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FIRST AMONG EQUALS:

The United States and NATO in the 90's

by

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FIRST AMONG EQUALS: The United States and NATO in the 90's

For two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring example of freedom and democracy. For generations, America has led the struggle to preserve and extend the blessings of liberty. And today, in a rapidly changing world, American leadership is indispensable. Americans know that leadership brings burdens and sacrifice.

- President George Bush, State of the Union, 1991

As he struggles to shape a new security strategy for the United States in the face of radical changes to the world order brought on by the end of the Cold War, President George Bush finds himself in much the same position as Woodrow Wilson in 1918 and Franklin Roosevelt in 1944. President Bush, with widespread public support for a US leadership role, however, will not preside over a return to isolationism or the bipolar competition of the Cold War. Rather, the United States will attempt to pursue its national security objectives through collective security and the rule of international law.

A new military strategy, formulated by the Bush Administration to support US national security policy in the new world order, entails a US role of leadership within a system of regional alliances-- similar to George Kennan's "strongpoint defense." The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), historically the focus for our Cold War military strategy, will continue to support our most important strongpoint-- Europe. The Bush Administration has advocated a post-Cold War mission for NATO beyond the treaty-specified boundaries of the Alliance. This out-of-area mission has been divisive throughout the history of the Alliance and should not be made a central theme of US policy *vis-a-vis* our European strongpoint.

The purpose of this essay is to contribute to the debate over the wisdom of a US policy that

endorses an out-of-area mission as part of an otherwise excellent American military strategy for the new world order. To better understand the issue and our new strategy, I have included a brief history of the post-World War II era with an emphasis on George Kennan's proposal for a strongpoint defense which he suggested as an alternative to a NATO-centered strategy. I believe this strongpoint concept is compatible with our new military strategy, authored by General Colin Powell, and the "new NATO" which must meet the challenges of a changing world environment. NATO must become a coalition equipped and able to deal with the threats of reemerging nationalism and traditional rivalries within the treaty area. Finally, I will suggest a formula for collective action which I believe can be effective without a disruptive out-of-area mission for NATO.

Background

The Post-War Debate

Following World War II, the vanquished Axis powers lay utterly destroyed and the victorious Allies on both sides of the Elbe were war-weary and exhausted. The wary trust that brought East and West together against Hitler's armies disappeared with the Nazi threat. That trust was replaced with a widening ideological rift that was exacerbated by perceptions of military inferiority in the West and traditional defensiveness in the Soviet Union. This rift prevented fulfillment of Franklin Roosevelt's vision of a world order determined by collective security through the newly formed United Nations and evolved instead into the bipolar alignment that defined the battle-lines of the Cold War. Despite agreement in the West on the Soviet Union as a security threat and widespread acceptance of the need to counter that threat by rebuilding Western European economies, the Western allies could not agree on the immediacy of the danger represented by the Soviet military. Some argued that the Red Army on

the Elbe constituted an immediate military threat to the security of the West, while others argued that the real threat was political and ideological.

Soviet military capability was, in fact, awesome in numbers and combat potential-- the Red Army, for example, outnumbered Western ground forces by over three to one by 1948. Despite this capability some analysts maintained that the real dangers were the weakness of the ruined Western economies, the Allies' inability to counter the Communist political threat, and the resultant fertile ground for the spread of Communist ideology. George Kennan, the "author" of containment, was prominent in this group. Kennan believed that Soviet military capability was not accompanied by an intent to invade the West but was intended by the Soviet Union to be used to back up its political offensive.

Kennan opposed the militarization of European relations and argued that it would render the dividing line in Europe more permanent.¹ He believed that a militarized alliance, like NATO, was too limited in geographic scope and membership to be the centerpiece of US policy and that American interests outside the region would be more vulnerable as a result of this concentration of effort and resources.² Kennan thought that no one nation, including the United States, had sufficient resources to provide complete domination of events on a worldwide basis.

Since resources were limited, Kennan argued that interests had to be prioritized. He suggested a strategy of "strongpoint" rather than "perimeter" defense. He believed that only five centers of military and industrial power, or "strongpoints," were important to the United States' national security-- the US, Great Britain, Germany and central Europe, Japan, and the Soviet Union. The objective in Kennan's strategy was to ensure that no more than one of these regions fell under hostile control. Although other areas of the world were of interest to the US, threats to the strongpoints of industrial-military power were potentially the most dangerous and should receive emphasis by US policy.

Prioritized emphasis was necessary to ensure that limited resources were applied where they could do the most good.³

Kennan and his supporters believed that the proper response to the USSR, the only power center believed to have both hostile intent and capability, was to contain its activities politically until the Soviet system inevitably collapsed under the weight of its own illegitimacy while Western democracies rebuilt their societies.⁴ The initial salvos of the Cold War were, in fact, political. Two such salvos were the Marshall Plan and the program of leniency toward the defeated Germans in Allied zones of occupation. These Allied political attacks eroded the potential for Soviet ideological progress and resulted in setbacks for the USSR such as the failure of Communist inspired strikes in France and the defeat of Communist candidates in Italian elections in the spring of 1948.⁵

The Soviets reacted to these reversals by attempting to protect their newly acquired Eastern European sphere of influence through heavy-handed military activities such as the Berlin blockade and a crackdown on liberalization in Czechoslovakia. Predictably, these activities fueled the fears of those who anticipated a further Soviet land grab in the West.

Ironically, Kennan unintentionally advanced the arguments of those who viewed the threat in military terms. His famous "X" article was taken literally as an outline for military encirclement and was used by the armed services to justify force build-ups to counter Soviet military might rather than as a formula for the political containment of a political threat. As a result of this escalating concern over a Soviet military incursion, US policy gradually moved toward a strategy of militarizing the Western coalition to offset Soviet strength.

The North Atlantic Treaty

Modern advocates for greater European burdensharing frequently point out that the Europeans

initiated the momentum for the North Atlantic Treaty because of the uneasiness they felt over the disparity in military power between themselves and the Soviet Union. Concern over this situation led Great Britain, France, and the Benelux countries to form their own military alliance, the Western Union, in March 1948. Their attempts to include the United States resulted in discussions which led to the draft treaty that provided for the mutual defense of member nations. The draft would become the North Atlantic Treaty.⁶

The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in 1949, is a fairly short document of 14 articles. The preamble declares the common heritage of freedom, democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law that forms the basis for the governments of the member nations. The second article commits member nations to work together to develop "peaceful and friendly international relations" by strengthening their free institutions, by "promoting conditions of stability and well-being," by seeking to "eliminate conflict in their economic policies," and by encouraging "economic collaboration between any or all of them." Some people use these clauses to justify a more political role for NATO despite the unquestionably military orientation of the rest of the document.⁷

The military aspects of the alliance are established in Articles III through V. Article III commits the parties, separately and jointly to maintain an individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid. Article IV instructs the parties to "consult together" whenever the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the parties is threatened. The authors of the treaty understood that Article IV had the potential for use by members to draw other signatories into a member's out-of-area problems, but it also allowed this regional alliance some flexibility to deal with the problems of the wider world. The framers believed conflicts between the regional charter of the alliance and the need to deal with wider out-of-area

problems was best left to future diplomats to handle on a case-by-case basis.⁸ The frequently quoted Article V states that the parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them "shall be considered an attack against them all." If a member is attacked, the parties will take action as deemed necessary, "including the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."⁹ This provision is much more strongly worded than the US proposal for the original document. The US draft waffled on the definition of the term "armed attack" and may have allowed an escape for an individual nation from armed collective action.¹⁰ Article V and Article VI which deals with the territorial scope of the treaty have been the sources of much of the debate over NATO activities in the first forty years of the Alliance.

Article VI defines the area of application of the treaty. With several modifications over the years, the treaty region now encompasses all of the national territories of member nations, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean north of the Tropic of Cancer.¹¹ This is the precise definition which has been interpreted rather imprecisely over the years. The term "out-of-area" has occasionally been applied to locales and activities within the geographic boundaries of the treaty when common agreement did not exist over invocation of the treaty. One recent example of such an "out-of-area" operation within the prescribed treaty territory was the United States Navy's quarrels with Qaddafi in the Gulf of Sidra. The treaty was not invoked nor did the US press the point.¹²

The remaining articles are general guidance on the implementation of the alliance but do not establish an integrated organization. The latitude allowed by these general guidelines has provided the legal authority for the evolution of today's elaborate structure that goes well beyond the original concept of the treaty's authors.¹³ Many people believed at the time that as the threat of Soviet invasion receded, the Alliance would outlive its usefulness. As time passed, however, the forces assigned to

counter that threat established permanence and NATO grew because there never was a good strategic case for their removal. In fact, political reasons for the continuation of the NATO structure grew. A prime example of such a political motivation for Alliance continuation was the justification of defense budgets to counter the perceived burgeoning Soviet military threat. The structure has been remarkably resilient and long-lasting especially in view of the fact that the alliance was intended as a temporary expedient that could be disbanded once the threat in Europe had stabilized.¹⁴

Two important factors contributed to the longevity of the NATO structure: first was the shared democratic heritage of most of NATO's member nations; second was the common threat to the security of all posed by the Soviet Union. The fact that an additional security function of the Alliance was the promotion of internal stability within war-prone Europe has been obscured by the passage of time. The democratic heritage of the Alliance is likely to continue to be a unifying force, but the reduction of the Soviet military threat has called into question the continued relevance of the Treaty.

The Evolution of NATO and the Out-of-Area Question

After forty years of military involvement in Europe, the fact that a US presence in Europe was intended to be temporary is easy to miss. In fact, the Truman Administration lobbied skeptical Republicans in the US Senate with the insistence that large numbers of American troops would not have to remain abroad for long. The troops were to come home when the European countries had recovered from the war and were better able to contribute to their own security. After the start of the Korean War, while urging troop increases in Europe to counter an expected Soviet-initiated second front in the NATO area, Truman emphasized his "sincere expectation" that there would be a concomitant increase in European military capabilities.

In 1952, NATO leaders meeting in Lisbon agreed that the alliance needed to strengthen its

military capability to counter the increasing threat of the Soviet bloc and that national contributions would be based on specialization of effort. This specialization of effort was necessary because the Allies realized the huge expenditure of resources that would be required to balance the Soviet military threat. The US was tasked with maintenance of the strategic air arm and control of the seas while the Europeans were to furnish the bulk of the ground forces. Unfortunately, the failure of the European Defense Community in 1954 doomed efforts to meet the Lisbon goal of fifty divisions; the US Army was left with a major role in offsetting the numerical advantage of Warsaw Pact conventional forces.¹⁵

The inability of the European powers to meet their ground force commitments in the specialization of effort scheme created some of the early divisions over out-of-area activities by NATO members. The US took the position in the early years of the Alliance that European members should not engage in action out of the NATO region to the detriment of their commitment to Alliance force structure. Several European allies, however, took a different view as they attempted to reattain their pre-WWII positions of eminence. The French, for example, were concerned about the escalating conflict in Indochina and the British hoped to hold on to the remnants of the Empire through a "special relationship" with the United States.¹⁶ Predictably these internal Alliance conflicts of national and coalition objectives created disagreements in the United States over how to commit American resources and meet increasingly global US commitments.

The US Shift in Out-of-Area Policy

Global US commitments expanded as the Soviet military threat and the fear of the spread of Communism merged into a single monolithic "bogeyman" that was seen as central to every conflict that erupted anywhere in the world. The centrality of European security was generally recognized, but support for US interests in other areas of the world began to compete for American attention and

resources. As US involvement and resources required in the effort to militarily contain Communism increased, the United States frequently changed its position on containment strategy. Emphasis on a nuclear rather than a conventional weapons approach and vice-versa each rose to prominence at various times. We found ourselves politically committed to decolonization while trying not to alienate our European allies to the detriment of the global containment network. Our policy toward out-of-area action shifted from our discouragement of non-US NATO involvement to frequent requests for non-US NATO support of our own activities beyond the treaty region. By the end of the Cold War, the United States was the principal proponent of expanding NATO's reach. Some observers now say the US may actually be the only NATO member so inclined.¹⁷

This shift in out-of-area policy was the result of the US government's recognition of the increasing economic power of the European allies and the US perception that NATO security was often affected by conflict outside the region. By the end of the Cold War, arguments over sharing financial and operational burdens became the most fractious area of conflict within the Alliance as policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic anticipated smaller defense budgets in response to the reduction of the Soviet threat.

The paradox of the Cold War victory is that the "loser" is still a military superpower that retains the most significant external security threat to the alliance that defeated it. Our Cold War victory did not result in the removal of the threat on which NATO was founded, yet many policymakers rushed to cash in on the "peace dividend" through immediate and radical reductions in defense budgets. To stem the tide, policymakers and analysts sought to redefine the threat to justify the continued existence of the alliance that many still considered essential to stability in Europe. Some suggested a mission for NATO beyond the traditional territorial limits of the Alliance.

Ministers to the NATO summit meeting of July 1990 in London addressed the out-of-area question and the future of the Alliance before declaring a new era of comprehensive change for NATO. The comprehensive changes, enumerated by the London Declaration, did not alter the wording of the treaty. The North Atlantic Treaty remains an agreement for regional stability within a well-defined area with reluctant flexibility for the case-by-case handling of threats beyond the region. The United States, on the other hand, advocates an out-of-area role for the Alliance as part of the new US military strategy which is to be based on a system of regional alliances and limited forward basing for American forces.

Secretary of State James Baker suggested that while NATO was necessary to provide "insurance" against the still powerful Soviet Union, the nature of the threat had changed sufficiently that NATO members should also recognize the threats to their collective security from "other directions." He noted that Third World troublespots like the Middle East posed dangers to Western Europe as real as any direct threat to NATO territory.¹⁸ The new American strategy, therefore, will perpetuate the argument over out-of-area missions that has proved divisive for most of the last twenty years.

A New American Strategy

You're the only superpower left in the world. We see it. The Europeans see it. The Soviets see it. Why don't you?

A Senior Egyptian Military Leader¹⁹

US Interests and the New World Order

Core US interests are unchanged by the challenges of the new world order and the altered global environment. We still seek the survival of our nation, its citizens, and continuation of our way of life. We will continue to advance the welfare of our people by contributing to an international environment

of peace, freedom, and progress within which our nation and our allies can flourish.²⁰ The advancement of these objectives is contingent on the continuation of the leadership role that the United States has assumed since the end of World War II.

Leadership requires a willingness and ability to make the tough decisions by taking the first step toward difficult but necessary courses. A leader is needed to show the way and mobilize independent countries into powerful coalitions.²¹ Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, during his presentation of the Defense Budget for FY 1992-93, emphasized this leadership role as fundamental to the formulation of our new national military strategy. He noted that the United States was the only country in the world with the power and prestige to pull together the type of coalition that was required to counter the aggression of Iraq in the recent Gulf War. The Secretary quoted President Bush when he testified that future threats to our security objectives will be met by "collective resistance" from diverse nations "drawn together in common cause." According to Mr. Cheney, we must:

be ready to show our moral and political leadership; to reassure others of our commitment to protect our interests; and if necessary, to respond to threats resolutely with forces for deterrence or defense. These aims and a close appreciation of the changes and continuities in today's world give rise to the main emphasis of our new defense strategy.²²

The United States cannot maintain a position of world leadership in the 1990's if we don't adjust our policies to the changed world environment. The inward turn the Soviet Union has been forced to make in the last few years leaves the United States as the only true superpower. Our economic difficulties and the rise of power centers in Japan and Europe, however, make our margin of power far smaller than at any time in our fifty years of world leadership. If we are not in decline in absolute terms, we have certainly declined relative to other world powers. We are faced, therefore, with the task of providing leadership in a world-wide arena through the expenditure of political power backed by reduced, but still adequate, military and economic power. In many ways this environment lends itself

to the type of "strongpoint" defense advocated by George Kennan in the 1940's.

To pursue a strongpoint defense, the United States must maintain involvement in the areas chosen to be worthy of defense-- that is, those areas considered vital to our own national security. The more vital an area is to our own national security, the greater will be our need for involvement. In the most important areas of the world, a position of leadership is the best way to ensure our involvement results in the optimum service of our national interests. Strongpoints may change as our interests change, but they now seem very similar to Kennan's original structure. The US, Japan, central Europe, and the USSR remain critical. Great Britain is in the process of merging with Central Europe, however, and the Mid-East should be added as a strongpoint.

Since America must be selective in husbanding its resources and credibility in dealing with a wide variety of diverse issues in these most vital areas of the world, Henry Kissinger has suggested three levels of threats to our interests that require different responses:

1) Level One-- Prepared to Act Unilaterally. In this case, I believe the United States is dealing with a core interest which requires our action regardless of the objections or support of other players. The most likely location for an intervention of this type would be outside the regional strongpoint structure. Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama or the Grenada student rescue would be examples of this type of action. This type of out-of-the-NATO area action by the US is less likely to result in meaningful criticism from our NATO allies if we had previously rejected the out-of-area role for NATO and had toned down our appeals for burdensharing outside of Europe. A less likely level one action would be one in which only US survival is threatened. In this rare instance, the concerns of other nations would be irrelevant and unilateral action would be pursued.

2) Level Two-- Action in Association with Other Nations. If we have maintained a position of leadership within the region of the activity, our influence is likely to be great enough to promote our national interests. Desert Shield/Storm is a good example of a level two situation. We must avoid any intervention that makes the US look like a mercenary or hired gun-- Kissinger has suggested that we should only get involved in situations that are of such interest that we would be willing to pay for them ourselves. Although this test could be a bit extreme since the concept of specialization of effort may permit different types of involvement and contribution by allies of different strengths, the key test for the appropriate level of intervention should be our level of interest in the outcome. Regional coalitions could be formed by bilateral agreement without violating the out-of-area restrictions of the North Atlantic Treaty. The Western European Union (WEU) is an alternative source of concerted action for European nations with more extra-regional interests.

3) Level Three-- No US Interests. Within "strongpoint" regions, the enhanced level of local security arrangements may enable regional powers to address the activity without US participation. The disappearance of the ideological context for US involvement makes this level far more likely in new world order conflicts.²³

The threat array that will form a part of the new world order will be more volatile and less ideologically oriented than the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War with which we became so comfortable. Challenges such as the spread of fundamentalist Islam, new economic competition, the reemergence of traditional, nationalist rivalries, and the looming prospect of North-South conflict will not always threaten the US and its regional allies at the same level. Sometimes concerted action will

be required but seldom will the interests of all regional players coincide against a single threat nor will a single threat necessarily challenge the interests of all.

The diversity of these threats and the interests they challenge, the significantly reduced Soviet threat to our basic survival, and the resources available to address the new threat array prompted the Bush Administration to formulate a new military strategy. This new strategy, articulated by Secretary Cheney and Chairman Powell, offers more flexibility to deal with these diverse threats and interests within resource constraints by a reliance on regional strongpoints and a reduced force structure. We will pursue our interests on a selective basis with the help of regional allies who share our interests.²⁴

US Security Policy for the 90's

In December of 1990 in his Eisenhower Centenary Lecture in London, General Colin Powell outlined a new security strategy for the 90's which balanced US security interests with the new world environment and its opportunities and threats. General Powell's plan-- the Base Force Concept-- acknowledged the continuing realities of Soviet military might while taking advantage of the unquestionable reduction of the immediate threat. He cautioned against complacency, especially in the NATO region where threats to continental security may be emerging with the new democracies of Eastern Europe.

In addition to calling for continued American support for a vibrant NATO, General Powell pointed out the importance of other regions of the world including the Middle East, Southwest Asia, and the Pacific. He underscored the enduring reality of unknown threats and emphasized that the world is still a place of danger, turmoil, tyranny, and war.

To meet these threats both within and beyond the NATO region, General Powell outlined a minimum military force structure designed to meet global US commitments both alone and with the help

of allies around the world. The United States will reorganize its military into four military force packages-- a Strategic Force, an Atlantic Force, a Pacific Force, and a Contingency Force-- backed up by four military supporting capabilities. The four supporting capabilities are transportation, space, reconstitution, and research and development.²⁵ The Atlantic and Pacific Forces will continue our policy of forward basing and will be configured to accurately address each regional environment. The Contingency Force will be light and flexible to augment forward-based Atlantic and Pacific units and to counter threats to our interests outside or peripheral to Pacific and European strongpoints. The Strategic Force will maintain the US nuclear deterrent "umbrella." As the names of these forces and capabilities imply, the US will have the flexibility to continue global involvement while meeting the challenges of the rapidly emerging strategic realities of the future.

In Europe, for example, the Base Force Concept exploits the prospect of a longer response time which must result from the reduced threat and the increased warning time afforded by the huge new geographic buffer between Western Europe and the USSR. The forward based Atlantic Force will use an appropriate Active-Reserve mix and multi-national units-- at the division level and above-- to meet this reduced threat at the lowest possible expenditure of resources.²⁶ This longer response time and the reduced threat from the Soviet Union is both a blessing and a curse for the future of NATO. It is a blessing in that NATO can and has begun to reduce its force posture, readiness levels, and other Cold War defense burdens. It will be a curse if the Alliance fails to maintain a potential for countering a reversal in Soviet policy or if NATO becomes so fractured that it is no longer able to promote internal European stability threatened by the reemergence of nationalist rivalries.²⁷

In NATO, as in other regional alliances, the US must maintain its leadership role to ensure that the new opportunities are blessings rather than curses to the world order of the 1990's. Just as the US

reshapes its military strategy to confront new global challenges. NATO must reorient itself to remain a viable and useful counter to post-Cold War challenges. The counterbalance that NATO will continue to provide against regional European crises is a vital portion of our own security strategy that allows us to reduce our commitment in the area.

The New NATO

NATO and US Interests

The preamble and first two articles of the North Atlantic Treaty outline security objectives for the Alliance that are very similar to the basic US security goals outlined above. This coincidence of values and objectives forms a political basis for the continuation of NATO. The allies would do well to recall that the Alliance was founded to "safeguard the freedom, common heritage, and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of the law." When these words were written into the North Atlantic Treaty preamble, they expressed more of an ideal than what we have come to accept as reality. Democracy and personal liberty were certainly not the rule in the old Europe as they are now. Similarly, these values are still not universally accepted and practiced in the broader international community.²⁸

As we look back to the early days of the Alliance, we should also remember that the original drafters of the Treaty sought to prevent the type of traditional, nationalist rivalries that had plunged Europe into two costly wars in thirty years. The post Cold War era has already witnessed the reemergence of the old fear of a united Germany and the potential for another Baltic crisis to erupt into spreading violence. Even as the Soviet threat subsides, this older traditional internal threat that NATO has so successfully addressed may be reemerging.

The Europeans realize the danger of this internal threat and are attempting to counter it by encouraging a continued US presence in the region and by increasing efforts at European cooperation through collective arrangements such as the European Community (EC) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). While these are both valuable efforts and have the potential to include a wider list of participants, neither has the proven security aspect that NATO has so successfully demonstrated over the last fifty years.

The continued tranquility of Europe through the cooperation of NATO's member states and the strategic offset of the still significant Soviet threat remain legitimate roles for NATO's fifth decade. The treaty is relevant to the demands of the new world order and provides the security framework for our most critical regional strongpoint.

The Eastern Threat to NATO

Despite its retreat from Eastern and Central Europe, the USSR continues to modernize its strategic forces and retains the defensive paranoia of its Russian heritage. What has changed, however, is the Soviet ability to rapidly bring conventional force to bear on Western Europe. The agreement among member states to disband the military aspect of the Warsaw Pact by 31 March 1991 dramatically eliminated the nose-to-nose, East-West confrontation that characterized the Cold War. The Soviet withdrawal from the territory of former satellites, the preoccupation of the USSR with the restlessness of its own Republics, and the anemic state of the failed Soviet economy have combined to ease Western fears of hostile Soviet intentions despite the retention of considerable Soviet capability.

This mismatch between capability and intent may have always existed just as George Kennan asserted over forty years ago. Kennan did not believe that the USSR ever intended to militarily invade the West, but he acknowledged the reasonableness of the concern expressed by those who did. His

assertion that a definition of the threat in narrow military terms oversimplified the problem has relevance today as policymakers attempt to justify the continuation of NATO to counter a modified Soviet menace. Much of the debate between the US and its European allies over defense burdensharing in the last few years was caused by different interpretations of the Soviet threat.

By the end of the 1980's, Europeans were reluctant to assume a greater share of the financial burden by increasing their defense spending because of their perception that the Soviet threat in the region was rapidly shrinking. The US, on the other hand, viewed developments in Eastern Europe with skepticism and questioned Gorbachev's longevity.²⁹ After the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 and with the promise of the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) agreement, however, both parties to the debate now agree that the Soviet threat has stabilized to the point that the Alliance should be able to take advantage of the opportunity to radically reduce the current force structure. Unfortunately, the oversimplified, and perhaps inflated, depiction of the threat over the past forty years will complicate that task. The European public has become increasingly skeptical of the "red menace" focus for defense spending while people in the US are less sure than their leaders that the Cold War is over.³⁰

Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet threat was represented to the public primarily in terms of a huge concentration of tanks massed for a frontal attack on NATO positions. Policymakers continued to rely on this depiction of the threat long after that scenario started to lose credibility. Consequently, arguments that advocated the continuation of NATO based primarily on this type of threat were much less believable and public opinion was inclined to favor massive cutbacks to take advantage of the so-called peace dividend.

The Soviet threat facing the new NATO will be even harder to define than the old, familiar Cold War scenario, but it can be credibly explained to the public in terms of residual nuclear capability, the

possibility for a reversal of Soviet direction, and the volatility of internal Soviet politics. Leaders could also emphasize the need to preserve a stabilizing force until the revolutions of the East are completed.³¹ Recent difficulties with the definition of armaments subject to elimination by the CFE Treaty underscore the need to avoid euphoria while making the most of the unquestionably relaxed threat environment to reduce the NATO force structure.

Force Structure Proposals

The diminished threat environment offers NATO an unprecedented opportunity to reduce force structure and reduce defense expenditures. This new structure fits nicely with General Powell's Base Force allocation for Europe under the new Atlantic Force-- reinforced by the Contingency Force. According to General John Galvin, NATO's military commander-in-chief, some of the changes will likely include:

- 1) Reducing troop strength levels in Europe, especially in Germany. US forces will be reduced to a single corps-- two divisions-- of ground troops with backup logistics and air support provided by three tactical fighter wings.
- 2) Developing a more mobile force among the thinned-out units to cover the same geographic area. Troops would likely be centrally located rather than on the German-Polish border.
- 3) Reducing the number of headquarters units.
- 4) Limiting reliance on short-range battlefield nuclear weapons with an eye toward eventual phase-out.
- 5) Introducing chemical weapons only in case of an emergency buildup by a potential enemy force.

- 6) Cutting large-scale maneuvers and low-flying missions by jet fighters to a minimum to spare the citizenry.
- 7) Forming more multi-national units, probably down to the division level to allow specialization of effort as each member nation reduces its own national force.
- 8) Emphasizing further arms cuts between NATO and the USSR with continuous readaptation of Western tactics to such reductions.³²

Such reductions mean that the NATO of the future will be smaller and less ready for combat-- at least less ready by today's standards in the context of the old threat environment. These sweeping changes to NATO force structure spell the end of such time-honored concepts as the literal application of forward defense and will alter our reliance on nuclear weapons. The London Declaration, in fact, committed the allies to a new strategy that makes nuclear weapons truly weapons of last resort. This seems to imply that the new NATO will rely on the deterrent nature of the reduced stockpiles of such weapons on both sides rather than the war-fighting orientation sometimes inferred in the past.³³ It does not mean the end of flexible response-- the carefully dosed deterrent options that are commensurate in each case with the level of threat-- but the threshold for use of nuclear weapons has been raised considerably.

At the conventional end of the response spectrum, the principle of forward defense will be altered to reflect the disappearance of the traditional dividing line between East and West. This larger "buffer zone" means warning times will be drastically lengthened and the requirement to base large numbers of forces against immediately proximate enemy forces will have been eliminated. The resultant relaxation of tension should enable the Allies to rely more heavily on reserve mobilization. In such an environment, it might make sense for Western European members of NATO to take responsibility for

fielding an even greater percentage of NATO's ground forces than the 80% they do now.³⁴ This greater responsibility for Europe to bear the load of ground forces while the US focuses its defense expenditures on nuclear, naval, and reinforcement capabilities is reminiscent of the Lisbon agreement of 1952 on specialization of effort. Many of the arguments over financial burdensharing could be avoided in the future if policymakers can successfully implement this forty year old idea.

To make this specialization work, policymakers in Europe must increase their percentage share of a reduced force structure while US leaders must recognize the unique contribution that NATO offers American security. Members will need to look at the larger context of global security that confronts the US and reiterate the regional nature of the North Atlantic Treaty. Specialization of effort and the formation of multi-national units will make NATO units less able to respond to non-European contingencies so the United States should not press the organization to support interests out-of-area. Individual members with broader interests than the Alliance as a whole could be enlisted on case-by-case bases when their interests and ours coincide. The new economically powerful and politically stable Europe of the 90's is ready for a greater share of the responsibility for its own security and many of its leaders are anxious to assume that role.

The Reemergence of Europe

Western Europe has achieved the level of prosperity and invulnerability to ideological erosion that the Marshall Plan was designed to stimulate. The prosperity, stability, and integration encouraged by the United States for over forty years is now both an opportunity and a threat to American interests. On the one hand, an integrated Europe will be a more effective security and business partner. On the other hand, a Europe less dependent on American protection will be less responsive to American concerns.³⁵ In the short term, however, most European nations will continue to welcome US

involvement in their defense because the democratization of the East also brings the possibility of the reemergence of nationalist rivalries and a widespread fear of a united Germany.

The type of American involvement desired by the Europeans is not the type of benefactor/client relationship they considered characteristic of the Cold War period. Rather, the Europeans want a more equal relationship, possibly symbolized by a European supreme commander of NATO military forces. They want the US to help ensure Germany's continued presence in NATO. Finally, they want the US to accept a stronger political role for the European Community.³⁶ US policy must address these desires while maintaining a leadership role to continue the influence that protects our own national interests.

Current US Policy

US policymakers recognize the European desire to seek their own security identity and are attempting to integrate that wish into our security planning. We are trying to stay out in front of the issue by encouraging a further strengthening of the so-called European pillar of NATO while ensuring a continuing role for the US in European affairs.³⁷ There are signs that many Europeans, especially the French, would like to see a distinctly European defense identity through the Western European Union serving as the defense arm of the EC. The WEU is considered by France, Germany, Italy, and the UK to be the ideal body to represent Europe's security interests in the Atlantic Alliance. Recent statements by Secretary of State Baker support the idea of an enhanced security role for the EC. Behind these statements, however, is a strong American concern that this strengthened defense role for the EC, coupled with US military cuts, could weaken US leadership of NATO. For their part, the Europeans are worried that security independence from the US could result in the withdrawal of the nuclear umbrella along with American ground troops.³⁸ For the near term, however, support for a continued US presence in Europe is nearly unanimous among European leaders.

The need for a reduced, but continuing presence of the US military in Europe is also accepted at home. Americans recognize the potential for conflict on a continent that has not known much peace in this century and where extensive US involvement has been necessary to achieve what little peace there has been.³⁹ They also recognize the prosperity of Western Europe and many have joined the call for more assistance from our allies when their interests coincide with ours outside the NATO region.

Popular opinion and recognition of our economic limitations have prompted US policymakers to attempt to break the bonds that restrict out-of-area missions for NATO forces. This has been our policy for most of the last twenty years as we typically framed requests for out-of-area assistance in the context of European contributions to the broader security of the Alliance against the monolithic Communist threat.⁴⁰ Lately, however, the out-of-area mission has been pushed forward as a new mission for NATO to counter US-defined threats to Western interests. This type of mission was not easy to sell against the common Cold War foe; it will be practically impossible to sell against the diverse threat array of the new world order. This aspect of our policy needs some rethinking because of the unprecedented complexity of the world environment and the dwindling resources available to meet its challenges.

Ill-Suited for Action Out-of-Area

Out-of-area problems cannot and should not be treated on a standard basis by any NATO member nor should the treaty be invoked for any reason other than those stated in Article Five. There are several specific reasons why pursuit of an out-of-area mission is more likely to disrupt the cohesiveness of the alliance than to contribute a new role justifying its continued existence.

First and foremost, NATO has the vital mission of maintaining the security of Europe and offsetting the conventional capabilities of the Soviet Union. The urgency of this primary mission has decreased, but its criticality to the survival interests of both the United States and its European allies has

not diminished. Until and unless the Soviet Union changes so completely that it no longer poses a security threat to its neighbors, this mission must remain the overriding focus of the North Atlantic Alliance.

The second reason for NATO to maintain its regional nature is based in the decline in the immediacy of the Soviet threat. Reduced tensions have afforded the Allies an opportunity to reduce their military expenditures which will eventually benefit the economic position of all. These reduced defense budgets, however, have resulted in lower readiness states and more specialized forces. This means that military units will be less able to meet out-of-area challenges and still provide a credible deterrent to regional problems. The criticality of NATO's deterrence mission demands the best possible use of funds and forces committed to the alliance.

Third, out-of-area debates have historically been divisive. Attempts to achieve unanimity even during the Cold War against out-of-area Soviet adventures were generally unsuccessful. The unlikelihood of finding enough common ground among sixteen nations with generally sub-regional geopolitical outlooks will be even more difficult now that the global Communist threat has diminished. The few nations in NATO that do have out-of-area interests could be enlisted to support the US through the WEU, on a case-by-case bilateral basis, or through the UN Security Council. Most out-of-area disputes will justly be considered by Europeans to be none of NATO's business. NATO has served the security interests of the United States and its Allies well over its first forty years. It will continue to serve those interests through the 90's as part of a global "strongpoint" strategy. US policymakers can help to ensure the future success of NATO by rejecting the out-of-area mission and keeping the Alliance in its originally intended regional context. As Europeans seek and achieve a more dominant role in regional security, the United States must be prepared to cede some pride of place.⁴¹ This implies a new

role for the United States as a "first among equals" in its foreign policy activities with its various regional allies-- a position of leadership through influence and persuasion.

Conclusions

Now we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of new world order. In the words of Winston Churchill, a "world order" in which "the principles of justice and fair play...protect the weak from the strong...." A world where the United Nations, freed from Cold War stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders.

*- President George Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress,
6 March 1991⁴²*

Collective Security Through the UN?

After his impressive diplomatic efforts at coalition building and subsequent victory in the Gulf War with Iraq, President Bush reiterated his post-Cold War hope that the United Nations could form the basis for a new world order. Like Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt before him, President Bush is likely to be disappointed. The unanimity of UN resolutions in the Gulf affair will likely prove to be the exception rather than the rule because the unique coincidence of national self-interests, unprecedented in the history of collective security efforts, are unlikely to recur. Although the votes of nations like the Soviet Union, China, and France supported the US-sponsored resolutions against Iraq, the national interests which justified their votes were not the same as ours. The Soviets, for example, preoccupied with domestic crises and in need of foreign economic assistance, were in no position to challenge the US. The Chinese, stung by censure following Tiananmen Square, were eager to demonstrate the advantages of practical cooperation. The French were torn by their own desire to maintain a voice in the Arab world and the desire to keep the US linkage to European affairs should its nightmare of German resurgence come true. Among the veto-empowered members of the Security Council, only the

British held views practically identical to ours.⁴³ Chances are good that the divergent interests of these permanent members of the Security Council will again translate into a veto of our own interests in the future as they have so many times in the past. When that occurs, as it inevitably must, our first true test of American commitment to collective security through the UN will have arrived.

NATO, WEU, or Bilateral?

This pessimistic assessment is not to say that UN-based collective security is not worth a try-- it certainly should be the first effort made to resolve conflict when our interests are at risk, but caution dictates a reasonable fall-back position. The Bush Administration's strongpoint defense strategy provides such an alternative or addition to action through the United Nations Security Council.

The strongpoint defense will have great appeal to counter threats to US interests in the new world order. Since the bipolar focus against a monolithic ideological threat, has been replaced by a more diverse array of challenges, I believe most US interests will be threatened at Kissinger's second level-- that is, those challenges we will engage only in alliance with other nations. Our engagement of regional challenges, therefore, will be accomplished in coalition with nations with coincident interest in successful problem resolution. In Europe, two security fora are available. The first is, of course, NATO and the second is the Western European Union.

If the conditions of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty are met and NATO's sixteen nations agree to act, the treaty should be invoked and NATO forces committed to meet the threat. The only likely threat that would result in such unanimity would be a revival of an expansionist Soviet Union that could again threaten the continent with a conventional invasion. As unlikely as such a revival may now seem, the threat is too great to disband or critically hobble the Alliance best suited to counter the challenge. Let us benefit from the reduced threat and associated longer warning time available for

mobilization, but we must keep the structure intact to quickly regenerate forces if this worst case occurs. We must also remember NATO's second security mission-- the maintenance of stability in Europe. The existence of NATO serves as a deterrent to violence over such traditional rivalries as the Greek-Turkish dispute and a reemergence of the French-German question. I believe the continued relevance of these two, still critical, security roles means that the treaty should remain as it is and the potentially crippling, divisive issue of an out-of-area mission for NATO be shelved by the Bush Administration.

The second forum for action from the European strongpoint is the Western European Union. The WEU has fewer members than NATO with a proportionately better chance for unified action outside the region and is unconstrained by the Brussels Treaty for action out-of-area. Significantly, France, a nation with interests and influence in many Third World nations is a full fledged member of the WEU-- in contrast to the French government's self-imposed exclusion from the military structure of NATO. If US and European interests are challenged out of the NATO area, the WEU could provide a coalition partner for the United States. In such a coalition, the extent of the US role would be determined by our level of interest in the outcome of the situation. The global nature of US interests and the interdependence of the various regional strongpoints suggest that the United States would most often be the leader and coalition builder. Thus, the recent Gulf War may be a prototype of new world order conflict resolution.

A third option is available if the United States cannot achieve a coalition through either the United Nations or from a group of strongpoint powers such as the WEU. That option is to form a temporary alliance through bilateral or multilateral contacts. If this last option fails to yield an ally, US policymakers must reevaluate the situation and determine if the challenge is a level one situation, in Kissinger's terms, and respond unilaterally. If it is not and no allies can be found, no further action

should be taken. If the United States can maintain a position of leadership and enhance its persuasive influence by occasionally yielding on questions of lesser interest to the US, this friendless situation should never occur.

I have discussed these three options-- the UN, regional strongpoints, and bilateral agreements-- as if they were sequential and independent. Of course they are not and all three will be pursued simultaneously just as George Bush did in the formation of the coalition against Iraq. President Bush was steadfast and consistent in that crisis in his efforts to take advantage of the new world order. Similar persuasive and energetic leadership will be required in the future.

No Out-of-Area Mission for NATO

The President's national security policy and the military strategy that has been proposed to support it are complementary and appropriate for the changed world environment except for the Administration's position on the out-of-area mission for NATO. For forty-five years NATO has proven to be effective in the accomplishment of its two primary, continuing objectives-- collective security from the Soviet threat and the promotion of stability in Europe. Despite the longevity of the Alliance, however, its fragility should not be underestimated. Continued consensus among this diverse coalition of sixteen nations will be more difficult to maintain in the new world order of post-Cold War Europe.

The biggest challenge to consensus in the Alliance is the historically divisive appeal for an out-of-area mission beyond the national interests of most of NATO's members. Reduced resources will force many member nations to commit an even larger percentage of their smaller defense budgets to maintain a conventional deterrent to a Soviet resurgence. Specialization of effort will make non-US NATO forces less flexible and capable of responding to threats outside of the European region. Similarly, the US will not be able to do all missions everywhere-- minesweeping is a case in point. All nations will rely more

heavily on partnerships but each arrangement will be more situation contingent and of shorter duration. The diversity of threats outside the region and the equally diverse interests of the sixteen nations within the Alliance make collective action by NATO to achieve objectives, beyond those specified in the North Atlantic Treaty, unlikely indeed.

The new world order will often be contested on the fringes of US interests--our nation's basic survival most likely will not be an issue. Most conflicts will be resolved politically through influence and persuasion through a strongpoint system similar to the one envisioned by George Kennan over forty years ago. *Vis-a-vis* NATO, almost all threats to US interests will be out-of-area and will best be met by coalitions formed by strongpoint nations affected by the crisis. These coalitions, formed by consensus against a common threat, will be adequate to meet most threats to the new world order and will have the advantages of flexibility and brevity of commitment.

The increased probability of these unique challenges to the new world order and the convenience of short term coalitions to meet them does not diminish the continuing need for proven security arrangements such as the North Atlantic Alliance. The threats on which the Alliance were based remain in altered but still significant form. The accomplishment of the Alliance's continuing vital missions should not be jeopardized by fractious debate over issues-- such as the out-of-area question-- that go beyond the coincidence of interests on which this unique coalition was founded.

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