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Moving from Theory to Action

NATO in the 1990s

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Conference Conclusions

- **The United States trans-Atlantic tie is under stress. If not carefully tended to, the relationship could erode. As an example, if Europeans continue to reduce their armed forces' readiness levels, it becomes increasingly difficult for the United States to justify maintaining 100,000 troops in a high state of readiness.**
- **Divergences in perceptions and expectations abound not only among Allies, but also among PFP partners on the role of PFP and expanding the Alliance. As a result, Alliance machinery is being pulled in many directions.**
- **NATO faces challenges in coordinating command arrangements with the UN and Western European Union (WEU) as well as with partners in standing up Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF). Without effective coordination, out-of-area activities can prove less than effective.**
- **A great danger to NATO's legitimacy and relevance stems not only from perceptions of institutional competitiveness but also from NATO's participation in increasingly unpopular out- of-area activities. Hence, it may become more difficult to maintain public support for NATO's Article 5 function.**

Background

Three major challenges face the Alliance: (1) the United States has not yet fully decided on its role in Europe; (2) the European Union (EU), despite the rhetoric, has not yet forged a common foreign and security policy; (3) Russia is unclear on its future.

These uncertainties impact on the Alliance's future as NATO faces pressures from the East to expand through the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programs and on standing up CJTF for out-of-area activities.

What is the future of the trans-Atlantic relationship?

The trans-Atlantic relationship might be described as under pressure. Some Europeans believe that the United States has not yet fully decided on its role in Europe, while others still see the United States as "hegemonic." In contrast, some Americans see Europeans as "irresponsible," argue for greater "burden-sharing," and find the EU's inability to develop a common foreign and security policy a continuing irritant.

On the European side, there seems to be more focus on narrow national interests. This is most evident in the significant unilateral reductions in military force levels in recent years, the present "hollowing out" of those already deficient forces, and significant reductions in readiness. For example, Germany's decision to reduce the readiness of the *Bundeswehr's* main defense forces to

within 180 days raises questions about U.S. forces. Some Americans ask why the United States should maintain 100,000 U.S. troops at a high state of readiness and cost, while Germany and other NATO members reduce readiness and save resources. In summary, "readiness" is now measured in months and weeks, rather than hours and days. European armed forces are, in effect, becoming "hollow," and countries are lowering readiness levels.

On the U.S. side, there are serious questions from the heartland about why the United States should continue to bother with NATO, now that the Cold War is over. NATO's reputation is also coupled with changing American public and Congressional attitudes toward peacekeeping (since Somalia), and will suffer adversely from increasing association with these out-of-area activities.

Partnership For Peace (PFP) as a Route to NATO Enlargement.

The January 10-11, 1994 Brussels Summit adopted Partnership For Peace (PFP) in response to the thorny problem of NATO's expansion eastward. NATO adopted PFP to avoid making any decision on immediate expansion because no consensus then existed within the Alliance. It seems now that, although PFP did postpone the enlargement question, the issue is again on NATO's front burner because of Partner insistence.

Some participant critics suggested that President Clinton's European policy is flawed, and that PFP is really a "Policy for Postponement." Though PFP bought the Administration some time to get expansion right, it is now time for the United States to make its case. Should the United States fail in that regard, the issue of the U.S. leadership role in Europe is once again in question.

Though Alliance consensus appears to exist on PFP as the route to enlargement, there does not yet appear to be any consensus about which specific Partners should be admitted first, nor on the timing, criteria, or resources to implement enlargement. Some participants even expressed the wishful hope that PFP might make membership unnecessary for some countries, almost to save the Alliance from having to make the choice.

One participant noted three reasons why Spain had much to offer as a model for NATO expansion. First, Spain entered NATO in 1982 over the strong opposition of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) (Andrei Gromyko threatened to target Spain with nuclear weapons if it joined NATO). Second, NATO helped Spain make the transition from an authoritarian system to democracy. Third, at the time of accession, Spain's armed forces were five to six years short of operational readiness.

Some Central and East Europeans noted that once PFP peacekeeping activities become routine, the logical question will be what next? The Czechs, for example, suggested that they attach military liaison officers to NATO's major subordinate commands in order to better coordinate Czech military activities with the Alliance. The Poles noted their desire to expand their military cooperation from peacekeeping activities to include their general defense forces. The Estonian noted, "You cannot tie a knot with only one hand," that PFP was a two-way street, and that NATO financial resources and political support would be necessary to sustain PFP momentum.

PFP's Relationship to Other NATO Organizations.

There was consensus to retain the North Atlantic Cooperation Council because it remained useful as a consultative forum and provided the means to coordinate political, economic, and scientific activities. As to the Partnership Coordination Center (PCC) at Mons, some fundamental organization problems remain. According to the January 1994 Summit terms of reference, the PCC does not work for SACEUR, but for the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and reports to the International Military Staff (at Evere). The PCC can only "coordinate" each partner's Individual Partnership Program (IPP) activities related to search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping operations. Yet, since PFP partners see their activities as a means to achieve interoperability and entry to full membership, they will push the PCC to coordinate military activities that are broader than its mandate on timing, criteria, and resources for membership -- such as developing interoperable general defense forces. Funding remains a problem. Not only does the source of PCC funding remain unclear, but national contributions to PFP are voluntary. It is anticipated that "sponsors" should donate financial resources to support PCC activities.

A new issue is the possibility of establishing force goals for the Partners that would lead to NATO interoperability and an accompanying annual defense review with perhaps modified Defense Planning Questionnaires (DPQs). This scenario will immediately draw fire from France, which feels that such review procedures would be a "back door" attempt to get France into the integrated military command. Some in the International Staff (IS) believe such force goals would also dilute and undermine the already well-established force planning process for the Alliance at 13 (16 minus France, Spain, and Iceland).

What will NATO's evolving relationship be with Russia?

The Russian participant argued that Russia is more isolated from the West (EU and NATO) than was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Although Russia has joined PFP and Duma Parliamentarians participate in North Atlantic Assembly (NAA) seminars, these activities, in Russia's view, do not conform with stability requirements. In fact, as a Cold War holdover, NATO shares a very poor image in Russian society. Russian nationalists equate closer cooperation with NATO as "treason." Most Russians view NATO's enlargement as further exclusion, not integration, of Russia from Europe.

Recognizing that NATO has an image problem in Russia, some participants noted that NATO needs to train public information officers and establish a full-fledged information office in Moscow. Unfortunately, France has blocked this NATO effort and the French embassy in Moscow has become the de facto conduit for NATO information to Russia.

NATO's relations with Russia suggest that while enlargement *is* on the NATO agenda, Russia must be dealt with through the NACC, G-7, or bilaterally. The challenge will be how to integrate Russia into European institutions and peace operations while it remains opposed to NATO expansion to include Central European states.

What is the status of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) and prospects for the Combined Joint Task Force?

The concept of separable but not separate capabilities is necessary to avoid expensive duplication and to allow some non-NATO members to engage while permitting others *not* to engage. Areas of focus involve: using existing national and NATO assets (such as ships or aircraft) to avoid expensive duplication; using existing NATO command structures (with designated CJTF "separable" staff personnel); and developing political-military structures to provide planning advice to the WEU Council.

Since May 1994, the WEU has established associated partnerships with nine Central and East European members. Joint WEU Council sessions are convened with associated partners and the experience has been educational for both sides. In conformance with the 1992 Petersberg Declaration to make forces operational for peacekeeping, the WEU has taken on the following tasks: setting up the Mostar police force; participating in the Adriatic maritime embargo of Montenegro (Sharp Guard); establishing a Danube maritime embargo force; and establishing a Working Group to deal with CJTF C2 arrangements.

At the January 1994 summit, NATO agreed to establish CJTF to address new missions, to affirm ESDI, to provide a rapidly deployable command and control element, and to facilitate non-NATO contributions. The CJTF concept has a number of issues. One is the CJTF relationship to the Alliance's purpose. Though Article 5 was NATO's central purpose, out-of-area activities create new and greater demands. One unintended danger is that the CJTF makes it easier to separate U.S. from EU interests, which could erode U.S. support for 100,000 U.S. forward-stationed troops. Second, CJTF means that NATO is in the business of peacekeeping. To the degree that peacekeeping operations are unpopular in the U.S., American support for the Alliance could similarly erode. As Europeans reduce their "readiness" levels and require the U.S. to provide logistics, C3I, and strategic lift, this also could signal that "lighter" U.S. forces are necessary. Third, the issue of just how CJTF will link with the WEU remains to be worked out.

Can NATO survive and adjust to its new Peacekeeping and Crisis Management role?

While public support for NATO as an Article 5 insurance policy exists in people's minds, NATO is being judged by what it *does*, not by what it *is*. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to translate general American support for NATO into support for resources.

Peacekeeping has grown unpopular in the U.S. Congress as a result of Somalia and the situation in Bosnia. Since NATO's 1992 decisions to perform peacekeeping operations to support the CSCE and UN, NATO has engaged in such operations. If NATO continues to attach a priority (and increasingly its identity) to peacekeeping, popular support for the Alliance could erode.

NATO has utilized its integrated military command during the maritime arms embargo against Serbia and Montenegro (Sharp Guard) and the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina (Deny Flight) in former Yugoslavia. In both cases, France operated under SHAPE's integrated military command. In addition, NATO recently has engaged in many other "firsts." It has engaged in actual combat operations, operated out of area (in Hungarian airspace and Albanian territorial waters), participated in joint NATO/UN planning and operations, and taken part in joint NATO/WEU operations.

Nonetheless, all has not been without difficulty. The UN, with some 18 operations and 70,000 soldiers, is clearly suffering from overreach. An urgently needed area for improvement is in cooperation between

NATO and other institutions. One such grouping involves NATO-WEU cooperation, whereby to satisfy the French and potential non-NATO participants, we could undermine NATO's integrated command. A second grouping involves NATO-CSCE cooperation, where by transplanting unique NATO capabilities (e.g., early warning, conflict prevention, and crisis management) to the CSCE, we could inadvertently erode NATO's relevance. A third issue involves different perceptions between NATO and the UN on the use of force, impacting heavily on military doctrine and rules of engagement.

Policy Recommendations

Policymakers might consider the following steps:

- the United States needs to demonstrate that PFP is not a "Policy for Postponement" but for eventual NATO enlargement. The United States must decide -- on timing, criteria, and resources for membership -- and lead the Alliance.
- NATO needs to mount a significant educational and public affairs offensive in Russia in order to address fundamental misperceptions about the nature of the Alliance. Besides NATO PFP activities, the West should expand on democracy programs of the Council of Europe and CSCE, and encourage active participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in that effort.
- NATO needs to ensure effective coordination with the WEU, CSCE, and United Nations by implementing the CJTF concept.

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