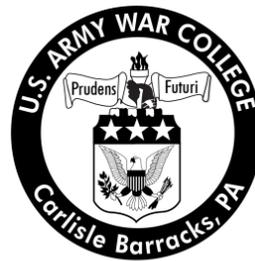


Strategic Implications of U.S. Troop Drawdown in Europe

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF U.S. TROOP DRAWDOWN IN EUROPE

by

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ABSTRACT

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On 9 June 2011, the then-Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, stated “future U.S. political leaders may not consider the return on America’s investment in NATO worth the cost.”¹ Supporting this statement are the underlying concerns about Asian stability, and a poorly performing U.S. and global economy. In particular, the Department of Defense (DoD) is anticipating a budget reduction of \$450-billion to \$1.2-trillion over the next 10 years. Finally, the potential savings gained from the reduction of U.S. troops in Europe, and by reducing fiscal support to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is between 65 percent and 70 percent of total investments, are compelling rationales for decreased involvement in Europe and NATO. However, abrupt decisions based on these legitimate drawbacks are shortsighted, and the advantages gained from second and third order effects of a European presence, in today’s globalized and transnational world, cannot be understated. This paper acknowledges the need for a force drawdown, but argues that in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) global environment, the U.S. must maintain its strong military presence in Europe through increased support to NATO.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF U.S. TROOP DRAWDOWN IN EUROPE

Europe is still vitally important, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a foundational element of global security.²

— Admiral Stavridis

Despite Admiral Stavridis' words above, there are those in the United States (U.S.) government and military who believe it is time to begin decreasing U.S. military presence in Europe and significantly reduce the financial and manning support to NATO. Specifically, on 9 June 2011, the then-Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, stated "the alliance (NATO) faces a dim, if not dismal future" and "future U.S. political leaders may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost."³ Supporting this statement were the underlying and growing concerns about Asian stability, and a poorly performing U.S. and global economy requiring substantial fiscal restraint across government. In particular, the Department of Defense (DoD) is anticipating a budget reduction of \$450-billion to \$1.2-trillion over the next 10 years. Therefore, some in the administration have identified savings gained from the reduction of U.S. troops in a stable Europe, and by reducing United States' fiscal support to NATO, which is between 65 percent and 70 percent of total investments by all member countries. These arguments are compelling rationales for the decreased involvement or even withdrawal from both Europe and NATO. Though these very stark and legitimate drawbacks exist, the advantages gained from second and third order effects of alliance membership and European presence, in today's globalized and transnational world, cannot be understated. This paper acknowledges the need for a force drawdown in Europe, but contends accomplishment of this action should be through a decrease in service component, United States Army Europe (USAEUR) and United States Air

Forces Europe (USAFE), force structure while increasing overall NATO participation, and with a clear understanding of past, present and future regional and global strategic implications. Many, in political and military circles, acknowledged that alliance membership creates diplomatic, economic and internal U.S. military gains. However, in an ever-growing Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) global environment, these gains must be weighed against fiscal constraints. Therefore, conceding the need for troop reductions in Europe as a cost saving measure, the most effective and efficient way to accomplish regional security and global stability is through continued and increased NATO involvement with operational and training commitments and headquarters staffing.

When adjusting long-standing policies, thorough assessments of the regional and global security environment, as well as, what portion of Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic (DIME) elements of power require the greatest emphasis is crucial. The elements of power must link to current national foreign policy and the International Relations (IR) theory trends that presently and have guided those decisions. IR theory is the starting point for understanding the motivation behind an actor's actions, and policy negotiations with specific state or non-state entities. In relation to the United States' policy adjustments, on European force structure, an understanding of the current Obama administration's foreign policy, and that of previous U.S. governments leading to our present force structure are of noteworthy importance. Furthermore, by accepting a troop drawdown in Europe, U.S. policy makers must be cognizant of the domestic and international pressures put on our allies, how domestic audiences perceive the threats, both physical and economical, to national interests. Moreover, planners and policy

makers must embrace the fact that war no longer equates to a simple military versus military dynamic, but that consideration of all the elements of power is critical to future negotiations and actions. Finally, through rigorous strategic analysis and a solid deliberation of today's American foreign policy, a coherent and effective policy to extend well into 2020 is possible.

To better understand the basics of IR theory it is essential to highlight separations within definitions; specifically focusing on realism and liberalism; however, acknowledging the host of other theories branch from these base ideas to form the whole of IR thinking and categorization. Realism is the first base theory, and it is the belief that "power and the distribution of power are the only important factors in International Relations."⁴ Furthermore, "realists conclude the nature of the international system is conflict, and that cooperation among states is difficult, short term, and rare."⁵ This fact drives an American mindset that throughout history has placed the interest of the state above wider global desired actions, such as in Vietnam or Iraq. Based on the nation historically acting unilaterally when required, and a constant struggle to resist isolationist inclinations, the realist approach to foreign policy is understandable and expected by other global players. However, the Obama administration entered office espousing a more pluralistic or liberal point of view. Yet, this approach found little success in achieving its aims on the world stage, and the administration has since become more realist in action, if not in words. This does not necessarily mean that the President's staff has abandoned pluralistic thinking, but this administration's actions in Pakistan and the Pacific continue to provide other global players with reason to assess the U.S. as a realist actor with design on continued hegemonic status. This, correct or

incorrect, perception of U.S. motivations and actions provides our friends and adversaries with a predictable actor. This level of predictability exists among the vast majority of global players, and each nation finds comfort in the ability to understand actions, and calculate reactions to international events from other nations. The Obama administration's attempt to change its engagement strategy to a more pluralist approach was not overly successful, but it continues to press for something other than a strict realist policy to world.

The realist theory has been the mainstay of U.S. foreign policy for the last 60 years, but with the rise of globalism and transnational entities, it has become critical that a pluralistic approach to engagements become the centerpiece of the U.S. international policy. Again, the current administration is pursuing this approach, but actions are not matching the words. This multilateral approach closely aligns with liberalist theory. "Liberal theory asserts the incidence of conflict and cooperation is determined by domestic politics (the political competition among different sub-state actors to influence state policy) and national interests which result in state policy preferences"⁶ and that "international order originates from power, international society, and international law."⁷ Furthermore, the liberal focus is "less on structure and the asymmetries of power among states and more on ideas, values, processes and rules which influence and regulate inter-state relations because from their viewpoint, states can cooperate in any given structure, whether unipolar, bipolar or multipolar."⁸ Again, the rise of non-state actors and decreasing state-only power is making this IR model more relevant and applicable to current foreign policy challenges. However, there is no denying the continued need for a state to protect its national interests and that of its population and

allies. This leads to institutionalist theory, which closely deals with the pros and cons of both realism and liberalism in the 21st century.

“Institutional scholars argue the creation of international institutions helps reduce uncertainties about state intentions (i.e. they help label or categorize which states are aggressive and revisionist and which are cooperative and peaceful) by providing important information to member states, they provide mechanisms to monitor state compliance with international law, and they provide forums that facilitate negotiation and cooperation among states.”⁹ Furthermore, they agree with the liberal viewpoint that due to anarchy in international society states must develop institutions to create laws and guidelines that normalize behavior and maintain international order. They believe that the organizations are not “beyond” or “above” the state, but form to solve problems and advance group interests.¹⁰ The significant fiscal constraints levied against our nation, and most other states across the globe, and the diminishing influence of nation-states due to globalism makes international organizations appealing and potentially mandatory for continued prominence on the world stage. Acceptance and adherence to institutional premises could be seen as a relinquishment of power to multilateral international establishments, but if the U.S. maintains its strong leadership role within the organization it will remain the global hegemonic power, but with an understanding of its place shifting in the world order.

This rudimentary overview of IR theories provides a base for further discussions. Specifically that globalization and associated phenomena are eroding the established 350 year old Westphalian system,¹¹ and exposing influential new players; such as, transnational corporations, international criminal/terror movements, and empowered

alliances. Each of these new entities is a challenger to the established environment and the acceptance of state power. These facts have brought the U.S. to the decision point where it can maintain its traditional realist point of view and actions; where interests of the state are all that matters or they can, as current policy is trending, become more pluralistic and make decisions based on the greater patchwork of international interests. Acceptance of an institutionalist mindset does not require the U.S. to relinquish its place as a military and economic global leader, but continue the trend of shifting its leadership influence to alliances such as NATO and the United Nations (U.N.). In this way, it can persuade world politics through indirect pressure as a major member of these organizations. It also demonstrates that no one IR theory can encompass the current security environment, but there must be a synthesis of available viewpoints to create a consistent, transparent, and rational National Strategic Strategy (NSS), National Military Strategy (NMS), and overall foreign policy for engagements across the spectrum of international relations. Particularly, as the U.S. proceeds with planned troop decreases in Europe, the administration must ensure that the ever-present realist viewpoint does not drive isolationist fervor, for fiscal reasons. Our regional commitments have brought stability and peace to Europe and arguably the world; so, it is imperative that relationships with our allies and NATO remain strong with no perceived loss of regional interest or influence.

This leads back to the current situation facing the U.S. and the drawdown of troops in Europe. The growing perceived threat in Asia, and increasing fiscal constraints on the U.S. and its allies; along with an expanding spectrum of threats is creating a very difficult and ambiguous security environment for the U.S. and

complicating its policies in Europe. Most Americans see the stability of Europe, excluding the financial crisis, and the continuing rise of China as a driving force calling DoD officials to shift overseas force strength from Europe back to the U.S. or to Asia. Recently, “Mr. Panetta, U.S. Secretary of Defense, also held out the possibility of cutting the number of American troops based in Europe, with the United States compensating for any withdrawal by helping NATO allies improve their militaries. That effort would free up money so the United States could maintain or increase its forces in Asia, a high priority of the Obama administration.”¹² The concerning point about this phrase is, helping NATO allies improve their militaries. By decreasing its military presence, the U.S. may be ceding influence in Europe and its ability to help train, cooperate and foster relationships with allied forces. However, by increasing the United States’ overall commitment, through training events and material support to NATO and its members, the U.S. can maintain the expected level of influence within Europe. In fact, this concept fits well with the direction other European nations are working toward. French General Stephane Abriel, Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation, said on November 22, 2011, “NATO countries are taking tentative steps to pool military resources in the face of shrinking defense budgets and to fill gaps exposed by the recent Libya campaign,” and “that the alliance (NATO) hopes to unveil a number of cooperative projects in time for a NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012 that may include joint training for pilots of allied aircraft and shared maintenance for NATO vehicles.”¹³ The 2012 Chicago event is a perfect forum for U.S. officials to announce a further troop drawdown in Europe, but along a renewed pledge to NATO through additional manning commitments for training and operational events, and hardware

commitments for national modernization and to sustain operations. The “win” in this situation is that our European allies will see the United States’ commitment to NATO and Europe without the need to maintain significant troop strength in the Area of Responsibility (AOR). Ultimately, this solution can lead to fiscal savings for the U.S. government and strengthened alliance partnerships. Specifically, it would be possible to support greater training and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) options with funds saved by decreasing permanent troop levels in Europe.

Additionally, this concept also supports the gamut of new threat concerns, and re-invigorated ones such as Russia, confronting the diverse nations of the alliance. The threats are not easily defined or identified and flourish in the seams between states, and in the soft areas of bad or weak governance. The new global threats consist of distinct but tangled elements – hence the rubric *hybrid threat*. “Hybrid threats are much more than the amalgamation of existing security challenges.”¹⁴ These are adversaries able to persist against the military element of power when enforced by one nation, so that multinational organizations with significant nation-state participation using a complete Comprehensive Approach¹⁵ must confront them. Admiral Stavritis, current Supreme Allied Commander Europe, described the situation in the Fall of 2011 as:

“In this world, we must think our way to success in incredibly complex scenarios:

- a Westphalian system under attack with nation-states fighting in unconventional settings with unfamiliar tool sets;
- attacks by organizations bent on ideological domination;
- aging demographics throughout Europe and many developed regions (U.S.);

- a globalizing economy with perceived (and actual) winners and losers exacerbated by the challenges of austerity;
- the exponential rise of environmental concerns directly linked to globalization;
- miniaturizing technologies producing powerful effects and dangers to security;
- transnational and transregional criminal organizations, trafficking in weapons, narcotics, people, money and intellectual capital;
- diffusion of weapons of mass destruction – including biological and chemical weapons;
- the “cyber sea,” enabling global communication at potentially everyone’s fingertips – a “speed of thought” dialogue that occurs in a virtual *and* real 24/7 news cycle;

all of this taking place within the competitive “marketplace of ideas,” which is ultimately at the root of conflicts, requiring sophisticated strategic communication to influence in both directions.”¹⁶

Several of the scenarios mentioned above by Admiral Stavritis have culminated in one of the most prolific challenges, the growth of new democracies and increasing self-determination. This increasing sphere of democratization is a, “re-emergence of traditional and new forms of nationalism and poses the question whether or not nation-states today are becoming more nationalist, or as globalism implies, more multinational and multicultural.”¹⁷ The recent rise of “democracy” resulting from the protests and uprisings within the Middle East, also referred to as the “Arab Spring”, is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Though these few new governments may not be the Jeffersonian democracies that most Americans would hope for, they are at a starting

point down a path that has been an advertised goal of American policy and all recent U.S. Presidents. So, what is the best way to deal with such fledgling democracies? In the past the U.S. and previous colonial powers have imposed their ideals of government on these founding states; such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the best-laid intentions can appear as overbearing or colonialist to the local population. Therefore, a more modern approach would be to encourage the newly minted democracies join Supranational Organizations (SNOs) such as the United Nations, African Union, Arab League, and others. In this way, the U.S. or its politically allied countries (NATO members) can influence the growth of these new governments, directly or indirectly through diplomatic relationships. "Supranational trends place the nation-states, national movements, and other manifestations of "nationalism" beyond the insularity of purely national-domestic frames of reference and activities. Such insularity has always been, to a greater or lesser extent, an ideological chimera. States and nation-states by their very nature have been only relatively insular at any time during their history. They have always existed and been shaped by their larger international environment."¹⁸ However, there are, "pariah states like North Korea, Iraq under Saddam Hussain and Iran, as well as failed states; such as Yemen, Sudan, and Afghanistan that are outside international society. Each of these entities has been (and will continue to be) the focus of a variety of military interventions, and economic sanctions by international society because the states within the agreed upon international society recognize war as sometimes necessary to uphold international order."¹⁹

Furthermore, the advent of and rapid growth in global communication networks and transnational movements add credibility to the concept of "unknown unknowns" for

the future. In the first decade of the 21st century, warfare continues to evolve and change in unexpected and dynamic ways, where military actions are only part of the new “battle space”. The remainder of the 21st century will see destructive military action function as a coercive tool that is rarely drawn, but frequently displayed as a threat. Therefore, in the near future, credible international actors must become more adept in using the spectrum of national powers, in order to minimize the required use of the military arm of the DIME approach to international relations. A fully integrated DIME approach will decrease emphasis on the military component, which is over-stretched, and required to perform mission sets that are outside of designated expertise areas. However, strong military relationships and interactions are critical, because as Thucydides’ states, the most influential motives behind all actions (state and non-state) are “fear, honor, and interest.”²⁰

Therefore, the assumption is that violent military conflicts or wars are still inevitable since every action is driven by one of Thucydides’ trinity. However, the goal is to minimize number and intensity of these events. Many consider strategists, such as Sun Tzu, Thucydides and Clausewitz, to have provided timeless insights into war and strategy, while others, like Brodie, Smith and Nye have not yet stood the test of time, and the changing faces of war that may eventually place them into the enduring strategy hierarchy. However, as American philosopher George Santayana said, “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it, and only the dead have seen the end of war.”²¹ Added to these dire warnings is the fact that the challenges lay upon the backdrop of an economic crisis only surpassed by the Great Depression. The current U.S. economic status assessment is that there is over \$15 trillion in debt, which is over

\$48,000 per citizen.²² In response, DoD is preparing to cut up to \$1 trillion over the next decade, and further military reductions in a stable Europe are a viable area for risk. Some estimates indicate savings up to \$8.6 billion, in the next year, if a few large bases in Europe are closed.²³ Additionally there are on-going arguments from some officials and pundits that the need for U.S. presence in Europe has come and gone, and all that is required in the future is a small “caretaking” presence to ensure U.S. military access, and diminished NATO support. These individuals feel that “a reduction in U.S. forward deployments could mollify U.S. adversaries, eliminate potential flashpoints, and encourage U.S. allies to contribute more to collective defense – all while easing the burden on the United States of maintaining geopolitical dominance.”²⁴ Furthermore, Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala) put it bluntly, “for our economy, it’s better for those troops, in Europe, to be in the United States, spending their wealth and creating tax growth for the local communities and jobs.”²⁵ Additionally, there are attacks on the validity and necessity of U.S. support for NATO. Specifically, “forecasts of NATO’s imminent demise have been plentiful since the waning days of the Cold War, and they persist. Indeed, for NATO skeptics, the events of 9-11 and subsequent intra-alliance tensions over the Bush administration’s conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq offered only further reason to question NATO’s relevance to the post-Cold War world.”²⁶ However, these views are shortsighted and although U.S. military reductions may be fiscally warranted, there must be a very careful analysis and well-planned approach to the agreed upon actions.

The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) affirms that the United States “will collaborate closely with allies and partners, pursue a cooperative and tailored global

defense posture, and to enhance the resiliency of U.S. posture and base infrastructure.”²⁷ Considering that between 2003 and 2009 European Command (EUCOM) closed 43 bases and installations, a significant number with noticeable financial impacts to the local communities,²⁸ any future adjustments to force structure in Europe require very careful handling. Due diligence is critical in the process, because work conducted in line with the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) studies have been questioned. Specifically, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) cited that, “the original analyses were poorly documented, limited in scope and based on questionable assumptions.”²⁹ These facts lead to unexpected delays and costs. Explicitly, “the restructuring plan, reduction of U.S. troops in Europe, was meant to save taxpayers \$80 billion in overseas military spending, but the GAO states that delays in decision-making regarding the closing of bases in Bamberg and Schweinfurt, Germany, as well as delays in moving U.S. Army Europe’s headquarters from Heidelberg to Wiesbaden, will lead to significant cost overruns.”³⁰ Subsequently, the U.S. Army will continue to operate the Heidelberg facilities until 2015, and the February 2010 QDR reversal decision, realized the significant cost of maintaining forces that were previously designated to return to the United States. Specifically, “starting in 2014, it will cost the DoD an additional \$360 million a year to retain the brigades in Europe compared to having them at U.S. bases.”³¹ On the other hand the cost might be worth it since “soldiers in Europe are the gatekeepers of international terrorism between the Middle East and West, Lt. Gen. Mark P. Hertling said. Apart from that threat, there is a significant flow of illegal drugs – heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines – through Europe, some of which is used to finance terrorism. Add to that human trafficking, radical

domestic terrorism and a belief that Russia is using its energy reserves to intimidate neighboring states, and the Army in Europe will have plenty to defend against when the wars, Iraq and Afghanistan, are over.”³² Finally, it is important to remember, as long as American soldiers remain in Europe our allies will be comforted by the U.S. commitment to the region and its security.

From this background, several options for adjusting troop strengths in Europe are available for consideration, and the measurement of the final recommendation is subjective and weighed against the interests of a notional target audience of U.S. military, host nation/NATO allies, and U.S. Government (USG) officials. Moreover, the evaluations of options occur through assessment of the Feasibility, Acceptability, Suitability (FAS), and risk of each choice. There are four options for consideration, and each alternative presented has viable components and drawbacks for consideration.

OPTION I: Decrease Presence in Europe by 50 Percent

This action will create significant cost savings through a reduction in infrastructure and total deployed personnel. Furthermore, creation of caretaker or “warm” bases and minimal combat capability based in Europe provides significant savings. The U.S. has created and used this concept in England with success, though there are operational drawbacks for consideration that are outside the scope of this paper. Moreover, this will ensure the availability of European bases in support of forward deployed training or operations. The drawback is the perception to our allies that Europe is no longer strategically critical to U.S. policy, and the subsequent decrease in influence in and among these nations. This is a moderately feasible option, but due to the magnitude of the required actions, cost savings would not be immediate.

However, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had the following thoughts on overseas basing in their report of May 2004; “shrinking forward presence by moving personnel and forces back to the United States would address several concerns about current overseas basing. It would reduce the annual costs of maintaining forces, the amount of family separation that soldiers experienced, and the extent of turnover in CONUS units.”³³ This option will allow the U.S. to either close many of the remaining bases in Europe, or transfer them into a caretaker status, eventually allowing for cost savings. This means that a minimal team keeps the base operating for use in deployment or training events, but a large support group is not required for day-to-day operations. This concept also opens other alternative options such as the “lily padding” or “leap frogging” of units. This means that the bases can quickly become operational to support rotational Brigade Combat Teams (BCT), Air Wings and critical lift requirements. Initially, the lily pad concept “was advocated by former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, where you fly in, you land like a frog, and you hop on to your next destination ... without any need for a great ground presence there.”³⁴ Nonetheless, significant limitations, such as less frequent interaction and loss of standardized operating procedures, to allied training and exercise programs accompany this option. Additionally, the economic impact to local communities may cause considerable backlash to host nation governments and ultimately support to the remaining U.S. forces due to reduced interactions and lack of acceptance of cultural differences. Though this is not a direct U.S. concern, we need to understand the implications and difficulties this will cause host nation governments. Also, the CBO identified that “relocating large numbers of forces to the U.S. would require finding new

basing for them. A 50 percent reduction would mean bringing more than 40,000 soldiers back to the United States, which would increase the total Army population in CONUS by about 12 percent.”³⁵ Additionally, an “Army study suggests that virtually no excess barracks space exists at seven of the largest Army bases that would be expected to receive units returning from overseas.”³⁶ Moreover, a 2011 Politico article cited a recent GAO study stating “that it won’t save money to bring U.S. troops home from Europe because of the costs of building new bases for them in the United States.”³⁷ Finally, there is high risk due to the noteworthy implications involving host nation relations, alliance and partnership training, and minimal, if any, cost savings in the near and mid-term.

OPTION II: Maintain Commitments, But Eliminate Accompanied Tours

Elimination of family support programs at overseas locations, will allow DoD to actualize significant savings without degrading mission capability or presence. However, as the U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) Commander stated, “(unaccompanied 1-year tours) would be devastating for quality of life.”³⁸ This option is feasible, and represents how a majority of assignments to the Korean Peninsula are detailed. “The need to support family members who accompany soldiers on assignment in Europe has led to the development of a large infrastructure there, including family housing and schools. Eliminating accompanied tours would eliminate the need for such extended infrastructure. However, doing that would have disadvantages, such as increasing the total time that soldiers spend away from their families and boosting annual turnover in CONUS units by about 25 percent, assuming that unaccompanied tours last for one year and accompanied tours for three years.”³⁹ This new concept could manifest as a

group of individuals on one-year assignment, or as a “unit” or BCT rotation of 6-month or 12-month duration. This also allows for large savings through the elimination of family support programs, but also in the reduced costs for individual Permanent Change of Station (PCS) funding. The average cost for a Lieutenant Colonel to move from Carlisle, Pennsylvania to Germany with dependents is \$1.20/lb, so with a maximum weight of 17,500lb the cost would be over \$21,000, one way, just for household goods shipment. However, if a non-accompanied member makes the same move, with a weight restriction (2,500lb), than the cost is \$3,000 one-way. Looking at it another way, three unaccompanied Lieutenant Colonels can make roundtrip moves for the price of a family to move once. In addition, there are sizeable savings available due to the sheer number of dependents that accompany military members abroad. Estimates show that the roughly 40,000 Army soldiers in Europe are accompanied by 100,000 dependents, and roughly the same amount of combined Navy and Air Force personnel and dependents reside in Europe.⁴⁰ This is a solid option, but there is a medium level of risk due to the concerns of increased separation from family and how that would affect retention, and escalating temporary duty costs.

OPTION III: Relocate All Current Commitments to Eastern Europe and Turkey

Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. relations with many former Warsaw Pact countries have become exceptionally strong. An expenditure comparison for members in Eastern Europe versus Western Europe shows significant savings. Nonetheless, there will be initial costs for force relocation and construction of facilities. Additionally, increased presence in Turkey is feasible, but noteworthy buildups (greater than staging bases with 50 military personnel) in the former Warsaw Pact countries may prove

difficult politically. The political roadblocks would be from Russia, not the participating countries. This option would be unacceptable to current host nations, Russia, and USG. The cost of moving significant forces and force structure is prohibitive within current fiscal constraints. Specifically, “CBO examined several ways to alter where troops are based overseas; specifically in Europe, the moving of units based in Germany to Eastern Europe could enable Army forces to respond to conflicts in the area more quickly. The primary focus areas are Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, and Poland. The overall base operating cost, to include facility upkeep and personnel expenditures should decrease with this move due to reduced labor costs, but further analysis is required to determine the magnitude of savings. However, establishing any new permanent bases could require significant investment by the United States -- \$2 billion to \$4 billion (per base), CBO estimates.”⁴¹ The assessment is considered medium to high risk due to the political sensitivities, especially with Russia, and initial cost make this an unfavorable option in the near/mid-term.

OPTION IV: Decrease U.S. Force Presence, But Increase in NATO Commitments

Bottom line up front, this is the best option, but recommend implementation be delayed until 2017 to allow U.S. and NATO consolidation actions to finalize in or around 2015, prior to any further adjustments to current force structure or troop distribution. During the recent NATO ministerial conference, Secretary Clinton called NATO our strongest alliance and many of our relationships in Europe buttress on the agreement to collective defense. This alternative would call for “warm-basing” many current U.S. facilities and inviting host nations to use designated portions of the base while preserving its capability as a staging location for U.S. assets. Unlike Option I, this is a

burden sharing arrangement, which would provide facility utilization for U.S. personnel without the commitment required to maintain a full operational base complex. This choice also allows for cost reductions while maintaining strong alliance support. Additionally, by encompassing U.S. troops on coalition bases there will be a decrease in the required support services provided by the U.S. military. Moreover, it highlights our continued commitment to our NATO allies and all of Europe through combined training, exercising and deployment events. Also, there will still be U.S. dollars flowing into the local economy which will make a troop drawdown easier for the local governments. However, influential policy-makers, such as Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO), do not believe in maintaining current levels of investment in Europe and NATO. They cite that the U.S. provides approximately 75 percent of the funding for NATO activities. “Only four of our 28 NATO allies are fulfilling their requirement under the NATO chapter to spend at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense because they rely far too heavily on the United States to provide for them.”⁴² This is in gross disproportion of the other NATO contributing nations. However, the USAREUR Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling provides an alternate view, “as the NATO intervention in Libya highlighted, future coalitions likely will be ad hoc and hastily assembled. Cooperation with European nations in peacetime is an important mission aimed at making future alliances more successful as threats arise.”⁴³ General Hertling continues on to state that he “believes his troops play a key role in preventing future conflict, mainly by working directly with European partners on a day-to-day basis and training them to meet both present and future threats. We’re actually...getting more “bang for the buck” by helping train our allies to fight alongside us.”⁴⁴ Additionally,

“many European ministers and diplomats, some from former Warsaw Pact countries who see the U.S. presence as reassurance against Russian intentions – had also argued strongly against further U.S. cuts.”⁴⁵ Therefore, the delaying of immediate troop withdrawals will allow for greater socialization of the plan and for possible agreements with those nations hesitant to see U.S. forces decrease their permanent basing in Europe. However, the status quo may appear unacceptable from the administration’s viewpoint due to continued cost for the USG, but to emphasize this point, the February 2010 DoD Quadrennial Defense Review decision backed “retention (in Europe) of the brigades (172nd and 170th), pending a review of NATO’s Strategic Concept.”⁴⁶ The strategic review was completed in late 2010, and it was determined that the first brigade departure will not occur until 2015. This decision supports the U.S. objective of decreasing fiscal requirements in the European Theater while maintaining substantive presence and support to our critical allies in Europe. Additionally, the approach reaffirms our continuing National Security Strategy commitment to alliance building and partnership while lessening overall troop commitments in Europe. Finally, risk is moderate due to lack of immediate funding benefits and decrease in overall troop levels for alliance training and exercises. However, the U.S. will be maintaining a presence in Europe at a decreased cost; so, this appears to be the best option for a 2020 strategy on U.S. force structure.

So, what does NATO provide that supports continued and increased participation in the organization? First, it is key to understand the history behind the organization when defending the continued or increased support to the establishment. NATO is the military alliance based on the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington

Treaty and now commonly referred to as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It formed in 1949 with a goal of collective defense, and all member nations adhere to Article 5, which is the Alliance's agreement of collective defense. As stated in the NATO charter, an attack against one is an attack against all. This alliance and specifically Article 5 rose from Cold War fears of the Soviet Union, and it achieved its objective. However, activation of Article 5 never occurred until September 12, 2001 – a decision taken without any encouragement from the United States – marked a moment of remarkable solidarity between the United States and Europe. Since that time NATO has continued to show its relevance through support to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as, humanitarian support in Haiti and Pakistan. Moreover, the writing of NATO 2020, led by Madeline Albright in 2010, describes potential missions for NATO including the need for expeditionary operations. Most of the areas highlighted in the 2020 document are expected tasks that the U.S. and its military forces will confront also, so it is advantageous to use the synergistic capabilities to combat these future challenges.

However, three crucial detractors need addressing to ensure a strong alliance and continued U.S. support. To begin with, the NATO nations need to begin paying a more equitable portion of the overall funding bill. As former Secretary of Defense Gates said, "I am the latest in a string of U.S. defense secretaries who have urged allies privately and publicly, often with exasperation, to meet agreed-upon NATO benchmarks for defense spending. However, fiscal, political and demographic realities make this unlikely to happen anytime soon, as even military stalwarts like the U.K have ratcheted back capability with major cuts to force structure. Today, just five of 28 allies -- the

U.S., U.K., France, and Greece, along with Albania -- exceed the agreed 2 percent of GDP spending on defense."⁴⁷ Now that Greece has had such excessive financial difficulties that list is also in danger of becoming smaller.

Second, all nations need to consider the implementation of national caveats. National caveats are restrictions the member nations of NATO place upon their soldiers conducting operations in support of alliance objectives. In 2005, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly attempted to address this issue through Resolution 336, "Reducing National Caveats", but based on continuing limitations on operations in Afghanistan the resolution has had little to no effect. The national caveat discussion is a perfect example of alliance operations as a whole. The organization can give direction or place restrictions, however, the individual state's interests take precedence and ultimately determine adherence, or not, to the policies. Specifically, in Resolution 336 the second bullet highlights this issue; "recalling that national caveats may be both declared and known to commanders, or undeclared and therefore unknown to commanders until they actually assign a mission to a particular unit and discover that a caveat prevents that unit from performing that mission."⁴⁸ Because of some national caveats, operational effectiveness is impacted and all involved troops are potentially at risk. Caveats are an area that with a greater U.S. presence in NATO there is an opportunity to influence a more normative set of guidelines for the alliance, and greater adherence to organizational verses national rules of engagement.

Finally, at the end of the 1980's the NATO command structure totaled 24.5K personnel and 37 HQs; as of 2011 those numbers have dropped to 13,200 with 12 HQs, and further reductions to approximately 8.5K are in the process. NATO nations and

leadership need to be willing to readdress the makeup of NATO forces, and support to operations below the HQ level. Much of this training and education is nationally funded, but if the U.S. were to increase its NATO involvement below the HQ level, some additional host nation or NATO compensation would be required. Specifically, the U.S. funds most of its international basing infrastructure and protection requirements. However, under this revised construct within NATO, the U.S. would need to insist on host nations providing a majority of the infrastructure and protection support and funding. Due to current fiscal constraints in Europe and in the United States this could be a very contentious matter, but one that must be quickly resolved. This would allow the U.S. force structure to be less “tail” and more “tooth” in its make-up. Furthermore, this would allow for greater training and exercise capabilities since most administrative functions require unit support provided by host nation entities.

These three points are important to consider, but the value added to the U.S. and the individual member greatly overshadows any negatives related to increased alliance support. In fact, Lt Gen Mark Hertling stated that the Army facilitates “about 8,000 security cooperation events a year – everything from participation by individual soldiers to establishing liaisons with foreign command headquarters and helping them with operations. As U.S. participation in the hot wars of Iraq and Afghanistan begins to cool, the Army in Europe should focus on building international partnerships and trust as a means to preventing future wars.”⁴⁹ He goes on to state that any further reduction from current manning levels will inhibit his ability to provide this comprehensive level of support. However, an increase in NATO support would compensate for reductions in “stand alone” U.S. troop levels. Furthermore, this international interaction will help to

produce a more diverse, in both thought and experience, military member who is more intellectually ready to engage in the ever-increasing VUCA global environment.

Principally, development of young professionals in an international environment with a focus on civilian-military operations develops strategic thinkers and tactical leaders versed in the Comprehensive Approach to operations. “Since the Allies decision at the 2008 Bucharest Summit to develop the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan, NATO has been improving its own crisis-management instruments and it has reached out to strengthen its ability to work with partner countries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and local authorities. In particular, NATO is building closer partnerships with civilian actors that have experience and skills in areas such as institution building, development, governance, judiciary and police.”⁵⁰

When discussing the Comprehensive Approach and the current environment it is also important to consider the premise that “in a globalizing economy, the state has no longer the same exclusive and traditional role it used to have in international relations. Non-state actors have gradually brought together a growing influence and have an important say in global affairs. The political context within globalization represents unprecedented breaches in power equations among states, markets and civil societies.”⁵¹ Furthermore, it is crucial to define clearly the term “non-state” actor. The reference point for this term is from a 2007 National Intelligence Council (NIC) conference that grouped “non-state actors into three wide categories; 1) multinational corporations, 2) non-governmental organizations, and 3) super-empowered individuals each of which are causing transformations in international relations.”⁵² Additionally, the rise of cyber capabilities allows non-state and state actors greater global influence;

specifically, the ability to rapidly spread messages or ideals over great distances and to diverse audiences in an unrestricted and uncensored manner. This phenomenon has led to the redistribution of global power and influence, which were previously the sanctuary of only the strongest few world actors. Over the past few decades, that power base has liberally spread to include as many as 20 powerful nations, also known as the G20.⁵³ However, in the first decade of the 21st century, the influence has further distributed to regional actors, numerically insignificant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Trans-National Corporations (TNCs).

Ultimately, this all ties together because in this VUCA environment, where a further drawdown U.S. force in Europe is inevitable, there are significant implications attached to the decreasing presence in Europe, diplomatically, economically and militarily. The use of a specific element and approach will influence the situation through not just direct effects, but through subsequent second and third order effects. With globalization and growth of transnational non-state actors, the ability to understand and use the Comprehensive Approach is becoming a necessity, and experience in a multi-national organization is the perfect educational opportunity for future leaders. Education in the application of the Comprehensive Approach will allow the future leader to “employ a complex blend of means that include the orchestration of diplomacy, political interaction, humanitarian aid, social pressures, economic development, savvy use of the media and military force.”⁵⁴ Moreover, an increased presence in this international environment where guidelines and norms are established allows for greater professional development of the individuals assigned to the organization. In addition to providing an enhanced career path for military and civilian leaders, it would

also lead to a greater expertise in operating in the international and interagency realms. However, this will require all services to increase the value of young officers and NCOs operating in such a diverse and educational setting, and a willingness to use their skillsets in non-traditional assignments.

Furthermore, increasing NATO interaction and operations would provide significant benefits, as well as cost savings by employing these individuals in planning and strategy positions across the services. However, because the future security environment remains uncertain at best, and although planners and policy makers put great thought and preparation into future military actions, the inextricable linkages between people and global actions makes factual predictions nearly impossible. Therefore, one major potential benefit is a substantial increase in unity of effort across all the instruments of power from all alliance members, through all phases of an operation. Most significantly, the expanded breadth of possibilities would result in greater pre-conflict operations on a coalition level, and fewer overall kinetic actions. Furthermore, development of “coalitions of the willing” or “pods” of influence that are created from the greater organization can apply significant pressure upon global situations, typically more than unilateral engagement. These “pods” have considerably more “power” capability than any single nation operating on its own accord. In addition, some assert that U.S. power has begun to wane, and more importantly, the acceptance of U.S. power and policy definitely has been questioned following the predominately-unilateral actions in Iraq. Therefore, having the consensus of the alliance or a coalition of the alliance lends greater credibility to our national actions, but also allows for differing views and potentially different approaches to solve difficult problems. An

example of this would be to use other NATO members to work closely with Russia to ensure solid Russia-NATO relations, and warming interactions between Russia and the United States. This appears to be the direction the current administration wishes to proceed. President Obama made the following statement when preparing to present the American people with the planned troop increase for Afghanistan, "I want to say in the speech why this is not Vietnam, why this is not Iraq."⁵⁵ The President wanted to emphasize that in Afghanistan, unlike Vietnam, the U.S. was part of a strong coalition with over 48 nations supporting operations.

The presidential quote is important because it recognizes the changing face of world relations and perceptions. Additionally, it acknowledges that alliances and especially NATO are now more important than anytime over the last 60 years. Some continue to contend that alliances and specifically NATO were more relevant during the Cold War, but with the hybrid threats and transnational organizations freely moving about the globe, it is arguable that this is where shared capabilities and common interests will provide the greatest benefit to the U.S., as well as global security. This is particularly true when considering the drawdown of U.S. troops in Europe, and the need for maintaining a presence in this crucial theater of operations. Europe continues to be a crossroad for hybrid threats affecting the United States, such as criminal organizations, cyber attacks, terrorism, and High North⁵⁶ issues. There is no denying that the U.S. is still the world leading power, but there is also no hiding that globalization and transnational organizations have changed the face of the global security environment. Furthermore, this changing security situation has made it an imperative

for the U.S. to maintain a presence on a global scale, and strengthening historic alliances and partnerships is the appropriate first action.

Finally, considering current fiscal constraints and world perceptions of American intentions, it is best to approach future global engagements through greater influence in international organizations with a multilateral face. European countries are acutely aware of the constraints and challenges within their borders and they have begun to re-evaluate national and NATO military contributions. However, they also understand that most threats to their sovereignty and regional security come from outside the combined borders of greater Europe. These nations realize, and so must the U.S., that a symbiotic union is necessary for the purpose of greater European, Northern Atlantic, and global combined security and defense. Finally, it is important to remember, “as long as the American flag and the American soldier is present, the symbolism of solidarity is there.”⁵⁷ Through a strengthened position in NATO, American presence in Europe will not only be assured, but will allow the U.S. to effectively and efficiently employ all elements of power needed to ensure continued global leadership while allowing our allies to lead operations when required, as in Libya during Operation ODYSSEY DAWN. Additionally, as Etienne de Durand, director of security studies at the Institut Francais des Relations Internationales recently said, “this is a golden opportunity for Britain, France and possibly Germany and other nations that want to have a voice in world affairs to get together and do something.”⁵⁸ So, we cannot abandon the allies, friendships and trusts that have developed over the last 60 years through American military presence in Europe. So, by maintaining a strong NATO presence we solidify our commitments and allow our allies to play critical roles against

emerging and established threats. Additionally, it allows the U.S. to continue forward with its strategic vision, into the 21st century, with a confidence that our eastern border is being monitored by NATO and our European neighbors.

Endnotes

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