

Death Knell for NATO? The Bush Administration Confronts the European Security and Defense Policy

by Christopher Layne

Executive Summary

One of the first foreign policy challenges President George W. Bush and his foreign policy team must face is the changing nature of the transatlantic relationship. For several years, U.S. policymakers have been increasingly concerned that the European Union's goal of acquiring the capability to pursue an autonomous foreign and security policy—the European Security and Defence Policy—will undermine NATO's role as the primary guarantor of European security.

U.S.-European tension over ESDP and NATO came sharply into focus during the Clinton administration's closing months. Washington and its European allies became locked in an increasingly bitter dispute about the relationship between the EU's proposed Rapid Reaction Force and NATO, specifically about whether the RRF should be embedded within the NATO framework or constitute an autonomous European military capability separate from NATO.

The U.S.-EU controversy about ESDP and the RRF is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Underlying the current discord are fundamental questions about the nature of the U.S.-European relationship, about American grand strategy, and about NATO itself. Inevitably, the new adminis-

tration will have to come to grips with the question of whether the alliance—in its current form—has a future.

It is unclear what course the Bush administration will chart for transatlantic relations. Some top administration officials, notably Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, are extremely wary of U.S. involvement in Balkan-style peace-keeping missions. Logically, they should welcome ESDP and the RRF, because those EU initiatives offer the most realistic hope for the United States to extricate itself from Kosovo and to avoid such commitments in the future.

The Bush administration should not be dissuaded from rethinking the U.S. role in Europe by fears that it will be charged with "isolationism." American internationalism can exist without an ongoing U.S. military presence in Europe. Here, the Bush administration should revisit the views of Dwight Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, leading Republican internationalists who welcomed the prospect of a truly independent Europe rather than feared it, and who regarded the U.S. role in NATO as temporary, not permanent.

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Introduction

One of the first foreign policy challenges the Bush administration must confront is the changing nature of the transatlantic relationship. For several years, U.S. policymakers have been increasingly apprehensive about the European Union's deepening political integration. Specifically, they worry that the EU's goal of pursuing an autonomous foreign and security policy—known as the European Security and Defence Policy—will undermine NATO's role as the primary guarantor of European security and thereby undermine Washington's dominance in the transatlantic relationship.

U.S.-European differences on the proper relationship between ESDP and NATO came sharply into focus during the Clinton administration's closing months. During that period, the United States and its European allies became locked in an increasingly bitter dispute about the relationship between the EU's proposed Rapid Reaction Force and NATO—specifically, whether the RRF should be embedded within the NATO framework or constitute an autonomous European military capability separate from NATO. Because this controversy was not resolved before the Clinton administration left office, the Bush administration will be compelled to tackle it.

Development of the EU's Security and Defense Policy

The current crisis has roots reaching back to the 1970s, when the European Community (as the EU then was known) began discussing the need for a cooperative foreign and security policy. Following the Maastricht Treaty and Single European Act (1991–92), the EU came to regard a common foreign and defense policy not simply as an aspiration for the future but as a necessary complement to Europe's deepening economic and political integration. Ironically, the forerunner to ESDP and the RRF—the European Security and Defense

Initiative—was born at the January 1994 meeting of the North Atlantic Council. The intent was to give the Western Europeans a greater voice and role within NATO. According to four NATO scholars, "From the outset . . . ESDI was always a *NATO military project*, essentially designed to solve a number of structural and political problems within the Euro-Atlantic community."¹ However, at the EU's Cologne (January 1999) and Helsinki (December 1999) summits, ESDI was rechristened ESDP, and it took on a new cast "as an inherent part of the EU's long-term political agenda."² Unlike ESDI, which essentially was one in a long line of NATO burden-sharing initiatives, ESDP aims to establish an independent European security policy; that is, a security policy determined by the Europeans themselves without American input.³

The EU's Rapid Reaction Force

The implications of ESDP for NATO were thrown into clear relief when the EU, at its November 2000 defense ministers meeting, formally announced plans to create a 60,000-strong RRF, to be operational by 2003. EU members made specific commitments to contribute troops and equipment to the RRF.⁴ The RRF is to be available for use in ethnic conflicts, humanitarian interventions, and peacekeeping operations in which NATO—or, more precisely, the United States—chooses not to participate.

Disagreement between the United States and the EU regarding how far the "Europeanization" of the Continent's defense should go boiled over during the run-up to, and aftermath of, the EU's December 2000 summit meeting in Nice, France. That fundamental disagreement was precipitated by a seemingly arcane dispute about the RRF's command and control and planning arrangements. Immediately before the Nice summit, European Commission president Romano Prodi, French president Jacques Chirac, and French prime minister Lionel Jospin all indicated that, although the RRF would draw on European military assets also earmarked for NATO, it would be an autonomous European

force with a chain of command, headquarters, and planning staff separate from NATO.⁵ Those statements fanned some dissension within the EU itself, because Britain—with its traditionally Atlanticist rather than European orientation in security affairs—denied that the RRF would constitute an independent European military capability outside NATO.⁶ Although Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed that the French were forced at Nice to back away from viewing the RRF as an autonomous European force, this appears not to have been the case.⁷ At Nice, and again several days later at the NATO foreign ministers meeting, the French continued to insist that the RRF indeed would be separate from NATO. For example, after Nice, French defense minister Alan Richard stated that the RRF was merely the first step toward developing a full-fledged EU army.⁸ And, at the NATO foreign ministers meeting, a French official claimed that an independent European defense policy was inevitable: “The train is already moving. NATO is not on board. It is not the engine. It is not in the tender or even in the passenger compartment. It is still on the platform.”⁹

A Strident U.S. Response

The U.S. reaction to the RRF was swift and hostile. Speaking at a NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels just prior to the Nice summit, then-secretary of defense William Cohen declared that if the EU created an independent defense capability outside the alliance’s structure, NATO would become a “relic of the past.”¹⁰ Cohen’s comments were a toned-down version of reports from within the Pentagon that the United States would respond to the EU’s approval of the RRF by withdrawing its own military presence from Europe.¹¹ Anti-RRF sentiments appear likely to carry over to the Bush administration. Several days after the Nice summit, John Bolton, who was then vice president of the American Enterprise Institute and has since been nominated as under secretary of state for arms control and international security affairs in the Bush administration, described the RRF as “a dag-

ger pointed at NATO’s heart.”¹²

The U.S.-EU controversy about the RRF is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Underlying the current discord are fundamental questions about the nature of the U.S.-European relationship, about American grand strategy, and about the alliance itself. Inevitably, the new administration will have to come to grips with the question of whether NATO—in its current form—has a future.

At first blush, Washington’s vehement opposition to ESDP and the RRF seems puzzling, because the EU’s initiatives appear to respond positively to long-standing U.S. complaints—as old as the alliance itself—that the Europeans are not pulling their weight in providing for the Continent’s security. Perhaps the most recent reiteration of American concerns about inequitable “burden sharing” was delivered in October 2000 during the presidential campaign by Condoleezza Rice, who now is President Bush’s national security adviser. Rice caused one of the campaign’s few foreign policy controversies by proposing a new “division of labor” within NATO that would make the Western Europeans responsible for peace-keeping duties, such as those in the Balkans, while U.S. forces gave priority to meeting looming security challenges in East Asia and the Persian Gulf and Middle East.¹³ In this light, the reported opposition of some potential Bush administration advisers to the RRF is doubly surprising, because European policymakers have suggested that the RRF could take over from NATO and the United States precisely those kinds of Balkan-style peace-keeping missions with which Washington seems increasingly disenchanted.¹⁴

The Historical Context of the Present Crisis

To understand why the U.S.-EU dispute has become so acrimonious, it is necessary to place the current crisis in historical context and, in the process, come to grips with the paradox of America’s European policy: while

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Washington always has wanted the Western Europeans to assume more responsibility for the Continent's security, it has never wanted them to do too much, because the United States fears the implications of a too powerful Europe. Or, to frame the issue somewhat differently, the underlying causes of this latest transatlantic imbroglio can be attributed to a fundamental clash between the aspirations of the EU project and American ambitions in Europe.

Long-Standing European Goals

From the European Coal and Steel Community (1950–51) to the Maastricht Treaty and Single European Act (1991–92), Europe has been embarked on an incremental but steady “state-building” process. The Western Europeans have pursued integration for many reasons, not the least of which has been Europe's desire to attain geopolitical equality with the United States, something that the nations of postwar Europe could not accomplish individually. Commenting on the motives driving the Western Europeans to integrate, diplomatic historian Geir Lundestad observes:

Although they wanted the two sides of the Atlantic to cooperate more closely, in a more general sense it was probably also the desire of most European policymakers to strengthen Western Europe vis-à-vis the United States. This could be done economically by supporting the Common Market and politically by working more closely together on the European side.¹⁵

Even Jean Monnet, author of the Schuman Plan that led to the ECSC and the “father” of European integration, first toyed with the idea of an Anglo-French federation in the late 1940s because he saw this as the basis of a European bloc that could stand apart from both the United States and the Soviet Union.¹⁶ Seen in this light, ESDP is a culminating step of Europe's integration process,

which has already achieved considerable economic and political unification. After all, the capability of self-defense is the most important feature of sovereignty and independence. Without an autonomous defense capability, Europe cannot aspire to geopolitical equality with the United States.

Washington's Ambivalence about a “European Pillar”

Since the end of World War II, the United States has supported European integration for its own strategic, political, and economic reasons.¹⁷ However, notwithstanding Washington's official position of the past 50 years that it favors the emergence of a strong and united Europe that could be America's equal partner, the truth is somewhat more complex. U.S. support for European integration always has been conditioned on its taking place only within the framework of an overarching—and American-led—“Atlantic Community,” a term that is “a code phrase for overall American leadership.”¹⁸ In fact, the United States has never wanted a truly equal Western Europe, because such a Europe not only would be independent of the United States but also might exercise that independence in ways that clash with American interests.¹⁹ Simply put, Washington has sought consistently to maintain its geopolitical preponderance in Europe, and NATO has been the chosen instrument of America's hegemony over the Continent.²⁰ The EU's move toward strategic self-sufficiency is regarded by Washington as a threat to U.S. preponderance in Europe.

Why Washington Regards ESDP as a Threat

Given this background, the vehement reaction of U.S. policymakers to ESDP and the RRF reflects long-standing American fears that an equal and independent Europe would throw off Washington's tutelage and Washington's pervasive suspicion that, in this regard, ESDP and the RRF are the

“camel’s nose in the tent”—that they will rival NATO for supremacy in European security affairs.²¹ This American suspicion of the EU project—specifically the fear that the EU is a threat to U.S. primacy—was voiced rather bluntly by Sens. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Gordon Smith (R-Ore.). After the EU’s summit in Nice, they warned that “European leaders should reflect carefully on the true motivation behind ESDP, which many see as a means for Europe to check American power and influence *within* NATO.” Senators Helms and Smith went on to warn that “it is in neither Europe’s nor America’s interests to undermine our proven national relationships in favor of one with a European super-state whose creation is being driven, in part, by anti-American sentiment.”²²

The U.S. desire to contain Europe’s geopolitical power was also expressed by then-secretary of state Madeleine K. Albright, who delineated what Washington deems as the acceptable limits of the EU’s security initiatives. In 1998, she observed that ESDP is “a very useful way to think about *burden sharing*.”²³ In November 2000, Albright greeted the EU’s announcement that it was moving forward with the RRF by commenting that ESDP and the RRF are welcome as a “valuable complement to the efforts and capabilities of NATO.”²⁴ Other senior Clinton administration officials also made clear that, for the United States, ESDP must be based on “the principle that these institutions should be the European pillar of a strong transatlantic alliance and not separate and competing entities.”²⁵

To ensure that ESDP does not undercut NATO, Washington has proclaimed the so-called Three Ds: ESDP must not *diminish* NATO’s role, must not *duplicate* NATO’s capabilities, and must not *discriminate* against NATO members that do not belong to the EU.²⁶ Of course, if those Three Ds were implemented—especially the nonduplication proscription—Europe would be foreclosed from ever achieving strategic autonomy and would remain dependent on the United States for its security. This is because the

United States has a virtual monopoly on NATO military capabilities in such key areas as intelligence, advanced surveillance and reconnaissance systems, power projection, and precision-guided munitions.

Preventing Europe from achieving strategic self-sufficiency is precisely the goal of U.S. policy: Washington is seeking to uphold NATO’s primacy in order to maintain its leadership role in European security affairs.²⁷ Thus, as it did during the Cold War, the United States pays lip service to the idea of European unity while opposing in practice any tangible moves toward an independent Europe. Hence, the United States insists that European integration, and ESDP, can occur only within the framework of “*transatlantic partnership*.” As then-secretary of state Stuart Eizenstat said in 1999, “We will continue to celebrate the dream of a continent united through the European Union, but we must also hold before us another essential vision—that of a transatlantic partnership.”²⁸ Cohen’s contention that the RRF could turn NATO into a “relic” is only the latest American warning to the EU that if it goes far down the road to real autonomy in defense and security—that is, if it seriously challenges U.S. preponderance—the Atlantic alliance could be shattered.²⁹

Confronting NATO’s Contradictions

Whether the kind of Atlantic community historically championed by Washington can be maintained—and more important, whether it is desirable to do so—is problematic. The Bush administration will have to confront the contradictions that long have been imbedded in the transatlantic relationship, and NATO.

Burden Sharing and Buck Passing

The first contradiction the new administration must address concerns “burden sharing.” Students of alliance relationships understand why the United States has always borne a disproportionate share of NATO’s burdens. Alliance politics inescapably

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involves what economists call the "free-rider" problem. Security is a collective good that can be enjoyed by all members of an alliance regardless of how much they contribute individually. Thus, the hallmark of intra-alliance politics is the jostling of allies as they seek to shift to their partners (or "buck pass") a greater share of the costs and risks of meeting the common threat to their security.

Invariably, the alliance partner that believes its security is most jeopardized by the common adversary (or threat) will end up shouldering the biggest share of the burden of providing security against that adversary for the alliance as a whole.³⁰ From this perspective, it is evident why—especially during the Cold War—the United States had little leverage over its European allies with respect to burden sharing. Simply put, the Europeans knew the United States was defending the Continent, not as a favor to them, but because the United States perceived that it had an overriding strategic interest in containing the possible expansion of Soviet power into Western Europe. Hence, America's threats that it would do less for Europe's defense unless the Europeans did more were always little more than a bluff, and were so regarded in Western Europe.

Notwithstanding the Cold War's end, American policymakers continue to believe that the U.S. commitment to NATO is indispensable to Europe's (and America's) security. This mindset was captured perfectly by former vice president Al Gore's assertion: "The whole history of NATO has shown that without America's leadership and involvement, NATO is not willing to act."³¹ As long as Washington believes that Europe's security is more important to the United States than it is to the Europeans, the European governments have every reason to continue passing the buck to the United States with respect to the costs and risks of European security. In other words, they have no incentive to do more burden sharing.

The "Twin Pillars" Illusion

A second contradiction with which the

Bush administration must come to terms is the persistently held American vision—articulated almost since the moment of the alliance's birth—of a NATO comprised of twin—European and U.S.—pillars. The twin pillars concept has always been an illusion. There can be no NATO composed of equal pillars; equality inevitably means an independent Europe. The logic here is simple: If Europe were an equal pillar, it would not need U.S. security guarantees, and it would not tolerate the humiliating loss of autonomy that accompanies them. And, if Europe were an equal pillar, the United States would see little reason to assume the risks and costs of defending Europe. The Bush administration must ask whether, in the post-Cold War world, vital American interests are still served by NATO. If so, the United States should mute its calls for greater European contributions to NATO and for an "equal partnership" between the United States and Europe.

European Ambivalence about U.S. Hegemony

A third contradiction facing the Bush administration lies in the attitude of the Europeans. For most of the past five decades, the European allies have adopted a "have their cake and eat it too" posture regarding American preponderance within NATO. On the one hand, time and again they have made clear their resentments of America's power and of U.S. dominance over the Continent's affairs. At the same time, they repeatedly have shied away from building up their own power, precisely—and paradoxically—because of their concern that Washington would use greater European contributions to the alliance as a justification for reducing U.S. involvement in Europe.

The latest example of this deeply rooted European attitude was reflected in the European response to Rice's proposal to achieve a new division of labor between the United States and Europe with respect to Balkan peacekeeping. From the standpoint of logic, one would have thought that the Europeans would have welcomed her pro-

posal. After all, Rice implicitly was acknowledging that the EU should assume a much greater role in Europe's security, and that the United States should accept this development rather than oppose it. Moreover, the EU has said that the RRF is being created precisely to take on peacekeeping chores in such places as Bosnia and Kosovo. One would have expected the EU to leap at the chance to assume full responsibility in Kosovo and thereby give concrete expression to its professed desire to play a greater role in European security affairs.

The Europeans, however, did not react to Rice's proposal as logic would have predicted. Instead, they argued that NATO is based on a sharing of risks as well as burdens and that, if the United States pulls back from participating in some NATO operations, it cannot expect Europe to defer to Washington's policy preferences and leadership.³² Moreover, in a curious mirror-imaging of the U.S. response to ESDP and the RRF, they issued veiled warnings that if the United States abdicated its share of Balkan peacekeeping responsibilities, NATO could collapse. It is more than a little incongruous that the Europeans greeted Rice's suggestion—which opened the door for the EU to assume a major role in Europe's security—with skepticism at the same time they are promoting the ESDP and RRF as vehicles to attain equal footing with Washington in European security affairs. After all, greater European responsibility—which obviously means a diminished American role—is the sine qua non of the EU's goal of achieving equality with the United States in transatlantic decisionmaking.

Just as U.S. leaders must confront the reality that a strong Europe means an independent Europe, European leaders need to acknowledge that a capable ESDP brings closer the day when they can no longer have a free—or, at least, a heavily subsidized—ride on Washington's security efforts. On both sides of the Atlantic, there is a reluctance to face the obvious: the security status quo is not sustainable.

Thinking beyond NATO

The Bush administration takes office at a crucial juncture in U.S.-European relations. No doubt, as then-Harvard professor Henry Kissinger noted in the mid-1960s, NATO always has been a "troubled partnership." Indeed, as historian Lawrence S. Kaplan has observed, "The idea of NATO being in a terminal state has been a topic for pundits since 1950."³³ Given this background, it is easy to dismiss as "crying wolf" suggestions that the alliance is in serious trouble. This time, however, the crisis is real. Today, that relationship is suspended between an Atlanticist past—a product of the Cold War—and an as-yet-uncharted future that will be shaped by post-Cold War realities. Commenting in 1994 on the state of U.S.-European relations just after the Cold War's end, historian John Lamberton Harper observed that post-Cold War events

suggested that genuine European union was incompatible with the kind of hegemony to which the Americans had grown accustomed and which . . . they were hesitant to give up. The period also indicated that despite the end of the Cold War, the Western Europeans . . . still preferred American leadership and protection to the alternative of European union involving the real surrender of sovereignty in the fields of defense and foreign policy and the dilution of their autonomous national links to the United States. By the mid-nineties neither party to the relationship saw the status quo as either salutary or tenable. But American ambivalence about greater European unity and autonomy from the United States continued to be matched and reinforced by European ambivalence, the pattern since 1952.³⁴

Crucial Differences from Earlier Crises

Today, the situation differs in two crucial

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respects from that described by Harper. First, American ambivalence about the prospect of a stronger, more unified Europe has turned into open hostility. And second, as manifested by adoption of a common currency (eurodollar), and ESDP (and the RRF), Europe has taken a giant stride toward achieving political as well as economic unity. In large measure, those steps reflect a diminishing European tolerance of U.S. hegemony. Washington must come to terms with the fact that its Cold War-era hegemony in Europe is no longer tenable, and attempts to maintain it inevitably will lead to a messy transatlantic divorce. The Bush administration's challenge is to adjust America's European grand strategy to these changed circumstances by gracefully accommodating Europe's reemergence as an autonomous geostrategic actor in international politics.

Although the Europeans long have resented their subordination to Washington, for most of the post-World War II era they have drawn back from the one step that could free them from U.S. overlordship: becoming militarily self-sufficient. Students of international politics understand why, after complaining for decades about "American hegemony," the Europeans finally may be doing more than talking. One of the few ironclad rules in international politics is that when one state becomes too powerful in the international system—as China, Russia, India, and Europe believe the United States became in the unipolar decade following the Soviet Union's collapse—others act to create geopolitical counterweights to it.³⁵ In the coming years, the Kosovo war may be seen as the crucial moment when Europe deliberately set out to constitute itself as a geopolitical counterweight to American hegemony.³⁶

Growing European Discontent

In the aftermath of Kosovo, the Western Europeans have been much more vocal in expressing their fears of American hegemony. European concerns were forcefully articulated by French president Jacques Chirac and Hubert Vedrine, his foreign minister.

Arguing that U.S. economic and military dominance is so formidable that the term "superpower" is inadequate to convey the true extent of America's preeminence, Vedrine called the United States a "hyperpower," and added: "We cannot accept either a politically unipolar world, nor a culturally uniform world, nor the unilateralism of a single hyperpower. And that is why we are fighting for a multipolar, diversified, and multi-lateral world."³⁷

The Kosovo war also dramatized for the Western Europeans the vast disparity between their military power and America's, especially the U.S. superiority at the high end of military technology. Alarmed by their military inferiority to the United States and resentful of their continued dependence on Washington, the Western Europeans were jolted by the Kosovo episode into recognition that they needed to back up the concept of a common European defense and security policy by developing their own advanced military capabilities—including satellite reconnaissance; command, control, and communications; precision-guided munitions; and power projection.³⁸

Why Washington Should Endorse European Autonomy

Instead of resisting Europe's bid for autonomy and independence, the Bush administration should embrace it. No doubt, relations between the United States and a truly equal Europe will be quite different qualitatively from the transatlantic relationship that has prevailed during the past five decades. As Kissinger observed in the mid-1960s, although it ultimately might prove to be a price worth paying, the United States indeed would pay a price if Europe achieved political and economic unification. A unified Europe no longer would be subservient to Washington and would pursue its own agenda in international politics. It was naive, Kissinger said, to suppose that "Europe would unite in order to share our burdens or that it would be content with a subordinate role once it had the means to implement its

own views. Europe's main incentive to undertake a larger cooperative role in the West's affairs would be to fulfill its own distinctive purposes."³⁹

Kissinger's insight is as valid today as it was 36 years ago—indeed, perhaps more so. Nevertheless, there are two reasons why the United States should “pay the price.” First, in the long run, the price of European independence is likely to be less than the price of Europe's continuing subordination to the United States, which inevitably will fan resentment (albeit of a different kind) on both sides of the Atlantic. Second, attempts to maintain American preponderance are bound to trigger a nasty geopolitical backlash against the United States. During the second presidential debate, Bush acknowledged that others indeed do fear America's unchecked power, and he emphasized the need for the United States to act with “humility” to alleviate those fears. By gracefully accepting Europe's strategic self-sufficiency, the United States can go a long way toward assuaging others' fears of America's hegemonic power.

The new administration has a historic opportunity to refashion the relationship between the United States and Europe. When Cohen warned that NATO could become a relic, he missed the point. In many ways, NATO *is* a relic. This is especially so when NATO is considered from the standpoint of America's traditional strategy toward Europe. Historically, from our early days as an independent nation, U.S. policy toward Europe has been “counterhegemonic.” Washington feared that America's security in the Western Hemisphere would be jeopardized if a single great power succeeded in dominating the Continent and harnessing its resources.⁴⁰ When it became doubtful that the European balance of power could operate successfully to prevent the emergence of a continental hegemon, the United States intervened in both world wars to block Germany from achieving mastery over Europe. America's military engagement in Europe during the Cold War similarly was

counterhegemonic in nature.

With the Cold War's end, the geostrategic rationale for the U.S. military presence in Europe has vanished. Russia has fallen from the ranks of the great powers to second-tier status, and it will be decades—if then—until it could once again threaten to dominate the Continent. Instead of the peril posed by would-be European hegemonies, Europe's security agenda for the foreseeable future will be dominated by threats of a far lesser magnitude, such as those in Kosovo and Bosnia, that implicate core U.S. strategic interests peripherally if at all. The Europeans can handle security problems such as these without American assistance. And, were it not for the perverse incentives built into NATO's structure that encourage the Europeans to buck pass to the United States the leadership role in dealing with such crises, they would take care of them.⁴¹

Opportunity for the Bush Administration

It is unclear what course the Bush administration will chart for transatlantic relations. Certainly, some top administration officials, notably Secretary of State Powell and National Security Adviser Rice, are extremely wary of U.S. involvement in Balkan-style peacekeeping missions. Logically, they should welcome ESDP and the RRF, because these EU initiatives offer the most realistic hope for the United States to extricate itself from Kosovo and to avoid similar commitments in the future. However, there are other administration officials who oppose ESDP and the RRF because they perceive those initiatives as threats to the relevance of a U.S.-dominated NATO.

The Powell-Rice camp has the better case in this policy debate. A decade after the Cold War's end, Europe no longer is as salient strategically to the United States as it once was. The locus of post-Cold War American strategic interests has shifted from the Continent to East Asia and the Persian Gulf. As Rice correctly suggested, by diverting American forces from their primary deter-

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rence and war-fighting missions to Balkan peacekeeping, U.S. military participation in NATO makes it more difficult for Washington to meet security challenges outside Europe.⁴²

No doubt, self-styled Atlanticists within the administration, and in the broader foreign policy community, will argue that NATO is as important as ever. But that is not true. After the Cold War, it became fashionable in some strategic circles to argue that NATO had to “go out of area or out of business.”⁴³ In fact, the alliance does not add to U.S. capabilities outside Europe, and never has. Since the Korean War, with the *partial* exception of the Persian Gulf War, NATO and the Western European allies have either opposed, or refrained from supporting, U.S. strategy and military interventions outside Europe. Although some individual U.S. allies *might* come to Washington’s assistance in a future crisis in the Middle East or East Asia (as Britain and France did, for example, in the Gulf War), NATO *as an institution* almost certainly would not.

In fact, far from augmenting America’s grand strategic posture, in important ways NATO has become a yoke that limits U.S. options. The European allies are attempting to use the alliance to constrain the United States’ taking strategic initiatives that Washington believes further U.S. strategic interests but the Europeans find inimical to their perceived interests. European opposition to American plans to deploy a national missile defense system is a case in point. Given the divergent strategic outlooks of the United States and Western Europe, Washington can expect similar European opposition in the future to American strategy in East Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

The time has come for the United States to withdraw from Europe militarily and to let the Europeans take care of the Balkans and similar parochial matters while the United States directs its attention to maintaining its global geopolitical interests outside Europe. Implicitly, some Bush administration policy-

makers recognize the need for restructuring the U.S.-European relationship.⁴⁴ If the administration accepts ESDP and the RRF as legitimate expressions of European autonomy—and thereby acknowledges NATO’s diminishing relevance—it no doubt will be subject to accusations that it is “isolationist.” The fear of such criticism—which truly is a canard—should not unduly trouble the administration, because it is easily rebutted.

Historical Arguments for Relinquishing Hegemony

American internationalism can exist without an ongoing U.S. military presence in Europe. Here, the Bush administration should revisit the views of Dwight Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, who were leading Republican internationalists. Unlike their successors in both parties, they welcomed a truly independent Europe rather than feared it, and they regarded the U.S. role in NATO as temporary, not permanent. Eisenhower and Dulles eagerly anticipated the day—once the Western Europeans recovered from World War II and again could assume full responsibility for their own security—when the American military presence in Europe no longer would be necessary.

In 1951, while serving as NATO’s first supreme commander, Eisenhower observed, “If in ten years, all American troops stationed in Europe for national defense purposes have not been returned to the United States, then this whole project will have failed.”⁴⁵ During his presidency, Eisenhower continued to express the belief that ending the U.S. military presence in Europe by shifting the responsibility for Europe’s defense to the Western Europeans was the key to America’s fiscal and economic well-being.

For his part, Dulles was a champion of a united Europe that no longer would need to rely on U.S. forces for its security. As Dulles said, “We want Europe to stand on its own two feet.”⁴⁶ Dulles further noted that, by creating perverse incentives for the Europeans both to avoid taking the hard steps to achieve political unity and to take the easy step of

relying on the United States for security, the Marshall Plan and NATO “were the two things which prevented a unity in Europe, which in the long run may be more valuable than either of them.”⁴⁷

In historical perspective, the EU’s continuing march toward political unity, and its quest for military self-sufficiency expressed in ESDP and the RRF, represent the triumph of the hopes for Europe held by Eisenhower, Dulles, and other leading U.S. policymakers during the late 1940s and 1950s. They saw the emergence of a stable, prosperous, and independent Europe as the sine qua non for an exit strategy that would allow the United States to bring its troops back from Europe. But they also viewed the emergence of such a Europe as the vindication of American ideals and as the foundation for a healthy long-term U.S.-European relationship.

Toward a New Transatlantic Relationship

Although some people—though surely not Eisenhower and Dulles were they alive today—might find it ironic, America’s best hope for retaining a healthy relationship with Europe lies in cutting NATO’s Gordian knot of contradictions, resentments, and illusions. A U.S.-European relationship based on mutual independence, equality, and autonomy likely will prove far stronger than NATO, the bonds of which are fast being corroded by the recriminations generated by America’s dominance and Europe’s subordination.

NATO’s days are numbered, and Kosovo is likely to be remembered as the last American war in Europe. The threat posed by the Soviet Union was the glue that simultaneously held the alliance together and legitimated U.S. hegemony in Europe. Yet, even during the Cold War—especially from the mid-1960s on—NATO’s cohesion was eroding. U.S. and Western European political and strategic interests often conflicted sharply. Though allied against the Soviet Union, the United States and Western Europe were

locked in a deepening, intense economic rivalry. And, as “successor generations” came to power on both sides of the Atlantic, the sense of a common Euro-Atlantic identity—forged by the struggles of postwar recovery and the dangers of the early Cold War years—faded. With the Cold War’s passing, those factors gnaw away at the alliance’s fabric at an accelerated pace.⁴⁸

This time, however, there is no common external threat to hold the fissiparous forces at bay and keep the alliance together. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict, Europe predictably is beginning to respond to American hegemony by balancing against the United States. That the United States and Europe are destined to drift apart politically and strategically is increasingly evident. The only issue is how this distancing occurs. An amicable separation is better than a nasty divorce. For the former to happen, however, the United States will need to give up its hegemonic pretensions and accept Europe’s emergence as an equal power center in international politics. Whether the U.S. foreign policy elite is prepared to accept gracefully the transition from unipolarity to multipolarity is, however, an open question. That is the question that the Bush administration will be called upon to answer.

Notes

1. Stuart Croft, Jolyon Howorth, Terry Teriff, and Mark Webber, “NATO’s Triple Challenge,” *International Affairs* 76, no. 3 (July 2000): 503. Emphasis in original.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Joseph Fitchett, “EU Force Takes Shape with Pledges of Troops,” *International Herald Tribune*, November 20, 2000; and “EU to Shape Reaction Force,” *International Herald Tribune*, November 18, 2000.
5. Philip Webster, Richard Beeston, and Martin Fletcher, “French Trigger NATO Furore,” *Times* (London), December 8, 2000; Michael Evans, “Chirac Blows Cover of New European Army,” *Times* (London), December 8, 2000; George Jones

That the United States and Europe are destined to drift apart politically and strategically is increasingly evident. The only issue is how this distancing occurs.

and Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, "Chirac Angers Blair by Backing EU Army," *Daily Telegraph*, December 8, 2000; Anton La Guardia and Michael Smith, "France Snubs America over European Army," *Daily Telegraph*, December 7, 2000; and Ambrose Evans-Pritchard and Michael Smith, "EU Force 'Will be Independent from NATO,'" *Daily Telegraph*, December 1, 2000.

6. Claims that the RRF would be independent from NATO triggered a mini political crisis in Britain. The Conservative Party's "Euro-sceptic" wing seized upon those reports to denounce the Blair government for weakening NATO, and for harboring a secret agenda to incorporate Britain into the European "superstate" into which the EU allegedly is in the process of transforming itself. See George Jones, "Counter-Attack over Euro Force," *Daily Telegraph*, November 25, 2000; John Keegan, "Blair Snared by Rapid Reaction to Europe," *Daily Telegraph*, November 25, 2000; Andy McSmith, "Defence Chief Is under Fire over European Force," *Daily Telegraph*, November 24, 2000; and Andy McSmith, "Blair Renounces His Thatcher Inheritance," *Daily Telegraph*, November 23, 2000. For editorial comment and letters hostile to the idea of the RRF as an autonomous European capability, see "America's Timely Warning," *Daily Telegraph*, December 7, 2000; "Out of Control," *Daily Telegraph*, November 30, 2000; "The Wrong Battle," *Sunday Times*, November 26, 2000; "Phantom Army," *Times* (London), November 21, 2000. Sir David Hannay, "Should the EU Take on the Burden of Defending Europe?" *Times* (London), November 25, 2000; and Lord Carrington et al., "Reasons for Fearing the Euro-Force," *Daily Telegraph*, November 24, 2000.

7. For reports that the French gave way at Nice to the view that NATO, not the EU, should be the cornerstone of European security, see Keith B. Richburg, "European Force to Cooperate with NATO," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2000; and Philip Webster, Martin Fletcher, and Michael Evans, "Blair Claims Eight-Minute Knockout on Defence," *Times* (London), December 9, 2000. For indications that the French, in fact, did not budge from their stance that the RRF should be an autonomous European capability separate from NATO, see Anton La Guardia, "NATO Deadlock over EU Reaction Force," *Daily Telegraph*, December 15, 2000; Anton La Guardia, "Euro-Force Still Cause of Division," *Daily Telegraph*, December 9, 2000; and Alexander Nicol, "Setback for EU's NATO Links," *Financial Times*, December 17, 2000.

8. Robert Locke, "France Fires Fresh Salvo at Britain over Euro Army," *Sunday Times*, December 10, 2000. In making this prediction, Richard made clear that he was expressing his personal view and not necessarily that of the French gov-

ernment or the EU.

9. Quoted in Anton La Guardia, "America Tries to Stop EU Going It Alone on Defence," *Daily Telegraph*, December 16, 2000.

10. Quoted in Douglas Hamilton and Charles Aldinger, "EU Force Could Spell NATO's End, Cohen Says," *Washington Post*, December 6, 2000. See also Anton La Guardia, "Euro Army Is a Threat to NATO," *Daily Telegraph*, December 6, 2000; Alexander Nicol, "U.S. Warns EU on Military Plans," *Financial Times*, December 5, 2000; and "Cohen Warns Europe That NATO Could Become 'Relic,'" *International Herald Tribune*, December 6, 2000.

11. Robert Fox, "US to Pull Out of NATO if EU Force Goes Ahead," *Sunday Telegraph*, October 29, 2000.

12. Quoted in Matthew Campbell and Stephen Grey, "Bush Aides Launch Assault on Euro Army," *Sunday Times*, December 17, 2000.

13. Michael R. Gordon, "The 2000 Campaign: The Military; Bush Would Stop U.S. Peacekeeping in Balkan Fights," *New York Times*, October 20, 2000, p. A1.

14. Gen. Jean-Pierre Kelche, chief of the French Defense Staff, has suggested that the RRF would be capable of assuming full responsibility for the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia. Alexander Nicol, "EU Force 'Ready for Bosnia Role,'" *Financial Times*, November 30, 2000.

15. Geir Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 135.

16. Francois Duchene, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (New York: Norton, 1994), pp. 186-87.

17. The literature on this is voluminous. Good starting points are Francis H. Heller and John R. Gillingham, eds., *The United States and the Integration of NATO: Legacies of the Postwar Years* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996); Michael P. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Lawrence S. Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984); Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration*.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 40. In a recent speech, then-under sec-

retary of state Thomas R. Pickering illustrated concretely the salience of the transatlantic framework in U.S. thinking: "Our vision is a simple one: we want a Europe whole and free *in partnership with the United States as part of a new Atlantic Community* which is a force for progress in the world." Pickering, "Remarks at French-American Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C.," November 3, 2000, www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/2000/001103_pickering_transatl.html. Emphasis added.

19. As Lundestad observes, Washington's reiterated declarations of support for an equal partnership between a strong Europe and the United States "ring a little hollow. . . . It is highly doubtful that the United States has ever wanted a Europe really equal to the U.S." Lundestad, "Empire" by *Integration*, p. 166.

20. As former defense secretary William S. Cohen stated in October 2000, "NATO will continue to be the indispensable anchor of American engagement in European security matters and the foundation for assuring the collective defense of alliance members." William S. Cohen, "Informal NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting—Remarks as Prepared for Delivery, October 10, 2000," www.Defenselink.mil/speeches/2000/s20001010-secdef.html.

21. See Joseph Fitchett, "EU Takes Steps to Create a Military Force, without Treading on NATO," *International Herald Tribune*, March 1, 2000, online edition; James Kitfield, "European Doughboys," *National Journal*, February 26, 2000, pp. 610–14; and Carol J. Williams, "Conference Highlights Flaws of NATO's Kosovo Campaign," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 2000, online edition.

22. Jesse Helms and Gordon Smith, "European Defence Policy Is Dangerous," *Daily Telegraph*, December 28, 2000, online edition. Emphasis added.

23. Madeleine K. Albright, "Press Conference at NATO Headquarters," December 8, 1998, Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State. Emphasis added.

24. Madeleine K. Albright, "United States Backs European Rapid Reaction Force," November 20, 2000, Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State. Emphasis added. See also William S. Cohen, "Preserving History's Greatest alliance," *Washington Post*, January 8, 2001, p. A19. Former under secretary of state Pickering reiterated the U.S. view that ESDP is welcome only as a means of bolstering NATO. Speaking of ESDP, he noted, "A stronger European military contribution will make the alliance stronger, lift some of the burden from the U.S., and make the U.S.-European relation-

ship much more of a partnership in this area." Pickering. Emphasis added.

25. Walter Slocombe, "Partnership for Peace and NATO-Russian Relations," *Defense Issues* 10, no. 28 (March 2, 1995), online edition. Then-deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott made the same point, stating that U.S. support for EDSI would depend on the answer to a the key question: "will it help keep the alliance together?" As Talbott said, the United States does "not want to see an EDSI that comes into being first within NATO but then grows out of NATO and finally grows away from NATO, since that would lead to an EDSO that initially duplicates NATO but that could eventually compete with NATO." See Strobe Talbott, "Remarks at a Conference on the Future of NATO," Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, October 7 1999, www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1999/990310_talbott_nato.html.

26. Albright, "Press Conference at NATO Headquarters."

27. NATO, declared then-deputy national security adviser James Steinberg, is the "bedrock" of post-Cold War Europe's security, and "underpins Europe's best hopes for a continent that is democratic, undivided and at peace." He went on to note that while some in Europe perceive "that U.S. leadership is heavy handed," nevertheless the "fact is, our leadership is essential in support of the larger cause of an integrated Europe." James B. Steinberg, "Remarks before European Institute," Mayflower Hotel, Washington, January 15, 1998.

28. Stuart E. Eizenstat, "Address to the Secretary's Open Forum," April 6, 1999, www.state.gov/www/dept/openforum/proceedings/apr6-99/s_eizenstat.html. Emphasis added.

29. Strobe Talbott warns: "If ESDI is misconceived, misunderstood, or mishandled, it could create the impression—which could eventually lead to the reality—that a new, European-only alliance is being born out of the old, transatlantic one. If that were to happen, it would weaken, perhaps even break, those ties that I spoke of before—the ones that bind our security to yours." Talbott.

30. The classic theoretical statement of this problem is Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances: A Theoretical Study of Alliance Formation," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 48, no. 3 (1966): 266–79.

31. Quoted in Brian Knowlton, "Bush under Fire over Balkans Plan," *International Herald Tribune*, October 23, 2000.

32. Steven Erlanger, "Europeans Say Bush's Pledge to Pull Out of Balkans Could Split NATO," *New York Times*, October 25, 2000.
33. Lawrence S. Kaplan, "After Forty Years: Reflections on NATO as a Research Field," in *NATO: The Founding of the Atlantic Alliance and the Integration of Europe*, ed. Francis H. Heller and John R. Gillingham (New York, St. Martin's, 1992), p. 16.
34. John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean C. Acheson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 341.
35. For discussion of why, even in unipolar international systems, counterbalances form against hegemony, see Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993): 5–51.
36. As University of Munich political scientist Ulrich Beck put it, "Kosovo could be our military euro, creating a political and defense identity for the European Union in the same way as the euro is the expression of economic and financial integration." Quoted in Roger Cohen, "In Uniting over Kosovo, A New Sense of Identity," *New York Times*, April 28, 1999, p. A11.
37. Quoted in Craig R. Whitney, "France Presses for a Power Independent of the U.S.," *New York Times*, November 7, 1999, p. A5.
38. See Craig R. Whitney, "Hey, Allies, Follow Me. I've Got All the New Toys," *New York Times*, May 30, 1999, online edition; Roger Cohen, "Dependent on U.S. Now, Europe Vows Defense Push," *New York Times*, May 12, 1999, online edition; and John-Thor Dahlburg, "Battle for Kosovo Shows Europe Still Needs U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1999, online edition.
39. Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 131. Kissinger first made this point in a 1965 book on transatlantic relations, where he argued explicitly that a united Europe would "challenge American hegemony in Atlantic policy." Henry A. Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership: A Re-Appraisal of the Atlantic Alliance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 40.
40. John Mearsheimer, "The Future of America's Continental Commitment," in *No End to Alliance—The United States and Western Europe: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Geir Lundestad (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), pp. 221–44.
41. As Lucio Caracciolo, editor of the Italian foreign policy journal *Limes* noted, "The only way Europe will ever develop its own security policy is if it weans itself from mother America." Thus, he does not regard negatively the prospect of U.S. withdrawal from the Balkans because "this could help Europe face its own responsibilities." Quoted in Steven Erlanger, "A Higher Threshold for U.S. Intervention Means Adjustments Abroad," *New York Times*, December 18, 2000, online edition.
42. There is, indeed, evidence that the kinds of military skills required for peacekeeping are sharply different from those needed for high-intensity combat, and that troops committed to the former lose their effectiveness for the latter mission. Paul Richter, "Kosovo Report Supports Calls for Separate Army Peacekeeping Force," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2000, online edition.
43. For example, see Ronald D. Asmus, "Double Enlargement: Redefining the Atlantic Partnership after the Cold War," in *America and Europe: A Partnership for a New Era*, ed. David Gompert and F. Stephen Larrabee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, and F. Stephen Larrabee, "Building a New NATO," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 4 (September–October 1993): 28–40; and Richard G. Lugar, "NATO: Out of Area or Out of Business: A Call for U.S. Leadership to Revive the Alliance," Press Office of U.S. Senator for Indiana, Richard G. Lugar, June 24, 1993.
44. This certainly must be true of National Security Adviser Rice. As European critics of her "division of labor" proposal noted, the implications of her plan went well beyond the superficial issue of burden sharing and raised fundamental issues that cut to the heart of NATO's *raison d'être*. It strains credulity that someone with Rice's experience as a policymaker was unaware that, in this respect, her comments were opening a transatlantic Pandora's box.
45. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to E. J. Birmingham, in *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Louis Galambos, vol. 12, *NATO and the Campaign of 1952* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 76–77. For an exceedingly thoughtful and well-researched discussion of the Eisenhower-Dulles approach to the U.S. military commitment to Europe, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). Trachtenberg argues that the Eisenhower-Dulles "exit strategy" was to create militarily self-sufficient power centers in Western Europe and to devolve to them full responsibility for the Continent's defense. In this way, they hoped to lift the economic burden of maintaining U.S. conventional forces in Europe and to extricate the United States from

the increasing peril of nuclear war that was imbedded in its extended deterrence strategy.

46. Quoted in Mark Sheetz, "Exit Strategies: American Grand Designs for Postwar European Security," *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 25.

47. Quoted in Kaplan, *The United States and NATO*, p. 185.

48. The most recent iteration of these points is Stephen Walt, "The Ties That Fray: Why Europe and America Are Drifting Apart," *National Interest*, no. 54 (Winter 1998–99): 3–11. Walt's analysis is compelling and builds on the work of such analysts as David Calleo, James Chace, Earl Ravenal, and Ronald Steel, who, as early as the 1960s, acutely identified the external and domestic factors that could ultimately cause the transatlantic alliance to fracture. By the 1980s, those tensions were even more evident. See Christopher Layne, "Superpower Disengagement," *Foreign Policy*, no. 77 (Winter 1989–90): 17–40; idem, "Atlanticism without NATO," *Foreign Policy*, no. 67 (Summer 1987): 22–45; idem, "Toward German Reunification?" *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 7–37; idem, "Ending the Alliance," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 6, no. 3

(Summer 1983): 5–31; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 5–56; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 44–79; Christopher Layne, "Continental Divide—Time to Disengage in Europe," *National Interest*, no. 13 (Fall 1988): 13–27. See also Ted Galen Carpenter, "Competing Agendas: America, Europe, and a Troubled NATO Partnership," in *NATO at 40: Confronting a Changing World*, ed. Ted Galen Carpenter (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990), pp. 29–44; and idem, *A Search for Enemies: America's Alliances after the Cold War* (Washington: Cato Institute, 1992), pp. 11–46. Previously associated with strong support for NATO, Walt now concurs with my analysis of more than a decade ago that, because the alliance's disintegration is inevitable, the best course of action is for the United States and Western Europe to begin a process of gradual disengagement, rather than risk NATO's precipitous rupture in a future transatlantic crisis. For his previous support of the U.S. commitment to NATO, see Stephen Walt, "The Case for Finite Containment: Analyzing US Grand Strategy," *International Security* 14, no.1 (Spring 1989): 5–50.

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