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Renewing the US-European Relationship

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Despite the hopes that abounded as the 1990s opened, post-Cold War Europe is an unstable and dangerous place. A single massive threat of the proportions of Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia is not likely to occur again soon. But economic chaos, rampant nationalism, and ethnic hatreds are the type of kindling which could ignite major regional conflict. Economic interdependence and the effects of modern communications would make it difficult for the United States to shield itself from European upheaval. Thus, unless greater stability can be fostered, the United States might again find its security threatened by European developments.

What does stability mean in today's Europe? During most of modern history, it meant finding a balance in which no single power was so dominant as to threaten the existence or vital interests of its neighbors. Neither post-Soviet Russia nor any other European power appears likely to pose this kind of threat in the near future. Today's European security challenge looks more like a race to head off or contain regional conflicts before they become uncontrollable. Rather than confronting a single adversary, we will find ourselves dealing with many problems of bedeviling complexity. What should we build on in confronting them?

Our Postwar Lessons

The American-led response to the Soviet Cold War challenge was a new set of integrative political, military, and economic structures, notably NATO and the European Community. We and our West European partners realized, in establishing these institutions, that a traditional power arrangement based primarily on nation-states would no longer meet their security needs.

These new institutions succeeded beyond all expectations: Western Europe achieved unprecedented stability and prosperity; its adversary, the Soviet Union, collapsed. While the dangers facing Europe following the disappearance of the Soviet Union are great, the West has emerged from the Cold War with tremendous advantages. One of the most important is the experience that by engaging Western Europe in a grand design of European integration and Atlantic partnership, the United States fostered a degree of interdependence that makes war among West European countries almost unthinkable.

In a new era in which Western Europe should, by virtue of its stability and prosperity, bear increasing responsibility for the rest of the continent's security, there are many reasons why American leadership will still be needed. What they boil down to is that the prosperous and democratic part of Europe is having tremendous difficulty in coming to terms with the continent's new problems. There is no single European country with the resources or acceptance from its partners to organize the effort. The hope that Germany, following reunification, would spearhead a European response to this challenge will not be fulfilled in the short or medium term.

German Unification and Its Aftermath

While Britain and France both had reservations about German unification following the fall of the Berlin Wall, they found they had no choice but to accept it. Subsequent hand-wringing, particularly by the French, over their relative loss of influence in Europe indicates a deep European reluctance to accept German leadership openly. While the Germans have demonstrated an assertive approach on some issues (e.g., recognition of Croatia and expanding European Union membership), historically-grounded inhibitions make them unable to exercise across-the-board leadership.

Issues on which Germany will continue to be reluctant to lead are primarily those of military security and peacekeeping.[1] This reluctance remains acceptable for the time being to Germany's European partners, fearful of too

sudden an expansion of German power. It also reflects the views of many Germans, who are uncomfortable with the notion of their country playing a military role that goes beyond its NATO commitments. Despite the German constitutional court's recent decision that the Bundeswehr may participate in military activities outside the NATO area, the new government which takes office in Bonn late this year probably will make only slow progress toward a more robust international security role.

While they lack Germany's economic power and influence, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, Britain and France will thus continue to be our main partners on European security activities that extend beyond the NATO area. This arrangement allows time for the development of new multinational European military structures, such as the Eurocorps, in which the Germans can play a significant role. In time, these arrangements can lead to greater European initiative in security matters and an accepted German role in this field. But a lot of bad things can happen in Europe before then.

What this suggests is the continued need for a strong American political and military commitment to NATO while the Europeans develop greater responsibility in the security field. The most tangible part of our commitment--our troop presence--should remain large and stable enough to be effective in case of emergencies. It also should be capable of reinforcement so as to respond to specific needs. Nevertheless, our presence should be tied to European readiness to contribute enough of their soldiers and resources to a common effort.

The Maastricht Treaty and Its Lessons

Paradoxically, German unification provided the main impetus to the current effort to "deepen" or intensify West European integration through the Maastricht Treaty. The treaty, which went into effect in November 1993, sets out the ambitious goal of achieving a common foreign and defense policy. Skepticism is in order about the near-term realism of this goal, particularly in light of the weak performance of the European Union (EU) in the Balkans crisis. Expansion of the EU to include such neutrals as Austria, Finland, and Sweden can only make a common foreign and security policy an even longer-term goal.

Achievement of another of the Maastricht Treaty's goals--a common European currency--has somewhat better prospects of being achieved in the next several years, though the path will be rocky. The governments that participate in this effort would give up a large measure of sovereignty, perhaps smoothing the way to common policies in other areas. Under Maastricht, those countries that meet strict criteria set out in the treaty would adopt a common currency by 1999. The number of countries that could meet these criteria now is small. If they include both Germany and France, there would be good chances of achieving a momentum that would carry other countries.

The Maastricht criteria for monetary union reflect the Bundesbank's policy principles, a sign that the monetary field is one in which German influence in Europe is already paramount. As has been true since the European Community's founding, economic cooperation probably will remain in the near future a more powerful motor for integration than political or security efforts.

In an excellent analysis, Douglas Stuart asserts that Maastricht mistakenly concentrates attention on expanding progress toward a fully integrated West European economic system.[2] He argues that the Europeans should focus more on "widening" of the European Union to include newly independent states of East and Central Europe, and on building ties to Turkey and other Islamic states.

While it is true that the West Europeans need to address these issues, we should recognize that German unification drastically reshuffled the geopolitical cards. The resulting power shift in Germany's favor requires the EU to strengthen its core if it is to continue as a stabilizing framework for Western Europe. Serious weakening of that core would risk a return to largely national policies among member states. Thus, despite the difficulties, the goal of common foreign and security policies among its key Western members remains important.

The road to approval of the Maastricht Treaty, which included the 1992 Danish and French referenda, suggests other problems that need addressing. The large anti-Maastricht votes in both countries--as well as opinion polls which show low public support and understanding for the treaty in other countries[3]--also indicate substantial voter fears of loss of control over decisions that affect their countries. European leaders have concluded from this experience that they need

to do a better job at dialogue with their publics about next steps in the integration process.[4]

Complicating Europe's efforts to formulate geopolitical priorities is mounting concern with instability in North and Black Africa. This preoccupation is especially strong in the European Union's southern tier--those countries most exposed to the social and political shock waves coming from across the Mediterranean.

For Americans, the aftermath to German unification and the collapse of the Soviet power system has a triple lesson. The first is that Western Europe will in the next few years remain focused on consolidating progress toward internal integration, while also bringing in new members and dealing with instability on its borders. The second lesson is that no European government will seize the reins of foreign and security policy leadership in the near term. Indeed, the Maastricht goal of a common foreign and security policy tends to discourage national attempts at leadership. Third, Europe will remain for a considerable time dependent on US leadership. In the Balkans, for example, it was only after the United States began to assert itself that there was even slight progress toward a political solution.

Which Lessons Should We Heed?

Preparations for the January 1994 NATO Summit brought to a head discussion of Western strategy toward the former members of the Warsaw Pact. In its broadest terms, the question has been about which lessons to draw from 20th-century European history.

One school, recalling Germany's humiliation and desire for revenge following the Versailles Treaty, argues that the West should give priority to encouraging Russia, the successor states of the Soviet Union, and the other former members of the Warsaw Pact to become partners in a Europe without dividing lines. Under this view, the greatest danger to a stable Europe would be an isolated and resentful Russia.

The other school, recalling the turbulence in Central and Southeastern Europe which contributed to the outbreak of both World Wars, argues for promoting stability through giving priority to building NATO's ties with the formerly communist Central European countries in which democracy has already made a strong start.[5] This priority, according to the partisans of "Central Europe first," should be expressed through offering these states a clear prospect of early membership in NATO.

How Russia will eventually organize its society and deal with the outside world is not yet clear. Much will depend on whether it seeks to remain a multinational empire held together by force or becomes a Western-style democratic nation-state. The evidence thus far is mixed.

A few things are, however, already known about Russian foreign policy. One is that there exists a consensus among Russian elites that their country's external relations must be based on a defense of Russian "national interests." [6] This means that any Russian leader must be able to portray his country's relationship with the West as one in which Russia's importance is recognized. As Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev wrote, Russia cannot be excluded from efforts to resolve such a major European problem as Bosnia.[7]

Initially constructive Russian behavior in Bosnia suggests that the West should not succumb to negative self-fulfilling prophecies about Moscow's future diplomacy. At the same time, efforts to reconstitute a Russian empire in the "near abroad" through force and intimidation must be rejected. In such an eventuality, benefits for Russia of cooperation with the West must be withheld.

How can the security needs of the newly free Central European states be met while still encouraging constructive Russian conduct? Zbigniew Brzezinski has suggested offering Russia a special treaty of friendship and alliance even as NATO itself expands its membership eastward into Central Europe.[8] Such a treaty offer would be contingent on Russia demonstrating concretely that it is behaving toward its neighbors like a democratic nation-state rather than as an empire with possible designs on them.

As Brzezinski suggests, such a good-neighbor Russia could be associated with Europe-wide cooperative undertakings without being a member of NATO and the EU. If Russian performance in these activities supports a more formal relationship, the cooperation that develops could defuse lingering suspicions in Moscow about NATO.

We can expect the Visegrad countries--Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia--to expand their cooperative activities with NATO under the recently adopted Partnership for Peace as far and as fast as they can. Early NATO membership for them is not, however, a desirable prospect. Dealing with Russian suspicions will take time. Moreover, the armed forces of these countries need thorough restructuring and will not be able in the short term to participate fully in Alliance military activities.

Beyond this, there is a fundamental NATO issue to be addressed with these Central European countries. Under the NATO Treaty's Article 5, "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." As Poland learned in 1939, an ineffective security guarantee is of little value in the face of an attack. In other words, NATO's armed forces would need to be structured to carry out a security guarantee for these countries if they became members. Some argue for revising NATO members' treaty obligations toward each other as a way out of this dilemma. It is difficult to see, however, how a dilution of security guarantees could be stabilizing.

Richard Nixon argued shortly before his death that progress by the Visegrad countries toward membership should be gradual and that Russia must not be given a veto over NATO's decision.[9] The Partnership for Peace is certainly flexible enough to offer Russia the opportunity to participate in Alliance activities to the extent that its policies are compatible with the Alliance's commitment to "the preservation of democratic societies, their freedom from coercion and intimidation, and the maintenance of the principles of international law." [10] Such participation would help smooth the way toward a more formal relationship between NATO and Russia.

Inviting Russia into the Partnership may seem to some like inviting the fox into the chicken coop, but there is much to be said for trying to train this particular fox in the advantages of responsible international behavior. Russia's vast size and historical lack of attachment to Western political values will make sorting out its relationship with the West enormously difficult. Moreover, security problems on its Asian borders would seem to preclude even eventual full membership in NATO. But these complexities should not prevent the development of a cooperative relationship in which Russia is exposed to Western political and economic culture and encouraged to act responsibly. We cannot be certain that such an effort will succeed, and the West might need to make difficult decisions if Russian actions revert to undemocratic past patterns.

Russian behavior in three areas will be critical in forming Western policy. First, how will Moscow perform in the Balkan crisis--will it continue to cooperate in the search for a constructive political solution? Second, how will it conduct its relations with the former Soviet republics, and with Ukraine in particular? If these ties are based on voluntary cooperation and Russian respect for their sovereignty, European security would be much enhanced. If the contrary is true, Western rearmament would definitely be on the agenda. Third, what will Russian behavior be regarding the implementation of arms control agreements and cooperation on halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction? Russian performance in this area thus far has been encouraging but will require careful monitoring.

A Long-Term US Commitment

We learned through bitter experience in the 1930s and 1940s how our vital interests in Europe can be threatened if we are not actively involved there. Our successful commitment after World War II to building European and Atlantic structures fostered an era of unprecedented stability in the Western part of the continent. The opportunity exists to extend these structures eastward to encompass much of the remainder of Europe and to develop cooperative relations with Russia. There are also great dangers. As Vaclav Havel observed, one sees:

. . . hatred among nationalities, suspicion, racism, even signs of fascism; vicious demagoguery, intrigue and deliberate lying; politicking, an unrestrained, unheeding struggle for particular interests, a hunger for power, unadulterated ambition, fanaticism of every imaginable kind. . . [11]

It is not hard to imagine the potential for local and regional conflict growing out of such an atmosphere. Unfortunately, Western Europe's performance in foreign and security policy since 1990 does not portend an early assertion of its leadership in dealing with such problems. Perhaps more than at any time since the early 1970s, a consensus prevails in Europe that continued US leadership and a substantial American military presence are needed.

Recalling the US role in two world wars and in the Cold War, Senator Richard Lugar argues for a modest investment now to stabilize and secure the peace in Europe. To do this requires, in his view, a new bargain with Europe "not only to stabilize the continent but also to induce Europe to become the outward-looking and meaningful ally Washington needs to reduce its own global burden." [12] Lugar's proposal that the United States and Western Europe together seek to project democracy and security both eastward and southward should become a central principle for a renewed transatlantic partnership.

Lugar includes the Balkans in his proposal. The crisis in that region may confront us with difficult decisions about deploying troops there. An American refusal to send troops to help enforce agreed political arrangements might become fatal to these efforts. It also would raise serious questions about the worth of our overall commitment in Europe.

If we do send troops to the Balkans and they are withdrawn because of casualties, the political effect on NATO would be even more disastrous. Before sending troops to the Balkans, the President would need to tell the American public that such a deployment might be costly and lengthy. The reason for such a step would be that keeping the Balkan conflict from spreading is fundamental to our interest in maintaining European stability.

Many predicted in the early 1990s that the US-European relationship would become a more contentious one, especially in the economic sphere. The recent GATT accord defused some of this concern, but the risk of economic quarrels undermining transatlantic cooperation still exists. Industry on both sides of the Atlantic is being restructured to meet sharpened international competition, and resultant unemployment creates domestic pressures to get tough with trading partners. Just as we did during the Cold War, we will need to keep frictions over individual economic problems within limits so as not to damage our basic ties. Putting the whole range of US-European relations within a broad revised political framework might help keep individual problems manageable when disputes erupt.

The Goal of Devolution

The profound changes of 1989-90 make it too soon for Europe to assume now the responsibilities of leadership that Americans have borne for half a century. This does not, however, mean that a gradual devolution of responsibility should not be a goal. It should, and this concept should be at the core of a new Atlantic Compact in which the United States explicitly declares that European stability remains central to our own national security.

In this context, the Bonn-Paris axis will continue to play a central role in European deliberations. While the Germans move incrementally toward assuming greater political responsibility in Europe, France will also gradually free itself from old policies. Coming to terms with a greater German role should impel France toward increased involvement in NATO and with the United States. While the French will remain difficult partners, this evolution in their position would facilitate maintaining our own European commitment.

Putting together a renewed transatlantic partnership along these lines will require patience, clarity of purpose, and skill from the United States and its European partners. We should build on what has been achieved in the postwar partnership and extend democratic government, market economies, and cooperative structures eastward and southward.

From the Europeans devolution will require taking adequate account of American interests while they pursue the goal of common policies. Americans will have to get used to not having our way as often as in the past. We probably will need in time to accept some restructuring of NATO that reflects both our gradually diminishing role and the new security missions the Alliance will assume. There should be no hurry to such efforts since premature steps in this direction could encourage those in our country who argue for a sharply reduced American commitment now.

A true revolution took place in Europe in 1989-90. It did not, however, end dangers to American security from that continent. We continue to need a commitment there, a commitment that must be adapted to a changing environment and a growing European role.

NOTES

1. In a 12 July 1994 decision, the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe found in favor of the Kohl Government's position that the German Constitution or Basic Law permits Bundeswehr participation in UN peace missions outside the NATO area. That position had long been contested by the opposition Social Democrats, who argued that the Basic Law would have to be amended to allow operations "apart from defense." Notwithstanding the court's decision, public opinion remains profoundly divided on the issue.
2. Douglas T. Stuart, *Can Europe Survive Maastricht?* Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 4 February 1994.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
4. This conclusion is based on my 1990-93 conversations with German political business leaders while serving as US Consul General in Frankfurt.
5. Edward L. Rowny, "NATO and the Difference between Eastern and Central Europe," *The Washington Times*, 15 March 1994.
6. Alexei G. Arbatov, "Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives," *International Security*, 18 (Fall 1993), 5-43.
7. Andrei Kozyrev, "Don't Threaten Us," *The New York Times*, 18 March 1994, p. A29.
8. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Normandy Evasion," *The Washington Post*, 3 May 1994, p. A23.
9. Richard Nixon, "Moscow, March '94: Chaos and Hope," *The New York Times*, 25 March 1994.
10. Partnership for Peace: Framework Document, para. 2.
11. Vaclav Havel, as quoted by Vladimir Tismaneanu in *Reinventing Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 301.
12. Richard G. Lugar, "American Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Period," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 24 (Winter 1994), 25.

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