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NATO in the 21st Century: A Strategic Vision

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Admiral William Crowe, former Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, tells of a conversation he had with the late Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev in the latter days of the Soviet Union. Crowe, an Oklahoman not known for mincing words, asked, "Tell me Marshal, how come you never attacked us? Was it the fact that we had the bomb? Was it the Seventh Army and the Sixth Fleet?" Whether Marshal Akhromeyev was dissembling or not will never be known, but he reportedly responded, "No. It was because we knew that, if we took on one country, we were going to have to take on 16."

The United States and its Allies are engaged today in a debate about enlarging the NATO of "the 16," and it appears that the 16 Allies will admit the first new members since Spain entered a decade ago. Enlargement is about many things, most particularly about the willingness and commitment of the United States to continue its basic engagement in the outside world in general and in European security in particular. We will decide whether we will continue to play a role that has been indispensable at every critical moment in European history in this century. Our debate should confirm that the United States is, and will remain, a European power, because it is in the self-interest of this country not to depart from Europe in 1998, just as we decided in the late 1940s not to repeat the mistake of 1919.

This article examines the status of four enduring "grand purposes" of NATO and then describes and evaluates the arrangements for implementing them--including the landmark decision to expand the Alliance formally by taking in three new members. The membership applications of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic represent new beginnings for them and for NATO. And as NATO seeks to redefine its Strategic Concept for the early 21st century, the Alliance will be preparing to deal with challenges unimagined by its founders and their Cold War successors. NATO is alive and well and is in the process of defining its forms and functions for a new era. Indeed, the work of creating a new architecture for 21st-century European security is essentially completed.

Beyond the Post-Cold War Era

Our continued engagement in European security is fundamentally in the American interest--strategically, politically, militarily, and economically-- and it is morally consonant with the deepest values of the United States. In the security realm, we express that interest and those values through NATO. To be sure, a number of rivals for primacy in European security have emerged in recent years, particularly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Western European Union. But none rivals NATO in terms of its ability to act; and certainly none rivals NATO in terms of the ability to commit American power and prestige. And keeping America engaged in NATO--with strong, bipartisan political support--is, in fact, the first of the four grand purposes of the Alliance: an absolute bedrock commitment of American participation and leadership. We Americans have discovered, whether we like it or not, and whether or not all our allies like it on all occasions, that the European-transatlantic security relationship works well when the United States is prepared to be engaged and when we are prepared to lead. And--at least so far--when we are not prepared to do both, the Alliance has had less than success.

NATO's second grand purpose is already being validated: to preserve what it accomplished during the last 50 years. Certainly, there is no evident threat within the Western part of the continent that would likely lead to the establishment of NATO were it not already in existence. Indeed, the absence of a direct threat caused some in the United States and in other nations during the first years after the end of the Cold War to suggest an end to the Alliance, as an anachronism whose time had come and gone. But it would beggar history to argue that Europe could summarily

dispense with an institution like NATO, which has come to represent much of what has been achieved in Western Europe since 1945, without entailing significant risks at some point in the future.

One of the largely unrecognized successes of NATO is that European security did not re-nationalize following the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the morrow of the Cold War, each of the 16 countries came to the conclusion that it is more intelligent, more effective, and cheaper to do security--to do military affairs--"at 16" rather than attempting to do it "at one." In effect, the member nations had made it too expensive for any of them to think that they might do security on their own, a conclusion from which all continue to derive great strength.

These decisions revealed some underlying purposes, including the fundamental values that bind together transatlantic institutions, and that could help organize the way in which we all do security in the future. Thus one of the basic elements of the NATO Cold War experience--and within European experience as reflected in the European Union--continues as a legitimate goal of the nations involved.

Preserving what has been accomplished has validated as well the views of General Marshall and other men and women of his era on both sides of the Atlantic. The 15 countries of the European Union have done something that no group of polyglot countries has ever in history managed to achieve: to abolish war as an instrument of their relations with one another. That is so trivial a comment today that it often escapes notice, until we think about what has happened in this century when the obverse was true. NATO helps to provide an organizing principle for that outcome, as well as a commitment to preserving it in the future.

So the first two grand purposes--the enduring commitment of the United States to NATO, including its assumption of leadership responsibility, and helping to preserve the accomplishments of the past half century--remind us how fully NATO realized its potential during the Cold War.

But that is essentially old business. Two other grand purposes, both of which transcend the peaceful end of the Cold War, must be developed and sustained. The first is NATO's assumption of responsibility for security, stability, and certainty in Central Europe, a role it shares with the European Union and other regional institutions. But it remains NATO's mandate to continue as first among equals in security matters. NATO nations have agreed to invite countries representing several hundred million people, who languished behind the Iron Curtain for nearly half a century, to join their neighbors to the West in an alliance unlike any other in history.

Those countries of Central Europe have no sooner reemerged into history--some after three-quarters of a century--than we are attempting to take them out of it. In fact, what we are doing with regard to the first three countries to be invited to join the Alliance--Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic--is to remove them permanently from Central Europe's traditional competition for power and influence. And for Poland the invitation also brings closure to World War II. If one counts backward from the decisive moment for Poland at the summit of NATO heads of state and government in Madrid in July 1997, it had taken just under 58 years to validate the reason that Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany in September 1939: their guarantee of the freedom and stability of Poland, from which all nations now will benefit.

At the same time, the Alliance has stepped up to the mark in Bosnia, responding to the most serious fighting in Europe since World War II. It is now more or less taken for granted that NATO will continue to play its active, stabilizing role in a part of Europe that has been a sinkhole of good intentions for more centuries than one wishes to count. Through its prestige and armed might, and despite the difficulty and danger of the task, NATO has succeeded in Bosnia where the United Nations failed. It is gratifying that after two and a half years, the role of the Implementation Force (IFOR) and now Stabilization Force (SFOR) is continuing after the latter's mandate expires at the end of June 1998.

The fourth grand purpose of NATO, also shared with other institutions, may be the most difficult of the residual Cold War issues awaiting resolution. It is the one that is the most consequential, the one that--if we get it right--is most likely to give us a new century of peace and stability in Europe. That task is no less than drawing Russia out of its 80-year, self-imposed isolation from the outside world. This mission has many components; the most noteworthy of them may be for all Western institutions to help Russia's democratic experiment succeed and to nurture its effort to create a market economy. An equally important goal is to encourage Russia to become part of the outside world, playing by the same rules as everybody else, in matters of security as well as in politics and economics.

The third and fourth grand purposes of NATO--stability and democratic development in Central Europe and in Russia--are essentially opposite sides of the same coin. It is an important, shared principle among the countries desiring to join NATO that the Alliance needs a positive relationship with Russia: indeed, the notion of a direct NATO-Russian relationship was first proposed by Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic. One of history's paradoxes involves Russia's quest for a stable and secure Western frontier, a search that entailed devastating conflicts with Charles XII, Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler: 200 years or more of failure to secure a vital interest. For nearly 50 years in this century, the Soviet Union--read Russia--tried to impose stability through the Warsaw Pact. The moment the countries of Central Europe had a choice, however, they sent their occupiers packing.

In part what NATO is doing today by bringing into its compass three Central European countries--with more to follow--is securing for Russia its Western frontier. That is fundamentally no different than securing for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic the right and ability to be full and free members of the international community.

A New Historic Agenda

The four grand purposes of NATO represent a truly historic agenda, recognizing that this is the first era in which there is the possibility of building security in Europe with all winners and no losers. The challenge will be to maintain the common goals and the essential cooperation in attaining them now that the fear of external aggression and political subversion has been removed as a principal motivation. The next phase of NATO's evolution is to adapt its forms and functions to conditions that seem likely to challenge the Alliance in the first decades of the next century. In this process, the NATO Allies will continue to consolidate and advance its four grand purposes.

In 1997, in order to advance toward its four grand goals, NATO made eight decisions in a remarkable 44-day period between the 27 May meeting of NATO heads of state and government at the Elysee Palace, including Russian President Yeltsin, and the 9 July NATO summit in Madrid, when allied leaders formally invited three carefully-selected countries to join the Alliance.

NATO's eight key decisions all reinforce one another; each is indispensable to the success of the others and to the overall creation of a transatlantic security architecture that can succeed:

- . *First Invitees.* Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were chosen for membership because they best fulfilled the criteria that each ally, explicitly or implicitly, set for the entry of new countries. They are the three countries also judged most likely to gain the support of the 16 parliaments. Some of the purposes in issuing the invitations clearly were strategic and political in the sense of classical international politics. They were also political in the sense of making sure that, as the proposed expansion of NATO membership is debated in parliaments, all 16 of them will say "yes." NATO is not a club, it is a military alliance. It is not an association assembled ad hoc by ambassadors at NATO, or even by heads of state and government. It is the product of acts of parliaments willing to commit states to one another for mutual security.

That important principle does not come from statements of government. It comes from the kinds of debate, perhaps all too often taken for granted, through which nations will concur that the security of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic is of vital importance to each member nation. And without getting into particular examples, if a situation arises where Article V of the Washington Treaty is called into question, it is more likely that it will be invoked in circumstances where one of these new members will have to be engaged on behalf of a current ally rather than in having the other allies come to the rescue of one of the new members.

- . *Open Door.* At the same time, NATO's door to membership will remain open. This is agreed by all the Allies. As stated in US policy, this "open door" policy will continue so long as there are European countries ready and willing to shoulder the responsibilities of NATO membership. This is an important qualification and implies the critical importance of sustaining the ability of NATO to be militarily effective. There would be no point in admitting new countries to membership if that would merely weaken the Alliance and, in the process, diminish the value of the NATO Treaty commitment. As the foreign minister of one Central European country aptly put it: "I wouldn't want to

join NATO if that made it weaker," adding, "but I am going to get to the position where I will make it stronger by coming in."

. *Partnership for Peace*. Critically important, the Alliance also decided to strengthen its flagship program, the Partnership for Peace (PfP). This is probably the most important development in NATO in a generation. PfP now embraces 27 members, including countries that weren't even part of the Warsaw Pact, and some--Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland--which we used to call "neutrals." Partnership for Peace has two objectives. The first is to help prepare prospective members to become NATO allies. In effect, instead of inviting countries to join and then having a lengthy transition before they can begin to pull their weight in the Alliance, we start with the transition first. This also helps to demonstrate to parliaments that aspirants do take their NATO obligations seriously.

Equally if not more important, the Partnership for Peace enables those countries that have not yet been invited to join--and others that may choose never to join the Alliance--to be deeply and closely engaged with NATO in a variety of ways. The secret is that short of guarantees contained in the Washington Treaty's Article V, short of sitting at the table in the NATO Council and being formally engaged in Allied Command Europe, there is little that a PfP member cannot do with NATO to enhance its security.

. *Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council*. In parallel, the Allies have created a new Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), to replace the defunct North Atlantic Cooperation Council that was created in 1991 and was clearly a relic of the Cold War. The EAPC is a work in progress. It can improve political engagement and integration throughout the central region and on the flanks of the Alliance. In time, it could be able to make decisions regarding the Partnership for Peace.

. *NATO-Ukraine*. The NATO Allies also recognized that there are two very special cases in European security--Ukraine and Russia. Thus in 1997 they negotiated a NATO-Ukraine Charter. The Charter and its operating arm, the NATO-Ukraine Commission, recognize tacitly that the future of Ukraine may well be the key to many other Alliance strategic plans and objectives. Indeed, if, a decade and more hence, Ukraine is still a free, independent, and sovereign country, it is very likely that other key security concerns in Europe will also have been achieved, and we will be able to say that NATO's post-Cold War objectives have been met.

. *NATO-Russia*. The signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act was a truly extraordinary event, reflecting both the critical importance of Russia to the future of European security and the political problems that country has had in adjusting to NATO's role in post-Cold War security in Europe. Despite the fact that what the Soviet Union--now Russia--went through during the past decade represented the most profound strategic retreat in all of peacetime history, President Yeltsin was still prepared to join NATO in trying to build a long-term strategic partnership from which both sides could extract benefit and with which all could increase their chances of being secure in the next century.

The NATO-Russia Founding Act has two components. The first preserves all that NATO needs to preserve in terms of its own strategic capacities. This includes NATO's need to build infrastructure in new member states in order to be able to implement its conventional force doctrine: not to deploy major conventional forces, but rather to be able to provide reinforcements if need be. The second part of the Founding Act is the creation of a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) with its own possibility--which remains just that until put to the test--of going from consultation to cooperation to the prospect of common action in matters that benefit both NATO and Russia. At the same time, the PJC is subject to some real qualifications, most important of which is the continued sovereignty of the North Atlantic Council in making NATO's decisions, and the fencing off of issues that could affect third countries. Thus Russia will be given no influence or authority over anything that NATO does with Central European or other countries. Whether the PJC will succeed in both reconciling Russia to NATO expansion and creating possibilities for genuine cooperation cannot be foretold; but the opportunity is there for Russia to take a valid place in European security if it will choose to do so. A hopeful development is the presence in Bosnia of 1500 Russian troops, serving on an equal basis with other national forces in SFOR.

Command Restructuring. In addition to its outreach activities, NATO has also been redesigning itself to meet the

newer challenges of the next century. This includes completion in 1997 of the key elements of the so-called Long-Term Study. The study entails updating, modernizing, and slimming down NATO's military command structure and moving it decisively beyond the Cold War, with its emphasis on static defense and an East-West focus. Allied Command Europe will reduce from the 68 headquarters needed in the Cold War to just 20 for the new era. A collateral objective has been to prepare forces for operations under the command and control of new Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters and comparable arrangements--one of which is represented by SFOR in Bosnia. The renovated command structure should allow the Alliance to respond, with specifically tailored forces, to challenges yet unspecified. General Norman Schwarzkopf is reputed to have observed that: "The day I graduated from West Point, if somebody had told me my career would be dominated by three places--Vietnam, Grenada, and Kuwait--I wouldn't have believed them." So it is with NATO; members have agreed to create capabilities to deal with a future whose security requirements have yet to be clearly seen. The streamlined command structure exists in fact and as a symbol of renewal within the Alliance.

. *European Security and Defense Identity.* NATO's final achievement in 1997, of very profound and underrated significance, is its new relationship with the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI)--in practice, the Western European Union (WEU). NATO has now agreed that under certain circumstances, it will make available to the ten members of the WEU specific assets that will enable WEU to be militarily effective--indeed, for the first time in its history. This includes the provision of CJTF headquarters for WEU use, the double-hatting of some NATO officers, the identification of specific military assets that could be released to WEU, and the designation of the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (currently a British four-star general) as potential WEU strategic commander. Assets to be released to WEU, according to plans drawn up by NATO at WEU request and subject to decision by the North Atlantic Council, could even include elements of the US military, such as large transport aircraft, satellite-based communications, and sophisticated intelligence capabilities.

The NATO-WEU relationship has now been completed. In the process, the reforms undertaken have also enabled the French government of President Jacques Chirac to move toward reintegration in NATO's military commands--a process that is now about 95 percent done. At the same time, NATO support for an effective ESDI will enable the European Allies to take greater responsibility for meeting some security challenges on the continent--if the political will to do so can be created and sustained.

Shared Responsibilities

NATO can achieve much for the future of European security, but it cannot act alone. In addition to the companion work of the OSCE, WEU, and even the Council of Europe, what NATO is attempting to do with Russia in Central Europe and elsewhere will succeed only if the European Union (EU) also does its job. Security now and in the future, as indeed since the founding of NATO, is not the preserve of any single set of institutions, nor can it be fully reflected in a single charter or set of criteria. NATO took the lead on enlargement partly because this was less expensive than EU enlargement, partly because NATO was better organized, and partly because the United States was willing to lead the process. But NATO enlargement has to be followed by enlargement of the European Union; without that evolution, none of the plans of whatever body in the new Europe are likely to succeed. Fortunately, the EU has embarked on its own process of enlargement, opening negotiations with Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic--the three countries also invited to join NATO--and with Slovenia and Estonia, in addition to Cyprus. The inclusion of Slovenia and Estonia is especially useful, since both had hoped to be in the first round of invitees for NATO.

At the same time, the Western private sector has a critical role to play in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. Indeed, in the fullness of time, this may well prove to be more consequential in terms of helping countries to gain stability and the ability to develop their societies than any of the other initiatives described here.

The Benefits of NATO Success

If NATO is successful in this phase of its efforts to meet new security opportunities and requirements, its members will have reached a number of goals. The first is to put to rest residual problems not just of one war, but of all three

European wars of this century. This is symbolized by the contrasting roles played by Sarajevo in 1998 as opposed to 1914. Second, what NATO is doing is designed so that every country engaged in European security--including Russia--will be able to say at every critical moment, "I may not agree with all of what NATO is doing, but I gain something very valuable for my own security." This is one reason that NATO took three and a half years from the moment of deciding to enlarge to the naming of the first invitees: it was essential to build a broad, encompassing architecture that could include all countries engaged in European security. In fact, the first new countries will enter NATO only five years and three months after the basic decision was taken.

Finally, by taking Central Europe out of history through its comprehensive strategy, NATO can avoid the drawing of new lines in Europe, creating gray zones, or consigning any country to the role of a buffer state. This outcome points to something even more dramatic, already achieved in Western Europe, which is the possibility of moving beyond the 350-year experiment in Europe called the balance of power--an experiment repeatedly tried and which repeatedly failed.

Moving Ahead

The tasks immediately before NATO are as difficult, if not more so, than what has been achieved since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. First and most critical is the securing of popular support for what NATO is doing, including support for the entry of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. It will mean nothing if we have designed this formidable architecture only to have our citizens declare it unacceptable. The hard work of explaining changes in NATO, actual and proposed, is going on right now "at 16." It is a daunting task, and one that is far from completion.

Second, NATO will be also be examining the new and proposed changes in the Alliance and assembling the different parts, in order to ensure that each is internally consistent and that all are compatible with one another. This work includes developing in practice the new theoretical relationships between the North Atlantic Council, the Alliance's decisionmaking body, and the work undertaken by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the NATO-Ukraine Commission, and the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council.

Most difficult will be the Permanent Joint Council because, however much Russia adapts to a new European role consonant with the security requirements of its neighbors, it will still have critical interests at odds to some degree with those of its new Western partners, especially beyond the European region. At the same time, we seek to show the Russians that they have a rightful role in European security, based on our understanding of the importance of treating them the way we treated Germany after 1946, not after 1919. If Russia is prepared to see the potential in this relationship, then it and the members of NATO, collectively and individually, can benefit from the work undertaken in the PJC.

Third, since 1991, the United States and its NATO Allies have been taking on a major set of new responsibilities toward a wide range of countries. Most obvious is responsibility for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic; upon their becoming members of NATO, these countries cannot be permitted to fail in any critical dimension, whether security, economic, or political.

In addition, the Allies have taken on other specific responsibilities, and are considering more, with regard to members of the Partnership for Peace and especially with countries not accepted for NATO membership in 1997. In January 1998, the United States signed a new Charter of Partnership with the three Baltic states, part of an encompassing effort to assure these states that they are fully part of the West, even during the period before they are invited to formal Alliance membership. Meanwhile, several Balkan states have high expectations. Romania, Slovenia, and Bulgaria are striving for early entry to NATO. Farther afield, the countries of the Transcaucasus--with their roles as energy producers or transit routes--increasingly believe that NATO should assume some burdens of regional security.

No ally is yet ready to commit itself to a precise date for the next enlargement decisions, and there is no consensus regarding which countries should next be invited. But whenever these decisions are taken, and whatever the direction in which the Alliance next moves, it is clear that the Allies have assumed major responsibilities for dealing with rising expectations. At the very least, this means added efforts in the Partnership for Peace and strengthened bilateral relationships. Meeting this set of responsibilities is almost as important to European security in the years ahead as the formal responsibilities being assumed toward the three new entrants.

Fourth, these new responsibilities will also require the commitment of real resources. During the debate on NATO enlargement, the Alliance has estimated the costs to be about \$1.5 billion over the next ten years. This is a realistic estimate of the cost of new outlays to the Alliance as a whole. That figure does not include what the countries joining NATO must do for themselves, nor what NATO countries must do to sustain their defense industrial bases, maintain suitable military structures, and be able to project power. Equally consequential, however, is finding the resources to sustain the Partnership for Peace; this, in fact, should be the true debate about NATO costs, not the relatively modest expenditures needed to bring three countries formally into the Alliance. In all this, it is useful to recall that in winning the Cold War, the United States spent in excess of four trillion dollars in Europe alone. Against that sum, the costs of expansion--and even the costs of making PFP a stunning success for all its members ready and willing to work closely with NATO--are minor in comparison.

Strategic Evolution

Fifth, as NATO Allies consider which countries next to invite to join the Alliance, they will need to make some key strategic choices. The first three countries were the easy choices; indeed, one of the most important qualities of the decisions taken at the Madrid summit was to demonstrate that the Alliance would, indeed, take on formal responsibility for security in Central Europe.

The decision to invite countries to join the Alliance is a profoundly political act; thus each ally decides whom to admit according to its own set of criteria. Clearly, however, several standards have been applied and no doubt will continue to figure in calculations about NATO enlargement. These have included:

- The state of evolution of political systems, according to democratic principles
- Progress in converting from command to market economies and creating an environment friendly to foreign trade and investment
- Preparations to undertake the responsibilities of a NATO ally, including active efforts within the Partnership for Peace
- Demonstrated willingness to resolve differences with neighbors--as exemplified by the Hungarian-Rumanian accords that laid to rest a dispute that dated from the Treaty of Trianon (1920)
- Geographic location between NATO and Russia in the center of Europe
- Proximity to Germany, with its ambition to surround itself by NATO and the European Union

In the first round of NATO enlargement, Poland and the Czech Republic were the only two countries that met all these implicit criteria. Hungary is not situated either on the German border nor on the direct strategic line between NATO and Russia; it can be said to have earned its way into NATO through a number of actions, including its internal developments, efforts with neighbors, performance in Partnership for Peace, and direct support for IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia.

In the next round of enlargement, no candidate country will meet this full range of criteria, especially regarding geographic location on the direct line between the strategic center of NATO and Russia (Belarus and Ukraine are not candidates), and only Austria, among potential candidates, borders on Germany. Other criteria will apply, including the extent to which candidates are ready to become Allies, the state of their political, social, and economic development, and their efforts to resolve differences (if any) with neighbors.

At the same time, geography does matter, and the Alliance will have to make critical choices about the direction(s) in which it will enlarge. There will also be differences of view among Allies, with the Nordic NATO members favoring the Baltic states, and several of the Mediterranean members favoring Balkan states, especially Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The implications of the choices are immense for the scope, coverage, and extent of the Alliance. In terms of the degree of commitment, taking in major Balkan states would imply assumption of responsibility for sorting out the difficulties and problems of this entire region--though it can be argued that the Alliance is already well on the way to assuming this commitment, by its PFP programs and its engagement in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia. In any event, the next NATO enlargement will send powerful political signals of intent and will be intensely debated within the Alliance. There is no natural or easy resolution to this conundrum.

Whatever the decision, it will by no means be reached as readily as the first; a 16-country consensus formed fairly readily around Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Informal discussions at Madrid in 1997 showed no consensus for the next states to be invited, even though special mention was made of Slovenia, Romania, and the "states of the Baltic region." It will be important that the Allies seek to resolve these critical issues ("when" and "who") as far in advance as possible of the 50th anniversary NATO summit to be held in Washington in the spring of 1999.

Defense Industrial Base

It is also essential to ensure that NATO will continue to function effectively. That means meeting current challenges and foreseeing those of the early 21st century, agreeing on a new Strategic Concept in time for the 1999 summit, and meeting the costs as well as the opportunities of further expansion without destabilizing the Alliance. An immediate challenge is to ensure that there is an adequate defense industrial base on both sides of the Atlantic, both for its own sake and to help sustain political support in individual allied states for the Alliance and its purposes. NATO could still be hollowed out by failure to maintain a vigorous defense production capacity in allied states. There are already indications of the stress caused by the evident division of Allies into three general groups in terms of defense needs and capacities: US forces at the high end of technological development and designed for global deployments; a second tier of states--consisting of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany--with a considerable range of technological development in armaments; and the rest of the Allies in a third tier. It will be essential in the period ahead that the Allies, collectively, not permit this division to undermine the political cohesion of the Alliance.

The Lessons of Bosnia

As NATO looks to its future, it also has to consider the scope of its potential engagement and action. A guide to what is possible has been provided by the Alliance's experience in Bosnia. The question is sometimes asked, "Why did it take NATO so long to go to Bosnia?" One should ask, instead, "How did we manage to do it all?" For years, most Allies perceived Bosnia in the terms Neville Chamberlain used in 1938 to describe British views of Czechoslovakia: "a far away country of which we know nothing." Yet it was possible finally to gain the agreement of all 16 Allies, who had come together to contain Soviet power and communism, to redirect their attention both geographically and militarily to assume responsibility for bringing peace to an isolated corner of southeastern Europe.

NATO's capacity to make this decisive change in perspective, direction, and intent derived in large part from a recognition that, if it failed to take responsibility in Bosnia, the Alliance was in danger of eroding from within, of being rejected as irrelevant. Equally important, by 1995 the Allies had redesigned the Alliance for the future, as described above, and came to realize that, unless they could also bring peace to Bosnia, NATO might not be able to gain the political support necessary to implement its emerging new grand strategy for the whole of the transatlantic and transeurasian region.

Thus even though the Bosnian conflict had essentially been contained as early as 1991, the Allies came gradually to recognize that a successful security system had also to confront that conflict squarely. NATO's future legitimacy overall depended on what it was prepared to do there. In the summer of 1995, therefore, the Allies finally adopted an air-strike decision, in defense of the so-called safe areas in Bosnia, that they were prepared to stand behind. The air campaign of August-September 1995 was a major success; it helped to bring the conflict to a halt; it opened the way to the Dayton Accords and to the deployment of the NATO-led IFOR and SFOR forces.

This intervention has been successful in many respects. Not only has it shown that the 16 Allies can work together on a critical post-Cold War challenge, requiring the deployment and, if need be, the use of military force, but it has also taught the military and policymakers lessons about the future of conflict that would have been difficult to learn in any other way. NATO learned from the experience of the UN force, UNPROFOR, that effective action requires a clear chain of command, centralized decisionmaking, and robust, no-nonsense rules of engagement. Civilian and military leaders of NATO have learned new ways of working together. The Bosnia operations of IFOR and SFOR have entailed a highly complex integration of military services operating in space and in the air, on land, and at sea--in the process demonstrating the efficacy and proving the techniques of joint and combined operations. NATO has also seized the opportunity to work with Partnership for Peace nations, indeed, giving a reality to PfP activities that mere exercises could not have duplicated. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have been in this group. One might

even ask to what extent the decision to invite them to join NATO was influenced by what happened in Bosnia. Hungary, for example, was invited to join as much because of its efforts in supporting the Balkans operation as by anything else that it did to press its case for membership.

Where Next for NATO?

NATO's actions in Bosnia are also helping to shape its future, with profound implications for the Alliance's next Strategic Concept. Indeed, a critical debate is now developing on the extent to which NATO should be prepared to move beyond its European agenda and to declare an interest in North Africa and the Persian Gulf. The view currently prevailing in the Alliance is that the challenges posed by North Africa, while important to the Alliance and to individual members, probably do not lend themselves to the kind of action that NATO, as a military defense alliance, is best suited to handle. That does not mean the region should be ignored, only that other means and institutions--particularly the European Union--should have first charge in dealing with the region's problems.

A more pertinent challenge is that posed by the Persian Gulf. Recent crises regarding Iraq's manufacture and storage of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them have raised the issue whether NATO as a whole should assume any direct responsibilities for security in that region. The United States, in particular, expects support from its Allies in dealing with the threats posed by Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein. But many of the European Allies have been reluctant to become engaged, including any formal role for the North Atlantic Alliance. To be sure, the Alliance has since the January 1994 NATO summit been committed to developing a program to deal with the threat of weapons of mass destruction--although, of all the actions agreed at that summit, this one is so far the least well developed. But there is a significant difference between dealing with this issue and extending NATO's responsibilities into the Middle East-Persian Gulf region.

One outcome could be to recognize the regional interests of individual countries, and the capacity that NATO as an institution could provide in a crisis--e.g., through potential use of a Combined Joint Task Force. But this is an issue for which "coalitions of the willing," rather than the Alliance "at 16 (or 19)," will likely define the limits of the possible. It took more than two years to convince NATO to employ military power in Bosnia, a country on the Alliance's immediate periphery. To seek a formal NATO agreement to act in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region is, and probably will remain for some time, beyond the range of tolerance of most (if not all) of the European Allies.

Thus the core of NATO's new Strategic Concept must continue to be the security of Europe itself. There is ambitious work to be done in integrating new allies, ensuring the success of Partnership for Peace, and taking greater responsibility for sorting out the Balkans. Meanwhile, Ukraine's future is not settled, and certainly the securing of Russia's future remains a hope rather than a confident expectation. This strategic reach itself constitutes an agenda of stunning historic proportions. Of course, the Alliance should use success in Central Europe as a platform to help produce security where and when this proves possible. But if the future of NATO and the continuation of political support should come to depend on the willingness of its members to extend themselves far beyond their core purpose, we could damage, if not destroy, an institution whose essential functions remain of vital interest to its members. To expect the Alliance to accept responsibilities in non-contiguous regions could place at risk our yet-to-be-consolidated efforts to create lasting security in Europe in the post-Cold War era.

Conclusion

In 1998 NATO has demonstrated that it has staying power, and rightly so, beyond the Cold War. The purposes for which it was created were not dependent upon a single challenge or even on the existence of a clear and precise enemy. NATO's underlying purpose since it was created has been to provide the military element--and a high degree of political-military coordination--of an overarching concept of security in Europe and the transatlantic region. Just as the Alliance was founded in major part to make possible the success of the Marshall Plan, so now it has a role to play in supporting the efforts of other "security" institutions, notably the European Union, in helping countries in Central Europe and beyond develop the attitudes, institutions, and practices that can engender security in the broadest sense. Those attitudes, institutions, and practices will be based upon democracy, market economies, the rule of law, and cooperative ventures with like-minded countries and peoples.

Thus the New NATO picks up where the original NATO left off, adapting itself to new circumstances and challenges,

but at heart still based upon the same core interests of its member states and the same enduring human and political values. Provided that what has now been begun can be carried through--following completion of an encompassing security architecture for the 21st century--there is good reason to see a security in Europe in which all states can gain a share, to a degree that has never before been possible. For NATO and its member states, that is a tall order; but it is also a task worthy of such an institution and such nations.

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