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Steven E. Meyer

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# Carcass of Dead Policies: The Irrelevance of NATO

STEVEN E. MEYER

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In 1877, Lord Salisbury, commenting on Great Britain's policy on the Eastern Question, noted that "the commonest error in politics is sticking to the carcass of dead policies."<sup>1</sup> Salisbury was bemoaning the fact that many influential members of the British ruling class could not recognize that history had moved on; they continued to cling to policies and institutions that were relics of another era. Salisbury went on to note that the cost was enormous because this preoccupation with anachronism damaged Britain's real interests. Despite Salisbury's clever words, his observation is nothing new. Throughout Western history policymakers often have tended to rely on past realities, policies, and institutions to assess and deal with contemporary and future situations.

Post-Cold War American policymakers have not been immune from falling into this trap. Indeed, this inertial approach, characterized by Washington's unbending support for NATO and its expansion, has defined American foreign and security policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world. During the Cold War, NATO provided the proper linchpin of American—and West European—security policy, and served as a useful, even fundamental deterrent to Soviet military might and expansionism. However, NATO's time has come and gone, and today there is no legitimate reason for it to exist. Although the strong differences exhibited in the Alliance over the war against Iraq have accelerated NATO's irrelevancy, the root causes of its problems go much deeper. Consequently, for both the United States and Europe, NATO is at best an irrelevant distraction and at worst toxic to their respective contemporary security needs.

## *The Inertial Imperative*

The end of the Cold War presented a problem similar to the one faced by post-World War II American leaders. A tectonic shift had occurred that required innovation, creativity, and a real understanding of the evolving world. For some experts—both in government and academia, as well as on both sides of the Atlantic—the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact called into question the need for NATO. They recognized that an era had ended and the time was ripe for a basic debate about the future of NATO and Western security policies and structures.

Unfortunately, the policymakers in Washington who established the priorities for the post-Cold War era reacted quite differently from their predecessors. A small, influential coterie of policymakers in the elder Bush and then the Clinton administrations reacted reflexively and inertially, cutting off what should have been useful debate on the future. Moreover, virtually all of the officials who helped define the foreign and security policy in the Bush “41” Administration have resurfaced in the current Bush Administration. According to them, the existence and viability of NATO was not to be questioned. It was to remain basically the same successful alliance of American and European foreign and security policy that it had been since 1949. But a fundamental change was taking place in the post-Cold War security environment. In 1949, a genuine, measurable security threat justified NATO for all its members. Now, with the end of the Cold War, the inertial attachment to NATO meant that the alliance had to seek or invent reasons to justify its existence and relevance.

American officials recognized the threats to the alliance. NATO needed props. Expansion into the former Warsaw Pact was one. Not only did expansion provide a whole new *raison d’être* for the alliance, but—perhaps more important—it spawned a large new bureaucracy and the accompanying “busyness” that provide the lifeblood of institutions trying to justify their existence. At the same time, the theological mantra changed. Since there was no longer an enemy, NATO could not be described as a defensive alliance, it now was to be a combination of a wide-ranging political and collective security alliance. There were only two avenues the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could take if they wanted to join the West: NATO for security interests, and the European Union for economic interests. No other avenues were acceptable.

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Dr. Steven E. Meyer is Professor of Political Science at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, in Washington, D.C. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and holds an M.S. in political science from Fordham University and a Ph.D. from Georgetown University. His most recent writings include “U.S. Policy Toward the Former Yugoslavia,” a Woodrow Wilson Center publication.

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Consequently, in 1999 Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO, and in November 2002 the Baltic countries, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania accepted invitations to join the alliance.

In addition to expansion, the crisis in the Balkans also came to NATO's rescue. For the Clinton Administration, the former Yugoslavia was never really the most important point. NATO credibility was. This distinction is fundamental because policies that were designed to justify NATO were not necessarily the same as those that would deal successfully with issues in the former Yugoslavia. Clinton Administration spokesmen often pointed out that our vital interest was in preserving the alliance and vindicating our leadership of it.

In February 1996, for example, the *Congressional Digest* observed that a primary motivation for the Clinton Administration's engagement in the former Yugoslavia was because it constituted a "test case of NATO's ability to deal with post-Cold War security threats." Three years later, in April 1999, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright noted that "Belgrade's actions [in Kosovo] constitute a critical test of NATO" and that "we were responding to a post-Cold War threat to alliance interests and values."<sup>2</sup> Another former Clinton Administration official sums up the point by noting that a primary "factor contributing to the US decision to engage in Bosnia was the need to defend NATO's credibility."<sup>3</sup> The Balkans became the indispensable vehicle to respond to the perceived challenges to NATO's credibility and viability. For Washington, using the existence and proximity of NATO to justify intervention in the Balkans was less important than using the existence and proximity of the Balkans to justify NATO.

Although the current Bush Administration's focus has been riveted on the post-9/11 war on terrorism and Iraq, it has remained staunchly committed to NATO and its expansion. In its approach to the NATO Summit in Prague in November 2002, the alliance's serious problems were ignored, downplayed, or glossed over. For example, in congressional testimony in February 2002, a high-level Administration official said that NATO expansion was an exercise in "how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom," and that we must strengthen NATO's military capability and political solidarity.<sup>4</sup> In October 2002, in an address to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, another Administration official noted that NATO "remains the essential link between Europe and North America—the place for free nations to secure peace, security, and liberty."<sup>5</sup>

But no one explains what all of this means—whose freedom, peace, security, and liberty are endangered? Who, after all, is the enemy? How is it possible to argue that there is any sense of political solidarity in the wake of the alliance's deep split over Iraq? NATO enthusiasts repeat their mantra by rote, but none of it justifies supporting a failing alliance.

## *Inevitable Decline*

There are five interrelated reasons why post-Cold War rhetoric and inertial symbolism no longer conform to reality.

- *First, the legitimate threat that justified NATO really is gone.* All three US administrations since the collapse of the Soviet Union have paid lip service to this aphorism. For more than a decade, US security has advocated cooperation with Russia, but the structural and functional reality is quite different. Essentially, we are following a modified version of the post-World War I model, which excluded the defeated Germany from European and Western councils, rather than the more positive post-1815 and post-1945 models of including former enemies as quickly and completely as possible into the new security system. Consequently, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the old Permanent Joint Council, and the new NATO-Russia Council speak more to separation and isolation than they do to cooperation and inclusion. They reinforce the fault line in Europe, unnecessarily dividing the continent into “ins” and “outs,” with Russia clearly still “out.”<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental problem has been the inability of the post-Cold War American—and European—leadership to move beyond old organizations, policies, and philosophies to build organizations, policies, and philosophies that are more appropriate to the current age. Ever since the end of the Cold War and the ascendancy of the United States as the world’s only superpower, American foreign policy has been formulated and controlled by a very small coterie of elites from both the Democratic and Republican parties who share a remarkable synonymy of interests, values, and outlooks, differing only at the margins.

- *Second, the whole nature of contemporary European politics has changed so fundamentally that it has outgrown NATO-type alliances.* For the first time in about 1,800 years, there is no world-class threat to or from any European state or combination of European states that requires a wide-ranging, comprehensive alliance such as NATO.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, borders are set, uncontested, and peaceful. Aggressive nationalism (although not nationalism itself) and the race for arms and empire that so dominated the politics of every major power from the 16th through the early 20th centuries are gone.

In Western Europe, the political struggle has replaced many of the characteristics of Westphalian sovereignty with a more intricate system of regions, states, and supra-national organizations. The “constitutional conference” launched in March 2002 ultimately may determine what happens to the residue of traditional sovereignty in Western Europe. The situation is different in Central Europe, where states are trying to reestablish democracy and civil society after years of Nazi and communist tyranny, while at the same time struggling to meet the requirements to join the European Union. And the

collapse of the Stalinist system has resolved the “Soviet Question” that dominated much of the second half of the 20th century. Although we can’t predict Russia’s future exactly, it is highly unlikely that the Stalinist system will be reestablished, and by including Russia as an equal we greatly enhance her prospects for a stable political order and a more traditional, non-antagonistic relationship with the United States and the rest of the West.

The modern sense of security in Europe not only is broader than what even the new form of NATO is built for, it is different in *kind*, and it is best summarized in the (Maastricht) Treaty on European Union (1990-92) and the follow-up Treaty of Amsterdam (1997). These treaties speak to an understanding of security that includes issues of justice, environment, ethnicity, economic development, crime, and terrorism, in addition to references to more narrowly military definitions of security. In those sections of the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties that deal with a “common foreign and security policy,” NATO is not mentioned, but several references are made to the Western European Union. Neither treaty envisions NATO as an integral part of Europe’s security future, and a major reason it has been so difficult to implement the “common foreign and security policy” parts of these treaties is because NATO stands as both an impediment and an intimidation to Europe’s future.

Of course, the United States does have interests in common with the Europe that is emerging, but without the kind of overall mutual threat we faced in the past, they are much more issue-specific. For example, economic ties now provide America’s single most important relationship with Europe—both as partner and competitor. However, we are doing much less than we should do to prepare for the future of this relationship, in part because we are distracted by an anachronistic security relationship. We also have other common interests in such areas as the environment, terrorism, and others, none of which are particularly well suited to resolution by NATO or any other like alliance. Occasionally, the United States and specific European countries or groups of countries may need to engage in joint military activities—the Gulf War in the early 1990s and the more recent war in Afghanistan provide two excellent examples. In both cases coalitions were put together to deal with specific issues and, during both, NATO was little more than a “truck stop.” But these conflicts were unique. It was impossible to recreate the Gulf War alliance to confront Iraq in 2003, and within a year or two we probably will be saying the same thing about multilateral cooperation in Afghanistan. At the same time, there also are strong differences between the United States and much of Western Europe on a growing number of issues—such as how to deal with Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian horror, abrogation of the ABM Treaty, disagreement over the Kyoto Treaty, and accusations in the European press and among European officials about “American hegemony” or “American hyperpower.”

As Robert Kagan argues, the differences between the United States and Europe go to much deeper philosophical and anthropological levels.<sup>8</sup> As the US view of engaging the world has become increasingly ideological, that of the Europeans has become increasingly pragmatic. Both sides retain a sense of superiority and arrogance when dealing with the third world. For the Europeans, however, this tends to be more cultural, while for the United States it is a divine mission. Consequently, the United States takes more seriously what Anthony Padgen describes as the “vision of a single ‘orbis terrarum’”—the notion “of a presumed right of lordship over the entire world,” which, ironically, had been a hallmark of the European empire in America.<sup>9</sup>

In an environment of shifting interests and philosophies between Europe and the United States, Americans and Europeans still share—at least in theory—a respect for democratic values. But that is not enough to hold NATO together. There also is a growing transatlantic split over a range of primary issues: the size, sophistication, and use of military power; environmental issues; budget priorities, including welfare expenditures; the role of state sovereignty, involving especially the evolution of the European Union; and more.<sup>10</sup>

• *Third, as NATO’s relevance has declined as a security organization in the West, it also has become less important for Russian security interests.* For a while after the Cold War, NATO enlargement was a top Russian foreign policy concern, and Russia’s leaders almost uniformly opposed enlargement as a direct threat to their country’s vital interests.

But while opposition to NATO remains strong in the Russian military, for President Putin and his primary leadership circle, the salience of NATO for Russia’s security interests has declined dramatically since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. For example, the opposition of Putin and other Russian officials to the inclusion of the Baltic states in NATO—a crisis in Russian-Western relations just a few years ago—has become virtually a non-issue. The Putin government supported the establishment of US military bases in Central Asia after 9/11, an area still considered part of the Russian “near abroad,” which was unthinkable before the terrorist attacks. In addition, there has been only mild opposition to the Bush Administration’s decision to abrogate the 1972 ABM Treaty. Finally, the serious bickering between the United States and NATO partners in “Old Europe” over Iraq apparently has convinced Putin that Russian interests are best served by holding the alliance at arm’s length.

Putin’s new, more benign attitude on NATO does not mean that he is becoming “pro-Western.” He remains as pro-Russian as ever, but Russia’s interests and patterns of engagement in international politics have changed fundamentally. Today, Russia has four major security interests under Putin: (1) reversing the centrifugal pressures on the Russian state; (2) economic development, established especially through ties to the West and a secure position

in the oil market; (3) combating terrorism; and (4) China. Although rebuilding the Russian state and economic development are the most important long-term goals, the battle against terrorism is the most important contemporary security issue driving Moscow's overtures to the West. Especially since 9/11, Moscow sees a convergence of interests between the US struggle against al Qaeda and the Russian struggle against Muslim separatists in the Caucasus region, accusing "Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda of being behind the problems in Chechnya."<sup>11</sup> Washington's guarded public recognition that Moscow is facing a "terrorism" issue in Chechnya was welcomed by Putin, even as he looks for more support.

For most Russian leaders—more so than for their American counterparts—the events of 11 September 2001 finally brought the Cold War to an end. Concern about terrorism has prompted Putin to seek a new strategic relationship with the West that preferably would replace NATO and end the artificial divide between east and west. Shortly after 9/11, Putin observed that "all nations are to blame for the terrorist attacks on the United States because they trust outdated security systems. . . . [W]e have failed to recognize the changes of the last 10 years."<sup>12</sup>

Putin knows that dismantling NATO and constructing a new security arrangement is not yet in the cards. Consequently, he is willing to settle for a new relationship between the alliance and Russia that concentrates on terrorism.<sup>13</sup> In exchange, Russia will "rethink opposition to NATO enlargement" and establish regular, structured meetings between Russia and the European Union focusing on terror.<sup>14</sup> This is intended to draw Moscow and the alliance closer together. However, it is a hollow victory. The new Russia NATO Council will be "strictly limited [and] the 19 members of the alliance would reserve the right to once again take up any topic [considered] strictly as an alliance issue."<sup>15</sup> Russia is back at the table, but as a guest, not as a member of the family, and the tension continues between real-world security interests and an organization caught in a world that exists only in the minds of a handful of inertia-guided policymakers. Putin clearly understands the difference.

- *Fourth, expansion to the east actually damages the legitimate interests of the new NATO members.* NATO membership does not protect the countries of Central and Eastern Europe from any recognizable security threat. The usual argument advanced by NATO enthusiasts is that the new members will become "consumers" of security rather than "providers" of security. But, again, security against or from what? What, for example, is the security threat to Hungary, or Slovenia, or the Czech Republic, or even Poland that requires NATO membership? There is no traditional security threat to these countries that could not be handled by the Europeans themselves—if they have the political will to do so.

The companion argument for those advocating NATO expansion is that the alliance will advance democracy and even “civil society.” The 1995 “Study on NATO Enlargement” argued that a primary rationale behind expansion was “to [protect] the further democratic development of new members.”<sup>16</sup> It is legitimate to argue that NATO protected the democracies of Western Europe from the threat of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. But the alliance did not bring democracy and civil society to Western Europe when it was established in 1949, because Western Europe already had a long democratic tradition. In like manner, NATO has not and will not carry democracy and civil society east. As Dan Reiter concludes after a study of democracy in Central Europe, “NATO membership was not necessary for democratization because each [new NATO country] already has a strong national commitment to democracy.”<sup>17</sup> There also is a theoretical and practical problem with this rationale. NATO requires that aspirant countries have a working democratic system in place before they are accepted as members. So, by definition, NATO can’t carry democracy to countries that already must have it established as a prerequisite for membership.

Enlargement puts the Central and East European members in an unnecessary and rapidly debilitating political and financial position. In particular, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are becoming increasingly enmeshed in a conflict of loyalty between NATO and the European Union. Despite the propaganda that NATO and the EU are two legitimate, complementary avenues of development, in fact they are becoming increasingly competitive—for attention, loyalty, and resources. Although this problem is gaining momentum in Western Europe, it is becoming especially acute in Central and Eastern Europe, where the resource base is considerably smaller and political affiliations more fragile.

As a result, “since their accession on March 12, 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have all experienced integration difficulties,”<sup>18</sup> because the real demands of economic and social issues lead to “economic constraints” and “a failure of political will.”<sup>19</sup> And still, NATO and EU authorities continue to press these strapped economies to live up to difficult and at times mutually exclusive commitments that undermine pressing economic and social programs. A prime example for the Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians has been the multi-billion dollar competition for the sale of Lockheed Martin F-16 fighter jets<sup>20</sup> and the Grippen JAS-39, produced by Saab and BAE Systems. These three countries neither can afford nor need either the F-16 or the Grippen, a position borne out by the fact that the cost of repairing the damage caused by the floods in the Czech Republic during the spring of 2002 has scuttled the Czech government’s decision to buy the Grippen.<sup>21</sup> Hungary faces similar restraints, and even larger Poland is so strapped that it agreed in early

2003 to buy 48 Lockheed Martin Block 52 F-16 C/D aircraft for \$3.5 to \$4.0 billion, but only if Warsaw was granted a 100-percent offset.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, if anything undermines the budding democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, it will be the inability to fund critical economic and social programs because of NATO's demands.

Romania provides an early example of what is likely to become commonplace as Central Europe's newest invitees prepare to actually join the alliance, probably in 2004. Just a year ago Romania's chances of being invited to join seemed bleak because it did not meet many of the criteria laid out in the Membership Action Plan. But then, in an attempt to improve its chances, Bucharest actively courted Washington by backing much of the Bush Administration's anti-terrorism strategy and by signing a bilateral agreement "not to turn over American soldiers to the new International Criminal Court."<sup>23</sup> Although this gambit worked, it annoyed European leaders and reportedly "will hurt [Romania's] chances for a place within the EU."<sup>24</sup> In like fashion, the Chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee noted that support by some Central and East European countries for US policy on Iraq "might ultimately endanger those candidates' accession" to the EU. Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the current Chairman of the Convention on the Future of Europe, followed up by warning candidate countries that the Maastricht Treaty requires all members to support "without reservation the EU's foreign policy positions."<sup>25</sup>

In addition, NATO membership—including vulnerability to Western arms merchants—damages the ability of these countries to deal with genuine emerging security issues. Issues of social and economic justice, crime and corruption, environmental degradation, and ethnic reconciliation bear more directly on the security futures of these countries than does their struggle to satisfy NATO's arcane demands for membership. Consequently, instead of pressing these countries to spend scarce resources on NATO, Washington should encourage them to focus exclusively on European and regional organizations that are better geared to help address the real, pressing interests of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>26</sup>

- *Fifth, since the end of the Cold War, NATO's programs and instruments have expanded seemingly exponentially, and its organizing rationale has changed.* Virtually every summit—especially since the fall of communism—has been concerned with attempts to "redefine" or "reinvent" NATO in an effort to ignore history and make NATO relevant to the new reality. The following post-Cold War programs, instruments, and rationales are illustrative.

*Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF).* The CJTF program was established in 1993-94 to provide the "flexibility needed to deploy at short notice forces specifically tailored to a particular contingency. CJTFs can also be made

available for WEU [Western European Union] operations undertaken by European Allies.”<sup>27</sup> In sum, the CJTF program allows NATO assets to be siphoned off for predominantly short-term operations that interest only some (two or more) of NATO’s members (although, in fact, CJTFs have been used mostly by the United States and United Kingdom). Although CJTFs certainly do enhance flexibility with respect to the use of people and resources, it is a flexibility that is driven by the centrifugal reality of an increasingly fragmented alliance, which in turn reflects the growing divergence of interests and values. Consequently, almost any deployment, by definition, could be described as a CJTF. Ironically, CJTFs, which were instituted as a mechanism to preserve a degree of NATO purpose and unity, have become quite the opposite.

*The Membership Action Plan (MAP)*. The MAP was established at NATO’s Washington Summit in 1999 to provide a “tailored program for aspirants, designed to help build a roadmap to future membership.”<sup>28</sup> The MAP laid out five broad areas that were designed to provide a detailed guide for prospective members to join NATO under Article 10 of the Washington Treaty.<sup>29</sup> But the MAP has been essentially a sham. First, prior to 9/11, NATO headquarters promised that the MAP process would hold aspirant countries to very high standards if they wanted to become NATO members, but that changed after 9/11. Virtually all of the countries invited to join the alliance at the Prague Summit in November 2002 had not satisfied the rigorous requirements of the MAP. The test for membership now became how willingly and quickly an aspirant country would follow the US lead in the “war on terrorism.”

Second, the MAP became unnecessarily duplicative. Virtually every part of the five chapters, especially in the political and economic sections, is addressed in the *Acquis Communautaire*, which lays out requirements for membership in the European Union—and arguably EU membership is much more important for the future of Central and Eastern Europe than membership in NATO.

Third, once the new members have bought into the military, defense, and resource requirements of the alliance, they will be pressured to commit to programs, instruments, and equipment they cannot afford and do not need. We already have seen the deleterious effect of these pressures in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and they are likely to have an even greater negative effect on the relatively poorer new inductees.

*The Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI)*. The DCI, also launched at NATO’s summit in Washington in 1999, was intended to prepare the alliance for “the security challenges of the 21st century” by updating military capabilities in five overlapping areas (58 specific areas of shortfall): mobility and deployability, sustainability, effective engagement, survivability, and interoperable communications.<sup>30</sup> It was designed to be a far-reaching, ambi-

tious plan aimed not only at security challenges within Europe, but especially enabling NATO to “deploy forces in distant crises.”

The DCI was perhaps the most important program adopted by the 1999 summit because it was designed to reverse the widening technological and materiel gap between the United States and Europe. It was to lead to a tighter, more equal, more interoperable military alliance that could deploy major forces anywhere in the world for long periods of time. Despite the optimistic hopes of the High Level Steering Group assigned to oversee the DCI, it has proven to be an almost complete failure. With most European defense budgets either flat or declining, and with the US defense budget proposed to reach in excess of \$500 billion by 2009, the gap will grow even greater.<sup>31</sup> But even more important than indicating a divergence in raw capability, this gap reflects diverging values and interests. The Europeans have sufficient technological capability, economic prowess, and talent to narrow the “capabilities gap” significantly—if they want to. What they do not have is the desire or the perceived security need to do so.

*The “Transformation” Summit.* The new Prague Capabilities Committee (PCC), formed at the Prague Summit to focus on 12 areas (in four major “baskets”) needing improvement, was an attempt to recover the failed DCI. This time, however, the new NATO Defense Transformation Initiative (NDTI) “has a narrower focus on new missions and . . . a small, but select number of forces for them.”<sup>32</sup> As the logic goes, each country will take on “capabilities tasks” in advance as one or more of their responsibilities, leading to so-called “niche” responsibilities for even the smallest member, depending on each member’s perceived areas of “comparative advantage.”<sup>33</sup> Sadly, but eminently predictably, the PCC will be no more successful than its predecessor. Nothing important has changed since 1999 to make success any more likely this time. As in the past, the new—as well as the old—members will find no compelling reason to proceed, will find it too costly to do so, or, driven by more pressing concerns, simply will ignore the program. Just like the DCI, the new PCC/NDTI is likely simply to fade into insignificance and die in indifference.

The Prague Summit participants also approved the joint NATO Reaction Force (NRF) under CJTF headquarters, to consist “of a technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable, and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed.”<sup>34</sup> The NRF also is intended to promote and improve “the alliance’s military capabilities.” In other words, the NRF is conceived to become a vehicle for the NDTI, *nee* DCI. The summit also approved a “leaner, more efficient, effective, and deployable command structure,” and moved to “strengthen” the CJTF program. But why will any of these initiatives be more successful than the ones that came out of the Washington Summit? The same

problems exist and, indeed, have been exacerbated, especially as a result of the disagreements between Washington and several European NATO countries over Iraq. Substantial improvement and interoperability of technical capabilities will give way to diverging interests and values, and the smaller members will succumb to financial pressures and conflicting and mutually exclusive security demands. The NRF, which is merely a concept at this point, also is threatened by the same pressures—in part because maintaining such a unit at a high level of readiness for deployment is extremely expensive, but more importantly because its development will suffer from the tugs and pulls of different political interests.

Finally, the new CJTF is likely to be the most successful of NATO's initiatives. CJTFs—old or new—exist and are used only because NATO's cohesiveness and purpose are so porous and weak. If NATO was the kind of security organization its protagonists wanted it to be, not only would CJTFs be unnecessary, they would be an anathema.

*A Collective Security Alliance, not a Defensive Alliance.* As the Cold War faded into history, NATO enthusiasts began to argue that the very nature of the alliance had to change if it was to continue to exist. Consequently, as Henry Kissinger noted, NATO “has become more akin to a collective security organization, like the United Nations, than to a traditional alliance.”<sup>35</sup> If the alliance was to survive, it had to find a rationale that did not depend on a clearly defined enemy, or even a potential enemy. A loosely formed “collective security organization” was the answer.

In reality, these two types of alliances represent a distinction without a difference. Even in a collective “security alliance,” there must be at least some overriding common security bond that holds the participants together. As noted before, quite the opposite is happening—not only on security issues, but in the political realm as well. The NATO that has emerged since the end of the Cold War does not satisfy even the most rudimentary tests of what an alliance is supposed to do. For example, it fails both Stephen Walt's “five . . . explanations for international alliances” and Glenn Snyder's theory of alliance formation and management.<sup>36</sup> And, the further we get from the Cold War, the more serious those frictions will become as the nexus of values and interests between the United States and Europe continues to widen. Two recent examples illustrate the point.

First, after 9/11, NATO's European members declared “Article 5” support for the United States in its war against terrorism generally and the military action in Afghanistan. This was the first time in NATO's history that Article 5 had been formally invoked—and it is likely to be the last, despite the argument that “modern-day terrorism and WMD proliferation are ‘Article 5 threats.’”<sup>37</sup> The United States spurned the European action, and in doing so

Washington signaled that it did not need NATO and that the European allies counted for little in the greatest threat to US vital interests since perhaps the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Second, differences over Iraq illustrate the widening gap in interests and values between the United States and several important European countries, especially France and Germany. These differences are not superficial; they are rooted in a basic philosophical divergence that will not be explained away by the normal admonition that “there have always been differences among NATO countries.” This time, the political survival of the German—and perhaps the French—government depends on it. In both cases, political success depends increasingly on disagreeing with Washington on many of the most important international issues. At the same time, US policy—either by design or by accident—is dividing Europe and thereby damaging the Europeans’ efforts to find common ground on the future of Europe and underscoring Europe’s irrelevancy for US security interests.

### *Getting Past the Past*

The Europeans will have to take the initiative to move beyond security anachronisms such as NATO, because it will not happen as a result of US leadership. Washington will cling to NATO even more desperately and continue to manufacture complicated, ineffective, even deleterious mechanisms to “prove” NATO’s importance and viability. For Washington, NATO is the security institution that best exemplifies the static world it prefers—it makes no difference that the alliance no longer serves any useful security function. The American political class will not be voluntarily shaken from that perspective, no matter how much the world changes.

The Europeans, on the other hand, have been more ready to recognize and embrace the changes that are taking place in the structure of the international system. They are struggling with the transition and are more fully engaged in the transformation than is the United States. The Europeans have reached a critical juncture in the construction of the “European space.” Certainly, questions of “widening versus deepening,” problems of a multiple-speed Europe, the lasting soundness of the Euro, the equity of the Common Agricultural Policy, and even issues of consensus versus majority rule are very important, and they will be handled one way or another in time. But the critical issue that will ultimately define the nature and character of European cooperation is the whole arena of foreign and security policy—an issue that the Europeans currently are not handling very well.

If the United States is blinded by its own self-righteousness, the Europeans are crippled emotionally by their timidity. For different reasons, then, both sides are unable to shed NATO’s Cold War grip, despite the Euro-

peans' greater potential to break this inertia. To do so, they will have to recognize that the conduct of foreign and security policy is perhaps the most fundamental arena that defines any polity. The Europeans are now "a de facto military protectorate of the United States,"<sup>38</sup> unable to fully provide for their own relations with other states and other political organizations on the international stage. To have one's security and foreign policy agenda set by another is the height of servitude.

The Europeans have made a halting start by trying to construct the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). Efforts in both areas have a long history, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s when the "member states of the European community cooperated and endeavored to consult with one another on major international problems."<sup>39</sup> These efforts progressed through the Single European Act in 1986, received a major boost in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 and the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999, the Nice Treaty in 2001, and, in security specifically, at the 1999 Cologne Council meeting (including the Petersburg tasks), and the Helsinki Headline Goals (HHG), which are supposed to be achieved by 2003.<sup>40</sup>

But the effort has stalled, and it is likely to remain stalled as long as the Europeans are tied to the myth that NATO and its lore is the appropriate linchpin for the future. Although discussion under the current European Constitutional Convention does not presently provide a major role for foreign and security policy, there is no reason it cannot be extended to do so.<sup>41</sup> The platform and the precedent are available; only the political will is lacking. The Europeans should begin to chart their own course now by exercising their option under Article 13 of the NATO Treaty and announcing their intention to withdraw from the alliance. Ironically, the bitter transatlantic dispute over Iraq may already have started the process.

#### NOTES

1. David Steele, *Lord Salisbury—A Political Biography* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 121.

2. See *Congressional Digest*, 75 (February 1996), 33; "Summary of U.S. Government Policy on Bosnia," released by the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, US Department of State, 16 July 1998; press briefing on the NATO Summit and Kosovo, the White House, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1999; statement by Secretary of State Albright before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1999.

3. Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton—The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2000), p. 164.

4. Comments by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith; see the Armed Forces Press Service, 28 February 2002.

5. Statement by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Marc Grossman; see *Department of State Bulletin*, 9 October 2001.

6. *The Financial Times*, 15 May 2002.

7. Terrorism does not fit the bill because it is diffuse, sporadic, and of much less salience in Europe than in the United States. All of this requires a different kind of response than NATO can provide. In short, NATO does not have the tools to fight terrorism.

8. Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, No. 113 (June & July, 2002).

9. Anthony Padgen, *Lords of All the World—Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France (1500-1800)* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 5, 8.

10. Clearly, as disagreements within Europe over Washington's Iraq policy demonstrate, European countries are not always of one mind on all transatlantic issues. But intra-European divisions do not undermine the basic point, and once the immediate crisis over Iraq fades, the centrifugal issues separating the United States from the Europeans will accelerate.

11. "New Dawn for Russia," *European Defence*, no date, <http://www.European-defence.co.uk/article14.html>.

12. BBC World News Report, 25 September 2001.

13. *Der Spiegel*, 3 October 2001.

14. "Russia Ready to Rethink Stand on NATO: Putin," *Dawn*, 4 October 2001, <http://www.dawn.com/2001/10/04/int5.htm>.

15. <http://64.69.109.103/mic/eaabstract.cfm?>

16. NATO Basic Texts, *Study on NATO Enlargement*, ch. 1, "Purposes and Principles of Enlargement," <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9502.htm>.

17. Dan Reiter, "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy," *International Security*, 25 (Spring 2001), 60.

18. Jeffrey Simon, "NATO's Membership Action Plan and Defense Planning," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 48 (May-June 2001), 28.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

20. Dipankar De Sarkar, "EUROPE: Arms Trade Launches All-Out Sales Blitz on New NATO Members," *World News*, 18 July 2001, <http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/jul/nato.html>.

21. *Aerospace Daily*, 28 August 2002.

22. *Fort Worth Business News*, 13 February 2003.

23. Institute for War and Peace Reporting, "Romania: Courting NATO Harms EU Hopes," 21 August 2002.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty news line, 10 February 2003.

26. Although the EU is the most important organization for the future of Central and Eastern Europe, other organizations, such as the Southeast Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) and the Southeastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEEDM) process are potentially more important to the specific security issues of these countries than is NATO.

27. Anthony Cragg, "The Combined Joint Task Force Concept: A Key Component of the Alliance's Adaptation," *NATO Review*, 44 (July 1996), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1996/9604-2.htm>. See also, NATO Fact Sheets, "The Combined Joint Task Forces Concept," <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/cjtf-con.htm>.

28. NATO Fact Sheets, "NATO's Membership Action Plan," <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/nato-map.htm>. Also see Membership Action Plan, Press Release NAC-S(99)66, 24 April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-066e.htm>.

29. The five areas or chapters in the MAP program are: (1) political/economic issues, (2) defense/military issues, (3) resource issues, (4) security issues, and (5) legal issues.

30. NATO Fact Sheets, "NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative," <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/nato-dci.htm>.

31. *The Washington Post*, 31 January 2003.

32. Jeffrey Simon, "NATO at a Crossroads: Can it Cope with Post-September 11th and Enlargement Challenges?" unpublished paper, Institute For Security Studies, National Defense University, p. 3.

33. Testimony by Thomas Szayna (RAND Corporation) before the Committee on NATO Enlargement of the US House of Representatives' Committee on International Relations, Sub-Committee on Europe, 17 April 2002.

34. Prague Summit Declaration, issued 21 November 2002.

35. "A Dangerous Divergence," *The Washington Post*, 10 December 2002, op-ed.

36. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), ch. 2; Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), chs. 2, 6.

37. Richard L. Kugler, "Preparing NATO to Meet New Threats: Challenge and Opportunity," US Department of State, International Information Programs, 27 March 2002, <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/nato/02032800.htm>.

38. Zbigniew Brzezinski et al., "Living With the New Europe," *The National Interest*, No. 60 (Summer 2000).

39. Council of the European Union, "Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defense Policy," <http://ue.eu.int/pesc/pres.asp?lang=en>.

40. Some scholars argue that European efforts to find common ground in foreign and security policy can be traced back to the European Defense Community idea (Pleven Plan) of 1966-67.

41. Title III, Article 13, of the preliminary draft Constitutional Treaty provides ample justification for bold moves in the area of foreign and security policy.