

COUNCIL_{on} FOREIGN RELATIONS

Building a New NATO

Author(s): Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler and F. Stephen Larrabee

Source: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Sep. - Oct., 1993), pp. 28-40

Published by: Council on Foreign Relations

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20045713>

Accessed: 25-09-2019 08:11 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Council on Foreign Relations is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Foreign Affairs*

Building a New NATO

*Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler and
F. Stephen Larrabee*

A NEW TRANSATLANTIC BARGAIN

THREE YEARS AFTER the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe is headed toward crisis. Memories of democracy's triumph have faded. The immense problems facing the new democracies in the East are increasingly compounded by political gridlock, economic recession and resurgent nationalism. The revolutions of 1989 not only toppled communism; they unleashed a set of dynamics that have unraveled the peace orders of Yalta and Versailles. War in the Balkans, instability in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, growing doubts about the European Community's future as well as the future role of the United States—all underscore the lack of any stable post-Cold War European security order.

Nationalism and ethnic conflict have already led to two world wars in Europe. Whether Europe unravels for a third time this century depends on if the West summons the political will and strategic vision to address the causes of potential instability and conflict before it is too late. A new U.S.-European strategic bargain is needed, one that extends NATO's collective defense and security arrangements to those areas where the seeds for future conflict in Europe lie: the Atlantic alliance's eastern and southern borders.

RONALD D. ASMUS, RICHARD L. KUGLER AND F. STEPHEN LARRABEE are senior analysts at RAND. The views and conclusions expressed are their own and should not be interpreted as representing the views of RAND or any other agency sponsoring its research.

EUROPE'S CHANGED STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

THE END OF THE Cold War has wiped away the strategic distinction between Europe's center and periphery. Whereas the potential locus of conflict in Europe during the Cold War was located along the old inner-German border, Europe's new strategic challenges exist almost exclusively along two "arcs of crisis." The first is the eastern arc: the zone of instability running between Germany and Russia from northern Europe down through Turkey, the Caucasus and middle Asia. The second is the southern arc, running through northern Africa and the Mediterranean into the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

In the eastern arc especially, the Soviet collapse has left behind significant and unbalanced military forces and weapons inventories among nations experiencing a wave of instability and conflict generated by virulent nationalism. East-Central Europe is littered with potential mini-Weimar Republics, each capable of inflicting immense violence on the others. Paradoxically, while heavily armed, these countries nonetheless lack the ability to defend themselves against major outside aggressors. This is the case despite strong residual fears about the threat of a possibly resurgent Russia—a nation that has itself demonstrated real signs of instability, the potential for a shift to the right and flirtations with imperial restoration.

These factors combine to fuel an almost desperate search for security in the region, which itself reinforces the trends toward geopolitical competition, proliferation and instability, as the expectation builds that states may soon pursue unilateral attempts to gain real or perceived security. Ideological mobilization alongside a security vacuum is once again proving to be Europe's classic recipe for instability and conflict.

While these circumstances are seemingly located safely on Europe's periphery, for a number of reasons conflicts along either arc are in fact central to European security. First, conflicts in the arcs are increasingly generated by antidemocratic and anti-Western ideologies that threaten the liberal-democratic foundations of Western Europe and the nascent democracies of the former Soviet bloc. Second, conflict and insecurity in the twin arcs are unlikely to be neatly isolated or contained. Spillover, in the form of political and economic instability and refugees, is a real danger. Third, while local conflicts

may escalate into regional wars, instability in such geopolitically sensitive areas also threatens to draw in one or several major powers who see their own interests threatened. Finally, and perhaps most important, instability along the arcs threatens to reactivate old fault lines and dormant historical rivalries—geopolitical competition between Germany and Russia along the eastern arc, or a conflict between the West and Islam in the south.

Western policymakers have been slow to recognize these new dangers and the security needs of these states. Many still cling to Cold War distinctions between Western Europe, which is implicitly defined as a vital interest, and Eastern Europe, which is seen as a secondary or peripheral concern. The West must not delude itself that the problems of violent national conflict are exclusive to the Balkans. More than anything, events in the former Yugoslavia underscore how war is far more likely in the absence of a functioning security structure. East-Central Europe's lack of a stable security

arrangement has already helped to undercut progress toward democracy and economic reform. Now, the spread of instability or violent conflict threatens to destroy even that progress achieved thus far.

East-Central Europe's democrats well understand that democracy will succeed only if their states belong to a secure European

and Western political, economic and military community. The West, too, previously understood this link—as demonstrated with the case of West Germany. That nation might never have become a stable Western democracy had it not been accepted into NATO's fold. Similarly, NATO membership helped stabilize democracy and stem authoritarian backsliding in Portugal, Spain, Greece and Turkey. Those who insist that democratic credentials must be presented prior to alliance membership should remember that the need for a stable security framework is greatest when democracy is most fragile and threatened.

Instability in the East threatens to revive old rivalries between Germany and Russia.

Building a New NATO

A GRAND STRATEGY FOR THE WEST

THE WEST NEEDS a grand strategy to reorganize itself to deal with the issues of conflict and instability and to project collective defense, democracy and security into the twin arcs of crisis. Such a strategy must be, first and foremost, political and economic. But the West must also establish a stable security framework for these regions.

The obvious tool for this new strategy is NATO. The Persian Gulf War and the ongoing Yugoslav crisis have shown the European Community incapable of taking on such a task. Achieving consensus among the 12 EC members, especially when military action is required, is nearly impossible. Belgian Foreign Minister Mark Eysken's remark during the gulf crisis—that the EC was an economic giant, political dwarf and military worm—sadly remains true.

What is true of the EC is doubly true of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The very number and diversity of its members make it impossible for this 53-nation organization spanning the globe from Vancouver to Vladivostok to speak with one voice. Only NATO—an alliance with a tested leadership structure, functioning logistics and an effective arsenal—is capable of addressing the security challenges of post-Cold War Europe.

While almost everyone from the Atlantic to the Urals shudders at the prospect of NATO crumbling and the United States withdrawing from Europe, the simple fact is that if NATO does not address the primary security challenges facing Europe today, it will become increasingly irrelevant. NATO must go out of area or it will go out of business.

The kind of NATO that could respond to Europe's new strategic challenges would bear little resemblance to the NATO of the Cold War. It would be based on a new political bargain between the United States and Europe, a different set of political and military understandings, as well as a new relationship with the East. This bargain would simultaneously expand the alliance's strategic horizon geographically and find new ways to share responsibilities and burdens. NATO's rationale and mission would be defined anew.

The act of reconfiguring NATO to handle such dangers admittedly carries both risks and costs. But NATO has already taken some steps in this direction. The London and Rome summits began redefining the

alliance's political and military strategy. The North Atlantic Cooperation Council was created to extend cooperation to the countries of the former Warsaw Pact. But the NACC does not go far enough. It is essentially a holding operation that provides only meager psychological reassurance. The NACC's unwieldy membership, which includes all the successor states of the former U.S.S.R., including the Central Asian republics, prevents it from providing meaningful security in Europe. The only constraints on further transforming NATO are the political will and strategic vision of its members.

REORGANIZING THE WEST

POLITICALLY, SIX STEPS are necessary to forge a new transatlantic bargain. The first and in many ways most important step is to transform NATO from an alliance based on collective defense against a specific threat into an alliance committed to projecting democracy, stability and crisis management in a broader strategic sense.

A new transatlantic bargain must be based on the new political imperatives on both sides of the Atlantic. While there remains a general consensus in the United States that Washington should remain engaged in Europe, this no longer automatically translates into support for the old transatlantic bargain. Changing American priorities mean that the United States now needs to share the burdens and responsibilities with its allies. European political imperatives have also changed in ways that mirror the United States. An overwhelming desire to see the Americans remain engaged in Europe notwithstanding, Europeans want a more balanced and equal relationship with Washington.

The second step in forging a new transatlantic bargain, therefore, must be a new understanding between the United States and its European allies that harmonizes the interests of both sides. Europeanization of the alliance is as much in the interests of the United States as it is of Europeans. The United States will be less able to play the lead or major role in providing security in Europe unless it is part of a more equal partnership. While Washington recognizes its interests along both arcs and the unique role it can play, future U.S. involvement will be conditioned on Europe's willingness to bear its own share. Alter-

nately, then, Washington must be willing to accept a stronger European identity, including in security affairs.

The inability to harmonize the transatlantic partnership with European integration has caused particular tension with France. To ease these strains, Washington must relinquish its residual ambivalence toward European integration. France will agree to participate in a new NATO only if Washington more actively supports European integration. Such a course, moreover, remains the best guarantee for securing democracy in Europe and guarding against the revival of destructive nationalism. Washington's concern that French influence in Europe will challenge American interests is both misguided and misplaced—misplaced because it is unlikely and misguided because the real danger is not that Europe will become too strong but too weak. The strategic logic of post-Cold War Europe should drive Washington and Paris closer together.

For its part, France must abandon its exaggerated fear of American hegemony. The real issue regarding the future American role in Europe is not whether Washington will be hegemonic, but whether the transatlantic relationship can be turned into the kind of partnership that fully engages the United States. Without French backing to transform NATO, the alliance will crumble. France would then find itself forced to go it alone in a Europe characterized by increasing instability along both its eastern and southern flanks, with an independent Germany and an aloof America. Paris would have helped deny itself what it is in fact most interested in obtaining: American support for a unified Europe.

Recognition of these factors has led to a shift in French thinking. In past months Paris has signaled its interest in a new transatlantic bargain. While insisting that Paris will not return to the "old" NATO, French officials recognize that NATO will have to change its mission and have announced their willingness both to define and fully participate in the process of transforming the alliance.

Franco-American rapprochement can set the stage for the third step in transforming NATO—Germany's strategic emancipation. Germany must finally resolve the confused debate over its future role in Europe and beyond. To be sure, residual fears concerning German power still exist. But only a strong Germany can facilitate European

integration and NATO's strategic transformation.

Germany is the country most vulnerable to instability, but one whose democratic and geopolitical orientation are crucial for the continent. While Germany remains preoccupied with the staggering challenge of the political and economic reconstruction of its eastern half, the need to stabilize its eastern flank is Bonn's number one security concern. This preoccupation has little to do with some mythical *Drang nach Osten* but instead results from a *Zwang nach Osten*—the imperative to become more involved in the East in order to project

More than any other country, Germany has an interest in seeing NATO extend collective security.

Germany's own democracy and stability. It thus has been at the forefront of efforts to extend the EC eastward and, more recently, has opened the debate over a new role for NATO.

Germany's constitution does not expressly forbid German troops from being deployed abroad in active combat roles. What prevents them is what former Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has aptly called "state practice"—a constitutional interpretation that German politicians have chosen, often for tactical reasons. The underlying issue, then, is not constitutional but political: What must Germany do to contribute to peace and stability in a new European security order? The best solution to that dilemma is for Germany to play an active role in a revitalized Atlantic alliance.

This requires German leaders, especially among the current Social Democratic opposition, to take a responsible approach to the issue of German participation in out-of-area operations. While German politicians overwhelmingly proclaim themselves to be pro-NATO, their unwillingness to resolve this issue blocks alliance reform. Unless Germany resolves this debate, it will be all but impossible to proceed with a new transatlantic bargain. And without a strong Germany that fully participates in new security roles, including combat missions, the likelihood of an American withdrawal from Europe increases. More than any other country, Germany has an interest in seeing NATO move toward extended collective security.

DEALING WITH THE EAST

REORGANIZING THE West will set the stage for the fourth step in this process—a coherent and coordinated Western strategy for the integration of Visegrad countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and possibly Slovakia) into both the EC and NATO. Opening the EC to the East is the best guarantee against a revival of anti-Western nationalism and of stabilizing the process of political and economic reform.

EC expansion will in turn increase pressures for NATO membership. As these countries enter the EC, they will have the option of joining the Western European Union. Thus, they will acquire security guarantees from Europe's key powers and Washington's major NATO allies. A situation in which a country like Germany would extend a security commitment to Poland through the WEU, but not through NATO, could destroy the Atlantic alliance. For Washington it would create a situation like that which existed among the European powers prior to World War I—where the entangling commitments of a country enjoying an American security guarantee could draw the United States into a conflict over which it had little if any control. It is clearly better to have these security guarantees spelled out within a new NATO, where they will be credible and where the United States can influence them.

Including the Visegrad countries in NATO is also in the American interest. The political leaders of these countries are pro-American. Their views on security issues closely coincide with those of the United States and other Atlanticist members such as Britain, Portugal and the Netherlands. Their inclusion in NATO would strengthen the Atlanticist orientation of the alliance and provide greater internal support for U.S. views on key security issues.

NATO membership, like EC membership, can come in phases and should be made conditional. The criteria for membership need to be spelled out clearly in advance and should include commitment to democratic rule, civil-military reform, renunciation of all territorial claims, respect for the rights of minorities, and willingness to participate in the full range of future NATO activities from peacekeeping to collective defense. By conditioning membership on these criteria, NATO can help solidify a zone of stability in Central Europe without

undue risk of embroiling NATO's existing members in new ethnic or intra-regional conflicts.

There is no reason why membership must be simultaneous for all these countries. Some countries, such as Poland, may be ready for NATO membership sooner than others. In the case of the EC, on the other hand, countries like the Czech Republic may be ready for accession sooner than Poland. The alliance should do what makes political and strategic sense based on its own security needs and those of the East European countries.

In the meantime, NATO should create the preconditions for the eventual integration of these countries into the alliance by expanding defense cooperation. Such cooperation would not imply a full-fledged defense commitment. Conceivably, "association agreements" could spell out the criteria for membership, but not provide explicit security guarantees. Such an arrangement would give the countries of Central and Eastern Europe the clear perspective they are looking for. At the same time, it would provide them time to adapt their military and defense establishments to meet NATO standards.

Fear of strategic entanglement, that NATO will be drawn into local conflicts in the region, has heretofore kept the alliance from embracing these countries. The alliance, however, has dealt with this issue involving other countries during different periods. The most familiar case is the Greek-Turkish conflict. It is far better to deal with such issues in the context of a collective defense framework than to run the risk that such conflicts will erupt and spill over into the alliance.

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

THE FIFTH STEP in the new transatlantic bargain concerns Russia. If providing security is important for stabilizing East European democracy, then the same must hold true for Russia's more fragile democratic experiment. Helping to democratize Russia should be one of the West's top strategic priorities. If democratic change succeeds in Russia, then there is no legitimate reason to exclude it from the Western community. A strong security partnership with a democratic Russia would be one of the strongest guarantees of peace and stability in Europe.

Russia nevertheless remains a special case due to its size, geostrategic position and long imperial tradition. Many Europeans believe that Russia is not a European country, is unlikely to become one and should not be allowed into core European institutions. Indeed, at the moment not a single Atlantic alliance member is in favor of allowing Russia into either the EC or NATO, although most avoid saying so openly.

The West has been reluctant to move toward the East more quickly for fear of offending Russia's strategic sensibilities. But it is hard to understand how supporting democracy and stability in Eastern Europe can undercut democracy in Russia. It is not in the interests of Russia, above all Russian democrats, to have a zone of instability, renewed nationalism and potential conflict on its western flank.

NATO needs to remain sensitive to Russia's security interests and the delicate balance of power in Moscow. As it transforms and expands relations with Central and Eastern Europe, the West should not give Russia the feeling that a new iron curtain is being erected along its western border. As NATO strengthens its links to Central and Eastern Europe, it should expand and deepen its security dialogue with Russia, above all with the Russian military, which still tends to see NATO as an anti-Russian alliance. Specifically, the West needs to lay down the basic principles around which to structure a new special relationship between NATO and the EC on the one hand, and Russia on the other. Such a charter would be designed to reassure Russia that it will be included in efforts to build a new European security order.

Extending the alliance eastward should be seen as the West taking a step toward Russia, rather than against it. As a partner of the West, Russia could play a crucial role as a pillar of security and stability in Europe and Asia. Whether NATO's eastward extension becomes a new offer for partnership or a move toward an anti-Russian alliance rests almost entirely on the outcome of Russia's own internal transformation. This process, over which the West has little control, is likely to take years. In the meantime, the West should not give Moscow a *droit de regard* over its own policies. The West must continue to define its own interests along the eastern arc of crisis and then work with Russia to implement them. To hold the future of NATO hostage to the outcome of Russian politics is a recipe for the demise of the alliance.

The sixth step in the new transatlantic bargain requires the West

to develop a constructive Ukrainian policy. An independent Ukraine is one of the most important features of Europe's new strategic landscape; it acts as an important strategic buffer between Europe and Russia. In light of the uncertainties surrounding Russian democracy,

To hold NATO's future hostage to the outcome of Russian politics is a recipe for the demise of the alliance.

it represents the best guarantee against Russian imperial restoration from the point of view of Eastern Europe, especially of Poland. The reincorporation of Ukraine into a Russian-led confederation would transform the geostrategic equation in Europe as a whole.

The West has thus far viewed Ukraine largely as a proliferation problem rather than a state with legitimate security concerns.

Washington's preoccupation with the nuclear issue has been counter-productive and has obscured the larger issues at stake. Instead of making the Ukrainians more willing to give up nuclear weapons, it has strengthened pronuclear sentiment in Ukraine.

A broader policy is needed. The West should strongly resist any Russian effort to reincorporate Ukraine. If it does not, Ukraine will be driven in a more nationalist direction and toward the retention of nuclear weapons. The West should also encourage Ukraine's Europeanization, its development of closer ties to Central Europe and its integration into pan-European and regional groupings, thereby reducing prospects for the emergence of a highly nationalistic, xenophobic regime that could threaten its neighbors, especially Poland.

REORGANIZING NATO'S MILITARY

FINALLY, EXTENDED collective defense and security means that the alliance must be reorganized militarily. NATO's basic problem is the mismatch between its old mission and Europe's new strategic challenges. It is no longer possible for NATO to concentrate on the strategic luxury of territorial defense. The dividing line between "in area" and "out of area" crises, so clearly drawn during the Cold War, has become ambiguous and artificial. Redefining alliance commitments in both areas, and finding the proper balance between the two, is the fundamental issue facing the alliance. Any new balance, however, must greatly improve

Building a New NATO

NATO's capability to conduct military operations beyond its borders, and eventually allow it to expand its full security guarantees.

The majority of future crises will likely fall into what was formerly considered "out of area." While alliance members were required to consult with each other when their security was threatened beyond NATO's boundaries, the alliance, or a group of alliance members, was not prohibited from acting together in other areas. But what was once an ad hoc and almost tangential alliance activity will now move to center stage. NATO members, therefore, must be able to assemble a coalition quickly, fashion policy and strategy, create a command staff, deploy forces and build a support infrastructure. The alliance will need to develop better institutions that will make it less dependent on improvisation in the midst of crises.

Two institutional reforms should be pursued. NATO should create a new Committee for Preventive Diplomacy and Crisis Management for developing policy concerning the twin arcs. It should also create a new Force Projection Command responsible for developing the military plans and forces needed to conduct operations beyond NATO's traditional borders. The goal of such reforms is to improve the alliance's capabilities for crisis management, whether operating under an integrated command or in less formal ways.

Above all, NATO will need to equip itself to deal with the full spectrum of possible conflicts in Europe, ranging from small to large and from peacekeeping to combat operations. Today NATO is capable of peacekeeping and modest combat operations. But it could be hard pressed to react to a major crisis, doubly so if more than one crisis were to erupt simultaneously. NATO should focus on improving forces that already exist rather than on creating new forces. NATO's Rapid Reaction Corps could be reorganized to strengthen its deployability. Further development of the Eurocorps also makes sense. These measures could triple the alliance's capacity to project power beyond its borders.

THE NEED FOR WILL AND VISION

A new transatlantic bargain is essential lest Europe fall back into its old rivalries and patterns of conflict. The alliance's future will be decided on Bill Clinton's watch as America's first post-Cold War

president. During his presidential campaign, Clinton cast himself in the tradition of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman—domestic reformers and activist international leaders. They were also presidents who redefined America's relationships with Europe at crucial junctures in world history—F.D.R. by bringing the United States into World War II, and Truman by taking the lead in forging the postwar strategic bargain.

Forging a new partnership between the United States and Europe for the post-Cold War era is as important and difficult as those earlier challenges. American leadership must secure the gains of the Cold War and build a new U.S.-European partnership that can project democracy and stability. What is required is political will and strategic vision. By showing both, President Clinton can lay the foundation for a new partnership between the United States and Europe for the post-Cold War era. 🌐