Center for Security Studies

STRATEGIC TRENDS 2017

Key Developments in Global Affairs

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A Castle in the Air?

Fragility and Self-Doubt in European and International Security

"The people of the time scornfully looked down on earlier epochs with their wars, famines and revolutions as periods when mankind had not yet come of age and was insufficiently enlightened … that century basked in its own sense of achievement and regarded every decade, as it drew to a close, as the prelude to an even better one. People no more believed in the possibility of barbaric relapses, such as wars between the nations of Europe, than they believed in ghosts and witches; our fathers were doggedly convinced of the infallibly binding power of tolerance and conciliation. They honestly thought that divergences between nations and religious faiths would gradually flow into a sense of common humanity, so that peace and security, the greatest of goods, would come to all mankind."
Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday: Memoirs of a European (1942)

In his autobiography Stefan Zweig, the Austrian writer who fled Central Europe amidst the rise of Fascism, wrote perceptively of the illusions that many harbored prior to the upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century. He called the optimism and sense of security that accompanied Europe's long peace between 1815 and 1914 "a castle in the air" – a mirage that seemed permanent but which in reality simply masked "the destructive forces of the underworld" which "could break through at any moment".

It pains us to introduce the 2017 edition of *Strategic Trends* with such a gloomy historical reference. However, Zweig's rueful account of what he called the "liberal idealism" of the pre-World War One era seems appropriate, given the seismic changes that have rocked the establishment in recent months. At the

systemic level, the liberal world order appears to be under threat. The longstanding liberal hegemon, the United States, appears to be in decline relative to rising illiberal powers, such as China, and resurgent ones, such as Russia. Americans are now openly questioning the value of an internationalist foreign policy and even, it seems with the election of Donald Trump, the desirability of liberal democratic institutions.

Things are even bleaker when we narrow the focus to Europe. Radical rightwing populism is on the march in many European countries, with potentially fateful elections looming in France. Indeed, the entire European project appears to be under threat. The unresolved problems of the Eurozone continue to weaken and divide member states. Instability on Europe's periphery has led to an inflow of migrants and refugees from poorer and/or war-torn regions, testing – and often surpassing – the limits of European toleration. The magnitude of this challenge is increased considerably by the ever-present threat of terrorism. Meanwhile, Britain has decided to withdraw from the European Union and insurgent parties around Europe are clamoring for the opportunity to follow in its footsteps.

It seems to us, as we survey the security landscape in early 2017, that *fragility* is pervasive. It imbues the key facets of public life. Political institutions are threatened by the forces of anti-Europeanism and illiberalism. Economic institutions are being undermined by globalization, inequality, and the shortcomings of the common European currency. Security institutions such as NATO are wobbling in the face of the potential unilateralism of the United States, a newly assertive Russia, and an inability to forge a genuine and effective set of European foreign policies.

Events such as "Brexit" and the election of Donald Trump in the US have shocked the liberal system, not only because of their specific impact on European and global order, but also because of the sudden speed with which these fundamental changes are occurring. These events have accelerated the emergence of underlying trends, such as nationalist populism, feeding into a growing sense of powerlessness amongst political elites and a desire to "take back control" among populaces.

The four chapters in this volume offer early, but informed analyses on the current state and future direction of a very fluid Euro-Atlantic security system.

While the foci of the chapters vary and address today's security challenges from various perspectives – from the OSCE world, Trump's America, European defense onto NATO – there are some common themes.

While analyzing current trends, all authors emphasize, albeit to differing degrees, historical processes and old problems that have been gestating for years. Seen through this prism, the Ukraine Crisis and the election of Donald Trump are both a symptom rather than a cause of European insecurity and American disengagement from liberal internationalism. Concurrently, the presidency of Donald Trump and the "Brexit" referendum, though the result of razor-thin margins at the voting booths, represent long-standing movements in the two countries (and others in Europe, for that matter).

This is why the impact on the security policies of European states, of NATO and the EU has been so immense: discussions about marginal modifications of the existing architecture are no longer sufficient. The same holds for a debate about burden sharing. President Trump and "Brexit" cause and demand radical change and courageous leadership – at a time when, as we see it, fragility and self-doubt appear overwhelming.

While there have been serious crises and challenges to the post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security architecture before, what most worries the authors of "Strategic Trends 2017" is the unprecedented concurrence of today's challenges. If experienced Western leaders underline that they have never experienced such a confluence of crises at the same time, and that they think that the EU could crumble away – than this should give analysts pause. With that in mind we hope that the essays collected in this year's volume of "Strategic Trends" offer some thought-provoking reflections and ideas how to deal with this new and uncomfortable situation.

To be sure, the state of affairs in 2017 is nowhere near as bad as in 1914. In fact, we would argue that, though fragility is rife, it is also reversible. In other words, we should not despair like Zweig – who committed suicide after completing his memoirs – and hold fast in the belief that, with the right attitude and better policies, the tide can be turned.

Daniel Keohane, Christian Nünlist, Jack Thompson & Martin Zapfe

Contested History: Rebuilding Trust in European Security

Christian Nünlist

Different interpretations of the recent past still cast a negative shadow on the relations between Russia and the West. The Ukraine Crisis was a symptom, but not the deeper cause of Russia's disengagement from the European peace order of 1990. While the current situation is far from a "new Cold War", reconstructing contested history and debating missed opportunities are needed today to create trust and overcome European insecurity.

US President George H. W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev shake hands at the end of a press conference in Moscow on 31 July 1991.

History is back. Recent developments have made clear that ghosts from the past still cast a negative shadow on the current political dialogue between Russia and the West. In addition to tensions arising from the present, the fact that Russia and the West subscribe to diametrically opposed narratives on the evolution of the European security order after 1990 prevents a common view on the causes and origins of today's problems. These different interpretations of the recent past continue to shape the world today.

The Ukraine Crisis was a symptom, but not the deeper cause of Russia's disengagement from the European peace order of 1990. The collapse of a common perspective on European security originated much earlier. The current confrontation between Russia and the political West and the broken European security architecture must be understood as a crisis foretold. In 2014, the "cold peace" between Russia and the West after 1989 turned into a "little Cold War".[1]

This burden of the past bedevils the current debate about Russia's role in Europe. Historical analogies are often invoked in discussions over the nature of the current state of affairs, or in trying to explain how we arrived from the high hopes of 1989 at the hostilities of today. On the one hand, some observers speak of a "new Cold War" and recommend a return to a strategy of containment, echoing the ghost of US Cold War diplomat George F. Kennan.[2] Others even invoke the image of a "Second Versailles",[3] criticizing the alleged humiliation of Russia after 1991 and the absence of a "new Marshall Plan" for Russia in the 1990s.[4] On the other hand, commentators complain about Russia's neo-imperialist appearance, the claim for special treatment, the references to its unique civilization, and exclusive spheres of influence.[5]

These are not purely academic discussions. The Western narrative is also contested by the sitting Russian leader. President Vladimir Putin has often complained that the West promised Moscow it would not accept any of the former Warsaw Pact members into NATO in 1990. He therefore regards NATO's expansion as a Western betrayal.

Radically different interpretations of the steps that led from cooperation to confrontation complicate a return back to dialogue, trust, and cooperation. A high-level Panel of Eminent Persons (PEP) launched by Switzerland, Serbia, and Germany identified these divergent narratives about the recent past as "a main problem of today's relations between Russia and the West". Its report "Back to Diplomacy"

(2015) called for a research project that would systematically analyze the different views on the history of European security since 1990 and examine how and why they developed.[6]

In this sense, the present chapter aims to make a modest contribution towards placing post-1989 events in their proper historical context – with a view to the confrontation of our day and possible future ways out of the current stalemate. Naturally, the first drafts of history are always based on little empirical evidence. As long as official documents are classified (usually 25 – 30 years), studies have to rely largely on memoirs and testimonies of eyewitnesses. This first phase of historiography often promotes a politicized history, with former policymakers wanting to put their actions in the best possible light. Recently, however, archives in the US, Russia, Germany, and elsewhere have been opened, allowing solid historiographical interpretations of what was going on behind the scenes in the early post-Cold War period. Contemporary historians can now provide valuable corrections to early myth-making (whether intentional or unintentional) by adding new empirical, archival evidence and a well-founded historical view to the debate.[7]

The aim of this chapter is not to place blame on one side as the main culprit for the descent from cooperation to confrontation. Rather, the newly available documentary evidence allows us to better understand analytically the motives, behavior, and actions on all sides and to provide a more nuanced version with more clarity of what really happened behind closed doors from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

This chapter is structured around presenting three central arguments: *First,* the often-heard historical analogy, suggesting that the current situation should be labeled a "new cold war" is scrutinized, but ultimately rejected as an inaccurate metaphor which is also misleading for shaping current political decisions in the West. *Second,* I argue that the crux of Russia's sense of marginalization within the European peace order lies in the failure to implement the Cold War settlement and the common vision of a pan-European, inclusive security architecture – and in misunderstandings about what had been agreed upon in the high-level diplomatic talks between the West and the Soviet Union that ended the Cold War in 1990. *Third,* I argue that any renewed effort to deal constructively with the other side needs to start with understanding previous missed opportunities and learning from the past. The deeper causes of

Russia's current disengagement from Europe must be discussed and clarified. By exposing myths, reconstructing contested history may contribute towards tearing down the currently poisoned propagandistic echo chambers and creating trust and confidence in the present situation. An open, inclusive dialogue similar to the historic Helsinki process could be a viable way out of today's crisis.

If it was possible to create the basis for peaceful coexistence in Europe in a cumbersome, multilateral negotiation marathon during the Cold War, this should also be possible in the 21st century – despite, or precisely because of, the currently difficult conditions. However, it should also be remembered that the historic Helsinki process could only be launched ten years after the Berlin Wall had been built and after West and East had accepted their respective spheres of influences in Europe. Today, patience is needed for setting up a similar multilateral exercise within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Disputed territories and overlapping spheres of influence make the situation today much more complicate.

It is opportune now to critically review the terms of the Cold War settlement in Europe in 1990 to better understand the roots of the current confrontation between Russia and the West. The missed opportunity for a successful integration of Russia into European security structures after 1989 puts into perspective the Western narrative of the end of the Cold War, hitherto often portrayed as a success story. While the enlargement rounds of NATO and the EU have provided security and prosperity to Central and Eastern European countries, the failure to find an acceptable place for Russia within the European security framework contributed to a new dividing line in Europe and instability.

A more nuanced understanding of the recent past, as advanced in this chapter, is in no way meant to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. But it should serve as a reminder that the West and Russia have not yet found a solution to overcome European insecurity and have yet to realize the vision of indivisible European security. Or in the words of Italian philosopher George Santayana (1863 – 1952): "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."[8]

A New Cold War? Characteristics of the Current Confrontation

Russia's land grab of Crimea and its (initially denied) military intervention in Eastern Ukraine brought back memories of the original East-West

Cold War versus Today

Population in millions

Legend:
- USSR
- Russia
- USA

1984 — USSR: 274.9 | USA: 236.4

2016 — Russia: 143.4 | USA: 324.1
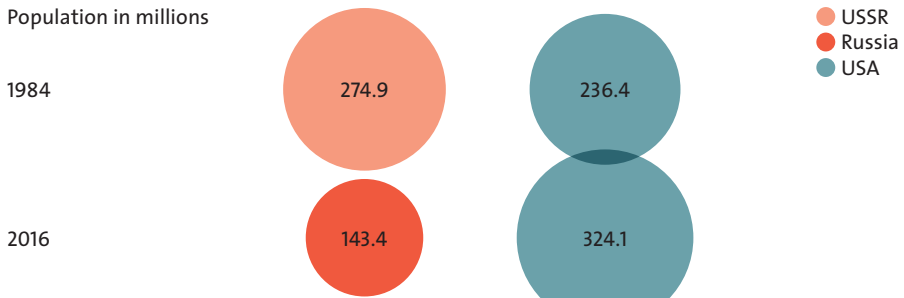
Real GDP per capita in USD

1984 — USSR: 6,700 | USA: 30,816

2015 — Russia: 11,039 | USA: 51,054
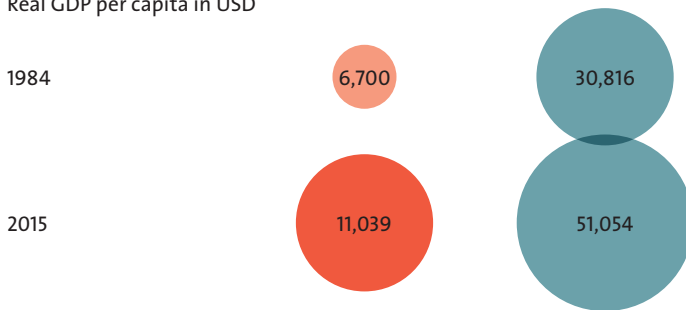
Defense spending in billion USD

1988 — USSR: 246 | USA: 293

2015 — Russia: 66 | USA: 596

Nuclear arsenal

1984 — USSR: 36,825 | USA: 23,459

2017 — Russia: 7,000 | USA: 6,800
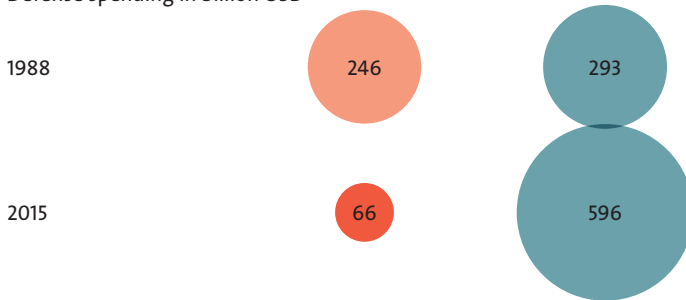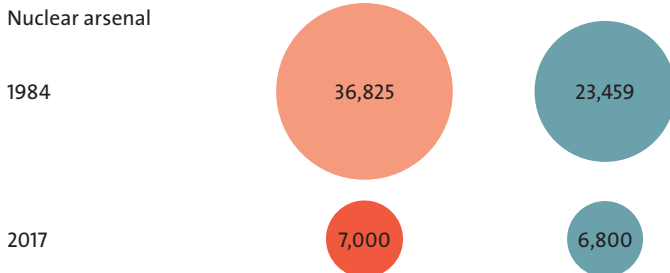
Sources: The CIA World Factbook 1984; Worldometers; Allen, Robert C., "The Rise and Decline of the Soviet Economy", in: *The Canadian Journal of Economics* 34, no. 4 (2001); fred.stlouisfed.org; SIPRI; ourworldindata.org; Arms Control Association; multpl.com

confrontation in Europe. Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev said in February 2016 in Munich: "We have slid into a time of a new Cold War."[9] The cognitive recourse to the term "Cold War" has been experiencing a revival since 2014,[10] but in fact the label had already been used in the media and scholarly publications in the aftermath of both the Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis in 2006 and the Russian-Georgian War in 2008.[11]

The historical analogy, however, is misleading when it comes to the characterization of the current relationship between Russia and the West. Ultimately, it is also dangerous, because it implies that the West should respond to the alleged "Cold War II" with well-tried strategies of the past. The original Cold War was a global confrontation between two ideologically antagonistic power centers in Washington and Moscow. The Communist Soviet Union and the democratic, liberal West dominated the international system between 1945 and 1990 and divided the world into two camps. None of three key attributes – orderly camps, ideological superpower contest, global character – apply to the current confrontation between Russia and the West.

First, the current global order is no longer exclusively shaped by the US-Russian confrontation. Today's international system is radically different from Cold War bipolarity and rather marked by a transition from unipolarity under Western dominance towards multipolarity and the emergence of new power centers in Asia and the global South. The US and Western Europe will remain influential, but they will lose power relative to the emerging powers like China or India. Russia will also play a more active role in Europe than in the 1990s in such a multipolar global order, but it is currently stagnating economically.

In contrast to the Cold War era, Europe is no longer the center of US attention – US grand strategy is increasingly geared towards a strategic rivalry with rising China. Russia is a regional spoiler, but no longer constitutes the principal global challenge for the US and its allies as the Soviet Union did during the Cold War. Russia is no longer the hegemon of a strong military pact. In fact, Belarus and Kazakhstan even drew the lesson from the Ukraine Crisis to strengthen their independence from Moscow. Increasingly, these two countries see themselves not so much as partners of Russia, but rather as mediators between the West and Moscow.[12] Finally, the current confrontation is more limited in geographical scope and mainly focused on Greater Europe.

Second, today, there is no risk of a remake of an ideological competitive global struggle between communism and capitalism – modern Russia is capitalist as well. Russia is not leading a global anti-Western camp, although Putin poses as the leader of a Slavic-Orthodox world and likes to speak of a war of the "West against the rest."[13] He sees in Russia the true heritage of a conservative European civilization shaped by Christianity.[14]

In addition, Russia is significantly weaker than the Soviet Union was. Compared with the territory and population of the Soviet Union, Russia "lost" 5.2 million square kilometers and about 140 million inhabitants after 1991. Russia's armed forces were reduced to about a fifth of the Red Army's strength during the Cold War. Russia's defense budget (2017: USD 45.15 bn) is over 17 times smaller than the US defense budget (USD 773.5 bn).[15] In addition, Russia's economic power also contradicts talk of a renaissance of a superpower rivalry – even if the US always had a clear upper hand in economy during the Cold War. But the gap widened dramatically after 1991. Currently, Russia is only the 12th-largest economic power (USD 1.3 bn), even behind Canada and South Korea, while the United States (USD 18 bn) is still the world's top economic power, ahead of China.[16] In the last few years, Russia's economy has suffered primarily as a result of falling global oil prizes as well as due to Western sanctions.[17] Russia's significant overall inferiority to the US and the West is compensated by its possession of nuclear weapons and its veto power in the UN Security Council, as well as economic strength in individual sectors such as gas, oil, coal, and timber.[18]

Third, many parts of the globe are not affected by the current Russian-Western confrontation. China, India, Brazil and others have so far refused to take sides in the conflict between Russia and the West. After 2014, Russia and the US continued to cooperate when their interests overlap, for example in the containment of Iran's nuclear program, the stabilization of Afghanistan, the Middle East peace process, the fight against jihadist terrorism, or climate change. However, the poisoned relations between the US and Russia have already negatively impacted the international community's response to the Syria War.

Structurally, therefore, the current conflict differs greatly from the Cold War – and might be described rather as a regional contest over European integration models rather than a global ideological and military rivalry. In contrast to the original Cold War, the

current conflict between Russia and the West is not yet predominantly militarized, despite Moscow's occasional nuclear saber-rattling. It is true that Russia is implementing a multi-year modernization program of its armed forces, and the West has strengthened NATO's eastern flank military. But neither side has the military capacity any longer for launching a major military offensive in Europe (on the scale of Cold War scenarios for a war in Central Europe), and no new military arms race has yet been observed. Military scenarios mostly focus on the Baltic States, where Russian forces could embarrass Western forces should Putin decide to ignore NATO's Article 5 commitment – which would be a very risky gamble.[19]

The current situation can be best characterized as a fragile and uneasy mix of conflictual elements (dominant since 2014), confrontational elements (not yet dominant), and cooperative elements (occasional, isolated events). Isolated cooperative events, however, are only transactional and no longer transformative. Currently, both sides favor deterrence over cooperative security, and most formal communication channels were closed in 2014.[20]

And yet, as Robert Legvold has pointed out in his book "Return to Cold War", the behavioral patterns of Russia and the West are becoming more and more similar to the Cold War era. In the dominant Russian and Western narratives, the other side is blamed for everything and all, and is held responsible for the erosion of the post-Cold War peace order in Europe. A solution to the conflict is therefore only considered to be possible if the other side capitulates or radically changes its behavior.[21]

The common vision of an undivided, inclusive, and cooperative Europe seems to be an aspiration from a very distant past. However, the renewed security dilemma actually already originated in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, when Russia and the West failed to implement a mutually acceptable European security arrangement.

The "Western Betrayal of 1990" Revisited

The current crisis in European security needs to be contextualized within a complex historical process that started at the end of the Cold War. In recent studies revisiting the descent from cooperation into confrontation, the following scholarly consensus is slowly emerging, based on newly available archival evidence: Both sides are responsible for the fact that the common strategic vision of 1990 could not be implemented in a sustainable

matter.[22] Mistakes were made on both sides, but some of the more fatal long-term developments largely resulted from unintended side-effects of crucial decisions that seemed to make perfect sense for the respective side at the time – for example, the Western desire to expand the area of liberal democracy and market economy to the East to increase international stability. Not unlike to the similarly complex historical process of the transition from World War II cooperation to Cold War antagonism between the US and the Soviet Union after 1945, misperceptions, misunderstandings, and self-delusions on both sides complicated Russian-Western relations after 1989.

On the one hand, doubts emerged early on in the West as to whether Boris Yeltsin's desire to transform Russia into a democratic market economy that was integrated into the West could really be fulfilled. Western hopes were dashed by Yeltsin's military assault on the Russian parliament in October 1993 and Moscow's brutal action in the Chechen War in 1994. The parliamentary elections of December 1993 gave evidence of rather massive domestic resistance in Russia to Yeltsin's pro-Western reform course. As a result, NATO security guarantees moved up on the political agenda of Central and East European countries, as a safeguard against possible future

Russian revanchism in Europe. The West also felt an obligation to support their transition into full-fledged members of the Western security institutions. After the dissolution of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, a dangerous security vacuum had opened up in Europe.

The US and the West still supported Russia in its reform efforts towards a Western market economy and democracy. But there was "no new Marshall Plan".[23] Western support for Russia in the 1990s was "too little, too late", even if Russia was allowed to join the G7 in 1997, thus transforming this exclusive club of the world's leading industrial powers into the G8.[24] In addition, Russia also claimed a special status in its relations with NATO and the EU compared to other post-Communist states, due to its size, geographical extension, nuclear super-power standing, and its permanent UN Security Council seat. The case for Russian membership in NATO or the EU was occasionally put forward, but Russia was always considered too powerful, too special, and too different to be successfully integrated into Western organizations.[25]

On the other hand, the US could not resist the temptation to take advantage of the Soviet Union's strategic withdrawal from Central and Eastern

Europe after 1989. The essence of Russian grievances against the West is the alleged "betrayal of 1990": At that time, as Putin underlines to this day,[26] the US had promised in high-level negotiations leading to German reunification not to expand NATO further to the East – "not an inch", in US Secretary of State James Baker's famous words addressed to Gorbachev in February 1990. Therefore, Russia regards NATO's Eastern enlargement as a Western betrayal. The minutes of the respective bilateral meetings between US, West German, and Soviet leaders can now be accessed in archives in Washington, Berlin, and Moscow. They reveal that the West did not offer a clear, legally binding promise to Moscow not to expand NATO eastwards. These talks focused on German reunification and the territory of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1990. A future NATO membership of Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia was not discussed. A dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was still unthinkable at that time.

Later Russian criticism about a "broken promise" is thus based on a myth and not on verifiable documentary evidence. Non-expansion promises were only given with regard to the GDR, which as part of reunified Germany would become a member of NATO, but with a special military status.[27]

A close reading of the 1990 statements by US President George H. W. Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, and German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, based on recently declassified governmental documents, however, suggests that NATO's later Eastern enlargement indeed "broke" at least the cooperative spirit of the Cold War settlement.

In 1990, Bush and Baker promised Gorbachev they would transform NATO from a military alliance into a political organization and reform the CSCE into the main European security forum. Genscher also promised to transform the CSCE into the dominant security alliance in Europe, replacing the Cold War military alliances NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In 1990, Genscher (and his advisors such as Dieter Kastrup, head of the Political Department, and State Secretary Jürgen Sudhoff) earnestly wished to establish a new security order in Europe, modeled after the CSCE. To honor Western partnership with Moscow, Genscher was even ready to dissolve NATO together with the Warsaw Pact. His "promises" to his Soviet counterparts were therefore meant sincerely. Nevertheless, Genscher could speak neither for Chancellor Helmut Kohl nor for NATO, let alone for Warsaw, Prague, or Budapest.[28]

French President François Mitterrand on 31 December 1989 also offered East Europeans a "Confederation for Europe" under France's auspices as an alternative to eventually joining the European Community. Mitterrand's project intended to include the Soviet Union, but to exclude the US.[29] In addition, Eastern European countries initially also pointed to the CSCE as the preferred structural design for the future European security architecture. In February 1990, for example, Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel called for all foreign troops to leave Eastern Europe and favored the replacement of NATO and the Warsaw Pact with a pan-European organization along CSCE lines. At that time, Poland also thought a new European security structure would supersede both Cold War alliances – and agreed with Gorbachev's plea that the Warsaw Pact should be preserved, since it was needed, in Poland's view, to guarantee its borders.[30]

The US, however, resisted these calls for pan-Europeanism by Gorbachev, Genscher, Mitterrand, Havel, and others. The Bush administration internally decided in early 1990 that the new security order in Europe should not be completely different from the Cold War order. The future security architecture should not be centered around a new, pan-European security

organization based on the CSCE. For Washington, the exclusive NATO (without Russian membership and without a Russian veto) should be preserved as the most important instrument for stability and peace in Europe – and for continued US dominance in European security.

Already in the summer of 1990, the possibility of a NATO membership of Eastern European states began to play a role in internal planning and debates in Washington. Bush's advisors emphasized that strengthening the CSCE at the expense of NATO was out of the question. In July 1990, Baker bluntly warned Bush that "the real risk to NATO is CSCE".[31] Rather than to create a truly new international order, the US instead preferred to perpetuate Cold War institutions that it already dominated.[32]

In its diplomacy with Moscow, Washington still assured Gorbachev that the West would limit NATO's influence and instead strengthen the pan-European CSCE. In several public speeches and in meetings with their Soviet counterparts, US leaders promised that European security would become more integrative and more cooperative – and NATO less important. Talking to Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on 5 May 1990, for example, Baker promised

to build a "new legitimate European structure – one that would be inclusive, not exclusive."[33]

From a Western perspective, hopes were still high in the early 1990s that Russia could be integrated into the emerging European security system. Russia was no longer treated as an adversary. At NATO summits in London (1990) and Rome (1991), the vision of Russia's future integration into the Euro-Atlantic security community was still upheld. Under the label "new world order", the new cooperative spirit between the former Cold War rivals was successfully implemented in the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein in 1991.

The informal Cold War settlement reached in 1990, however, did not last very long. Actually, it collapsed already one year later. Instead of the Soviet Union, the West was now facing a much weaker Russia. After the disintegration of the USSR, Moscow was no longer an equal partner in the debates about shaping the future security order in Europe.[34] In the 1990s, the US no longer perceived Russia as an ideological or military rival. The emerging European security architecture became US-dominated and was largely based on the status quo with NATO as its central pillar (as desired by Bush's advisors in mid-1990).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and after war had broken out in the Balkans, the planned transformation of NATO from a military pact into a political organization was put on hold. Fear of a return of Russian imperialism and expansionism led Eastern Europeans in particular to push for NATO enlargement. NATO was preserved as an insurance policy against a future resurgent Russia. The administration of US President Bill Clinton worked hard to have Russia support the Western military intervention and peacekeeping mission in Bosnia (IFOR) in 1995–6. Russia joined UN sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro and agreed to suspend the OSCE membership of these two countries in 1993. In the spirit of cooperative security, the Kremlin also gave a green light to the OSCE's deployment of an assistance group to Chechnya in 1995.[35]

NATO's eastern enlargement was sold to Russia as a win-win solution, since extending NATO membership to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic would also increase stability on Russia's western border. NATO expansion, desired by Central and Eastern European governments and strongly supported by the US and Germany, was compensated with a special NATO-Russia partnership format – the NATO-Russia Permanent

Go East: Stages of NATO's Enlargement, 1952 – 2016

Member since:
- 1949
- 1952
- 1955 (incl. territory of former GDR, added in 1990)
- 1982
- 1999
- 2004
- 2009
- Signed but not ratified: 2016
- NATO aspirant countries
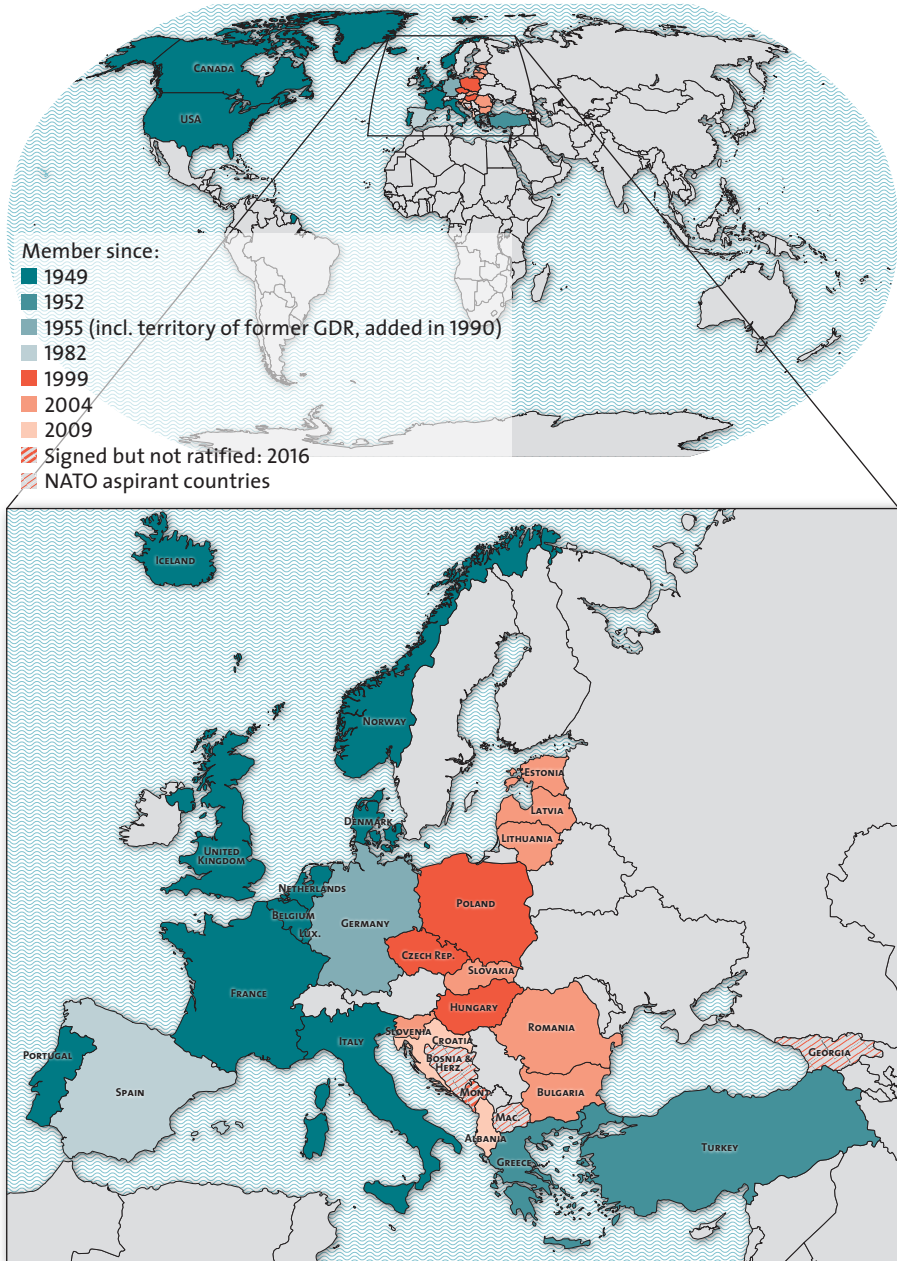
Source: NATO

Joint Council (PJC), established in 1997 – as well as with a Western invitation for Russia to join the exclusive G7 club (1997).

From a Russian perspective, NATO expansion led to a European security architecture that was increasingly built against, rather than with, Russia – despite Western good intentions to stabilize *Mitteleuropa* and despite the establishment of privileged partnership formats between NATO and Russia. With each further NATO expansion round, the 1989 vision of a "Europe whole and free" (George H.W. Bush in Mainz) contrasted with the isolated position of Russia. Moscow had a voice in European security, but no veto. While Central and Eastern European states joined NATO and the EU, Russia was left outside of these security institutions. Europe appeared to be divided again between East and West, with a new demarcation line moved further to the east than the original Iron Curtain – now running from Narva in the Baltic to Mariupol on the Sea of Azov.

Increasingly, the Kremlin perceived the evolution of European security as zero-sum-game rather than a cooperative undertaking. Russia felt particularly betrayed by the Clinton administration's move from a policy of NATO partnership for all (including Russia)

towards NATO membership for some in 1994. As a recently declassified memorandum of conversation makes clear, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher promised Yeltsin on 23 October 1993 in Moscow that nothing would be done to exclude Russia from "full participation in the future security of Europe". Presenting US plans for a NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP), Christopher emphasized that PfP would be open for all former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states, including Russia, and "there would be no effort to exclude anyone and there would be no step taken at this time to push anyone ahead of others". When a relieved Yeltsin learned that the US would only offer partnership rather than membership or an associate status to Central and Eastern European countries, he told Christopher that this was a "really great idea" and a "brilliant stroke" that would remove all the tension that had existed in Russia regarding NATO's response to Central and Eastern European alliance aspirations.[36]

When Clinton told Yeltsin in September 1994 that NATO would soon expand, Yeltsin felt betrayed, having been given the promise of "partnership for all, not NATO for some" by Christopher less than a year earlier. He used a CSCE meeting in Budapest in December 1994 to warn his

Western colleagues that Europe was "risking encumbering itself with a cold peace". Emphasizing that Russia and the West were no longer adversaries, but partners, he emphasized that the plans to expand NATO were contrary to the logic not to create new divisions, but promote European unity.[37]

Throughout the 1990s, Russia advanced proposals and ideas for a transformation of the CSCE/OSCE into a regional security organization that was legally incorporated, with a legally binding charter, and a European Security Council based on the UN model. From the Russian perspective, weakening NATO and the US role in Europe was part of the thinking.[38] These Russian reform proposals were all rejected by the West and disappointed Russian hopes that the CSCE/OSCE would become the center of the European security system as promised by the West in 1990. The emergence of the weakly-institutionalized OSCE in 1995 also dashed Russian hopes for a new pan-European security organization.[39]

The worldviews of Russia and the West visibly collided in the spring of 1999. Yeltsin strongly criticized the unilateral military action of the West – without a UN Security Council mandate – against Serbia in the Kosovo War. Russia had been a member of an

international contact group with the US, France, Britain, Germany, and Italy trying to mediate a diplomatic solution. Moscow accused the West of breaching the Helsinki principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders.[40]

After "color revolutions" in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) and under the impression of George W. Bush's "freedom agenda", in a speech delivered in early 2007 at the Munich Security Forum, Putin stigmatized the OSCE as a "vulgar instrument" of the West, aiming at advancing Western interests at Russia's expense. He meant the OSCE's election monitoring missions and field missions to verify compliance with human and civil right commitments. These missions were increasingly criticized by Moscow as an unacceptable interference in internal affairs and as violations of state sovereignty.[41] The Arab rebellions and Western military intervention in Libya in 2011 marked another step, in Russian eyes, from cooperation to confrontation.

Then again, Putin's anti-Western volte-face in 2011–2 can maybe best be explained in terms of domestic policy. Renewed emphasis on Russia's identity as a Eurasian, Slavic, Orthodox power was an important element

in Putin's presidential election campaign.[42] To avoid mass-protests and a regime change in Moscow, Putin advanced anti-Western rhetoric for a rally-around-the-flag effect and to deflect domestic attention from structural economic problems in Russia. Thus, many Russia experts are convinced that Putin's fear of a "color revolution" in Moscow, inspired by the "Maidan protests" in Kiyv, was an important motive for intervening militarily in Ukraine.[43] The strengthening of authoritarian rule in Russia under Putin, in contrast to the values of the Charter of Paris, contributed to the mounting crisis between Russia and the West.

In retrospect, the window of opportunity for truly cooperative security between Russia and West had already closed by early 1992, after the Soviet Union had collapsed. European security now became US-dominated and NATO-centered. The Cold War settlement of 1990 and the vision of an inclusive, pan-European new security architecture, as promised by the George H.W. Bush administration and German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, never materialized. The relations between Russia and the West deteriorated in stages, and tense relations were interrupted by at least four "resets" and fresh starts to improve cooperation.[44] But these "honeymoons" never lasted long – and in

the end, the key question of Russia's role in European security was avoided and not seriously discussed. By 2008, Russia had given up hope of playing an active, equal role in Euro-Atlantic Security. Putin began looking for an alternative project where Russia would be a regional hegemon in the post-Soviet space.[45] Since 2014, the issue of how to deal with Russia has returned to the political agendas of the West in a most dramatic fashion.

Rebuilding Trust: Thoughts on the Future of European Security

A look back can help us to understand Russia's present and future role in Europe. The history of the Helsinki Process and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, 1972–94) encourages hope that a new transformation from conflict to cooperation might again be possible in a peaceful way and in an inclusive, multilateral diplomatic setting – just as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, when East and West, despite their intense strategic rivalry, were able to conduct a pragmatic dialogue to reach consensus on the most important security issues in Europe. No side benefits from a permanent state of confrontation. Communication is important for de-escalation, and dialogue is an important prerequisite for détente. It needs to be emphasized that dialogue is not the same as

From Cooperation to Confrontation

American opinions of Russia and Russian opinions of the United States, 1989 – 2016

Legend:
— Favorable view of the United States by Russians
— Favorable view of Russia by Americans
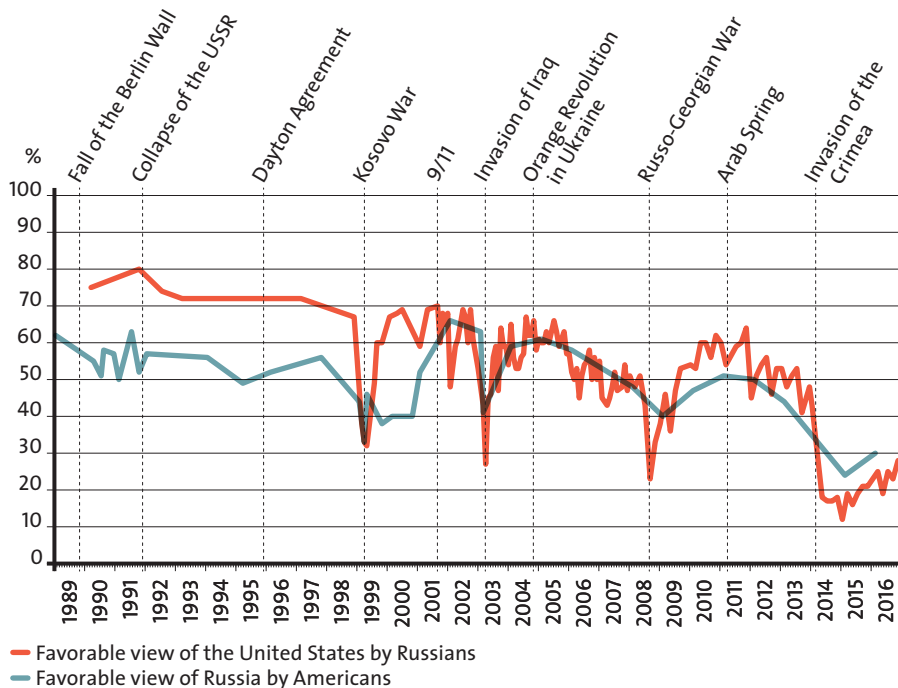
Sources: Gallup; Levada-Center

appeasement, and that listening to and trying to understand the other side's grievances is not the same as taking them at face value.

Much like the CSCE in the Cold War, the OSCE today seems to be the best-suited forum for such a sustainable, permanent exploration of practical ways for carefully managing the current volatile confrontation with Russia, while defending firmly Western interests and values.[46] The deep causes of mutual mistrust between Russia and the West need to be discussed and clarified. It is essential to understand the precise reasons for Russia's long-standing adversarial relationship with the West. The Helsinki Process – an open, inclusive dialogue among all parties of a conflict – is an interesting model for slowly rebuilding trust that was destroyed in the last two decades and for returning to a more constructive Western-Russian relationship. Such a reconciliation process,

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however, is lengthy and requires patience. Instead of ignoring or deriding alternative narratives, they should be actively tackled and changed. Insights into mistakes made in the past and missed opportunities might help us rediscover a mutually acceptable vision for peaceful coexistence in Europe.

At the same time, supposedly attractive alternatives to multilateral, cooperative security such as a "Yalta II" agreement must be unmasked as misleading historical analogies. A "Yalta II", a new great-power agreement like the one reached on Crimea in 1945 between the "Big Three" (Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill) to define and recognize boundaries and spheres of interest, seems an impractical notion. Anyone seriously entertaining the historical analogy would soon remember that a new Yalta pact first requires another world war, and that a new Yalta pact would be diametrically opposed to the 1975 Helsinki principles and the spirit of the OSCE.[47]

Recently, the idea that US President Donald Trump might be open to the idea of a "Big Two" deal with Putin – much to the consternation of America's (Eastern) European allies, who fear an arrangement concluded without their participation and at their expense – was put into perspective

again and the initial euphoria in Moscow with Trump's victory is already evaporating.[48]

Achieving consensus among OSCE participating States on a new negotiation process aimed at formulating a "Helsinki II" is currently also unrealistic. After all, the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act have been negotiated between East and West and are thus universal, not Western principles. The "Helsinki Decalogue" has served its purpose well for over four decades. In this respect, the Panel of Eminent Persons (PEP) report of 2015 – employing an apt metaphor – argues that the rules of traffic don't have to be changed just because one driver ran a red light.[49]

However, there is a need to discuss the different views as to how these principles (e.g., non-use of force or self-determination) must be interpreted in the current situation. Their interpretation as substantiated in the 1990 Paris Charter for a New Europe has been overtaken by events. An informal dialogue in the OSCE could aim at drafting substantiation of the Helsinki principles for the 21st century, a "Paris II", so to speak, to be formally codified again at future OSCE summit, maybe in 2020, celebrating the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

In the meantime, cooperation between the West and Russia will be limited to selective, interest-based, transactional cooperation. A return to broader co-operation is dependent on a consensus in the Ukraine Crisis and a face-saving exit strategy for Russia from Ukraine. This seems to be unrealistic for the time being, because neither the newly appointed US President Trump nor Russian President Putin before his re-election in 2018 can afford to be accused of weakness or appeasement.[50] The fact that the West insists on penalizing Russia for annexing Crimea and breaking international law and the Helsinki principles is understandable. However, in the long run, it is more important that the Russian annexation of Crimea (similarly to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence – despite all important differences between the two cases)[51] are regarded as disputed exceptions to the still generally accepted principle that borders in Europe can only be changed by mutual consent of the motherland and the regional population, and only peacefully.[52] It is better to have two individual cases of disputed exceptions than a generally ignored and violated core principle.

A first trust-building step on the lengthy road back from conflict to cooperation beyond interest-based transactional cooperation was made in December 2016 at the OSCE Ministerial Council with the "mandate of Hamburg".[53] Now, in 2017, the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship is tasked with organizing an informal, structured dialogue on different threat perceptions and security issues in Europe. Another innovative possible step for a return to dialogue was recently proposed by the Panel of Eminent Persons (PEP), a wise men committee tasked by the OSCE Troika of Switzerland, Serbia, and Germany in 2015 to draw lessons from the Ukraine Crisis for the OSCE and European security. In its follow-up report, the PEP in December 2016 suggested that the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability from 2003 be updated to reflect the changes in international security since then.[54]

The aims of such a multilateral dialogue should include a better understanding of the past grievances of the other side, i.e., the different views and interpretations of events in Europe since 1990 and the different views on the causes of the breakdown of trust. In learning from the past, a return to the vision of a commonly shared security community in Europe also requires tackling the difficult question of Russia's role in European security. A sustainable and stable peaceful European security order should be based

on the original rationale and spirit of the Cold War settlement, namely that indivisible security in Europe needs to be built together with Russia – and not against Russia. In retrospect, moving up the timetable for exclusive NATO enlargement (which upset Russia) rather than sticking to the inclusive Partnership for Peace strategy (which was welcomed in Moscow in 1993) might not have been the wisest strategy of the West in the mid-1990s – as historians like George F. Kennan cautioned at the time. In 1996–7, the 92-year old Kennan warned that NATO's expansion into former Soviet territory was the "most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era" and a "strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions".[55]

History can be a guide towards a richer understanding of past policy decisions; but it should not serve as an excuse for Putin's illegal military intervention in Ukraine in 2014. Russia needs to recognize that the notion of spheres of influence, demarcated to end any further NATO enlargement into the former Soviet space and (semi-)autocratic regimes, contradicts fundamental, universally accepted ideas of sovereignty, equality, and the freedom of states to choose their alliances. Great-power politics and Yalta deals are ghosts from the past that should remain in history books about

the 19th and 20th century.[56] Patiently bringing back Russia to the rules-based Helsinki order will not be possible overnight – and it might in fact only be realized after the Putin and the Trump years.

Respectful discussion of facts while maintaining divergent opinions has become more difficult in the world today. In an increasingly fragmented, polarized, and politicized media landscape, facts seem to matter less and less, as fake news, the use of trolls, or automated social media bots proliferate. It may seem naïve to hope that scholarly discourse over the recent past will contribute to overcoming grievances over the evolution of European security after 1990. However, particularly to avoid slipping into a "post-truth" world influenced by "alternative facts", European societies need to invest in education and media literacy.[57] A historical understanding of Western policy after 1989, based on available and valuable archival sources, is also highly relevant for Western relations with Russia today – to counter harmful propaganda and hostile rhetoric on both sides with realistic judgment, based on a sound understanding of empirical historical facts.

The history of the Helsinki Process impressively demonstrates that

positive change is possible in the long run, if dialogue with rivals and inclusive, multilateral diplomacy are kept alive also in times of crisis and tension. In addition, Western governments and societies need to be more self-confident in the superiority of their liberal, rules-based international model over illiberal alternatives that envisage a return to the concert of great powers. If the past is indeed the prologue of the future, this is the most important lesson today's policymakers should draw from the complicated history of how the Cold War was overcome in a peaceful way.

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4   Dmitry Suslov, *The Russian Perception of the Post-Cold War Era and Relations with the West, Lecture given at Harriman Institute, Columbia University,* 09.11.2016.

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6   Panel of Eminent Persons, *Back to Diplomacy* (Vienna: OSCE, 2015), 2.

7   See e.g. Frédéric Bozo et al., "On the Politics of History, the Making of Deals, and the Way the Old Becomes the New", in: Fréderic Bozo et al. (eds.), *German Reunification: A Multinational History* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–11, here at 1ff.

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Looking Beyond Trump

Jack Thompson

Support in the United States for the liberal world order is under threat from a combination of profound economic, cultural, and political changes. The election of Donald Trump, and the emergence of his America First credo, underscores the fact that the world can no longer depend upon the US to pursue an internationalist foreign policy. Europe, in particular, would do well to begin planning for a future in which the US is more skeptical of alliances and trade agreements and less willing to provide leadership in addressing international challenges.

US President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a "USA Thank You Tour" event at Giant Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania, 15 December 2016.

For decades, Americans benefited greatly from the liberal international order that the United States has promoted ever since the end of World War Two. This includes formal security alliances with Europe, in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and with nations such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea. It is also based upon a set of financial, monetary, and trade institutions that have encouraged international trade, placed the US dollar at the heart of the international economy – first as part of the Bretton Woods System and after 1971 as the world's foremost reserve currency – and made New York City the world's leading financial center. Key financial and monetary institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are located in Washington DC. In addition, the liberal order relies upon respect for a shared set of values. These include administering democratic elections, protecting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, a commitment to human rights, and upholding the rule of law.

Maintaining this web of alliances, economic structures, and values has not come without challenges. These included the collapse of the Bretton Woods System in 1971 and longstanding imbalances in military spending between the US and its allies. Overall, however, it has reinforced and institutionalized the role of the US as an economic and military superpower. For decades, it also contributed to a steadily improving quality of life for most Americans and optimism about the future. Not surprisingly, this arrangement faced little opposition for many years and a bipartisan consensus coalesced around internationalism as the cornerstone of US foreign policy. Seminal advice from leaders in the early 19th century, such as Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, about avoiding "entangling alliances" and not going abroad "in search of monsters to destroy", no longer seemed relevant.

Recently however, and especially since the Great Recession of 2008, it has become clear that many Americans no longer see the liberal international order as a beneficial arrangement. This means that the election of Donald Trump, and the embrace by many of his "America First" credo, is a symptom, not the cause, of an underlying evolution in the political fundamentals – namely, that US foreign policy is undergoing its most dramatic transformation since the onset of the Cold War. Three interrelated types of problems that, it is clear with hindsight, have been gestating for years are driving this: globalization fatigue and other economic crises; increasing multiculturalism and a corresponding

backlash among cultural conservatives; and political dysfunction.

The upshot is that internationalism is no longer the default American worldview. This should worry the rest of the world. Europe, in particular, should think carefully about its longstanding partnership with the US, especially when it comes to European goals and values, trade, security cooperation, and the rise of right-wing populism.

Globalization Fatigue and Interlinked Economic Crises

Recent headlines would seem to indicate that the US economy is relatively strong. After contracting by 2.8 per cent in the wake of the global economic crisis, gross domestic product grew steadily between 2010 and 2015 and appears to have been at least as strong in 2016. The unemployment rate, after reaching a peak of 10 per cent in October of 2010 – which is very high by US standards – has been steadily dropping. It reached a low of 4.6 per cent in November 2016, which constitutes full employment in the US context. Perhaps most impressively, household income rose by more than 5 per cent in 2015, breaking a pattern of years of stagnation.[1]

However, a closer look indicates that important sectors of the economy, and many parts of the country, have been

in crisis for some time. The overarching problem is often characterized as globalization fatigue (a term which cannot convey the massive transformation that has taken place for many Americans): discontent with the upheavals that usually accompany deeper integration with the global economy, such as loosened capital controls, lowered barriers to trade, and reducing obstacles to foreign direct investment.

The problem Americans most frequently attribute to globalization is the loss of manufacturing jobs to lower-income countries (though many economists consider technology to have had a much larger effect in this respect). The conventional argument in favor of free trade holds that, although some sectors of the economy will see job losses due to competition from cheaper imports, workers in these industries will find employment in more efficient areas and the overall economy will benefit. However, as the authors of a recent paper on trade with China argue, the reality has been more complicated. Job losses in industries exposed to import competition have been significant, as expected, but new jobs for these workers in other industries have mostly not emerged. To make matters worse, areas of the country where the worst-affected industries are located, such as

parts of the Midwest and Southeast, have also experienced rising unemployment rates overall, as the departure of the manufacturing base undermines the rest of the local economy (and as Americans, once famously peripatetic, become less willing and/or able to relocate). This has literally become a matter of life and death. Regions disproportionately exposed to trade liberalization have higher rates of mortality, due to suicide and other causes of death that have been linked to reduced income and employment. This has been particularly true for working-class white Americans.[2]

Those working in traditional manufacturing jobs are not the only ones to have suffered in recent years. Young Americans also face significant economic challenges. The extent to which these can be directly attributed to globalization is debatable, but the end result – pervasive resentment of the status quo – is not. The official unemployment rate for those under the age of 25 was 11.5 per cent in July 2016. However, that number understates the problem, perhaps by a significant margin. A report by the Economic Policy Institute in 2015 found that the unemployment rate for recent high school graduates is almost 20 per cent. The underemployment rate – which tracks part-time work undertaken by those who would prefer full-time jobs

– is higher still: nearly 15 per cent for college graduates and 37 per cent for those with only a high school diploma. These numbers are even worse for African-Americans and Hispanics.[3]

Even for those that manage to enter university, formidable challenges await that are further reducing social mobility and increasing income inequality. The cost of attending university in the US has risen dramatically over the last few decades, at a rate far higher than inflation, from an average of just under USD 11,000 in 1983 – 4, for four-year institutions, to more than USD 36,000 in 2013 – 4. This has made higher education much less affordable for the middle and working classes and, not surprisingly, led to an explosion in student debt levels. As of September 2016, borrowers no longer in school owed almost USD 1.4 trillion in loans. Many of these former students – about one quarter – are behind in their loan payments or are in default. This has prompted warnings from some observers of a student debt "bubble" reminiscent of the housing bubble prior to the 2008 financial crisis.[4]

At the same time that many sectors of the traditional manufacturing economy contract, and young Americans endure a prolonged economic crisis, other concerns have emerged. One

The Rich Getting Richer

Family income growth, by income group, 1957–2013
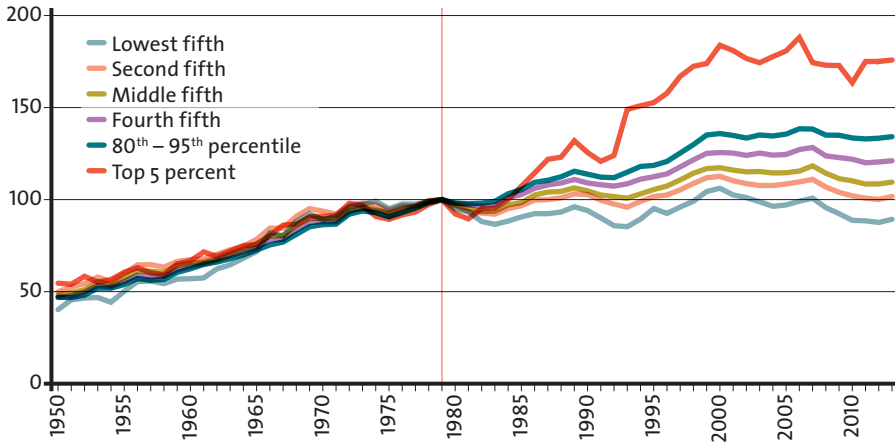
Source: Economic Policy Institute

worrisome trend is the disconnect between labor force productivity and income. The share of economic output that workers collect in wages is at the lowest level on record. In fact, since the early 1970s, even as the productivity of the workforce has increased by more than 70 per cent, pay levels have been stagnant, rising only 8.7 per cent over a span of three decades. A second problem is rapidly growing inequality, to perhaps the highest level in US history. Since 1979, the wages of the top 1 per cent of earners have increased 138 per cent, whereas the income of the bottom 90 per cent has only risen 15 per cent. Hence, by 2013 families in the top ten per cent controlled more than 75 per cent of all family wealth.[5]

It is true that many communities in the US have benefited considerably from adapting to the globalized economy. And a plausible argument can be made that overall the US is in a stronger position because of its willingness to embrace the transformation induced by globalization. But the process has taken a profound toll on many parts of the country.

This is not only a matter of economic concern; it is also clear that globalization has become difficult to sustain politically. Even if we set aside as a fluke the election of Donald Trump – who ran for president on a staunch anti-globalization platform – his worldview is increasingly

representative of the Grand Old Party (GOP). A majority of Republican voters now consider global economic ties to be, on the whole, bad for the US. What is more, although Democrats still consider engagement with the global economy to be worthwhile (albeit by a narrow margin), a majority of Americans now consider it to be bad for employment and wage levels.[6]

Given the longstanding commitment to internationalism among elites in both parties, it was always likely that those most concerned about the effects of globalization would become disenchanted with the status quo. In addition, in a country where many view immigration and multiculturalism as being closely linked to globalization, it was inevitable that cultural resentment would constitute part of the revolt against elites.

Multiculturalism, Immigration, and the Conservative Backlash

The US is becoming more diverse. Sometimes referred to as the "browning of America," this trend is driven by two factors. One is a relatively high rate of immigration – 14 per cent of the population is foreign-born – especially from Latin America and Asia. The other is a lower fertility rate among non-Hispanic whites than is the case among most minority groups. For the first time in history, in 2015, a majority of children under one year of age were racial or ethnic minorities.[7]

Many observers – especially those in the media and academic elite – have celebrated this fact, or at least portrayed it as a normal and mostly advantageous consequence of living in a globalized era. There is much to be said for this viewpoint: the newcomers prevent population loss – a critical problem facing some advanced economies, such as Germany and Japan – and bring new ideas, skills, and customs with them when they arrive. However, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants also dilutes the primacy of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition that has dominated American culture since the founding of the nation. There is considerable unease about this among culturally conservative white Americans, many of whom have – especially in the years since the election of the nation's first non-white president, Barack Obama – fiercely criticized the notion that immigration, diversity, and multiculturalism are good for the country.

This perspective comprises several elements. One is an urgent sense that the country is changing rapidly, and for the worse. Long before Donald Trump crafted a successful presidential campaign around the theme of making America great *again*, prominent

The Changing Demographics of America, 1965–2065

In % of the total population
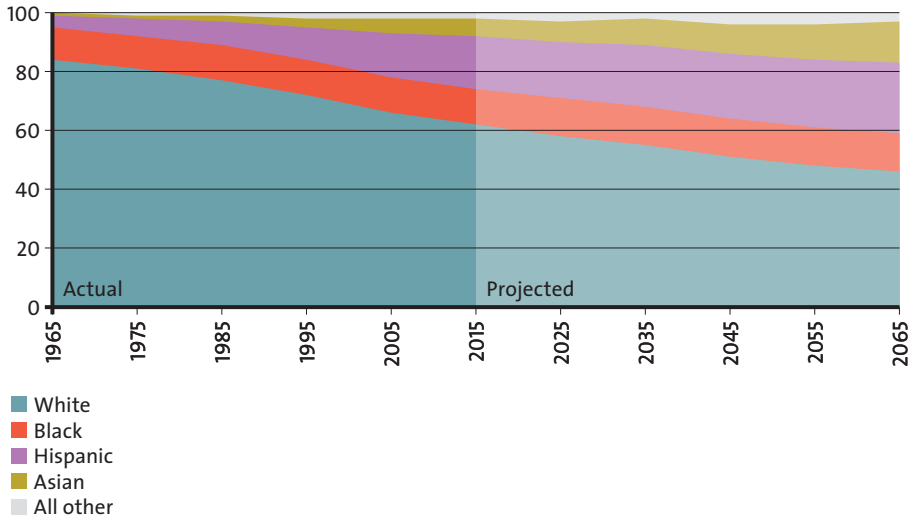
Source: Pew Research Center

voices have been warning that, absent dramatic changes, the nation faces an unpleasant future. Patrick Buchanan, the former speechwriter for Richard Nixon, ran for president on this platform in the 1990s and has published books with titles such as *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025?* In *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* Samuel Huntington, the eminent political scientist, argued that the unique American sense of identity – based upon the Anglo-Protestant "principles of liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property" – was being undermined, perhaps fatally, by economic globalization and immigration from Latin America. A focus group conducted in 2013 concluded that self-identified Tea Party (essentially anti-establishment conservative) voters "want to return to a time when they believe government was small, people lived largely free of the government, and Americans took responsibility for themselves."[8]

Closely related to this notion – that the country has lost touch with a more virtuous past – is the belief that minorities, especially African-Americans and Hispanics, are less likely to embrace traditional values. Instead of

working hard like other Americans, goes the argument, they are more likely to rely on the government for support. A member of the Oklahoma state legislature, for instance, argued during a debate about affirmative action in 2011, "I've taught school, and I saw a lot of people of color who didn't study hard because they said the government would take care of them." One study found that Tea Party adherents placed considerable emphasis on their perception of "workers" and "people who don't work." Included in the second category were unauthorized immigrants "who may try to freeload at the expense of hardworking American taxpayers."[9]

Indeed, a key finding of scholars who have examined white resentment is that, in spite of the fact that conservative intellectuals champion limited government, there is actually little opposition to federally funded social insurance, among the rank and file, as such. Instead, there is more selective anger that those who have worked hard and thereby earned such assistance are being crowded out by minorities who, it is believed, do not deserve it. As one man in Wisconsin told a journalist, "Free services for illegal immigrants? I had to fight six months to get food stamps after my back injury ... I'm from here, my whole life … And this is the way we get treated."

Similarly, studies demonstrate that whites increasingly view gains for African-Americans as coming at their expense and view reverse racism as a more significant problem than traditional racism.[10]

Working-class whites are at the heart of the conservative cultural backlash. This group is confronted by multiple crises. In many parts of the country, it has been devastated by the loss of traditional manufacturing jobs and stagnant wage levels. In numerical terms, the white working class is shrinking as a per centage of the electorate, from nearly three quarters of eligible voters in the mid-1970s to less than half today. They are also less healthy than the rest of the population. One study found that middle-aged white men and women suffered an increase in mortality rates in recent years that was not seen in other ethnic groups or in other countries. The biggest increases were seen among whites with lower education levels. Not surprisingly, scholars have documented a strong sense of unhappiness and pessimism among suburban and rural uneducated whites that is not found among minority groups in similar circumstances.[11]

The white working class is all too aware of its diminished status, as one scholar notes, and he argues that

recognition of this – in other words, awareness of the fact that they no longer occupy a central and influential role in American life – is a key factor in their radicalization. This process has played a crucial role in the emergence (or re-emergence) of extremist political behavior in recent years. It has taken several forms. One is a strong correlation between white working-class disaffection and the renewed importance of outright racism – as opposed to more subtle coded language – in shaping political behavior (the election of Barack Obama also played a central role in this process).[12]

Another worrying manifestation of radical political behavior is renewed enthusiasm among white nationalists. This includes the emergence of the so-called alternative right, or alt-right, a loose grouping of men that, mostly online, organizes and promotes a variety of fringe ideas. Traditional white supremacists have also been reinvigorated and view Donald Trump as the first president in the modern era who is sympathetic to some of their objectives.

Equally disquieting is the increase in illiberal political views. These numbers are particularly high among young people – only 30 per cent consider it "essential" to live in a democracy – and among supporters of Trump, just

40 per cent of whom retain faith in the US system.[13]

To be sure, the growing lack of trust in Washington DC cannot be attributed solely to the spread of illiberal ideas. Many Americans who embrace democratic norms are nevertheless deeply pessimistic about their system of government. That is because, in recent years, it has become increasingly dysfunctional.

Political Dysfunction

There is little common ground in US politics these days, but voters across the spectrum agree that the government is broken. For the second year in a row, according to Gallup, respondents named the government as the biggest challenge facing the country. This result reflects a number of concerns. Congressional job approval, for example, stands somewhere in the low to mid-teens and has rarely reached 50 per cent over the last 40 years. In addition, according to a recent survey by the Associated Press-GfK, a large majority believe that the federal government mainly benefits corporations, lobbyists, and other special interests. Not surprisingly, nearly three in four respondents believe that the country is heading in the wrong direction.[14] A growing body of scholarship also lends credence to the notion that the government is dysfunctional.

American Trust in Government

Near an all-time low
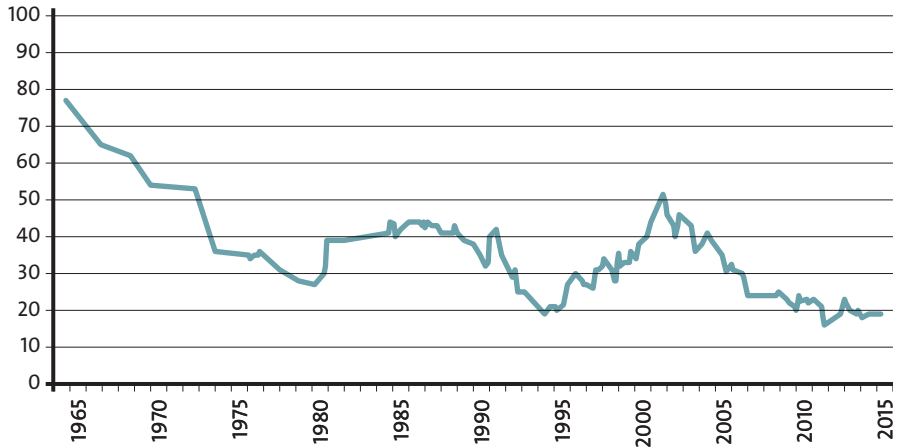
Source: Pew Research Center

Why is this? And why have politicians failed to fix a set of problems that have been obvious for years? One explanation is that these shortcomings are an inevitable result of the design of the US Constitution. Some scholars, for instance, note that presidential systems have, on the whole, been less stable than parliamentary systems. Holding separate elections for the executive and legislative branches, they contend, is inherently problematic because it inevitably leads to a fight for power. In fact, the US struggles across the board when it comes to running free and fair elections. Experts found that out of 22 industrialized democracies, the US ranked last in terms of electoral integrity. The office of the presidency, in particular, is potentially dangerous. It is an enormously powerful position – if not in the original conception of the framers of the Constitution, then certainly in its modern, "imperial" incarnation – especially when it comes to foreign policy. And because of the dissatisfaction that most voters express when it comes to the government, there is a temptation for candidates to craft personalized – even demagogic – platforms in which they promise to radically transform Washington DC. It has also been suggested that a system conceptualized in the late 18th century for a geopolitically marginal nation with a few million inhabitants, and which limited suffrage to a fraction of the populace, cannot possibly

cope with the challenges of governing a democratic superpower with a globalized economy and a population of more than 320 million.[15]

Even those that consider the Constitution to be of sound design tend to agree that the US system of government no longer functions as it should. Conservative intellectuals, for instance, believe that the federal government has grown too large to be effective or democratically accountable and, as a result, is rife with rent-seeking behavior by special interests. In addition, they contend, the president and the courts have usurped powers that the framers of the Constitution intended to be exercised by Congress.[16]

Though few outside of the movement would agree with the conservative prescription for this problem – to shrink dramatically the size of the federal government – the view that Washington DC is more responsive to elites than to ordinary people is widespread. One study found, for instance, that business groups and their political allies have far more influence on public policy than do voters or civic groups. Francis Fukyama, the political scientist, has characterized this as part of a broader process of "political decay." He argues that functions that, for much of the post-New Deal era, were the preserve of a skilled bureaucracy

(and still are in other modern democracies) are now overseen by Congress and the courts, much as they were in the 19th century. The quality of government has steadily declined in recent decades, he contends, as the bureaucracy becomes less meritocratic, policymaking gets captured by special interests, and the enforcement of laws becomes increasingly litigious and less predictable.[17]

Another explanation for political dysfunction is that one of the two main parties has been radicalized to such an extent that it is sabotaging the system. For close observers of politics in the US, it has been clear for some time that the Republican Party – in spite of the fact that it now controls the White House, both chambers of Congress, and a majority of governments at the state level – is in crisis. Most of the increase in political polarization in recent years is the result of the GOP moving rightward, transforming from a center-right party into one that is very conservative. It is increasingly disdainful of expertise and evidence and is resistant to information that does not originate from within the movement (a phenomenon that has been called "epistemic closure"). The result is that, as two political scientists put it, conservatives today "show less interest in policy details or execution

than they do in upholding the symbolic ideals of limited government, American nationalism and cultural traditionalism."[18]

One consequence of this ideology is that, over the past two decades, Republicans have shown a striking disregard for the norms that are essential for the proper functioning of the federal government. Beginning with Newt Gingrich's tenure as Speaker of the House of Representatives in the 1990s, they have frequently threatened to shut down the government, to instigate a default on the government's debt, or to eliminate vital government programs in order to extract concessions from Democrats. The same is true for their growing inclination to block judicial and executive branch nominees by Democratic presidents, regardless of qualifications.[19]

This radicalization is intensified by unceasing pressure from the grassroots of the GOP, which is deeply suspicious of party elites. One reason for this distrust is the belief among conservative voters that their principal concerns – immigration, the negative effects of globalization, and a generalized fear that the country is changing for the worse – have been ignored by their elected representatives, who have prioritized tax cuts for the wealthy and favors for their friends and colleagues

in government and corporate America. The massive bailout packages that the financial industry and General Motors received during the recession heightened this sense of betrayal. Trump's presidential campaign platform was astutely designed to take advantage of such concerns.

Perhaps most troubling, in recent years, is the embrace of non-democratic norms in the GOP. Some scholars have found, for instance, that the single most reliable factor in predicting support for Donald Trump in 2016 was the degree to which voters held views that correlate with authoritarianism (which can be defined as a desire for order and a fear of outsiders). It is tempting to dismiss the party's nomination of, and strong support in the general election for, Trump – 90 per cent of Republicans voted for him – as an aberration. But his worldview – with his admiration for dictators, his penchant for conspiracy theories, his suggestion that he might not respect the election results if he lost, and his threat to put Hillary Clinton in "jail" – actually dovetails nicely with conservative political culture. After all this is a party that has, in recent years, passed laws designed to depress the turnout of minority voters. Nearly three quarters of its supporters still doubt that Barack Obama is a US citizen.[20]

That so many Republicans are susceptible to such conspiracy theories underscores another set of problems: the fragmentation and polarization of the media landscape. With the onset of the information age and the rise of social media, the choice of news providers is larger than ever. In contrast to most of the post-World War Two era, when a relatively small number of newspapers and television stations furnished the vast majority of daily news, voters today can consult (often partisan) sources of information that conform most closely to their preconceptions.

This has a number of consequences for political life. The new, more diverse media landscape paradoxically intensifies polarization (and hinders pluralism) as voters, especially those that are most engaged with the political process, become less open to information that contradicts their views. It also decreases the influence of traditional authority figures in the media – such as *The New York Times* or the nightly news broadcasts on the major networks – and those that have customarily used the media to communicate with potential voters, such as public officials.[21]

This means that it is increasingly difficult for accurate information to reach the public, let alone for people to be persuaded. As we have seen over the last eight years in particular, whether it relates to Barack Obama's citizenship or global warming, false information can be attractive to many people if it reinforces their worldview. This is one reason that fake news has become such a problem.

In fact, fake news is now an international business. In the Macedonian town of Veles, for instance, locals developed a thriving industry of websites aimed mostly at Trump voters. It is also a national security problem. Russia, which has developed a sophisticated apparatus for disseminating propaganda abroad, takes advantage of the American appetite for fake news, according to intelligence officials, and skillfully used the US media in its campaign to ensure the election of its preferred candidate, Trump.

The Future of Transatlantic Relations

The resurgence of Russia, and its willingness to manipulate Western elections, highlights the indispensability of a robust US-European relationship. However the bond, as it has existed since the end of World War Two, is at risk. Perhaps most alarming is the fact that public support for the transatlantic project is on the wane. There is profound anger at elites in both parties and this has affected, in particular, the traditional autonomy

of foreign policy insiders and officials. This would have been true even if Hillary Clinton had won the election. Clinton, for instance, felt compelled to withdraw her support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement when she decided to run for president. There is no question, though, that Trump's victory has intensified the challenge facing internationalists on both sides of the Atlantic.

At the systemic level, the question from the European standpoint is: to what degree will the US continue to be a viable partner for pursuing strategic goals and upholding values? Many of the initial indications from the Trump administration are not promising in this respect. Trump's indifference to democratic norms – and the willingness of many Americans to overlook this disturbing trait – is unsettling for most (with the obvious exception of the European populist and illiberal right). His characterization of the European Union as little more than an instrument that Germany uses against the US in the competition for exports indicates that he has little sympathy for, or understanding of, the seminal role the European project has played in promoting peace and stability. His dismissal of the United Nations as "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time," his choice of Governor Nikki Haley – who has

no international experience – for ambassador to the UN, and the overwhelming support among Republicans in Congress for cutting funding to the body do not bode well for his administration's view of the importance of international law and multilateral institutions.

Moving from the systemic to the specific, further liberalization of trade between the US and Europe will likely cease for the foreseeable future. Given Trump's strong opposition to such deals, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, which were already facing potentially fatal opposition on both sides, are already effectively over. This dovetails with the president's withdrawal from the TPP agreement, his promise to crack down on what he has called unfair trading practices and currency manipulation by China, and to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Taken as a whole Trump's trade agenda could destabilize the international economic system. It could also have profound strategic implications. The Obama administration viewed TTIP and TPP as companion agreements that were intended to increase trade and prosperity and to promote stability and the development of a rules-based international system, especially

in East Asia. China, which was not included in TPP, has moved quickly to replace it by suggesting a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. Success in this endeavor would boost Beijing's goal of regional leadership and be a significant blow to the US.

The magnitude of these setbacks in East Asia is compounded by the fact that Trump presents transatlantic security cooperation with its gravest challenge since the inception of NATO. He is the first president to publicly voice skepticism about the value of the alliance. It should be noted that more than three-quarters of Americans still believe that it is beneficial and Europe continues to enjoy a positive image in the US. However, the share of voters (37 per cent) who think that NATO benefits other countries more is almost as large as those (41 per cent) that believe it is equally important to the US. Also, a large minority of Trump's supporters are skeptical about NATO.[22]

What these numbers suggest is that, although US-European security cooperation still enjoys broad support, it is no longer a political liability, as it would have surely been even a decade ago, to suggest that the US should reconsider its participation in NATO. Trump did not create this skepticism but he has used it more effectively than any previous politician. Although presidential

rhetoric rarely leads to dramatic shifts in public opinion, it can set the agenda for public discussion, especially among voters in the same party. Also, when it comes to foreign policy many voters are relatively unengaged with the issues and frequently follow the cues of party elites.[23]

In other words, even though many Republican officials disagree with him, Trump has used his rise to power to inculcate skepticism of NATO into the mainstream of Republican foreign policy thought. In this light, it is worth recalling Lord Ismay's witticism about NATO being designed "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down". Without the enthusiastic participation of the US, which spends more than twice as much on defense as all other member countries combined, the alliance would quickly collapse and the foundation for European security would disappear.

Ismay's bon mot has bearing on another issue: relations with Moscow. The president's ambivalence about NATO, when seen against the backdrop of his statements about Russia, suggests that there could be a significant shift in the US-European-Russian relationship, especially as it relates to the alliance's eastern flank. It is too early to predict with any confidence

Trump Voters During Presidential Primaries

Shaky support for liberal international norms

NATO membership is bad for the US **30%**

Support for building a wall on border with Mexico **84%**

Immigrants are a burden to the country **69%**

Muslims should be subject to more scrutiny than people in other religious groups **64%**

Free trade agreements have been bad for the US **67%**

Free trade agreements have definitely/probably hurt personal financial situation **60%**

Involvement in the global economy is bad for the US **65%**

In terms of solving world problems, the US does too much **54%**

Support for Trump among Republican voters with very high authoritarian tendencies* **52%**

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

* Scholars have found that authoritarianism was the single best predictor of support for Trump during the Republican primaries.

Sources: Pew Research Center; Vox

how he would react to a conflict and it is possible that, sooner or later, Trump and Vladimir Putin will clash as a result of their nationalistic agendas. Nonetheless, there is ample reason for concern. The nature of Trump's comments – he has praised President Putin and called for closer ties with Moscow – indicate that, at a minimum, he is untroubled by the nature of Russian foreign policy. Furthermore, Trump is unenthusiastic about restraining Russian revanchism in Eastern Europe. His team – which was otherwise unengaged with the drafting process – intervened to ensure the removal of

a line in the Republican Party's platform that called for providing lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine. He is also unwilling to commit to defending the Baltic nations in the event of an attack. This suggests that, at a minimum, the President cares more about the relationship with Moscow than he does about allies in Eastern Europe. It is no wonder that many observers have begun to speculate about a second Yalta, wherein Trump and Putin would agree to carve out spheres of influence at the expense of other nations.

This unsettling relationship, between the autocrat Putin and the democratically-elected but illiberally-inclined Trump, underscores another reason why European policymakers should take stock of their ties to the US. The election of a radical right-wing populist to the presidency has provided an enormous boost of confidence to parallel movements in Europe. Nigel Farage campaigned for Trump (who then brazenly suggested that the former UKIP leader be appointed as ambassador to the US), Marine Le Pen has been spotted at Trump Tower, and Geert Wilders predicted that Trump's victory foreshadowed similar outcomes in Europe. But the links go beyond mere favor-trading and moral support. Those close to Steve Bannon, Trump's chief strategist and former executive chairman of the far-right

website Breitbart News, suggest that his praise of European nationalists is more than mere rhetoric: he is looking for ways to cooperate with them. In other words, in spite of the differences between Trumpism and the agendas of these groups, there is now a loose but identifiable transatlantic coalition of right-wing populist parties that is eager to collaborate and exchange ideas that are hostile to liberal internationalism.

The Need for a More Assertive Europe

Europe should not give up on the US. A majority of Americans still consider the transatlantic relationship to be of value and most members of the economic and political elite believe it is imperative that the US continue to uphold the liberal international order. These facts will not change anytime soon. What is more, there is a good chance that Trump's successor will be a more desirable interlocutor.

However, even if Trump is not re-elected in 2020 and is replaced by a committed internationalist, the nature of US-European relations has already been permanently altered. Too much has changed for the US to fully return to its previous role of unflagging leader of the free world. The allure of the nation's approach to foreign policy in the 19th century,

when Americans believed that the best way to safeguard liberty and prosperity at home was to avoid involvement in problems abroad, is greater than at any point since 1945.

In concrete terms, Europe should expect little from the new administration. Sympathy for the many challenges facing Europe will be in short supply. When it comes to collaborating to address the problems in Europe's backyard, à la the joint intervention in Libya in 2011, the Trump administration is unlikely to be as agreeable as its predecessors. For instance, it would be surprising if the president were willing to cooperate vis-à-vis the conflict in the Ukraine. Indeed, though he has sent mixed signals on this issue, there is reason to believe that he will lift US sanctions on Russia.

Instead of seeking partnership with Europe, we can expect the US to emphasize unilateral action – with the fight against ISIS as a chief priority – and relationships with other significant powers such as Russia and China. (The potential exceptions in this context are collaboration with Moscow in combating ISIS and perhaps employing the United Kingdom as a very junior partner.) Also, the president's team and Republicans in Congress have little appetite for cooperating with international institutions and organizations,

with the UN in particular emerging as a target for criticism.

In sum, if it cares about the maintenance of the liberal international order Europe will have to carry more of the burden in the future. If one looks for silver linings in the current state of affairs, the genesis of a more vigorous European foreign policy would certainly qualify.

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Brexit and European Insecurity

Daniel Keohane

The British exit from the EU is feeding into a general sense of uncertainty about the EU's future. This uncertainty may be further exacerbated by US President Donald Trump, who has called into question both NATO's and the EU's viability. But irrespective of Brexit or the Trump administration's actions, it is vital that France, Germany, and the UK continue to work closely together on European defense post-Brexit.

British Prime Minister Theresa May passes tanks at Bulford Camp on 29 September 2016 near Salisbury, England.

The British exit from the EU – "Brexit" – is occurring while European governments face an unprecedented confluence of security crises. These range from an unpredictable Russia to conflicts across the Middle East, which are generating internal security tests such as terrorist attacks and refugee flows. The US is ambiguous about putting out all of Europe's fires and expects allies to take on more of the military burden. And no European country can cope alone.

More broadly, Brexit is feeding into a growing sense of European insecurity. The new US president, Donald Trump, supports Brexit and seems nonplussed about the future of the EU, adding succor to nationalist movements across the Union. Elections during 2017 in the Netherlands, France, Germany, and perhaps Italy, all founding EU member-states, may produce strong results for Brexit-loving politicians – such as Marine Le Pen in France – that further question the viability of the EU project. At the very least, Trump's outlook could further complicate already-difficult Brexit negotiations between the UK and its EU partners.

In addition to EU uncertainty, Brexit is causing a distinct sense of self-doubt for the UK, too. Two of the four parts of the United Kingdom voted to remain in the EU in the June 2016 referendum: Northern Ireland and Scotland. Depending on the economic consequences of the UK's Brexit deal with the EU, instability could easily return to Northern Ireland, while Scotland (where UK nuclear weapons are currently located) may hold another independence referendum. Both Unions – the EU and the UK – have reasons to feel insecure because of Brexit.

More specifically, that Brexit will reduce the potential usefulness of EU security and defense policies should be self-evident, since the UK is the largest European military spender in NATO. Those who believe that because the UK remains a nuclear-armed member of NATO, nothing much should change for European defense had better think again. Brexit might hinder European military cooperation because it could greatly strain political relationships with other European allies, especially with the next two leading military powers in NATO-Europe: France and Germany. But if handled constructively, military collaboration could become one of the most fruitful areas for cooperation between the UK and the EU post-Brexit.

With regard to NATO's future, the election of Donald Trump as US

president has an even greater potential to transform Europe's strategic landscape than Brexit if he scales back the US military commitment to European security. But irrespective of what Trump thinks in theory and what his administration does in practice, European defense post-Brexit will require much closer trilateral political and military cooperation between France, Germany, and the UK.

The Brexit Effect on EU Military Cooperation and NATO

Following the UK vote to leave the EU in June 2016, the remaining 27 Union governments have committed themselves to improving the performance of EU security and defense policies. Although it is not fair to blame the UK alone for the EU's prior lack of progress on defense, cheerleaders for a common defense policy in Berlin, Paris and elsewhere have seized on the Brexit vote as an opportunity to strengthen that policy area. In large part based on a number of subsequent practical Franco-German proposals, EU foreign and defense ministers approved new plans for EU security and defense policies in mid-November.

Since the Brexit vote, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen had at times accused the UK of paralyzing progress on EU defense in the past, and asked it not to veto new plans.

In turn, British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon has occasionally suggested that London would veto anything that smacked of an "EU army" or undermined NATO (such as an EU version of NATO's military headquarters, SHAPE).[1] Thankfully, this divisive rhetoric died down towards the end of 2016, as it has become clear that EU security and defense plans will not undermine NATO and that the UK will not use its veto.

With the approval of the UK (which retains its veto until it departs the Union), EU heads of governments approved a package of three plans covering aspects of capability development, operational planning, and military research, among other issues, at a European Council summit on 15 December 2016. However, despite their good intentions, the proposals are unlikely to have much immediate impact, and whether or not the remaining 27 EU governments will collectively deliver more on defense remains an open question.[2]

For instance, while Berlin and Paris agree on much, there are some major differences in their respective strategic cultures. For one, France, as a nuclear-armed permanent member of the UN Security Council, has a special sense of responsibility for global security, and is prepared to act unilaterally

if necessary. Germany, in contrast, will only act in coalition with others, and remains much more reluctant than France to deploy robust military force abroad.

For another, Berlin and Paris do not necessarily agree on the end goal of EU defense policy. Calls in the 2016 German defense white paper for a "European Security and Defense Union" in the long-term give the impression that EU defense is primarily a political integration project for some in Berlin.

The French are more interested in a stronger inter-governmental EU defense policy today than a symbolic integration project for the future, since Paris perceives acting militarily through the EU as an important option for those crises in and around Europe in which the US does not want to intervene. Because of their different strategic cultures, therefore, France and Germany may struggle to develop a substantially more active EU defense policy than their joint proposals would suggest.[3]

Moreover, the French do not assume that their EU partners will always rush to support their military operations. In general, they haven't robustly supported France in Africa in recent years, although Germany has enhanced its presence in Mali since the 2015 Paris

terrorist attacks. But if acting through the EU could help ensure more military support from other EU members, France would find that preferable to acting alone. The trouble for France has been its awkward position between a Germany reluctant to use robust military force abroad and a UK reluctant to act militarily through the EU.

Post-Brexit, French strategic culture will remain closest to that of the British. The EU could only develop a defense policy because France and the UK agreed that it should, at St. Malo in 1998. Moreover, London and Paris have been prepared to act together, leading the charge for what became NATO's intervention in Libya in early 2011. To reinforce the European part of NATO, the ongoing quiet deepening of bilateral Franco-British military cooperation, based on the 2010 Lancaster House treaties, is vitally important.

For example, London and Paris conducted a joint military exercise with over 5,000 troops in April 2016, as part of their broader ongoing effort to develop a combined expeditionary force, and in November 2016 they announced that they would deepen their dependence on each other for missile technology. Indeed, Franco-British cooperation is much more militarily

significant for European security than the recent developments trumpeted by the EU, which have produced little of concrete military value so far. Furthermore, Anglo-French military collaboration could become even more important if President Trump were to scale back the US military commitment to European security.

But bilateral Franco-British military cooperation may not be immune to politics. And it is important to try to avoid a spillover effect from the Brexit decision onto NATO, especially any political rift between Europe's two leading military powers, the traditionally more "Europeanist" France and more "Atlanticist" UK. Even before Trump's election in November 2016, in a speech on 5 September, British Defense Secretary Fallon said: "Given the overlap in NATO and EU membership, it's surely in all our interests to ensure the EU doesn't duplicate existing structures. […] Our Trans-Atlantic alliance works for the UK and for Europe, making us stronger and better able to meet the threats and challenges of the future".[4]

In contrast, on 6 October 2016, French president Hollande said: "There are European countries which believe that the USA will always be there to protect them […] We must therefore tell these European countries […] that if they do not defend themselves, they will no longer be defended […] the USA is no longer in the same mindset of protection and defense." Hollande added that "Europeans must be aware […] they must also be a political power with defense capabilities".[5]

If these Franco-British positions were to harden – because of difficult Brexit negotiations – and cause a political rift, it could hinder not only their bilateral cooperation, but also cooperation through (and between) both NATO and the EU. Strong Franco-British cooperation is vital for European security, not only because of their combined military power, but also because Europeans need to be able both to contribute more to NATO (as the UK prioritizes) and to act autonomously if necessary (as France advocates, via the EU, or in other ways).[6]

However, President Trump's admiration of Brexit and declaration that it wouldn't worry him if the EU broke up could not only exacerbate Franco-British divisions during difficult Brexit negotiations, but could also encourage a broader divide within NATO (of which more below) between an Anglo-sphere and a Euro-sphere. That is in nobody's interest except that of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who wishes to destabilize the Atlantic

The European Army Alphabet Soup

INSTITUTIONS

NATO

EU

NAC

FNC

CSDP

PESCO

2016 PROPOSALS + PLANS

Schengen Zone for NATO

Strength-ening NATO's "European Pillar"

SDIP

EDAP

EUGS

Letter of Four

Schengen of Defense

ESDU

European Security Compact

EU-NATO Joint Declaration

OTHER FORMATS

Bilateral

Regional

Multi-national

Ad Hoc
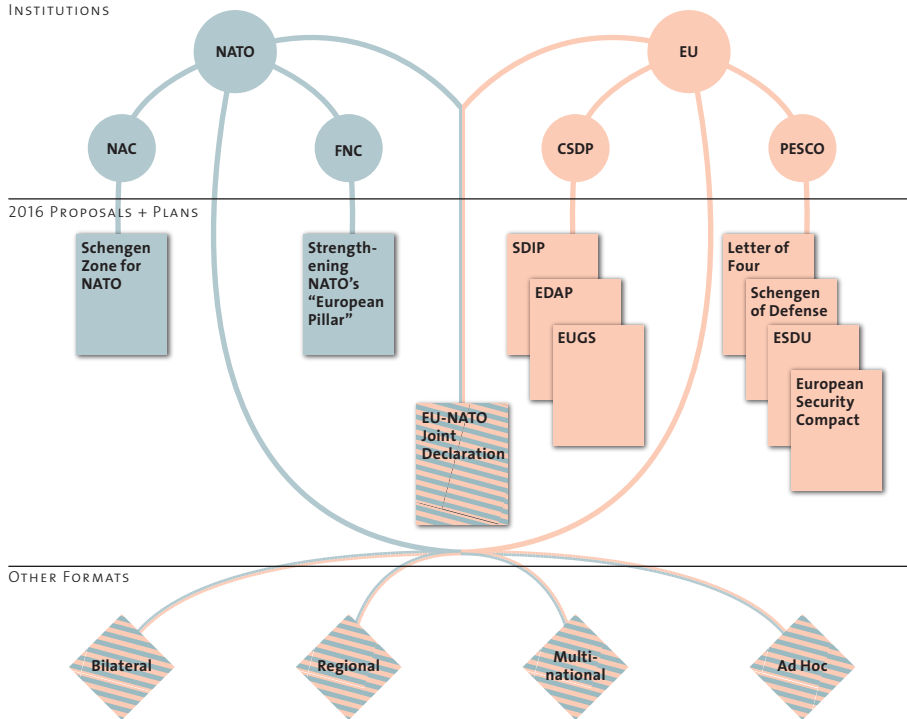
INSTITUTIONS

NAC *North Atlantic Council:* Brings together all of NATO's 28 members, decisions are taken by inter-governmental consensus

FNC *Framework Nations Concept:* Forms part of broader idea to strengthen the "European Pillar" of NATO, e.g. by pooling and sharing military capabilities

CSDP *Common Security and Defence Policy:* Inter-governmental framework for military cooperation housed within EU foreign policy structures, part of broader international security policies

PESCO *Permanent Structured Cooperation:* A legal mechanism to allow a smaller group of EU countries cooperate more closely together on military matters, may be triggered during 2017

2016 PROPOSALS + PLANS

Schengen Zone for NATO: Freedom of movement for soldiers and military equipment across NATO internal borders, an idea supported by US Army Europe & others

Strengthening NATO's "European Pillar": Europeans to take on more of NATO's military burdens, such as meeting NATO's 2% of GDP spending goal – highlighted in July German White Paper

EU-NATO Joint Declaration: A cooperation program agreed at the July NATO Warsaw summit, 40+ proposals in 7 areas such as migration, cyber, hybrid threats, exercises etc.

EUGS *EU Global Strategy:* A document published in June outlining the objectives of EU foreign and security policies, drafted by EU HR/VP Mogherini

EDAP *European Defense Action Plan:* December Proposals to augment financing of military research and joint equipment programs, and opening up national defense markets, presented by the European Commission

SDIP *Security and Defense Implementation Plan:* Follow-on document to EUGS focusing on security and defense aspects approved in December, drafted by EU HR/VP Mogherini

European Security Compact: A June Franco-German call to beef up the EU's contribution to international security and improve EU's ability to tackle internal security threats

ESDU *European Security and Defense Union:* A long-term goal to create a common defense for the EU, proposed in July German White Paper

Schengen of Defense: An August Italian proposal for a permanent multinational European force outside institutional structures but available to EU/NATO/UN.

Letter of Four: An October Franco-German-Italian-Spanish call for exploring the use of the PESCO mechanism in the EU treaties

OTHER FORMATS

Bilateral: Examples include Franco-British, German-Dutch

Regional: Examples include Nordic, Benelux, Visegrad

Multinational: Examples include the European Air Transport Command, Eurocorps

Ad Hoc: Examples include military operations like current one against Daesh

alliance. It is no wonder that other EU governments are worried about the future of European security, not only the effect of Brexit on the EU and NATO.

Military Cooperation Between the UK and the EU Post-Brexit

The UK government should hope that EU governments do deliver on their defense promises, including after the British exit from the EU. There are three reasons for this. First, some EU operations are useful for coping with the vast array of security challenges facing Europe at large. NATO cannot – and the US does not want to – be everywhere. This largely explains why most EU military operations have taken place in the broad geographic space (beyond EU territory) stretching from the Western Balkans via the Mediterranean and Africa to the Indian Ocean, to counter pirates, terrorists, and people smugglers, among other tasks. This emerging strategic necessity helps explain why the British defense secretary has said that after its departure, the UK could still contribute to EU operations.[7]

Second, Europeans need to improve their military capabilities and spend their sparse defense monies more effectively. The EU institutions in Brussels can help the governments with funding for defense research, by opening up protected national military procurement markets, and by providing financial incentives for more efficient multinational equipment programs. All of this would benefit taxpayers and soldiers alike, as well as NATO, since 21 countries will remain members of both the EU and NATO post-Brexit.

Third, the EU and NATO are deepening their practical cooperation, and European security can only benefit from these two organizations working together. To tackle terrorism or the refugee crisis, between them the EU and NATO can connect everything from internal policing and intelligence networks to external military operations. Both bodies are conducting operations to combat people-smuggling across the Mediterranean, for example. To counter Russian hybrid belligerence, they are also trying to improve the coordination of their various efforts, from economic sanctions to territorial defense, cyber-defense, and countering propaganda.

This is why NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has welcomed the (mainly) Franco–German proposals for strengthening EU security and defense policies. At a September 2016 informal meeting of EU defense ministers in Bratislava, Stoltenberg highlighted that there is no contradiction between better EU military

cooperation and a strong NATO, noting that they are mutually reinforcing.[8]

Because of these three reasons – alongside Britain's substantial military capacity, intelligence assets, and operational experience – it is in everyone's interest to have as close a relationship as possible between the UK and the EU on military matters after Brexit. The UK, for example, may wish to continue contributing to useful EU operations. Non-EU European members of NATO, such as Norway and Turkey, have made significant contributions to some EU operations in the past.

More broadly, it would make sense for the EU and UK to continue to align their positions on common international challenges, such as sanctioning Russia, and to work as closely together as possible. Malcolm Rifkind, the former UK foreign secretary, has suggested that: "What we will need, in future, is a EU+1 forum whenever the countries of Europe are seeking to promote a common foreign policy to ensure that global policy is not the monopoly of the US, China and Russia with Europe excluded."[9]

An EU+1 forum might work on an ad-hoc basis for specific challenges. But in general, the UK cannot realistically expect a formal say over EU foreign or defense policies in return for alignment with EU foreign policy positions or contributions to EU operations. British diplomats would probably prefer a permanent observer status on EU foreign policy decision-making committees to an ad-hoc, issue-by-issue approach, which implies "take it or leave it" choices for the UK. But a permanent observer status for the UK would prove difficult.

It is true that pre-accession countries, such as the ten governments that joined the EU in 2004, were able to enjoy observer status on some inter-governmental EU foreign policy-making formats. But the UK is not trying to join the EU, it is leaving. Plus, other non-EU European members of NATO who will not join the EU for the foreseeable future, particularly Norway and Turkey, would likely expect similar arrangements. At the same time, the remaining 27 EU governments are keen to protect their decision-making autonomy.

Instead, London should aim for de-facto rather than de-jure influence post-Brexit. Beyond ad-hoc observer status on standing inter-governmental EU decision-making committees, this could also involve selective inclusion of the UK in some issue-specific ad-hoc decision-making formats – such as steering boards – based on

London's willingness to participate in a particular capability project or contribute to a military operation at hand. For example, if the UK is willing to make a significant contribution to an EU military operation, while some EU members may not wish to participate, ways should be explored to ensure a formal say for London in how that operation is run.[10]

These types of ad-hoc arrangements would require a lot of political trust between the UK and the remaining 27 governments. But given the UK's deep knowledge of EU procedures and challenges – alongside its global outlook, strong military capabilities, operational experience, and vast international networks and knowledge – it is likely that London would have considerable de-facto influence on other EU governments if it chose to. Handled constructively, defense policy could become one of the most fruitful areas for cooperation between the UK and the EU after Brexit.

As long as it remains an EU member, therefore, there is not much point in London threatening to veto any future agreements on EU military cooperation, as they would almost certainly happen anyway after the UK has left the EU. It would also needlessly antagonize France, Germany, and others when the UK has much more

important things to negotiate with its EU partners. The British government should instead wish its EU partners well in their endeavors to make EU military cooperation more effective, safe in the knowledge that the UK can no longer be blamed for any future lack of progress on EU defense policy.

Brexit Negotiations and the Trump Card

Post-Brexit, European military cooperation will continue to be pushed more by the convergence of national priorities than by the efforts of the EU and NATO. European military cooperation is mainly bottom-up – driven by national governments – not top-down, meaning directed and organized by the institutions in Brussels. European governments are increasingly picking and choosing which forms of military cooperation they wish to pursue, depending on the capability project, or military operation at hand. Sometimes they act through NATO or the EU, but almost all European governments are using other formats as well, whether regional, bilateral, or ad-hoc coalitions.[11]

Other EU governments will continue to want to work with the UK in bilateral or other settings, as well as at NATO, just as the UK should work with them. British Prime Minister

Theresa May has constructively emphasized that regardless of Brexit, the UK will remain strongly committed to European security: "Britain's unique intelligence capabilities will continue to help keep people in Europe safe from terrorism […] Britain's servicemen and women, based in European countries including Estonia, Poland, and Romania, will continue to do their duty. We are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe."[12]

Policy-makers in London are well aware that other EU governments will want to continue working closely with the UK on security matters, to the extent that some see it as strengthening the UK's Brexit negotiating position. Malcolm Chalmers from the Royal United Services Institute has described the situation thus: "As concern over the future terms of a Brexit deal grows, some of those involved in shaping policy have been tempted by the argument that the UK should use its 'security surplus' – its role as the leading Western military and intelligence power – as a bargaining chip that could be 'traded' in return for commercial concessions in the post-Brexit settlement with the EU."[13]

Chalmers cautions against taking such a path, linking UK security guarantees to economic interests such as access to the EU's single market, since it could undermine the mutual confidence on which those security guarantees depend. Charles Grant of the Center for European Reform suggests that this approach has already gone down badly in some Central and Eastern EU members: "[The UK] recently sent about 1,000 troops to Estonia and Poland. Given this contribution to European security, some government advisers have suggested, EU member-states – and especially those in Central Europe – should go the extra mile to give the UK a generous exit settlement. However […] Some Baltic and Polish politicians who heard it last summer were miffed, saying they had thought the UK was sending troops because it cared about their security; but now it appeared to be a cynical move to ensure better terms on a trade deal."[14]

Moreover, although the UK is the largest European military spender in NATO, its ability to contribute as much as it would wish to European security may be hampered by the ongoing impact of Brexit on the British economy and the UK government budget. The hope is that the impact of Brexit on UK military spending and capability will not be as debilitating as the fallout from the economic crisis of 2008 onwards. The 2010 UK defense review led to the reduction of

The United Kingdom's Trade Relations with Selected Countries

As of 2014, in billion USD

Legend:
- Trade in Goods (Import)
- Trade in Goods (Export)
- Trade in Services (Import)
- Trade in Services (Export)

USA
- 58.66
- 64.15
- 38.55
- 83.28

Poland
- 12.64 / 6.17
- 2.65 / 2.63

Germany
- 100.04 / 52.05
- 16.1 / 19.91

France
- 43.39 / 32.4
- 19.79 / 19.27

Italy
- 28.39 / 14.42
- 7.99 / 12.15

Spain
- 21.81 / 14.48
- 16.88 / 9.11
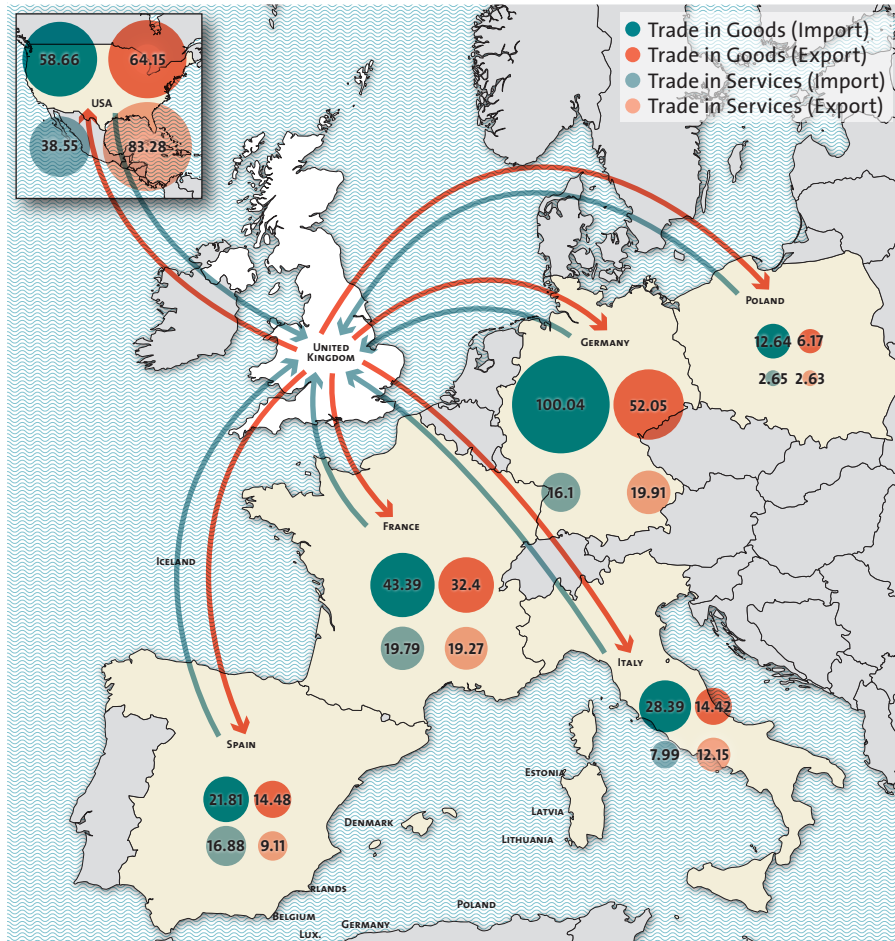
Sources: OECD, *OECD Quarterly Internationale Trade Statistics* 2016, no. 3 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017); OECD, *OECD Statistics on International Trade in Services* 2016, no. 2 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016)

the UK army to its lowest manpower numbers since the Napoleonic era, and a number of key capability projects were scrapped or delayed (such as aircraft carriers).[15]

However, Brexit is already biting into the British defense budget to some degree, mainly due the fall in the value of the pound sterling: A January 2017 report from the UK National Audit

Office said that the projected costs of funding the UK's current defense equipment plan, which takes Britain from 2016 to 2026, had risen by 7 per cent during 2016, compared with a rise of 1.2 per cent between 2013 and 2015. This will require British defense officials to find nearly £6 billion of additional savings from their equipment plan in ten years if they are to remain within budget.[16]

In addition, some in London now expect that the US will reinforce the UK's position in its forthcoming Brexit negotiations. President Trump has declared his admiration of Brexit, and stated that it wouldn't worry him if the EU broke up. In a joint interview before his inauguration with the British *Times* and German *Bild* (conducted with Michael Gove, a leading pro-Brexit UK politician), Trump said that not only would Brexit "end up being a great thing", but also that the EU would continue to break apart. Trump explained: "People, countries, want their own identity and the UK wanted its own identity."[17]

Some pro-Brexit politicians in the UK interpret Trump's November electoral victory (and outlook) as additional justification for the British exit from the EU. The world is changing, so the argument runs, and the UK will emerge as a pioneer in the new

sovereigntist world order, not least because of a re-booted "special relationship" with the US. Following a meeting with Trump on 9 January 2017, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said that the then US president-elect had "a very exciting agenda of change", and that the UK was "first in line" for a free trade deal with the US after the Trump administration took office (technically, however, this cannot happen for at least two years, since the UK cannot formally agree a bilateral trade deal with the US or any other non-EU country until after it has left the EU).

Johnson elaborated further at the Munich Security Conference in February 2017, referring to Brexit as "liberation" from the EU.[18] But the UK's embrace of Trump, combined with the US president's nonchalance towards the EU's future, could divide NATO allies, with the US and the UK on one side and France, Germany, Italy, and Spain on the other. Similar to the bitter splits over the 2003 Iraq war, this could potentially force other European governments to choose sides. In that scenario, everyone would lose out.

Alternatively, in a more optimistic scenario, the UK could potentially act as a bridge between Europe and the new US administration on reinforcing

NATO, which could play positively into the ongoing Brexit negotiations with EU partners. UK Prime Minister Theresa May did manage during her January visit to Washington to get a public agreement from the new US president that he backs NATO "100 per cent". But most other Europeans are less convinced by Trump's words on NATO, they await his actions. Moreover, in stark contrast to Boris Johnson's views, the chairman of the Munich Security Conference, Wolfgang Ischinger, summed up how many in the remaining EU-27 countries feel about Trump's views on the EU, calling them a form of "war without weapons".[19]

As Charles Grant from the Center for European Reform has put it: "A related card cited by British officials is Donald Trump. His questionable commitment to European security, and the increasingly dangerous nature of the world, could make partnership with Britain more valuable to continental governments. But the Trump card could easily end up hurting the British. The more that British ministers cozy up to Trump, and avoid criticizing his worst excesses, the more alien the British appear to other Europeans, and the more the UK's soft power erodes."[20]

New Deals on European Defense?

Trump's views on NATO are more mixed than his views on the EU, if not altogether re-assuring to most Europeans: "I said a long time ago that NATO had problems. Number one it was obsolete […] Number two the countries aren't paying what they're supposed to pay […] which I think is very unfair to the United States. With that being said, NATO is very important to me."[21]

The problem with Trump's general approach to world affairs is that it favors creating an international bazaar of bilateral deals, centered on what the president thinks is best for the US, over working with more stable global and regional institutions.[22] That the US created the current global system of institutions and rules – for very good reasons – seems to be neither here nor there for Trump. No wonder that many in Brussels and elsewhere worry for the future of both NATO and the EU.

Much commentary has focused on the key role Germany will have to play to keep the EU together following the UK's Brexit vote during the Trump era. The departing UK aside, some other major EU countries may not be so resistant to the US president's ideas. The current conservative government in Warsaw shares much of Trump's nationalist worldview. Following his election, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło said: "A certain era

in world politics ends […] Democracy won despite the liberal propaganda."[23]

Warsaw has been fighting with the EU institutions in Brussels over the rule of law in Poland, and meets the NATO target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defense. Sounds like Trump's kind of European ally, a country he might want to tempt to leave the EU with a bilateral trade deal. Moreover, if Trump continues to be dissatisfied with NATO as a whole, might Poland be tempted to try to cash in and strike a bilateral deal with the US on defense?

Alternatively, if Trump and Putin were to agree a new geopolitical arrangement over the heads of NATO allies, a kind of updated Yalta conference, would that push Poland towards better bilateral relationships with Germany, France, the UK, and others? In some respects, this has already been happening. Since 2015, Germany has placed a battalion of mechanized infantry under the command of a Polish brigade. In November 2016, Poland and the UK announced their ambition to agree on a bilateral defense treaty.

As Poland's potential choices suggest, deeper bilateralism across Europe may be the best way to resist the temptations and turbulences of Trump. Malcolm Chalmers of the Royal United Services Institute has suggested such

a course for the UK: "The election of Trump as US president could also lead to further pressure on European states, including the UK, to take a greater share of responsibility for their own security. Given this, the UK is likely to want to further deepen existing efforts to improve bilateral defense cooperation with European NATO members (for example, France)."[24]

To reinforce the European part of NATO, the ongoing quiet deepening of bilateral military cooperation between Europe's two leading military powers, France and the UK, based on the 2010 Lancaster House treaties, is vitally important. Germany is also working on a roadmap for military cooperation with the UK to ensure that tight cooperation on military matters survives Britain's exit from the EU.[25] Preserving the EU, and developing more effective EU military cooperation (as outlined above), will depend to a large degree on stronger Franco-German cooperation – although the Berlin-Paris engine is in dire need of a kick-start.

However, deeper bilateralism between the major European powers may not be enough to strengthen Europe's defenses. No European member of NATO wants to lose the protection of the US. But Europeans would be wise to at least collectively improve

Selected Military Capabilities

As of 2016

	Defense budget in USD billion	Active troops	Deployed troops (incl. on their own overseas bases)*	Main battle tanks	Combat aircraft	Principal surface vessels	Submarines
United Kingdom	52.5	152,350	13,418	227	279	19	11
France	47.2	202,950	18,104	200	351	24	10
Germany	38.3	176,800	3,050	306	217	15	6
Italy	22.3	174,500	4,155	160	268	19	7
Poland	9.1	99,300	583	985	98	2	5
Spain	12.2	123,200	1,086	347	182	11	3
USA	604.0	1,347,300	202,954	2,831	3,628	104	68

* not including naval missions

Source: IISS Military Balance 2017

their own defenses, in case they can no longer depend on NATO – meaning the US – as much as before. Moreover, Europeans – in particular the French, the Germans, and the British – should probably also consider whether they would be able to defend themselves collectively if they had to, a question that has been, until now, a taboo in European defense discussions.

Currently, the main state-based military threat to European security is Russia. Although it is possible that Moscow might risk a shooting war with a European NATO member, that is far from obvious, and Russia may prefer to wage war via hybrid means. In 2016, France, Germany, and the UK combined spent USD 138 billion on defense, whereas Russia spent USD 58.9 billion.[26] But Russia is not the only threat to European security. There is a wide range of security challenges across the EU's broad neighborhood that may require Europeans to use military means without US help, such as preventing conflicts or helping weak states like Mali fight terrorists.

The elephant in the room for such a European defense plan would be nuclear deterrence.[27] If Trump were to withdraw the US nuclear umbrella

– which should be very unlikely – would France and the UK be willing and able to provide nuclear-armed protection for other Europeans?[28]

In any case, deeper European cooperation in the defense of Europe could not be credibly carried out via the EU, since the UK will depart, and some EU countries (such as Austria, Ireland, and Finland) are not yet willing to join a military alliance. The EU, unlike NATO, is not an inter-governmental military alliance (let alone moving towards creating a federal European army under the political control of Brussels-based EU institutions), and is far from capable of defending its territory from attacks by external states like Russia.[29]

Depending on the precise nature of any US military scale-back, something like a strengthened European pillar of NATO would probably be required.[30] In the worst case, perhaps even a revived Western European Union – a now-defunct military alliance of ten European governments that preceded EU defense policy, separate from the EU and NATO –, might be needed. [31]

In particular, deeper European cooperation for defending Europe will require much closer political and military alignment between Berlin, Paris, and London. One misfortune of Brexit is that it is occurring just when British,

French, and German defense policies have been showing some signs of convergence in recent years. Each country is aiming – to varying degrees – to be able to meet as broad a spectrum of tasks as possible, maintain the ability to defend their territories, and also deploy abroad.

Each of them has promised to increase defense spending in the coming years, reflecting the difficult security crises that Europe faces today. All three have made important contributions to NATO's reassurance measures to allies in Eastern Europe, such as participating in Baltic air policing. Moreover, all three have deployed forces to help fight Islamist terrorists in Africa and the Middle East.

It is true that Germany has been reluctant to take on full-blown combat roles abroad. But its beefed-up support for the coalition against the so-called "Islamic State", following the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, alongside its willingness to lead one of NATO's four new battalions in Eastern Europe, suggests that Germany realizes that it needs to be prepared to contribute more militarily to European security.[32]

France has sometimes been suspected of being too Russia-friendly, but it cancelled the delivery of two Mistral

amphibious assault ships to Moscow after the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Britain has long been accused of being anti-EU military cooperation. But the EU's most successful military mission to date, an anti-piracy operation in the waters off Somalia, has been run from a British military headquarters.

In essence, European military cooperation – whether through the EU, NATO, or other formats – is a tale of three cities, because it can fully work only if Berlin, London, and Paris agree. Encouragingly, in November 2016 a joint meeting of French, British, and German defense chiefs took place in Paris. Regardless of what the Trump administration in the US does, the minimum challenge now for France, Germany, and the UK will be to ensure that the British exit from the EU will not make political alignments on European defense more difficult to achieve.

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Threatened from Within? NATO, Trump and Institutional Adaptation

Martin Zapfe

NATO faces an existential challenge by a revanchist Russia. Despite impressive assurance and adaptation measures, its overall defense position remains weak. It will face serious challenges in balancing strategic divergence, both within Europe and in its transatlantic relations. While regionalization and increased European efforts might offer some respite, the stage is set for potentially serious rifts at a critical point in time.

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg during a NATO defense ministers meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, 15 February 2017.

The Atlantic alliance is both more relevant, and more threatened by internal disturbances, than ever before since the end of the Cold War. At least since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of eastern Ukraine, European states and their militaries have had to accept that they have to use the current time of peace to think potential war. At the same time, the Russian challenge goes far beyond conventional military threats, opting instead for "cross-domain coercion"[1] from sub-conventional to nuclear means and methods. The target is cohesion within NATO – weakening the transatlantic link and supranational European institutions – a policy of constant divide and rule. It is at this critical point that the presidency of Donald Trump appears to threaten NATO from within.

This chapter argues that NATO's adaptation towards countering the Russian challenge since 2014 is impressive. Nevertheless, although achieved at high political cost, it still risks falling short. Further tangible steps are necessary to deter Moscow, and yet internal strategic divergences within NATO threaten to hamper or block such measures. It is here that the external and internal threats to NATO converge.

The US is NATO's indispensable ally, the political and military core of the alliance. However, it is unlikely that NATO can insulate itself from global US conflicts under a President Donald Trump who appears to follow a strictly transactionist understanding of foreign policy. The US could very well impose conditions on its security guarantees, and other alliance members may find that increasing their defense budgets, while necessary and imminent, might not be enough. Although there are ways for "institutional NATO" to mitigate the strategic divergences within the alliance, they each come with distinct risks attached and will not be a substitute for US leadership and capabilities.

The Russian Threat and NATO's Response

A Threat to Cohesion

European states are facing many and complex security challenges. Migration pressures, terrorism, and fragile states at their periphery demand attention. However, the challenge posed by Russia under President Vladimir Putin is of a different quality, as it targets the very basis of the order that, after the end of the Second World War, enabled the longest period of peace in written European history – and a democratic, prosperous peace as well. Both with its aggression against Ukraine and with the largely sub-conventional, "hybrid" nature of this aggression, Russia has crossed

lines that only a few years ago were considered inviolable. The Russian challenge is existential in that it combines external and internal threats: Russia poses the only credible territorial threat to a NATO member while actively aiming to subverting not only the inter- and supranational European alliances, but the democratic order of European states per se.

First, the annexation of Crimea marked the first armed land grab in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Six decades of general peace were partly made possible through the official renunciation of territorial ambitions and irredentism. Borders, while changeable in principle, were to be inviolable, as laid down in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and confirmed in the Paris Charter of 1990. Even through the bloody wars of Yugoslav succession, this principle was generally upheld. Kosovo, for all the debate about it constituting a precedent for Crimea, was not invaded by any Western state for the sake of territorial gains. The Russian attack against Ukraine to prevent the nation's movement towards Europe was and remains a watershed predicted by very few within and outside of NATO.

Second, the "hybrid", ostensibly covert nature of the invasion, which was

long denied by Russian authorities, appears to augur the "new normal" in Russian-European relations. Russia's understanding of interstate relations as a continuum of conflict, where the choice of means is not dictated by questions of legality, but of practicability, is diametrically opposed to the conduct of diplomacy and the understanding of interstate relations from the European point of view. Russia's concept of "new-generation warfare" consciously and explicitly denies the distinction between war and peace as separate spheres. This overburdens the West's ability to formulate policy responses.[2] In addition, Russia has demonstrated that its understanding of information warfare (IW) as an integral part of cyber-operations aims at a soft spot in the West's defense – its normative and legal distinction between the military and civilian spheres, and its commitment to the principle of a free press. The influence operations conducted daily in Western societies, most prominently the hack-and-release operation to influence the outcome of the US presidential election in 2016, aim at weakening the democratic societies of the West and their trust in the democratic process of governance.[3]

Adaptation Falls Short
NATO stepped up to the challenge in ways that not too many observers

had expected. In the mere three years since the Wales Summit of 2014, NATO has implemented the "Readiness Action Plan" and taken important and far-reaching steps to reassure allies and adapt to the new challenges for a credible defense of the exposed allies in the east – first and foremost, the Baltic states. It has established the so-called "Very High Readiness Joint Task Force" (VJTF) as its spearhead, it has enhanced the NATO Response Force ("eNRF"), it has established eight small headquarters in the eastern member states to facilitate quick deployments, and it has adapted its Force and Command Structure. The next, logical step at the alliance's July 2016 summit in Warsaw was the decision to deploy four multinational battalion-sized battlegroups as the "Enhanced Forward Presence" (EFP).

On top of these multilateral measures, the US, under the administration of former US president Barack Obama, significantly increased its military commitment to Europe. In addition to the two combat brigades continuously stationed in Germany and Italy, armored brigades will rotate in nine-month cycles into eastern Europe to train with local forces, and equipment for another armored brigade will be stored in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Three years after the invasion of Crimea, Russia will be

facing an unprecedented – if still merely symbolic – NATO presence at its borders and reinforced US troops in Europe.

Compared to where the alliance stood when Russia invaded Ukraine – with limited plans, no significant presence, and a diminished institutional memory of how actually to conduct territorial defense – the progress is impressive. Judging by whether these measures, by themselves, could credibly deter a Russian aggression in the most feared scenarios, however, the answer appears to be negative. Until it is backed up by credible capabilities, rehearsed contingency plans, and demonstrated political will, a symbolic presence in the form of a trip-wire force remains exactly that – symbolic.

For NATO, the order of the day must be twofold: politically, to preserve the cohesion of the alliance and to underline the importance of Article 5, and militarily, further to strengthen NATO's posture in the east. This enhanced posture would allow the alliance to better resist Russian "new generation war" in peacetime and to make credible preparations for open hostilities in case of war. The agenda should be set. However, serious strategic divergences threaten to prevent this from happening.

NATO's Conventional Deterrence Posture

Key multilateral and US forces, key NATO command and control structure

- NATO members
- NATO members with Force Integration Units (FIU)
- HQ NATO and Shape Mons
- Joint Force Command (JFC)
- Multinational Corps Northeast (MCNE)
- NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU)
- Multinational Division South-East (MND S-E)
- Romanian Multinational Framework Brigade
- NATO enhanced Forward Presence (eFP)
- enhanced NATO Response Force (eNRF)
- NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)
- Baltic Air Policing
- US Combat Brigades
- Stored material under the European Activity Set (EAS)
- Area of operations, rotating US armored brigade

ICELAND

RUSSIA

Tallinn — UK
ESTONIA — CA
Riga
LATVIA
LITHUANIA — GE
Vilnius — US
DENMARK

Baltic Sea

UNITED KINGDOM

Stettin
Bydgoszcz
POLAND

NETHERLANDS
Brussels
Mons — Brunssum
BELGIUM
LUXEMBOURG
GERMANY

CZECH REPUBLIC

SLOVAKIA
Bratislava
HUNGARY
Szekesfehervar

FRANCE

SLOVENIA
CROATIA

ROMANIA
Bucharest
Craiova

BULGARIA
Sofia

Black Sea

SPAIN

ITALY

Naples

ALBANIA
GREECE
TURKEY

Mediterranean

Allied Reaction Forces

eNRF
- VJTF 2016: ES
- VJTF 2017: UK
- VJTF 2018: IT

Sources: NATO; US Army; Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik; German Ministry of Defence

Threats to Cohesion

"If the alliance is to remain the foundation of Western security there must be no basic disagreement on the nature of our global objectives and on the collective responsibility of the West to protect its interests."[4]
Cyrus Vance, 1983

In the face of these determined Russian efforts to undermine it, NATO faces a period of not unprecedented, yet serious strategic divergence. Of course, the Cold War did see its share of strategic divergences and momentous political upheavals seriously affecting NATO, such as the Algerian War and the Suez Crisis during the 1950s and Greece and Turkey facing off over Cyprus in the 1960s.

What is new in 2017, though, is the potentially dangerous combination of an challenge from a revanchist Russia on the one hand, and deep insecurity about internal strategic divergences within NATO on the other. A strong and essentially unified alliance would not have to fear the destabilizing acts of an overall weaker competitor with growing, but still limited military capabilities. However, an alliance that struggles with diverse, yet subtly linked challenges does have reason for concern. The alliance is facing a serious intra-European rift about defense priorities, while

simultaneously experiencing hitherto unknown doubts about the US security commitment.

A Shaky Intra-European Consensus

Many allies are preoccupied with other serious security threats, and it is in addition to the existential and therefore common challenge from Russia that these other security issues are to be seen. Jihadist terrorism, carried out by commandos sent by, or perpetrators inspired by, the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) is high on the agenda, especially in France in Belgium. At the same time, Italy is struggling with a massive movement of refugees and migrants over the Mediterranean, which is largely ignored by its northern neighbors. Paris, Brussels, and Rome look southwards, not eastwards. France has refused to lead one of the EFP's battalions, citing strained resources, which proves that this strategic divergence has already had immediate implications for operational and politico-military matters.

The "conventional turn" of 2014 has not sufficiently strengthened NATO's cohesion. Understood as the general tendency within the alliance to move away from troop-intensive stabilization operations and back to a general notion of collective defense, this turn had already begun with the drawdown of ISAF and was significantly

reinforced by the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Contrary to the expectations of many, including this author, this did not sufficiently enhance allied solidarity, nor did it form a solid basis for the years ahead. The unprecedented and unexpected migration crisis of 2015–6 strained intra-European relations to the breaking point, and the challenge to the south became more prominent as the Syrian war escalated further, now with Russian troops actively supporting Bashir al-Assad. On top of that, bloody terrorist attacks in France and Belgium set the agenda and demanded political attention and bureaucratic resources.

On top of that, hugely complex and potentially bitter negotiations over the terms of the UK's departure from the EU ("Brexit") are to be expected. With the UK being Europe's most important and resolute military power, it appears increasingly unlikely that the critical security relationships between London and its European partners will remain unaffected by the Brexit talks. NATO will have to struggle with increased uncertainty and acrimonious relations between the UK and its partners at the time when it can least afford them.

Finally, relations between most NATO members and Turkey are on a dangerous course. While the heavy-handed and indiscriminate crackdown against real and imagined participants of the failed coup attempt of July 2016 is observed with muted suspicion and worry, Turkey's aims and priorities in the Syrian carnage and in the broader Middle East are also partly at odds with those of its allies. On the upside, the prospect of direct Turkish-Russian clashes, which had flared up after Turkish jets downed a Russian aircraft in northern Syria in November 2015, has faded. That fear has now been replaced by a certain weariness regarding Turkey's internal developments and a rather spectacular rapprochement with Russia, resulting in a de-facto alliance, at least in the short term, in parts of Syria. For decades, NATO has included non-democratic states among its members, yet today, it will have to ask itself whether it can permanently endure the tensions arising from an increasingly authoritarian, undemocratic, and Islamist state in its ranks. For now, the only thing that prevents serious discussions of a "Turxit" from NATO may be the fear of what might happen if Turkey were not to be an ally, but an antagonist.

NATO and the US

During the Congo Crisis of 1960, NATO's secretary general, the Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak, mused: "Can we, thanks to NATO, maintain a common policy on European questions

and […] oppose each other on all others?" That question appears to be more relevant than ever, with the US under President Trump appearing liable to entangle the alliance in global conflicts not of its choosing.

During the Balkan wars of the 1990s, US reluctance to intervene stemmed not from an urge to abandon Europe, but from the conviction that, with the Soviet threat gone, Europe should be able to manage its strategic glacis by itself. When the US under President George W. Bush, in his neo-conservative first term, split the alliance by invading Iraq, the basic commitment to European security was never seriously questioned. "Old Europe", and even more "New Europe", counted on the US in the event of a still-unlikely Russian resurgence. That has already changed.

With or Against Russia?
At the beginning of 2017, the insecurity within NATO capitals over the future relationship between Moscow and Washington is perplexing. During the US presidential election campaign of 2016, incredulity over the Republican candidate's nearly ritualistic admiration of Russia, and especially of its authoritarian president, mounted by the week; and it has not faded since the inauguration. Far more than Trump's threats and demands regarding a fairer

burden-sharing, this has fed suspicion and undermined the alliance. After all, Trump's pressure on allies to increase their defense spending is part of a decades-old tradition, and comes only six years after the landmark 2011 speech by then-secretary of defense Robert Gates, who issued an identical threat, raising the specter of a strategic reassessment by Washington.[5] Moreover, President Trump can legitimately point to the commonly agreed 2-per cent target for defense spending. Thus, his pressure on allies to increase defense budgets follows the normal playbook and would, in different times, not constitute a threat to NATO.

However, the extent to which Trump has already undermined the US security guarantees, and his surreal and positively grotesque efforts to cast Putin in a positive light, are fueling the most basic European fears of a "Yalta II", a grand bargain between Moscow and Washington over the heads of the Europeans. Essentially, Europe fears that the US will abandon its long-term allies. Senior administration officials have so far failed to reassure the allies that their president is not serious about what he says. Thus, by increasing their defense spending – in case of Germany, quite dramatically – the Europeans are not only alleviating pressure, but also hedging

their bets against the time when the US is no longer the continent's security guarantor.

Global Allies, Always?

In addition to this intra-European dissent, the alliance faces unprecedented doubts about Washington's essential security guarantees as a NATO member. These are compounded by the prospect of potential global turmoil, with the US under Trump refusing to allow its allies to stand by and decline involvement. In a time of growing doubts about NATO's security, global conflicts far beyond Europe could well contribute to a transatlantic divide.

The two global theaters most likely to be at the center of forceful US foreign policy efforts – the Middle East and Asia – are liable to see severe disagreements between the US on the one hand, and most of its NATO allies on the other. While President Trump's senior officials, namely Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, have tried to reassure European allies, Donald Trump made the headlines. During the campaign, he seemed to qualify US solidarity by tying it to the European states' defense spending. Furthermore, after his inauguration, he added to that by famously calling NATO "obsolete". Without clarifying what, precisely, he meant by this, it is clear that the US

will not easily accept NATO members standing aside in US conflicts beyond the campaign against terrorism – when confronting IS, Iran, or China.

At the very least, the alliance faces intense discussions about its role in the fight against IS, and the broader Middle East as a whole. President Trump has made clear that IS constitutes his key foreign policy priority. Former and current advisors, like former national security advisor Lieutenant General Michael Flynn and White House chief strategist Stephen Bannon, viewed "radical Islamic terrorism", if left unchecked, as a potentially existential threat to the US; they apparently wield strong influence over the president. While Trump has been famously silent on the specifics of his plans, he has hinted that he wants his NATO allies to take on a stronger role in the "fight against terror". Since most NATO members are already engaged in the US-led coalition against IS, albeit outside of NATO, this could mean either that they would increase their engagement within this coalition, or that NATO could take over part of the campaign in what would be a largely symbolical step without too much tangible value being added to the campaign.

Such wins may not be nearly as easy to achieve when it comes to the other

potential main effort of the Trump administration in the Middle East. Trump and his key advisors have been outspoken in their criticism of Iran's role in the region and its attacks on US service members and interests. Washington's European allies have been instrumental in negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of 2015. They are unanimous in supporting the agreement, and have strong economic interests in expanding trade relations with Tehran. Should President Trump choose to abrogate the agreement in the absence of unambiguous Iranian violations, he could not count on European support. And should he listen to those voices around him (and in the region) who still demand US attacks on nuclear and military installations – potentially in a combined operation together with Israel – it appears highly unlikely that he could count on the active and unanimous support of NATO and its member states.

The same applies to potential conflicts in the Far East. Asian security challenges took center stage even before the inauguration after president-elect Trump upset the People's Republic of China by accepting a phone call from Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who congratulated him on his victory. In the days that followed, Donald Trump made clear that this had been

no mere faux-pas, but that he might assume a more confrontational policy vis-à-vis Beijing, temporarily challenging the One-China Policy and attacking the current imbalance in bilateral trade as unfair. In addition, some of his personnel picks indicate a tougher stance on Beijing.[6] While one has to be careful – and President Trump has already been forced to backtrack from his challenge to the One China policy – it appears that the US under Trump will continue to confront China on many levels, notwithstanding logical inconsistencies such as the cancellation of the TPP, which decidedly disfavors Beijing.

At the same time, fears emerged concerning an early confrontation with North Korea. In the face of speculations over a test of an intercontinental missile that might be capable of reaching the US mainland, the president-elect promised via Twitter that North Korea "developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the US [...] won't happen", leading to speculation over what he would do, once in office, to prevent the regime of Kim Jong-un from following through on its promises. While the response to the test of a missile with shorter range has been rather restrained, North Korea might well pose the first real test of President Trump's foreign policy.

Few European states have a global strategic perspective. Only France and the UK, formerly the continent's preeminent colonial powers, include global interventions in their strategic portfolio. While any of the aforementioned conflicts would immediately affect European interests, it is far from certain that the mere possibility of such outcomes could prompt European NATO members to contribute militarily to any US-Chinese or US-North Korean conflict. While the Chinese encroachment in the South China Sea, and the challenge this poses to the global rules-based order, could incite European resistance, no one should count on Berlin, Rome, or Madrid to be willing to confront China over their profound economic interests. This would be even more unlikely if, from the Europeans' perspective, the US under Trump were to blame for any escalation.

Trump, who puts "America First" and has already stated that NATO has become obsolete by focusing on Russia as the main threat, is unlikely to accept the simple legal fact that the NATO treaty is limited to *"the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America (and) the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer."*[7] The US president, apparently viewing international politics as

purely transactional in nature, might well condition the US security guarantee for Europe on direct European assistance in the Middle East or Asia – and there is no guarantee that NATO would be willing to live up to his expectations, or indeed capable of doing so.

Mitigating Strategic Divergence

In the face of these strains on cohesion within the alliance, how can NATO leverage its institutional flexibility to mitigate the fallout? The obvious answer is increased defense spending, as the US has repeatedly demanded. This message appears to finally have been understood, and European states have pledged to increase their defense expenditures, sometimes dramatically. That alone, however, will not suffice. The institution itself must adapt, as it has always done over six decades. Three possible courses of action, which are not mutually exclusive, continue to re-appear in the debate, but none comes without costs and risks attached – and none may be easy to implement.

Regionalization as Risk and Chance

The obvious functional answer to such divergent interests, at least regarding the European allies and their respective priorities, would be a regionalization of the alliance – meaning the acceptance that certain potentially

overlapping groups of allies prioritize certain regions or challenges. Such a regionalization is at odds with NATO's historical approach and, while having undisputable benefits, would entail the risk of further diminishing unity in case of conflict.

For NATO, this means accepting strategic divergence and nascent regionalization as a given and actively moderating it to contain the risks and cultivate the chances that such a trend entails. Both the advantages and the disadvantages are potentially significant. Walking the tightrope between accepting specialization and regionalization to buffer strategic divergences, while still ensuring political and military unity and interoperability across the board, appears to be one main challenge in the years to come.

NATO has always known a certain degree of regionalization. Italian troops were focused south of the Alps, while Norway guarded the north. Greece looked towards the Mediterranean, and Turkey had an eye on the Black Sea. However, the bulk of the alliance's forces was to be fighting at Europe's central front between the Alps and the North Sea. Here, British, Dutch, Canadian, Belgian, Danish, US, and German (and, although of varying independence, French) forces were positioned to fight side by side. Apart

from the sheer necessity of fighting together to generate the numbers, this also had a very strong symbolic aspect. Most of the main allies had ground troops on the frontline. For all practical purposes, it was near impossible to opt out of any escalation – an important reassurance for all allies in general, and for the German government in particular. Buffeting the increasingly diverse strategic foci of NATO members through increased regionalization risks weakening the very cohesive forces that hold NATO together in times of crises.
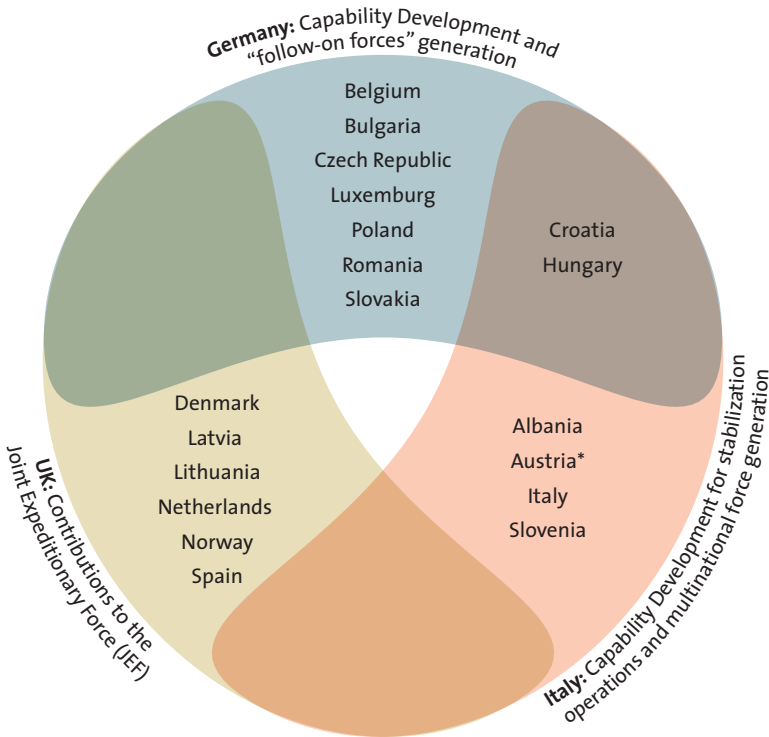
However, if NATO should manage to coordinate and steer that regionalization, there would be tangible advantages. There is a considerable potential for a distinct east-south specialization – a split that, in reality, is already relevant. On the upside, such a strategy could sharpen the operational and regional focus of the alliance, increase military efficiency and efficacy for relevant contingencies, and allow for better force planning and harmonization of capabilities.

The NATO Command Structure – still the military centerpiece and most important asset of the alliance – has experienced quasi-constant reform since the end of the Cold War. Currently, it is based on functionality, not geography, meaning that no

The Framework Nations' Concept

Introduced by Germany in 2013, adopded by NATO in 2014

Germany: Capability Development and "follow-on forces" generation

Belgium
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Luxemburg
Poland
Romania
Slovakia

Croatia
Hungary

Denmark
Latvia
Lithuania
Netherlands
Norway
Spain

Albania
Austria*
Italy
Slovenia

UK: Contributions to the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)

Italy: Capability Development for stabilization operations and multinational force generation

* Non-NATO Member

Sources: Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, "The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity?", in: *NATO Defense College Research Paper,* no.132 (2016); Hans Binnendijk, "NATO's Future: A Tale of Three Summits", *Center for Transatlantic Relations* (2016).

headquarters are permanently assigned to a specific region. It would seem imperative, then, for the alliance to designate a distinct and unambiguous chain of command for one single region and to focus all its bureaucratic bandwidth on war-planning, contingencies, and preparations in the assigned area of operations. For example, while the Joint Force Command Brunssum could be designated as "JFC East", its sister command in Naples could be modeled as a "JFC South" with permanently subordinated or assigned forces, tailored to specific missions and contingencies. Recent announcements by NATO point in that direction.[8]

This could imply a regionalization of the alliance in terms of force generation as well. With regard to Russia, for example, such a group could form a core of nations prepared to go further in their military integration and to pledge certain capabilities with a regional focus and much deeper integration than currently achievable. Such a regionalized defense cluster would need to include the US; the "Big Three", whose capabilities come as close to full-spectrum forces as is realistically possible, namely France, the UK, and Germany; and the eastern member states primarily affected by this threat. In addition, a certain degree of regionalization could facilitate the integration of non-members Finland and Sweden into NATO's contingency planning, if their respective governments should choose that course.[9]

In the south, where various maritime and coast guard capabilities are in demand, together with stabilization capabilities, states like Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece would prioritize those missions.

This split is already visible in force planning: Within NATO's "Framework Nations' Concept" (FNC), Germany is leading efforts to generate viable so-called "follow-on forces" for the eNRF, while Italy is coordinating

a group of nations focusing on stabilization operations.[10]

However, any regionalization would come at potentially prohibitive political and military cost. NATO has always been more than just a military organization searching for the most efficient battle plan. It is also an organization of mutual security that for 60 years has protected its member states against external enemies and promoted peaceful conflict resolution between them, as laid down in Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Thus, political unity, or the acceptance of a single basic contractual and political framework, is not just mere symbolism, but the foundation for peaceful relations between alliance members. Regionalization, if unchecked and unmoderated, could undermine this unity and degrade the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to a mere symbolic shell.

In military terms, overly specialized armed forces that are focused on a single scenario risk "preparing for the last war", meaning that they cultivate capabilities that are relevant in the worst-case scenario, but of little use in other (and, for NATO as a whole, more relevant) scenarios. For example, should the southern states completely reorient their armed forces towards intervention and stabilization

Multinational Integration in the Dutch and German Land Forces
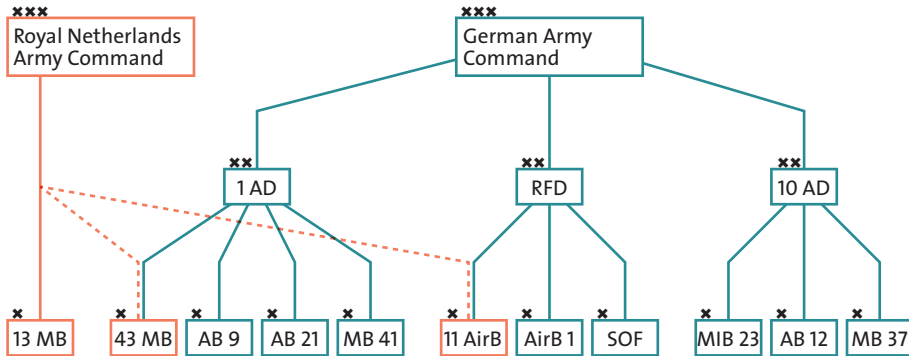
Dutch
German
Simplified with focus on ground combat brigades and harmonized designations.
AD: Armored Division
RFD: Rapid Forces Division
MB: Mechanized Brigade / Mechanized Infantry Brigade
AB: Armored Brigade
MIB: Mountain Infantry Brigade
AirB: Airmobile/Airbone Brigade
SOF: Special Operations Forces (*Kommando Spezialkräfte,* KSK)
Sources: Deutsches Heer; defensie.nl

missions in the south – focusing on infantry-heavy, light and sustained low-intensity land operations to the detriment of heavy, armored, high-technology intervention forces with a priority on high-end air and naval forces – the day might come when they are not only unwilling, but also essentially unable to support the Baltic allies against a Russian incursion.

That logic also applies conversely. As NATO might find itself fighting wars with the burden being carried by only a small number of specialized states, so increases the danger that a vanguard of willing nations could embroil NATO in a war it does not want. The organizational integration of armed forces as pursued by some allies might also reinforce this dilemma. While rightfully hailed as an important symbolic move, and with real military potential, integrating the Dutch and German land forces will only make sense if it is accompanied by a harmonization of political decisionmaking between The Hague and Berlin, which would create new power centers that could mobilize or block NATO.

The principle of collective decision-making thus constitutes an effective barrier against NATO being dragged into such a scenario, but a regionalized and specialized defense posture involuntarily entails informal decisionmaking groups of the most affected nations, potentially putting NATO solidarity to the test in a situation where it is far from guaranteed. Furthermore, any such development would immediately touch off the decades-old question of the alliance's nuclear deterrence, control of relevant assets, and collective decisionmaking in nuclear scenarios. It could thus become impossible, on purely technical grounds, to uphold the hugely important principle of "all for one, one for all".

Below and Beyond the Alliance? 'Coalitions of the Willing' and Unilateralism

A regionalization of NATO entails risks, and yet it would affect neither the institutions nor the logic of NATO. Every foreseeable form of regionalization would still involve the symbolic presence of at least token forces from most member states. It is precisely this logic that underwrites NATO's EFP in the Baltics and Poland. Nevertheless, institutions can lose some of their integrative force, as illustrated by the growing trend towards what former US defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld referred to as "coalitions of the willing"

within and outside of NATO. In fact, even for the most basic task of territorial defense, NATO might have to fall back on "coalitions of the willing" if it does not adequately prepare for what is still essentially its *raison d'être.*

Again, the concept of a group of nations resolving to act together and to move further, faster, and more efficiently than the alliance as a whole is not a totally new one. Throughout its existence, NATO's member states have allied or cooperated for specific wars and operations, independently of their NATO commitments. Whether it was the French and British during the Suez Crisis or, naturally, the US in all its global entanglements since 1949, no article of the North Atlantic Treaty prohibits its members from going it alone. However, the current trend towards a variety of ad-hoc coalitions meets a different NATO than during the 1950s; and ad-hoc coalitions under US leadership risk relegating NATO to a backseat at a time when it needs to be front and center.

Current relevant ad-hoc coalitions can be categorized in three groups. First, allies can form ad-hoc coalitions and cooperate flexibly as well as in varying coalitions, outside of NATO, and for any conceivable scenario. Most prominently, the "Counter-Daesh" coalition fighting the so-called "Islamic

THREATENED FROM WITHIN?

State" is coordinated by US command institutions and brings together a very heterogeneous coalition of NATO and non-NATO states. While there are good reasons to circumvent the alliance in this fight, this form of ad-hoc coalition poses the least threat to NATO cohesion.

Second, NATO members can act (primarily) within the framework of the alliance, using its institutions and command structure, while others not only abstain, but oppose the operation. The 2011 Libya Campaign is an obvious case in point. During "Unified Protector", NATO was far from unified. In the United Nations Security Council, Germany abstained from UNSC Resolution 1973 authorizing the operation, yet did not block agreement in the NAC, allowing NATO to command parts of the operation through its command structure. However, the German abstention caused not only political, but also tangible military problems. While the federal government distanced itself from the operation, more than 100 German officers supported it through their work within NATO's Command Structure. At the same time, Germany prohibited the use of German airmen assigned to NATO's integrated Airborne Early Warning and Control (AWACS) wing at Geilenkirchen, Germany, significantly straining allied resources in a coordination-intensive air campaign against Libyan forces.

For all its short-term successes, "Unified Protector" was an interventionist operation in NATO's periphery without a clear and present danger to alliance – and nevertheless, it may be far-fetched to imagine a coalition of the willing within NATO operating the machinery of NATO against Russian forces without the unanimous support of the NAC. However, if regionalization is thought through to the extreme, it is not unimaginable that a high-pressure situation could lead to a wrangling NAC tacitly agreeing that selected members move the NATO machinery to action while others abstain from the vote without blocking mobilization. The dangers for allied cohesion that such a scenario would entail needs no further elaboration.

Third, NATO members could act outside of NATO's institutions, yet within its basic politico-military logic and relevant scenarios. One potential scenario that is seldom discussed, but is highly relevant, envisages allies such as the UK and the US intervening in a Baltic invasion scenario in the face of a divided NAC blocked by hesitant allies. In that case, the nations could not use NATO's Command Structure, but would likely use some of the same forces, and only slightly adapted

operational plans, to act as NATO's "unsanctioned vanguard".

A theme frequently discussed among central and eastern European NATO members is that NATO's primary designated instruments for deterring Russia – the VJTF and the eNRF being the most prominent among them – are liable to fall short due to political and military reasons. Exposed allies then point towards nations with strong military capabilities that might be willing to go above and beyond what has been authorized by a reluctant NAC and intervene on their own. This envisions US, British, or Danish troops coming to the assistance of the Baltic and Polish states far quicker and more decisively than the designated NATO units.

Setting aside the implications for NATO's credibility of such a non-NATO vanguard countering Russia in a region that dramatically favors the Russian side, this hope for an anti-Russian coalition of the willing stands and falls with US resolve. While the UK is Europe's prime military power, and even some smaller allies have respectable military capabilities, the US is, and remains, NATO's indispensable nation.

Strengthening the European pillar?
After the election of Donald Trump gave rise to fears about Washington's

relations with Russia and its NATO allies, a growing number of voices responded with the familiar call for a stronger European pillar within NATO – partly to accommodate US pressure for better "burden-sharing", and partly to prepare better for a formal or informal US withdrawal from NATO.[11] While such an approach is undoubtedly important, and never more so than today, one has to be clear-eyed as to its limitations: Even in the best-case scenario, Europe is set to lose with a US withdrawal, at least for years to come.

First, the very political and institutional logic of NATO depends on the US. It is, of course, no coincidence that Europe has been united and at peace for the first time in centuries during the same time in which the US shed its tradition of shunning permanent alliances and engaged with Europe.

The political bedrock of NATO is the US determination to stay engaged, and to help defend its European allies. The US is the indispensable balancer that brings together the still-heterogeneous countries of Europe under one roof – especially the "new" member states of Central Europe, all of whom look to Washington, not Berlin, London, or Paris for political leadership and protection (not only against Moscow).

Second, NATO's prime military asset, its integrated and tested command structure, has always been built around US capabilities and forces. Just as NATO's supreme commander in Europe (SACEUR) is simultaneously the commander of all US forces in Europe (COM EUCOM) within the US unified command plan, US general officers form the backbone of NATO's Command Structure. The US cannot simply withdraw from NATO's military integration, as France did in 1966, without doing the utmost damage to the alliance's capability for military operations.

Third, in addition to the command-and-control arrangements that are critical to any military operation, and even more so for multinational campaigns, the US provides the bulk of critical, mission-relevant, and mission-ready capabilities and forces. With regard to ground forces, even with generous counting, the major European allies would be hard-pressed to provide one combat-capable brigade at short notice. The US alone is set to have three combat brigades present in Europe at all times, plus materiel for a fourth, as well as the relevant ground enablers, including significant artillery capabilities and national command-and-control elements. Added to these are high-readiness forces in the US that can be deployed at relatively short

notice over strategic distances. Moreover, if we look beyond these ground forces to air and naval capabilities, the gap between US forces and those of the other allies is even larger. The fact that NATO had to rely on US support, coordination, and supplies for a relatively minor air campaign over Libya in 2011 should caution against ambitious expectations in any real war scenario against Russia. While individual NATO members may add relevant capabilities in the area of special operations and cyber-capabilities, the US remains on a level of its own in these spheres as well.

Fourth – and re-entering the debate after years of neglect – NATO's nuclear deterrence still is vitally dependent on US nuclear weapons and political will. Through its strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, and through the nuclear sharing arrangements with selected European nations, the US provides the nuclear umbrella for the continent. Should that umbrella weaken or even disappear, it is far from a given that the two remaining nuclear powers, France and the UK, could step into the void. Judging by the political climate that made Brexit possible, London is liable to value independence over anything else, its public support for NATO notwithstanding. Paris has always been consistent in its insistence on nuclear sovereignty. Nevertheless, even if one

or both of these nations were to agree to extend their nuclear deterrence, this would hardly be an equivalent substitute for US forces. The UK only operates submarine-based strategic nuclear weapons and is technologically dependent on the US. In addition to submarines, France relies on tactical aircraft as delivery platforms. These forces are several "steps" below the capabilities that are traditionally – and increasingly – deemed necessary on the ladder of escalation. Without the US, there is no credible nuclear deterrence in NATO.[12]

The bottom line is that the US is and remains NATO's indispensable nation. While fairer burden-sharing and increased European commitments will have some effects, there is no cheap and immediate shortcut for the Europeans to strengthen the "European pillar" to the point of "strategic autonomy" or even to substitute a retrenching US. In any scenario, especially regarding a revanchist Russia and its Eastern defense, there is no credible deterrence and no realistic defense of Europe, within or outside of NATO, without the US – for at least a decade to come.

A Thoroughly Political Challenge

NATO is in peril; not because the challenges are insurmountable, but because it is threatened from the outside and within, severely hampering

the alliance. Within only a few years, the alliance has found itself facing a weak but determined strategic competitor, structural insecurity in its neighborhood, and existential doubts over the reliability of the indispensable ally, the US. Increased defense spending, while critical, will not suffice. Institutional adaptation might bring some respite and leverage NATO's strengths, but comes with its own risks and costs attached.

Ultimately, the strength and cohesion of NATO as an alliance of sovereign nation-states depend on the political determination to overcome political challenges. Without Washington acknowledging that, through all disagreements, NATO is not just a means, but an end in itself, the prospects are bleak. However, for all of Russia's determination and the credible threat that it poses, NATO is primarily threatened from within – and can thus be saved from within.

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