THE TWILIGHT OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

NATO and the Soviet Threat

The decisions of three successive American presidents to expand the membership of NATO with former members of the Warsaw Pact and former republics of the Soviet Union have created problems for NATO decision-making that threaten the cohesion of the alliance and have created tensions with Russia. NATO enlargement played a role in the strategic mishandling of Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The addition of new members to NATO and the decisions to pursue military engagements in Serbia and Afghanistan divided parliaments, legislatures, and popular opinion throughout Europe. As a result of the war in Afghanistan, we may be entering the twilight era for the 60-year-old political-military alliance that took a great deal of credit for the defeat of the Soviet empire, Soviet communism, and even the Soviet Union itself. Perhaps it is necessary to call a time-out on NATO expansion in order to allow the NATO membership to assess the current geopolitical situation, to reach a consensus on the issue of threat perception, and perhaps to ease Russia's anxiety regarding the threat of encirclement on its borders.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 as a mutual security alliance in which an attack against one member was to be treated as an attack against all members. This historic commitment for the United States, which had refused to join military alliances in peacetime for 175 years, was designed to counter the Soviet threat and the fear of a sudden, massive Soviet assault on Western Europe. After a "great debate" in 1951, following the North Korean invasion of South Korea, President Harry S. Truman assigned American troops to NATO forces in Europe, where they remain. (James T. Patterson, "Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974," New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 167) The worsening of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union led to the increased militarization of NATO; the rearming of the Federal Republic of Germany, which joined NATO in 1955; and American acceptance of the permanent division of Germany and Europe. The Pentagon performed war games throughout the Cold War with conflict initially centered on Northeast or Southwest Asia that eventually led to a Soviet offensive in Europe with the Red Army coming through the Fulda Gap, which was treated as the first battle of the next world war.

In the late 1970s, moreover, there were policy planners and intelligence officials, including CIA director Stansfield Turner, who believed that the Soviets could achieve

strategic surprise with a sudden attack through the Fulda Gap in Germany that would threaten the European members of NATO. Most experts did not believe that the Soviets could achieve such surprise because of the need for massive pre-deployment operations and lengthy logistical preparations, but this did not stop conservative thinkers from focusing on sudden Soviet aggression. When the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact ceased to exist in 1990 and the Soviet Union itself dissolved in 1991, there were finally opportunities for rethinking the central geopolitical and military assumptions of U.S. national security policy.

The Soviet collapse had fundamentally altered the strategic environment in Europe in a way that should have led to a major debate on the necessity of NATO rather than the enlargement of NATO. Even prior to the collapse, the Soviet Union had announced a plan for unilateral force reductions in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary as well as the withdrawal of its most important weapons systems for power projection. Thus, if Russia were to contemplate any aggressive actions against West Europe, it would have to do so without the Allied forces it once controlled in the Warsaw Pact as well as the forward operating facilities it once occupied in Eastern Europe. In addition to a smaller force structure, the Soviet economy was in a spiral of economic collapse and the political cohesion of the leadership was in tatters. Meanwhile, a united Germany became a member of NATO, and the East European states were pursuing a democratic path that would lead to closer relations with the United States and West Europe and greater distance from Russia. It was unlikely that Moscow's ground forces could have challenged the northern and southern flanks of NATO let alone conduct the "theater strategic offensive" against NATO that would provide no strategic warning. Despite this altered reality, the United States moved to a policy in support of expanding NATO.

The Pros and Cons of NATO Expansion

As early as 1990, even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the supporters of expansion believed that it was geopolitically correct to build new relations with the former nations of the Warsaw Pact and to include the new democratic states of East Europe in the alliance "as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe." ("The American Interest," Vol. III, No. 5, May/June 2008, "NATO Expansion, A Decade On," John Kornblum and Michael Mandelbaum, p. 56) The author of that statement, John Kornblum, former deputy assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from 1994-1997, acknowledged that this statement was "as tortured a piece of bureaucratese as one could imagine." (op. cit) The statement was in response to the

ministrations from the former Warsaw Pact states to join NATO, but it provided no indication of how expansion would take place or what conditions or requirements would be necessary for membership. The supporters of expansion indulged various platitudes about the need to encourage democratic standards of behavior, but had no apparent concern about the impact on expansion on Russia in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Kornblum and other Foreign Service officers conceded that Russia would not share our logic for expansion at the beginning, but blithely assured the critics of expansion that "careful diplomacy" would be able to balance the many competing interests that were involved. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration from 1993-2001 was not known for pursuit of careful diplomacy, and the issue of NATO expansion became an immediate irritant in Russian-American relations as well as a controversial factor in Russian domestic politics.

The case for expanding NATO was made by such conservative senators as Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY), academicians such as Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington; and such policy luminaries as former secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and James Baker. But it was left to the undersecretary of state, Strobe Talbott, to shoulder much of the burden for making the case to the Congress and the American people for the expansion of NATO. It was ironic for Talbott to be placed in this role; after all, Talbott was the Clinton administration's senior Kremlinologist and was best positioned to understand the impact of expansion on Russia, its leadership, and Russian-American relations. Talbott argued that collective defense remained the leading imperative of European and transatlantic security, and was central to American engagement in Europe. (Strobe Talbott, "Why NATO Should Grow," *The New York Review of Books*, August 10, 1995, Volume 42, Number 13.) In view of the end of Soviet communism, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the breakup of the Soviet Union, which eliminated the need for NATO, this appeared to be a peculiar argument for *expansion* of the alliance. The simple fact is that during the Cold War, St. Petersburg was 1,200 miles away from a NATO country; today, St. Petersburg is less than 100 miles from Estonia, a NATO member.

Talbott argued that entry into NATO would provide the nations of Central Europe and the former Soviet Union with additional incentives to strengthen their democratic and legal institutions, to liberalize their economies, and to respect human rights. Again, this was a peculiar argument because it would appear that the European Community (and not a military alliance) would be the proper institution for assuring political, economic, and legal credibility. Finally, Talbott argued that NATO membership would lead to a "greater willingness to resolve disputes peacefully and

contribute to peace-keeping operations," thus promoting regional stability. This argument ignored the fact that European institutions, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation, had been working for regional stability, helping to smooth relations between the three Baltic states and their large ethnic Russian populations and even securing the full withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonia and Latvia in 1994.

Talbott and Secretary of Defense William Perry acknowledged that the rationale for NATO expansion was the need for a "hedge against pessimistic outcomes." Thus, instead of developing a strategy and a geopolitical architecture to keep Russia on a course of internal reform, the leading voices for national security policy in the Clinton administration believed that the West needed to hedge against the possibility of resurgent Russian aggression and disingenuously argued that Moscow had "good reason to support NATO's extending the zone of political stability into Central Europe." (William Perry, Speech to the Wehrkunde Conference in Germany on February 6, 1994.) In other words, the principal figures of the U.S. foreign policy community, and not the Kremlin leadership, would decide the best course for Russian national security. It is true that Russia in the mid-1990s was primarily concerned with internal and economic stability, and considered Chechen secessionism a greater threat to Russian sovereignty than any current scenario in Central Europe. But it was naïve in the extreme to believe that Russia would meekly accept both East European membership in NATO and a Western military presence on Russia's eastern border.

The best case against expansion was made by the father of the containment policy, George F. Kennan; Kremlinologists such as Michael Mandelbaum and Stephen Sestanovich; moderate senators such as Sam Nunn (D-GE); and a group of former ambassadors and retired Foreign Service Officers, including Ambassadors Richard Davies, Jack Matlock, Arthur Hartman and U. Alexis Johnson. Even such hardliners as Ambassador Paul Nitze and former State Department counselor Robert Bowie opposed expansion. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was opposed to expansion, but his key advisors, including Talbott and Lynn Davis, as well as national security adviser Tony Lake were in favor of enlargement. In October 1993, Christopher told Russian President Boris Yeltsin the United States had decided to forego expansion but would concentrate instead on developing the Partnership for Peace that would create special relations between NATO and the East European nations, but not formal membership. Before Christopher even finished his statement, Yeltin "spread his arms and intoned, drawing out the words, 'Genialno! Zdorovo!' [Brilliant! Terrific!] Tell Bill [Clinton] this is a wonderful decision!" (Strobe

Talbott, "The Russian Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy," New York: Random House, 2002, p. 101.) Just as secretary of state Baker had misinformed Gorbachev and Yeltsin when he said that the United States would not "leapfrog" over eastern Germany to coopt Eastern Europe, secretary of state Christopher had unwittingly misled the Kremlin leadership.

Christopher and the retired Foreign Service officers stressed the opportunities for alternate strategies to NATO membership, including full membership for the former East European countries in the European Union and its nascent defense arm, the Western European Union. (Richard T. Davies, "Should NATO Grow?—A Dissent," *The New York Review of Books*, September 21, 1995, Volume 42, Number 14.) The opponents of expansion were concerned that NATO enlargement would give the Russians an excuse to withdraw from discussions on the trilateral accord with the United States and Ukraine, which was designed to remove the so-called "loose nukes" from Ukraine, as well as to renege on Moscow's commitment to withdraw military forces from the Baltic states. Fortunately and unexpectedly, the Russian leadership moved forward in both agreements. Conversely, the Russians may have been uncooperative on such matters as peacekeeping in Bosnia and Kosovo because of the rapid schedule for NATO enlargement.

The critics of expansion understood that NATO was first and foremost a military alliance and that the Russians would anticipate that expansion would lead to force modernization throughout East Europe as well as a Western role in the East European military structure. As far as Moscow was concerned, the only genuine purpose of modernization would be countering the Russian "threat." Talbott believed that NATO expansion would "diminish the current level of mistrust between Russian and its neighbors," but the dissenters anticipated that "evolutionary enlargements" of NATO would lead to Western deployments in East Europe as well as membership for former Soviet republics, particularly the Baltic states and Ukraine. The dissenters feared that a militarily and economically weak Russia would not be able to undertake modernization of conventional forces, but would have to rely more heavily on tactical nuclear weapons. They believed that the Clinton administration should have been supporting European Union and WEU membership for the former Warsaw Pact states, not NATO membership. Former ambassador Jonathan Dean, a long-time policy-maker and practitioner in the field of European security, concluded that NATO expansion was the "worst mistake in U.S. policy toward Europe since the end of World War II. (Davies, "Should NATO Grow," NYRB)

There were errors in perception on both sides of the East-West divide. The United States made a major mistake in failing to concede or even acknowledge that the Soviet leadership had made huge concessions in the European theatre to the United States; these concessions were largely unacceptable to the Soviet rank-and-file. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev overestimated the support that Moscow would receive from the United States and West Europe for the Kremlin's retreat; he also underestimated the difficulty of managing the collapse of the Soviet empire and the reunification of Germany. He never anticipated the impact of fundamental change in the security architecture of Europe on the Soviet Union and his Kremlin opposition. Over the course of a year, from the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 to the reunification of Germany in October 1990, Moscow had lost hegemony in Eastern Europe and the strategic advantage of a divided Germany. The Warsaw Pact and then the USSR itself vanished a year later; a reunified Germany became a NATO member soon after. No Soviet or Russian official anticipated that the NATO alliance would grow from 16 members to 28 members, including five former members of the Warsaw Pact and three former republics of the Soviet Union, following the Soviet collapse.

Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, Gorbachev and Foreing Minister Eduard Shevardnadze had given little thought to the impact of a reunified Germany, a liberated Eastern Europe, and an enlarged NATO on the future of Russia or Europe, let alone their own immediate political future. They were far more concerned with the political and economic backwardness of the Soviet Union and the importance of strengthened bilateral relations with the United States. Eventually they became preoccupied with their own loss of political influence, particularly in the wake of the withdrawal of Soviet forces from East Germany and the entrance of a reunited Germany into NATO. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze hoped to trade a withdrawal of Soviet forces as well as concessions on German reunification and German membership in NATO for economic rewards from the German government and strong political and diplomatic ties to Germany, but this didn't mollify the Kremlin opponents of German reunification and Soviet troop withdrawal. (Pravda, July 11, 1990, p. 5) Shevardnadze naively believed that he could rely on a verbal commitment from Secretary of State James Baker that the United States and NATO would not use the Soviet withdrawal from Germany to "leap frog" over Germany in order to incorporate new NATO members from the former Warsaw Pact states. (Conversation with Eduard Shevardnadze; Blair House, Washington, DC; 1994)

Neither the Bush administration nor Gorbachev anticipated the intense political opposition in Moscow to the reunification of Germany and the "loss" of Eastern

Europe and the Warsaw Pact. The Kremlin's handling of these issues made Gorbachev and Shevardnadze vulnerable to charges of "losing" Central Europe. The U.S. pursuit of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic for NATO membership led to further vilification and marginalization of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. Just as Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman were blamed for the "loss" of East Europe and China in the wake of the Second World War, the Soviet leaders had to respond to accusations of losing the gains from the war. The loss of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, moreover, meant that Moscow had lost its natural allies in any campaign to delay reunification, and contributed to a renewed feeling of encirclement that was exacerbated by the decisions to enlarge NATO.

The Kremlin leaders opposed to Gorbachev's capitulation in Europe mounted a bizarre and abortive coup attempt that only could have taken place in Moscow. The coup plotters included Minister of Defense Dmitri Yazov; the Central Committee secretary responsible for defense industry, Oleg Baklanov; and KGB chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov, who were strong critics of the foreign policies of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, particularly the compromises they had made with the United States and the West. They took a steam bath in a KGB facility in Moscow on August 17, 1991 to plan the coup, drinking considerable amounts of vodka and Scotch whiskey. (Jack F. Matlock, Jr., "Autopsy of an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union," New York: Random House, 1995, p. 579.) The following day, key members of the KGB's 9th Directoriate, which was responsible for the security of the Soviet leadership, confronted Gorbachev at his Crimea vacation headquarters. National security adviser Brent Scowcroft thought that the coup would be successful and was prepared to do business with the coup leaders, but cautionary messages from the U.S. charge in Moscow, James Collins, and an intelligence assessment from CIA that pointed to the poor planning of the coup led to some hesitancy on the part of the Bush administration. Three days later, the coup collapsed; the Minister of the Interior and the former chief of the general staff committed suicide.

Unlike Gorbachev, Shevardnadze had anticipated Kremlin resistance to Gorbachev's European policies, particularly from the Defense Ministry and the KGB, as well as a great deal of Russian anxiety in view of the huge sacrifices and losses of World War II. As a result, he had warned against rapid reunification and German membership in NATO, and had prophetically warned: "Emotions will come to a boil within the country, specters of the past will come to the fore, and the national complexes rooted in the tragic pages of our history will be revived." (Eduard Shevardnadze, "My Choice," p. 225.) The August coup attempt failed, but tragic

events in the Balkans and the Caucasus in the early 1990s as well as the emergence of ultra-nationalism in Moscow, led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, proved Shevardnadze correct about the need for a new European security formula to prevent the emergence of nationalism throughout Central Europe, the Baltics, and Russia itself. Shevardnadze tried, but was unable to create a new security architecture in Europe that might have eased Russian entry into the European community. Ironically, key European members in NATO, particularly France and Britain, were opposed to German reunification and expanding NATO membership. They could have been Shevardnadze's allies in creating a new security architecture, but they chose to "hide behind Soviet skirts in implicitly reminding the Germans that the World War II victors still held residual rights and expected to exercise them on the issue of German reunification." (Elizabeth Pond, "After the Wall: American Policy Toward Germany," Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1990, p. 24.

<u>President Clinton's Decision to Expand NATO</u>

President Bill Clinton's decision to expand NATO, which contradicted the need for a new strategic relationship with Russia, had less to do with international relations and much to do with domestic politics. Since 1949, NATO had been defined by its opposition to Moscow, and it was not possible for Russian President Boris Yeltsin to believe that bringing the former Warsaw Pact states of East Europe into a military alliance was part of building a "free, peaceful, undivided Europe." President Clinton expected to face Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) in the 1996 election and he learned that Dole would take advantage of any indication that the Clinton administration was shying away from expanding NATO. As a result, Clinton overlooked the opposition to expansion from the European experts from the Department of State as well as from Senator Nunn. Clinton did not want to alienate the East European ethnic vote in Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio, and therefore decided to expand a Cold War alliance that many believed had outlived its mission.

Clinton believed that he could appease Moscow by offering the Russians a special consultative voice in NATO; in May 1996, he and Yeltsin signed the Russia-NATO Founding Act on Mutual Relations. The pact was designed to share knowledge and intelligence, particularly on military weaponry. "In the twilight of the twentieth century," Clinton proclaimed, "we look forward toward a new century with a new Russia and a new NATO working together in a new Europe of unlimited possibility." (Martin Gilbert, "A History of the Twentieth Century," Volume III: 1952-1999, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999, p. 837.) Yeltsin appeared enthusiastic about the Founding Act and announced that Moscow would remove

warheads from all Russian nuclear weapons that were aimed at NATO countries. Unfortunately, the pact created the same kind of political opposition against Yeltsin that the entry of a united Germany in NATO had created for President Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze. Several years later, when the pact failed to lead to the promised consultation, cooperation, and coordination, let alone joint decision-making, there was mounting opposition to Yeltsin. In November 1996, Yeltsin's health deteriorated and he had to undergo a quintuple cardiac bypass operation, thus weakening Washington's best friend in the Kremlin.

President Clinton was also responsible for NATO's first ever invocation of its collective security arrangement, convincing the European members to support an air campaign against Serbia in 1999 to force its evacuation from Kosovo. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and NATO's supreme allied commander General Wesley Clark wanted to demonstrate that NATO could enhance its military credibility in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. They convinced the president that the mere threat of bombing would intimidate Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and that the threat itself would be sufficient. Clark told Deputy Secretary of State Talbott "I can't believe that Milosevic won't sign [a peace agreement] when the time comes. He always holds out. He has to be leaned on very hard. But he will come around." (Wesley Clark, "Waging Modern War," p. 170) A professional soldier, Clark usually understood the constraints of warfare, particularly air power, but he had come under the influence of Richard Holbrooke during the Bosnia confrontation several years earlier, particularly Holbrooke's "breezy confidence that 'using military power to back diplomacy'—threatening air strikes to coerce political adversaries—would end a seemingly intractable conflict." (Andrew J. Bacevich, "American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy," Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 182) The European member states of NATO were not so sure about this strategy, and some members had serious doubts about their ability, in the careless words of General Clark, to "systematically attack, disrupt, degrade, devastate, and ultimately destroy" Serbia's military and security forces.

In the 1990s, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright believed that NATO's mantra should be "out of area or out of business," but the start of a NATO air campaign against Serbia on the same day that Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was in flight for his first visit to Washington forced Primakov to turn back and signaled that the war against Serbia would have unintended consequences. The air campaign that began on March 24, 1999 and was supposed to last for several days turned into a 78-day aerial bombardment, an armada of 829 combat aircraft, 38,000 sorties, and 28,000 weapons, with NATO forces killing more than 500 civilians, including scores of

ethnic Albanians. (Andrew J. Bacevich, “The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism,” New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008, p. 150.) When the war ended, most NATO members wanted a postwar peacekeeping force in Kosovo under the control of the United Nations or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Clinton administration wanted peacekeeping to be a NATO operation, however. The European members of NATO forced a compromise that called for peacekeepers that would primarily consist of NATO forces, but under UN command.

NATO’s bombing of the Serbian capital, Belgrade, in April 1999 turned the 50th anniversary celebration of NATO into an inquest rather than a birthday party. European strategists began to speak of the need to emphasize their own institutions (e.g., European Union, Common Market, and OSCE) to compensate for the problems associated with a US-led NATO in Europe. Germany, France, and Italy moved to improve their relations with Russia, realizing that Russian goodwill was essential to the stability of Central and East Europe. NATO’s newest members (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) heavily criticized the bombing of the Serbian capital; Italy, Greece, and Portugal call for a halt to the bombing campaign. And to make matters worse, the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade turned a military and intelligence fiasco into a diplomatic and political nightmare. Washington’s efforts to marginalize Russian diplomacy in Serbia and the Balkans was an unnecessary and gratuitous affront to Moscow, which meant that anti-Americanism reached Cold War levels in Moscow as well as in Beijing. The pace and intensity of Sino-Russian negotiations quickened with the start of the war on March 24, 1999, thus hurting arms control and counter-proliferation efforts with both capitals.

Nevertheless, the United States forced through a provision for “non-Article Five crisis response,” which permitted NATO to deploy forces in the Balkans even though a NATO member was not under attack. Article Five of the NATO charter provides for collective self-defense; non-Article Five provides for an offensive military action when collective self-defense is not an issue. Moreover, it provided for military action not only in areas that were contiguous to the NATO members, but farther afield, including North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Two years later, following the 9/11 attacks on Washington and New York City, NATO’s European members joined the United States in its war against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan that has become a confrontation exceeding the length of World War II. Since very few of the European legislatures actually approved the expanded role for NATO on such a broad periphery, there has been serious parliamentary dialogue and debate regarding civilian control over military alliances as well as over the proper role for NATO’s military forces.

NATO prevailed militarily against Serbia, but the bombing of Serbia and the eventual recognition of Kosovo's independence led to major differences between NATO and Russia as well as controversies within NATO itself. Russia used NATO's actions on behalf of Kosovo to justify its military presence in Georgia's autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and to subsequently recognize their independence. President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov immediately returned to harsh Soviet-style diplomacy in the wake of the U.S. bombing of Belgrade. Yeltsin shelved ratification of the SALT II treaty and warned that, if the United States and West Europe were to recognize Kosovo's separation from Serbia instead of informal autonomy, then Moscow would be free to recognize the independence of disputed areas on its border, presumably Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the two breakaway regions of Georgia, which took place nine years later.

There were signs of bureaucratic turmoil in Russia over the Serbian situation. The Russian Defense Ministry overruled Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and sent an electronic intelligence-gathering ship to the Mediterranean in 1999. Yeltsin, however, resisted the general staff's efforts to deploy combatants to the region, and pledged to keep Russia out of conflict. Yeltsin was not looking for a way to recreate the Soviet empire; he once said that any Russian who didn't regret the breakup of the Soviet Union had no heart, but that any Russian who wanted to restore the Soviet Union had no brain. But Yeltsin was seeking a response to the Western sponsorship of Kosovo independence by sticking a finger in the eye of the United States, and expanding Russia's presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was the easiest and least risky way to do so. The day after cruise missiles began hitting Serbian targets, however, Yeltsin signaled that he did not want long-term problems with the United States by quietly signed an agreement to convert uranium from Russian nuclear weapons into fuel for American nuclear reactors.

President Bush's Contributions to the Decline of NATO

The Bush administration (2001-2009) created more problems for NATO's leadership with the pursuit of policies that often divided the old and new members of the alliance and contributed to the decline of NATO's cohesion. These policies included the second stage of expansion, which pursued members that were not merely former members of the Warsaw Pact, but former republics of the Soviet Union, such as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In addition to expansion, the Bush administration took a series of steps that worsened Russian-American relations and prevented a serious discussion of important geopolitical problems that could have stabilized these relations. These steps included the

abrogation of the ABM Treaty and the deployment of a national missile defense in 2001; the declaration of the "axis of evil" (Iran, Iraq, and North Korea) in 2002; the invasion of Iraq in 2003; the decision to deploy missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic; and the use of torture and abuse, secret prisons, and extraordinary renditions in the "war against terror." The Bush administration's disdain for multilateral diplomacy and arms control as well as the reliance on the use of force, particularly the unnecessary war against Iraq in 2003, were opposed by most NATO countries.

In his first presidential address on international issues in May 2001, President George W. Bush signaled that he would pursue policies that would be contentious in Europe. He announced that the United States "must move beyond the constraints of the 30-year Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty" and deploy an extensive shield against nuclear missiles, which was met with the disapproval of many European members of NATO. In the post-Cold War world, Bush explained, the primary enemy against whom a nuclear missile defense would be aimed would not be Russia, but rather the "world's least-responsible states," which the president did not name. For such states, the president declared "Cold War deterrence is no longer enough and endorsed a wide variety of missile defense systems, including technologies that involved land-based and sea-based capabilities to intercept missiles in mid-course or after they re-enter the atmosphere. (The New York Times, May 2, 2001, p. 1) He highlighted the "substantial advantages of intercepting missiles early in their flight, especially in the boost phase," and referred to "promising options for advanced sensors and interceptors that may provide this capability."

The European states of NATO did not share President Bush's dreams for a national missile defense (NMD), which were reminiscent of those of President Ronald Reagan, who surprised the world and the nation on March 23, 1983, by announcing an ambitious research program designed to render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete." (The New York Times, March 24, 1983, p. 1) Reagan acknowledged that this "formidable technical task…may not be accomplished before the end of this century." He was right, of course. Despite the expenditure of more than $100 billion over the past five decades on various missile defense programs, the United States has not produced a single workable device. The deployment of NMD in California and Alaska has not contributed to the national security of the United States, but it has contributed to a reduced role for the United States in the field of arms control and disarmament.

The key European states of NATO, in addition to Russia and China, expressed concern with the security implications of the abrogation of the ABM Treaty and the deployment of NMD. Our friends and foes alike remain unconvinced of either the missile threat to the United States or the technological merits of NMD, which they believe would seriously jeopardize future reductions in nuclear arsenals and would encourage China and others to expand their own arsenals. These nations fear that the abrogation of the ABM Treaty and the construction of NMD could spark a new arms race, compromise arms control and disarmament, particularly the verification regimes associated with disarmament, and undermine relations between the United States and key nations in the international arena. The fact that the European states, particularly France, Germany, and Italy, had a radically different perception of the threat environment from that of the United States meant that the rationale for NATO would no longer be consensual.

These states were concerned that the abrogation of ABM and the deployment of NMD as well as the expansion of NATO would forge better relations between Russia and China. They were right. Moscow viewed NATO expansion, ABM abrogation, and NMD deployment as aimed at the Kremlin; Beijing viewed NMD as the beginning of a defensive network to contain China and strengthen Taiwan. As a result, Russian and Chinese relations are stronger than they have been at anytime in the last 50 years.

Afghanistan and NATO's Future

The Soviet Union entered a period of economic and military decline in 1979 following its invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviets completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the year that witnessed a series of anti-communist revolutions in East Europe that brought down the Berlin Wall and the Warsaw Pact. U.S. efforts to expand the fighting and pursue nation-building in Afghanistan presumably will be no more successful than the previous efforts of other foreign forces, including the Soviets, and these efforts could threaten the cohesion of NATO. Initially, the European NATO members were quick to respond to the challenge of the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, although the United States did not want its allies to get in the way of U.S. command and control. Currently, there are major differences between the United States and virtually all the European members of NATO on the pursuit of victory in Afghanistan.

The United States wants more combat support from the European states, but these states have become reluctant partners in the counter-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan. The campaign became more dire in 2003 when the United States

invaded Iraq and needed military assistance in both Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf. NATO's involvement began in Kabul, but soon spread across the country as increased fighting led NATO forces to southern Afghanistan where the insurgency was spreading. Now there are domestic political controversies throughout Europe over the number of forces to be deployed and particularly the types of operations that the European states are willing to undertake.

NATO has about 64,000 troops in Afghanistan, about half of them Americans. The number of Americans is expected to increase to 68,000 by the end of the year, which would mean twice as many Americans as Europeans in Afghanistan. The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) and not the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe (SACEUR) is in charge, which adds to the tensions between the United States and the European members of NATO. Several NATO members have already signaled that their forces in Afghanistan will be reduced or even withdrawn in the near term. NATO's unity, credibility and even its future may be at risk.

Political controversy is occurring in many NATO countries, particularly in Britain whose military forces have already suffered more fatalities in Afghanistan than during their six years of service in Iraq. Public opinion in many NATO countries is drifting toward the view that keeping combat units in Afghanistan is futile, and the fact that President Obama failed to give his own military forces the full complement of forces that the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested points to reluctance on the part of the United States as well. Allies such as Canada and the Netherlands, which have taken disproportionately heavy casualties, have announced their withdrawal plans for 2010 and 2011, respectively. The outgoing NATO commander, British General Bantz J. Craddock, told a meeting of the Atlantic Council in the summer of 2009 "We can't continue to reinforce failure. There are a number of things as an alliance we should never do again in this kind of struggle." (The Washington Post, July 20, 2009, p. 17) He could have added that Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty contains a qualification that states NATO members "will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually, and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."

President Obama's decision to deploy 17,000 additional troops in Afghanistan has exposed varying degrees of support in Afghanistan as NATO members differ on how and where to confront the Taliban. Only the United States, Britain, and Poland are willing to continue to engage the Taliban in the southern part of the country. Most NATO members are opposed to confrontation in the south and, if they have troops in Afghanistan, have deployed in the relatively safer regions in the north and the west.

These members do not believe that global *jihad* is a threat, let alone the main threat, to NATO and, since the Russian invasion of Georgia in the summer of 2008, have wanted to refocus NATO's military planning on Russia. The 12 Central and East European members strongly believe that Russia is still the main threat.

Britain, France, and Germany have shown a reluctance to commit more troops to Afghanistan. Significant British combat deaths in Afghanistan, particularly in Helmand, are leading to a divisive debate in the Parliament as well as serious public criticism of the British role there. In July 2009, British fatalities in Afghanistan (184) surpassed the number of British fatalities in Iraq (179), where the British combat commitment ended in the spring of 2009. Britain's fatalities are far lower than those suffered by U.S. forces, which have lost more than 700 troops in Afghanistan and 4,300 in Iraq, but in view of Britain's much smaller population and the fact that Britain has the second largest coalition contingent in Afghanistan (more than 9,000), there has been great public shock. (*The New York Times*, July 12, 2009, p. 17, "Criticism of Afghan War Is on the Rise in Britain," John F. Burns) The major British task is to secure the city of Helmand in the south, which produces more than half of the world's opium poppies and has become one of the most treacherous parts of Afghanistan.

The British populace is well aware of the country's catastrophic losses in Afghanistan in the 19th century, when it was engaged in a competition with Russia in Southwest Asia known as the "Great Game." This adds to the controversy. Britain also faces an underfinanced defense budget ($55 billion compared with $680 billion in the United States), which adds to the current controversial debate over maintaining effective counter-insurgency operations as opposed to investing in new naval and air assets. There are some in Britain who believe that there are far too few British troops in Afghanistan but, with a spending crisis in Britain and an unpopular government in London, there is little chance of expanding its 110,000 regular soldiers, let alone its global role.

Meanwhile, the United States changed tactics in the summer of 2009, embarking on Operation Khanjar (Thrust of the Sword) to challenge Taliban strongholds in Helmand province, to remain in the region, and to make sure that the Taliban do not return. More than 4,000 Marines and only 650 Afghan soldiers arrived in the area in early July, but there were few Taliban fighters on hand for engagement. The shift in tactics was also due to the realization that reliance on air power had led to unacceptable civilian losses, making it virtually impossible to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan population. U.S. claims to use airpower to "create conditions

for sustained anti-terrorist and humanitarian relief operations in Afghanistan," reminded the European leaders of NATO of the fatuous claims of U.S. leaders for strategic bombing in Vietnam in the 1960s. (Andrew J. Bacevich, "American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy," Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 233.)

The air campaign was never as intense as the campaign against Serbia in 1999, but there were few strategic targets in Afghanistan and the civilian losses were just as devastating to the citizens of Afghanistan and to public opinion in the NATO member states. Currently, U.S. forces are also trying to disrupt Taliban supply lines and to make sure that there are far fewer civilian losses. President George Bush scoffed at using "$2 million missiles to hit a $10 tent that's empty," but did not change tactics. (*The New York Times*, September 19, 2001, p. 1, Michael Gordon, Eric Schmitt, and Thom Shanker, "Scarcity of Afghanistan Targets Prompts U.S. to Change Strategy.") Pentagon leaders were leery about committing additional manpower to the fighting in Afghanistan and wanted to rely on airpower. But, under President Obama, airstrikes have been curtailed, and the share of firefights involving close air support have declined. It was soon apparent, however, that the increase of forces was insufficient, and there are already discussions taking place in Washington for additional deployments.

Military tactics and operations are probably not the key to stabilizing the geopolitical situation in Afghanistan, which will continue to be a drain on NATO's cohesion. Until the United States and its NATO allies come up with a scheme for addressing the massive corruption in Afghanistan that has "steadily alienated the local population and fueled support for insurgent groups," it will be impossible for modest numbers of U.S. and NATO forces to reverse the downward spiral in Afghanistan. (Seth G. Jones, "In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan," New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009, p. 319) The European members want the United States to apply greater pressure on Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai to reform his corrupt and indolent government, but Washington has limited influence in Kabul.

Similarly, it is unlikely that U.S. and NATO commanders will find a way to deal with the decentralized tribal nature of Afghan politics and to cultivate bottom-up efforts to provide security and public services on a local level that will convince the Afghan populace that the Western presence will bring change. As long as Pakistan's military and civilian leaders are unable to conduct a sustained campaign against Taliban and al Qaeda militants mounting attacks in Afghanistan, there is little chance

of stabilizing the Afghan-Pakistani border, the Durand Line, which has never been officially recognized by either country. The existence of a Pakistani sanctuary for the militants will ultimately prevent NATO's success and ensure that the war will continue into the future and further complicate NATO's politics and partnership. At the same time, increased anti-Americanism in Pakistan's military, public opinion, and the media in response to increased U.S. military intervention will also complicate U.S. and NATO relations. It is not likely that the United States and NATO will be able to succeed in this region where Alexander the Great, Queen Victoria, and Leonid Brezhnev failed.

In addition to adding to the American troop presence in Afghanistan, which has caused pressures within the NATO alliance, President Obama has indicated support for expanding the alliance by adding Georgia and Ukraine as members. The United States promoted a NATO military exercise in Georgia during the run-up to the president's first summit meeting in Moscow in July 2009, and an American warship arrived in Georgia later in the month for the first joint exercise since the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. The United States also has more than 100 military advisers in Georgia as well as civilian contractors and advisors in all aspects of the Georgian economy. But there is no indication that the United States has any influence over the Georgian government.

Vice President Joe Biden visited Kiev and Tbilisi only two weeks after the summit to encourage political support for the two former republics of the Soviet Union. In both nations, Biden stated that he fully understood that Ukraine and Georgia want to join NATO, and added "We fully support that aspiration." (Washington Post, July 24, 2009, editorial, "Mr. Biden's Diplomacy") He told Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili the United States would continue to support Ukrainian and Georgian bids to join NATO. (*The New York Times*, July 22, 2009, p. 6, Ellen Barry, "Biden Says U.S. Still Backs Ukraine in NATO.") Ironically, the Ukrainian populace as well as the leading candidates in the Ukrainian presidential elections in January 2010 (Tymoshenko and Viktor Yanukovich) appear less enthusiastic about NATO membership than the U.S. president and vice president. In June 2009, the United States had to cancel a military exercise planned in Ukraine because the Parliament did not pass legislation required to authorize the exercise. A similar parliamentary vote was shelved in 2006 due to anti-American and anti-NATO protests.

The United States has become Georgia's closest ally, which makes little geopolitical sense in view of Georgia's essential irrelevance to Washington's national

security. NATO membership for Georgia would be vexing in view of Russia's recognition of the independence of two breakaway provinces of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. If Georgia were to be admitted without the two regions, NATO would be obligated to activate the Article V collective security clause on their behalf or would have to "add a codicil to admission that its defense guarantee excluded them?" (Richard Betts, "The Three Faces of NATO," April 10, 2009, www.nationalinterest.org) The Obama administration seems to recognize the difficulty of moving too fast with Georgia and Ukraine as well as the danger of gratuitously angering Russia because it has been extremely cautious about weapons sales to Georgia and Ukraine.

The United States is already bogged down in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, where it and its NATO allies have been unable to win wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Any orientation toward the Caucasus would be an additional strain on U.S. and NATO manpower, planning, and logistics, and would make it less likely that the United States and Europe would gain support from Russia for addressing important geopolitical problems such as countering nuclear energy programs in Iran. The fact that the ethnic fighting is spilling over the Afghanistan and Pakistan borders into the Central Asian states will add to the difficulties in stabilizing the region.

NATO membership for the Ukraine would be even less tolerable for the Russian leadership than membership for Georgia. Membership for Ukraine would be perceived as strategic encirclement from the Russian perspective, complicated by the fact that a large Russian minority resides in the eastern part of Ukraine. Eastern Ukraine had a brief period of independence, but was long integrated into Russia and Russian orthodoxy and was always part of the Soviet Union. Western Ukraine once belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire, which permitted Ukrainian culture to flourish. The population in the west is largely Catholic, and it never accepted the loss of the Vatican's authority. Both east and west suffered from Stalin's collectivization and the famine of the 1930s, when more than three million Ukrainians died. World War II was a nightmare for the Ukraine, and Stalin even considered deporting all Ukrainians because of security considerations. (Helene Carrere d'Encausse, "The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations," New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p. 127)

Presidents Clinton, Bush, and now Obama have justified NATO expansion as an a way to extend the transatlantic union and to create more liberal, democratic members, but Russia certainly has reason to believe that the United States is merely reinforcing the original concept of NATO as an anti-Russian organization that will

contain the Kremlin. The United States maintains that its efforts to expand NATO membership do not threaten Russia, but the Russian leadership is equally adamant that expanded NATO membership is a threat. Russia's collective memories of the Nazi threat and the huge Russian sacrifices during World War II are much too real even today to allow for a benign interpretation of a NATO military alliance that contains former members of the Warsaw Pact as well as former republics of the Soviet Union.

The Twilight of NATO

The use of American military power in Serbia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, which has often linked the European members of NATO to U.S. use of force, has convinced many European leaders that their global interests will be complicated by U.S. policy. As a result, some Europeans want to reform NATO and others want to pursue more independent military capabilities that will be more responsive to European concerns. This could lead to a more integrated and self-reliant Europe that would not automatically respond to U.S. global interests. NATO is already becoming less of an alliance for managing common problems based on a shared perception of the threat and more of an organization that must debate and discuss controversial political and military decisions. The perception of the common threat is no longer apparent and notions of collective security have evolved; meanwhile, the use of force in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia has raised serious questions about common values. Harvard Professor Stanley Hoffman warned in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of 2003 that the U.S. use of its NATO allies like "tins of shoe polish for American boots" will certainly create problems for the alliance. (Stanley Hoffman, *"Gulliver Unbound: America's Imperial Temptation and the War in Iraq,"* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004, pp. 125-126)

The last ten years have been particularly difficult for NATO's unity and cohesion. Its fiftieth anniversary was accompanied by membership for three former member states of the Warsaw Pact (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland), the first new members for NATO since 1952, when Greece and Turkey joined NATO's ranks, and 1955, when West Germany became a member. Several years later, nine additional countries applied to join NATO, including three former republics of the Soviet Union (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Despite secretary of state James Baker's guarantee to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze that the United States would not "leapfrog" eastern Germany in order to create a security zone in Eastern Europe, that is exactly what took place. In 2008, President Bush tried to obtain NATO membership for two additional former Soviet republics (Ukraine and the Georgian Republic), but he was

blocked by European opposition, particularly from German Chancellor Angela Merkle, who believed such membership would be a bridge too far for the NATO alliance. President Obama appears committed, however, to pursuing such expansion, and Vice President Biden told the Georgian and Ukrainian leadership in July 2009 that we "fully support that aspiration." (Washington Post, July 25, 2009, editorial, "Mr. Biden's Diplomacy")

A political evolution in Europe that led to a weaker NATO and a more self-reliant Europe would not necessarily be the worst geopolitical outcome for American national interests, although it could be politically damaging to the new Obama administration, which is already undergoing problems in national security policy with Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Israel. The operational tempo of the American military has steadily increased in the wake of the end of the Cold War as unrivalled American military power has permitted successive administratives to use military power in Central America, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans, and Southwest Asia. If a new Europe were to emerge as a rival power bloc, along with a revitalized Russia, a rapidly growing China, and an emerging India, according to Johns Hopkins University Professor David Calleo, there would be a more balanced or "plural" world order to challenge the current unipolar world. (David Calleo, "A Choice of Europes," *The National Interest,* <u>Vol. Number</u>, Spring 2001, p. 5.) The United States would be a less decisive factor in such an alignment.

The fact that three American presidents over the past two decades have supported the expansion of NATO will make it more difficult to reverse course or at least call a time-out to stop the proliferation of new members. At the outset, in the wake of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1990 and the Soviet Union in 1991, there were many alternatives to expansion. The United States could have supported a collective-security arrangement for Europe that would have involved Russia in the security architecture for the continent. This approach would have acknowledged the new balance of power that existed in Europe with the withdrawal of Soviet forces and weaponry from Central Europe and the emergence of a weaker Russia that lacked the manpower and the funds for military expansion. Such a step would have transformed and perhaps weakened NATO by bringing Russia into the military alliance, but it would have prevented Russian fears of encirclement. The incorporation of such a collective-security arrangement for Europe and Russia would have made it easier for the United States to face its new challenges in Asia, particularly the emergence and greater geopolitical activity of China and India, and possibly presented Russia as a partner in dealing with problems in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, particularly Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The most effective alternative to expansion would have been the Partnership for Peace (PFP), which would not have led to NATO membership for the former Warsaw Pact states or to a Western military embrace of East Europe. The Pentagon led the charge for PFP in 1994 because of its opposition to full membership status for the new governments of East Europe and the expansion of the military commitment to Europe. It believed that PFP would provide a mechanism for involving various European nations with NATO through civil and military cooperation and an exchange of intelligence and information without formal membership. The military leadership also understood that NATO's out-of-area and peacekeeping operations would become even more difficult if it were necessary to coordinate logistics and operations with 15 additional members.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Secretary of Defense Les Aspin were opposed to expansion and in favor of PFP, but they were outmaneuvered by Clinton's domestic advisors who wanted to deprive Senator Dole of a campaign issue. Christopher and Aspin argued that NATO expansion would compromise the chances for demilitarizing the Russian economy and denuclearizing the former Soviet republics that found themselves outside Russia but still dependent on Russian command and control. U.S. intelligence had exaggerated the military strength of the East European states during the Cold War, but the Pentagon and military intelligence understood the true nature of the East European weapons inventory as well as the existence of command and doctrinal structures that were incompatible with those of the West European states of NATO.

Therefore, the Pentagon came up with the idea of PFP, which would bring together officers and units from NATO, the former Warsaw Pact, and even such neutral or nonaligned states as Austria, Finland, and Sweden for joint planning, exercises, and even peacekeeping missions. PFP's highest-ranking proponent was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, who could have been a poster boy for the new concept. As Strobe Talbott said in his memoir, "Shali" was "born in Poland in 1936 to a Georgian father and a Russian mother, came to the United States as a teenager already speaking three languages and learned English by watching John Wayne movies." (Strobe Talbott, "The Russian Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy," New York: Random House, 2002, p. 99.) It is noteworthy that only the Pentagon could think outside-the-box in dealing with NATO's role in the post-Cold War world.

It is too late for the alternative approaches to NATO enlargement, but it is still possible to call a time out on enlargement in order to allow NATO to regroup as a

political-military alliance and to put an end to Russian opposition to the geopolitical encirclement. Only the United States appears to be in a hurry to expand the alliance. Perhaps a de-emphasis of NATO and a greater emphasis on the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank would allow greater concentration on the economic and social problems that exist instead of looking for military engagements that have increased the operational tempo of European armies and not necessarily contributed to stability in Europe or elsewhere. It is just possible that Pan-European economic assistance to the troubled regions of the Middle East and Southwest Asia could be more stabilizing than pan-European military engagement. As key NATO members begin to have greater concerns with their own Muslim populations (e.g., there are between 15-17 million Muslims in Western Europe, where there were no significant Muslim populations 50 years ago), it is quite possible that they will become more concerned with their own internal problems rather than with assisting U.S. missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The U.S. use of force in Serbia, Iraq, and Afghanistan over the past ten years has created serious differences in bilateral relations with many of its European allies as well as within the leadership councils of NATO. The differences within NATO were probably inevitable in view of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the militarization of American national security policy. These wars have also led to greater geopolitical problems in key regions that affect NATO. The initial use of force in Afghanistan in 2001 was highly successful, but the current mission of counter-insurgency and state-building in Afghanistan appears to be inconceivable, let alone achievable. The instruments of military power and political engagement do not appear feasible for Afghanistan and the corrupt government that resides in Kabul. These are problems that will confront the United States and the NATO alliance in the near term.

Melvin A. Goodman is senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and adjunct professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. He spent 42 years at the CIA, the National War College, and the U.S. Army. His latest book is "Failure of Intelligence: the Decline and Fall of the CIA." *Carolyn Wright from American University provided excellent research assistance for this chapter.*