

Introduction

On an overnight visit to one of the U.S. Navy's aircraft carriers, I found myself seated at dinner between two senior naval officers whose ages differed by around eighteen years. During dinner I asked the older officer what he thought about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His answer was an emphatic endorsement. "It is and will continue to be the most powerful alliance for safeguarding the world," he said. Later, during a conversation with the younger officer, I asked the same question. His answer was equally forthright but dramatically different from that of his comrade in arms. "I remain to be convinced that NATO serves a useful purpose anymore," he told me.

I am often asked why I decided to write a book on NATO. That conversation on the high seas, in one of the most powerful warships in the world, answers the question more clearly and succinctly than I ever could. The answers from the two naval officers stripped the protective shield that surrounds any discussion of NATO and boiled the argument down to its essentials. If two senior members of America's armed forces could have such divergent opinions about the greatest military alliance in history, does anyone really understand why, twenty years after the end of the Cold War, NATO still exists and what its main purpose is?

The confusion illuminated by the naval officers is even more pronounced among Americans outside the military. "You mean NATO is still around?" an incredulous investment banker in New York recently asked

me. The dean of a well-known private college in Boston confidently assured me that she was quite certain NATO was not a military force anymore and was “probably just humanitarian assistance staffs.” A retired college professor from Arizona asked if I was sure, absolutely sure, that NATO troops were serving in Afghanistan.

How, I wondered, could there be so much confusion about a military alliance that is supposed to be at the core of the relationship between America and Europe? Given what I was finding out about NATO from my conversations, the transatlantic alliance ought to be in tatters. But this situation is clearly not the case.

The United States and the European Union between them represent some eight hundred million people who produce almost two-thirds of the world’s economic activity. They invest more in one another and hire more of each other’s citizens to work in their companies than any two entities in the world. And from a range of issues spanning art, culture, history, and academia, the transatlantic relationship has seldom appeared stronger.

What is true I found out, while doing research for my earlier book, *America and Europe after 9/11 and Iraq: The Great Divide*, is that there has been a steady deterioration in the political and security aspects of the transatlantic relationship. This divide deepened since 2001 as the American military pursued actions after 9/11 that the Europeans believe were taken without adequate regard for the core agreement of the NATO alliance, which requires unanimity among members and conformance with international law as represented by the Security Council of the United Nations.

My earlier book argued that the divide is structural and would not repair itself simply through a change in personalities. This observation has certainly been borne out by the flow of events. Neither the change in American administrations nor the change in a number of EU countries’ leaders has done much to bridge the divide, even though the rhetoric has become far more civil.

As I researched this book I came to realize that instead of being a force for transatlantic unity and geopolitical stability, as it is supposed to be, NATO has become the reverse. The alliance is increasingly a force that works against transatlantic unity and geopolitical stability. And, as I shall demonstrate, NATO’s professed, indeed required, assurances of protection for its members are promises it can no longer keep. Left dangling

in this state and as its internal tensions continue to damage the already frayed transatlantic ties, NATO risks becoming irrelevant to the security needs of the European-Atlantic area.

NATO's downward trajectory is in contrast to the upward sweep of the European Union's increasingly successful Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

The alliance's lackluster performance in Afghanistan has left an impression in North America that the Europeans have no desire to engage in military action anymore. Many Americans believe that the process of creating the European Union has left Europeans with the feeling that every geopolitical problem can be resolved with patience, negotiations, and compromise. In other words, the Europeans have become pacifists.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Over the last decade the European Union has sent out twenty-seven CSDP military and civilian missions around the world. Most of them were small deployments, but they also included the first naval deployment by the European Union and a powerful military force sent to Africa.

The European Union's naval deployment to the Horn of Africa protects shipping against Somali pirates and is twice the size of a similar NATO force that also operates off Somalia. The military mission was sent to Chad in the center of Africa. Twenty-three EU member states were joined by Russia, Albania, and Croatia to mobilize over ten thousand troops for the African mission. As seen in chapter 5, during the nineteen-month mission to Africa, the European Union's military force fought three engagements against insurgents, deployed and used European special forces, and handled complex logistics required to send and maintain military forces in a landlocked country thousands of miles from Europe.

I spent two weeks in Brussels meeting with key leaders of the CSDP to find out more about the European Union's military arm. I subsequently had two conversations with Lt. Gen. Patrick Nash, the Irish operations Commander of the Chad mission.

As a result of this research I have developed a far more nuanced understanding of the European approach to crisis management. Instead of a military-centric approach, the European Union relies on multidimensional missions that can be tailored to the needs of a crisis by using a toolbox of military, diplomatic, police, human rights, and development aid resources.

As of August 7, 2010, a new EU department, the European External Action Service (EEAS), took over responsibility for these missions. Uniquely, this department combines the European Union's military arm, its diplomatic service, and its development aid programs into a powerful crisis management tool. This arrangement would be akin to combining the U.S. Departments of Defense and State under one secretary. It is a novel and far more effective approach to winning hearts and minds in the conflicts projected for the twenty-first century.

The CSDP, the European Union's military arm, is still relatively young. The total military staff in Brussels numbers around two hundred as compared to some fourteen thousand permanent positions in NATO. But the CSDP has wind in its sails while NATO's sails are stalling. The CSDP has a sense of where it is headed while NATO is still grappling with its relevance after the end of the Cold War. The Europeans appear solidly behind the CSDP while their commitment to NATO appears half hearted, as demonstrated by the largest NATO allies, which are quitting the fighting in Afghanistan and heading home. Crucially, both the CSDP and NATO are feeling the impact of the global economic downturn.

Another thing to keep in mind is, contrary to popular belief, NATO does not have a standing military force. Both NATO and the CSDP generate forces for a mission by dipping into the same pool of European military resources that include some 2 million army, navy, and air force personnel; 5,000 military aircraft; and 3,500 helicopters. The combined military budgets of the twenty-seven European Union members, of some 210 billion euros (approximately \$360 billion), fund the military assets from which both NATO and the CSDP can draw resources. It is a budget that is now under considerable strain given the financial downturn and quickly disappearing support from European publics for the seemingly interminable Afghan war.

Recognizing that today's threats will be considerably different from those encountered during the Cold War, NATO has begun to transform itself from a defensive military organization to one geared to crisis management missions. But the European Union, through the CSDP, already has this base covered. It is ready, willing, and able to handle the crisis management missions that NATO is trying to transform itself to execute.

What NATO has is an integrated military command and control structure that the alliance has perfected over its sixty-year life span. The CSDP will surely need these capabilities as it expands its role to include European territorial defense, and outgrows the ad hoc military headquarters system that controls the European Union's deployments.

It is also clear from recent speeches delivered by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and from the deliberation at the NATO Summit meeting in Lisbon, November 19–20, 2010, that NATO will have to significantly trim its bureaucracy and become much more cost effective and relevant. Maintaining hundreds of committees, a bureaucracy of some fourteen thousand people, and multiple military commands is no longer feasible given the deep and continuing global economic downturn.

In this emerging picture of two organizations with overlapping objectives and financial constraints lies a window of opportunity.

Press most Europeans and you will find they still believe NATO is their ultimate security blanket. It is this historical trust in the NATO brand that provides an opportunity for leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to synchronize again the strategic visions of Europe and North America and to revitalize the transatlantic security relationship.

If the CSDP and NATO were businesses, I would propose sending in a top-flight investment bank to recommend a range of alternatives, from undergoing a full merger to combining significant parts of their businesses. I realize neither the CSDP nor NATO is a business and that there are political hurdles to any kind of combination, as demonstrated by the two organizations' inability to formally collaborate on anything major. But the task may not be as daunting as it sounds.

As the Paris-based EU Institute for Security Studies has pointed out, four countries in Europe—Britain, France, Germany, and Italy—provide roughly 70 percent of the European Union's defense spending. (Britain and France alone provide 45 percent.) Add two more countries—the Netherlands and Spain—and the six account for 80 percent of the European Union's defense spending. All are members of the European Union, which passed the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and set up the EEAS. Its head, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, is a po-

tentially powerful position that was created to present a unified European security and foreign policy to the world.

The United States and Canada should encourage these six European Union countries to use their clout and leadership within the European Union and empower High Representative Catherine Ashton to begin working with the American secretary of state or the American secretary of defense, and the Canadian defense minister, on a project to develop the road map to bridge NATO and the CSDP. During the project the allies would be forced to consider the broader political divide between America and Europe and to take steps to forge a strategic consensus that recalibrates the transatlantic security relationship for the new century. A newly energized European-American security relationship would strengthen and further promote the growth of the wider transatlantic alliance, which is, I believe, the real prize and the key to global security and financial stability.

I recognize that the NATO's new mission statement, adopted at its Summit meeting in Lisbon (see appendix E) rededicates the alliance to the protection of its members. And it commits the alliance to handling new threats such as cyberattacks, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and ballistic missile defense while developing a civilian-military crisis management capability.

It is difficult to understand how NATO will be able to pay for all these new capabilities as it slashes its budget and workforce. For example, the alliance believes the development of a Europe-wide anti-ballistic missile shield will cost its members around \$200 million over ten years, or around \$770,000 per member per year. But a more realistic estimate for the shield was provided by *The Telegraph* on November 24, 2010. The respected British newspaper estimated the cost at around \$58 billion.¹ Will European states come up with this level of funding for the project as their budgets are being slashed? I think not.

NATO cannot survive simply by dreaming its way out of reality. In its original version, that I call NATO 1.0, the alliance could exist as a successful stand alone military alliance. For the threats and economics of the twenty-first century, its viability requires NATO to reboot and transform itself into NATO 2.0 by bridging itself to the EU's CSDP.

It would be a pity to let NATO fade away because we may then have to reinvent it someday. And that will not be easy.