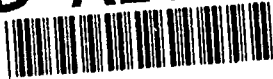


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THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES IN EUROPE

by

Gary D. Dills

Lt Colonel, United States Air Force

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy or the Department of the Air Force.

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Abstract of
THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES IN EUROPE

The United States has been a primary guarantor of security for Europe since the end of World War II. As the Soviet threat recedes, Europe becomes more independent, and the worlds economy becomes more intertwined, is the military presence of the United States forces in Europe necessary for continued security? This paper reviews the major aspects of the changing international environment concluding that continued American commitment to NATO is necessary although the day-to-day presence will likely diminish. The paper also suggests that NATO enlarge its Allied Command Mobile Force concept to provide a strong, readily available force to deter and/or counter limited aggression in the theater. It also suggests that it may be time for a European to be designated as SACEUR to underline the increased reliance on Europe's military while maintaining American presence. Finally, the changed environment and increased teamwork gives NATO an opportunity to come nearer to Eisenhower's vision that "Someday we will all wear the same uniform."

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THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES IN EUROPE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most observers of the international scene agree that the environment of international relations has changed drastically and irrevocably in the last three years. The Soviet Union (or Russia if you prefer) has demolished the Berlin Wall, dissolved the Warsaw Pact, agreed to a limit on conventional weapons in Europe, and is busily trying to reshape its domestic situation to compete in the modern world. The West may have won the Cold War.¹

At the same time, the United States of America has pursued technological dominance in many military systems (at least parity in all), shown a willingness to fight anti-democratic forces in our hemisphere (Grenada, Panama), and demonstrated a willingness and capability to militarily defeat a large standing military force (Iraq) to protect our ideals and petroleum supplies. Similar to the Soviet Union, the United States is burdened by financial problems (balance of payments, unbalanced budgets, low capital savings, etc.) which generate domestic calls for a refocus on the needs of the United States albeit at the expense of our security efforts outside the country. Our people are looking for ways to unburden the United States from the role of world peacemaker/enforcer particularly since

the major economic players of the world, Japan and Germany, limit their expenditures on security affairs outside their immediate nation. Further muddling the situation is a unified Germany faced with enormous expenses to rebuild the former German Democratic Republic while continuing to provide social services and national defense without increasing the tax burden on the country or greatly slowing the economic vibrancy of the Germany economy. Overriding all of this seemingly chaotic world is a global public that no longer sees the Soviet Union as a military threat. Without a threat the viability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is questioned by many. Some would prefer a political organization such as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), to resolve European issues and replace the military issue dominated NATO. In short, the bipolar world previously believed to exist is no longer; Public pressure in the United States will increase calls for the US military to return to the continental United States and a more European led and funded defense in Europe.

US and other NATO leaders responsible for the security of the west are faced with a major change in the way we have planned, programmed and trained to defend US interests particularly in Europe.² Is there a threat to European security? Should the United States continue to play a dominant role in the security of Europe? How must our strategy and military objectives change in the era of decreasing defense resources

and reemerging isolationism? What will NATO become? The following paragraphs will explore these questions, outline some possibilities and offer recommendations for the United States role in Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as we depart the twentieth century.

CHAPTER II

U. S. INTERESTS AND THE THREATS

UNITED STATES' INTERESTS

Since World War II, the leaders of the United States have consistently connected the security of the European continent to the security of the United States. The peoples are tied by shared history, values and democratic principals. Until most recently, the United States was also the predominant global economic power. However, as the ruins of World War II were rebuilt, economic influence and growth spread. The result is a more interdependent economic world depending on free trade and unfettered access to flourish. A continuous peace in Europe is essential to the global economy and the continued emergence of the countries of eastern Europe. As the leader of the democratic world, the United States should be committed to the security necessary for the prisoners of the Cold War to rehabilitate their economies.¹ It is also in the economic interests of the United States to promote free markets and perpetuate the economies of western Europe particularly in an era where the European Community tries to come closer together with a common currency and fewer barriers.²

Concurrent with economic freedom is political freedom. One of the goals of the cold war was to allow the peoples of eastern Europe the opportunity for free choice in their leaders and their forms of government. As forty five years of Soviet

dominance of the areas receded, that process began. For these infant pluralistic societies to grow, military/political coercion from other nations must not occur. It is in the interest of the United States and the peoples of Europe for the democratic process to continue without fear of outside interference. The potential of using military power to prevent outside interference in the affairs of eastern Europe is one of the key guarantees for continued growth of freedom. ³

THREATS

The dominant threat to democratic principals in Europe and the primary driving force behind NATO has been the overpowering conventional and nuclear threat of the Soviet Union. President Gorbachev has done much to reduce the reality and perception of the threat. In January of 1990, Soviet Army General M.A. Moiseyev (Chief of the General Staff) outlined several new guidelines which appear to lessen the Soviet threat including:

- "War is no longer considered a means of achieving political objectives
- The Soviet Union will never initiate military actions against any other state.
- The Soviet Union will never be the first to use nuclear weapons.
- The Soviet Union has no territorial claims against nor does it consider any other state to be its enemy.
- The Soviet Union seeks to preserve military parity as a decisive factor in averting war, but at much lower levels." ⁴

Subsequently, the Soviet Union agreed to the removal of ground forces from eastern Europe by the end of 1995 and the Warsaw Pact declared itself defunct. ⁵ At the same

time, the Soviet Union has moved to modernize their strategic nuclear forces and strategic defense systems including space systems.⁶ The apparent results of this new approach to Soviet defense is a decrease in conventional forces in Europe, maintenance of a strong modern strategic capability (and superpower status), and continued modernization of strategic defense. For the United States and Europe, this threat translates to significantly increased warning times, the existence of a eastern Europe buffer zone for a soviet attack in central Europe, and a continuing nuclear threat from the Soviet Union.⁷

Further complicating matters, the Soviet Union is embroiled in internal turmoil as the various states clamor for more independence, economic reform is not working or not begun, and ethnic violence expands. Gorbachev's government is attacked from all sides -- Shevardnadze resigns, Yeltsin campaigns for more rapid change, Gorbachev threatens to resign, the economy is in ruins. The image is one of a strong nuclear power in chaos internally but appearing to be less aggressive, in a conventional sense, with its neighbors and the United States.⁸

CHAPTER III

STRATEGY AND MILITARY OBJECTIVES

NATO'S DILEMMA

The United States and the NATO actions are faced with a great deal of uncertainty. The Soviet Union says it is not belligerent, it has decreased the massive conventional force facing Europe (post 1995), it is struggling to revive the economy, and it has a modern, capable nuclear arsenal at the disposal of the Soviet leadership. At the same time, the United States is significantly decreasing its standing military force and closing military installations around the world. Concurrently, the United States is committed to the defense and security of NATO and democratic nations around the world. How does NATO defend against the decreasing threat and develop a strategy to counter any future aggression and what is the role of the United States?

Basic Strategy

The uncertainty of the future threat forces NATO to be prepared for a variety of aggressions from the Soviet Union and potential forces in eastern Europe. The essence of NATO strategy has been and should continue to be deterrence through strength and alliance solidarity. This basic concept has maintained the peace for forty five years while we faced an overtly offensive enemy. We now must deter a

potential enemy who has the capability to threaten Europe but is not demonstrating any intentions to become aggressive. The task for NATO and the United States has become one of political-military deterrence backed by the capability to immediately respond to a crisis.

The current strategy of flexible response to contain and deter is based on the Alliances' forward defense posture, high state of readiness and agreement to bring military forces to bear across the spectrum of military options.¹ The specter of the strategic nuclear power of the United States (and its adherence to NATO) is a major element of NATO's deterrence. In other words, this "military-oriented" strategy depends on the Soviet perception that the Alliance has the will to use its in place forces to counter aggression and has the capability to severely damage the Soviet Union. As the U.S. and the other NATO nations significantly decrease forward deployed force structure and remove theater nuclear weapons from the European mainland, this perception loses viability and the NATO deterrent strategy becomes less likely to succeed.

Nonetheless, NATO must continue to deter a Soviet nuclear war, a massive conventional war, and gradual political usurping of western Europe by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union must continue to believe that NATO is prepared to counter any conventional or nuclear aggression on western Europe with an appropriate equivalent military

response. Further, they must be convinced that NATO has the will, the solidarity and the capability to respond to Soviet attempts at military blackmail of the west. In the longer term, NATO will have to consider how the Alliance will react to any Soviet military (perhaps under the guise of police action) activity in eastern Europe. It is unlikely that NATO would stand idle if the Soviet Union attempts to enforce Soviet policies inside a nation such as Poland. This deterrence is not unlike the deterrence in effect today with one major exception. If we assume that the Alliance and the Soviets have parity in conventional forces between the Atlantic and the Urals, then both sides depend on reinforcement to prevail. In the case of the Soviets, they are the sole determiners of how, when or if they will mobilize and reinforce. The Alliance also has the option to reinforce but is dependent on sixteen national decisions to begin mobilization and reinforcement. In the case of a clear crisis, it is likely the Alliance nations would agree to the necessity of mobilization and reinforcement. However, if there is Soviet activity short of direct confrontation of the Alliance, such agreement may not be rapid. Consequently, deterrence of such Soviet activity is dependent upon the Soviet belief that the NATO nations have already agreed and are prepared to mobilize and deploy. The key to this perception (and to actual NATO agreement) is the active involvement of the United

States. If the United States continues to maintain a significant forward presence in Europe, continues to have the capability to control the lines of communication necessary for reinforcement, continues to maintain a force structure capable of reinforcing Europe, then the opportunity for continued deterrence of Soviet aggression is more likely. If the United States were to remove all but token forces from Europe, the Soviets would likely question the sincerity of the United States' commitment to the Alliance and the security of Europe. Consequently, if NATO is to deter Soviet aggression, overt and covert, then the United States must be an active participant in European security.

If this multifaceted deterrence is to succeed, then the military forces of NATO will have to be capable to provide sufficient force to blunt a limited offensive, a nuclear attack, as well as a bolt-out-of-the-blue conventional attack in the heartland of Europe. If the Soviets actually mean what they have stated, then a bolt-out-of-the-blue scenario is unlikely; however, NATO must be prepared for the eventuality.² The Soviets would require several months to gather, equip and otherwise prepare forces for such a major conflict in Europe. The Alliance is confident that sufficient indications and warning would provide adequate time for the nations to take preventive action or combat such Soviet activity. Consequently, the Soviets are unlikely to do something which could be discovered easily

unless they have overwhelming military power to succeed. It follows that only an alliance of nations with a combined military power to counter the Soviets could deter the Soviets. Once again the United States and its large manpower and technological base are a key part of any alliance large enough to counter the Soviets.

Similarly, a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union on Europe or the United States is unlikely without some prior indications. The presence of the strategic nuclear arsenals of the United States and the other Alliance nations is a deterrent from such action. This aspect of Alliance military capability is not likely to change over the foreseeable future IF the United States and the Alliance nations continue to field modern capable systems to counter continued Soviet modernization of their strategic nuclear arsenal.

Perhaps the most difficult problem is deterrence of Soviet aggression aimed toward a limited objective in eastern Europe or in an Alliance country. For Alliance deterrence to be credible, NATO must have the capability and the will to react quickly to changing events. The current Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) concept is one military option which, if strengthened, can provide a viable alternative. The AMF is a small (about 5000) air/land force designated as a rapid movement force to demonstrate NATO commitment in an area. It is composed of

units from most of the allies (but stationed in home countries) and has a small staff assigned.³ As Allied forces decrease, the concept of a rapidly mobile, in place force to demonstrate commitment as well as having sufficient power to be a real counter becomes even more important.

In a Europe where the most likely use of Allied force is to counter limited Soviet aggression, perhaps the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) should restructure a large portion of his force in the manner of the AMF. This would involve designation of forces by all nations to the "NATO mobile force" for day-to-day operational command by SACEUR and should include air, land, and naval forces. The forces assigned to this NATO reaction force should be portions of the ones remaining in Europe under the Conventional Forces Europe agreement. Planning and staff support could come from the SACEUR's current headquarters thereby reducing staff duplication (the current AMF staff is in Heidelberg) and improving unity of command for SACEUR. Perhaps the most important element of having such a force is that it commits the nations, on a daily basis, to the use of a military force in a limited way. In reality, political discussion would probably occur ad nauseam however, the force is a standing one, it is under the daily command of the SACEUR and the Soviets cannot assume they can depend on the lack of will by NATO during a limited military action in Europe. Deterrence of aggression should

improve and the capability to react quickly to such action should greatly improve.

Such a mobile force also could take advantage of the strengths of each nation, improve interoperability through constant combined operations, and hopefully, provide a laboratory for the eventual transition of the entire NATO force to a single joint combined force. The disadvantages to a large NATO mobile force are numerous and will take time to resolve. Interoperability of equipment is a long standing problem in NATO. However, if these forces are to work together effectively, their equipment (from ammunition to wheels) must be interchangeable. A great deal of the reluctance to move toward increased interoperability was to protect national military industries although all allies recognized the need to be interoperable. Perhaps a closer, more dependent working relationship within the mobile team will enable the countries to adapt engineering schemes for their industries to produce interchangeable equipment. Competition could then focus on quality rather than on maintaining a monopoly on each nation's force structure.

Another disadvantage, which is also an advantage as noted above, is that the political leadership of the nations do not have as much control over the forces as before. The AMF concept does not abrogate the powers of the Atlantic Council or the Military Committee to control the political and military decisions to commit to an active

military operation. Ultimate control would remain with the allied political leadership; however, having a larger in being Allied Command Europe Mobile Force reduces the need to mobilize a larger force to conduct operations and gives the political leadership more time to make a decision whether to commit forces.

Command language is also a problem which would become more prevalent in a combined operation. There are no quick solutions for differences in language except constant contact and education. It is unlikely that the average American soldier, airman, or sailor will be as proficient in communicating with our German, Italian, French allies as the European military. Air Forces around the world have adopted English as the standard aviation language thus instant communication airborne should not be as large a problem. Such an agreed upon set of terminology, use of computerized messages (which are capable of translation) plus the presence of multilingual personnel within the mobile teams will lessen the problem but never eliminate it.

Having an in place force capable of countering Soviet aggression and demonstrating Alliance solidarity contributes directly to deterrence and the continued success of NATO. The disadvantages are significant but, since they are known disadvantages, may spur more active solutions to problems which have plagued NATO since its inception.

Overall, a large Allied Command Europe Mobile Force consisting of air, land, and naval forces allows NATO the flexibility to react rapidly to aggression anywhere within the theater in a rapid manner and in non-crisis times demonstrates Alliance commitment to a military defense.

CHAPTER IV

IMPACT ON THE UNITED STATES

Throughout this discussion, the role of the United States is key to any deterrence of the Soviets and thus to the security of Europe. One of the prime motivations for developing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was to assure United States involvement in the defense of Europe. The need for U.S. involvement has not subsided. The U.S. is the glue that binds the interests of western democracies while limiting the capability of any single European power to dominate. The U.S. nuclear and conventional military power is also key to any effective deterrence or defense form Soviet aggression. Clearly, the U. S. must continue as an active military and political member of the alliance for the foreseeable future.

As a consequence of World War II, the emergence of the nuclear superpowers, and the strength of the United States economy, the leadership of NATO has largely been held by the United States, e.g. the Supreme Allied Commander Europe is an American general. With a decrease in the forward deployed forces (including theater nuclear weapons) of the United States in Europe, it may be time that this position became a rotational one among the major European powers and the United States.

Some Alliance members may desire an American to continue as the senior military leader since many alternatives

generate political uneasiness. For example, some Europeans may be reluctant to see a German military officer in control of western forces. Some American politicians may view control of American forces by a non-American as unacceptable since that non-American could involve the United States in a war. Similar arguments could be expected from other allied nations. Rational explanation of continued civilian control through the NATO committees and councils should counter these oppositions; however, most of these objections are on an emotional level and will require experience with a new system before a more complete acceptance of a non-American military leader is possible.

The concept of an enlarged mobile force is only part of the deterrence problem. The United States contribution to the nuclear deterrence and large scale conventional deterrence remains. Nuclear deterrence is based on maintaining a viable modern nuclear force. The US triad, along with our allies, has successfully accomplished this task for decades because we maintain a credible capability. With budget decreases comes decreases in this force as well (Minuteman II retirement begins in 1992, Poseidon retiring, aging B-52s retiring) and the replacements are tremendously expensive (e.g. Trident, B-2s).¹ The United States must be willing to contribute defense funds to strategic programs if strategic deterrence of the Soviet Union is to succeed. The United States commitment to NATO's security and the

nuclear deterrence strategy of NATO cannot succeed without a viable United States strategic force and U.S. commitment to NATO.

Conventional deterrence of a large scale invasion of Europe by the Soviets is also dependent upon the capability of the United States to generate large capable forces and transport them to Europe rapidly. In the past, theater nuclear weapons could have become an equalizer during a large scale invasion which NATO forces could not repel. With theater nuclear forces removed from Europe, the contribution of these conventional forces becomes even more important. Obviously, rapid mobilization of US forces to Europe requires a variety of military capability including naval forces to control the sea lines of communication, fast sealift, airlift, and a port/base structure to deploy and receive forces. It also requires the procurement and maintenance of reserve and active land and air forces which are rapidly deployable. All items are expensive to maintain and procure. Again, a large financial commitment in an era of budget constraints.

Overall, a successful NATO deterrence of the Soviets depends on United States active involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, the U.S. role in NATO likely will decrease as our forward deployed forces leave Europe perhaps resulting in a rotation among the major allies for the senior military leadership in SHAPE.

A shrinking of command and decreased U.S. forward deployed forces will mean decreased influence. Nonetheless, U.S. influence can be sustained by maintaining a nuclear deterrence capability and by assuring the capability to deploy air, land, and naval reinforcements to NATO when needed.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The United States is the key to a successful broad based NATO deterrence of the Soviet Union. The NATO operational commander, SACEUR, depends on the political deterrence capability of the NATO nations and the military capability of the combined forces of the allied nations to counter aggression when and if it occurs. The nuclear forces of the United States and the capability to provide rapid deployment of large conventional forces to Europe will continue to be necessary for the foreseeable future. With decreasing forces available, longer warning times, and the likelihood of a limited (vice Bolt-out-of-the-blue) Soviet offensive becoming the primary conventional threat, SACEUR must focus more on rapid deployment and employment of in-place forces.

An enlargement of the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force to a standing force of ground, air, and naval forces available to the commander for employment. In addition to the operational flexibility provided to SACEUR, this enlarged mobile force concept could serve as the example for gradual improvement in the combination of the national forces into a real combined force. It also provides an impetus for increased interoperability on a personal basis (troops training closely together, increased language familiarity, compromise of training and tactical proce-

dures) as well as increased interoperability in equipment. The operational commander eventually gains a command using similar tactics/procedures, accustomed to working together, more interoperable equipment, and supported by a common logistical system.

As the nations work more closely and U.S. forces decrease, a rotational sharing of the SACEUR position is likely to become a reasonable political goal of the larger allies. Operationally, such a change should have little effect except perhaps to reinforce the team dedication of the sailors, soldiers, and airman as they view their nations as more equal partners than in the past. The long term effect of the mobile force and its anticipated growth could lead to Eisenhower's ideal that "Somel'ay we will all wear the same uniform." 1

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