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# **THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN LANDPOWER: DOES FORWARD PRESENCE STILL MATTER? THE CASE OF THE ARMY IN EUROPE**

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John R. Deni



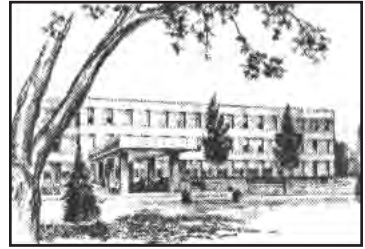
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## **Strategic Studies Institute Monograph**

# **THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN LANDPOWER: DOES FORWARD PRESENCE STILL MATTER? THE CASE OF THE ARMY IN EUROPE**

**John R. Deni**

**October 2012**

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## FOREWORD

In January 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced that the United States would reduce the number of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) in Europe. In conjunction with this decision, the administration also announced plans to increase the U.S. military presence in Europe in other ways—by establishing an aviation detachment in Poland; locating missile defense assets in Romania, Poland, and Turkey; and deploying *Aegis* Ballistic Missile Defense ships to Spain. However, it was the announcement regarding American land forces in Europe that captured media, popular, and scholarly attention, prompting many to ask whether the United States was turning its back on Europe as it pivoted to Asia and whether the Europeans had the wherewithal to defend themselves. This in turn led to more fundamental questions as to whether forward-based U.S. land forces were necessary at all.

In this monograph, Dr. John R. Deni explores the utility of forward presence in Europe, placing the recent decisions—and, in particular, the arguments *against* forward presence—in the context of a decades-long tradition on the part of many political leaders, scholars, and others to mistakenly tie the forward-basing of U.S. forces to more equal defense burden sharing across the entire North Atlantic alliance. In assessing whether and how forward presence still matters in terms of protecting U.S. interests and achieving U.S. objectives, Dr. Deni bridges the gap between academics and practitioners by grounding his analysis in political science theory while illuminating how forward-basing yields direct, tangible benefits in terms of military operational interoperability. Moreover, Dr. Deni's monograph forms a critical datapoint

in the ongoing dialogue regarding the future of American Landpower, particular in this age of austerity. For all of these reasons, the Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to the national security debate on the future of the U.S. Army and the manner in which it can best serve the nation today and in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr." in a cursive script.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN R. DENI is currently a research professor of Joint Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) Security Studies for the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College. Previously, he was a political advisor for senior U.S. military commanders in Europe for 8 years. Prior to that, he spent 2 years as a strategic planner specializing in the military-to-military relationship between the United States and its European allies. While working for the U.S. military in Europe, Dr. Deni was also an adjunct lecturer at Heidelberg University's Institute for Political Science. There, he taught graduate and undergraduate courses on U.S. foreign and security policy, NATO, European security, and alliance theory and practice. Before working in Germany, he spent 7 years in Washington, DC, as a consultant specializing in national security issues for the U.S. Departments of Defense, Energy, and State. Most recently, Dr. Deni has authored the book, *Alliance Management and Maintenance: Restructuring NATO for the 21st Century*, as well as several journal articles. He has published op-eds in major newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*, and he has spoken at conferences and symposia throughout Europe and North America. Dr. Deni completed his undergraduate degree in history and international relations at the College of William & Mary, holds a Master of Arts degree in U.S. foreign policy from American University in Washington, DC, and a Ph.D. in international affairs from George Washington University.



## SUMMARY

For at least 50 years, many American politicians, scholars, analysts, and observers of European affairs have complained about perceived inequitable burden-sharing in the transatlantic alliance. If only the United States would withdraw its military forces from Europe, so they reasoned, then the European allies would pick up the slack and start paying more for their own defense. The decision to station U.S. forces in Europe during peacetime was in substance and style a major commitment to European defense, matched to a limited degree by parallel British forward-stationing on the continent as well as West German rearmament, for example. By the Vietnam era though, as American commitments in Southeast Asia grew significantly, in part at the expense of commitments in Europe, many in the United States became critical of Europe's perceived unwillingness to shoulder more of the defense burden in Europe. Since then, similar burden-sharing complaints have been lodged against America's closest allies, with most arguing that the United States ought to use the withdrawal of its forward-based forces as a political tool to compel greater defense spending on the part of European North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members.

In fact, since the end of the Cold War, the American military presence in Europe *has* dramatically downsized, from a high point of over a quarter-million Soldiers down to roughly 42,000 today. Ironically though, European defense spending has actually fallen for the most part during the same period. Why? Leading political science theories such as institutionalism, neo-realism, and collective goods theory all offer potential explanations. However, these are flawed tools, since the available data contradict the expectations of insti-

tutionalism, and since both neorealism and collective goods theory assume that the purpose of U.S. forces in Europe today is to act as a deterrent force against a conventional military adversary such as Russia.

In fact, the primary purpose of U.S. forces in Europe today is to build interoperability and military capability within and among America's most capable and most likely future coalition partners through security cooperation activities like exercises and training events. This shift in purpose means that U.S. force presence in Europe is no longer—if indeed it ever was—a useful tool in extracting a greater commitment to increased defense spending on the part of America's European allies. Nonetheless, through security cooperation, America's forward-based military forces in Europe play a critical role today in shaping the capabilities of allied military forces. Given the necessity of capable, interoperable coalition partners for the future security threats Washington most expects to encounter, the role of America's forward military presence in Europe remains as vital as it was at the dawn of the Cold War, but for different reasons. Unfortunately, continuing calls to withdraw even more U.S. forces from Europe threaten to undermine Washington's ability to develop and maintain capable, interoperable coalition partners.

# THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN LANDPOWER: DOES FORWARD PRESENCE STILL MATTER? THE CASE OF THE ARMY IN EUROPE

## Introduction.

Many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) skeptics, critics of Europe, and American politicians from across the political spectrum have long called for a wholesale removal of U.S. forces from Europe. Arguments in favor of pulling forward-based American service members back to the United States include perceived easier and cheaper deployment to global hot spots, thanks to advancements in power projection.<sup>1</sup> Others claim that European environmental or other regulations restrict U.S. training or that ranges and maneuver areas in the United States are simply “better” than those available in Germany or elsewhere in Europe.<sup>2</sup> However, the argument that has been relied upon most frequently by the many analysts and politicians who have called for rebasing over the last several decades is that removing U.S. forces from Europe in particular would spur European NATO allies to spend more on their own defense and therefore correct the perceived imbalance in collective defense burden-sharing.<sup>3</sup>

Calls to address the perceived lack of burden-sharing through a rebasing of U.S. forces forward-based in Europe, especially Army forces, which have comprised the greatest proportion of troops there, certainly have been made since the end of the Cold War. Such appeals have only intensified as the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) seeks to tighten its belt as a result of the debt-reduction efforts that have engulfed Wash-

ington in the last few years. Perhaps not coincidentally, the American military presence in Europe, and in particular the Army, has slowly but steadily decreased over the last 2 decades. From a high point of over a quarter-million Soldiers in Europe at the height of the Cold War, the U.S. Army has drawn down to roughly 42,000 Soldiers today. Plans announced in early-2012 call for further cuts between now and 2014, when two of the four remaining U.S. brigade combat teams in Europe will inactivate, bringing the total down to roughly 29,000 Soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

However, while the United States has, in fact, reduced its forward military presence in Europe over the last 20 years, defense spending on the part of America's allies in Europe has been steadily *decreasing* over time and certainly since the end of the Cold War. This trend has only become magnified in the last 3 years as European governments have sought to deal with the most serious economic downturn in decades, since a significant part of the European government response has included dramatic cuts to defense budgets and force structure. Therefore, contrary to the expectations of those who argued that the NATO allies would contribute more to collective defense if the United States simply reduced its military presence in Europe, European contributions to collective defense, at least by some of the most commonly accepted measures, have instead dropped.

Borrowing from academia—specifically, by relying on political scientists—can help to explain this seeming paradox better. The most obvious political science theoretical tools for explaining why European defense budgets have gone down while U.S. forward military presence in Europe has fallen over the last 20 years—institutionalism, neorealism, and collec-

tive goods theory – are largely inadequate, either because the available data contradict their expectations or because they are based on inaccurate assumptions regarding the purpose of U.S. troops in Europe. This monograph will examine the case of the U.S. Army in Europe as a means of determining whether forward presence still has any value today as American land forces face fundamental questions regarding their future role and missions. In doing so, the monograph will show that, although the rationale for a U.S. military presence in Europe has changed significantly from territorial defense to allied interoperability, the presence of American forces in Europe is no less vital to American security today than it was 60 years ago, when President Harry S. Truman ordered U.S. troops to return to Europe in the largest peacetime deployment of military forces in American history.

### **Bring the Boys Home.**

During the Cold War, there was a broad political consensus in the executive branch of the U.S. Government – through both Democratic and Republican administrations – regarding the importance of forward military presence in Europe. That consensus was based upon the need to protect and defend America’s closest allies – those of NATO – from Soviet political intimidation and to deter the Soviets from attempting to overrun Western Europe quickly through a military assault. The result was that, with some variation, between 200,000 and 300,000 U.S. troops – the vast majority of whom were U.S. Army Soldiers – were based in Europe at any given time.

The political consensus within the executive branch on the importance of forward presence was certainly

not always reflected by the legislative branch. As far back as the early-1960s, some in Congress – most notably U.S. Senator Mike Mansfield, a Democrat from Montana – expressed opposition to the U.S. presence in Europe. The reasons for such opposition varied, but important among them was congressional frustration with European defense spending levels, which many viewed as insufficient.<sup>5</sup>

Such a perspective – that the Europeans should step up their defense spending and their contributions to collective defense if America was to maintain forces in Europe – was not altogether novel in the 1960s. Indeed, when President Truman first announced in September 1950 the stationing of significant numbers of U.S. Soldiers in Europe following the immediate post-World War II drawdown, he noted his assumption that the Allies would also make a corresponding commitment:

A basic element in the implementation of this decision is the degree to which our friends match our actions in this regard. Firm programs for the development of their forces will be expected to keep full step with the dispatch of additional United States forces to Europe. Our plans are based on the sincere expectation that our efforts will be met with similar action on their part.<sup>6</sup>

The rearming of Germany in 1955 helped to assure most in both the executive branch and the legislative branch in Washington that the Europeans were indeed capable of increasing their commitment to the common defense and willing to do so. However, as American involvement in Vietnam deepened in the early-1960s – with little assistance from the European allies – resentment within the Congress began to manifest itself in terms of calls to return U.S. Soldiers from Europe to America.<sup>7</sup>

Beginning in 1963 and continuing until the 1970s, Senator Mike Mansfield introduced a series of resolutions and amendments designed to reduce the U.S. military presence in Europe unless the allies increased their defense expenditures. While his efforts in the 1960s consisted primarily of “sense of the Senate” resolutions, which do not carry the force of law since they are not passed by the House nor signed by the President, subsequent resolutions in the 1970s were far more pointed. In 1971, Mansfield offered an amendment to a bill extending the U.S. Selective Service Act, a must-pass piece of legislation that authorized U.S. military conscription and was hence crucial for generating the manpower necessary to fight the Vietnam War while maintaining U.S. commitments to other allies around the world. Mansfield’s amendment would have forced a 50 percent cut in U.S. troop strength in Europe. The amendment failed by a vote of 61 to 36, but only after the Richard Nixon administration had engaged in a significant lobbying effort against it.<sup>8</sup>

Concerns over perceived inequitable burden-sharing did not end with the Vietnam War. A decade later, Senator Sam Nunn, a Georgia Democrat, and Senator William Roth, a Delaware Republican, sought again to tie U.S. military presence in Europe to higher allied defense spending. In this instance, Senators Nunn and Roth sought to attach an amendment to a must-pass piece of legislation—the annual Defense Department spending bill. The amendment would have mandated a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe unless the European allies met the agreed-upon 3 percent annual increase in real defense expenditures and took other steps to increase their military capabilities. The amendment was ultimately defeated by a vote of 55-41, but it was particularly noteworthy that one of

the co-sponsors was Senator Nunn. During his days in the Senate and since then – and in contrast to the anti-war Mansfield – Nunn was known as a defense hawk, a strong proponent of NATO, and an internationalist. To have such a person as co-sponsor signaled the extent of U.S. frustration with perceived inequities in burden-sharing and the willingness to use U.S. troop strength in Europe coercively to spur greater allied defense spending.<sup>9</sup>

As the Cold War ended, a broad-based bipartisan consensus emerged in favor of cashing in on the so-called “peace dividend,” chiefly by reducing troop presence in Europe but also by cutting defense spending more broadly.<sup>10</sup> The DoD and the executive branch generally favored a slow pace for any withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe, largely because of what was perceived as continuing uncertainty in Eastern Europe as the Soviet Union gave way to 11 successor states, four of which retained nuclear weapons or related delivery systems on their territory, and as Russia, the largest and most powerful of the successor states, seemed less than completely stable politically. However, as Moscow showed an increased willingness to negotiate deep, mutual reductions in conventional forces based in Europe, the threat-based rationale for keeping U.S. forces in Europe crumbled, and with it, DoD’s willingness to stand in the way of a draw-down. As then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney noted in explaining the transfer of forces from Europe to the Persian Gulf as part of the Operation DESERT SHIELD buildup, “Clearly, our ability to move forces out of Europe to support Desert Shield is a direct result of the fact that the threat level in Europe is down. . . . [Because of the overwhelming changes in Eastern Europe in the past year,] there is no military risk.”<sup>11</sup>

On Capitol Hill, the reaction to the move to draw down forces as the Cold War ended was positive, as both sides of the political aisle sought to redirect the funds spent on defending Europe to their other political priorities.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, many clamored for even deeper cuts in the U.S. presence in Europe, arguing that the United States had no business subsidizing the defense of relatively wealthy European allies.<sup>13</sup>

More recently, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, a Republican from Texas, has made similar arguments, although her motivations are perhaps somewhat complex. Her state plays host to some of the largest military installations in America, and she has expressed an abiding interest in expanding them to house even more U.S. military units.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, she has cited lack of allied commitment in Afghanistan as a key rationale for reducing the U.S. military presence in Europe.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Representative Mike Coffman, a Republican from Colorado, has tied the U.S. military presence in Europe with his interest in seeing America's European allies spend more on defense, arguing that the United States should reduce its presence in Europe as a means of eliminating an imbalance in burden-sharing.<sup>16</sup>

Still others in the U.S. Congress have expressed similar sentiments on burden-sharing and the corresponding need to reduce America's military presence in Europe as a means of encouraging the Europeans to do more in their own defense. Representative Barney Frank, a Democrat from Massachusetts, has argued for some time that, given the demise of the Soviet threat, the United States should have long ago withdrawn its forces from Europe:

I think the time has come to reexamine NATO. NATO was a brilliant move by Harry Truman in 1949, because you had devastated nations in western and central

Europe and a brutal, aggressive dictatorship under Stalin, and only American military force could stop him. Two of those things are no longer the case. We no longer have devastated, poor western and central European nations. We no longer have a brutal, militant, and aggressive dictatorship in the Soviet Union. The only thing that hasn't changed is America is still there defending them, except there's now no reason for it.<sup>17</sup>

In 2010, Frank joined Representative Walter B. Jones of North Carolina, Representative Ron Paul of Texas, and Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon in establishing the Sustainable Defense Task Force (SDTF) – comprised of defense and foreign affairs experts from several think tanks and academia – which was charged with developing possible defense budget contributions to deficit-reduction efforts.<sup>18</sup> The SDTF report, released in June 2010, proposed capping U.S. total military strength in Europe – that is, not just Army but all the services – at 35,000, largely on the basis of their contention that there is no longer a need for a high-readiness deterrence force in Europe and that the United States can in any case quickly redeploy military assets to Europe in the event of hostilities there: “Our friends in Asia and Europe can now defend themselves.”<sup>19</sup>

Frank and Paul sought to promote the findings of the SDTF as a means of advancing deficit-reduction efforts underway in Washington over the last year. In October 2010, they led the drafting of a letter to the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, otherwise known as the President's debt commission. Fifty-five other Members of Congress joined them in writing:

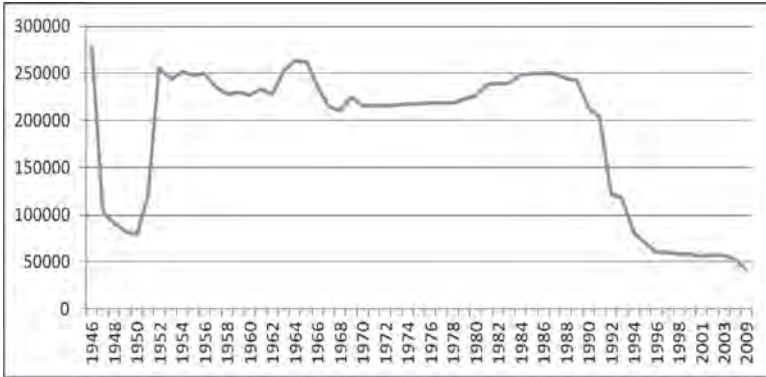
Years after the Soviet threat has disappeared, we continue to provide European and Asian nations with

military protection through...the troops stationed in our overseas military bases. Given the relative wealth of these countries, we should examine the extent of this burden that we continue to shoulder on our own dime.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, over at least the last half-century, many members of the U.S. Congress from both sides of the political aisle—as well as some policy analysts who have recently addressed this subject—have called for cuts, sometimes dramatic, in the U.S. military forces forward-based in Europe. These calls have typically been based, in part if not wholly, on the sense that burdens have not been shared equally by the European allies, and that through cuts in the American commitment to its forward-based presence in Europe, the United States can spur increased defense spending on the part of the Europeans and greater allied contributions to the collective defense.

### **By the Numbers: America's Presence in Europe.**

Interestingly, an examination of U.S. Army force structure levels in Europe appears to indicate that the executive branch has heeded the concerns of some members of Congress. As noted above, immediately after the end of the Cold War, the United States began to reduce significantly its military presence in Europe. In some cases, U.S. military units that were deployed from their home stations in Europe to Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM in Kuwait and Iraq in 1990 and 1991 were *redeployed* straight back to the United States following the war's conclusion. As seen in Figure 1, the U.S. Army presence in Europe declined precipitously following the end of the Cold War, from roughly a quarter-million Soldiers in 1988-89 to about 55,000 by 2001.



**Figure 1. U.S. Army Presence in Europe, 1946-2009.**<sup>21</sup>

In 2001, the incoming administration of George W. Bush began an intense re-examination of the U.S. overseas force posture both in Europe and in Asia. Led by the DoD and its new Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, the Integrated Global Posture and Basing Study (IGPBS) was designed to assess the size, location, types, and capabilities of U.S. forward military forces.

The IGPBS had roots in the 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (QDR). The QDR is a periodic review of U.S. defense doctrine and strategic planning, which was mandated by Congress following the end of the Cold War. The 2001 QDR recognized the importance of forward presence as “one of the most profound symbols of the U.S. commitment to allies and friends,” but it also noted that the concentration of forward-based forces in Western Europe and North-east Asia was “inadequate for the new strategic environment.”<sup>22</sup>

So in 2004, President George W. Bush promulgated the IGPBS, through which he recommended cutting U.S. Army combat forces in Europe substantially. Ultimately, and in combination with the 2005 Base Re-

alignment and Closure (BRAC) process, the plan for rebasing in Europe would aim to take the U.S. force structure from two division headquarters with four brigade combat teams down to no division headquarters and two brigade combat teams. American force structure overseas was still necessary, according to the report, to project military power in crises, ensure U.S. military access to critical regions and lines of communication, “strengthen U.S. diplomacy and foreign policy,” demonstrate U.S. commitment to the security of its friends and allies, and demonstrate to any potential challengers U.S. resolve to deter aggression.<sup>23</sup> In announcing the plan, President Bush noted:

Although we’ll still have a significant presence overseas, under the plan I’m announcing today, over the next 10 years, we will bring home about 60,000 to 70,000 uniformed personnel and about 100,000 family members and civilian employees.<sup>24</sup>

The drawdown initiated in 2004 and later reaffirmed in the 2006 QDR moved forward slowly, largely because of the wartime rotations to Iraq and Afghanistan. Specifically, the operational demands of generating forces for two simultaneous wars preempted the plan to move Soldiers and their families back to the continental United States. Another reason for slow implementation, though, was the fact that both Admiral James Stavridis and General John Craddock—the current NATO commander and his immediate predecessor—as well as the senior Army commander in Europe at the time, General David McKiernan, argued against a quick, dramatic drawdown, in part because they believed it would have a negative effect on U.S. leadership of and influence within NATO.<sup>25</sup>

In response to these concerns—as well as a lack of facilities and quarters in the United States for the returning troops—the Bush administration decided to delay the return of two brigade combat teams in late-2007.<sup>26</sup> Instead of returning in the 2010-11 timeframe, the brigades would return in 2012-13. This delay essentially punted to the next administration a decision on the final disposition of U.S. forces in Europe.

The Barack Obama administration addressed force presence in Europe through the 2010 QDR, declaring initially that it would maintain existing U.S. Army force levels on the continent of Europe. Specifically, the 2010 QDR stated that, “the United States will retain four brigade combat teams and an Army Corps headquarters forward-stationed on the continent” of Europe.<sup>27</sup> The adjustment from the Bush administration’s original plan of returning two brigades appeared to be based on several arguments: deterring political intimidation of U.S. allies and partners in Europe; displaying U.S. commitment to NATO allies; promoting stability in the Balkans, the Baltic region, and the Black Sea region; and training and exercising with key NATO allies.<sup>28</sup> This decision, though, was made pending a review of the new NATO Strategic Concept—slated for release later that year at the Lisbon summit—and an accompanying U.S. review of its forward posture.

Following NATO’s approval of its new *Strategic Concept* in November 2010, and after its own strategic posture review, the Obama administration announced in April 2011 that it would reverse its reversal—that is, it would not follow in the tentative path laid out by the 2010 QDR to leave four brigade combat teams in Europe but would instead leave only three.<sup>29</sup> This decision—based apparently on budgetary considerations but also on the argument that the troops were

no longer needed for Europe's defense—would result in a U.S. Army presence of roughly 37,000 in Europe by 2015, when one of the brigade combat teams would return from Germany.<sup>30</sup>

Not even a year later, in February 2012, the Obama administration again changed course, declaring that it would indeed cut two brigade combat teams from America's forward-based force structure in Europe, as well as the Germany-based U.S. V Corps headquarters and a further 2500 troops from within combat support and combat service support units.<sup>31</sup> Given DoD's intent to reduce the overall size of the U.S. Army over the next several years, current plans call for all of these forces to be eliminated from the force structure as a means of cutting the defense budget, not simply relocated to the United States. In any case, the latest announcement continued the trend of a significantly reduced American military presence in Europe following the end of the Cold War.

### **European Defense Budget Cuts.**

For the last 50 years or more, advocates for cutting the American military presence in Europe, particularly those in the U.S. Congress but also including analysts elsewhere, have consistently based their argument on the notion that such reductions would spur the European allies to spend more on their own defense. Cutting the U.S. presence in Europe was therefore deemed necessary to correct the perceived imbalance in transatlantic burden-sharing. Over the last 20 years, the U.S. presence in Europe—particularly the presence of U.S. Army forces, which have always been the most numerous of the four military services in Europe—has been significantly reduced.

In response, and somewhat paradoxically, if one subscribes to the logic of the aforementioned critics of forward presence, defense spending on the part of the European allies has, for the most part, actually gone down instead of up.

One of the most common measures of comparative burden-sharing among the NATO countries is the level of annual defense expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in constant terms. This measure is very useful, because it keeps prices constant, it is based on data that NATO reports annually, and it permits relative comparison in a way that other measures do not. Figure 2 portrays the available data for select European NATO member states from 1990 until 2011. In all cases, the trend is quite clear since the end of the Cold War – that is, defense expenditures as a percentage of GDP have declined among European NATO member states. In most cases, the percentage has dropped below the politically agreed-upon goal for European member states of 2 percent of GDP.

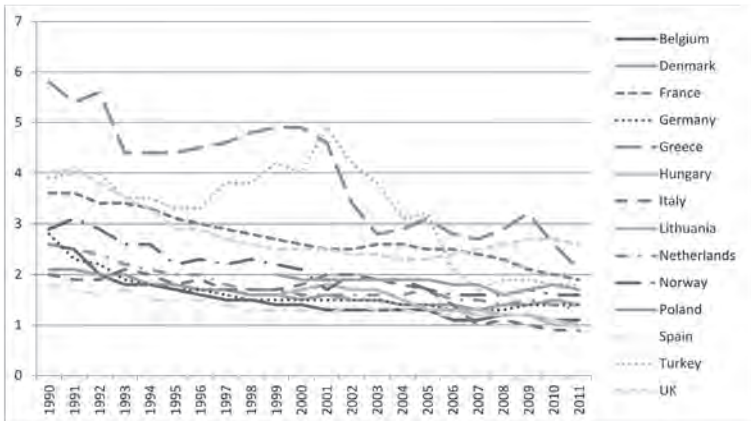


Figure 2. Defense Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP, in Constant Prices.<sup>32</sup>

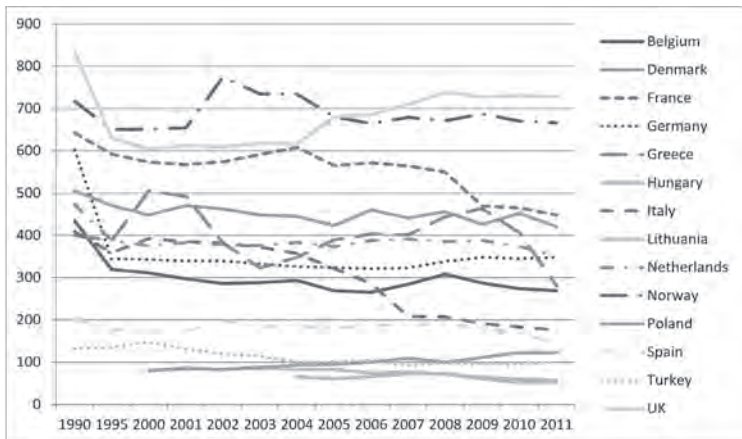
However, using this measure of comparison is not without its shortcomings. For example, if one were to rely solely on defense spending as a percentage of GDP as an indicator of burden-sharing, one might conclude that Denmark was not carrying its fair share of the common defense burden, since it spends only the equivalent of 1.4 percent of its GDP on defense. Such an analysis, though, would overlook the fact that the Danes have been among only a handful of allies to contribute interoperable special forces to combat operations in Afghanistan, that the Danes were one of four European NATO allies to contribute interoperable fighter-bomber aircraft to operations against the Taliban and for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), that the Danish battlegroup in ISAF operates in Helmand in the more dangerous southern part of Afghanistan, and that Denmark has the second highest per capita casualty rate of ISAF contributors.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, the Danes have taken on a greater burden and a greater share of the military and political risks than their 1.4 percent of GDP would indicate.

Conversely, on the other end of the spectrum, one might conclude that Greece made a more than fair contribution to alliance security when it spent the equivalent of 3.1 percent of its GDP on defense in 2009, 2.6 percent in 2010, and 2.1 percent in 2011. Admittedly, this was a downward trend, but still the highest of any European NATO member in 2009 and the second highest—after only the United Kingdom (UK)—in 2010 and 2011. Greece's contribution was well above the European averages for those years of 1.8, 1.7, and 1.6 percent, respectively, and certainly above the politically agreed-upon level of 2 percent for each of the European allies.

However, if one were to examine what Greece actually purchased with its defense funds, one might

conclude quite the opposite, given that 56 percent of Greece’s defense budget in 2009, 65 percent in 2010, and 74 percent in 2011 was used to pay for personnel costs. Additionally, the Greek military has only 245 troops deployed to Kosovo as part of KFOR and only 162 troops deployed to ISAF at the Kabul International Airport – relatively low numbers for a country with a military of 124,000 troops.<sup>34</sup>

To get a more complete picture of burden-sharing, it is helpful to examine defense spending per capita in constant prices. This measure also allows for a comparative examination of defense spending in real terms—in this case, in 2000 prices. Figure 3 shows that over the last 20 years, the trends in European defense spending have been mostly downward. At best, some trend lines appear somewhat flat. It should also be noted that the 2011 data consist of estimates – actual expenditures are likely to be lower. In any case, there is no evidence of a significant *increase* in defense spending over the 2 decades since the end of the Cold War.



**Figure 3. Defense Spending Per Capita, in Constant Prices.<sup>35</sup>**

In sum, as the American military presence in Europe has decreased, European defense spending has fallen—precisely the opposite of what opponents of forward presence had expected. As American politicians and others have long argued, a reduced American presence in Europe should have resulted in an increase in burden-sharing. However, at least as measured by defense spending as a percentage of GDP and by per capita defense spending—two of the most common, most useful measures of burden-sharing—it seems clear that the slow but steady drawdown of U.S. forces on the continent has evidently not persuaded or compelled European governments to increase the amount of money they devote to defense or fix perceived inequities in burden-sharing.

### **Potential Explanations: Institutionalism, Neorealism, and Collective Goods Theory.**

A consistent drawdown in the U.S. forward presence in Europe over the last 2 decades has not resulted in a corresponding increase in European defense expenditures or amelioration of unequal burden-sharing as many in America evidently expected. Political science theory offers some tools for explaining why America's European allies have not increased their defense expenditures, and hence their share of the collective defense burden, as the United States has drawn down its forces in Europe. Three of these are most applicable for explaining this seeming paradox—international institutionalism, or regime theory; neorealism; and, collective goods theory.<sup>36</sup>

First, an international institutionalist, or regime, theory perspective might focus on the role of norms

among the alliance members, and the expression of those norms in the form of varying defense expenditures relative to the number of U.S. combat troops forward-based in Europe. One leading theorist has defined international institutions as a persistent and connected set of rules, both formal and informal, that prescribe roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations for behavior.<sup>37</sup> In one example of how this might apply to NATO, John Duffield relied on international regime theory in arguing that NATO's conventional force levels in Germany and the Benelux countries were remarkably stable over the course of the Cold War, despite changing Soviet threat levels during the same period.<sup>38</sup>

In this way, Duffield used international institutionalism to explain how norms of behavior among the alliance members had a constraining effect, resulting in consistent behavior (in terms of troop levels) in the face of changes in the distribution of power and resources (in terms of the perceived or actual Soviet threat). Placed in the post-Cold War context, perhaps a consensus among Alliance members led to a change in the norms of behavior, resulting in agreement on reduced European defense burden-sharing, while the United States simultaneously drew down its forward-based forces.

Initially, the facts might appear to support this interpretation. In 1990, recognizing the changing security picture in Europe, alliance members agreed to cut the defense spending target from the equivalent of 3 percent of GDP to the equivalent of 2 percent for European members of NATO. However, most members did not conform to this new "regime," and instead went far beyond it in terms of cuts, unilaterally implementing deep defense reductions without re-

gard to Alliance-wide strategy or norms of expected behavior.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, in the immediate post-Cold War period, the Alliance as a whole struggled to remain collectively ahead of dramatic defense cuts then occurring in allied capitals, where the expected norms of behavior—in terms of defense burden-sharing—were seemingly flouted.

Next, structural realism might provide a potential explanation to the apparent paradox outlined above. Structural realists, otherwise known as neorealists, posit that the structure of the international system—one in which anarchy reigns—causes states to pursue power. It is this pursuit of power that best explains the relations between states. One strain of neorealism, known as defensive realism, is best represented by the work of Kenneth Waltz. In his *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz argued that states pursue power as a means to achieve security, placing special emphasis on the role of external balancing behavior.<sup>40</sup> Another major neorealist scholar, Stephen Walt, added significant richness to our understanding of the reason states form alliances by noting that most often states seek to balance against threats, not simply against power.<sup>41</sup>

A second strain of neorealism, known as offensive neorealism and best represented by scholar John Mearsheimer, posits that states are actually quite aggressive in their search for power and hence security, because they can never be certain of a competitor's intentions. Therefore, a state must never end its quest for power and security, including by relying on alliances if and when necessary, lest it lose sovereignty at the hands of another state.<sup>42</sup> Still another strain—labeled neoclassical realism and best represented by Christopher Layne—holds that neorealist theory is actually too parsimonious and that unit-level, or domestic, factors must be taken into consideration.<sup>43</sup>

Applying some of the broad tenets outlined above to the context of the post-Cold War period, one can arrive at a general neorealist interpretation. As the Soviet threat evaporated, neorealists might argue, so too did the salience of NATO—the Alliance was not as important to its member states because they no longer faced an existential threat for which NATO was absolutely vital. More specifically, it has become obvious that absent the Soviet threat, neither the Europeans nor their American allies desired to pay for what they saw as an unnecessary level of defense expenditures (for Europeans) or military deployments overseas (for Americans). Neither side is interested in carrying any more of a defense burden than necessary to address the threats in the international system; hence, the Europeans cut their defense budgets while the Americans *simultaneously* reduced their military presence in Europe. To some degree, the evidence supports such an interpretation. However, as will be shown below, a critical assumption necessary to rely upon neorealism as an explanatory tool in this situation is without basis.

Finally, the sharing of defense burdens in the context of alliances has often been considered by scholars as part of the larger academic field of collective goods theory, which offers a second potential explanatory tool in addition to neorealism. Collective goods theory is actually a subfield of the study of economics and public policy, and examples include early works like “An Economic Review of Alliances,” by Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, as well as more recent studies such as Wallace Thies's *Friendly Rivals*.<sup>44</sup>

These studies rely on economic models of behavior that emphasize the challenges of free riders within an alliance who limit their own contributions to the

provision of the “public good” – in this case, defense against the Soviet Union – and instead rely upon their allies for defense or security. Earlier formulations of this school of thought placed emphasis on achieving an elegant, parsimonious theory at the expense of often necessary actor-specific detail, resulting in theoretical tools that often were not of great use beyond the very generic. To provide a more useful set of tools, theorists of alliance burden-sharing have sought to incorporate more refinements from real-world cases. The result is that there exists a rich array of literature on burden-sharing, which goes beyond the parsimonious free-rider construct originally developed by Mancur Olson nearly 5 decades ago.<sup>45</sup>

One of the most important developments in the literature was the recognition that some of the goods provided by states for alliance use are not entirely pure public goods and that instead they may be private goods, or they may be so-called impure, or mixed, public goods. Theoretical refinements such as this helped to explain and describe what is commonly seen in the empirical world – that the factors motivating states to contribute (or not) to collective defense are often far more complicated than relatively simple calculations of threat, as neorealists would have us believe, and instead consist of sometimes complex political, bureaucratic, and/or organizational factors.

Applied to the context of the post-Cold War period, a collective goods theorist might point out that European governments have simply continued to free-ride on Washington’s provision of security, particularly during a period in which European publics expected and demanded a so-called “peace dividend” after the end of the Cold War, and as many members of NATO turned their attention – and their treasuries – toward

broadening and deepening the European Union (EU). Meanwhile, the United States took the first steps toward a gradual rebalancing of its strategic orientation toward Asia, as the American public demanded its own peace dividend and homeland security took on greater importance. In short, for an array of potential reasons, including but certainly not limited to the demise of the Soviet threat, both the United States and its European allies have been in a race to the bottom when it comes to the common defense in Europe, each hoping to shift the burden of common defense to the other.

Even with the refinements offered by the most recent incarnations of collective goods theory, utilizing it—or, for that matter, the less nuanced neorealism—in a post-September 11, 2001 (9/11), environment to explain why European defense spending has not risen in the face of the reduced U.S. military presence in Europe assumes that the *purpose* of American forward presence is for collective defense. In part, this is true—America’s Baltic and Polish allies view a U.S. military presence in Europe as vital to deterrence vis-à-vis Russia.<sup>46</sup> Twenty years of post-Cold War peace in Europe cannot so easily lighten the weight of their historical experience at the hands of Moscow. To such allies, the American military presence in Europe represents a tripwire, one that would compel deeper U.S. involvement if Russia engaged in hostilities. Doubtlessly other allies—perhaps Norway and Turkey, for instance—subscribe to a somewhat similar view, but such perceptions are generally concentrated among a small handful of allies in Eastern Europe.

However, the American military presence in Europe today is about far more than deterrence. Indeed, the primary purpose of the American military presence

in Europe today is to maintain interoperability with existing capable allies, build partner capacity among newer, less capable allies and partners, and ensure operational access for operations beyond Europe. This shift in purpose means that the U.S. force presence in Europe is no longer—if indeed it ever was—a useful tool in extracting greater commitment to increased defense spending on the part of the European allies. Nonetheless, through security cooperation, America’s forward-based military forces in Europe play a critical role today in shaping the capabilities of allied military forces.

### **The Purpose of U.S. Presence in Europe.**

Many of those described earlier as critics of forward presence assume, if only implicitly, that the primary purpose of U.S. forces in Europe is to keep the Russians out of Berlin, Paris, and Warsaw. Even some political science scholars and analysts have continued, in the post-Cold War world, to subscribe to the notion that the U.S. presence is focused *almost entirely* on mitigating security threats *in* Europe. Professor Andrew Bacevich of Boston University clearly implied that U.S. forces had no further reason to stay in Europe after the Soviet Union’s demise, when he criticized what he perceived as a policy of “permanent presence” and wrote that, “A decade after the end of the Cold War rendered Europe whole, the United States maintained a garrison of 100,000 troops there.”<sup>47</sup> Robert J. Art of Brandeis University sees the purpose of the U.S. presence in Europe as directed not against any threat from the east but rather from the center: “In Western Europe, that [U.S. military] presence assures Germany’s neighbors that it will not return to its ugly past.”<sup>48</sup>

Kenneth Waltz of the University of California, Berkeley, argued that the purpose of the continued U.S. military presence in Europe, “where no military threat is in sight,” was not directed at any single adversary but rather to keep a new balance of power inimical to American interests from rising.<sup>49</sup>

Elsewhere, John Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a former official in the administrations of George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, has written, “If the EU were really capable of a united security policy . . . it would undermine the sole remaining argument for an American military presence in Europe, which is that the Europeans cannot handle these critical [security] questions themselves.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Klaus Naumann, former Chairman of NATO’s Military Committee and a leading advocate in Germany for close transatlantic ties, has argued that, “without the United States in Europe, there is neither security nor stability in Europe itself. For quite a time to come, Europe cannot do without the American presence.”<sup>51</sup>

Others have also tied the American military presence overseas with threats to Europe, suggesting that withdrawing half of all U.S. troops on the continent would be a good first step toward a necessary reassessment of the American commitment to Europe’s defense, or that the EU would need to fill the gap created by an American withdrawal in order to keep Russia from filling the security void on the continent.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, some have argued that the recently released DoD defense strategic guidance appears to rest on the logic that since there are no major threats to European security—beyond Iranian missiles, which the new NATO missile defense system will guard against—the United States can further draw down its Army forces in Europe.<sup>53</sup>

In fact, over the last 20 years, the U.S. military presence in Europe has gradually but decisively become de-linked from its Cold War-based foundations. Correspondingly, the logic of neorealism and the imperative to share more equitably the burdens associated with the provision of a collective good (specifically, the defense of Europe) no longer apply in the same way that they did 2 decades ago. Today, defending alliance territory and deterring potential aggression toward the same are two of *several* purposes of the U.S. presence in Europe—and they are arguably not even the most important, given the lack of serious threats to allied territory in Europe.

Explicit expressions of the changing purpose of U.S. forces in Europe have appeared in an array of official policy pronouncements and publications. For example, the 2006 QDR identified four purposes for forward presence, regardless of the geographic region those forward-based forces are located in: (1) to interact with allies; (2) to build partner capability; (3) to conduct long-duration counterinsurgency operations; and, (4) to deter aggressors.<sup>54</sup>

The 2010 QDR took a slightly more detailed view in addressing five specific reasons for maintaining U.S. military forces in Europe:

1. To deter the political intimidation of allies and partners;
2. To promote stability in the Aegean, Balkans, Caucasus, and Black Sea regions;
3. To demonstrate U.S. commitment to NATO allies;
4. To facilitate multilateral operations in support of mutual security interests both inside and outside the continent; and,
5. To build trust and goodwill among host nations.<sup>55</sup>

Shortly after the 2010 QDR was published, the commander of the U.S. European Command, Admiral James Stavridis, appeared before the House Armed Services Committee and explained that there were five reasons to maintain a robust U.S. forward military presence in Europe. In addition to reassuring allies and deterring potential aggressors, Stavridis cited logistics—the “capability to move rapidly globally,” training—a tool for building partner capacity and maintaining interoperability, and leadership—for maintaining a role as first among equals in NATO.<sup>56</sup>

Even to the armchair strategist, it would seem obvious that Russia, despite massive oil revenues at its disposal and a growing tendency toward authoritarianism, has failed to materialize into the kind of threat—in terms of either intentions or capabilities—that many had thought possible or even likely. The August 2008 Georgia-Russia Crisis notwithstanding, and with the previously noted exceptions of policymakers in Warsaw or the Baltic states, few in the West really see Russia as a security threat in a classic state-on-state context. American policymakers have long recognized that threats to U.S. security in the decades to come are more likely to emanate from state weakness than from state strength. For example, the 2002 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) noted that, “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, with regard to Russia, the 2001 QDR explicitly noted that it, “does not pose a large-scale conventional military threat to NATO.”<sup>58</sup> The 2006 QDR made almost the exact same point: “Russia . . . is unlikely to pose a military threat to the United States or its allies on the same scale or intensity as the Soviet Union during the Cold War.”<sup>59</sup> More recently, the January 2012 defense strategic guidance

emphasized violent extremism as well as instability and inaccessibility of the global commons brought about by weak governments as primary threats to U.S. security in the coming years, noting that the United States would continue to build a closer relationship with Russia.<sup>60</sup>

Today, America's European military presence has as its most important function the maintenance of interoperability with Washington's most capable allies and the development of basic military capabilities within the newest U.S. allies and partners. The reason for this is relatively straightforward – Washington believes it will need highly capable allies to address the expected future security challenges, characterized by hybrid warfare, protection of access to the global commons, and mitigating the threats posed by failed or failing states.<sup>61</sup>

According to the Obama administration's 2010 NSS, the United States relies upon its European allies as its most likely, most capable coalition warfare partners for future military operations:

Our relationship with our European allies remains the cornerstone for U.S. engagement with the world, and a catalyst for international action. . . . We are *committed to ensuring that NATO is able to address the full range of 21st century challenges*, while serving as a foundation of European security.<sup>62</sup>

The 2010 QDR further clarifies the importance of interoperable allies when it comes to the ways America would prefer to wield force in the future: "Whenever possible, the United States will use force in an internationally sanctioned coalition *with allies*, international and regional organizations, and like-minded nations. . . . *We have an enduring need to build future coalitions.*"<sup>63</sup>

If we extrapolate from the expected threat environment, the implications for force structure are fairly clear and provide a basic description of the kinds of allies and partners America wants to cultivate for the future. The military forces of Washington's coalition partners must be capable of rapid adaptation and innovative thinking so as to handle the complexity of the hybrid threat environment; of power projection in order to secure the commons; and of full spectrum operations so as to operate effectively and often simultaneously across high-intensity combat, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian relief missions.

America's most innovative and adaptive allies, those at least somewhat capable of sustaining forces across time and distance and those that are full spectrum or nearly so, are primarily found in Europe. However, capable allies are not of much use unless they are also interoperable. The DoD employs a variety of efforts, including exercises, training, and common acquisition programs as the primary means of building and maintaining interoperability. Although the entire U.S. Armed Forces have responsibility for conducting these kinds of activities in coordination with or occasionally under the direction of the Department of State, those forces based overseas bear most, if not all, of the burden for implementing this element of U.S. national security strategy. Multi- or bilateral acquisition efforts lead to commonality in equipment, while combined training and combined exercises provide military forces with the opportunity to learn common tactics, techniques, and procedures and to practice how they would fight and operate together in actual combat.

To practitioners familiar with the composition of the U.S. force structure in Europe, the shift in purpose

for American forces based in Europe has been obvious.<sup>64</sup> The numbers alone tell the story of a dramatically less powerful—and hence, at least *somewhat* less capable, and even less full-spectrum—U.S. military force in Europe, designed not to take on Russia’s land forces, but rather to support American national security in other ways. During much of the Cold War, the United States maintained two entire *divisions* of armored forces, each comprised of roughly 300 tanks, which were deemed essential to help defend the Allies against the vastly superior number of Soviet tanks arrayed on the other side of the Iron Curtain.<sup>65</sup> However, since the early-1990s, the United States has gradually removed all but two of its armored brigades from Europe, each of which currently consists of less than 100 tanks, but both of which are slated to be inactivated by the end of 2013. Similarly, forward-based U.S. fixed- and rotary-wing anti-armor assets have been or are slated to be dramatically downsized across the American footprint in Europe. The U.S. Air Force has announced plans to remove the last of the A-10 *Warthog* aircraft from Germany over the next couple of years, after similar units based in England were eliminated in the 1990s.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, the number of tank-killing AH-64 *Apache* attack helicopters has been cut significantly from over 200 in the 1980s to less than 50 today.<sup>67</sup>

To be fair, U.S. forces in Europe during the Cold War were never equal to those of the Soviet Union. Indeed, forward-based American military forces in Europe functioned not only to defend U.S. Allies but also to act as a tripwire of sorts, should Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies initiate an attack against Western Europe. In such a scenario, while American forces based in Europe may not have halted completely a

Soviet thrust into West Germany, their engagement in combat by Pact forces would have compelled greater American involvement in Europe's defense, aimed ultimately at ejecting the invading forces.

While it is certainly true that European-based U.S. forces were never quantitatively equivalent to their Soviet counterparts during the Cold War, it is equally clear that, as U.S. force levels and force structure have changed over the last 2 decades, so too has the combat focus of American forces in Europe. During the 1990s, American Army forces in Europe had primary responsibility for peace-support operations in the Balkans, while U.S. Air Forces in Europe enforced the no-fly zones over Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq. As part of the global American force pool, from which combat rotations to Iraq and Afghanistan were resourced, U.S. forces in Europe focused during the 2000s on Operation ENDURING FREEDOM; Operation IRAQI FREEDOM; its successor, Operation NEW DAWN; and, ISAF. As a result, at least one-third of all U.S. forces based in Europe were deployed annually to conduct counterinsurgency and peace-support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> This reflected the reality that the U.S. Army in Europe had, over the 2 decades since the end of the Cold War, evolved from a large, conventional force with a defensive mission focused on Article 5, to a smaller, more expeditionary force designed and trained to deploy from Europe to crisis locations elsewhere.<sup>69</sup>

The noncombat activities conducted by U.S. forces in Europe also reflected the change in purpose. As a result of current operations in the 2000s, U.S. forces in Europe focused much of their training and exercise efforts during that decade on peace-support missions, necessarily devoting less funding and fewer man-

hours to training and exercising Article 5 full-spectrum operations. The U.S. development of so-called forward-operating bases in Romania and Bulgaria during the 2000s was emblematic of this shift in mission focus from conventional defense against Moscow to security cooperation with allies and partners.<sup>70</sup> To be sure, U.S. forces continued to support NATO exercises, including Article 5 exercises, but the majority of U.S.-led exercises and training events over the last decade have been aimed at preparing American and allied forces for stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan – so-called Mission Rehearsal Exercises and related events.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly, America's forward-based forces in Europe have several functions, such as those cited by Admiral Stavridis above – assuring allies of the American commitment to European security, deterring potential aggression, providing logistical support for U.S. and allied military operations on three continents, embodying American leadership of NATO, building partner capacity for regional security and internal stability, and maintaining interoperability with key allies and partners. Nevertheless, it is the last of these that is most vital today from Washington's perspective when it comes to the reasons forward-based U.S. forces are worth the expense and effort, since the other missions could conceivably be accomplished almost as well, and perhaps more cheaply, by forces based in the United States that are then rotated to Europe periodically or on a contingency basis, as crises manifest themselves.

However, the sort of interoperability necessary to operate side-by-side in combat does not simply happen when coalition soldiers land on a beach or seize an airfield, or as the result of episodic engagement – it is the result of significant and consistent effort and resources. In Europe, still home to Washington's most

capable, most likely future coalition partners despite recent defense restructuring across the continent, America's forward-based military forces provide the bulk of the manpower necessary to achieve the interoperability required in operations such as ISAF, where 90 percent of the non-U.S. forces come from Europe. Today, the most important mission for U.S. military forces based in Europe – aside from maintaining trained and ready forces prepared for deployment anywhere – is the implementation of security cooperation activities to maintain interoperability, as well as to build coalition partner capability and secure lines of communication and logistical support throughout Europe to regions and theaters beyond.

Nonetheless, many continue to call for even deeper cuts to the U.S. presence in Europe than those planned by the Obama administration. For instance, during floor debate on the House's version of the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO) offered an amendment authorizing and requesting that the President remove all U.S. Army brigade combat teams from Europe, arguing that this was justified because of decreased defense spending among European NATO allies.<sup>72</sup> Another member of the House, Representative Jared Polis (D-CO), claimed that continued forward-basing amounted to "subsidizing" the defense of America's European allies.<sup>73</sup> Such efforts to cut further what is already a very limited forward presence are particularly risky, because they threaten to undermine America's ability to develop and maintain capable, interoperable coalition partners across the range of military operations. If the United States desires that its future leaders, when faced with a security challenge, have a full range of military options to consider – including the option of engaging in a multinational, coalition

military operation—then the investments necessary to achieve that objective must be made and preserved today, in the form of the forward U.S. military presence in Europe.

### **Conclusion.**

The American military presence in Europe today plays a vital role in U.S. and allied national security. Certainly, the Baltic states and Poland view that presence, regardless of its size, as critical to their defense—after all, there is no prescribed minimum force structure for the “tripwire” they seek in the form of an American presence on the continent. Nonetheless, the focus of the American military role is *not* deterrence of Russia or other traditional conventional military threats. Instead, the most important mission of forward-based forces in Europe is that of maintaining interoperability with America’s most capable allies and building up capacity within America’s newest allies and partners. This is driven by the requirement to prepare for future security threats by building and maintaining capable, interoperable coalition partners. This goal is accomplished through security cooperation activities such as exercises and training events in which U.S. forces work side-by-side with foreign counterparts who may someday be called to fight next to American forces. The purpose of security cooperation is to provide U.S. and allied forces with the opportunity to “train as they would fight,” as the military say.

This relatively new mission for U.S. forces in Europe has developed in an evolutionary way, as Washington has come to see the growing importance of interoperable allies at the brigade, battalion, and company level over the last 20 years. Many U.S. politicians, analysts,

and observers had long expected the Europeans to increase their share of the defense burden, at least as measured by defense expenditures, if and when the United States began withdrawing troops from Europe. However, as U.S. troop strength in Europe has fallen steadily since the end of the Cold War, European defense spending has also fallen. This seemingly paradoxical development cannot be explained by using the most obvious theoretical tools – institutionalism, neorealism, and collective goods theory – since it is clear that alliance members flouted the post-Cold War norms that the “institution” (NATO) put in place to guide defense spending, and since both neorealism and collective goods theory assume that *the* purpose of the U.S. presence is collective defense of allied territory.

In fact, there has been an evolutionary change in the purpose of the U.S. military presence in Europe, dramatically reducing the utility of that forward-based force as a means of extracting greater defense spending from the European allies. Instead of countering a conventional military attack on NATO territory – particularly from Russia – American military forces have come to focus on security cooperation as their primary reason for remaining forward-based in Europe. Given the necessity of capable, interoperable coalition partners for the future security threats Washington most expects to encounter – and the downsizing of military force structure occurring across the Alliance – the role of America’s forward military presence in Europe remains as vital as it was at the dawn of the Cold War, but for very different reasons. Unfortunately though, threatening to reduce or actually reducing that presence further is no longer useful – if indeed it ever was – as a means of extracting greater defense commitments or expenditures from European allies.

## ENDNOTES

1. "Tester urges Defense Secretary to consider closing Cold War-era bases overseas," press release from the Office of Senator Jon Tester, May 19, 2011, available from [tester.senate.gov/Newsroom/pr\\_051911\\_overseasbases.cfm](http://tester.senate.gov/Newsroom/pr_051911_overseasbases.cfm). See also Raymond DuBois and David Vine, "Bipartisan Strategy Takes Shape To Close Overseas U.S. Bases," *Defense News*, January 29, 2012. "And we could achieve these savings at a time when technological advances and prepositioned equipment allow us to deploy troops almost anywhere nearly as quickly and more reliably from Fort Bragg as from Ramstein Air Base in Germany, as a Bush administration study found."

2. Chris Roberts, "Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison Wants Brigade Relocated to Fort Bliss," *El Paso Times*, July 11, 2011.

3. For the most recent incarnations, see for example, Chris Preble, "Why Does U.S. Pay to Protect Prosperous Allies?" *CNN Opinion*, February 3, 2012, available from [www.cnn.com/2012/02/03/opinion/preble-military-budget/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/03/opinion/preble-military-budget/index.html); and "Letter to Joint Committee on Overseas Bases," signed by Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Jon Tester (D-MT), Tom Coburn (R-OK), Mark Begich (D-AK), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), and Ron Wyden (D-OR), October 18, 2011, available from [tester.senate.gov/Legislation/upload/Letter-to-joint-committee-on-overseas-bases.pdf](http://tester.senate.gov/Legislation/upload/Letter-to-joint-committee-on-overseas-bases.pdf). Preble argues, "As many as 70,000 [U.S. troops] are likely to remain [in Europe]. . . . These troops serve to reassure our allies of our commitment to defend them. It is working as designed: Other countries do not spend enough to satisfy their defense needs," while the authors of the letter write, "We support our NATO allies but believe the . . . strategy will continue to promote an over reliance by our NATO partners on the U.S. taxpayers who disproportionately foot the bill for defense spending."

4. John Vandiver, "Pentagon Lays Out Significant Cuts to U.S. Forces in Europe," *Stars and Stripes*, February 16, 2012.

5. Other key reasons many in the U.S. Senate agreed with Mansfield included a general displeasure with the lack of Euro-

pean support for U.S. efforts in Vietnam and the general drain on the U.S. treasury of maintaining forces in Europe during peacetime. Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004, p. 53.

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peditionary and ready for “global deployment,” while the second objective was to promote NATO’s ability to conduct out-of-area operations. Statement of General Bantz Craddock Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 24, 2009, available from [armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2009/March/Craddock%03-24-09.pdf](http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2009/March/Craddock%03-24-09.pdf).

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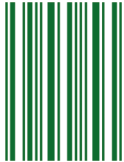
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