



NEWPORT PAPERS

A Series of Point Papers
from the Naval War College and the
Navy Warfare Development Command
For Senior Leadership
In Response to Critical Issues

Strategy / CONOPS / Doctrine / Decision

United States Naval War College
Navy Warfare Development Command
Newport, Rhode Island

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Newport Paper: 19**NATO AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR**

Purpose: To assess the role of NATO in the global war on terror and the impact of the war on the alliance and the evolving transatlantic strategic community.

Background: America's European allies provided critical support at the onset of the global war on terror. British diplomacy contributed to the swift invocation of Article V of the NATO Charter and the immediate passage of condemning resolutions in the UN Security Council. Individual allies and the European Union (EU) collectively extended unprecedented legal and financial cooperation in the war effort, with particularly extensive exchanges among police and immigration authorities. Perhaps most significant was the intensification of intelligence-sharing, as demonstrated by the string of Al Qaeda arrests and adoption of unprecedented financial controls.

The involvement of European forces in anti-terror operations has been slower to take shape. At the behest of the United States, European participation was kept to relatively low levels in the Afghanistan campaigns. NATO as an organization has not played a central role. The most important discussions and decisions have been confined to bilateral channels with Britain, Germany, France, and Italy. Britain has been the most active and visible partner, with roles both in offensive and reconnaissance operations. Until the beginning of the peacekeeping phase in Afghanistan, most other allied cooperation has been relatively low profile. European countries and others focused largely on backfilling missions that might otherwise be undertaken by U.S. forces (in Kosovo and providing AWACs coverage over the east coast of the United States), establishing symbolic presence (Gulf deployments and watch operations off the Somali coast), or coordinating special forces/intelligence activities. The EU is now committed to organizing and funding the Afghan reconstruction effort.

Discussion. The political impact of the war on the transatlantic alliance has become a matter of controversy. A growing number of European critics argue that European support was taken for granted by Washington and that a unilateralist United States has sought little more than multilateral diplomatic cover from Europe. In their view, European contributions to the war were relegated to sideline operations. Some now question how long the terror war will continue. Opposition to extending the war to include campaigns against Iraq and other state sponsors of terrorism has grown. Official sentiment is divided even in Britain about future cooperation with American-led campaigns. European political elites on the whole do not see the intersection of the terror threat with that of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) with the same degree of clarity or inevitability as their Washington counterparts. Finally, as in past decades, there are sharply differing European perspectives on who is responsible for the

terror and turbulence in the Middle East. More broadly, there is a growing demand for American leadership, but only with appropriate, effective, and extensive consultation.

For their part, some American observers view European reactions as evidence of a basic lack of political will and an unwillingness to meet responsible military goals. Europeans are seen as using the absence of a regional threat to Europe as an excuse to avoid global military engagement. The United States, consequently, must bear both the responsibility for and the costs of maintaining international order. Others see this period as just one more step in NATO's demise. Most stress the growing capabilities gap between American and allied forces—particularly in airlift, global reach, speed of action and even basic communications capabilities—which further complicates operational cooperation.

The onset of the global war on terror may well have prevented the United States and its European allies from drifting further apart. The Bush administration has used the war on terror to push for a broad new policy agenda and to stress more mature relations with both traditional allies and a newly assertive European Union. How Europe responds to these initiatives will, in the long run, determine whether alliance drift is inevitable or can be averted.

This is clearly a critical transition period for an Atlantic Alliance poised on the edge of a second round of expansion. Structurally and politically, NATO is not yet finished with a decade of change sparked by the campaigns in Bosnia and Kosovo and the Partnership for Peace (PFP) outreach to Central Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet republics. Under American leadership, NATO is clearly attempting to transform itself from a defensive alliance concerned primarily with territorial defense to a political security community that has acknowledged a wide range of shared interests beyond its geographic area and that faces a broad spectrum of threats.

The United States has much to gain from maintaining Allied interest, cooperation, and involvement in the global war on terror. If the United States devalues, directly or indirectly, the most effective international cooperative framework that it has been able to create in the last five decades, it may weaken a key pillar of its own national security. The Western nations remain the most formidable powers in the international community. Moreover, Western cooperation and solidarity are seen as significant assets by the American people. Although American popular enthusiasm for the war on terror since 11 September has been remarkable, the level of domestic support for subsequent phases of the terror war may fall if the United States is viewed as acting alone, without the material and moral support of our long-time European allies.

The potential benefits and risks of Allied involvement in the global war on terror are best explored in the context of the principal U.S. goals for transatlantic relations.

1. Retain and strengthen American leadership in the Euro-Atlantic space. The United States has effectively reasserted political leadership and increased the incentives for key states to give first priority to bilateral relationships. Prime Minister Blair's initial stance as "first friend" was quickly imitated by Germany's Schroeder and France's Chirac. Little

has been said since 11 September about further steps towards a common European foreign and security policy (CSFP) or about a new division of labor between NATO and the EU in the military arena. Work continues but at a far slower pace and with little of the grandiose rhetoric heard before the war. The potential threat to American leadership posed by European initiatives has receded.

The next phase in the war, especially if it involves action against Iraq, will pose a greater leadership challenge. At present, few allies would support even unilateral American action without intense consultation and direct new evidence of links between Sadaam Hussein and Al Qaeda.

2. Mobilize a broad European consensus within a reinvigorated NATO to expand the European zone of stability. The United States seeks major changes in NATO over the next five years. Most significantly, it advocates maximal eastward expansion of the alliance and a major reinvigoration of Partnership for Peace arrangements. These changes will require a major reform of most NATO political structures and the negotiation of a new, broadened political consensus. Before 11 September, the United States faced allied indifference, if not opposition, to both types of change. Most allies were turning inward, especially Germany and France. Under the present circumstances, the United States may have an opportunity to set new parameters for the transatlantic relationship, ones flexible enough to allow for later adjustment.

Since the start of the war there has been progress in some areas (e.g., intelligence cooperation, integration of Russia) but little significant movement on broader political goals. In the coming season of summits, the United States could (1) link NATO's eastward expansion agenda to broader anti-terror goals and the heightened needs for transparency and cross-border cooperation; (2) seek a common commitment to essential WMD counter-proliferation measures, both direct and preventative; and (3) foster a PFP that mobilizes allies and partners against potential sources of terror in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The risk is that Europe will respond with rhetorical support but little action, much less a meaningful division of labor. Neither European reluctance to embrace change nor the American inclination to propose commitments that cannot be implemented can be allowed to prevent necessary reforms. Cooperation is especially critical for (1) developing a strengthened counterproliferation regime that denies technology, components, and intellectual property to WMD proliferators and (2) including European partners in both theater and national missile defense programs .

3. Foster enhanced Allied military capabilities. The gap between American and Allied capabilities in both readiness and technology now equals that evident during NATO's first years. Few states have kept pace in modernization; all have reduced manpower and technological investment since 1989. Europe can barely support the present level of effort in Bosnia and Kosovo. Domestic considerations will prevent European governments from seeking significant new resources for defense in the foreseeable future.

The United States faces a choice: on the one hand, it could press for purpose-built European forces for the war against terror; on the other hand, it could ask Europe primarily to provide logistics and/or backfill forces, thereby relegating Europe to a secondary military role. There is little domestic political support within Europe to buy forces, invest in catch-up technologies to match American capabilities, or provide the logistical capabilities necessary to support America's global role. In the long run European publics and emerging political elites concerned primarily with domestic prosperity may not support campaigns in which Europe shoulders the burden of peacekeeping, financial reconstruction, and nation building while the United States decides when and how to fight wars.

4. Solidify a new European role for Russia. For a decade, the United States, and the West generally, have searched for the appropriate approach for dealing with Russia. Should Russia be regarded as a now vanquished superpower, as "Upper Volta with missiles," as a global strategic partner, or as a potentially resurgent adversary? The Bush approach prior to 11 September was to treat Russia as a "normal" country. Neither special support nor special treatment was to be expected. There was a "business plan" vis-à-vis Russia, but one to be unrolled at times and places of Washington's choosing.

11 September elevated Russia's status to a global ally with special responsibilities and thus raised again the question of Russia's role in Europe. At times the level of cooperation and openness between Moscow and Washington has been reminiscent of wartime cooperation—the intelligence sharing that has taken place, for example, and President Putin's *de facto* support for the establishment of American bases in Central Asia. The level of cooperation in WMD counterproliferation also continues to intensify. Meaningful arms reduction steps may emerge from negotiations in the near future.

But there is not yet evidence of a complete Russian reorientation. The Putin government has continued its charm offensive vis-à-vis Western Europe, especially Germany. It has both promised special partnerships and suggested that Russia join NATO and the EU in the not-too-far-off future. Since the beginning of 2002, despite his political ascendancy, Putin has also faced growing domestic criticism for having "given too much" to the West with little in return.

The improvement of Russian-NATO relationships and the Europeanization of Russia may well serve U.S. interests. But the United States should ensure that Russian engagement with NATO is gradual and measured. It must also be wary of Russian tactics that reflect traditional "divide and conquer" ambitions (e.g., a special Berlin-Moscow tie outside the general Western engagement). The "NATO at 20" initiative is an appropriate first step. But the United States should seek to more clearly define Russian involvement in areas in which Russia has both responsibility and accountability for crisis decisions and the global counter-terrorism efforts.

Recommendations/Actions: The U.S. conduct of the global war on terror can benefit from a high level of transatlantic coordination and solidarity, particularly from intensive interactions in intelligence, political consultation, and military preparations.

Policymakers, however, should not take the support of the European members of NATO for granted. By advancing a compelling case founded on mutual interests, the United States can secure both the European commitments and assets necessary to ensure continuing success against all facets of the terror threat, including the WMD dimension.