



Alliances – What are they for and how do they end?

An historical overview, including some thoughts on NATO

Ben Lombardi
DRDC CORA

DRDC CORA TM 2009–018
May 2009

Defence R&D Canada
Centre for Operational Research and Analysis

Strategic Joint Staff (SJS)

Alliances - What are they for and how do they end?

An historical overview, including some thoughts on NATO

Ben Lombardi
DRDC CORA

Information cut-off date: 1 March 2009

The reported results, their interpretation, and opinions expressed herein, remain those of the author and do not represent, or otherwise reflect, any official position of DND or the Government of Canada.

Defence R&D Canada – CORA

Technical Memorandum
DRDC CORA TM 2009-018
May 2009

Principal Author

Original signed by Ben Lombardi, PhD

Ben Lombardi, PhD

DRDC CORA Defence Scientist

Approved by

Original signed by Stephane Lefebvre

Stephane Lefebvre

DRDC CORA Section Head Strategic Analysis

Approved for release by

Original signed by Dale Reding

Dale Reding

DRDC CORA Chief Scientist

Sponsors: Strategic Joint Staff (SJS); ADM(S&T)

Defence R&D Canada – Centre for Operational Research and Analysis (CORA)

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2009

© Sa Majesté la Reine (en droit du Canada), telle que représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2009

Abstract

This Technical Memorandum examines alliances as historical and political phenomena. In doing so, it provides an explanation for their creation and demise, and nine “rules of thumb” that provide some insight into alliance dynamics. The latter half of the Memorandum examines some aspects of the political dynamic in NATO since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in an effort to address questions concerning relevance. It argues that the absence of a consensus on the purpose of the alliance and discord concerning the nature of the terrorist threat continue to be serious challenges to NATO’s viability.

Résumé

Le présent document technique offre une analyse des alliances en tant que phénomènes historiques et politiques. Dans cette optique, il propose des explications sur la création et la dissolution des alliances ainsi que neuf principes généraux mettant à jour leurs dynamiques. Dans la seconde partie du document, nous nous pencherons sur certains aspects de la dynamique politique de l’OTAN depuis les attentats terroristes du 11 septembre afin d’éclairer la question de la pertinence du Traité aujourd’hui. On y avance l’idée que l’absence de consensus quant à l’objectif de l’Organisation et que les désaccords sur la nature de la menace terroriste continuent de mettre en péril la viabilité de l’OTAN.

This page intentionally left blank.

Executive summary

Alliances - What are they for and how do they end?: An historical overview, including some thoughts on NATO

Ben Lombardi; DRDC CORA TM 2009-018; Defence R&D Canada – CORA; May 2009.

As Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) noted more than three centuries ago, alliances are an essential component of statecraft. They will almost certainly continue to exist, in one form or another, as long as the state-system. That said, no specific alliance was ever concluded with the assumption that it would be everlasting or that it could outlive the positive assessment of national interests that had given rise to the contemplation and conclusion of such pacts. No alliance is, therefore, sacrosanct for they are laden with the assumptions, beliefs, and assessments of the diplomats and statesmen who craft them. Examining the continuing relevance of such pacts is an ongoing task for statesmen and strategists.

Alliances, their creation and demise

The term “alliance” refers to a formal agreement between two or more political entities that involves a commitment to use armed force in specified circumstances (i.e., *casus foederis*) against a putative adversary, to achieve an agreed objective. But beyond that very basic understanding, a more precise definition is rather difficult. Alliances have existed from the dawn of history and, as a consequence, have responded to myriad political needs. In general, a policy of entering or maintaining an alliance is the expression of “grand strategy,” that is the integration by a state of its political, economic and military aims to advance long-term national interests. Alliances have, therefore, a natural lifespan, and are created and terminated as those interests dictate and for as long as a grand strategy defines those interests. An alliance is, therefore, little more than a marriage of convenience where each partner is allowed to continue to define what it finds most valuable. And, in so far as the other members of the pact can tolerate the actions of their partners, the alliance persists.

Emphasizing collective defence, the alliance agreement identifies an adversary—either explicitly or by implication—and establishes the level of contribution expected from each ally. During much of the Cold War, NATO and the Warsaw Pact were examples of such alliances, although neither identified the other explicitly as an enemy. Alliances do not, however, always encompass all of the interests identified by a grand strategy; and, indeed, there is no expectation that any one strategy will do so. This is particularly evident in wartime, and it has happened that the generally agreed objective of a collective defence pact—most obviously, the defeat of a common enemy—is not coincidental with the entire range of interests of key allies that are engaged in the conflict. Regardless of such inevitable differences, however, the most obvious objective of an alliance is to permit the aggregation of capabilities or resources among two or more states. A second motivation behind the formation and/or maintenance of an alliance is to constrain the actions and policies of one’s own allies. Referred to as a *pacta de contrahendo*, it is an insurance policy against partners in addition to providing security from adversaries.

Just as alliances serve a purpose, they also have a shelf-life. This report offers four general explanations for the demise of such pacts: the agreed life-span of an alliance being reached; formal withdrawal; abrogation; and the passage of time rendering the original alliance no longer strategically relevant. But in all cases it can be assumed that when the pact is no longer consonant with the interests of the state, as its leaders perceive those interests, the alliance generally comes to an end. That decision might take some time to make and might be a very complicated process. When it is completed, however, the decision might take the form of a formal announcement, but it need not do so. As many examples from history demonstrate, an alliance can linger for years, even decades, before circumstances force the parties to reveal that they no longer feel bound by its terms.

Lastly, it should be noted that the political dynamic within alliances is very different from that found within other types of agreements that states conclude. That dynamic is also quite specific to the time and circumstances surrounding the pact itself. The factors that influence relationships between allies include: the nature of the military commitment; the relative capabilities of allies; the role of ideology and values in the formation of such pacts; the offensive or defensive nature of an alliance; as well as the ongoing reassessment of interest by allies, leading to confrontations with existing allies and intrigues with others. While such a listing cannot be comprehensive, an overview of such considerations in the history of alliances provides some insight into how such pacts have operated generally.

NATO

NATO has been around for 60 years, and three generations of political leaders and students of international politics have viewed it as a centrepiece for security in the Euro-Atlantic region. As the Cold War recedes into history, the Atlanticist perspective is, however, no longer unchallenged. Some students of international politics expected that NATO's demise would have followed the collapse of Moscow's empire. In large measure, the threat to the NATO security paradigm is the international environment since the end of the Cold War and the challenges NATO has faced in reorienting itself. In the first few years, it became increasingly obvious that the traditional understanding of the alliance—collective defence—could not be sustained in the absence of a clearly identified adversary and the wholesale reduction of military spending. The movement toward NATO's reconfiguration as a collective security organization for Europe gained impetus, despite US reservations, when the European Union (EU) was unable to act in a security capacity during the Yugoslav civil wars. NATO was not, however, capable of fulfilling that role, as the European allies lacked the necessary political will and military assets. This became obvious during the air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs in summer 1995, in the peripheral role that the allies played in the peace talks that followed later that year, but most especially during the Kosovo War (1999) Not all allies were equally committed to Operation Allied Force and some were not at all convinced by Washington's assessment of the danger of doing nothing. Intra-alliance discord during the Kosovo war hampered the conduct of operations and the development of a workable strategy, and the disparity in military capabilities undermined the practical value of some allies' contributions. The US decision not to seek assistance from NATO in its initial campaign in Afghanistan was undoubtedly a reaction to events in the Kosovo war.

In the years that followed, it became increasingly obvious that two different agendas had emerged within the Alliance. The US has sought NATO transformation to ensure access to greater military

capabilities for expeditionary (i.e., out-of-area) missions, such as the ongoing operation in Afghanistan. The Europeans, unable or unwilling to rebuild their armed forces and acquire the necessary military capabilities, have sought to use the Alliance as a *pacta de contrahendo*: seeking to restrain Washington that is often seen as exacerbating security challenges, and too reliant on military force to address international crises. The Bush Administration's emphasis on "coalitions of the willing" gave rise to charges from NATO-Europe of US policy becoming overtly unilateralist: but, from Washington's perspective, the policy was, in part, a direct response to the incapacity (political and military) of its European allies. The US, not wanting to see its influence in Europe diminished, continues to support NATO transformation and European defence reform. US policymakers, however, no longer seem willing to subordinate Washington's international goals (and the country's security) to NATO procedures that it has assessed as being inadequate in addressing contemporary threats and challenges. The European allies, on the other hand, are playing a waiting game and hoping that the next administration will initiate a radical shift in US policy.

Differences over the seriousness of international terrorism had already emerged at the Washington Summit (April 1999), where US efforts to have NATO identify it as a major threat failed to obtain much support for its perspective. But the divide between the US and most of its European allies on this issue only became obvious after 9/11. For the US, affected by a profound sense of vulnerability, the nexus of terrorism and rogue states is the most acute security threat of our time and homeland security its greatest challenge: for Europeans, whose countries have long been exposed to terrorism, they believed that the threat is best managed by a carefully calibrated mix of diplomacy and aid, and the resort to military force must only ever be the very last option. The disputes over how to conduct operations in Afghanistan and by what means are specific examples of this, but the acute differences regarding the use of force are perhaps even more important. Given such deeply-rooted differences in outlook, it is difficult to sustain the argument that the trans-Atlantic security paradigm, sustained during the Cold War by American power and a deadly fear of the Soviet threat, has survived its passing intact. One can quite convincingly argue that there is a North Atlantic security community where there is agreement that "common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of 'peaceful change'." However, that community is increasingly inward looking and is far from embracing the global perspective that critics demand is necessary in the post-Cold War world.

Washington is obviously aware of these problems. At the 45th Munich Security Conference (February 2009), Vice President Joseph Biden sought to reassure a largely European audience of a "new tone" in US foreign policy that, he noted, "is not a luxury, it is a necessity" to confront "common challenges." Nevertheless, this speech, the first major foreign policy address by the administration contained messages that suggest that trans-Atlantic relations will not be trouble-free and will likely recall some of the disputes of this past decade. First, Biden was very clear that "the alliances, treaties and international organizations we build must be credible and they must be effective." Recalling the Clinton and Bush administrations' emphasis on effective multilateralism, he was stating that multilateralism is only a means and not an end in itself. Implicitly, therefore, there are limitations to the degree to which the US will work with other countries to advance its interests. As Biden reportedly stated at the time, the US would work with partners "whenever we can—alone only when we must." The European belief in a "multilateral order" is not easily accommodated, and will not always be, in the US emphasis on efficacy.

The second message was a reassertion that military force remains an important component of national power, an effective tool of foreign policy, and the ultimate means of assuring national security. Biden distanced the new administration from what many people termed the Bush Doctrine—pre-emptive strikes against adversaries that pose a direct security challenge to the US—by recasting the policy as preventive measures: but, while he reassured his audience that Washington was not seeking new enemies and would “extend a hand to those who unclench their fists,” he nonetheless reiterated a key component of the previous administration’s foreign policy, namely that radical groups and state-sponsors “that harbor extremists, undermine peace and seek or spread weapons of mass destruction and regimes that systematically kill or ethnically cleanse their own people” must be confronted. In doing so, Biden emphasized, “we must stand united and use every means at our disposal to end the threat they pose.”

The last general message specifically concerned trans-Atlantic issues, including several topics that have long undermined an effective trans-Atlantic dialogue, from the future of the Middle East to climate change to foreign aid. Many of the positions Biden enunciated will have fallen on friendly ears, but in a number of important areas agreement is likely to be less immediate, if at all. The speech nonetheless provided an overview, the only one so far, of how the Obama Administration regards NATO as an alliance. Biden called for the renewal of the Alliance, a common enough refrain during much of the past decade, although he refrained from going into much detail of how that renewal might be accomplished. In his speech at the Munich Conference, the new US National Security Advisor, General (retired) James Jones, USMC, observed that NATO must “become less reactive and more proactive. I think it needs to become less rigid and more flexible. It needs to become less stationary and more expeditionary. And it needs to become more, not less essential to our collective security.” If Biden’s speech was a call for reform and renewal, Jones’s words seemed to contain a warning. An alliance that cannot accomplish that sort of change is likely to be viewed as increasingly unnecessary. And such an assessment does not seem far removed from the perspective that led US military planners to discount a NATO role in the planning leading up to the Afghan and Iraq wars.

It is perhaps noteworthy that the last section of his speech was devoted to putting down a number of markers concerning relations with Russia. This subject has been a key concern for many in NATO-Europe given the acid tone of recent exchanges with Moscow, a situation exacerbated by Russia’s war with Georgia in summer 2008. According to Biden, relations with Russia are to be re-examined with an emphasis at identifying areas where cooperation is possible and can be promoted. That commitment to a new effort at cooperation will no doubt have pleased many in Europe, but the speech also advised its listeners that Washington expects that disagreements will continue. But when the text of the address is examined, there is little that Moscow will like. Washington will not abandon ballistic missile defence intended “to counter a growing Iranian capability”: it will not recognize the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, thereby continuing to reject the legitimacy of Russia’s conflict with Georgia: it “will not recognize a sphere of influence,” an obvious reference to the territories of the former Soviet Union: it asserted the view “sovereign states have the right to make their own decisions and choose their own alliances,” a clear reference to the NATO membership aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia. Only in the area of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and arms control will European critics of the Bush Administration find solace, as Biden declared that deeper cuts in existing nuclear arsenals are “a special obligation” of the US and Russia.

Biden's speech resembled more a set of talking points that highlighted the foreign policy inclinations of the new administration than a finely crafted presentation of a carefully considered policy. Some of Biden's European co-participants did, however, voice positions that might detract from a more effective NATO that his speech had urged. The German chancellor's address, for example, was overly focused on developing new processes of consultation between NATO and ESDP and between America and NATO-Europe. With regard to the latter, she noted that "the character of our cooperation must be: we analyse together, we come to the same decisions, and we act together." For the French president, the US demand that France play a greater role in the Alliance was heartily endorsed. However, his assertion that while France sought to upgrade its relations with NATO, it intended to be "an independent ally and a free partner of the United States," must have left many in Washington wondering what direction French policy will take.

Conclusion

This Memorandum provides a *tour d'horizon* of alliances, the reasons behind their creation and the causes of their demise, as well as explaining, if only cursorily, some of the basic dynamics that have been exhibited in alliance relationships. The purpose in "mining" the past in such a fashion is twofold: to provide some insight into the range of motivations of states in constructing and breaking alliances; and, second, to underscore the historically contingent nature of those pacts. Quite possibly, this report has also given some perspective to any discussion about the future of NATO. This Memorandum investigates further some of the intra-Alliance disputes that have plagued discussions in the North Atlantic Council. It offers some observations that might allow readers to better grasp the nature of the challenges the Alliance faces in its confrontation with a world very different from the Cold War that had given birth to it. Too often, the discussion of NATO's role since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been ideological in tone. Despite its achievements, NATO is not the most successful alliance in history, as so many of its strongest advocates like to argue, as though past success is reason enough for continuity. After all, it is certainly reasonable to argue that any alliance that ever existed that achieved its stated objectives must be deemed successful. A more modest discussion of the Alliance is, therefore, required, oriented around a very basic question: does NATO still advance and protect the interests of its member-states? The answers will go to the heart of the foreign policy objectives of the member-states themselves.

Sommaire

Alliances - What are they for and how do they end?: An historical overview, including some thoughts on NATO

Ben Lombardi; DRDC CORA TM 2009-018; R & D pour la défense Canada – CORA; Mai 2009.

Comme l'avait, avec justesse, fait remarquer le cardinal de Richelieu (1585-1642) il y a déjà plus de trois cent ans, il est essentiel de ne pas négliger les alliances dans les affaires de l'État. Aussi longtemps que les systèmes étatiques existeront, les alliances ont toutes les chances de continuer à exister sous une forme ou une autre. Cela dit, aucune alliance n'a été conclue sur la conjecture qu'elle durerait éternellement ou qu'elle perdurerait au-delà de l'évaluation positive des intérêts nationaux qui ont mené à envisager et à sceller ce type de pacte. Il n'existe donc pas d'alliance sacrée, car toute alliance est le simple reflet des hypothèses, des croyances et des analyses des diplomates et hommes d'État qui l'ont forgée. L'analyse continue de la pertinence des pactes constitue donc une tâche immuable des hommes d'État et des stratèges.

Alliances : création et dissolution

Le mot « alliance » renvoie à une entente en bonne et due forme entre deux entités politiques ou plus comportant, dans certaines circonstances (*casus foederis*), un engagement à recourir aux forces armées contre un adversaire putatif dans le but d'atteindre un objectif convenu. Il est cependant difficile de fournir une définition plus élaborée que ces grandes lignes. Les alliances existent depuis la nuit des temps et, par conséquent, répondent à une myriade de besoins politiques. Habituellement, une politique entraînant l'entrée en vigueur ou le maintien d'une alliance est l'expression d'une « grande stratégie », c'est-à-dire de l'intégration par un État de ses objectifs politiques, économiques et militaires en vue de servir ses intérêts nationaux à long terme. C'est pourquoi les alliances ont une durée de vie naturelle et qu'elles sont créées et rompues en fonction de ces intérêts aussi longtemps que ces derniers sont régis par la grande stratégie. L'alliance s'apparente donc à un mariage de raison permettant à chaque partenaire de redéfinir au fil du temps ses priorités. D'ailleurs, l'alliance demeure tant que les autres membres du pacte peuvent tolérer les actions de leurs partenaires.

Tout en mettant l'accent sur la défense collective, l'accord d'alliance désigne de manière explicite ou implicite un adversaire et définit le degré de contribution attendu de chaque allié. L'OTAN et le Pacte de Varsovie, tous deux conclus durant la guerre froide, sont des exemples de ce type d'alliance, bien qu'aucun ne désignait explicitement « l'autre » comme l'ennemi. Les alliances n'englobent toutefois pas toujours l'ensemble des intérêts faisant partie d'une « grande stratégie », mais on ne peut de toute façon attendre d'une stratégie qu'elle en fasse autant. Cela est particulièrement vrai en temps de guerre, et il est déjà arrivé que l'objectif généralement reconnu d'un pacte de défense collectif – à savoir la défaite d'un ennemi commun – ne coïncide pas avec la totalité des intérêts des principaux alliés engagés dans le conflit. En dépit de ces divergences inévitables, l'objectif le plus répandu d'une alliance reste de favoriser la mise en commun des ressources et des moyens dont disposent plusieurs États. La volonté de freiner les

actions et les politiques d'un de ses propres alliés constitue un deuxième motif pouvant motiver l'entrée en vigueur ou le maintien d'une alliance. Connu sous le nom de *pacta de contrahendo*, il s'agit plus précisément d'une forme de police d'assurance protégeant de ses propres partenaires qui s'ajoute à la protection obtenue contre ses adversaires.

De la même façon que les alliances ont une raison d'être, elles ont une durée de vie limitée. Le présent rapport présente quatre explications générales pour la dissolution de ce type de pacte : la durée de vie convenue pour l'alliance s'achève; une partie se retire officiellement de l'entente; l'entente est abrogée; ou le passage du temps fait en sorte que l'alliance originale a perdu sa pertinence sur le plan stratégique. Dans tous les cas, on peut prévoir qu'une alliance prend généralement fin lorsqu'un pacte ne répond plus aux intérêts d'un État et de ses dirigeants. Une décision de cette envergure peut prendre un certain temps à être prise et peut constituer un processus très complexe. Cependant, une fois ce processus achevé, la décision peut faire l'objet d'une annonce officielle, mais sans que ce soit une obligation. Comme l'ont prouvé beaucoup d'exemples au cours de l'Histoire, une alliance peut durer des années, voire des décennies, avant que des circonstances ne forcent les parties à s'apercevoir qu'elles ne se sentent plus liées par ses termes.

Finalement, il est à noter que la dynamique politique des alliances est très différente de celle des autres types d'ententes conclues par les États. Cette dynamique est aussi étroitement liée au moment et aux circonstances entourant la signature du pacte même. Les facteurs qui influencent la relation entre des alliés incluent la nature de l'engagement militaire, les capacités relatives des alliés, la place occupée par l'idéologie et les valeurs à la formation du pacte, la nature offensive ou défensive de l'alliance, ainsi que la réévaluation périodique des intérêts par les alliés, qui peuvent mener à des confrontations entre alliés et à l'élaboration d'intrigues avec d'autres États. Bien qu'il soit impossible de fournir une liste complète des facteurs de ce type, un survol de ceux-ci dans l'histoire des alliances offre des renseignements utiles sur la manière générale dont des pactes sont conclus et maintenus.

L'OTAN

L'OTAN existe depuis plus de 60 ans, et trois générations de dirigeants et d'étudiants en politique internationale l'ont perçue au fil du temps comme la pièce maîtresse pour la sécurité dans la région euro-atlantique. Comme la guerre froide s'éloigne dans le courant de l'Histoire, la perspective atlantiste ne demeure plus incontestée. Certains étudiants en politique internationale croyaient que l'OTAN s'effondrerait après la chute de l'empire soviétique. Dans une optique plus large, la situation internationale depuis la fin de la guerre froide et les défis de réorientation de l'OTAN constituent une menace pour le paradigme de sécurité de l'Organisation. Au cours des premières années, il est devenu de plus en plus évident que la conception traditionnelle de l'alliance, soit la défense collective, ne pouvait être conservée en l'absence d'un adversaire clairement désigné et d'une réduction générale des dépenses militaires. Lorsque l'Union européenne (UE) n'a pas été en mesure d'assurer une sécurité adéquate durant les guerres civiles en Yougoslavie, la restructuration de l'OTAN en une organisation de sécurité globale pour l'Europe a soudain pris du galon et ce, malgré les réserves des États-Unis. L'OTAN n'a toutefois pas été en mesure de remplir ce rôle, car les alliés européens ne possédaient pas la volonté politique et la puissance militaire nécessaires. Cet état de fait est devenu flagrant, notamment durant la campagne aérienne contre les Serbes de Bosnie à l'été 1995, les alliés étant confinés dans un rôle secondaire au cours des pourparlers de paix qui suivirent plus tard dans l'année, mais

surtout durant la guerre du Kosovo (1999). Les alliés ne s'étaient pas engagés dans la même mesure dans l'opération Force alliée, et certains n'étaient pas du tout convaincus par l'évaluation de Washington concernant les dangers de ne pas intervenir. Les désaccords intra-alliance durant la guerre du Kosovo ont ralenti les opérations et l'élaboration d'une stratégie fonctionnelle, et la disparité du potentiel militaire a miné la portée pratique de certaines contributions des alliés. La décision des États-Unis de ne pas demander l'aide de l'OTAN lors de sa campagne initiale en Afghanistan constitue sans contredit une réponse aux événements de la guerre du Kosovo.

Dans les années qui ont suivi, il est devenu de plus en plus évident que deux courants de pensée différents avaient pris racine au sein de l'Alliance. D'un côté, les États-Unis exigeaient une transformation de l'OTAN pour garantir un accès à des capacités militaires accrues pour les missions expéditionnaires (à l'étranger) comme l'opération en cours en Afghanistan, alors que de l'autre côté, les Européens, incapables de reconstruire leurs forces armées et d'acquérir les capacités militaires nécessaires ou réticents à ces idées, cherchaient à utiliser l'Alliance comme *pacta de contrahendo*, c'est-à-dire pour restreindre Washington, qui était souvent perçu comme un gouvernement exacerbant les problèmes de sécurité et recourant trop facilement à la force militaire pour régler les crises internationales. L'accent mis par l'administration Bush sur les « coalitions de partenaires pour une même cause » a soulevé l'ire des pays européens membres de l'OTAN contre la politique ouvertement unilatérale des États-Unis. Pourtant, du point de vue de Washington, cette politique était en partie une conséquence directe de l'incapacité politique et militaire de ses alliés européens. Les États-Unis, ne voulant pas voir leur influence s'atténuer en Europe, continuèrent à soutenir la transformation de l'OTAN et la réforme de l'Europe en matière de défense. Les décideurs américains ne semblent cependant plus vouloir subordonner les objectifs internationaux de Washington (et la sécurité nationale) aux procédures de l'OTAN, qu'ils considèrent désormais inadéquates lorsque vient le temps de réagir aux menaces et de relever les défis du monde d'aujourd'hui. Les alliés européens, de leur côté, ont pris leur mal en patience et espèrent que la prochaine administration amènera un réel vent de changement dans la politique des États-Unis.

Des différends concernant la gravité du terrorisme international avaient déjà fait surface au Sommet de Washington (avril 1999), durant lequel les Américains avaient cherché en vain à ce que l'OTAN reconnaisse le terrorisme comme une menace importante. Mais le schisme entre les États-Unis et la plupart de ses alliés européens sur ce sujet n'est devenu évident qu'après le 11 septembre. Pour les États-Unis, accablés par un sentiment de profonde vulnérabilité, le terrorisme et les États voyous constituaient la menace à la sécurité la plus importante de notre ère, et la sécurité intérieure en était le plus grand défi. Les Européens, étant depuis longtemps exposés au terrorisme, considéraient plutôt que la meilleure façon de répondre aux menaces était de viser un juste équilibre entre les mesures diplomatiques et d'aide, et de ne faire appel aux forces militaires qu'en tout dernier recours. Les disputes concernant la façon de mener les opérations en Afghanistan et les moyens à privilégier pour ce faire illustrent bien cette divergence, mais les différends marqués en matière d'usage de la force sont probablement encore plus importants. Considérant ces profondes différences de vision, il est bien difficile d'étayer l'argument comme quoi le paradigme de la sécurité transatlantique, né pendant la guerre froide de la peur bleue que les Américains nourrissaient envers la menace soviétique, a toujours toute valeur même après la chute du communisme. On peut affirmer sans réserve qu'il existe une communauté nord-atlantique en matière de sécurité au sein de laquelle il est entendu que « les problèmes sociaux courants doivent et peuvent être résolus par des voies pacifiques ». Cette communauté est

cependant de plus en plus centrée sur elle-même et n'est pas près d'adhérer à la perspective globale que les critiques considèrent comme essentielle pour l'ère après-guerre froide.

Washington est évidemment consciente de ces problèmes. Lors de la 45^e Conférence de Munich sur la sécurité (en février 2009), Joseph Biden, vice-président des États-Unis, a cherché à rassurer l'auditoire majoritairement européen sur le « nouveau visage » de la politique étrangère américaine, dont il a dit qu'elle « n'est pas un luxe, mais une nécessité » pour affronter « des défis universels ». Néanmoins, cette première allocution importante en matière de politique étrangère faite par l'administration américaine contenait des messages suggérant que les relations transatlantiques ne se dérouleront probablement pas sans heurt et rappelleront les querelles des dernières décennies. Biden a tout d'abord clairement dit que « les alliances, traités et organismes internationaux que nous bâtissons devront être crédibles et efficaces ». Évoquant l'importance que les administrations Clinton et Bush avaient accordée au concept de multilatéralisme efficace, Biden a déclaré que le multilatéralisme n'est qu'un moyen, et non une fin en soi. Implicitement, cela veut dire que les États-Unis, par souci de servir leurs intérêts, imposeront des limites aux collaborations qu'ils auront établies avec d'autres pays. Comme l'aurait dit Biden à ce moment, les États-Unis travailleront avec leurs partenaires « chaque fois que ce sera possible, en faisant cavalier seulement si nous le devons ». Le désir d'un « ordre multilatéral » de l'Europe n'est pas facile à mettre en place, et ne le sera pas toujours, en raison de l'importance qu'accordent les États-Unis à l'idée d'efficacité.

Le deuxième message lancé lors du discours de Biden réaffirmait la place importante que conservaient les forces militaires, que ce soit comme élément de puissance nationale, comme outil de politique étrangère ou comme moyen ultime pour assurer la sécurité nationale. Biden a cherché à dissocier la nouvelle administration de la pratique que beaucoup avaient baptisée « la doctrine Bush », soit le recours à des frappes préventives contre les adversaires mettant directement en péril la sécurité des États-Unis, en parlant plutôt d'une politique constituée de « mesures préventives ». Pourtant, même s'il veillait à rassurer ses interlocuteurs que Washington ne voyait plus de nouveaux ennemis partout et que « ceux qui seront prêts à cesser de brandir le poing recevront notre main tendue », il a néanmoins ressorti un credo dominant de la politique étrangère de l'administration Bush, soit le besoin de livrer bataille aux groupes radicaux et aux États qui « abritent des extrémistes, compromettent la paix ou cherchent à acquérir ou propager des armes de destruction massive, de même qu'aux régimes qui font des tueries systématiques ou du nettoyage ethnique au sein de leur population ». Dans cette mission, Biden a bien souligné qu'il « fallait faire front commun et utiliser tous les moyens à notre disposition pour mettre fin à ces menaces ».

Le dernier message véhiculé par Biden touchait plus précisément les enjeux transatlantiques et abordait différents sujets qui minent depuis longtemps l'établissement d'un dialogue transatlantique réellement fructueux, comme l'avenir du Moyen-Orient, les changements climatiques ou l'aide à l'étranger. Bon nombre de positions énoncées sont tombées en sol fertile, mais dans certains secteurs clés, l'atteinte d'un terrain d'entente risque fort d'être longue, voire illusoire. Ce discours a toutefois eu le mérite de donner un aperçu – le seul jusqu'à présent – de la vision de l'administration Obama par rapport à l'alliance de l'OTAN. Biden a lancé le souhait d'une Alliance renouvelée, un thème récurrent au cours des dix dernières années, mais il s'est abstenu d'entrer dans les détails quant à la façon dont ce renouveau pourrait se matérialiser. Dans son allocution pour la Conférence de Munich, le nouveau conseiller national pour la sécurité des États-Unis, le général à la retraite James Jones, du Corps des Marines des États-Unis, a quant à lui

offert son constat que l'OTAN devait « se transformer afin de devenir moins réactive et plus proactive, moins rigide et plus souple, moins stationnaire et plus expéditionnaire, mais surtout, plus essentielle à notre sécurité à tous, et non le contraire ». Si le discours de Biden avait des allures de plaidoyer en faveur d'une réforme et d'un renouveau, l'allocution de Jones avait plutôt des accents d'avertissement. En effet, si une alliance ne parvient pas à s'adapter de la sorte, elle court le risque de tomber peu à peu en désuétude. Cette assertion se rapproche d'ailleurs fort probablement des conclusions qui ont poussé les stratèges militaires américains à passer outre le rôle de l'OTAN dans la prise des décisions ayant mené à la guerre en Afghanistan et en Iraq.

Il est assez intéressant de remarquer que la fin de l'intervention de Biden a servi à énoncer une série de commentaires sur les relations avec la Russie. Ce sujet est en effet une préoccupation majeure pour plusieurs alliés européens de l'OTAN, particulièrement à la lumière du ton acrimonieux des échanges plus récents avec Moscou, ton qui s'était envenimé en raison du déclenchement de la guerre entre la Russie et la Géorgie à l'été 2008. Aux dires de Biden, les relations avec la Russie doivent être réévaluées afin de cibler les secteurs où la coopération est envisageable et peut donc être promue. Cet engagement à investir de nouveaux efforts dans un esprit de coopération aura certainement plu à plus d'un Européen, mais ces propos informaient également l'auditoire que Washington s'attendait à ce que des désaccords demeurent. Toutefois, lorsqu'on analyse à froid les éléments de l'exposé de Biden, on s'aperçoit que Moscou n'a pas vraiment de quoi se réjouir : Washington n'abandonnera pas son projet de bouclier antimissile visant à « contrer la menace grandissante de l'Iran »; elle ne reconnaîtra pas les régions dissidentes de l'Ossétie du Sud et de l'Abkhazie, ce qui équivaut à continuer de rejeter la légitimité du conflit russo-géorgien; elle ne reconnaîtra pas plus « l'existence d'une sphère d'influence », une allusion transparente aux territoires de l'ancienne Union soviétique; enfin, elle met de l'avant l'idée que « les États souverains ont le droit de décider librement de leur avenir et de leurs alliances », une référence sans équivoque aux aspirations de l'Ukraine et de la Géorgie à devenir membre de l'OTAN. Les critiques européens de l'administration Bush pourront quand même se consoler avec la question de la lutte contre la prolifération des armes de destruction massive et du contrôle des armements puisque Biden a déclaré que les États-Unis comme la Russie avaient tous deux « l'obligation particulière » de réduire radicalement leur arsenal nucléaire.

Il faut le dire, l'allocution de Biden ressemblait davantage à une succession de remarques destinées à exposer dans ses grandes lignes la tendance que prendrait la politique étrangère de la nouvelle administration qu'à la présentation bien ficelée d'une politique mûrement réfléchie. D'autres participants à la 45^e Conférence de Munich ont par ailleurs exprimé des intentions qui pourraient bien porter entrave à la plus grande efficacité de l'OTAN ardemment préconisée par Biden dans son discours. Par exemple, dans son allocution, la chancelière d'Allemagne s'est principalement concentrée sur l'élaboration de nouveaux processus de consultation entre l'OTAN et la Politique européenne de sécurité et de défense (PESD), de même qu'entre les pays d'Amérique et les pays d'Europe membres de l'OTAN. Concernant ce dernier point, elle a souligné que « le modèle de coopération devrait être le suivant : nous analysons ensemble la situation, nous nous entendons sur les décisions à prendre, et nous agissons ensemble ». Quant au président de la République française, il a accueilli chaleureusement le désir des États-Unis de voir la France jouer un rôle plus prépondérant dans l'Alliance. Toutefois, son affirmation comme quoi la France voulait intensifier ses relations avec l'OTAN, mais tout en demeurant « un allié indépendant et un partenaire libre des États-Unis » a dû en plonger plus d'un dans la perplexité à Washington à savoir quelle direction la politique française prendra réellement.

Conclusion

Le présent document technique propose un tour d'horizon des alliances, des motifs sous-tendant leur création et des causes expliquant leur déclin, et tente en plus d'expliquer, si ce n'est que sommairement, les principales dynamiques observées dans ce type de relation. L'intérêt à disséquer le passé de la sorte est double : premièrement, cela permet de sonder les diverses motivations qui poussent les États à nouer et briser des alliances; deuxièmement, cela fait ressortir le caractère inévitablement historique des pactes. Le présent rapport devrait également avoir ouvert des horizons de discussion sur l'avenir de l'OTAN, puisque tout en examinant de près certains des différends internes qui ont entaché les tractations au sein du Conseil de l'Atlantique Nord, le document propose quelques remarques qui devraient aider le lecteur à mieux saisir la nature des défis auxquels l'Alliance doit faire face depuis qu'elle est confrontée à un ordre mondial à cent lieues du contexte de la guerre froide qui avait mené à sa naissance. Depuis l'effondrement de l'Union soviétique, la discussion sur le rôle de l'OTAN s'est trop souvent cantonnée au plan idéologique. Contrairement à ce que nombre de partisans convaincus aiment à proclamer, les succès passés ne peuvent justifier à eux seuls la poursuite d'une entente, et malgré les réalisations qu'on peut lui attribuer, le Traité de l'Atlantique Nord n'est pas l'alliance la plus réussie de l'Histoire. Au demeurant, il est certainement raisonnable de plaider que toute alliance ayant atteint ses objectifs peut être jugée fructueuse. Il faudrait donc ramener les discussions de l'Alliance sur un plan plus terre-à-terre en les axant sur cette question des plus fondamentales : est-ce que l'OTAN contribue toujours à faire progresser et à protéger les intérêts de ses États membres? Les réponses à cette question définiront alors les objectifs desdits États membres en matière de politique étrangère.

This page intentionally left blank.

Table of contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Abstract | i |
| Résumé | i |
| Executive summary | iii |
| Sommaire | viii |
| Table of contents | xv |
| Acknowledgements | xvi |
| 1.... Introduction..... | 1 |
| 2.... What Purposes Do Alliances Serve?..... | 4 |
| 3.... Four Explanations Why Alliances Cease To Be..... | 13 |
| 4.... Nine Rules About Alliances | 18 |
| 5.... What Does This Mean for NATO?..... | 27 |
| 5.1 Collective Defence, Collective Security and Ad Hoc Coalitions | 30 |
| 5.2 9/11 and the Threat of Terror | 36 |
| 5.3 Trans-Atlantic Relations and A Speech in Munich | 41 |
| 6.... Conclusion | 48 |
| Distribution list..... | 51 |

Acknowledgements

Working in the social sciences and the humanities, as is the case in any scientific field, requires that a writer stand on the shoulders of others. We read their articles and books, use and/or reinterpret their research findings, challenge or accept their conclusions—all to advance our own, often meagre efforts. In completing this Technical Memorandum, I wish to thank my colleague, Dr. Michael Roi, with whom I have enjoyed many interesting discussions about diplomatic history, and who read an early draft of this Memorandum. I must also express my gratitude to the two peer reviewers: Mr. David Rudd (DRDC CORA) and a reviewer who asked to remain anonymous. Their comments were extremely helpful and the final draft is considerably different and greatly improved as a result. Last, I want to thank the staff of the CORA Library who, as ever, very patiently and diligently processed my many requests for inter-library loans.

1 Introduction

In his political testament, the 17th century statesman, Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), discussed alliances, or what he called leagues, as an element of national policy. “In matters of state,” he advised Louis XIII, “it is necessary to profit from everything possible: whatever is useful is never to be despised. Leagues are in this category.” But in proffering that advice, he cautioned that assembling such leagues was an inherently hazardous activity. Such unions, even if animated by a common purpose, are “never too secure when headed by several sovereigns,” he noted. And, he further observed, that weaker princes are “often as careful and diligent in involving great kings in important commitments as they are feeble in aiding them, although they are fully obligated to do so.”¹ If this master of the *raison d’État* philosophy² viewed alliances as a necessary evil, he was nonetheless also aware that there was nothing permanent about the accord upon which they were erected and that politics did not conclude with an alliance’s formation.

While this author (or, indeed, most authors!) cannot lay claim to the practical knowledge of international politics that underscores Richelieu’s advice, this Technical Memorandum is nonetheless an attempt to provide readers with some insight into alliances. It is, however, not a review of the literature on the theory of alliances: nor does it aspire to provide any theoretical breakthrough concerning their role or function. That latter endeavour has already been undertaken by such eminent scholars as Stephen Walt, Jack Levy, Robert Rothstein, David Singer, Melvin Small and William Moul.³ That work is being continued by a new generation represented by Brett Ashley Leeds, Jeffrey Ritter and others involved in the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project.⁴ While these works are interesting and are referenced in this paper when appropriate, it is nonetheless true that much of this research is often inaccessible to policy-makers. Its readership is largely restricted to academics and students who are focused on studying theoretical foundations of alliance formation and performance.⁵ The efforts of political scientists

¹ *The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu*, Translation by Henry Bertram Hill (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), pp. 100-101.

² In his classical study of this philosophy of statecraft, the German historian Friedrich Meinecke wrote that “Richelieu’s political thought centred around the proposition, that in all state activity the ruling force was to be, purely and exclusively *raison d’etat*, the ‘public interest’.” See his *Machiavellism; The Doctrine of Raison d’Etat and its Place in History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 167.

³ See, for example, Robert Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987) and his “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1997, pp. 156-179, Jack Levy, “Alliance Formation and War Behaviour: An Analysis of the Great Powers,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1981, Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), and J. David Singer and Melvin Small. “Formal Alliances, 1815-1939: A Quantitative Description,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1996, pp. 1-32. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of an earlier draft of this Memorandum for drawing my attention to Walt’s article in *Survival*.

⁴ Brett Ashley Leeds and Michaela Mattes, “Alliance Politics during the Cold War: Aberration, New World Order, or continuation of History?” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 24, 2007, pp. 183-199, and D. Scott Bennett, “Testing Alternative Models of Alliance Duration, 1816-1984,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 3, July 1997, pp. 846-878.

⁵ Interestingly, some of those involved in ATOP do not make any claim that their research findings will be of use to policy-makers, or even those involved in the policy process. Their audience is identified as

to explain as much as possible with as few variables as possible has undoubtedly generated very parsimonious understandings of state interaction. That effort has often come with a price, however, as it has also sometimes led to an inability by individual studies to accommodate important factors that lie outside the theoretical approach that has been adopted, including domestic political structures, ideologies, the personalities of leaders and even strategic cultures. Learning, for example, that the number of alliances involving a major Power concluded in the post-Cold War era has declined from earlier periods is admittedly interesting,⁶ but one can only wonder how relevant it is to a policy-maker contemplating his country's options in real time. As one scholar has written, "theoretical elegance is a virtue as long as it does not come at the expense of richness, rigor and relevance."⁷

With a readership that is less academic, this Memorandum takes a very different tack to the subject. Its purpose is to provide a *tour d'horizon* of alliances, examining some reasons for their creation and several causes of their demise, as well as explaining, if only cursorily, some of the basic dynamics that have been exhibited in alliance relationships. While acknowledging the utility of theories and the data they generate, this Memorandum draws heavily on examples from the historical record to illustrate how alliances have both reflected and influenced the dynamic of international politics. The intent behind "mining" the past in such a fashion is threefold: to provide some insight into the range of possible motivations of states in constructing and breaking alliances; second, to underscore the historically contingent nature of those pacts; and, third, to permit us to look at a modern alliance, such as NATO, with a more informed understanding of the dynamics that are present. In adopting this approach, this study eschews any claim to be comprehensive for, as readers will quickly become aware, any such ambition is unattainable.

Alliances are an essential (and, consequently, unavoidable) component of statecraft. Alliance formation is a lubricant of the international system, and alliances themselves often provide predictability and transparency, both of which are important attributes of grand strategy. They are believed by many practitioners of diplomacy and statecraft to augment resources to provide security for its members. But such beliefs are never certain and the presence of alliances is, however, not always a salutary one and may also contribute to feelings of insecurity. When Bismarck spoke of the *cauchemar des coalitions*, he was not only referring to the implicit threat that alliances might pose to Germany, but he might just as well have been speaking about the tendency of states to rely on inflexible alliances as a centre-piece of their foreign policies. Little has changed in the past century and we can safely assume that alliances will almost certainly continue to exist, in one form or another, as long as the state-system. Sometimes, we even take them for granted. NATO is perhaps the best example of this. For the governments of member-states and their political and academic elites, it is often difficult to conceive of security policy *sans* NATO. But international relations were conducted before the Western Alliance was created in 1949, and will persist long after its demise. When exactly NATO's denouement will occur is uncertain, but that it will is inevitable. It is all a matter of time, state interests, and political

"scholars pursuing a wide variety of research questions," "researchers interested in domestic politics and international relations," "scholars interested in issue linkage," game theorists, and quantitative researchers. See Brett Leeds, Jeffrey Ritter, Sara Mitchell and Andrew Long, "Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944," *International Interactions*, Vol. 28, July 2002, p. 249.

⁶ See Leeds and Mattes, "Alliance Politics during the Cold War: Aberration, New World Order, or continuation of History?" p. 187.

⁷ Robert G. Kaufman, "The Lessons of the 1930s, Alliance Theory, and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Stephen Walt," *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Summer 1992, p. 693.

circumstances. We should be prepared—intellectually and, perhaps, emotionally, as well as politically—for such a transformation of the security landscape.

It is for that reason that a brief examination of NATO's current state occupies the second half of this Technical Memorandum. Ministerial communiqués repeatedly assert the central role NATO plays in the trans-Atlantic security dialogue; but a commonly recognized purpose, a general appreciation of the core collective defence function, a willingness to achieve consensus on key issues, and a commitment to supply adequate military resources to support such agreements, are much less evident. Those who crafted the *Treaty of Washington* (April 1949) never included a clause with regard to the termination of the Alliance—the nature of the Soviet challenge at that time effectively precluded that option—but it is highly unlikely that any of them would have expected their creation to exist as long as it has. To date, few leaders are voicing such views and none are espousing NATO's dissolution as a policy. Despite frequent charges of unilateralism from their European allies, the United States remains, officially anyhow, strongly Atlanticist. A year after the 9/11 attacks, the Bush Administration released the *National Security Strategy for the United States* (September 2002). That document stated that the United States was committed to “lasting institutions” such as NATO that it regarded as a “fulcrum of trans-Atlantic and inter-European security.”⁸ Seven years later, Barack Obama has declared that he is committed to strengthening his country's traditional alliances, of which NATO has been identified as one of the most important. In other words, US presidents continue to publicly declare that NATO is a pillar of their security perspective. And, yet, there are already indications that Obama will likely be disappointed when he turns to the Alliance,⁹ most especially NATO-Europe,¹⁰ for additional contributions for the ongoing military operation in Afghanistan.¹¹ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)—is the largest out-of-area mission in the history of the Atlantic Alliance. Given its unprecedented nature, ISAF is posing considerable military challenges, not the least of which is defining and implementing a strategy for a victory that, seven years on, seems as remote as ever. These military uncertainties nonetheless reflect the deeper, underlying political questions with which the Alliance and the new US president must grapple. The situation would be very familiar to Richelieu: it is an issue of too many sovereigns and too many diverging interests.

Alliances are historical artefacts, and are fashioned by statesmen working in a particular context in response to a perceived need. This Memorandum examines the historical record to ascertain general rules of thumb for the rise and fall of alliances. Given the uncertainties of the international security environment, alliances are likely to become more rather than less important over time. And it is just as probable that they will not resemble the highly integrated, long-lived pact with most of us are now familiar: so familiar, in fact, that we mistakenly assume that such institutionalized alliances are the norm in international history. Understanding the dynamics of alliance formation and dissolution (the first half of this Memorandum), and reviewing some of the strains on the Atlantic Alliance today (the second half), might therefore provide valuable insight to those seeking to forecast future developments.

⁸ President of the United States, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: September 2002).

⁹ Throughout the paper, “the Alliance” refers to NATO.

¹⁰ In this Memorandum, NATO-Europe refers to the European members of NATO.

¹¹ See Ben Lombardi, “Obama, Afghanistan and NATO-Europe,” DRDC CORA Technical Note 2009-006 (Ottawa: Defence R&D Canada, Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, January 2009).

2 What Purposes Do Alliances Serve?

What is an alliance? Many readers may be surprised to learn that there is no general agreement in the scholarly literature on this. Stephen Walt, a leading authority, has defined an alliance as “a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states.” This definition is very broad-ranging, and would permit both treaty-like arrangements that specify the type of commitment and more general agreements, including unilateral guarantees. Walt defends this approach since “states may provide considerable support to one another even without a formal treaty, and because the presence of a formal agreement often says relatively little about the actual degree of commitment.”¹² The argument is a powerful one and draws on its author’s knowledge of international history. But it is unclear what constitutes “security cooperation,” a term that can imply interactions ranging from a common war strategy to innocuous statements on matters of pressing international concern. Including informal agreements under the rubric of alliances is also problematic, for the level and type of commitment is unclear to observers, save with hindsight. How can anyone—observer, political scientist, statesman, military commander—know who is allied to who (or has been) without some clear statement of intent to do so? For example, the United States provided important support to Great Britain during the latter’s Falklands’ campaign despite the absence of a formal commitment. While we might have assumed at the time that the United States would support Great Britain against Argentina in 1982, the initial hesitancy of the Reagan administration suggested otherwise: in other words, that support only became evident much later and was never expressed in terms of an alliance commitment.¹³

So, while informal military and political arrangements have existed and will continue to do so, a tighter definition is required for a discussion that would otherwise be overwhelmed by the range of issues that might be included. An alternate definition is provided by scholars working on the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project:

Alliances are written agreements, signed by official representatives of at least two independent states, that include promises to aid a partner in the event of military conflict, to remain neutral in the event of conflict, to refrain from military conflict with one another, or to consult/cooperate in the event of international crises that create a potential for military conflict.¹⁴

ATOP’s definition has been used in the generation of that project’s database. It is also more precise than that of Walt. The emphasis on a written agreement means that the terms of the arrangement are available to both parties—something not necessarily present in Walt’s concept—and easily ascertainable. The formal nature of an alliance makes an important distinction between states that are aligned (e.g., Japan and Canada) and those that are allied (e.g., Japan and the US). It also excludes unilateral guarantees, for an alliance relationship usually implies an accord of some dimension between two or more countries. However, the definition is still very broad and captures arrangements between states that most people would not always consider an alliance. Does a formal agreement to consult during an international crisis really meet

¹² Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” p. 157.

¹³ See Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: HarperCollins, 1983), pp. 191-192.

¹⁴ Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell, and Long, “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944,” p. 238.

the requirements for policy-makers to believe an alliance obligation exists? Under the terms of Articles 2 and 24, the UN Charter requires that member-states bring international disputes to the Security Council, but few governments regard membership in the United Nations as an alliance obligation.

The differences separating the definitions provided by Walt and ATOP remind us that alliances, as political entities, are extremely common in international history. Circumstances dictate, therefore, that alliances vary significantly and that obviously affects their categorization. We should not be surprised that there is no standard definition for what you see is, as one might say, what you are looking for. Neither Walt's nor ATOP's definition is, therefore, inherently inaccurate, and yet both are likely to pose problems for those attempting to understand alliances outside specific contexts. Walt argues, for example, that modern alliances are "more than a mechanical combination of independent national assets: they are also social institutions that may involve extensive interactions between the member-states."¹⁵ That argument is undoubtedly valid for alliances such as NATO and the now dissolved Warsaw Pact, but is that true in all cases? Will it be true in the future? It might be argued that the circumstances during the Cold War demanded an unprecedented level of institution-building to support the two sides' alliances. The Tashkent Accord and the Turkish-Israeli informal alliance, both of which post-date the end of the Cold War, meet the criteria of alliances according to both Walt, but there is little evidence of the level of integration that the former claims as a characteristic of a modern alliance.

To avoid such problems, this Memorandum has relied on a definition drawn from the work of political scientist Glenn Snyder. An alliance refers to a formal agreement between two or more independent political entities that involves a commitment to use armed force in specified circumstances (i.e., *casus foederis*) against a putative adversary, to achieve an agreed objective.¹⁶ This approach allows one to define very clearly what an alliance is not, and that helps in the framing of the discussion to follow. A formal alliance is far more than a political pact, a friendship, an entente, or, to cite a common phrase, a strategic partnership. Sir Eyre Crowe (1864-1925), who worked for nearly four decades in Britain's Foreign Office, drew a sharp distinction between ententes (or what Walt might refer to as an informal agreement) and alliances:

The fundamental fact, of course, is that the Entente is not an alliance. For purposes of ultimate emergencies it may be found to have no substance at all. For an Entente is nothing more than a frame of mind, a view of general policy which is shared by the governments of two countries, but which may be, or become, so vague as to lose all content.¹⁷

Relations short of an alliance might well involve intensive political contacts, including some form of defence relations, but are nonetheless distinguished by the lack of a *casus foederis*. Consequently, a Power can be aligned diplomatically with another in international circles, and do so without incurring any formal obligations to employ its armed forces to support its diplomatic partner. There are many examples of this type of arrangement. Except when its own interests

¹⁵ Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," p. 157.

¹⁶ Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 4.

¹⁷ "Minute by Eyre Crowe on Bertie to Grey, 31 January 1911," quoted in K.A. Hamilton, "Great Britain and France, 1911-1914," F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 324.

were involved, Great Britain largely upheld the Monroe Doctrine (1823) for much of the nineteenth century, but it was never allied to the United States. Despite the Entente Cordiale (1904) between Great Britain and France, the British foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, emphatically denied that it was accompanied by specific promises of military assistance.¹⁸ That might have eventually been revealed to be strategic nonsense in that Britain could not tolerate a German victory over France,¹⁹ but it expressed Whitehall's official position at the time. Alliances, on the other hand, represent a far greater level of commitment and, accordingly, a significantly reduced range of options, responding as they generally do to a more precise assessment of the national interest. The existence of the "Pact of Steel" (1939) meant that Adolf Hitler felt it was necessary to rescue his ally when the Italian campaign in Greece bogged down. An Italian defeat, he told Benito Mussolini in November 1940, would have meant "very grave psychological and military repercussions" to the Axis.²⁰ As alliances are often invested with more political capital than a diplomatic understanding, cooperation beyond its strictly defined obligations can also never be precluded. Such actions also make good sense particularly when trying to allay suspicions between allies. Germany's foreign intelligence service, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND), purportedly assisted US planning for its war with Iraq (2003) despite Berlin's extremely vocal opposition to the Bush Administration's policy.²¹

A policy of entering or maintaining an alliance is an outward expression of "grand strategy," that is the integration by a state of its political, economic and military aims to advance long-term national interests. Such goals may be defensive or offensive in nature, the pursuit of which is defined by the norms of statecraft at any given era. Alliances have, therefore a natural lifespan, and are created and terminated as those interests dictate and for as long as a grand strategy defines those interests. We can assume, therefore, that when a government revisits the goals of its grand strategy, that its membership in specific alliances is also subjected to careful review. In some cases, such as Britain's 1970 decision to terminate its commitments east of Suez, those alliances, if not concluded, are subsequently emptied of military purpose. As Hans Morgenthau observed in his classic study *Politics Among Nations*, an alliance is little more than a marriage of convenience

¹⁸ In a 21 May 1914 telegram to the British ambassador to France, Grey noted that "the French and British Governments were not bound to each other by any alliance, and remained free to decide in a crisis whether they would assist each other or not, but that there had taken place between the naval and military staffs certain conversations which, should the Governments decide to assist each other in a crisis, would enable them to do so." Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916: Volume One* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), p. 292. Grey was to repeat this assessment to the German ambassador to Britain, Prince Lichnowsky, on 24 June 1914: four days before the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the event that precipitated the July Crisis. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹⁹ As early as 1906, Grey had acknowledged that remaining neutral in the event of a future Franco-German war would not be in Britain's best interests: "the French will never forgive us [...] Russia would not think it worthwhile to make a friendly arrangement with us about Asia [...] we should be left without a friend and without the power of making a friend and Germany would take some pleasure [...] in exploiting the whole situation to her advantage." Beryl Williams, "Great Britain and Russia, 1905 to the 1907 Convention," in Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey*, p. 134.

²⁰ Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), p. 131.

²¹ August Hanning, the then-president of the BND, stated that "The Iraq war, after all, did not lead to the suspension of our alliance with the Americans. We continue to work closely together." See John Goetz, Marcel Rosenblach and Holger Stark, "BND in Iraq," *Der Spiegel*, 17 December 2008.

where each partner is frequently allowed to continue to define what it finds most valuable.²² And, in so far as the other members of the pact can tolerate the actions of their partners, the alliance persists.

Emphasizing collective defence, the alliance agreement identifies an adversary—either explicitly or by implication—and often establishes the level of contribution expected from each ally. During much of the Cold War, NATO and the Warsaw Pact were examples of such alliances, although neither identified the other explicitly as an enemy. Alliances do not, however, always encompass all of the interests identified by a grand strategy; and, indeed, there is no expectation that any one alliance will do so. This is particularly evident in wartime, and it has happened that the generally agreed objective of a collective defence pact—most obviously, the defeat of a common enemy—is not coincidental with the entire range of interests of key allies that are engaged in the conflict. If the Grand Alliance (Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union) in the Second World War was able to agree on the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, they were certainly not in accord about how to go about doing that: nor was there any agreement possible on how to rebuild war-torn Europe after the hostilities ended. Each of the three Powers had its own objectives, as was to become very evident in the months preceding the conclusion of the war. National interests explain the creation of an alliance and do not disappear after it is formed. Often those distinct interests also seriously hinder its functioning, and they certainly affect the lifespan of such arrangements.

Regardless of such inevitable differences, the most obvious objective of an alliance is to permit the aggregation of capabilities or resources among two or more states. It is an approach whereby “security-seeking states in an anarchic world” seek to form coalitions “solely to improve their military situation against hostile states in case of conflict.”²³ This calculation of ends and means is tied to what historian A.J.P. Taylor referred to as the “perpetual quadrille of the balance of power.”²⁴ It was because of the absence of any higher principle that alliances were denounced by philosophers in the 18th and 19th centuries as little more than “temporary armistices” or as instruments “for the blind passions of princes.”²⁵ That has not always been so. It has happened, as in the run-up to the First World War, that military coalitions became unusually rigid, in part because some states (e.g., Germany and France) had gradually come to equate their vital interest with the maintenance of their alliances. At other times, these military coalitions have afforded considerable fluidity to war and diplomacy. This characteristic was very evident in the age of *raison d’État* in the 17th and 18th centuries, where alliances were flexible, frequently amended, and their duration was almost always short-lived. In 1740, for example, Great Britain was allied to Austria and opposed to France and Prussia: in 1757, fearing the coalition of Austria, France, Russia, Sweden and Saxony, it allied itself with Prussia. Twenty years later, France’s alliance with the rebellious Thirteen Colonies, implemented most decisively by the naval blockade of Lord Cornwallis’ army at Yorktown (1781), was a highly effective counter-stroke at what was a common foe. For most of modern history (post-1789), such fluid alignments have been the norm

²² Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 4th Edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 175. It is interesting that Hitler purportedly used the same phrase “marriage of convenience” in reference to the Non-Aggression Pact (1939) he had with the Soviet Union. See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), p. 334.

²³ Bennett, “Testing Alternative Models of Alliance Duration, 1816-1984,” p. 848.

²⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. xix.

²⁵ F.H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 82.

in international politics. An oft-cited study conducted by J. David Singer and Melvyn Small revealed that of 112 formal alliances and informal defence pacts that existed between 1815 and 1939, less than half endured more than ten years and only three lasted for twenty.²⁶ Research associated with ATOP has revealed the average duration of alliances from 1815 to 2003 as being “just over eight and one half years.”²⁷

The North Atlantic Alliance was originally conceived as an expression of that approach to power politics. While it is true that the *Treaty of Washington* (1949) initially provided psychological reassurance to the war-battered societies of Western Europe, there was always an assumption that it would in time aggregate North American (i.e., US and Canadian) and postwar West European military capabilities in an effort to deter the USSR. In the post-1945 era, the emphasis was no longer on gathering military resources to wage war, but rather to assemble such capabilities that a putative adversary would be dissuaded from offensive actions. And while the “balance of power” was seldom discussed in such terms in the decades that followed, it was nonetheless ever-present, for much of the focus of intra-Alliance discussions in the decades that followed was focused on ensuring that the deterrent was as credible as possible. While we can never know if the USSR was effectively deterred,²⁸ at least one major ally long doubted the long-term credibility of the US commitment. De Gaulle’s belief that the interests of the US and NATO-Europe would eventually diverge was a principal factor underlying his demand for a more flexible approach to alliance leadership—one that necessarily favoured his own country—and for an independent French nuclear capability.²⁹ Whatever we might think of the Gaullist agenda, this view was strongly informed by the historical record. If alliances do aggregate military capabilities to confront a common threat, they are hardly ever able to pose as a chimera for a state’s international security concerns. Shared NATO membership did not, after all, protect either Britain or France from having to bow to US pressure to cease their Suez operation (1956) and to suffer a humiliating loss of prestige. More recently, most European allies have argued that Washington’s attack on Iraq and its approach to the war in Afghanistan have worsened their security situation.

Indeed, alliances designed to aggregate capabilities can often pose significant threats to the security of the member-states themselves. Small states are often particularly vulnerable in this regard, with alliance membership often exacerbating relations with larger more powerful neighbours. Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue is one such example and the recent case of Estonia subject to Russian sanctions while NATO could only offer moral support is another.³⁰ Large states are not, however, immune to such concerns. Nowhere is this more evident than in the First World War. Sidney Fay in *The Origins of the World War* (1928) wrote that the system of alliances was the “greatest single underlying cause” of the 1914-1918 conflict because “it gradually divided Europe into two hostile groups of Powers who were increasingly suspicious of

²⁶ See J. David Singer and Melvin Small, “Formal Alliances, 1815-1939: A Quantitative Description,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1996, pp. 1-32.

²⁷ Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell and Long, “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944,” p. 244.

²⁸ For a good exposition of the argument that deterrence was understood differently in the USSR, see Keith Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 2001).

²⁹ Jean Lacoutre, *De Gaulle; The Ruler, 1945-1970* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), pp. 413-433.

³⁰ Both examples are cited in Stanley Korber, “Cracks in the Foundation; NATO’s New Troubles,” *Policy Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: CATO Institute, 15 January 2008), p. 9.

one another and who steadily built up greater and greater armies and navies.”³¹ Diplomatic historian Bernadotte Schmitt argued similarly, noting that “the system of alliances, designed originally as a guarantee of peace, proved, when put to the test, to be the mechanism for unchaining a general war.”³²

Modern-day historians no longer assert that alliances played *the* central role in the tragic events of summer 1914. We are simply too aware of the many other factors that influenced the decision-makers at that time. However, even critics of the argument made in the immediate wake of the war by Fay and Schmitt, such as Scottish historian Hew Strachan who counters that the approach exculpates Wilhelmine Germany’s role in precipitating the conflict,³³ may be willing to admit that the system of rigid pre-war alliances transformed every confrontation between two Great Powers into a crisis that moved toward a general system-wide war. The July Crisis (1914) and the war that followed would not have played out the way that they did if the alliance system had not severely constrained the diplomatic flexibility necessary to avert it, had such intent been given scope to act. After all, if by 1916 Austria’s Chief of Staff came to see Germany as his country’s “secret enemy,” many German leaders were well aware of its ally’s weaknesses and would have shared the view that Berlin “was shackled to a corpse.”³⁴ In the Great War, far from only augmenting military resources, the existence of alliances undoubtedly exacerbated the security situation of the Central Powers, limited Germany’s strategic options in wartime, and prolonged a conflict that led to the collapse of both empires.³⁵

Alongside aggregation, a second motivation behind the formation and/or maintenance of an alliance is to constrain the actions and policies of one’s own allies. The alliance can be seen, therefore, as an insurance policy against the actions of partners in addition to providing security from adversaries. In his classic study *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (1968), Robert Osgood argued that

³¹ Sidney Bradshaw Fay, *The Origins of the World War* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1928), p. 34.

³² Bernadotte Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934), p. 114.

³³ “By shifting the blame to ‘-isms’ rather than individuals, to militarism, to nationalism, and economic imperialism, Fay exculpated Germany.” See Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Volume 1: The Call to Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 2. Strachan is probably correct that such was an implication of Fay’s analysis. But it is nonetheless true that the pre-war system of alliances seemed to afford a far greater predictability (and therefore rigidity) to international politics than in earlier times, as evidenced by the German decision-making that Strachan so convincingly argues helped precipitate the conflict.

³⁴ Interestingly, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and Colonel-General Erich Ludendorff, the German commanders on the Eastern Front, believed that their country’s next war would be fought *against* Austria-Hungary. See Robert B. Aspery, *The German High Command At War: Hindenburg and Ludendorff Conduct World War I* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), pp. 432-433.

³⁵ Arthur Zimmerman, a senior Foreign Ministry official in Germany, made a reference to the “d--d system of alliances” in early-August 1914 which he saw as the “curse of modern times.” (See Schmitt, *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente*, p. 1.) While such a comment might have been disingenuous, there is no question that the alliance system did prolong the war. The Austrian emperor’s peace initiative in 1917 failed precisely because Vienna could not extricate itself from its relationship with Berlin.

[n]ext to accretion, the most prominent function of alliances has been to restrain and control allies, particularly in order to safeguard one ally against actions of another that might endanger its security or otherwise jeopardise its interest.³⁶

There is nothing particularly unusual or duplicitous about such an objective. An alliance is designed to build a relationship whereby a Power can influence another to act in a certain manner that would best advance one's own interests. For example, a Great Power confronting a weaker state in a dispute that is likely to lead to military conflict may well seek an alliance with a potential rival in order to manage any potential conflict of interest that could arise as a result of war. Concluding the alliance is, in this case, an attempt to reduce uncertainty. It is an act of prudent foreign policy.³⁷

In other cases, the alliance restraint function is more nuanced. The alliance structure that in 1914 led to war had originally been designed to prevent that from happening. Bismarck's Dual Alliance (1879) with Austria was initially intended to prevent that country from allying with France and to stop it creating problems in the Balkans that might upset Berlin's relations with Russia. As historian Paul Schroeder has written,

Bismarck mainly wanted and used this alliance for management and control, of Austria first of all. Bismarck's maxim that every alliance must have one horse and one rider, and that Germany must be the rider, here comes into play. [...] In short, Bismarck forced Austria and Russia once again to become allies, because otherwise they were likely to go to war. The Dual Alliance thus served directly as a pact of restraint upon Austria.³⁸

"The existence and the integrity of the Austrian Empire," Bismarck stated, "are for us the first condition of security."³⁹ That objective required Berlin to structure its relations with Vienna so that the latter's policies would not lead to a conflict with Russia, a situation that could escalate to include Germany. Whatever one might think of the ethics of the Iron Chancellor's foreign policy, the logic behind his *Allianzpolitik* was sound, even if it was not fully understood by his successors. Schroeder has termed this approach, of using an alliance to control one's allies, as a *pacta de contrahendo*.⁴⁰

We do not need to look to the late-19th century for examples of this approach to alliance formation. NATO provides considerable evidence of possessing the qualities of a *pacta de contrahendo*. Most obviously, it is a mechanism to constrain US options with regard to its

³⁶ Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, p. 22.

³⁷ William Moul, "European Great Power *Pacta de Contrahendo* and Interstate Imperial War, 1815-1939: Suggestions of Pattern," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1983, p. 84.

³⁸ Paul W. Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815-1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management," in Klaus Knorr (ed.), *Historical Dimensions to National Security Problems* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1976), pp. 242-243.

³⁹ Quoted in William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 175.

⁴⁰ "A *pactum de contrahendo*, in the legal vocabulary of interstate treaties, is "an agreement by a State to conclude a later and final agreement," but Schroeder takes the phrase to refer to alliances as restraints on the actions of the rival alliance members themselves." Moul, "European Great Power *Pacta de Contrahendo* and Interstate Imperial War, 1815-1939: Suggestions of Pattern," p. 81.

security commitment to Europe. The core element of the Western Alliance is, of course, the obligation arising from Article V, and the overseas deployment of tens of thousands of US military personnel was its most definite embodiment. Agreement by the European allies to host those troops was intended to prevent the United States from withdrawing from continental security affairs, as it had done after the First World War. Forward deployment was seen in NATO-Europe as a statement of intent from Washington that reinforced the strategic nuclear deterrent. In time, a seat at the North Atlantic Council was also perceived by America's allies as a means of trying to influence broader US policies, even including those far removed from the North Atlantic region. In the run-up to the war with Iraq, for example, the refusal of some NATO allies—i.e., France, Germany and Belgium – to agree to Turkey's request for military assistance can be interpreted (and was at the time) as an attempt to dissuade Washington from a course of action they opposed.

Constraining Washington is not the only example of NATO being viewed as a means of managing allies. Maintaining influence in the areas of Europe outside of Soviet control has sometimes been viewed as a key incentive for the US commitment. "If our allies were uncertain about our ability or will to counter Soviet aggression," a 1953 report prepared by the National Security Council stated, "they would be strongly tempted to adopt a neutralist position."⁴¹ American historian Melvyn Leffler has likewise argued that as the Second World War was drawing to a close, US military planners were fashioning a postwar strategy that assumed good relations with its allies, but nonetheless "always presupposed American hegemony over the Atlantic and Pacific oceans."⁴² If senior US officials were not entirely convinced that the USSR wanted to occupy Western Europe, there was nonetheless a general feeling that, in the absence of a US commitment, the domestic political conditions in the countries of that region—geo-strategically valuable during the Cold War—could be very ably exploited by Moscow. Clearly, then, if the Alliance constrained America, it was also being viewed by Washington as a means of forestalling the emergence of positions and policies among its allies that it believed could be counter-productive and/or dangerous in the competition with the Soviet Union.

A second example is that of Germany and the countries that have acceded to the Alliance since the end of the Cold War, for in these cases membership has been quite explicitly employed for confidence building purposes. The postwar rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany was only possible after it had agreed to be subject to arms control limitations through the Paris and London Agreements (1954), as well as the Western European Union (1955). Its armed forces were also completely integrated into the multinational NATO command structure, thereby eliminating the possibility of independent military planning and operations. A similar argument was employed at the time of Germany's reunification in 1990: "membership of a united Germany in a NATO alliance with continuing United States participation could provide greater security assistance for Germans than neutrality and greater assurance for other European states as to the successful integration of a united Germany into a wider Europe."⁴³ That the USSR ultimately

⁴¹ Quoted in Stephen Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 3.

⁴² Melvyn Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2, April 1984, p. 349.

⁴³ Jonathon Dean, "Components of a Post-Cold War Security System in Europe," in Jörg Calließ (ed.), *Loccumer Protokolle 19/90: Die Neubau Europas; Dokumentation über das Zweite Internationale Experten-Kolloquium; Die Zivilisierung des Konflikts* (Rehburg-Loccum, Germany: Evangelische Akademie Loccum, 1991), p. 390.

agreed that a unified Germany would remain in NATO (i.e., the Two Plus Four Agreement, 1990) suggests that even the Soviet leadership retained some confidence in this argument.⁴⁴

In the years since the end of the Cold War, NATO has continued to function in a manner that allows one to see it as a *pacta de contrahendo*. This has been accomplished through the process of expansion of the Alliance. The three rounds of enlargement—in 1999, 2004 and 2009—have taken place only after an extensive preparatory period that saw aspirants for membership adopt policies in a broad range of areas to make their countries acceptable to the Alliance. For its advocates, expanding the Alliance’s membership is coincident with the enlargement of a zone of stability in Europe. “The incentive of NATO membership,” Philip Gordon has argued, “has led aspiring countries to reform their political systems, liberalize their economies, root out corruption, resolve territorial disputes with neighbours, rationalize their military establishments, and improve minority rights.”⁴⁵ Advancing such objectives was, in part, the rationale for the Partnership for Peace program and the Membership Action Plans, the latter taking the form of a what might be called a pre-approved application. But some European allies, France and Germany in particular, have frequently argued that the accession process must be more demanding of applicants. Whether for normative or geopolitical reasons, the impact on prospective members is largely the same. NATO “isn’t an inn whose door is open to the four winds with anyone who wants to come in because he’s seen a light burning being able to,” French President Nicholas Sarkozy recently stated: “Countries can come in who are ready to share our values, defend them, and take on internal obligations: democracy, settling their internal problems with their minorities, and their vision of the future—and let me add—with everyone sharing the burden pro rata.”⁴⁶ While one can dispute the claim that the burden has been equitably distributed, membership in Euro-Atlantic structures (i.e., NATO and the EU) is nonetheless cited as having been highly successful in encouraging the democratic transformation of many of the former members of the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 187-189. References in the early post-Cold War years to what is often termed the “German Problem” might appear to some to be anachronistic, but they reflected concerns in the events surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. According to one poll of non-German Europeans, 53% of Poles and Brits and 38% in France believed a reunified Germany might revert to fascism: 54% in Poland feared that Germany might return to an expansionist foreign policy. See David Young, “Poll Shows Many Share Concern About Germany,” *The Times* (London), 13 July 1990.

⁴⁵ Philip H. Gordon, “NATO: Enlargement and Effectiveness: Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” 11 March 2008, accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/testimony/2008/0311_nato_gordon.aspx?p=1.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Sarkozy. “Speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference, 7 February 2009,” accessed at http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_200=&menu_konferenzen+sprache+en&jahr+2009&.

⁴⁷ Ryan C. Hendrikson, “The Miscalculation of NATO’s Death,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 106-107.

3 Four Explanations Why Alliances Cease To Be

Alliances, rather like a soothing summer's breeze, do not last forever. Some die as a consequence of unrequited ambition: the *Foedus Cassianum* or Treaty of Cassius (493 BC) that had linked Rome to the Latin League of 30 separate cities collapsed in 340 BC when Rome apparently claimed ownership of lands held by its allies.⁴⁸ Some come to an end because of external pressure that undermines any recognition of common interests: the three hundred year old Iroquois League, an alliance in all but name, disintegrated due to disagreements over which side to support in the American Revolutionary War.⁴⁹ Others have failed because they could not command, or were presumed to lack, sufficient public support: in 1914, Romania refused to honour its secret military pact with Germany and Austria because of the government's fear of an adverse public reaction.⁵⁰ And alliances can also very obviously meet their demise when one party disappears from the political stage: the Berlin-Tokyo Axis came to an abrupt end with the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany in May 1945. But if there are as many specific reasons for the end of alliances as for their creation, the general causes for their demise can perhaps best be grouped under four broader headings.⁵¹

First, alliances can expire by means of what might be called a natural death. The demise can take two forms. Very clearly, an alliance is terminated when an ally is eliminated as an independent actor. One thinks here of the Anglo-Polish Alliance (1939) that can be understood as having ceased to exist after the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland in September of that year. While not frequent, this cause of alliance termination has affected, according to the ATOP dataset, 33 alliances since 1815.⁵² This might be termed death by failure, since the members' objective of obtaining security through an aggregation of resources is most effectively thwarted when an ally is eliminated.

Another, less dramatic form of natural death is when a military pact is not renewed or when its agreed duration has been reached. In this case, the signatories agree—either explicitly or tacitly—that the military commitments are no longer a good fit with their national interests and should not therefore be renewed. This action can be arrived at by agreement, but most often seems to be determined unilaterally. In 1890, Germany decided not to renew its secret alliance with Russia (i.e., the Reinsurance Treaty). While this decision came as a surprise to Russia's leaders, Berlin concluded that it could no longer maintain commitments to Austria and Romania

⁴⁸ Michael Grant, *History of Rome* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1978), pp. 56-57.

⁴⁹ See Neta C. Crawford, "A Security Regime among Democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois Nations," *International Security*, Vol. 48, No. 3, Summer 1994, pp. 345-385.

⁵⁰ Gerard E. Silberstein, *The Troubled Alliance: German-Austrian Relations, 1914-1917* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), pp. 33-39.

⁵¹ The ATOP also lists four explanations for alliance termination: "fulfillment, exogenous loss of independence, renegotiation, and violation (opportunistic abrogation)." See Brett Ashley Leeds and Burcu Savun, "Terminating Alliances: Why do States Abrogate Agreements?" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4, November 2007, p. 1124. As readers will observe, there is some overlap between this author's categories and ATOP's. This Memorandum, however, includes those cases where there is a silent consensus among allies that an alliance is no longer valid even if it remains legally in force. It is a category of relations not easily captured by a quantitative approach such as is used by ATOP.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 1125.

that were, in essence, directed against St. Petersburg.⁵³ The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902), London's first peacetime alliance with a non-European Power, came to an end when Britain decided not to renew the pact. Instead, it was merged into the far less successful agreement known as the Four Power Treaty (1921). Interestingly, the North Atlantic Alliance approaches the issue of termination from a different angle. The Treaty of Washington (1949) contains a provision (Article 13) that requires a member-state to announce a year in advance its decision to withdraw from the alliance: otherwise the alliance continues in perpetuity. Allowing an alliance to expire is probably the most expedient manner for a government to rid itself of an undesired military pact.

Formally withdrawing from a military pact is the second way to bring an alliance to an end. This could be the result of a decision by a government not to ratify the commitments previously given. One thinks here of the American-French-British alliance that was rendered stillborn when the US Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles (1919). Governments can also obtain agreement to annul an existing alliance. To remove a domestic political irritant and to avoid being dragged into a Franco-German dispute, in 1925 Belgium obtained France's agreement to suspend their alliance negotiated only five years before.⁵⁴ While the alliance was suspended at that time, Belgium was only formally released from its obligations in 1937, allowing Brussels to return to its traditional policy of neutrality. The process can also be a carefully scripted affair. Almost all alliances have an "escape clause" that permits a signatory to denounce the pact and, within a specified period of time, eliminates its military obligations. The Austro-German alliance contained such a provision, requiring consultations on the relevance of the agreement one year before the expiration of the treaty, otherwise it was automatically renewed for a further three years.⁵⁵

Withdrawing from an alliance is not without risk, for it obviously signals a reassessment of grand strategy that other states could deem to be generally destabilising or possibly even directly threatening. As a consequence, formal withdrawal when it has been practised has often been associated with imminent conflict. Italy announced its withdrawal from the Triple Alliance only three weeks before declaring war on Austria in 1915. Nazi Germany behaved similarly when it denounced its naval agreement with Great Britain and its non-aggression treaty with Poland in early summer 1939. Although neither of those two latter agreements was a formal alliance, war followed four months later. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that alliances tend to be terminated when a conflict is inevitable. As Robert Kann notes, "in addition to the war-scare atmosphere generated by the official termination of an alliance, such action destroys the credibility of the ally who asks for the cancellation."⁵⁶ The "credit rating" of countries does not permit too frequent a resort to withdrawal.

Third, alliances can be abrogated. Abrogation happens when one party refuses to meet its commitments and its action is assessed by an ally or allies to terminate the original pact. Abrogation also obviously affects a state's "credit rating" as a potential ally, but the decision is

⁵³ George F. Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 407-408.

⁵⁴ Robert Young, *In Command of France - French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 151-152.

⁵⁵ See "Article III, Treaty of Alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany, 7 October 1879," in F. R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo; The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 397.

⁵⁶ Robert A. Kann, "Alliances Versus Ententes," *World Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4, July 1976, p. 618.

generally rooted in a cost-benefit analysis. Leeds and Savun have referred to this as “opportunistic abrogation” and it is a relatively common happening. They have identified 105 examples of this occurring since 1815, or nearly one-third of the alliances they studied.⁵⁷ Five factors, in particular, seem to explain abrogation. First, the nature of the common external threat has changed. A recent example of this can be seen in the death of the US alliance with New Zealand. Created during the height of the Cold War, the ANZUS Pact (1952) is intended to be a collective defence organization much like NATO. In 1984, however, New Zealand banned US navy ships from its ports, due to the government’s opposition to nuclear weapons and its belief that the Reagan Administration’s policies toward the Soviet Union were needlessly confrontational. The era of détente had mitigated the Soviet threat for Wellington and domestic political concerns demanded a response. As a result, the US suspended all its military obligations to that country. While New Zealand, like its fellow ANZUS partner Australia, contributed special forces and navy ships to the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom, Washington considers New Zealand as “a friend, but not an ally.”⁵⁸

A second reason for abrogation is when the relative military capabilities of the member-states have changed, and the attractiveness of the alliance presumably declines for the stronger Power. Great Powers, for example, have generally sought to avoid the constraints imposed on them by military pacts concluded with weaker states. The German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact (1934) was abandoned five years later when the Third Reich had rearmed and the re-acquisition of the Polish Corridor became a priority. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (1939) met a similar fate two years after it had been concluded. The appalling incompetence of Soviet commanders and the large casualties incurred during the Winter War (1940) with Finland suggested that the Red Army was no longer the force many had reckoned it to be earlier. “It cannot pose any danger to us at all,” Hitler stated in November 1940.⁵⁹ This assessment undoubtedly had an influence (although not the most important) on the Nazi leader’s decision for war with his soon to be former ally.

Abrogation may occur when the agreement on the policy goals underwriting the alliance has diminished. Leeds and Savun have noted that

Alliances are most credible, and thus more valuable, when the states involved pursue similar foreign policies; states are most willing to participate in military conflict when that conflict accomplishes goals they share.⁶⁰

The historical record supports that conclusion. Two years after the great naval victory of Lepanto (1571), Venice, burdened by the costs of the war and doubtful of its allies’ resolution to continue the fight, abandoned the Holy League (i.e., the Papacy, Genoa and Spain) and unilaterally negotiated a separate peace with the Ottoman Empire.⁶¹ The solemn pledge to wage war on “the Turk” and only to jointly conclude peace was set aside, *La Serenissima* was roundly condemned by its former allies, and the Holy Alliance abruptly ended. More recently, many of Washington’s

⁵⁷ Leeds and Savun, “Terminating Alliances: Why do States Abrogate Agreements?” p. 1125.

⁵⁸ Robert G. Patman and Chris Rudd, “New Zealand Sovereignty in the Era of Globalization,” in Robert G. Patman and Chris Rudd (eds.), *Sovereignty Under Siege* (London: Ashgate, 2005), p. 12.

⁵⁹ Hitler quoted in Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 342.

⁶⁰ Leeds and Savun, “Terminating Alliances: Why do States Abrogate Agreements?” p. 1121.

⁶¹ John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), pp. 490-491.

European allies categorically refused to support the US attack on Iraq. And, while that did not lead to the dissolution of the Alliance, it seriously damaged it (see below).

There are two more conditions that could result in opportunistic abrogation. A state may opportunistically abandon its alliance obligations when it perceives viable substitute allies that will assist in advancing its interests. Italy's defection from the Triple Alliance at the outset of the First World War was, in part, due to its hostility toward Austria, but was also because the Entente had already advised Rome in pre-war negotiations of its suitability as a future ally. (In some cases, abrogation *does not* occur because a substitute ally is unavailable: the case of Finland, allied to the Third Reich during the Second World War is such an example.⁶²) A state's leadership may simply decide that an opportunity for gain must be seized, even at the expense of the alliance itself. The Italian-Albanian Defence Pact (1927) was quite clearly abrogated when Italy invaded and occupied its "ally" in 1939.

In many of these factors, the nature of the government appears to affect the willingness to contemplate abrogation. Opportunistic abrogation, according to research conducted by Leeds and Savun, is least likely with "alliances involving democratic states, alliances between major states and minor states, and alliances that include provisions for non-military cooperation."⁶³ This conclusion is a reasonable one to make, given that most democracies cannot change foreign policy alignments quickly or easily, and may have elaborate institutional processes that must precede such a transition. It is equally valid, as Leeds and Savun note, that democracies emphasise rule of law and leaders raised in that political culture might be disinclined or, indeed, legally prohibited from making a rapid readjustment in alliances.⁶⁴ If on the whole this is true, dissenting evidence can sometimes reveal as much as more general conclusions. Based on difficulties he encountered in his alliance with Great Britain, Frederick the Great seriously doubted the stamina and reliability of his ally because of its constitutional restraints on government decision-making. "What assurances can you give," he pointedly asked the British Ambassador in December 1757, "that your nation will act with vigour and spirit, against the Common Enemy? or will this Winter be spent (as the last one was) in fruitless Enquiries who is to be blamed for the late Miscarriages?"⁶⁵ While one might argue that 18th century Britain was not democratic in a modern sense, the influence of its elected parliament on foreign policy created a profound distrust (frequently justified) among the monarchs and their ministers of the other European Powers. More recently, as the case of New Zealand mentioned above indicates, democratic institutions are not always an impediment to the termination of alliances involving only democracies. Indeed, abrogation may come about precisely because a government is forced by the demands of an electorate to take actions that are, in the opinion of a key ally, coincident with an abrogation of alliance commitments.

⁶² Finland had entered into an alliance with Germany to regain territories lost in its war (the "Winter War") with the Soviet Union in 1940. It had done so with the expectation that victory would come swiftly. As the war dragged on, and hopes of German victory waned, the Finnish leadership became increasingly restive in their relationship with the Third Reich. Finland, however, had no alternative to being a German ally until September 1944 when it surrendered to the USSR. See Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, pp. 524-525.

⁶³ Leeds and Savun, "Terminating Alliances: Why do States Abrogate Agreements?" p. 1118.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1122.

⁶⁵ See D. P. Heatley, *Diplomacy and the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919), p. 82.

Lastly, in addition to natural death, withdrawal and all five variants (!) of abrogation, as causes for the demise of alliances, an alliance can be recognised by all its members as having outlived its usefulness. In such cases, it is not formally terminated by a member-state. Instead, the signatories recognize, or are compelled by altered circumstances to acknowledge, that what they originally accepted as a *casus foederis* is no longer worth that level of commitment. An example of this is the Anglo-French-Austrian alliance (i.e., the Triple Treaty of 1854) that was constructed to uphold the Crimean War's peace settlement. The three signatories agreed to use military force to maintain, among other clauses of that treaty, the neutrality of the Black Sea. When Russia unilaterally declared in late 1870 that it was no longer bound by that clause and that it intended to rebuild its Black Sea Fleet, none of the three allied governments wanted to honour their alliance commitments. Each of the three Powers had its own specific reason for avoiding a military confrontation with Russia, but there was a general recognition by all of them that the Triple Treaty was no longer in force. The belief that had been taken as an indisputable fact in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean War (1853-1856) that a revival of Russian power in the Black Sea would be a significant threat had, by 1870, dissipated. More immediate political developments (i.e., Prussian victories over Austria and France, and German unification) had fundamentally altered strategic calculations and, in so doing, had transformed this alliance into an empty shell.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ See W.E. Mosse, *The Rise and Fall of the Crimean System* (Toronto: MacMillan and Company, 1963), pp. 158-184.

4 Nine Rules About Alliances

Alliances are singular creatures, for no matter the similarities closer scrutiny reveals that no two are ever entirely alike. Indeed, given the nature of the commitment involved in a military alliance, the political dynamic is different in individual cases and from that found within other types of agreements that states conclude. That dynamic is naturally also very specific to the time and circumstances surrounding the pact itself. While acknowledging the unique aspects of each alliance, there are several *rules of thumb* that deserve mention. These rules are certainly not meant to be comprehensive, but they do provide some insight into how alliances have operated. More to the point, each can be applied comparatively, in examining different examples of alliances in history or, in the case of a long-lived pact such as NATO, to its operations over many decades.

Rule One: *the political dynamics within alliances are not all alike, and relations between allies have varied greatly.* We know from the writings of Thucydides that Athens allied with a number of other city-states to form the Delian League. However, by the time the Peloponnesian war erupted (432 BC), the Athenians nonetheless recognised that the alliance had become an empire of force that they dominated.⁶⁷ The *socii* (allies) of the late Roman Republic were granted nominal equality—nominal because, by then, Rome recognized no equals—as well as protection but, in return, were required to furnish troops to Roman armies.⁶⁸ The *socii* were also, it should be noted, essential to the broader *divide et impera* strategy, whereby Rome sought to weaken putative opponents by showing favour to one or another neighbour. In many cases, an alliance can contain non-military obligations that accompany the delineation of a *casus foederis*. ATOP data suggest that as one-fifth of alliances have included clauses for non-military cooperation.⁶⁹ In most cases, this has involved an agreement on territorial revisions. For example, in June 1940, Spanish dictator Francisco Franco presented a shopping list of territories to Germany in return for a formal alliance, but Hitler avoided any firm commitment and Spain avoided war.⁷⁰ The acquisition of territory is, however, not always the only extramural obligation. The Anglo-French-Turkish Alliance (September 1939) actually contained a “suspend implementation clause” that postponed the application of its terms until Ankara had received additional military supplies and equipment. In the end, however, the alliance was never activated and Turkey remained neutral throughout the Second World War.⁷¹

Differences in capabilities among allies that, unlike in the Roman era, are formally acknowledged as equals sometimes also impact the functioning of an alliance. This is particularly so when an alliance has become highly integrated. Historian Robert Kann has argued that “important exceptions notwithstanding, an alliance with rigid commitments leads to an attitude in which each

⁶⁷ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War. The Complete Hobbes Translation*, David Greene (ed.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 56.

⁶⁸ Alvin Bernstein, “The strategy of a warrior-state: Rome and the wars against Carthage, 264-201 B.C.,” in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rules, States and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 66.

⁶⁹ Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell and Long, “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944,” p. 244.

⁷⁰ Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire*, p. 114.

⁷¹ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1962), pp. 13-14.

state tries to minimize its own obligations and maximize those of its partners.”⁷² The Franco-Russian alliance (1893), which both parties viewed as the cornerstone of their foreign policies, saw St. Petersburg repeatedly balk at any firm timetable for operations if and when hostilities with Germany should erupt.⁷³ A similar dynamic existed within the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy) prior to the outbreak of war in 1914.⁷⁴ Disparity of strength and/or capabilities can also lead to the purposeful marginalisation of partners. The conduct of the war in Kosovo (1999) revealed significant shortcomings within NATO-Europe, with the result that US military planners successfully opposed the integration of their allies in the initial campaign to topple the Taliban two years later. “A formal NATO role in the initial stages of the Afghan war was neither necessary nor desirable,” Brookings Institute scholar Michael O’Hanlon has written, “given the location of the conflict and the need for a supple and secretive strategy.”⁷⁵

Rule Two: not all alliances are defensive. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether or not an alliance is offensive as many states have been loath to state explicitly aggressive intentions. Nevertheless, here again, ATOP data is enlightening in this regard, in that just over one-quarter of alliances since 1815 have included very bluntly worded “obligations of offensive assistance.”⁷⁶ This should not be too surprising as states have contracted alliances for offensive aims, including the aggrandisement of power, territory or even wealth. The Fourth Crusade (1204) was initially organised as an alliance between Venice on one side, with German princes and leading French knights.⁷⁷ Instead of fighting the infidels, however, the crusade degenerated into the sacking of Constantinople, after which the princes established the Latin Empire (1205-1268) and the Venetian Doge became “Lord of a Quarter and Half a Quarter of the Roman Empire”. Three centuries later, the League of Cambrai (1509) united a number of kingdoms and principalities, as well as the Pope, in a broad (and, in the end, unsuccessful) campaign to detach the Italian provinces from Venetian control.⁷⁸ All of Hitler’s alliances were contracted to assist, regardless of his allies’ wishes, in the establishment of a new German empire on the European continent. Of course, it is sometimes (probably always) the case that the assessment of what constitutes aggression depends on one’s vantage point. Although we are accustomed to think of NATO as a strictly defensive pact oriented to the deterrence of adversaries, the war against Serbia (1999) was viewed—and still is—in a very different light by many others,⁷⁹ most especially in both Belgrade⁸⁰ and Moscow.

⁷² Robert A. Kann, “Alliances Versus Ententes,” *World Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4, July 1976, p. 612.

⁷³ See Douglas Porch, “Arms and Alliances: French Grand Strategy and Policy in 1914 and 1940,” in Paul Kennedy (ed.), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 130-131. See also John Erikson, “Koalitionsnaya Voina: Coalition Warfare in Soviet Military Theory, Planning and Performance,” in Keith Nielson and Roy A. Petre (eds.), *Coalition Warfare: An Uneasy Accord* (Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1983), p. 90.

⁷⁴ Contrary to what many might assume, there was little coordination of policies between Austria and Germany before the outbreak of war in 1914. See Holger H. Herwig, “Disjointed Allies: Coalition Warfare in Berlin and Vienna, 1914,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 54, No. 3, July 1990, pp. 265-280.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Richard E. Rupp, *NATO after 9/11: An Alliance in Continuing Decline* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 100.

⁷⁶ Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell and Long, “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944,” p. 244.

⁷⁷ See Thomas F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2003), pp. 117-172.

⁷⁸ Frederic Chapin Lane, *Venice; A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), p. 243.

⁷⁹ “All of the opposition to the war throughout the world focused on NATO’s failure to abide by the letter of the [United Nations] Charter. The claim that its spirit was being respected was convincing to those who

Interestingly, offensive alliances tend to be less durable than defensive pacts.⁸¹ This is almost certainly due to the grounds upon which the alliance is constructed, namely the conduct of a specific military operation with a very precisely worded objective, such as the defeat of a common adversary. When that enemy is vanquished, the *raison d'être* of the alliance disappears and, unless some other purpose can be quickly substituted, the expectation is that the alliance itself will follow shortly after. The Austro-Prussian alliance (1864) was specifically intended to wrest the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein from Denmark, Prussia's alliance with Italy in 1866 lasted only a few weeks until Austria had been defeated, and the Grand Alliance of the Second World War fell apart shortly after Germany's capitulation. In some cases, a state's aggressive ambitions do not always need to be endorsed straightaway by a formal alliance. A country could enter into strong defensive alliance with the hope that, in time, it will provide cover for larger ambitions. Sardinia, for example, allied itself with Britain and France during the Crimean War in the hope that its allies would eventually support its efforts (ultimately successful during the decade that followed) to unify the Italian peninsula.⁸²

Rule Three: alliances have frequently been transformed by the natural dynamic of war, in ways unforeseen by allies at the outset of a conflict. Perhaps the best known example in this regard is the Anglo-American alliance that, during the Second World War, saw Great Britain gradually subordinate many (though not all) of its objectives to those of the United States. It was based on a recognition of the steadily growing imbalance in resources that characterised London's wartime relations with Washington, and also that a war-exhausted Britain would need as strong a relationship as possible with the US in the postwar environment.⁸³ The divergence of European and US strategic cultures (discussed in the Memorandum's latter half) may well be a function of the US guarantees to its allies during the Cold War. Much of NATO-Europe no longer needed to consider the utility of military power when it sheltered under the protection of America's nuclear umbrella.

There are obviously a great many other examples. Some of these testify to the impact of domestic political considerations on alliance function. Sudden changes in wartime leadership can obviously and very significantly alter military pacts. When the Russian empress Elizabeth died (December 1762), her successor withdrew from the coalition opposed to Frederick the Great in the Seven Years' War. Russia's *volte-face* probably saved Prussia from defeat and ultimately led to a

made it, but sounded like an argument from *force majeure* to everyone else." Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (Toronto: Viking Press, 2000), p. 182.

⁸⁰ During this author's April 2006 visit to the Military Museum in Belgrade, he was strongly encouraged by the museum guide to visit the section devoted to the Kosovo War. The exhibits were oriented around the theme that Serbia had fought a defensive war against NATO forces.

⁸¹ Walt, "Why alliances endure or collapse," p.159.

⁸² A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe*, pp. 71-72.

⁸³ The last volume of Sir Winston S. Churchill's memoirs of the Second World War, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), is filled with the author's recollections of British policy having to give way to US considerations. See also Terry H. Anderson, *The United States, Great Britain and the Cold War, 1944-1947* (London: University of Missouri Press, 1981), pp. 40-43 and Peter G. Boyle, "The British Foreign Office View of Soviet-American Relations, 1945-46," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1979, pp. 307-320.

negotiated settlement two months later (i.e., the Peace of Hubertusburg).⁸⁴ After the arrest of Mussolini and the fall of the Fascist regime (1943), Italy abandoned the Axis, surrendered, and then joined the Allies in waging war on Germany. Whether planned or not, Charles de Gaulle “reinforced his domestic position by removing France from NATO’s integrated military command in 1967.”⁸⁵ Today, we are all awaiting the effect of a new US administration, just as that of George W. Bush significantly exacerbated strains in the Alliance.

Longstanding national rivalries that are exacerbated by disagreements over ongoing wartime operations can quickly degrade alliance relations. Indeed, countries that have traditionally fought one another will naturally find alliance formation and maintenance a more than difficult enterprise. The hostility (often long lived) does not disappear when an alliance is concluded. The Anglo-Spanish alliance (within the First Coalition, 1793) at the outset of the French revolutionary wars collapsed when the two Powers failed to coordinate their policies leading to a revival of distrust and, ultimately, Madrid changing sides. The Second Coalition (1799) disintegrated when Russia grew resentful of Austria’s reluctance to conduct military operations against France more forcefully. Today, the application of national caveats in missions such as ISAF similarly aggravates intra-alliance relations by creating significant operational shortfalls, and is often identified by political and military leaders as a corrosive agent on NATO’s cohesion.

War can also alter the very scope of an alliance commitment. This can sometimes lead to “opportunistic abrogation” as was already discussed, but not in all cases. As French strength ebbed in the First World War, Britain was called upon to adopt a strategy of attrition vis-à-vis Germany, an approach far removed from Whitehall’s assessment of its commitment during the first two years of that conflict.⁸⁶ Britain might have refused to do so, but that would have meant accepting a German victory; and that was an outcome that British leaders believed outweighed the costs of an increased military effort. And, of course, there is always the battlefield’s cruel judgement of an ally’s overall effectiveness. After the losses inflicted upon its army by Russia’s Brusilov Offensive (June 1916), Austria-Hungary’s leadership could no longer refuse German military command on the entire Eastern Front.⁸⁷ The exigencies of war gradually transformed Austria, formerly a Great Power in its own right, into little more than a German satellite. Although the Dual Alliance still formally recognized the formal equality of the two allies, its continuation through to the defeat in late-1918 did not acknowledge the reality on the ground.

⁸⁴ Interestingly, some in Hitler’s entourage thought that history might repeat itself when they heard the news of the death of US President Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945. The significance of the deaths of important leaders is, like alliance dynamics, determined by their context. Whereas an early end to Adolf Hitler, a leader who built a political system around himself, would almost certainly have transformed the war, Roosevelt’s, despite growing tensions within the Grand Alliance, did not. This would seem to indicate that the nature of the regime has some relevance in determining the impact of leadership transition on the functioning of alliances.

⁸⁵ Walt, “Why alliances endure or collapse,” p.161.

⁸⁶ Michael Howard, “British Grand Strategy in World War I,” in Paul Kennedy (ed.), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, p. 37.

⁸⁷ “[T]he Austro-Hungarian Army had lost over a third of its men as prisoners in less than a week of action; with other casualties, the losses came to over half of the forces in the East.” See Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), pp. 254-255. See also John Schindler, “Steamrolled in Galicia: The Austrian Army and the Brusilov Offensive, 1916,” *War in History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2003, pp. 27-59.

Rule Four: national attitudes to alliance formation are affected by historical experiences. In this regard, the data assembled by ATOP is very revealing. Russia/Soviet Union is identified as one of the most active major Powers involved in alliance construction. According to ATOP, 23.4 percent (or 126) of alliances since 1815 included Russia, and during the Cold War it was involved in one-fifth (36) of alliances that have been identified. By comparison, the United States has been involved in only 5 percent (or 26) alliances since 1815, and 13 percent (22) of all Cold War alliances.⁸⁸ Why such a variance? There are several possible explanations. Clearly the fact that Russia is a continental Power, surrounded by potential adversaries, has had an impact on the national perception of the utility of alliances. Russia, therefore, has a long history of participating in alliances and they have always been an important tool in the country's foreign policy thinking. Until quite recently, the US approach has been much more relaxed. That US strategic culture was basically insular until 1945 explains why Washington did not regard alliances as a useful political device for conducting international politics. Once the United States became a global Power, that attitude changed and alliances became an important component of its foreign policy. However, even then that reliance is qualified and appears to be heavily dependent upon the perception of immediate threat. As Leeds and Mattes note, the United States forms few, but more lasting alliances, and that 16 of the 26 pacts of which it is a member were created between 1945 and 1960, when the confrontation with the USSR was most dangerous.⁸⁹ Should that be true in the post-Cold War era where there is no adversarial Power, Washington may place less value on alliance formation and maintenance in the future.⁹⁰

Rule Five: because alliances are composed of states that have their own interests, they can never be free of intrigue, internal tensions or of the near-constant negotiations that go on between members. For example, the secret agreements Italy concluded with France (1902) and with Russia (1909) ran directly counter to its commitments to Germany and Austria. France's relationship with NATO since De Gaulle's decision of 1967 has required considerable intra-Alliance diplomatic effort.⁹¹ In the case of Italy's entry into the First World War, Rome's decision was purchased through the promise of extensive acquisitions of Austrian territory—a price that its formal (and, consequently, former) allies, the Central Powers, could not match. In the case of NATO, the response to internal discord has often been to create new bodies such as the Nuclear Planning Group (1966), or to adopt new policies such as the Two Track Decision (1978) or the Report on Enlargement (1995), or to revisit the Alliance's strategic concept (as it

⁸⁸ Brett Ashley Leeds and Michaela Mattes, "Alliance Politics during the Cold War: Aberration, New World Order, or Continuation of History?" *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 24, 2007, p. 188.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ It would also be interesting to learn if ATOP data reveals that other countries, such as France, Great Britain, Prussia/Germany and Austria, have a similar national approach to alliances. Given their national histories, one suspects that they will, at least until the end of the European dominance of the state system prior to the onset of the Second World War. For example, one thinks here of Great Britain with its tradition of "splendid isolation," that eschewed alliances save in wartime and relied on its naval power for its security. One would expect in this case that Britain would have many short-term, war alliances, particularly with countries that do not represent real or potential challenges to its naval supremacy.

⁹¹ Following the election of Nicholas Sarkozy, the negotiations about a return of France to the integrated military structure began. See Tomas Valasek, "France, NATO and European defence," *Policy Brief* (London: Centre for European Reform, March 2008).

did in 1967, 1991 and 1999), to shore up unity by broadening participation in the discussion of strategic issues.⁹²

Despite such measures, on occasion, trans-Atlantic tensions have suddenly erupted, were not easily contained, and quickly assumed very serious dimensions. Washington threatened an “agonising reappraisal” of its European commitment when France unexpectedly rejected proposals for German rearmament (1953). The Suez Crisis (1956) nearly destroyed the Alliance when “the strange coalition” of the White House and the Kremlin put paid to an otherwise successful Anglo-French expedition against Nasser’s Egypt.⁹³ Washington’s relations with most of NATO-Europe (Britain being the exception) significantly deteriorated following the Reagan Administration’s military strike on Libya (April 1986) and it was months before a business as usual approach was resumed.⁹⁴ At other times, both public *and* political support for the Alliance appears to have vanished. For example, the NATO agreement (1979) to deploy intermediate-range nuclear forces to counter similar Soviet systems led to intense debates inside national parliaments and huge demonstrations (in some cases orchestrated by Soviet fifth column organisations) in the streets of NATO-Europe’s cities.⁹⁵ Opposition by allies to the policies of the Clinton and Bush administrations—whether over Bosnia and Kosovo, or Afghanistan and Iraq—is, therefore, not without ample precedent.

Rule Six: *alliances based only on the assertion of common values, as opposed to common interests, tend to be ineffective or short-lived or both.* Hans Morgenthau noted that, “[a] purely ideological alliance, unrelated to material interests, cannot but be stillborn: it is unable to determine policies or guide actions and misleads by presenting the appearance of political solidarity where there is none.”⁹⁶ Constructing an ideological coalition is obviously a relatively easy task in the wake of a challenge to the values being asserted as common, and against which they are more easily able to define common understandings of how they *ought* to act. “Oughtness” is crucial in this regard, for management of the system (and that is what an ideological alliance in some measure aims to do) is an inherently normative undertaking. As a result, such pacts are also highly appealing to many leaders for they often appear quite natural—viz., a league of democracies. The British conservative thinker, Edmund Burke, believed that alliances were largely constructed on similar outlooks, and British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston (1834), generally regarded as a pragmatist, went so far as to advocate “a Western confederacy of free states as a counterpoise to the Eastern league of arbitrary governments.”⁹⁷

⁹² For a history of the negotiations leading to the creation of the NPG, see Paul Buteux, *The Politics of Nuclear Consultation in NATO* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁹³ British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan used the phrase “the strange coalition” when discussing Suez in his later years. See Michael Charlton, *The Price of Victory* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1983), p. 218.

⁹⁴ Lord Carrington, the NATO Secretary-General, stated two weeks after the attack on Libya that “[t]he situation is as bad between Europe and America as I can remember in the period I have been associated with the alliance.” Quoted in Hendrickson, “The Miscalculation of NATO’s Death,” p. 103.

⁹⁵ At the time of the deployment of the intermediate nuclear forces, Paul Buteux argued that the Alliance’s strategic doctrine, Flexible Response, was essentially fulfilling the role of an ideology. See his *Strategy, Doctrine and the Politics of Alliance* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982).

⁹⁶ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 178.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Stephen Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 34.

Agreement on how best to manage such an ideological alliance has, however, always been far more difficult than its foundation. This is so because agreeing on what ought to be done is miles away from actually agreeing to do something: the latter requires only a rhetorical commitment, while the latter involves the cold calculation of political interests and the application of scarce resources (financial and military). The fate of the Quadruple Alliance (1815), that saw Austria, Britain, Russia and Prussia combine to prevent any further challenges from France, is a case in point. (By 1818, when France was no longer seen as dangerous, the pact was expanded and became the Quintuple Alliance.⁹⁸) Alongside a pledge to confront any revived revolutionary threat, regular congresses were to be convened to deal with any and all problems that might threaten the equilibrium of Europe. This solidarity was, however, short-lived, and the alliance collapsed in the 1820s. The diverging interests of the signatories meant that Britain and France strongly opposed the counter-revolutionary agenda of their allies. As British historian Harold Nicholson noted at the outset of his study of the Congress of Vienna (1815), “[n]ations in the hour of danger, ceased, once victory had been achieved, to compel solidarity.”⁹⁹ Despite their generally recognized ineffectiveness, ideological pacts are nonetheless relatively common. The Dreikaiserbund (1881) and the Anti-Comintern Pact (1941) are other examples of ideological pacts: the former functioned for only a very few years and the latter, while it encapsulated the cause of the Axis Powers during the Second World War, provided no mechanism whatsoever for effective coordination of policies.

Stephen Walt has argued that alliances founded on common values, a common ethnic background and a shared historical experience, are nonetheless susceptible to the impact of demographic and social change. Although it has never been a military alliance, the gradual loosening of ties between the members of the British Commonwealth since the 1960s is a very good example of how time and the natural changes in resident populations can alter otherwise close relations among a grouping of states. As will be discussed below, NATO has also experienced a similar influence, particularly with regard to the transformation of European strategic cultures. Other sources of change are also possible. For example, the rapid growth of Muslim minorities in the countries of NATO-Europe is likely to pose a significant challenge to the future of trans-Atlantic relations, as the perspectives and policies of European governments on key international security issues will need to respond to the demands of this growing segment of their population. Likewise, Walt notes that “demographic and generational changes in the US could undermine its traditional commitment to Europe and encourage a more active involvement in Asia or Latin America.”¹⁰⁰

Rule Seven: *ideological differences do not rule out the formation of alliances.* As alliances are constructed to achieve a particular objective, it stands to reason that ideologically opposed states might find common cause to unite. The durability of such pacts is probably limited due to the inherent distrust, magnified by normative differences, between the signatories. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (1939) that provided for the Fourth Partition of Poland is, perhaps, the most striking modern example of an alliance between Powers at the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. At the time it was concluded it was regarded as nothing less than a diplomatic earthquake, testifying to the belief in its unnaturalness. But, as Hitler often demonstrated, interests tended to trump such concerns, even if only for a short while. History shows that others have

⁹⁸ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored; Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-1822* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), pp. 184-185.

⁹⁹ Harold Nicholson, *The Congress of Vienna* (London: Methuen, 1961), p. ix.

¹⁰⁰ Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” p. 161.

done likewise. The Most Christian King of France, Francis I (1494-1547), early in his reign pledged himself to a crusade to liberate the Holy Land but, but facing defeat in a war with the Habsburgs, by the mid-1530s contracted an alliance with the Ottoman sultan.¹⁰¹ Such an arrangement was quite obviously an affront to the rest of Christendom, and carried associated political costs, so Francis carefully maintained “official friendliness and public hostility toward the Turks.” However, the extent of the pact not be denied when, in 1543, the city of Toulon was evacuated and given to the Ottoman fleet as a winter anchorage.¹⁰² Different ideologies or value systems might impede the formation of specific alliances, but sometimes a state’s grand strategy demands that it reach over such barriers.

Rule Eight: *alliances generally lead to counter-alliances.* The existence of one alliance is almost naturally going to create an impetus for other Powers to fashion their own security arrangements. It can hardly be otherwise, for whether balancing against accumulations of power or balancing against possible threats is the motivation, no state can afford to hazard its security on the presumed good will or inactivity of a coalition of which it is not a member. After 1890, Germany’s alliance with Austria led Russia and France to seek a common defence pact. Bismarck’s effort to stabilize Europe would, in time, lead to the undoing of his creation. More recently, it might be argued that NATO enlargement has gradually pushed Russia to seek closer ties with China and other Central Asian states:¹⁰³ and certainly, it has led Moscow to exaggerate the strategic and historical significance of its ties with Serbia, as well as to increase its political pressure on Ukraine. Regarding the expansion of the Alliance as a threat to its own security interests, it is only logical for it to seek reassurance and support from other unaligned countries. While it seems doubtful that the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation will ever achieve the level of integration of NATO, the dynamic of action/counter-action cannot be ignored when an expansion of the Western Alliance’s membership is being considered.

Rule Nine: *alliances can persist long after the political context within which they were created has been transformed.* In other words, the continued existence of a formal alliance is not necessarily synonymous with its continuing practical utility. The Anglo-Portuguese alliance—the oldest in the world—dates from the late-fourteenth century but its application has been spotty at best during the last six centuries. It could not be otherwise for the concerns of its creator, John of Gaunt (1340-1399), are far different from those of the current British prime minister, Gordon Brown (b.1951). And although Lisbon provided some support to Britain’s Falkland’s campaign (1982), it did not immediately enter the First World War and was neutral in the Second World War. But one need not deal in centuries to see examples of alliances that lose their political lustre. France’s alliance with Czechoslovakia (1924) remained in effect even as Paris followed London’s lead in agreeing to hand over the Sudetenland (1938), thereby subordinating its ally to the Third Reich. In doing so, France acknowledged that it no longer had the military capabilities to assist the Czechs in any effective manner.¹⁰⁴ The Treaty of Dunkirk (1947) committed Britain and France to defend one another against a resurgent Germany, and remained legally binding until

¹⁰¹ For a detailed discussion of the dynamics of the Franco-Turk alliance, see Clarence Dana Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature* (Paris: Boivin and Company, 1974), pp. 105-120.

¹⁰² Given the profound cultural differences and, very probably, a profound distrust of each other, the relations between French and Turkish officials that winter at Toulon were far from harmonious. See R. J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 487-489.

¹⁰³ Stanley Korber, “Cracks in the Foundation; NATO’s New Troubles”, p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ Robert J. Young, *In Command of France; French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 198-202.

1997: long before that date, however, all three Powers were already leading members of both NATO and the European Union (EU), and Germany had been peacefully reunified in 1989. In looking at alliances, one needs to acknowledge that they are essentially snapshots of members' interests at the time of their formation.

Such general rules tell us that the dynamic of alliance formation, maintenance and termination is largely defined by context. To understand how an alliance functions, it is important to acknowledge what political interests its member-states believe that it is serving and what is the assessment of its value to member governments. As the preceding discussion has demonstrated, there is nothing essentially actuarial about the operation of alliances, for they are, first and foremost, political institutions, and so an approach that only calculates assets and liabilities will not entirely capture the relationships that take place within them. However, it is reasonable to argue that an alliance that it perceived not to be serving a member's broadly defined interests is unlikely to endure or to endure as an effective military pact that plays a role in policy-making.

5 What Does This Mean for NATO?

How does the preceding discussion relate to the current situation in NATO? The rise and fall of alliances are of persistent interest in international history, and the Western Alliance is no exception. “History teaches us, and invariably we disregard her lesson,” Harold Nicholson wrote in his study of the Congress of Vienna (1815), “that Coalitions begin to disintegrate from the moment that the common danger is removed.”¹⁰⁵ And, indeed, there is an undercurrent of disbelief in the public realm that NATO persists. It was political scientist John Mearsheimer who observed in 1990 that the Soviet threat was “the glue that holds NATO together. Take away that offensive threat and the United States is likely to abandon the Continent.”¹⁰⁶ And, indeed, while it was the former Secretary General, Manfred Wornier, who observed that no where in the Treaty of Washington is the Soviet Union mentioned, scepticism still remains. As Robert McCalla noted in his study of the Alliance’s continued existence, that “several analysts argue that NATO has achieved its purpose, outlived its usefulness, and can—even should—be expected to die a peaceful death.”¹⁰⁷ More recently, the German weekly, *Der Spiegel*, wrote that “[t]he trans-Atlantic alliance is no longer a given.” It added that “[c]ordialities between top politicians no longer suffice to cover up the widening gap of interests.”¹⁰⁸

But if there have been many histories of its creation, and veritable library written about its activities both in the Cold War and after, fewer authors have taken the opportunity to ask why it is still here, particularly as the adversary for which was created has long vanished. The traditional understandings for alliances suggest that NATO’s persistence is an oddity. Aggregation of resources is of utility only when there is a reason to do so. And, since the demise of the Soviet threat one might question the Alliance’s continuing collective defence function. NATO as the *pacta de contrahendo* is only convincing if the member-states see membership as outweighing the costs of such a constraint: or, and perhaps more accurately, that abrogation poses a greater threat to national interests than continuing membership. Neither of these arguments seems to be the case today. But, perhaps more striking for an alliance, there seems to be little agreement as to what purpose NATO is now meant to serve.

The fact that NATO has been around for 60 years, and three generations of political leaders and students of international politics have viewed it as a centrepiece for security in the Euro-Atlantic region, is surely an important reason, in itself, for its post-Cold War longevity. Stephen Walt, for example, has argued that “the longer an alliance lasts, the more numerous and influential its advocates will be.” Ending the alliance “would liquidate the principal professional achievement of this transnational community and foreclose the continuing series of transatlantic conferences that these elites have long enjoyed.” One can expect, he rather cynically added, “these elites to resist pressures to dismantle the Alliance, even if it had outlived its usefulness.”¹⁰⁹ In other

¹⁰⁵ Nicholson, *The Congress of Vienna*, p. 262.

¹⁰⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, Summer 1990, p. 52.

¹⁰⁷ Robert B. McCalla, “NATO’s Persistence After the Cold War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 3, Summer 1996, p. 446.

¹⁰⁸ Eberhard Sandschneider, “Why Obamamania Isn’t the Answer,” *Der Spiegel*, 23 February 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” p. 166.

words, NATO continues to exist because there is a political class that sees it as in its own interest that it endure.

Other scholars are also casting about for explanations. Jae-Jung Suh has argued that it is necessary to abandon the power-interest focus when attempting to explain the resilience of highly integrated alliances such as NATO. Alliances are affected, he argues, by both “efficiency and identity.”¹¹⁰ The alliance has survived the end of the Cold War because an alliance ideology has emerged where “allied officials and officers issue a number of statements, findings, directives, announcements, and so on, which identify threats and define security.”¹¹¹ Military exercises, assistance programmes and common training, the interoperability of military equipment and techniques, serve to reinforce expectations and guide decision-making. Taken together, these factors have, Suh argues, created a trans-national identity that can sustain a military pact beyond what classical understandings of alliances would have predicted.

The limitation with explanations that rely on common elite values or a trans-national identity is that it is impossible to determine when either emerged, what influence they have played on day-to-day policy-making, and what factors might limit their appeal. Are we to assume that the officialdom in all the allied capitals thinks alike, drawing upon a common reservoir of norms and values defined by membership in the Trans-Atlantic Alliance? What role do political and strategic cultures play in mediating the transmission of those values? Walt himself has acknowledged these problems when he cautions that “students of NATO are likely to exaggerate the importance of common ideologies and shared identities by taking the rhetoric of national leaders and foreign policy elites too seriously.”¹¹² Suh has argued likewise, by noting that social identity is not set in stone only exists so long as member-states are willing to recognise it. It is, he pointedly observes, “what states make of it after all.”¹¹³ In other words, identity- and value-based explanations would appear to be dependent on other factors. It is an important point to note, for political rhetoric can mask profound differences and even hostility in alliances. The warm remarks that accompanied the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939, with Stalin toasting Germany’s Führer are, perhaps, the best example. However, even the Anglo-American alliance during the Second World War never ran as smoothly as many observers might have thought watching contemporary newsreels and reading the leaders’ speeches. NATO is no exception to this.

Providing an alternate explanation, Leeds and Mattes (working with ATOP) have argued that Cold War era alliances, of which NATO remains one even two decades later, “are less likely to be conditional, more likely to be explicitly linked to other areas of cooperation, more likely to be connected to a bureaucratic organization, and more likely to endure.”¹¹⁴ Building on this argument, Leeds and Savun have observed that some alliances require “sophisticated coordination machinery for integrated command, new bases, and coordinated defense policy.”¹¹⁵ (Given the level of integration they are describing, it is obvious that they are describing NATO.) Once states in such an organisation have invested for more than half a century in the construction and

¹¹⁰ Jae-Jung Suh, *Power, Interest and Identity in Military Alliances* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2007), p. 175.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹² Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” p. 169.

¹¹³ Suh, *Power, Interest and Identity in Military Alliances*, p. 192.

¹¹⁴ Leeds and Mathes, “Alliance Politics during the Cold War,” pp. 197-198.

¹¹⁵ Leeds and Savun, “Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements,” p. 1123.

maintenance of such a very costly institution, they may be reluctant to abandon that investment. The start-up costs for a similarly useful organization could be assessed as prohibitive and is a significant, if not decisive constraint on any contemplated abandonment of an alliance.¹¹⁶ In other words, national interests (and how resources are expended to advance those interests) are the determining factors. NATO persists because it is a cost-effective approach to the management of member-states' national security interests.

The work by scholars associated with ATOP is thought-provoking, but its explanation for NATO's persistence, while extremely useful, is not entirely convincing. The argument it presents assumes that member-states are engaged in a carefully calculated relationship, where decisions are based solely on the assessment of costs and benefits. There is no doubt that such assessments do occur in particular issue areas. One thinks here, for example, of the decades-long debate about burden sharing that began early in the Alliance's life and continues today in such forms as the Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI). No evidence is offered, however, that the larger question of membership in the Alliance has yet been subject to the same analysis by member-states.

That such a debate might be useful to states is undeniable. For small allies especially, the costs of reconstructing alliance-type relations after the demise of highly integrated military pacts would be prohibitively expensive. This is particularly so when one considers that many of the initial start-up costs and maintenance fees of alliances will be disproportionately borne by major Powers that are less likely to absorb such expenses in the absence of a direct threat. The vulnerability of minor Powers is, therefore, a reason to expect that they will struggle hardest to maintain an alliance relationship, such as NATO, long after its initial purpose has been achieved. This may also explain why allies such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, and Canada have been so active in the NATO mission in Afghanistan, fearing that the Alliance's failure there would threaten the multilateral framework through which they have long exercised influence over their security policy. While this argument seems reasonable, it fails to account for the more limited contributions of other minor allies. An alternate explanation is also possible.

It seems likely that the behaviour of NATO allies is not just being determined by an accounting of investment costs but also by the availability of alternative security arrangements. For just as the European allies have invested in the building of NATO, they have (*sans* Norway) also been involved in the construction of the European Union with the addition of resources from non-NATO EU members. During the past decade, the EU has devoted considerable effort to constructing a European defence capability, separate from NATO and, most importantly, Washington. While the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is still unable to provide for the security needs of its membership, a task that NATO continues to do, it is clear that it will become increasingly important politically in years to come. There is no guarantee that ESDP will ever be able to substitute for NATO in the near- to mid-term—a goal that its hard-line advocates are now less vocal about. It is possible, however, that NATO's survival is critical to the completion of this aspect of the European project.¹¹⁷ If so, one can expect that in addition to the frictions discussed below, trans-Atlantic tensions will grow as ESDP becomes increasingly self-sufficient.

¹¹⁶ This argument is made in Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane and Celeste Wallandar, *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁷ What all of this might mean for a non-EU member, such as Canada, is beyond the scope of this Memorandum.

Explaining why NATO is still around clearly poses real difficulties for students of international relations. Whatever the causes that explain its durability so far, the Alliance seems unprepared for the international environment that has succeeded the Cold War. The decades-old understandings of threat and appropriate response, and the mechanisms fashioned to support alliance interaction, now confront divergent assessments of the world-at-large. The identity function that the NATO security paradigm long provided is, it might be argued, now at odds with the perceived interests of many allies. The scale of the US contribution to the Alliance, once accepted, has now become far heavier—not only because its resources are demanded in other regions, but also because the language to justify it has slowly dissipated in the face of new security challenges. Likewise, the Cold War’s trans-Atlantic bargain created a European understanding of what was considered appropriate defence measures (size and utility of the armed forces) that no longer seem so to Washington. In other words, the US and NATO-Europe’s views of grand strategy have diverged in response to the new international security environment:

The power and position of the United States has only grown since the end of the Cold War. Washington perceives threats to its interests throughout the world and seeks to affect events from the Horn of Africa to the South China Sea, from the jungles of Columbia to the archipelagos of Indonesia. Europeans and Canadians do not seek global military status and share neither Washington’s global objectives nor its preferred means of dealing with threats. Unlike many Americans, Europeans are simply not desirous of possessing substantial military forces that are capable of major foreign deployment.¹¹⁸

The result of these different outlooks is a form of schizophrenia where the rhetoric of the Alliance recalls an earlier time, while national policies and actions indicate that a change is underway. These differences have been brought into specific relief when, as is discussed below, in the effort to transform NATO into an expeditionary security force and in the responses to 9/11. In a recent British parliamentary report, Michael Williams of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) captured this incoherence: “At the core of the Alliance’s current difficulties is a lack of consensus about what NATO is supposed to do. The allies all agree that NATO is a political-military alliance made up of democratic states that share common values. Beyond this, disagreement is rife.”¹¹⁹

5.1 Collective Defence, Collective Security and Ad Hoc Coalitions

In the years immediately after the end of the Cold War, it was recognised that the trans-Atlantic relationship had to change, but few were certain in what manner. Western Europe wants, one journalist wrote in early-1990,

the United States to provide a security shield against both the Soviet Union and a united Germany as well as to contribute generously to the reconstruction of

¹¹⁸ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11: An Alliance in Continuing Decline*, p. 9

¹¹⁹ *The future of NATO and European defence*, Ninth Report of Session 2007-2008 (London: House of Commons, Defence Committee, 20 March 2008), p. 22.

Eastern Europe. Yet Western Europe is also eager to take charge of its destiny and reduce Washington's political role.¹²⁰

US policymakers understood this dynamic, and quickly recognized that any movement away from the traditional model of the Alliance would likely tie their hands in the new world that it was facing. However, if a Cold War alliance was less relevant to a US that no longer faced a peer competitor, NATO-Europe saw the world quite differently. As the Soviet Union collapsed with the potential for greater instability, and Yugoslavia imploded, most of the European allies were not inclined to abandon completely the alliance model that had proven its worth. Therefore, the *Strategic Concept* released in 1991 reiterated the traditional aims of the North Atlantic Alliance, namely deterrence of adversaries, collective defence, and maintaining the strategic balance in Europe. In a world without a direct security threat, however, that effort nonetheless seemed outdated. Few allies were prepared to maintain their defence spending at Cold War levels, and the obligations of the alliance soon came to be seen as an unwarranted burden. The collective defence model of NATO was too much rooted in Cold War understandings of an external adversary and intra-alliance relations, and could not be sustained.

The movement toward NATO's reconfiguration as a collective security organization for Europe took impetus, despite US reservations, when the European Union was unable to act in a security capacity during the Yugoslav civil wars. The television imagery of widespread violence, the outflow of refugees from those war-torn lands, and the fear of the violence spreading into adjacent regions, possibly to involve direct participation of NATO allies themselves, led the Alliance to take up the role of Balkan peace enforcer. By the time the Intervention Force (IFOR) was deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina in late-1995, followed by SFOR (the Stabilisation Force) a year later, NATO was openly acknowledged by many commentators to be indispensable to post-Cold War European security.¹²¹ NATO's credibility was now firmly tied to its apparent capacity to fulfill a collective security function in Europe. The open-door policy toward membership that had been adopted earlier that year in the Report on Enlargement was itself a logical continuation of the Alliance's claim to that new role and its responsibilities.

NATO was not, however, capable of being a collective security organization for post-Cold War Europe. Like the League of Nations before 1939, NATO's member-states lacked the political will and the military assets to perform such a function. This was not at all a revelation. To many observers, the weaknesses of the European allies had already become obvious during the NATO-authorized air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs in summer 1995, and in the peripheral role that they played during the peace talks hosted by the US at Dayton Air Force Base later that year. In both cases, the Allies had essentially followed the US lead: at Dayton, for instance, US diplomats had conducted the negotiations while the allies were simply informed of the results.¹²² When the Imia/Kardak crisis broke in early-1996 and only last minute intervention by President Clinton averted another Greek-Turkish war, senior US officials were openly contemptuous of Europe's incapacity.¹²³

¹²⁰ Alan Riding, "Western Europe is Edgy Over the US and Much Else," *The New York Times*, 25 February 1990.

¹²¹ Sten Rynning, *Nato Renewed: The Power and Purpose of Transatlantic Cooperation*, p. 28.

¹²² See Richard Holbrooke, *To End A War* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 236 and 288-307.

¹²³ Richard Holbrooke, the Assistant Secretary of State at the time, was widely quoted in the media criticising Europe for having slept through the crisis: "You have to wonder why Europe does not seem

The reality of just how incapable NATO-Europe had become was glaringly apparent during the Kosovo War (1999). It was clear from the outset that not all members of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) were equally committed to the 78-day Operation Allied Force (March to May 1999) and some were not at all convinced by Washington's assessment of the danger of doing nothing.¹²⁴ Outwardly, cohesion at the political level was maintained but in terming it a "virtual alliance," Michael Ignatieff has quite rightly noted that "at the military level, alliance cohesion was a myth."¹²⁵ Intra-alliance discord during the war hampered the conduct of operations and the development of strategy, made it more difficult to translate the stated objectives from the NAC into a "clear attainable military plan,"¹²⁶ and the disparity in military capabilities in some cases undermined the practical value of allies' contributions. Although units from 14 countries contributed to the air campaign, the United States conducted over 50 percent of the combat sorties, and many allies had had to rely on the US for a wide range of "essential war-fighting technologies" that they had not acquired prior to the conflict.¹²⁷ Moreover, as Donald Neill has argued, some European allies were, from the outset of hostilities, under considerable domestic political pressure to oppose the continuation of the war:

Only days into the campaign, certain Allies began to feel the effects of domestic opposition to the war. According to [SACEUR, General Wesley] Clark, Rome soon asked whether NATO could avoid assigning Italian aircraft to strike missions until after the Italian parliament had approved participation. More seriously, about the same time a Greek Deputy Foreign Minister called for an immediate halt to the bombing. Less than a week after the first bombs fell, Clark received a call from the Italian Chief of Defence, who warned that if NATO escalated too rapidly, the Italian government could face a crisis: "Italy, he said, might be able to withstand only another three or four days of bombing."

"Given that Italy was one of the countries dropping bombs," Neill aptly observes, "the irony of this phrase is difficult to overstate."¹²⁸

The Kosovo war—the only war ever conducted by NATO—brought a sudden end to any discussion of the Alliance acting as a collective security organization. Disagreements about the

capable of taking decisive action in its own theatre." See Martin Pratt and Clive Schofield, "The Imia/Kardak Rocks Dispute in the Aegean Sea," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin*, Spring 1996, p. 68.

¹²⁴ In a meeting with a senior member of a NATO-Europe delegation at NATO, this author was told that some European ambassadors believed that, in briefings to the NAC prior to the initiation of the air campaign, US officials were lying about the situation in Kosovo. In saying this, he added that he was "very angry and very embarrassed" that those supposed misrepresentations were never challenged. Private interview at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, April 2000.

¹²⁵ Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, p. 207.

¹²⁶ "Kosovo Air Operations: Need to Maintain Alliance Cohesion Led to Doctrinal Departures," Report to Congressional Requesters GAO-01-784 (Washington D.C.: Government Accounting Office, 27 July 2001), p. 7, accessed at <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-01-784>.

¹²⁷ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11: An Alliance in Continuing Decline*, p. 70.

¹²⁸ Donald Alexander Neill, "The Evolution of Organisational Structure, Policies and Procedures for Crisis Management: NATO, Kosovo, and the Transition from Collective Defence to Collective Security," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The Brussels School of International Studies & The University of Kent at Brussels, January 2006), p. 186.

degree of threat that instability in Kosovo posed, political difficulties in sustaining a military operation, and the capability gap all came together to undermine the Alliance's ability to conduct an efficient campaign and, in the opinion of some US officials, extended a war that should have lasted a few weeks into one of almost three months' duration.¹²⁹ The new post-Cold War NATO had badly failed its first serious test in battle. For critics, the war confirmed that the most effective role for the Alliance was to provide political support for US-led coalitions and little more. A study, released by the Washington-based General Accounting Office (GAO) in July 2001, stated that

[t]he need to maintain alliance cohesion during the conflict led to important departures from standard US military doctrine and resulted in a limited mission with unclear objectives. Many American military officers and civilian officials who participated in this campaign felt that these departures resulted in a longer conflict, more extensive damage to Yugoslavia and significant losses to alliance forces.¹³⁰

The report concluded by noting that future multinational operations conducted similarly could lead to higher costs.¹³¹ It was a warning that military planners were not inclined to ignore. The US decision two years after Kosovo not to seek assistance from NATO in Operation Enduring Freedom's initial campaign in Afghanistan was undoubtedly a reaction to that assessment.¹³²

Although the concept long predated 9/11,¹³³ in the weeks that followed the attacks US policy-makers emphasized the need for (and the desirability to build) "coalitions of the willing" to deal with international security challenges. The focus on such an approach was understandable. Collective defence was no longer politically relevant and any idea of NATO as a new collective security system had been dashed by the alliance's performance in Bosnia and Kosovo. (And, as is discussed below, there was little evidence of a common appreciation of the threat in the wake of the attacks.) Moreover, European defence reform efforts—the St. Malo Declaration (December 1998) and the European Security and Defence Policy (June 1999)—that emerged in reaction to the capability gap had only just begun and, as time would demonstrate, were subject to many of the same political and financial constraints that had so hobbled Operation Allied Force. The US emphasis on ad hoc coalitions suggested to many that NATO had become rather peripheral in Washington's grand strategy, a perception that by the time of the outbreak of hostilities with Iraq in early 2003 was believed to be undermining the cohesion of the alliance itself.

In the years that followed, NATO's coherence was challenged by the emergence of two increasingly obvious and different agendas. The United States, anxious not to lose its influence in Europe, has sought NATO transformation to ensure access to greater military capabilities for expeditionary (i.e., out-of-area) missions, such as the ongoing operation in Afghanistan. The

¹²⁹ "Kosovo Air Operations," p. 11.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹³² Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars; from 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2008), pp. 224-225.

¹³³ For example, the first time that this author recalls hearing that phrase was during research he conducted in late-1992. In an interview at the Department of Defense, a senior official used "coalition of the willing" to describe the countries that the US had led in liberating Kuwait in 1991. Author's notes of a private interview with US official, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., 18 November 1992.

Europeans, unable or unwilling to rebuild their armed forces and acquire the necessary military capabilities, have largely sought to use the Alliance to restrain Washington that is often seen as exacerbating security challenges, and too reliant on military force to address international crises. The Bush Administration's emphasis on "coalitions of the willing" gave rise to charges from NATO-Europe of US policy becoming overtly unilateralist: but, from Washington's perspective, the policy was, in part, a direct response to the incapacity (political and military) of its European allies. The United States continues to support NATO transformation and European defence reform, but policymakers no longer seem willing to subordinate Washington's international goals (and the country's security) to NATO procedures that they have assessed as inadequate in addressing contemporary threats and challenges. The European allies, confident that they understand the nuances of international affairs better than some US presidents, have instead playing a waiting game and hoping that after George W. Bush departs political life a new administration will initiate a radical shift in US policy.¹³⁴

Are "coalitions of the willing" necessarily detrimental to an alliance such as NATO? In a recent study, Danish scholar Sten Rynning has suggested that they do not need to be and has argued that the US failure in 2003 to build a coalition to wage war with Iraq was due to Washington's approach being too flexible and too detached from the Alliance's institutions.¹³⁵ Rynning's analysis is highly original, and argues that one must look at the Alliance dynamic as a dialectic of flexibility (sense of community but "fleeting shared interests") and inclusion (shared perceptions of risks and threats). At any time in the post-Cold War era, the Alliance has found itself balancing between these two poles. Too much flexibility means "calls for change to the existing alliance," "framework documents in which several priorities coexist," and a slim common organization. Inclusion, on the other hand, means a large alliance with a focus on consensus decision-making, a coherent set of policy priorities, and a highly interdependent military organisation.¹³⁶ Each challenge—e.g., bombing the Bosnian Serbs, fielding the Kosovo Protection Force (KFOR), waging war in Afghanistan—requires a different balance of these two components. To some degree, it might be argued that the Alliance has already recognized this. The Berlin Plus Agreement, whereby the EU would access NATO planning capabilities and military assets to conduct its own low-intensity operations, and the development of the concept of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), would seem to demonstrate the type of flexibility that Rynning is advocating. For Rynning, therefore, the blame for failing to engage NATO-Europe in 2003 lies less in the Alliance's military inadequacies and more in decisions by governments on both sides of the Atlantic. By the time that it had decided to topple Saddam, the Bush Administration had become too cynical about the role of NATO (and, by implication, its NATO allies) in world affairs, and America's European allies were too reluctant to engage in the act of coalition building.¹³⁷ The failure was that no one was prepared to do the necessary diplomatic work. Mission-specific coalitions are not the problem, Rynning is arguing, so long as the manner of constructing them respects the Alliance's institutions, including one presumes the intensive planning and consultative processes.

¹³⁴ See Fraser Cameron, "Little Time for Reflection: Barack Obama's transatlantic to-do list," *The Atlantic Times*, December 2008, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Sten Rynning, *Nato Renewed: The Power and Purpose of Transatlantic Cooperation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 165

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Rynning's analysis may be very useful in understanding recent intra-alliance dynamics, but it is also overly optimistic as a prescription for solving future problems. The events surrounding the Iraq war would seem to argue for less certainty when looking to the future. Contrary to what many pundits have argued, the US campaign against Saddam was highly successful. And while Washington did obtain important aid from some of its European allies, it did not require NATO support to conduct the expeditionary campaign that it launched against Iraq. The utility of the Alliance in waging wars—expeditionary or not—has significantly declined in the post-Cold War era. The failure of US policy occurred in the post-conflict stage when the assistance of its European allies could have been considerable, but was denied. Germany and France, in particular, argued that to do otherwise would legitimize a war that neither supported. Given the context within which the decision to go to war was made, it seems unlikely that any future US leader would act differently. Given that public opinion in Europe was overwhelmingly opposed to the war, would European leaders have acted differently had NATO been consulted? It is not at all clear that greater consultation and involvement by NATO-Europe in the run-up to the war would have yielded a different set of intra-alliance relations. The challenge to NATO is not bad US policy-making, although that is a serious irritant, it is the different policy outlooks that are found on either side of the Atlantic.

“Coalitions of the willing” within NATO offer occasional opportunities to overcome that divide without solving the more serious problem, but only at a price. Some governments, for example, would certainly welcome the relaxing of pressure to contribute to US-led missions, and it might weaken the demands to increase defence spending. However, the flexibility attached to such coalitions would significantly weaken the stake of individual member-states in the security of their allies. The centrifugal forces discussed above will likely be strengthened. Too great flexibility, it might be argued, undermines the very purpose of the alliance itself. As Richard Rupp has argued in this regard, “[t]he damage to NATO is considerable when the Alliance is viewed not as a community of twenty-six states but as a coalition consisting of five or six states.”¹³⁸ Rynning's belief in the continuing resilience of the Alliance under such circumstances is rooted in an assessment that the new NATO is built on two pillars: “an abstract sense of shared fate and a concrete sense of what needs to be done.”¹³⁹ But is that really true in the post-Cold War era? Even more important, does one need the framework of a formal alliance for a relationship erected atop those pillars?

In answering that first question, it is arguable that a collective sense of what needs to be done is no longer present. Differing interpretations about the value of Article V are but one issue, although serious, for it questions the heart of any alliance, the military commitment. Many of the newer members see the security guarantee as protecting them from Russia, whereas most longstanding European allies view it as little more than a political symbol. More to the point, during the past decade, many observers have suggested that the allies no longer even share a coherent view of the world. In 2003, the disagreements between Washington and London on one side, and Berlin and Paris on the other, were such that one would have been hard-pressed to assume that an alliance existed at all. And, while all of the governments have worked to overcome the tensions created by that disagreement, the dispute was hardly resolved. In the wake of the Iraq war, opinion polling regularly reveals that the publics in NATO-Europe often regard US policy as a threat to international peace and stability. Several European allies have quietly

¹³⁸ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11*, p. 199

¹³⁹ Rynning, *Nato Renewed*, p. 163.

opposed Washington in a range of areas (i.e., soft balancing), including the war on terror, the Middle East, ballistic missile defence and NATO enlargement, and have justified the building up of military capabilities within ESDP—“semi-hard balancing”—in order to more effectively influence and/or constrain the United States.¹⁴⁰ Such actions are, of course, consistent with alliances in the past, but are now also accompanied by an unwillingness to contribute adequate resources to the mission in Afghanistan that all parties have asserted is the key to NATO’s renovation.

In relying upon “coalitions of the willing,” Washington seems to be directly challenging the expectations of key European allies about appropriate behaviour by a member of the Alliance. In 1956, when the United States humiliated France and Britain, the Soviet threat constrained its allies’ options in responding to such actions. NATO was essential to their national security. Today, such liberty of action may no longer be tolerated, and each example of “unilateralism” confirms the differences. “As long as the two sides of the Alliance do not directly harm each others’ interests,” Rynning has written, “then it is in the nature of things that they disagree on some issues, sometimes even passionately so.”¹⁴¹ But, if there is a dispute (often unspoken) about the continuing relevance of Article V, no agreement on how to deal with the threat of terror, and little stomach in NATO-Europe for the transformation of the Alliance into an expeditionary capable force, in what areas of significance are the allies now in accord? Alliances composed of states with shared foreign policy goals tend to endure, but serious challenges arise when there are significant differences.

5.2 9/11 and the Threat of Terror

To a considerable degree, the disputes within the Alliance are a function of the relative weight of the United States and the absence of a common threat that might constrain the exercise of that power. But it is perhaps even more a function of diverging perceptions within NATO concerning the use of force and the role of military power as an expression of common policies. These problems were first evident in the immediate post-Cold War years, but have become increasingly salient (undeniably so) in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. As historian Niall Ferguson has argued, “[t]he real turning point—the moment when the twenty-first century may be said to have begun—was not 9/11 but 11/9. The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, changed the context of American power far more profoundly than the fall of the World Trade Center.”¹⁴² If the end of the Cold War downgraded the geo-strategic importance of Europe in American eyes, it is nonetheless undeniable that the terrorist attacks crystallized opinion in Washington about the nature of the terrorist threat. In doing so, 9/11 has driven an already existing wedge deeper into a trans-Atlantic alliance that had not fully adapted to the new international security order. Differences over the seriousness of international terrorism had already emerged at the Washington Summit (April 1999), where US efforts to have NATO

¹⁴⁰ Sven Biscop, a Belgian scholar and a keen observer of ESDP, has written that “the last couple of years have seen too many US strategies that have proved directly counter to EU interests, on Iraq, on Afghanistan and the broader Middle Eastern region, on missile defence, on the European neighbourhood.” See his “The European Security Strategy: Now Do It,” in Sven Biscop, Jolyon Howorth and Bastien Giegerich (eds.), *Europe: A Time for Strategy*, Egmont Paper 27 (Brussels: Royal Institute for International Relations, January 2009), p. 12.

¹⁴¹ Rynning, *Nato Renewed*, p. 163.

¹⁴² Niall Ferguson, *Colossus; The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 27.

identify it as a major threat failed to obtain much support for its perspective. But the divide between the United States and most of its European allies on this issue only became really serious after 9/11. For the United States, affected by a profound sense of vulnerability, the nexus of terrorism and rogue states in an era of proliferating weapons technologies is the most acute security threat of our time and homeland security its greatest challenge: for Europeans, whose countries have long been exposed to terrorism, believed that the threat is best managed by a carefully calibrated mix of diplomacy and aid, and the resort to military force must only ever be the very last option. The difference is captured in the responses from Louis Michel, Belgium's foreign minister, who after 9/11 stated that "[w]e are all victims of this attack." However, when Article V was invoked by the NAC on 12 September, Belgium expressed serious reservations and Michel directly contradicted US Secretary of State Colin Powell by emphasizing that "we are not at war."¹⁴³ In the days that followed, the German defence minister, Rudolf Scharping, and the French premier, Lionel Jospin, concurred.¹⁴⁴

Far from an exemplary display of unity, the process that took place on 12 September in the NAC highlighted the fact that the support of some in NATO-Europe was heavily qualified.¹⁴⁵ According to one observer, the invocation of Article V was largely driven by the International Staff at NATO Headquarters and Secretary General Lord Robertson who were anxious to ensure that the Alliance had a role in the upcoming military campaign. No doubt recalling Washington's unease about future allied operations following the war in Kosovo, there was a clear recognition that if NATO did not openly declare its support it would be effectively sidelined.¹⁴⁶ There would be no requirement for the US to brief the North Atlantic Council (NAC) or the Military Committee on what they were doing in responding to the 9/11 attacks. Despite this concern, Robertson encountered considerable push back when he urged the Council to adopt this course of action. In part, this was probably due to the suddenness of the event. But, additionally, there was a profound fear that the United States would unleash a maelstrom on its enemies and do so very quickly, a development that many thought was unhelpful and quite possibly illegitimate. A Canadian observer at NATO Headquarters at that time has commented that "on the 11th and 12th, there was a very palpable sense of 'today we vote, tomorrow we go to war,' with 'tomorrow' not being hyperbole at all."

September 11th divided NATO into 4 groups. America: America's friends: America's Allies: and the other guys. The "friends" are those who saw invoking Article 5 as a moral obligation. I would say that this group included the UK, Canada, Denmark, Poland, Holland, the Czechs and maybe a few more. The "allies" saw invoking article 5 as a legal obligation deriving from the text of the Washington Treaty. I would say the Belgians, Germans, Greeks, Norwegians, Portugese [sic], Spaniards and Turks fell into this group. The "other guys" are those who might have voted to invoke Article 5, but who weren't going to put any meat on the bones, and wouldn't piss on an American if he was on fire, i.e., the French.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Cited in Rupp, *NATO after 9/11*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁴ Geoff Winestock and Matthew Kaminiski, "US's NATO Allies Voice Concerns About Growing Possibility of War," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 September 2001.

¹⁴⁵ See Edgar Buckley, "Invocation of Article 5: five years on," *NATO Review*, Summer 2006, accessed at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/issue2/english/art2.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Private communication with Canadian official, Ottawa, January 2009.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

This assessment is borne out by subsequent studies. In his analysis of NATO post-9/11, Richard Rupp notes that “[m]any choose to remember the NAC’s unanimous vote on September 12, 2001 as a defining moment of allied unity, but there was in fact considerable unease within some delegations.”¹⁴⁸ Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Norway, were all concerned that adopting any such measure would be interpreted as an endorsement of any US response to the 9/11 attacks. Allies were only convinced to vote tentatively¹⁴⁹ in favour of invoking Article V after Robertson, reassured them that “Washington’s response to the attacks would focus not solely on America’s military options.” Moreover, he advised the members of the NAC that there was no automatic requirement for them to provide military contributions.¹⁵⁰ With those assurances, the NAC agreed that Article V could be invoked if Washington was able to demonstrate that the attacks had been foreign based. Even after the decision had been taken, however, several European leaders nonetheless emphasized that invoking Article V did not, as French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine noted, “deprive us of our sovereignty and freedom to make up our minds.”¹⁵¹ His German counterpart, Joschka Fischer made a similar observation. (While Védrine publicly endorsed the logic of invoking Article V, Fischer’s caution was politic, as the intense and divisive debate weeks later in the Bundestag over Germany’s initial contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom was to reveal.¹⁵²) Those statements were entirely correct but, when made in reference to the discussion in the NAC, they probably confirmed the assumption in Washington that some of in NATO-Europe would be anxious to qualify their support at a time of apprehended danger.

The decision to invoke Article V is admittedly noteworthy, as it was the first (and, so far, the only) time in the Alliance’s history that such a measure had been adopted. However, its political significance might not lie in what appears to be an assertion of unity. It was, by contrast, also an exercise in public relations that was only possible when accompanied by significant qualifications. Four days after 9/11, Francis Fukuyama tried to put the attacks into perspective, advising his readers that if they were an act of war, then the law and order approach advocated by a number of European commentators was inappropriate. He also cautioned that there would “be a major problem between the US and Europe if Europeans underestimate how angry Americans now are, or interpret too narrowly the scope of the threat. NATO’s declaration of support for the US is a hopeful sign, but it remains to be seen what kind of concrete support will be forthcoming in the months ahead.”¹⁵³ In the weeks that followed, some governments in the NAC expressed unease over what the US was likely to conduct itself in the post 9/11 security environment. The answers to many of the concerns raised by European leaders came in the January 2002 State of the Union Address in which President Bush identified a global war on terror as a component of the US grand strategy. When the *National Security Strategy of the United States* (September 2002) was released, in which the United States declared itself prepared to pre-empt threats and maintain its primacy in the face of Great Power rivals, the divide between Washington and its

¹⁴⁸ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11*, p. 195.

¹⁴⁹ “Tentatively” since Article V was only formally invoked on 2 October after the US had provided evidence that conclusively linked Al Qaeda with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. See “NATO to invoke Article Five,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 October 2001.

¹⁵⁰ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11*, p. 196.

¹⁵¹ Judy Dempsey, “Use of Article 5 marks policy shift for Europe,” *Financial Times*, 16 September 2001.

¹⁵² See this author’s article, “All Politics is Local: Germany, the Bundeswehr and Afghanistan” *International Journal*, Vol. 63, Issue 3, Summer 2008, pp. 589-590.

¹⁵³ Francis Fukuyama, “Commentary,” *The Financial Times*, 15 September 2001.

allies became very obvious. Many governments objected to the strategy's assertion of a policy of pre-emptive (actually preventive) attack, and disliked the continuing emphasis on a "global war on terror." In 2006, when the Administration released its second national security strategy, the wording was even starker: "America is at war. [...] This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we face—the rise of terrorism fuelled by an aggressive ideology."¹⁵⁴ As Rupp has observed, "[t]hrough the Bush strategy may be praised for its clarity and considerable domestic support, America's post 9/11 foreign policy would win few accolades among the country's historic allies."¹⁵⁵

That unease has grown over the past seven years and is reflected in profound disagreements on how to confront terrorism as an international security issue. The United States believed that international terrorism poses an increasingly dangerous threat and had declared itself to be at war with Islamic extremists, narrowly defined as al Qaeda, while much of NATO-Europe adopted a risk management approach. While the US has employed its armed forces to kill terrorists and its foreign policy to confront state sponsors of terrorism, much of NATO-Europe has argued that legal mechanisms (either existing or newly created) are not only sufficient, but are the most appropriate way, to deal with the risk that terrorism posed. In the EU's security strategy (ESS), *A Secure Europe in a Better World* (December 2003), terrorism was listed as just one of several "key threats:" and in dealing with it, emphasis was placed more on its causes and effects, rather than confronting its perpetrators and, if necessary, state sponsors.¹⁵⁶ This understanding—what Belgian scholar Sven Biscop refers to as a "holistic approach"—is rooted in an emphasis on human security "by reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity."¹⁵⁷ The US emphasis on rogue states either themselves endorsing, or supporting groups animated by a pernicious ideology that leads to terrorism, finds no traction in the ESS. Moreover, the approach that most European governments favoured does not permit the pre-emptive strikes at terrorist targets that the United States has viewed (by both the Clinton and Bush administrations) as a necessary response to a new threat environment. Given the very significant differences in the way that terrorism was described, and how governments and publics believed it should be confronted, it seems clear that a common trans-Atlantic language for the identification of the Alliance's purpose—a crucial component of any common sense of identity—was no longer present.

The belief that the Bush administration frittered away the support in NATO-Europe by its policy on Afghanistan and Iraq is, therefore, partly myth. There is no question that anti-American attitudes blossomed in response to ham-fisted US diplomacy after 9/11. And the many commentators who believe that the US refusal to welcome NATO participation in the planning and execution of the initial campaign against the Taliban was a serious error could well be correct. This was, however, a function of different perceptions of the appropriate role of the US, with NATO-Europe viewing it as a member of an alliance and Washington seeing itself in far broader terms. More to the point, the US perspective of its role in what the Bush administration quickly termed the "global war on terror" was as the leader of what could be described as a

¹⁵⁴ President of the United States, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: March 2006).

¹⁵⁵ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11*, p. 113.

¹⁵⁶ European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy* (Brussels: 12 December 2003), pp. 3-7.

¹⁵⁷ Biscop, "The European Security Strategy: Now Do It," p. 6.

“coalition of coalitions.” “The coalition goes way beyond NATO,” President Bush explained to NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson shortly after the start of the campaign against the Taliban.¹⁵⁸ Different tasks would be assigned to different members of the international coalition against terrorism, but it was clear from the outset that the Alliance was not central to that process. While it seems clear, as Rupp has argued, that the Bush administration was predisposed to believe that NATO would be ineffective beyond providing welcome political support,¹⁵⁹ it is difficult to conceive of what greater role NATO-Europe might have played given the differing perspectives, a disparity of far more consequence than that of military capabilities. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the majority opinion in most European countries clearly favoured a legal approach to dealing with al Qaeda and the Taliban. According to one researcher, a Gallup International poll conducted at the time, recorded sizeable majorities in Great Britain (75 percent) and France (67 percent) that were opposed to the US attacking the Taliban and favoured only the extradition of al Qaeda suspects from Afghanistan for trial: that same poll indicates that by early-November 2001, shortly after the US offensive began, 65 percent in Germany and 67 percent in Spain wanted the military campaign to end.¹⁶⁰

Central to this discussion of public attitudes is the apparent divergence in strategic cultures within NATO. It might be argued that the Cold War guarantees of the US to its European allies transformed the latter’s social understanding of armed force. Nowhere is this better seen than in the clash of views concerning conflict management strategies between those Allies that see neutralizing the Taliban as a priority, and those that see reconstruction and development as the precursors to stability. These differences are grounded in a deeply held belief that the application of military force to deal with the threat of terrorism is not only illegitimate but also wrong-headed, for the source of the problem lies in what is often termed root (i.e., socio-economic) causes. Two years ago, *Transatlantic Trends 2007*, a broad survey of opinion conducted by the German Marshall Fund, revealed the extent of the divide within NATO: 84 percent of a sampling of EU citizens declared themselves in favour of spending more money on development, 68 percent on providing more troops for peacekeeping missions, but only 20 percent supported the idea of sending troops on combat operations, and 30 percent for fighting the Taliban. In France, public support for using troops to secure the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan stood at 71 percent, in Germany 57 percent, and in Great Britain 69 percent; but those figures fell to 36, 24, and 51 percent respectively when asked about using troops to combat the Taliban. There is, therefore, considerable support for deploying troops to Afghanistan, but only to support reconstruction efforts. By contrast, while clear majorities in the US favour increasing development aid and engaging in peacekeeping operations, 66 percent of Americans surveyed also supported the idea of using troops in combat operations, and 68 endorsed their use against the Taliban.¹⁶¹ According to American historian Victor Davis Hanson, an explanation for these differences is cultural: “military service and the idea of using weapons are not seen as strange or

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Tom Lansford, *All for One: Terrorism, NATO and the United States* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2002), p. 94.

¹⁵⁹ Rupp, *NATO after 9/11*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁰ The poll is no longer accessible online. The figures cited are found in David Miller, “World Opinion opposes the attack on Afghanistan,” *Religion-online.org*, 21 November 2001, accessed at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1772>.

¹⁶¹ The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends 2007*, accessed at <http://www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/index.cfm?year=2007>.

antithetical to our society at large—as is true in contemporary Europe.”¹⁶² And while it is true that there are American policy-makers who endorse a more European perspective that emphasizes what might be termed “soft power,” and that some European Powers (most notably Great Britain and France) are developing some capability for expeditionary operations, the distinction indicated by the survey results is still generally valid. As ongoing operations in Afghanistan demonstrate, broader US interests and domestic opinion in most European countries will constrain the decisions of policy-makers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Given such deeply-rooted differences in outlook, it is difficult to sustain the argument that the trans-Atlantic security paradigm, upheld during the Cold War by American power and a deadly fear of the Soviet threat, has survived its passing intact. One can quite convincingly argue that there is a North Atlantic security community where there is agreement that their “common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of ‘peaceful change’.”¹⁶³ However, that community is increasingly inward looking and far from embracing the global perspective that critics demand is necessary in the post-Cold War world. Disagreements on the nature of the external threat and on how to confront the security challenges of today clearly work to undermine any intra-allied consensus for action outside that community. The disputes over how to conduct operations in Afghanistan and by what means are certainly specific examples of this, but the acute differences regarding the use of force are perhaps even more important.

5.3 Trans-Atlantic Relations and A Speech in Munich

In a recently published study, Rebecca Moore has charged that NATO sceptics are overlooking the Alliance’s profound political accomplishments.¹⁶⁴ That charge is probably unfair for few informed observers would dispute that, in its time, the Alliance achieved a great deal. Containing the Soviet Union was no mean feat, even if it looks much simpler and more certain in hindsight. The integration of Germany after the Second World War and, after 1990, the reassurance that NATO could accommodate a unified state, contributed greatly to European stability during the past sixty years. Neither would likely have been achieved, it must nonetheless be noted, without the looming danger posed by the Soviet Union or the determined application of American power and prestige. That is, however, beside the point, for the chosen mechanism of achieving those objectives was NATO and it accomplished the tasks very successfully. There is, therefore, certainly reason to argue that it has been a highly effective military pact.

At the same time, however, advocates frequently overlook the crises that erupted during the decades that followed the Alliance’s formation when a different international situation would likely have shortened its lifespan, and they might even be reluctant to acknowledge that much of its success has been due to Washington’s willingness to provide most of the military capabilities. Burden-sharing, after all, has never been very multilateral, a situation greatly exacerbated as of late after NATO-Europe eagerly grasped the post-Cold War peace dividend. And interoperability,

¹⁶² Victor Davis Hanson, “Military Technology and American Culture,” *The New Atlantis*, Spring 2003, p. 32.

¹⁶³ The concept of the security community is found in Karl Deutsch, *Political Communities in the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ See Rebecca Moore, *NATO’s New Mission; Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World* (Westport: Praeger: 2007), p. 143.

so often identified as a key Alliance asset, has now become little more than the ability of certain units/capabilities to work with US forces rather than the creation of a common defence capability. Lastly, few commentators would now argue in the wake of either Kosovo or the ongoing mission in Afghanistan that NATO is effective operationally. Indeed, evidence is accumulating that, unless a new commitment of resources and political will is applied to ISAF, the outcome could very well be a strategic defeat for the Western Alliance.¹⁶⁵ Regardless of its past accomplishments NATO, as a formal alliance, is today very much a wounded beast. It is not at all certain that the wound is terminal, nor is it yet obvious what the appropriate treatment might be.

Much obviously depends on the United States. Since the November 2008 election of Barack Obama, some commentators have suggested that a new birth of Atlanticism is about to take place. "Today, with the change in the US administration, there is a real possibility of building a new Euro-Atlantic consensus," a report by several noted analysts at the EU's Institute for Security Studies stated.¹⁶⁶ Much of this enthusiasm was generated by the new president's own campaign rhetoric, but it is also a heartfelt reaction to the ending of eight years of an administration whose policies most European publics viscerally disliked. Washington is obviously aware of this and, at the 45th Munich Security Conference (February 2009), Vice President Joseph Biden asserted that US foreign policy would have a different complexion: "I come to Europe on behalf of a new administration determined to set a new tone in Washington, and in America's relations around the world." And, he noted, the new tone "is not a luxury, it is a necessity" to confront "common challenges."¹⁶⁷ This speech was the first major foreign policy address by the administration and, demonstrating the importance of disciplined diplomacy and the utility of tact in advancing a country's foreign policy agenda, something often neglected during the administration of George W. Bush, it left many in the audience reassured that a new age has dawned. An article in the centre-left daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* referred to Biden as "the charmer from Washington," and called his tone "statesman-like."¹⁶⁸ Even while reporting passages that could, upon closer reading, suggest continuity with the Bush era, the article nonetheless emphasized that Biden's speech appeared to signal a new beginning in international affairs. German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who spoke the day before Biden, voiced a similar sentiment:

For me, this week which ends with the Munich Security Conference began in Washington. The new American Administration faces immense challenges. However, a spirit of renewal, drive and optimism was palpable there. [...] 2009 will not only be a difficult crisis year, but also a year which sees concerted efforts to bring about a new era in foreign and security policy.¹⁶⁹

Is this perspective warranted and what does it mean for the Alliance? At present, with the Obama Administration only in office for slightly over one month it is too soon to know. Early indications suggest that there will indeed be a new tone to US policy and that has certainly pleased NATO-Europe. After all, adjusting one's sale pitch to one's audience is always a good tactic. But a closer look at the Biden speech suggests that beyond a new timbre, the change will not be as substantive

¹⁶⁵ "NATO losing battle against the Taliban, says IISS," *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Alvaro de Vasconcelos and Marcin Zabrowski (eds.), "The EU and the world in 2009; European perspectives on the new American foreign policy agenda," *ISS Report*, No. 4, January 2009, p. 10.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph R. Biden, Speech at the 45th Munich Conference, 7 February 2009.

¹⁶⁸ Peter Lindner, "Der Charmeur aus Washington," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7 February 2009.

¹⁶⁹ Frank Walter Steinmeier, Speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference, 6 February 2009.

as many of the Bush critics and Obama supporters in NATO-Europe expect. Four messages in that address, in particular, suggest that trans-Atlantic relations will not be trouble-free, will likely recall some of the disputes of this past decade, and will highlight differences among the allies as to the overall purpose of the Alliance itself.

The first message concerned the utility of alliances. Biden was very clear in his speech that “the alliances, treaties and international organizations we build must be credible and they must be effective.” While he reassured his audience that the US was prepared to build partnerships and cooperate with other countries—“they help us to advance our collective security, economic interests and values”—cooperation and consultation was not the purpose of the activity. Recalling the Clinton and Bush administrations’ emphasis on effective multilateralism, the Vice President was simply stating that multilateral approaches to foreign policy problems are only a means and not an end in itself. Implicitly, therefore, there are limitations to the degree to which the US will work with other countries to advance its interests. As Biden reportedly stated at the time, the US government would work with partners “whenever we can—alone only when we must.”¹⁷⁰ The European normative commitment to a “multilateral order” is not easily accommodated, and will not always be, in the US emphasis on efficacy.

The second message was a reassertion of the traditional US position that the use of military force remains an important element of national power, an effective tool of foreign policy, and the ultimate means of assuring national security. Biden very cleverly distanced the new administration from what many people termed the Bush Doctrine—pre-emptive strikes against adversaries that pose a direct security challenge to the US—by recasting the policy as preventive measures: “We will strive to act preventively, not preemptively to avoid wherever possible a choice of last resort between the risks of war and dangers of inaction.” In adopting this approach, all attributes of national power will be called upon, including “military and diplomatic; intelligence and law enforcement; economic and cultural” in an effort to stop a crisis from emerging. His words were carefully chosen, and clearly designed to placate those in NATO-Europe who have argued that Washington is too ready to use military force to solve international crises and that the US contributes far less than the EU (a disputable charge) to international aid and development. But, while Biden reassured his audience that Washington was not seeking new enemies and would “extend a hand to those who unclench their fists,” he nonetheless reiterated a key component of the previous administration’s foreign policy, namely that radical groups and state-sponsors “that harbor extremists, undermine peace and seek or spread weapons of mass destruction and regimes that systematically kill or ethnically cleanse their own people” must be confronted. In doing so, Biden emphasized, “we must stand united and *use every means at our disposal to end the threat they pose* [emphasis added].” Given European sensitivities, it was surprisingly politic (and unnecessary, one has to assume) on the part of the gaffe-prone Vice President that he did not elaborate on what he meant by the phrase “every means at our disposal”.

¹⁷⁰ This passage does not appear in the text version of the Vice President’s speech. However, as he is quoted in a very reputable newspaper, it would seem either that Biden improvised the line, or that he spoke these words in a different context at the Conference. (See Lindner, “Der Charmeur aus Washington.”) The passage is also noteworthy because it echoes aspects of the *National Security Strategy of the United States* issued by the Bush Administration in September 2002. That policy declared that “the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community” but noted that “we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country.”

Third, the speech specifically concerned trans-Atlantic issues. Much of the speech addressed topics that have long undermined an effective trans-Atlantic dialogue, from the future of the Middle East to climate change to foreign aid. Many of the positions Biden enunciated on those subjects will have fallen on friendly ears, but in a number of important areas agreement is likely to be less immediate, if at all. The speech nonetheless provided an overview, the only one so far, of how the Obama Administration regards NATO as an alliance. Biden called for the renewal of the Alliance, a common enough refrain during much of the past decade, although he refrained from going into much detail of how that renewal might be accomplished. In that, he differed considerably from the speeches of the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, and her foreign minister, both of whom also spoke at the conference. In fact, Biden's discussion of NATO's future was surprisingly cursory given the venue, although that perhaps reflected the uncertainty of a new administration. Nevertheless, there were indications that Washington does expect NATO to change and, echoing Biden's call for effective alliances, that it must become more relevant. While reasserting the continuing value of collective defence, the Vice President nonetheless demanded that NATO show determination in confronting new security challenges: "faced with new threats, we need a new resolve to meet them, and the capabilities to succeed." Even without clarifying what those new threats are, this demand would require a new level of commitment of political will and, just as significant, resources by Washington's European allies. "Our Alliance must be better equipped," he emphasized, "to help stop the spread of the world's most dangerous weapons, to tackle terrorism and cyber security, to expand its writ to energy security and to act in and out of area effectively." As a consequence, Washington supports a stronger and more capable ESDP and a closer partnership between the EU and NATO, positions that Nicholas Sarkozy and Merkel also advocated in their remarks. As Biden emphasized at the outset of the speech, "America will do more," Biden pointedly remarked, "but America will ask for more from our partners."

Last, Biden spoke about US relations with Russia. Indeed, it is perhaps noteworthy that the last section of the speech was largely devoted to putting down a number of markers concerning relations with Russia. This subject has been a key concern for many in Europe given their own interest in good relations with (and secure energy supplies from) Russia, as well as the acid tone of Washington's recent exchanges with Moscow. Indeed, for much of the last half of 2008, NATO-Europe, particularly France and Germany, went out of their way to try to ensure that East-West relations, which had deteriorated following the war with Georgia, were not irredeemably damaged. As a result, many will have been heartened when, according to Biden, relations with Russia are to be re-examined with an emphasis at identifying areas where cooperation is possible and can be promoted. The speech, however, also advised its listeners that Washington expects that serious disagreements will continue. In fact, when the text of the address is examined closely, there is little that Moscow will like and, as a result, relations are not likely to thaw very quickly, if at all. That itself will generate new trans-Atlantic tensions. Washington will not abandon ballistic missile defence intended "to counter a growing Iranian capability," a policy that Moscow has pointedly opposed:¹⁷¹ it will not recognize the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia,

¹⁷¹ Shortly after Biden's speech, various media reported that Washington was prepared to back away from a ballistic missile shield in Europe if Moscow would assist in stopping Iran's drive for nuclear weapons capability. It seems unlikely that Moscow will accept such an offer. First, it needs the money that Iran is paying for its support. Second, settlement of the missile defence issue would eliminate a very effective wedge that Moscow has been using to upset intra-Alliance relations. So long as Russia assesses that Iran is still far from acquiring a nuclear weapon, an outcome it also cannot believe is in its best interests, there is little to no incentive for the unconfirmed offer to be accepted.

thereby continuing to reject the legitimacy of Russia's conflict with Georgia: it "will not recognize a sphere of influence", an obvious reference to Moscow's attitude toward the territories of the former Soviet Union: it asserted the view "sovereign states have the right to make their own decisions and choose their own alliances," a clear reference to the NATO membership aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia. Only in the area of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and arms control will European critics of the Bush Administration find solace, as Biden declared that deeper cuts in existing nuclear arsenals are "a special obligation" of the US and Russia. While none of these positions need to be advanced immediately, and all will likely be nuanced in their application, they nonetheless signaled that Washington is not prepared to sacrifice core policies—some of which elements in NATO-Europe openly oppose—as a precondition of a new relationship with Moscow.

The Vice President's speech at Munich resembled more a set of talking points that highlighted the foreign policy inclinations of the new administration than a finely crafted presentation of a carefully considered policy. But if most of Biden's audience were impressed, not all were. Reporting on the speech, an article in the *Financial Times* concluded that "the mood was quite different from the Bush years. But just as the US is still urging allies to do more, so the Europeans are still seeking excuses."¹⁷² Whether such criticism of NATO-Europe is entirely warranted given the venue's semi-formal setting, it is nonetheless true that many of Biden's European co-participants did voice positions that would seem to detract from a more effective NATO that his speech had urged. Angela Merkel's address was overly focused on developing new processes of consultation between NATO and ESDP ("I see the European Security and Defence Policy as a new form of cooperation with NATO."¹⁷³) and between America and NATO-Europe. With regard to the latter, she noted that "the character of our cooperation must be: we analyse together, we come to the same decisions, and we act together." For the German chancellor, "the transatlantic axis is the foundation of our security architecture," but, facing an election later this year and a slowing economy, she did not seem prepared to meet the US demand for a new and tangible commitment of resources. For Nicholas Sarkozy, who admitted that he had been given an advance copy of Biden's speech, the US demand that France play a greater role in the Alliance was heartily endorsed. However, his assertion that while France sought to upgrade its relations with NATO, it intended to be "an independent ally and a free partner of the United States," must have left many in Washington wondering. Was Sarkozy speaking to a domestic audience already leery of his desire to move France closer to NATO, or was it a warning shot that French foreign policy independence would not be sacrificed in a reformed NATO? Most likely, he was addressing both audiences simultaneously and that cannot have been greeted uncritically by his American listeners.

Over the next months and years, as the Obama administration formulates and implements its foreign policy strategy, NATO will undoubtedly be placed under greater scrutiny by policy-makers in Washington. Many in NATO-Europe see this interregnum as an opportunity to advance their own perspectives. Some of the European speakers at the Munich Security Conference put forward a variety of ideas on alliance transformation. In his speech, Biden welcomed the opportunity for dialogue on the direction the Alliance should take. But if his speech is any indication of US expectations, talking about the way ahead or even agreeing on what needs to be done, common enough during the past two decades, will no longer suffice.

¹⁷² Quentin Peel, "New regime, same Munich excuses," *The Financial Times*, 9 February 2009.

¹⁷³ Angela Merkel, Speech at the 45th Munich Conference, 7 February 2009.

Perhaps the most frequently heard was the call for a more effective European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Long viewed as a challenge to NATO, Washington has now come to embrace ESDP as an important mechanism to leverage resources from otherwise recalcitrant allies. At Munich, Sarkozy argued that strengthening ESDP is a priority, and pointed to his own performance as President of the European Council at the time of the Georgian War as an example of how Europe can deal with problems in its own neighbourhood: “Europe did its job better than at the time of Bosnia. Europe existed and Europe was able to act.”¹⁷⁴ Some might dispute the French president’s claim, but Chancellor Merkel and British Foreign Secretary David Miliband likewise asserted the benefits of a more effective ESDP for trans-Atlantic relations. Such views have, of course, been heard before, after the 1999 Kosovo war, after 9/11, and after the US invasion of Iraq. It is too soon to know if a new era in ESDP has begun. In its December 2008 Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, the European Council clearly indicated a willingness to assume a much larger international security profile:

Our capacity to address the challenges has evolved over the past five years, and must continue to do so. We must strengthen our own coherence, through better institutional co-ordination and more strategic decision-making. The provisions of the Lisbon Treaty provide a framework to achieve this. [...] The success of ESDP as an integral part of our Common Foreign and Security Policy is reflected by the fact that our assistance is increasingly in demand.¹⁷⁵

Bastien Giegerich, of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, has argued likewise, noting that EU has built up “credibility and experience” as a result of ESDP operations. Nevertheless, he has also observed what he calls the “contradiction between the image of an increasingly self-confident actor and the quantitative and qualitative limitations of ESDP missions to date, a contradiction that is due in part to restrictions on resources.” But, he has noted that no ESDP mission has yet been “confronted with significant opposition in an area of operations” that could be luring European commanders into a false sense of security when a major confrontation occurs.¹⁷⁶ Such qualifications, on top of the limited military capabilities that the EU can muster for any operation, raise serious questions as to how effective any such partnership with NATO would likely be.

Even before Biden demanded that the Alliance adapt to meet present and likely future needs, Chancellor Merkel spoke to this effect in a November 2008 speech given to the German Atlantic Association in Berlin. On that occasion, she called for a new strategic concept (to replace the one dating from the Washington Summit in 1999) and urged a debate on the Alliance’s future tasks.¹⁷⁷ She repeated this call in her Munich address, but on neither occasion did she offer a formula for Germany and its European partners to alter existing and problematic foreign policy approaches. Regardless, in the run-up to NATO’s sixtieth birthday in April 2009, there will almost certainly be additional demands for a wide-ranging discussion. In his speech at the Munich

¹⁷⁴ Nicholas Sarkozy, “Speech at the 45th Munich Conference, 7 February 2009.”

¹⁷⁵ *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy—Providing Security in a Changing World*, s407/08 (Brussels: European Council, 11 December 2008), p. 9, accessed at <http://ue.eu.int/showPage.aspx?id=266&lang=en>.

¹⁷⁶ Bastien Geigerich, “European Military Crisis Management; Connection ambition and reality,” *Adelphi Paper* # 397 (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 32-33.

¹⁷⁷ “Merkel Calls for NATO, Afghan Rethink,” *The Atlantic Times*, December 2008, p. 3.

Conference, Obama's National Security Advisor, General (retired) James Jones, USMC, observed that NATO must "become less reactive and more proactive. I think it needs to become less rigid and more flexible. It needs to become less stationary and more expeditionary. And it needs to become more, not less essential to our collective security." If Biden's speech was a call for reform and renewal, Jones's words contained an implicit warning to America's allies. An alliance that cannot accomplish the sort of change that he advocated is likely to become increasingly viewed as "less essential" in some quarters. That would only reinforce the perspective that led US military planners to discount a NATO role in the planning for the initial Afghan campaign and, it is reasonable to assume given the many problems with ISAF, is extant within Washington's policy corridors. Time alone will tell if Washington's demand for a transformed alliance and NATO-Europe's likely unwillingness and/or inability to embrace the changes required can be reconciled. Provided that no new international crisis should erupt in the meantime, it will likely be the debate on a new security concept for the Alliance that, viewed as overdue by many European leaders, will bring those differences into the open.

6 Conclusion

Alliances are created and exist to advance their members' interests, either vis-à-vis a common enemy or for reassurance about one's partners. They are used to deter adversaries and, depending on the level of integration, they help to coordinate policies; but, most important, they all involve the very highest commitment one state can give another: namely, the promise to deploy their military forces under certain prescribed circumstances. When the terms under which that promise have been given are no longer consonant with the interests of the state, as its leaders perceive those interests, the alliance generally comes to an end. That decision might take some time to make and might be a very complicated process where, quite possibly, a reassessment of norms and values is involved. When it is completed, however, the decision might take the form of a formal announcement, but history tells us that it need not do so. An alliance can linger for years, even decades, before circumstances force the parties to reveal that they no longer feel bound by its terms. The dynamics of alliance formation and maintenance, and the decisions on alliance termination, suggest many possible variations for its funeral announcement.

This Memorandum has attempted to provide a *tour d'horizon* of alliances, the reasons behind their creation and the causes of their demise, as well as explaining, if only cursorily, some of the basic dynamics that have been exhibited in alliance relationships. It has sought to accomplish this task by using a variety of historical examples to illustrate the arguments being made, while indicating that in no way can such examples be considered the only ones available. Quite possibly, this Memorandum has also given some historical perspective to any discussion about the future of NATO. The latter half of this technical memorandum has attempted to investigate further some of the key disputes that have recently plagued the Alliance, and by doing so relate them to the broader issues discussed in the first half. It has offered some observations that might allow readers to better grasp the nature of the challenges NATO faces in its confrontation with a world very different from the Cold War that had given birth to it.

The second half of this Memorandum is, in part, a reaction to the ideological tone that too often characterizes the discussion of NATO's role since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is obvious that NATO is not a unique creation, for all military pacts are, by their very nature, singular. Nor is it the most successful alliance in history that so many of its strongest advocates like to argue, as though past success is reason enough for its preservation. The Iroquois League lasted for three centuries and the *Foedus Cassianum* endured for nearly a century and a half; and it is certainly reasonable to argue that any alliance that ever existed that achieved its stated objectives for its members must be deemed successful. Can we honestly say that the coalitions of Powers that held back the Ottomans in the 16th and 17th centuries, or ultimately defeated Napoleon (in 1813, and again in 1815) or Germany and Japan (1945) were any less successful than NATO has been? Clearly, that assessment depends on the breadth of one's historical perspective. Perhaps we might argue, however, that NATO successfully achieved its objectives without having to go to war: but, even there, we must be careful not to evaluate historical antecedents according to standards derived from our own circumstances. Even the claim that it was the most successful alliance in the lifespan of those who lived during the Cold War, will have little appeal to current and future generations. It seems that it would be best to abandon such descriptions altogether for they serve little use in addressing current and future security challenges.

Instead, the discussion might more fruitfully turn to a consideration of its contemporary value. Does the North Atlantic Treaty and the organization it gave rise to (i.e., NATO) still advance and protect the interests of its member-states? So far, at least, the answer seems to be yes, but governments might one day come to a very different conclusion. Research suggests that the highly integrated nature of NATO suggests a greater degree of durability than one might associate with an alliance, and its survival for nearly two decades past the end of the Cold War would suggest that there is something to that argument. But very evident trans-Atlantic differences in confronting the security challenges of our own time may yield a very different assessment. Many observers have argued that the credibility, if not the survival, of NATO is on the line in Afghanistan where the ongoing mission has produced very significant intra-Alliance tensions. By acknowledging that alliances are historically contingent institutions, one implicitly recognizes that they are created in a context and for a purpose. As the discussion in the first half of the Memorandum noted, the dynamic of relations between member-states can often significantly transform the purpose of the alliance into something that was never envisaged at its creation. But it is also possible that stresses associated with that transformation bring about its termination.

Three generations of policy-makers and political scientists have taken NATO as a model of a working alliance. That longevity has created an expectation that that is how alliances should function, as well as a belief held by many that the tensions within NATO since the collapse of the Soviet Union are somehow extraordinary. In fact, NATO is not a model that can be easily transplanted to other eras or other contexts. Its level of integration, its many subsidiary bodies, and even its longevity were responses to a profound threat that could not be confronted in open war. The requirement for an effective collective defence organization in such an environment therefore mitigated many intra-alliance disputes. De Gaulle's strong support during the Cuban Missile Crisis could, therefore, coexist with a profound dislike of US leadership in the Alliance. Many in Europe were contemptuous of Ronald Reagan and disliked his administration's policies, but the Soviet Union still occupied much of Central Europe, and none of the European allies ever seriously contemplated rejecting the protection afforded by the US strategic deterrent. The very evident and growing centrifugal tensions witnessed in intra-alliance relations since the Cold War ended are, it seems clear, a very obvious reaction to that threat's disappearance. Before reunification of his country and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, no German leader would ever have contemplated disrespecting the American president in public for domestic political gain as Gerhard Schröder did when he was seeking re-election in August and September 2002. Personalities of individual leaders and their policies undoubtedly influence alliance relationships, but hard assessments of interests still hold sway.

This page intentionally left blank.

Distribution list

Document No.: DRDC CORA TM 2009-018

Information

Internal

- 1 DRDC CORA Section Head Strategic Analysis
- 1 DRDC CORA Library
- 4 Author

External

- 1 DM
- 1 Assoc DM
- 1 CDS
- 1 DOS SJS
- 1 ADM(Pol)
- 1 Comd CEFCOM
- 1 Comd CANSOFCOM
- 1 ADM(S&T)
- 1 COS VCDS
- 1 CDI
- 1 CFD
- 1 DGIP
- 1 DG Cap Dev
- 1 DG FDA
- 1 DG MFD
- 1 DG LCD
- 1 DG AFD
- 1 DGIS Pol
- 1 DG Pol Plan
- 1 D Strat A
- 1 DMTAP
- 1 D NATO Pol
- 3 SJS/DSOA
- 1 DFSA
- 1 DPFL
- 1 DRDKIM

Alan Barnes
International Assessment Staff
Privy Council Office
59 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

Director – Policy Research Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Dr. Paul Wilson
Director of Policy
Prime Minister's Office
Langevin Block

Dr. Roy Rempel
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of the Minister of International Trade DFAIT
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Dr. Jeremy Littewood
Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies
The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA)
Carleton University DT-1404
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6

Dr. Marc Milner
Director
The Brigadier Milton F. Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society
Tilley Hall Room 43
9 Macaulay Lane
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
Fredericton NB E3B 5A3

Professor Hugh White
Head
Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
Level 3, Hedley Bull Centre
Australian National University
130 Garran Road
Canberra ACT 0200
Australia

Caroline Flintoft
Director of Research and Publications
International Crisis Group
149 Avenue Louise
Level 24
B-1050 Brussels
Belgium

Álvaro de Vasconcelos
Director
EU Institute for Security Studies
43 Avenue du Président Wilson
75775 Paris cedex 16
France

Dr. Karl-Heinz Kamp
Director – Research Division
NATO Defense College
Via Giorgio Pelosi, 1
Cecchignola
00143 Rome, Italy

Director of Research
National Defence College
Drottning Kristinas väg 37
Box 27805
SE-115 93
Stockholm
Sweden

Professor Keith Krause
Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement
The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
132, rue de Lausanne
Case postale 136
CH 1211 Genève 21
Switzerland

Dr. Robin Niblett
Director
Royal Institute of International Affairs
Chatham House
10 James's Square
London SW1Y 4LE
United Kingdom

Dr. John Chipman
Director-General and Chief Executive
The International Institute for Strategic Studies
Arundel House, 13-15 Arundel Street, Temple Place
London WC2R 3DX
United Kingdom

Dr. Jamie MacIntosh
Advanced Research and Assessment Group (ARAG)
Defence Academy of the United Kingdom
Headquarters
Greenhill House
Shrivenham
Nr Swindon
Wiltshire SN6 8LA
United Kingdom

Robert S. Litwak
Director, International Security Studies
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004-3027
United States

Dr. Eric Thompson
International Affairs Group (IAG)
The Center for Strategic Studies
The CAN Corporation
4825 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22311
United States

Richard K. Betts
Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies
420 West 118th Street
13th Floor, Room 1336, MC 3347
New York, NY 10027
United States

Professor Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute (SSI)
United States Army War College
122 Forbes Avenue
Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013-5244
United States

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall document is classified)

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. ORIGINATOR (The name and address of the organization preparing the document. Organizations for whom the document was prepared, e.g. Centre sponsoring a contractor's report, or tasking agency, are entered in section 8.) Centre for Operational Research and Analysis (CORA) Defence R&D Canada 6CBS, Pearkes Building NDHQ Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2 | | 2. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION (Overall security classification of the document including special warning terms if applicable.) UNCLASSIFIED | |
| 3. TITLE (The complete document title as indicated on the title page. Its classification should be indicated by the appropriate abbreviation (S, C or U) in parentheses after the title.) Alliances - What are they for and how do they end?: An historical overview, including some thoughts on NATO | | | |
| 4. AUTHORS (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc. not to be used) Lombardi, B.W.A. | | | |
| 5. DATE OF PUBLICATION (Month and year of publication of document.) May 2009 | 6a. NO. OF PAGES Total containing information, including Annexes, Appendices, etc.) 77 | 6b. NO. OF REFS Total cited in document.) 177 | |
| 7. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (The category of the document, e.g. technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report, e.g. interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.) Technical Memorandum | | | |
| 8. SPONSORING ACTIVITY (The name of the department project office or laboratory sponsoring the research and development – include address.) | | | |
| 9a. PROJECT OR GRANT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.) PG0 10ac | 9b. CONTRACT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.) | | |
| 10a. ORIGINATOR'S DOCUMENT NUMBER (The official document number by which the document is identified by the originating activity. This number must be unique to this document.) DRDC CORA TM 2009-018 | 10b. OTHER DOCUMENT NO(s). (Any other numbers which may be assigned this document either by the originator or by the sponsor.) | | |
| 11. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY (Any limitations on further dissemination of the document, other than those imposed by security classification.) Unlimited | | | |
| 12. DOCUMENT ANNOUNCEMENT (Any limitation to the bibliographic announcement of this document. This will normally correspond to the Document Availability (11). However, where further distribution (beyond the audience specified in (11) is possible, a wider announcement audience may be selected.) Unlimited | | | |

13. **ABSTRACT** (A brief and factual summary of the document. It may also appear elsewhere in the body of the document itself. It is highly desirable that the abstract of classified documents be unclassified. Each paragraph of the abstract shall begin with an indication of the security classification of the information in the paragraph (unless the document itself is unclassified) represented as (S), (C), (R), or (U). It is not necessary to include here abstracts in both official languages unless the text is bilingual.)

This Technical Memorandum examines alliances as historical and political phenomena. In doing so, it provides an explanation for their creation and demise, as well seven “rules of thumb” that explain alliance dynamics. The latter half of the report examines some aspects of the political dynamic in NATO since the 9/11 attacks in an effort to address questions concerning relevance. It argues that the absence of a consensus on the purpose of the alliance and discord concerning the nature of the terrorist threat continue to be serious challenges to NATO’s viability.

Le présent document technique offre une analyse des alliances en tant que phénomènes historiques et politiques. Dans cette optique, il propose des explications sur la création et la dissolution des alliances ainsi que neuf principes généraux mettant à jour leurs dynamiques. Dans la seconde partie du document, nous nous pencherons sur certains aspects de la dynamique politique de l’OTAN depuis les attentats terroristes du 11 septembre afin d’éclairer la question de la pertinence du Traité aujourd’hui. On y avance l’idée que l’absence de consensus quant à l’objectif de l’Organisation et que les désaccords sur la nature de la menace terroriste continuent de mettre en péril la viabilité de l’OTAN.

14. **KEYWORDS, DESCRIPTORS or IDENTIFIERS** (Technically meaningful terms or short phrases that characterize a document and could be helpful in cataloguing the document. They should be selected so that no security classification is required. Identifiers, such as equipment model designation, trade name, military project code name, geographic location may also be included. If possible keywords should be selected from a published thesaurus, e.g. Thesaurus of Engineering and Scientific Terms (TEST) and that thesaurus identified. If it is not possible to select indexing terms which are Unclassified, the classification of each should be indicated as with the title.)

Alliances; NATO



www.drdc-rddc.gc.ca