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Recasting
the Atlantic Bargain
and Its Implications
for Central Europe

Rapporteur
CHARLES A. KUPCHAN



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Policy Paper

01/6



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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

**Recasting the Atlantic Bargain and
Its Implications for Central Europe**

**Report of the Reflection Group on the
Diversity and Unity in the Enlarged European Union**

Chairman: Jean-Luc DEHAENE

Rapporteur: Charles A. KUPCHAN

Policy Papers, RSC No. 01/6

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Printed in Italy in December 2001
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

America's relationship with Europe has been the anchor of U.S. foreign policy for much of the past century. The Atlantic link promises to be equally important to America during this century, but the U.S-European relationship is headed into a new and more difficult era. The United States and the European Union must map out complementary strategies for ensuring the integrity and vitality of their relationship.

We are at a fluid moment in history, one in which the outlines of a new geopolitical landscape have yet to emerge. Such fluidity provides America and its partners enormous opportunity to shape that new landscape. But it also denies us a readily available set of guiding assumptions upon which to base U.S. foreign policy. Accordingly, this paper begins with a set of guiding assumptions in thinking about the future of U.S.-European relations. It then turns to an examination of specific areas of American policy.

Guiding Assumptions

The emerging Atlantic relationship will be quite different than over the past fifty years because of two fundamental changes in the geopolitical landscape. The first fundamental change is the rise of a stronger and more self-confident Europe. The European Union is reaching a new stage in its evolution that will lead to increased political cohesion, more autonomy, and a desire for greater influence in the international arena. This assessment is based on the following observations.

- The EU has completed the formation of a single market and the introduction of a single currency. The euro declined roughly 20% during 1999-2000, largely because of the inflow of European capital to the United States. The euro is now likely to strengthen as a result of the slowing of the U.S. economy, gradually establishing its place as one of the world's major reserve currencies. The EU is also expected to enjoy stronger economic growth than the United States for 2001. The collective GDP of the EU will soon surpass the GDP of the United States.
- The EU is continuing to pursue internal reforms that will provide for more efficient decision making and prepare the way for enlargement. The recent Nice Summit fell short of expectations on this front. But the EU is expanding the use of qualified majority voting, strengthening the power of the EU parliament, and taking steps to reinforce the identity of Brussels as its collective capital. A debate is also underway on the drafting of an EU constitution.
- The EU has embarked on a serious effort to forge a common security policy and acquire the military forces needed to back it up. Javier Solana

is the first high representative for foreign and security policy. The EU is in the midst of building a rapid reaction force of some 60,000 troops. It has also been flexing its diplomatic muscle of late. The EU has offered to step in to facilitate negotiations on the Korean peninsula. It took the diplomatic lead during the recent crisis in Macedonia. And it is working hard to strengthen its ties to Russia.

- Great Britain, after decades of keeping its distance from Europe, is gradually becoming one of the EU's leading members. Prime Minister Tony Blair was a key player behind the new initiative on the defense front. He intends to guide Britain into the euro zone with the strong mandate he received in the election of June 2001. The EU will be immeasurably strengthened by strong British participation.
- The EU enjoys enormous allure among Europe's new democracies. All the countries of Central Europe are preparing for membership, providing the EU a great deal of influence throughout the region.
- European politicians are beginning to use arguments about Europe's place in the world to legitimate the project of European integration. For the past fifty years, the need to escape Europe's bloody past was the main justification for integration. But this argument now carries little weight among younger Europeans, who have no past from which they seek to escape. The new legitimating task for the EU is focused on the future and projecting Europe's voice on the world stage. As Tony Blair has stated, "Europe's citizens need Europe to be strong and united. They need it to be a power in the world. Whatever its origin, Europe today is no longer just about peace. It is about projecting collective power."¹

In light of the maturation of the EU, the United States has in Europe a stronger and more capable partner. At the same time, as Europe seeks a new station and a voice commensurate with that new station, the potential for rivalry with the United States also increases. Both sides will need to work to ensure that partnership prevails over rivalry.

The second fundamental change in the geopolitical landscape is the emergence of a new and more selective brand of internationalism in the United States. U.S. internationalism has reached a high-water mark and will be on a downward trajectory in the years ahead. Since the Cold War's end, the United States has been the chief guardian and peacemaker in virtually every quarter of the globe – a level of engagement that is likely to prove unsustainable over the long term. From this perspective, the activist and wide-ranging foreign policies

¹ Speech to the Polish Stock Exchange, October 6, 2000, available at <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/news.asp?NewsId=1341&SectionId=32>.

of the 1990s are likely to be an aberration, a legacy of the Cold War, more than a good predictor of the future. This evaluation is based on the following considerations.

- The United States today faces no major external adversary or peer challenger. This benign strategic environment, as it cycles through domestic politics, is likely to induce the country to seek to lighten the burden of global engagement.
- The U.S. economy has begun to slow after successive years of unprecedented growth. The accompanying constraints on resources and political will are likely to produce a somewhat less ambitious brand of internationalism.
- President Bush was elected by states in the south and west that have historically been less internationalist than states in the northeast and on the west coast. These states are also some of the fastest growing in the country in demographic terms. Early indications are that President Bush will be pursuing a more selective foreign policy than his predecessors, having already backed off somewhat from mediating conflicts on the Korean peninsula, and in the Balkans, Middle East, and Northern Ireland.
- Americans who came of age after the Cold War are now entering the work force and rising to positions of prominence. They will not bring to the table the historical experiences – World War II, the rebuilding the Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall – that have provided a ready foundation for U.S. internationalism over the past decades. Younger Americans, raised in a globalized world, are unlikely to be isolationist, but they may well support a more discriminating brand of international engagement than their elders.

The forging of a new and more selective brand of internationalism is healthy for America. It is not a sign of a worrisome isolationism. Rather, it represents a necessary search for a new level of international engagement that befits a new strategic environment and that is politically sustainable over the long term. Indeed, deliberately crafting a new internationalism is the best way to avoid the isolationism that could potentially result from an America that overreaches and tries to do too much.

Europe, precisely because of the success of the European Union in bringing prosperity and peace to the continent, is the part of the world that will feel the strongest effects of this new brand of U.S. internationalism. Europe is today no less important to the United States than during the previous half century. But it remains hard to make the case that the United States should remain Europe's primary guardian when the EU's collective wealth is

surpassing that of America and when the United States faces far more pressing threats in the Middle East and East Asia than it does in Europe. America's reluctant participation in the war over Kosovo and its continuing ambivalence toward the peacekeeping mission in the Balkans are clear signs that America is in the midst of altering its strategic priorities and reconsidering its dominant strategic role in Europe.

The rise of a stronger Europe and the evolution of a new and more selective U.S. internationalism promise to have a profound effect on the Atlantic link. Indeed, the traditional Atlantic bargain – America keeps the peace while the EU focuses on economic and political integration – is rapidly coming undone. If the Atlantic link is to remain strong, a new and more balanced bargain is urgently needed, one that will require hard work by both sides.

Europe will have to redouble its efforts to forge a common position on foreign and defense policy. It will also have to devote sufficient political and economic resources to ensure that it builds its rapid reaction force in a timely and effective manner. The United States will have to make room for a stronger EU and accord it more influence in step with increases in Europe's collective political will and its military capabilities. If the Atlantic link is to remain strong into this new century, it must evolve into a more mature and balanced partnership. The next few years represent a critical window of opportunity for both Europe and the United States to get right this important transition.

Completing the European Project

During the current period of transition in the Atlantic relationship, the United States and Europe should together address the three remaining tasks needed to complete the European project: managing the emergence of ESDP, finishing the stabilization of Southeastern Europe, and enlarging Europe eastward.

ESDP

As indicated above, a robust European defense force capable of operating independently of U.S. forces is not just tolerable from an American perspective, but essential to maintaining the vitality of the Atlantic link. Far from undermining NATO, ESDP is critical to bringing about the more equal sharing of burdens that will keep America in Europe and NATO alive and well. Some American analysts argue that ESDP will mean the end of the alliance. They contend that the United States will see an autonomous European defense force as finally providing an opportunity for U.S. forces to withdraw from the continent. This analysis assumes just the opposite, however. Five years hence,

Americans and their elected representatives are far more likely to support the Atlantic link if Europe is carrying its fair share of the burden than if Europe continues its excessive strategic dependence upon the United States.

Accordingly, the United States should give Europe an unequivocal green light on ESDP and outline a new Atlantic bargain that consists of the United States granting Europe more influence in return for Europe's acquisition of military capability. Washington is right to insist on close and transparent defense links between the United States and the EU. Washington is also justified in arguing that NATO have the right of first refusal and that the EU act independently only when the United States chooses not to engage. After all, consultation before action is what a mature and balanced partnership is all about.

But most U.S. reservations about European defense are simply misplaced. American officials have told Europeans not to duplicate existing assets, but they must do so if they are to develop the capability to operate without U.S. forces. American officials have told the EU not to caucus and form a collective position, but Europe must do so if it is to act with a single, coherent voice. American officials express concern that Europe will go off on its own when it has the ability to act autonomously. But it is Europe, not the United States, that should be the worried suitor. Europe is building what will still be a small military force, and will want U.S. participation in virtually every conceivable operation.

The main threat to the Atlantic link stems from too little Europe, not too much. The United States should welcome, indeed it should insist upon, a robust and effective European defense force.

In return, Europe has the right to expect that its views and interests will be carefully considered as the United States moves forward with the development of a missile defense system. If handled correctly, missile defense has the potential to strengthen the Atlantic link. If mishandled, it has the potential to strain the relationship and polarize the debate over ESDP. The United States should observe three guidelines as it seeks to manage with the EU the ongoing debate over missile defense.

- Consult early and often. Just as the United States expects and deserves to be fully consulted as ESDP moves forward, the EU expects and deserves to be consulted as America's missile defense program develops. The EU has recently changed its position; rather than opposing deployment, it is now prepared to engage the United States in substantive



dialogue. The United States should take advantage of this opportunity to work toward a common position.

- Proceed slowly and deliberately. The Europeans were justifiably concerned by the extent to which the pressures of an election year led to a rushed and incomplete U.S. debate on missile defense. Especially because tests are still proceeding and missile defense technology still in a developmental stage, the U.S. should take a paced and measured approach to a decision about both the timing and nature of deployment.
- Develop boost-phase technology and focus on multilateral deployment. A boost-phase system, by intercepting missiles soon after launch rather than as they approach a target state, protects all potential target states, not just the one deploying the system. In this sense, its benefits are shared by all and its deployment therefore more likely to win widespread approval. Boost-phase intercept is also far more difficult to circumvent than intercept later in flight. Deployment of joint, multilateral systems will ease fears that the United States is seeking to protect only itself or gain unilateral strategic advantage, thereby substantially decreasing the likelihood that deployment triggers a new arms race. The United States should explore with the EU and with Russia proposals for sharing of early warning systems and intercept technology.

Southeastern Europe

Europe's southeastern flank remains its most troubled region. The reasons run deep; the history of the area has left behind complicated and volatile relationships among national identity, religion, and ethnicity. The new regime in Serbia and the uneasy peace that now holds throughout the former Yugoslavia provide a window of opportunity for the region finally to leave behind its troubled past. The United States and Europe need to stay the course to ensure this is the case. Otherwise, Europe will continued to be plagued by instability and violence in the region, distracting the EU from its other important tasks.

To ensure that the Balkans have finally experienced their last war, the United States should be guided by three principles:

- Prepare for a long stay. Integration into Europe's mainstream offers the best hope for a lasting peace in the Balkans. Although the EU is already playing a leading role in peacekeeping and reconstruction, it will take a long time – perhaps generations – before integration works its pacifying effects. In the meantime, the United States should be prepared to stay the course and keep at least a small contingent of troops in the

region. American participation is important to the credibility of and momentum behind the mission. Even after the bloodshed has receded into the past, neither the United States nor Europe can afford to let the region fall off the political radar screen.

- Keep an open mind on the question of redrawing borders. The United States and its partners in the Balkans have understandably been reluctant to broach the question of redrawing borders; doing so has the potential to provoke a new round of instability and bloodshed. At the same time, the issue will not go away and addressing it sooner rather than later could facilitate efforts to attain a self-sustaining regional order. Kosovo has already achieved de facto independence from Serbia. It is very likely to end up either as an autonomous republic in a very loose Yugoslav federation or as an independent state. Montenegro may ultimately move toward independence. In Bosnia, the Dayton process and years of political pressure and economic assistance from the international community simply have not produced the multiethnic integration necessary to establish a self-sustaining, unitary state. If the political stalemate in Bosnia continues, it will at some point make sense for the international community to consider other options, including the redrawing of boundaries.

- Place more emphasis on rapprochement between Greece and Turkey. Greek-Turkish rapprochement, which gained steam after the devastating earthquake in Turkey in 1999, now appears to be losing momentum. The United States and the EU should urgently press both parties to resume the process of reconciliation. Rapprochement between Ankara and Athens would immeasurably improve the chances for resolution of a divided Cyprus, would facilitate peace efforts in the Balkans, and would repair an age-old political cleavage that continues to plague Southeastern Europe.

NATO and NATO Enlargement

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has gradually changed its core mission and its character. Although it still provides for collective defense as an insurance policy, NATO on a day-to-day basis is now fulfilling two other critical functions – carrying out peace enforcement and peacekeeping in the Balkans, and serving as the primary vehicle for integrating Europe’s new democracies into the Atlantic security order. This adaptation has been key to keeping NATO relevant to a rapidly changing strategic landscape.

Whether to continue NATO enlargement and which countries to include in a second wave of expansion are becoming pressing issues on the NATO agenda. Prior to the first wave, the case for enlargement was not a compelling

one. The prospective gains to security achieved by enlarging the alliance simply did not outweigh the potential risks. And enlargement threatened to jeopardize a top priority for U.S. policy – the integration of Russia into a new Atlantic security order. The end of the Cold War affords a historic opportunity to democratize and pacify Russia, goals that are central to building a stable and peaceful Europe.

Now that the first round of enlargement has been completed, the process should continue. NATO has established itself as the main vehicle for establishing a new Atlantic security order and expectations of entry have been raised throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The prospect of membership also provides NATO a great deal of leverage in these regions: countries hopeful of joining are settling border disputes, proceeding with democratization, protecting their minority populations, and undertaking other welcome preparatory steps.

The continuation of NATO enlargement must be predicated, however, on the following important shift in policy – that NATO enlargement becomes a vehicle for Russia's integration into Europe, not a cause of its alienation and exclusion. Current NATO policy maintains that the alliance is open to all European countries that qualify. The time has come to take this statement seriously and to begin laying the groundwork for Russia's eventual inclusion in the alliance.

Russia remains far from meeting the criteria for membership; indeed, anti-democratic forces appear for now to be on the rise. At the same time, in the countries of Central Europe, including the Baltics, desire for NATO membership runs strong and has proven to be a powerful incentive in promoting political and military reform. This desire deserves to be fulfilled. However, the prospect of a continuing process of NATO enlargement that succeeds only in alienating Russia from the West and redividing Europe is a troubling one. To be sure, NATO is a defensive alliance and has no intention of doing harm to Russia. But international politics is very much about perceptions. Russia is justified in feeling uncomfortable with the expansion of NATO toward its borders, just as the United States would be if a third party formed a military alliance with Canada and Mexico.

Starting to work sincerely on Russia's inclusion in NATO is the best way to square America's commitment to the continuing enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance with Russia's legitimate security concerns. Doing so would elevate to a top priority Russia's attachment to Europe – the ultimate prize of the end of the Cold War. It would also make it far easier to integrate the Baltics and others

in future waves of enlargement; they will be joining with rather than against a Russia that has come to see NATO not as a threat, but as a key to its own security.

These suppositions lead to the following approach to NATO's continuing enlargement. NATO should proceed with a second wave of enlargement in 2002. The group of countries offered membership should be small and not controversial – Slovenia and Slovakia would make prime candidates. Slovenia has made extraordinary progress on economic and political reform. Slovakia, which had been excluded from the first round because of its faltering reform efforts, is now back on track. This round of enlargement should keep the process moving forward while buying time for Russian reform to proceed. Concurrent with the second round, NATO should begin a serious dialogue with Russia about its eventual membership. A detailed work plan should be mapped out. A timetable should be drafted; perhaps 2015 would serve as an initial target date for Russia's accession.

It is entirely plausible that Russian reform will fail, foreclosing the option of joining NATO and entering Europe. But at least the West will have made a sincere effort to bring Russia in and expose it to the pacifying effects of military and political integration. The risks are low; Russia will have a say in NATO only as its reforms substantially advance. But the payoffs of success would be huge – Russia's democratization, pacification, and integration into Europe.

At this point in time, the idea of Russia joining NATO has as little support in the Duma as it does in the U.S. Congress. But many Russians strongly believe that this need not be the case and that beginning a serious dialogue with Moscow about eventual NATO membership may ultimately provide an answer to the strategic dilemmas posed by the continuation of NATO enlargement. President Putin, after all, has made clear his western orientation and his desire to make Russia part of Europe. Just as the prospect of joining NATO has helped induce reform and discipline in Central Europe, it could also help keep reform in Russia on track and counter the return of anti-democratic forces.

Should Russia ultimately join NATO, the alliance would function quite differently than it does today. It would by then have a host of new members from Central and Eastern Europe. Rather than being focused on the territorial defense of members, it would serve as a more informal and flexible vehicle for coordinating military activities and preserving peace across Europe. But this looser and broader NATO would be in keeping with a much more benign

strategic landscape and a Europe that is no longer so dependent upon the United States to ensure its security.

The Atlantic link is in the midst of transformation. There is cause for optimism that the integrity of the Atlantic bond can be preserved. But achieving this important objective requires both Americans and Europeans to recognize the profound changes that are taking place, to get ahead of the curve, and to work together to build a Europe that is whole and free.

The Implications for Central Europe

The prospect of admission to NATO and the EU has had a powerful disciplining effect across the states of Central Europe. In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, these states would have looked west regardless of the precise nature and timing of their affiliations with Western institutions. But the fact that NATO formally opened its doors and that the EU is preparing to do the same has helped fuel political and economic reform, induced countries seeking membership to settle border disputes and protect minorities, and produced close security cooperation between NATO countries and new and prospective members. Defense reforms in Central Europe, even in the three countries that have already joined, have admittedly fallen considerably short of expectations. That is probably all for the better, however, as it would make little sense for these states to expend their scarce resources on weapons in light of the economic challenges that still lie ahead.

Although the prospect of EU membership has helped generate and sustain this centripetal force, the states of Central Europe have been particularly interested in gaining admission to NATO, thereby obtaining an American security guarantee. Because of the weight of history – previous European guarantees proved rather unreliable – and because of the EU’s military weakness, Central European countries have been actively seeking a direct U.S. commitment to their security. American guarantees continue to loom large as the ultimate source of security in the region.

For reasons outlined above, the United States is unlikely to continue its strategic focus on Europe. The Clinton Administration made NATO enlargement the centerpiece of its security policy. The Bush Administration, although committed to continue the process of enlargement, will focus its attention elsewhere – primarily on East Asia and the Middle East. As a result, the Atlantic security order is likely to become less Atlantic and more European. This shift in America’s strategic priorities will occur incrementally and quietly.

Nonetheless, it is of major consequence for Europe and has the following important implications for the security strategies of Central European states.

Deepening versus Widening

Central European states have for obvious reasons been ardent proponents of the timely enlargement of the EU. While current members prefer to move slowly and cautiously and to put deepening before widening, Central Europe has put a top priority on widening.

It may be time for Central Europe to reconsider this stance. As the European security order becomes less reliant on NATO and more reliant on the EU, it is very much in the interests of Central Europe to have a strong, coherent Europe – one that has a strong, coherent common foreign and security policy. From this perspective, the internal reforms that are necessary to give the EU a more collective character are far more important in the long run than the timing of enlargement. The states of Central Europe should elevate in their own national strategies the centrality of the EU's internal reforms, realizing that the union's integrity and internal logic are in the end key to their own prosperity and security. Even if these internal reforms mean more differentiation, the emergence of a political structure of concentric circles, and the slowing of enlargement, such sacrifices will in the long term work to the benefit of Central Europe.

ESDP

Central European countries have for the most part cautioned the EU not to move too quickly on ESDP. They are not yet EU members and therefore not directly involved in discussions over EU security policy. They prefer NATO guarantees and a U.S. security commitment to an EU security commitment. And the United States has been quietly counseling Central Europe to oppose ESDP, fearful that it will undermine NATO and U.S. influence in Europe.

Central European states should reverse course. They should be ardent proponents of ESDP, seek to have a voice in its evolution, and be willing to contribute whatever assets they can to the enterprise. America's ambivalent participation in the war over Kosovo, Congress' repeated calls for U.S. troops to withdraw from the Balkans, the Bush Administration's own doubts about the U.S. role in the Balkans and its distant involvement in the crisis in Macedonia – these are all signs that Central European states should not count on the United States to meet their security needs. If a security problem emerges in Central Europe, it may well be up to the EU to orchestrate an effective response. The

states of Central Europe may well want U.S. involvement in any and all military contingencies in the region. But they must begin preparing for the possibility that it may not be forthcoming.

Russia

Anti-Russian sentiment understandably still runs strong throughout Central Europe. It is one of the main forces impelling regional states to seek so ardent entry into NATO. Such animosity toward Russia, however, is in the long run counterproductive. Central Europe's ethnic lobbies in the United States have played into the hands of conservative Russo-phobes, complicating the task of formulating a coherent and constructive U.S. policy toward Russia. Trade ties between Russia and Europe have fallen off. Central Europe's cold-shoulder treatment of Russia, however understandable in light of history, is only increasing Russia's sense of alienation and isolation. It may also conflict with the EU's desire to reach out to Russia and fashion a new and closer relationship.

Central European governments should therefore seek to recast their public discourse about Russia and begin moving toward better relations. Rebuilding trade ties, deepening political, educational, and cultural contacts, toning down anti-Russian rhetoric – these are all important steps toward attaching Russia to the European project. The bottom line is that Central Europe has a greater interest than any other region in pursuing this objective. If Russia is pacified, democratized, and integrated into the European security order, Central Europe will not have a security problem. If Russia is excluded and its reform falters, Central Europe will be a very dangerous neighborhood, regardless of the number of western institutions its states will have succeeded in joining.

Trade and Investment with the U.S

In light of America's shifting strategic priorities, the states of Central Europe should work hard to retain durable ties with the United States. Strengthening economic links offers one effective means of doing so. Especially as entry into the EU tilts trade and investment flows toward the EU and away from North America, Central Europe should take steps to ensure that its economic linkages to the United States remain strong.



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