

Recent developments in US foreign policy

European Foundation Working Paper 3

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1 Nov 2000

It must be said at the outset that at the time of writing this note details of the draft treaty to be discussed at Nice remain very vague. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the government is delaying the release of a proper “working paper” version of the treaty to muddy the waters. What is sure is that the defence of the UK is in decline and that the British government must not get away with a further emasculation of NATO at the forthcoming negotiations at the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice. It should also be added that rumours are circulating in Westminster that – for tactical reasons – there will not be much in the treaty about defence after all and that the treaty basis for the creation of an EU army will be found in Maastricht and Amsterdam.

This note begins by summarising recent developments regarding NATO, the creation of a European army and US involvement in European defence in general as reported in the US press. I have included various opinions and views without commenting on them to provide what is hopefully an accurate snapshot of the current discourse on the matter. The next sections outline and document some of the reasons why moves towards an EU army are such a bad thing for peace and stability and for US interests.

Part 1: US foreign policy towards Europe: an update from the US press

The seminal article on the recent campaign controversy was published in *The New York Times* on 21. October 2000 “The 2000 Campaign: The Military; Bush Would Stop U.S. Peacekeeping in Balkan Fights” by Michael R. Gordon. It reports that George W. Bush Foreign Policy Team announced that if elected in November, the 11,400-strong U.S. force in the Balkans would be withdrawn, as greater emphasis would be placed upon preparing U.S. forces for major global confrontations.

- Condoleeza Rice (chief foreign policy advisor): Bush envisions a “new division of labour” – Bosnia and Kosovo would become a European responsibility while the U.S. would devote its attention to the Persian Gulf region, the Taiwan Straits, and other global commitments.
- The article also reports that withdrawal would be contrary to European wishes – impression that Americans do not appreciate their financial contributions and over-extension of their armed forces. Britain is viewed as “likely to be extremely concerned” while France would see opportunity to diminish American influence in Europe.”
- The Balkans—small part of overall Pentagon spending (estimated at 1% of \$280 billion annual budget (\$3.5 billion))
- Rice: “We are not withdrawing from Europe... We are not withdrawing the kind of support we can provide, like air power. But when it comes to nation-building or civilian administration or indefinite peacekeeping, we

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do need for the Europeans to step up to their responsibilities. We are not going to do anything precipitous, but unless we set this as a firm goal we will never get it done.”

Another piece of interest was published in the *Chicago Tribune*, 22 October 2000 and is entitled “If Elected, Bush Plans to Pull Troops from Balkans” by Bob Kemper. It is a follow-up to the above *Times* article.

- Following Bush election victory:
U.S. ground forces would be withdrawn (11,400 soldiers in total, less than 20% of total NATO forces) though a limited presence would be maintained in form of communications and logistical support.
- Objective: Bush Foreign Policy Advisor Karl Rove said that the U.S. would “rearrange our strategic relationship in Europe so that we would be peacemakers not long-term peacekeepers.”
- Clinton Administration Response: Confirms Bush’s “lack of judgement” in foreign policy Madeleine Albright—the proposal “sends a dangerous signal”

The next article was run by *The New York Time* on 25 October 2000 as “Europeans Say Bush’s Pledge to Pull Out of Balkans Could Split NATO” (by Steven Erlanger). According to the author, European leaders, diplomats, and analysts are worried the Bush Balkan proposal would:

- divide the NATO alliance. “Dividing NATO into ‘real’ soldiers and ‘escorts’ who walk children to school is the first move to divide the alliance itself.”
- Undermine current European efforts to increase its military capacity
- Question the post Cold War rationale for NATO’s existence
- Lord Roper alleged that Rice intended her comments politically “to underline the charge” that the Democrats “get America involved in long wars”—he believes the U.S. should remain in Bosnia to enforce the American-negotiated peace.
- Lord Robertson argued that the proposal could undermine the concept of “risk sharing,” the “glue” of the alliance.
- NATO diplomats said that they fear another Bosnia 1992-95 type situation—effort stymied by lack of U.S. involvement—“irreplaceable deterrent role”—They also worry about management of Russian forces already in Balkans.

Yugoslav response:

- “another indication of American capriciousness in foreign affairs”
- withdrawal will give Kosovar Albanians (who trust U.S. more than Europeans)—“new pretext to push for independence as soon as possible”

The next article of interest was published in the *Los Angeles Times*, 26 October 2000 (“NATO Faces a New Threat: President Bush”) by Robert E. Hunter. This former U.S. Ambassador to NATO 1993-1998 argues that the Bush camp’s proposal to leave the Balkans imperils the American position in Europe and jeopardizes the relationship between the U.S. and its European allies.

- Argues that the Bush abandonment of the Balkans would signal to the Europeans the U.S. abandonment of European strategic defence commitment
- The article says that this would confirm European suspicions that the U.S. will leave the European members of NATO to deal with the new Central European members—leaving them “holding the baby”
- Withdrawal ultimately would:
 - 1) “Fracture” American position in Europe
 - 2) Reduce U.S. influence on the Continent, including the European Union
 - 3) Increase the reluctance of America’s European allies to combine with the U.S. military in future joint operations beyond the Continent

Another interesting articles is “Rivals Differ on U.S. Role in the World” by David E. Sangar, published in *The New York Times*, 30 October 2000. It contrasts what the author believes are the Bush and Gore views on the matter.

Gore:

- Role of Military in the Future: To “halt Bosnian-style massacres” and move to “prevent disaster” globally.
Includes: Maintaining commitment in the Balkans.
Policy to be guided by “strategic humility,” though no indication given on meaning of this phrase.
Sensitivity to foreign impressions of “arrogance “ of U.S. military strength.
Opposition to national missile defence system.
- China: Reach out through economic ties with the belief that this will encourage the spread of capitalism and democracy
- Focus: Interventionist
Emphasis on economic globalisation
Well versed in foreign affairs

Bush:

- Role for the Military in the Future: At present, the U.S. military is “overextended” by its global peacekeeping role in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and reassessment needed.
Includes: Military not to be used as worldwide “nation-builder” e.g. Kosovo
General withdrawal of ground troops in Balkans
Development of missile defence system despite Chinese and Russian objections. Would consider quitting Antiballistic Missile Treaty though no firm plan on how this would be accomplished
No specific mention of future relations with European allies
- The author says Bush walks “middle ground” between GOP members who favour engaging China and those isolationists that are suspicious of the influence of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization.

- 1) Bush “leery” of IMF—sends erroneous message to international bankers “if you make a bad loan, we’ll bail you out.”
- 2) Emphasis upon Latin America—would push for its inclusion in the North American pact
- 3) Reliant on foreign policy advisors—especially Condoleeza Rice, other ex-Bush administration personnel

The next feature I found was in the *Des Moines Register*, 29 October 2000, entitled “Cheney Criticizes Gore Defense Plans” and authored by Clark Kaufman. He says that at a campaign stop in Davenport, Iowa, GOP vice-presidential candidate Dick Cheney criticized Gore’s contention that the U.S. military was not in an overextended state. He stated, “The evidence is overwhelming that the U.S. military is not as well off today as it was eight years ago.” Cheney believes that Gore either:

- a) doesn’t know the state of the U.S. armed forces or
- b) chooses not to tell the truth about it

The *Los Angeles Times* of 30 October 2000 had “Bush Plan Would Weaken Crucial Link to Allies” by Ivo H. Daalder. In this opinion piece, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Ivo H. Daalder charges that the Bush camp’s assertion that the military is overextended and engaged in too many peacekeeping operations is “without merit” and that the “new division of labour” described by Condoleeza Rice would:

- a) weaken the U.S. “unique leadership role in the Balkans” at the pinnacle of its success in forcing Milosevic out
- b) weaken “our most important alliance to the point of irrelevance” by ignoring NATO’s new role of strengthening European security and stability whenever threatened. To Daalder this would shatter the concept of shared risk which has served as NATO’s unifying force.
- c) “shift the burden of maintaining global stability almost completely” onto the U.S. by keeping the European allies tied down in Europe

In conclusion, Daalder argues that to perform a global peacekeeping role, the United States needs Europe as a “strong strategic partner” to confront threats to their “common interests.”

On 31 October 2000, the *Chicago Tribune* published “A New Strategy for the Balkans” (author unknown). This leader article argues that the Bush campaign’s ideas for a Balkan withdrawal are “well worth considering.” Contrary to critics’ impressions, the Bush proposal does not call for a full withdrawal by Inauguration Day, but rather a slowly staged operation performed “cautiously and only after negotiation with NATO allies.” At the same time, he says the U.S. would continue to assist its allies with intelligence and logistical support. Therefore, the author contends, the withdrawal would not be as “risky” as the Gore camp has stated. He states that the Bush plan recognizes the need for a long-term operation as Milosevic is newly out, his successor is still consolidating his power, and critical elections remain to be held in Bosnia and Serbia. Yet, despite this, the author asserts that, “Europe can and should take more of the burden and responsibility to police and democratise its own backyard.” Moreover, the Bush proposal only formalizes a process of downsizing already underway. The percentage of the NATO force made up by the U.S. is down from nearly one-third to less than one-fifth of the total. European fears

of Bush undermining NATO are also unjustified, as the U.S. remains committed to NATO's historical goals of protecting Europe and building ties to prevent the outbreak of disastrous world war.

The Fox News.com website reproduced a newswire report on 31 October 2000 entitled "No Unilateral U.S. Pullout" which basically reports that the Bush campaign assured NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson via telephone that they would not unilaterally pull the U.S. out from the Balkan mission if elected. Bush also reaffirmed a commitment to the NATO alliance while the Gore campaign made similar moves.

Finally, the *New York Times* confirmed today (1 November 2000, "NATO Chief Says Bush Aide Reassured Him on Balkan Stance" by Michael R. Gordon) that as reported above, Lord Robertson announced that he had been assured by the Bush campaign that Bush would not unilaterally withdraw from the Balkans. However, the candidate's advisers assert that he has not changed his stance and that Europeans should be prepared, after consultations, to assume the entire responsibility for Balkan peacekeeping. Bush advisor Ray Sullivan, "A George W. Bush administration would work with NATO friends and allies so that, in some point in the future, European personnel can replace U.S. combat troops on the ground. The article also reports NATO diplomats' impressions: Bush prepared to 'move slowly' on Balkan peacekeeping to avoid political crises with alliance. The Gore campaign charged Bush with 'flip-flopping' and with having an unsteady grasp of national security policy. The author's contention is that the issue will not go away—Bush may still press on with 'division of labour' plan.

Part 2: main problems with current moves towards EU defence.

1. A lack of resources.

Recent petrol tax revolts in the UK and on the continent and the growth of cross-border smuggling are the latest signs that populations are rejecting the ever-growing burden of taxation. EU countries have slashed defence budgets to make funds available for increased social welfare spending. Where the money will come from to fund the EU's grand vision is not clear. EU countries will need substantially to increase expenditures on the military if they are to replace the United States. A European capacity will simply not be funded adequately without massive increases in taxation that the electorate simply will not wear. The data below point to the fact that, by devoting on average only 2.2% of GDP to defence and therefore demonstrates that European nations have been 'free-riding' upon US defence expenditure.

In a decision rightly criticised by the US Secretary of State for Defence, William Cohen, Germany reduced her military expenditure as of December 1999 to a pitiful 1.5% of GDP. The UK now spends 2.5% of her GDP on defence—a figure that, while low, is considered high in Europe. Cuts in European defence expenditure are also motivated by the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, which stipulates that no country may run a deficit greater than 3% of their GDP.

Especially worrying is that the Helsinki summit in December 1999 established a 65,000-strong European army that, while it is to be autonomous, subject to majority

voting, and have an international (not just European) ambit, has not adequate funding or co-ordination to realise its aims.

Defence Expenditure Among Selected NATO Countries as a Percentage of GDP²

Country	Average 1985-89	Average 1990-94	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 ³
Belgium	2.8	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5
Denmark	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6
France	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.8
Germany ⁴	3.0	2.2	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5
Italy	2.3	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0
Luxembourg	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9
Netherlands	2.9	2.4	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8
Norway	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.2
Portugal	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2
Spain	2.2	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
UK	4.5	3.8	3.4	3.0	3.0	2.7	2.7	2.6
NATO Eur.	3.3	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
United States	6.3	4.9	4.3	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.2

The Franco-German summit, also in December 1999, contained declarations not only on a shared military intelligence satellite (Syracuse 3) and a rapid reaction force, but also for a heavy-lift capacity. Dr Jonathan Eyal of the Royal United Services Institute in London has estimated that, excepting the unlikely prospect of the US loaning Europe a fleet of Galaxy aircraft, acquiring heavy-lift capacity would cost the overburdened European taxpayer \$100 billion a year for the next ten years.⁵

2. Incompetence

The omens are not good. The leaking of NATO military intelligence by the French during the conflict in Kosovo seriously undermined the US military's trust in its European counterparts. Furthermore, Europe remains far from solving the lack of co-ordination that hamstrung its policy and action in the Gulf, Bosnia, and in Kosovo. Indeed, it was Germany's unilateral decision to recognise Croatia that contributed to the problems that beset Yugoslavia throughout the past decade (this did not, however, prevent Germany's Foreign Minister from describing that recognition as "the greatest victory of German foreign policy since 1945").⁶

3. Technical know-how

² Sources: NATO press release M-DPC-2(99)152: 'Financial & Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence', Table 3 and earlier editions.

³ 1999 figures are estimates.

⁴ These percentages have been calculated without taking into account the expenditure for Berlin.

⁵ Dr Jonathan Eyal, cited in *The European Journal*, (The European Foundation, January 2000), p.2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, *European Journal* (January 2000).

US technology is light years ahead from the rest and getting better -- both absolutely and relatively -- all the time. Most advances in modern electronic technology (with the possible exception of mobile communications) stem from American-owned firms.

4. *There remains much instability in Europe*

A convenient myth has evolved in Europe that the Russian threat has evaporated for good. In fact, Russia's *Perestroika* may prove all too vestigial with the election of—or the evolution of Vladimir Putin into—an autocrat.

Russia's present governing arrangement is more plutocratic than democratic and remains volatile. The notion that Europe can relax in the company of such a neighbour, pursue policies undermining NATO, and establish a defence union characterised by underfunding, undermanning, and tension between its competent nations, is misguided.

We have already seen Russia loosen her criteria for first use of nuclear missiles, while Putin has made increasing military expenditure by 50% central to his presidential campaign. (A record 30% of Russia's total defence spending will this year be spent on military procurement.⁷) Putin also backs the development of a new generation of multiple re-entry missile capable of penetrating the most sophisticated missile defence systems yet envisaged.

This is just one example of the degree of instability remaining in the region. The problem is that the EU's misguided policies would certainly exacerbate the problem even further.

5. *A persistent threat to US interests abroad*

France and Germany consistently undermine US interests abroad in a number of ways, including:

- Undermining US/UK policy on Iraq. France abstained from the crucial Security Council vote on sanctions in December 1999, encouraging Baghdad's belief that sanctions were about to be lifted and that the West was divided. Only on the 18th of January did France ally itself with Russia and China in opposing Anglo-American moves to appoint Rolf Ekeus, a Swede with great experience of arms control, to oversee the destruction of Iraqi weapons. The French Foreign Ministry declined even to give a reason for their decision.
- The EU works consistently to undermine the US trade embargo on Cuba.
- France and Germany were both openly hostile towards Washington's Dayton peace strategy for the former Yugoslavia.

⁷ *The Wall Street Journal*, European edition (London: 28 January, 1999), pp.1-2.

- France's Africa policy works directly to entice and cajole its ex-colonies away from close relations with the US.
- France refused to allow the USAF to fly over its airspace during the bombing of Libya; the UK was the only European country to back US air strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan; and one could go on with such examples.

The important point is that, time and again, the UK has supported US military operations while European governments have carped from the sidelines. Preventing UK forces from being subsumed within a European army is thus very much in the US national interest. A broader point is that, as the EU develops, federalising reforms will ensure that fewer and fewer of its decisions require unanimity among its member states to take. Germany, as the largest and most powerful country in the Union, can expect its eastern neighbours in the final resort to vote with her, if only because they calculate that it is in their interests to maintain good relations with a state to which they are tied both by trade and company control.

As well as influencing its immediate neighbours, Germany's plurality ownership of Russia's \$125.6 billion foreign debt gives it influence in Moscow.⁸ With many European leaders wishing the EU ultimately to extend to the Ural Mountains, German influence in Russia may prove critical to the future direction of the entire Eurasian region. Whether the UK is an enfeebled member of, or an outside counter-balance to this putative strategic alliance should be of great concern to the US.

Part 3: European Union: threat to NATO

France's desire to undermine NATO resurfaced in January 2000 when Paris sided with China and Russia to argue that the Pentagon's proposed National Missile Defence system contravenes the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. A senior Pentagon official described the French position as "divisive", continuing: "[w]e took it very damn seriously when Europe was under threat from missiles which could not reach the United States."⁹ Despite it being only four years since France tested her own nuclear weapons in the face of near-universal condemnation, President Jacques Chirac had the audacity to criticise the US Senate for failing to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Moreover, the Western European Union, a defence organisation, is to be folded into the EU. From France's perspective, subsuming the WEU is designed exactly so that Europe might one-day jettison NATO altogether. (Why else, indeed, would the empire-building Javier Solana opt to leave NATO in order to head the—formerly unimportant—WEU?)

The question for consideration in Washington is:

⁸ 'Global Development Finance', The World Bank (Washington, 1999), pp.452-454.

⁹ *The Daily Telegraph*, p.17 (London, 21 January 2000).

- why should the US lend Europe the equipment that its defence ambitions require?

While in joint command through NATO, the US has shown herself prepared, when persuaded, to contribute to the solving of essentially European conflicts (indeed, the USAF dispatched some 90% of the bombs dropped on Kosovo). Denied a commanding role, however, the US would be unwise to sign over its NATO equipment to an underfunded, undermanned, and poorly co-ordinated European defence force.

In sum, the European Union is at the same time groping toward common defence but not prepared to pay for it. Even were Europe successful in establishing a common defense force, past events suggest that the policy which that force would be called upon to implement would depart significantly from America's own.

Thus, potential savings to the US of Europe taking control of its own defense are outweighed by the damage that European forces would, through the trade and foreign policies that they would be called upon to underwrite, inflict upon US interests.