

Madame Chairwoman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to be here this afternoon to discuss NATO's strategic future and institutional challenges as we move beyond the Alliance's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss a set of issues that matters greatly to our security. I want to note initially that the views I will present are my own, not those of the German Marshall Fund of the U.S.

"Crisis in transatlantic relations" has always been good for a headline, and "Whither NATO?" has been a popular question for the Alliance since its founding. Perhaps crisis and doubt have been the main features of continuity over NATO's 60 years of existence. In the 1950s, the military structure of the Alliance developed through the years of the Korean War, the divisive Suez crisis, and Sputnik; in the same decade, then-West Germany joined the Alliance. The 1960s saw continued tension over Berlin, changes in U.S. nuclear doctrine that carried major implications for the allies, and the withdrawal of France from NATO's military structure.

The 1970s brought Germany's Ostpolitik, an American internal loss of confidence after Vietnam, and the first decisions on the deployment of short- and medium-range nuclear missiles that rocked Europe. The 1980s saw President Reagan's "evil empire" speech and his declaration of intent to eliminate nuclear weapons, both disconcerting for the allies who found them surprising and unnerving. And 1989 brought the fall of the Berlin Wall.

What many considered NATO's *raison d'être*, and certainly the proximate cause of its existence, ended soon afterward with the fall of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union itself. Yet NATO survived and responded to crises in Bosnia and Kosovo, even as it continued to agonize over its continued relevance.

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed the 9/11 attacks and, in response, NATO's first invocation of the Article V mutual defense clause. Sidelined in Afghanistan at the outset of that war, the Alliance is now trying to see a way forward there in difficult and, some would say, deteriorating circumstances.

In this climate, it is worth recalling a passage from the 1967 Harmel Report, written mainly by representatives of some of NATO's smaller members and undertaken in response to an existential crisis. That report concluded: "The Alliance is a dynamic and vigorous organization which is constantly adapting itself to changing conditions. It has also shown that its future tasks can be handled within the terms of the treaty by building on the methods and procedures which have proved their value over many years. Since the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949, the international situation has changed significantly and the political tasks of the Alliance have assumed a new dimension. ... Although the disparity between the power of the United States and that of Europe remains, Europe has recovered and is on its way towards unity."

Four decades later, that assessment could be applied to NATO today. NATO's successes are truly historic. Institutionally, it established and maintained

reasonably robust procedures and standards for military planning and operations, despite barriers ranging from language differences to long-standing animosities among its members. It developed effective, if sometimes inefficient, means of political coordination on security matters.

Measured by outcomes, NATO can count the successful defense and extension of freedom in Europe throughout and after the Cold War; the management of the security aspects of the 1990s Balkans wars; and the enlargement of the Alliance in ways that preserved NATO's functions while encouraging reform in new members. That said, NATO does face some real difficulties which differ qualitatively, and perhaps decisively, from its earlier anxieties.

### The Challenges of Afghanistan

NATO in Afghanistan is laboring in intrinsically difficult territory under several extrinsic burdens. Its overall strategy and objectives have been unclear and difficult to explain to allied publics. Differences on aid programs, methods for dealing with poppy production, lack of coordination, and other unresolved questions about political and economic development have all hindered the non-military aspects of NATO's efforts, so critical in a campaign like this one.

But for those concerned about NATO's continued viability, the greatest internal problem has been the refusal of some allies to take on the same risks as others. The restrictions on operations imposed by such allies as Germany and Italy has, in effect, created a two-tier alliance, something military planners worked hard to avoid throughout the Cold War. This division is especially damaging because some of the allies with the smallest potential to contribute have done so without restrictions, while some with the greatest potential have opted out of the most difficult and dangerous operations.

The result has been not just resentment, but real questions about the very meaning of the term "alliance." When some members accept greater risk than others, questions inevitably arise as to what it means that an "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." Certainly, Article V leaves latitude for each ally to determine its own appropriate response, and the war in Afghanistan was not undertaken as an Article V operation under NATO command. But to have NATO's most significant military operation create ambiguity surrounding various allies' willingness to undertake dangerous missions, even against regimes as brutal as the Taliban, has a corrosive effect that may be lasting.

If NATO's difficulties in Afghanistan were simply a matter of the friction that attends coordination among 28 bureaucracies, the problems would be vexing but not catastrophic. Such problems of process and mechanics have always existed, and they have always slowed progress. Indeed, they are explainable as the "cost of doing

business" through an organization that operates on the principle of consensus, reporting to capitals that are each accountable to pluralistic political systems.

But they are still messy, and that messiness can carry serious consequences. The problems of coordination in NATO's 1999 Kosovo campaign convinced some Bush administration officials that NATO could not be relied upon in actual conflict situations. Afghanistan, however, represents what may be a different level of divergence. Some governments -- for example, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Canada (as well as many of the Central European allies) -- have been able to sustain a commitment to the more dangerous work NATO has undertaken. Others, especially Germany and Italy, have not done so (though they have lost lives and expended treasure in their Afghan missions). The inability or unwillingness of those countries to commit to greater risk has transcended particular governments and operates even under avowedly pro-American leaders. That fact suggests that in those countries, at least, there are broad objections to taking on the more dangerous tasks of the war.

So Americans are entitled to wonder: If the Taliban regime and al-Qaida are not morally and practically worth opposing with military action, what enemy would qualify for united NATO action? Doubts on this score seem to suggest a basic divergence over what constitutes good and evil, and whether any regime is worth risking life to oppose.

## NATO Enlargement

In April 2008, the Allies agreed that Ukraine and Georgia will at some point be members of NATO. But at the behest of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, with support from French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the alliance did not offer a Membership Action Plan to either country. Because MAP has, for the most recent candidates, been the standard path to eventual membership, the effect of this decision was clear: to forestall any prospect of NATO membership for Ukraine or Georgia in the near future.

Berlin and Paris based their objections on the fact that neither Kyiv nor Tbilisi was ready for NATO membership. But none of the countries admitted during the post-Cold War enlargement of NATO were ready for the responsibilities of membership when they entered the MAP process. Indeed, MAP presumes that the candidate has work to do, in some cases a great deal of work. Moreover, as the candidate nation takes on that work, it does not participate in the Article V commitment to mutual defense. There was thus no possibility that a different decision a year ago would have obliged Germany or any other ally to defend a country that was not ready to be a member, militarily or politically.

The real concern for Germany and France seems to have been Russian objections to even the possibility that Georgia and Ukraine might eventually become NATO

members. In taking such an approach, Chancellor Merkel declined a direct request by President George W. Bush to extend MAP to Ukraine and Georgia, a historic rejection of American leadership on a key issue. Those who share this view seem more interested in taking a pragmatic approach to immediate, economic national interests than in extending the institutional success of NATO, and expanding the security of the beliefs that caused the allies to come together in 1949 to nations farther east.

This division about basic values and interests, and the relationship between the two, reflects serious differences within the Alliance. The United States and most of the Allies, especially the newer members in central Europe, believe that the extension of NATO's defensive alliance is not complete and that continued enlargement is not in conflict with Russia's legitimate security interests. Germany and France (and Russia) have a different vision of the future geography of European security. This fundamental dichotomy will sharpen divergences in the willingness to take risks, raising questions about which responsibilities are shared, and which are not, within an alliance built on common values and a willingness to take on dangers and burdens for a larger cause.

For perhaps the first time in NATO's history, then, we may need to ask what happens to a military or security organization when fundamental purposes diverge. For the cases of Afghanistan and enlargement raise questions not of means to ends, but of ends themselves. And beyond the issue of ends and purposes in Europe, broader global issues will pose a challenge for NATO in practical terms.

Even in the post-Cold War era, when the attention of U.S. policymakers has often turned in other directions, Europe's fundamental importance has remained sufficiently clear and strong to ensure the mutual and continued core relevance of each side of the Atlantic to the other. That situation may be changing. Many commentators have noted the extraordinary array of challenges the Obama administration faces as it approaches its first few months: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, and the broader Middle East all present immediate dangers. In the longer term, China is both a key economic partner and a potential regional challenger. Latin America, including Mexico, requires tending, and Africa needs continued assistance.

Given these challenges, there will be a real temptation for Washington to view European security with less urgency, just as many Europeans have feared would eventually happen. After all, if the largest nations in continental Europe are content to grant Russia the sphere of influence it seems to seek, American leaders may not want to expend valuable energy and time resisting that course, although the current administration has admirably rejected the idea of spheres of influence in Europe and insisted that all nations should choose their own alliances. While a lessening of American engagement would be disappointing and dangerous for the newer allies in central Europe, who have contributed much where the United States has asked, the

burden will be on them and like-minded Western European nations to work to close policy gaps to manageable scales.

The greater risk, however, is that basic questions on beliefs and purposes go unanswered and fester, leaving NATO less able to take united decisions. The United States could find itself working on critical issues directly with its more like-minded friends and leaving NATO to attend to less controversial, and less important, issues. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, fears of NATO's irrelevance could thus be realized.

This year's 60th anniversary will, like all such milestones, prompt a new version of the old debate about "Whither NATO?" Such questions are especially grave this year. The United States will find it much harder to cope with the global array of security issues it faces with a weakened trans-Atlantic security relationship, and Europe will find such a weakened relationship harmful to its project of economic and political integration. NATO members need to use this year and the new strategic concept to begin answering the hard questions that face the alliance.

Yet a future of irrelevance and ineffectiveness for NATO is far from inevitable. For the first time in over 40 years, France rejoined the Alliance's integrated military command structure, a step that could bring with it the resolution of difficult issues surrounding NATO's cooperation with the European Union. In a more negative light, Moscow may continue to assert its interests in ways that force NATO to rally to the deterrence of aggression aimed at Central European allies.

NATO's many successes have come in a sustained atmosphere of crisis, characterized by differences among members about means and methods. Accordingly, any forecast of the demise of should be treated with more than a grain of historical salt. But the key to NATO's future will be a recognition that the differences facing NATO on its 60th anniversary are real, and that surmounting those differences will be more difficult and require a greater sustained effort than in the past. Europe and North America should make that effort the center of NATO's attention in coming months.

Again, madame chairwoman, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the subcommittee today.