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# **LES ÉTATS-UNIS ET LA FIN DE LA GRANDE STRATÉGIE ? UN BILAN DE LA POLITIQUE ÉTRANGÈRE D'OBAMA**

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**É T U D E S**



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## **LEADING FROM BEHIND WHEN NO ONE IS IN FRONT: EIGHT YEARS OF FRUSTRATION WITH THE "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S" FAILURE TO SHARE THE BURDEN OF PRE- SERVING WORLD ORDER**

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This paper will explore the disillusionment of the Obama administration with the inability of "the international community," including the United Nations and regional entities such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, to play constructive roles in the promotion of peace and security in the world. The continual dependence on one single country—the United States—to assume the responsibility of deterring aggression, combating terrorism, and coping with humanitarian disasters across the globe, whether or not those developments affect the vital interests of the United States, provoked a vigorous response from the man whose term in office ended on January 20 of this year. Barack Obama was the first modern U.S. president to publicly complain about the post-Cold War assumption that the world's only remaining superpower can and should operate as the gendarme of the world.

I will begin by addressing what appears to be Obama's thinking about America's proper role in the world and will then review a few of the actual policies conducted by his administration reflective of that vision. I will end with a very cursory review of the history of United States foreign policy since the Second World War in order to demonstrate that President Obama's vision of world order is not entirely new, but rather reiterates concerns expressed by American officials in the past.

"Free riders aggravate me," President Barack Obama exclaimed in his wide-ranging interview in the *Atlantic* magazine with Jeffrey Goldberg in April 2016.<sup>1</sup> That particular outburst was directed at the failure of America's European allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to bear their fair share of the costs of regional defense. When even Great Britain, America's closest ally, failed to meet the specified 2% of GDP threshold for defense

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1 Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic Magazine*, April 2016.

spending, Obama had to exert considerable pressure on Prime Minister David Cameron to reach that goal. But that left only five of the alliance's twenty-eight members in compliance.

Obama's dissatisfaction with the "free riders" across the Atlantic repeated the acerbic complaints of his former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. In 2010 Gates grumbled about what he called "the demilitarization of Europe."<sup>2</sup> The next year, before leaving his post, he warned in a speech in Brussels of NATO's "dim if not dismal future" unless its European members increased their contributions to the alliance. "The blunt reality is that there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress—and the American body politic writ large—to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources and make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense," he complained. "[T]hose who enjoy the benefits of NATO membership but don't want to share the risks and the costs," he noted, are "apparently willing and eager for American taxpayers to assume the growing security burden left by reductions in European defense budgets." He also criticized the Europeans for their half-hearted efforts to meet their obligations in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and for imposing onerous restrictions on their troops there that "hobbled the effort" to bring stability to that war-torn country.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to Obama's own general dissatisfaction with the unwillingness of the European members of NATO to bear their rightful share of the financial burden of European defense, he was also agitated about the role of America's transatlantic allies in the alliance's "out-of-area" military operation during his presidency to overthrow Muammar Qaddafi in 2011. The Europeans had been loudly calling for action against the Libyan strongman after he threatened to massacre his domestic enemies in the eastern part of the country. "But what has become a habit over the last several decades in these circumstances, Obama later observed, "is people pushing us to act but then showing an unwillingness to put skin in the game."<sup>4</sup> So he

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2        "Gates Calls European Mood a Danger to Peace," *New York Times*, February 24, 2010.

3        Robert Gates, "The Security and Defense Agenda: The Future of NATO", Speech by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, June 10, 2011.

4        Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine."

decided, in the memorable phrase of an aide later leaked to the press, that the U.S. would “lead from behind” in the Libyan crisis. He insisted that the European members of NATO, located right across the Mediterranean from Libya, take charge of a multilateral NATO intervention, with full United States support. The resulting firestorm of criticism that engulfed the White House in response to that pronouncement and that policy greatly annoyed him. “We don’t have to always be the ones who are up front,” he defiantly declared. “[I]t was precisely in order to prevent the Europeans and the Arab states from holding our coats while we did all the fighting” that we insisted that they lead during the mission to oust Gaddafi. It was, as he put it, “part of the anti-free rider campaign” that he was waging against America’s European allies and Arab friends.<sup>5</sup> After the U.S. provided the overall coordination of the military operation, destroyed Qaddafi’s air defenses, and provided critical intelligence support—leading from behind, if you will--the NATO intervention, spearheaded by Britain and France, succeeded in removing Qaddafi. But the result was a failed state that has become a haven for ISIS and other jihadist groups. “I had more faith in the Europeans, given Libya’s proximity, being invested in the follow up,” he told Goldberg.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to Libya, the other Obama foreign policy that has caused much concern is his refusal to become directly involved in the Syrian Civil War. Defense Secretary Gates regularly asked the question in national security meetings, “Shouldn’t we finish up the two wars we have before we look for another?”<sup>7</sup> Obama has been reluctant to intervene in conflicts in which the U.S. has no demonstrable vital interest, even if such caution tragically permits horrific humanitarian disasters to take place, as they have been in Syria. “I suppose you could call me a realist in believing we can’t, at any given moment, relieve all of the world’s misery,” he declared.<sup>8</sup> Faced with evidence of the unmitigated brutality of the Assad regime, he publicly called for its removal in the summer of 2011. A year later, in August 2012, he famously warned Assad that if he used chemical weapons against his domestic enemies, he will have crossed a “red line” that would lead to a military response from the international community with the United States

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5        *Ibid.*

6        *Ibid.*

7        *Ibid.*

8        *Ibid.*

in the lead.<sup>9</sup> The European allies talked a good game in criticizing Assad. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel then informed the president that her country would not contribute troops to a Syrian campaign. The British parliament turned down Prime Minister Cameron's request for authorization for British participation in such an undertaking. The refusal of the U.S. Congress to authorize an American military intervention in Syria demonstrated that American congressional and public opinion had no stomach for involvement in a third war in a Muslim country.<sup>10</sup>

Vociferous expressions at outrage flowed from all quarters at American inaction in Syria, and particularly at the alleged damage to U.S. credibility caused by the failure to enforce the "red line" of 2012. These denunciations overlooked the fact that the president's warning referred specifically to the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons against its opponents or permitting those weapons to fall into the hands of terrorist groups. After a chemical weapons attack against a rebel-held suburb of Damascus in August 2013, the President authorized and then cancelled a planned missile strike against Syrian government positions. Soon thereafter the United States and Russia jointly crafted a non-military solution to the problem: By October 2013, without single missile being fired, the Assad regime was forced to submit to a multinational coalition that removed and destroyed the deadly weapons.<sup>11</sup> In short, Syria's huge chemical weapons arsenal was removed not by a unilateral American intervention in Syria, but by a rare instance of cooperative coercive diplomacy by Washington and Moscow.

What if Obama had launched the attack as planned? Such a strike would have eliminated only a small portion of this arsenal, leaving hundreds of tons of chemical weapons dispersed throughout the war-torn country. To prevent them from falling into the hands of ISIS and other terrorist groups, he would have had to deploy American forces on the ground to secure those weapons over which the Syrian government may well have lost control.

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9 Glenn Kessler, "President Obama and the 'red line' on Syria's Chemical Weapons," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2013.

10 Nico Hines, "With Britain Out, Allies Abandon Obama on Syria," *The Daily Beast*, August 8, 2013.

11 Michael R. Gordon, Michael R., "U.S. and Russia Reach Deal to Destroy Syria's Chemical Weapons," *New York Times*, (September 14, 2013). Michael R. Gordon, "U.N Deal on Syrian Arms is Milestone After Year of Inertia," *New York Times*, September 26, 2013.

But the allegation persisted that American credibility had been gravely compromised by the decision not to intervene militarily in the Syrian mess, long after the purpose of announcing the “red line” had been achieved by negotiation rather than by missile strikes. Obama later complained about what he called the “fetish of credibility” of the foreign policy establishment: the idea that the “international community” must be able at all times to rely on the United States to live up to all of its global commitments.<sup>12</sup>

Let me now turn to a brief excursion into history to demonstrate that President Obama’s resentment at this hyper-dependence on Washington to protect the world from the multifarious threats it faces is not new. Examples of this type of thinking had already surfaced in the early years of the Cold War and continued in the decades thereafter.

At the end of the Second World War it was widely assumed that the new United Nations Organization would succeed where its predecessor had failed by becoming an effective guarantor of peace and security in the world. The long-forgotten military sections of Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter specify that the Security Council will obtain from member states “armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.” A Military Staff Committee (MSC), composed of representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council, was established to lay the groundwork for a global network of UN army, naval, and air bases throughout the world to provide logistical support for a collective response to aggression as defined by the Security Council. By the time the MSC had completed its elaborate project for an on-call UN military command with dedicated UN bases across the globe to keep the peace in 1947, the willingness of the two Cold War rivals in the Security Council to exercise their vetoes to block any policy of which they did not approve buried the ardent hopes of the founders of the world body.<sup>13</sup>

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12 Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine;” Eric Alterman, “Obama and the ‘Cult of Credibility’,” *The Nation*, March 24, 2016.

13 Robert Donovan, “World Air Force Expected to Be First Organized,” *New York Herald Tribune*, March 27, 1946; Jonathan Soffer, “All for One or All For All: The Military Staff Committee and the Contradictions of American Internationalism,” *Diplomatic History* 21, N. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 172-192; Eric Grove, “UN Armed Forces and the Military Staff Committee: A Look Back,” *International Security* 18, No. 4 (1993), pp. 172-182; William R. Keylor, “The United Nations’ Record as the Guardian of Global Collective Security,” in Voytech Mastny and Zhu Liqun, eds.

In the absence of an effective *global* system of collective security, five West European countries formed in March 1948 the so-called Brussels Pact Organization, a *regional* security agreement that replaced the still-born collective security approach of the UN Charter, for the defense of the non-Communist half of Europe. But the two leading members of the Brussels Pact, France and Great Britain, immediately pressed the United States to join the emerging Western security system on the grounds that the Europeans desperately needed U.S. military protection while they recovered from the economic devastation of the war.<sup>14</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organization founded in 1949 represented an unprecedented commitment by the United States to defend the countries of Western Europe. But when Secretary of State Dean Acheson was asked during the Senate debate on the ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty whether this new obligation would require the prepositioning of American military forces in Europe, he responded with a "clear and absolute 'no.'"<sup>15</sup> In the lexicon of our own day, there would be no American "boots on the ground." That assurance that U.S. soldiers would not be placed in harm's way was sufficient to win legislative ratification of the pact.

In the following year the outbreak of the Korean War, which had nothing to do with the security of Western Europe, led to a radical transformation of the new transatlantic alliance and America's role in it. At the urgent request of the European members of NATO, the Truman administration persuaded Congress to agree to the deployment of U.S. ground forces in Europe and the establishment of an integrated military command under the leadership of an American general. These successful initiatives from Western Europe between 1948 and 1951 to obtain a U.S. pledge to participate actively in the defense of the old continent laid the foundation for what the Norwegian scholar Geir Lundestad later called "Empire by Invitation."<sup>16</sup>

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*The Legacy of the Cold War: Perspectives on Security, Cooperation, and Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 81-122 (esp. pp. 91-94).

14 John Baylis, "Britain, the Brussels Pact, and the Continental Commitment," *International Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Autumn 1984), pp. 615-629.

15 *U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, Hearings on the North Atlantic Treaty* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1949, part I, p.47. David Calleo, *The Atlantic Fantasy: The U.S., NATO, and Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 25-27.

16 Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western

From the very beginning, Washington pressed its transatlantic allies to contribute their fair share to their own defense. In the early months of the Korean War, Secretary of State Acheson implored them to welcome the rearmament and admission to NATO of the recently established Federal Republic of Germany, so that this vast untapped reservoir of manpower and economic resources could contribute to the defense of Western Europe. Horrified at the very thought of Germans in uniform again, France proposed an alternative project for a West European military force parallel to NATO in which West German soldiers would be thinly dispersed throughout a *European* army, wearing *European* uniforms and reporting to *European* commanders. The plan for a so-called European Defense Community collapsed in 1954, when the French parliament rejected the very project its own government had proposed four years earlier, even in the face of the direct threat by the U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that that the United States would be obliged to undergo "an agonizing reappraisal" of its pledge to defend a Western Europe unwilling to defend itself.<sup>17</sup> A year later West Germany was permitted to rearm and to join the alliance under the auspices of something called the Western European Union, a phantom organization that would remain a dead letter for the next three decades.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, throughout his two terms in office, considered the forward deployment of the American divisions that he had once commanded in Western Europe a temporary expedient to enable the West Europeans to recover economically to the point where they could finance and provide the requisite manpower for their own defense. As he noted two years after his retirement: "Though for eight years in the White House I believed and announced to my associates that a reduction in American [troop] strength in Europe should be initiated as soon as European economies had been restored, the matter was then considered too delicate a political question to be raised. I believe that the time has now

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Europe, 1945-1952, "Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 23, No.3 (September 1986), pp. 263-277.

17 Brian R. Duchin, "The 'Agonizing Reappraisal': Eisenhower, Dulles, and the European Defense Community," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 16, No. 2 (April 1992), pp. 201-222. François David, "John Foster Dulles, Secrétaire d'Etat, et la France (1953-1959)," Thèse de doctorat, Université de la Sorbonne, Paris IV, (2006), seconde partie, pp. 627-635 ; Daniel Lerner, *France Defeats EDC* (New York: Praeger, 1957).



come [1963] when we should start withdrawing some of those troops.... One American division can 'show the flag' as definitely as can several."<sup>18</sup>

During the Vietnam War, long after Western Europe had not only recovered from the wreckage of the Second World War but was enjoying unprecedented economic prosperity, this sentiment was picked up by the Democratic leader in the United States Senate, Mike Mansfield of Montana. He periodically introduced resolutions from 1966 to 1970 calling for a radical reduction in U.S. troop strength in Europe. As he sardonically complained, "[T]he 250 million people of Western Europe, with tremendous industrial resources and long military experience, are unable to organize an effective military coalition to defend themselves against 200 million Russians who are contending at the same time with 800 million Chinese, but must continue after 20 years to depend upon 200 million Americans for their defense."<sup>19</sup> Although the Mansfield resolutions received very strong support in both houses of Congress, they were turned back after strong presidential pressure. But American complaints about the absence of "burden sharing" continued.<sup>20</sup>

In the mid-1980s, as the Cold War began to wind down, the leaders of France and West Germany made a determined effort to promote the cause of European security cooperation by breathing life into the moribund Western European Union, which had been enlarged to include several new members. But that effort of reviving the long-forgotten project of creating a European military force failed once again.<sup>21</sup> Later plans for a "Franco-German brigade" and of a "European Army Corps" (Eurocorps) in the second half of the 1980s went nowhere.<sup>22</sup>

After the end of the Cold War and the creation of the European Union, renewed efforts were made to develop that elusive goal of European

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18 Guest column for Andrew Tully by Senator Mike Mansfield (Dem. Montana), August 7, 1970. "The Case for the Europeanization of NATO."

19 *Ibid.*

20 Péter Lázár, "The Mansfield Amendments and the U.S. Commitment in Europe, 1966-1975." MA thesis, 2003, Naval Post-Graduate School, Monterey, CA.

21 Ian Gambles, "Prospects for West European Security Co-Operation," International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Adelphi Papers* 244 (Autumn 1989), pp. 28-33.

22 Charles G. Cogan, *The Third Option: The Emancipation of European Defense, 1989-2000* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2001), pp. 54-55.

security cooperation separate from the U.S. dominated-Atlantic alliance. They all failed. In 1998 Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and French President Jacques Chirac met in Saint-Malo to issue a stirring call for a Common European Military Force, eventually setting a deadline date of 2003. Again. Nothing happened.<sup>23</sup> The replacement of the Western European Union by the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) in the first decade of the twenty-first century resulted in much bureaucratic activity but no practical outcome.<sup>24</sup>

On March 8, 2015 the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, bravely renewed the old call for the creation of a European army. Such a decision, he declared, “would convey to Russia that we are serious about defending the values of the European Union” in light of recent events in Ukraine and Crimea and threats to the Baltic states. “Such an army would help us design a common foreign and security policy,” the former prime minister of Luxembourg continued. “Europe’s image has suffered dramatically and also in terms of foreign policy we don’t seem to be taken entirely seriously.” One British critic contemptuously replied: “if our nations faced a serious security threat, who [*sic*] would we want to rely on?—NATO or the EU.” German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen welcomed Juncker’s vague proposal in the long run, but “not in the short term,” she cautioned.<sup>25</sup> Sixty-two years of failed plans and projects for European defense cooperation. In the long run, but not in the short term!

In his 2009 book about post-World War II Europe, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?*—the title borrowed from an American anti-war song from the 1960s—James Sheehan marveled at Europe’s success in turning its back on the tragic past of lethal and destructive wars by rejecting large defense budgets in favor of material well-being, social stability, and economic growth.<sup>26</sup> The most economically advanced members of the EU

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23 “The St. Malo Declaration Ten Years On,” *Financial Times*, December 1, 2008.

24 Jolyon Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). For a wildly optimistic assessment of the prospects for European security cooperation published the same year, see Seth G. Jones, *The Rise of European Security Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

25 “Jean-Claude Juncker Calls for EU Army,” *The Guardian*, March 8, 2015.

26 James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?: The Transforma-*

have developed excellent systems of human welfare: comprehensive medical care in single-payer systems; free education from kindergarten through the university; and efficient, government-subsidized transportation systems. In the meantime the infrastructure of the United States--its bridges, its ports, its airports, its drinking water, and above all its dilapidated internal transportation system, is in dire need to repair. Several months ago the antiquated subway system of Washington D.C. was shut down for a year for long-deferred maintenance. What a contrast to the Paris metro and the TGV I took from Paris to Poitiers to attend this conference! Nearly 47 million Americans live below the poverty line. An estimated 28 million have no health insurance despite Obama's Affordable Care Act. The combined figure for college student debt has reached \$1.3 trillion, with seven million young people in default. For the first time in recent history, the younger generation of Americans is expected to have a lower standard of living than its parents.

It was amid this domestic socio-economic context that Obama pushed back against the assumption that only the United States is capable of bearing the cost of taking the lead in preserving peace and security in the world. As in the Syrian Civil War, whenever catastrophe looms anywhere across the globe the "international community" looks to the "indispensable nation" (in the famous words of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright) to solve the problem.<sup>27</sup> When one of Samantha Power's "Problems from Hell" erupts, the United States is expected to clean up the mess, as it did in Europe's own back yard in the Balkans in the 1990s, with the European Union standing helplessly by the side.<sup>28</sup> Obama has periodically reminded us of the financial costs of America's overseas military engagements, which exceed \$3.6 trillion in current dollars, according to the Costs of War Project at Brown University's Watson Center.<sup>29</sup> The human costs to families of fallen soldiers and to returning veterans suffering long-term physical and psychological disabilities that prevent them from living nor-

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*tion of Modern Europe* (New York: Mariner Books, 2009). A similar assessment had been made earlier in Robert Kagan, *La Puissance et la faiblesse: Les Etats-Unis et l'Europe dans le nouvel ordre mondial* (Trans. Fortunato Israel, Paris: Plon, 2003).

27 Micah Zenko, "The Myth of the Indispensable Nation," *Foreign Policy*, Nov.6, 2014.

28 Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

29 <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>

mal lives, is incalculable. Obama's message seemed to be that those costs greatly outweigh the benefits of unilateral American military operations abroad when America's vital national interests were not at stake.

These are the considerations, it seems to me, that motivated most of the foreign-policy decisions of President Barack Obama. When he entered the Oval Office eight years ago, he inherited two colossal messes in Afghanistan and Iraq. When he turned his attention to his country's foreign relations--after addressing the worst financial crisis and recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s--, he tried valiantly to extricate the United States from what would become the two longest wars in the nation's history. Despite that noble intention, he was constantly sucked back into those two ongoing quagmires by the inability of the two successor regimes that the U.S. had installed and lavishly financed in those countries to establish the rule of law, root out corruption, and provide essential services and, above all, security for their citizens. In his obsession to avoid being dragged into the two potential quagmires that unfolded on his own watch, he succeeded in keeping the conflicts in Syria and Libya at arms' length.

In conclusion, let me repeat my observation at the beginning of this paper: Obama is the first American president since World War II to publicly push back against the widespread and persistent belief that the United States should singlehandedly deploy its financial and human resources to deter aggressive powers like Russia in Europe, engage and destroy terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Greater Middle East, and rush to the rescue of civilian populations decimated by unspeakable acts of violence across the globe, in the absence of collective action by what is euphemistically called "the international community" to preserve security and stability in the world.

Postscript (15 February 2017): A month after this paper was delivered at the international conference in Poitiers, France in mid-October 2016, Donald Trump was elected president of the United States. In light of Mr. Trump's sporadic comments on foreign policy before entering the White House, it may seem reasonable to predict that the foreign-policy legacy of Barack Obama, as I have interpreted it, will be largely repudiated by President Trump. But there is one sentiment that the new president and his predecessor appear to share: discontent with America's transatlantic allies for their over-reliance on the United States for their own security. Based on his public statements, Donald Trump may be prepared to go

much further than Barack Obama was in pressing the Europeans on this persistent source of transatlantic friction.

There are two reasons to question whether a Trump administration will honor the America's absolute and unqualified security commitment to an Atlantic alliance that the candidate has described as "obsolete."<sup>30</sup> The first is the President's intimation during the presidential campaign that this commitment is not absolute but rather is conditional on Europe's willingness to do more to ensure its own security while Washington concentrates on security priorities elsewhere, especially in what Trump regards as his country's top foreign-policy goal: the defeat of radical Islamic terrorism.<sup>31</sup> The second is the mounting evidence that the new occupant of the White House intends to orchestrate a complete and total "reset" of U.S. relations with Russia: his favorable references to Vladimir Putin as a national leader; his selection as Secretary of State of a longtime personal friend of the Russian strongman who opposed the economic sanctions imposed by the Obama administration on Russia after its annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine (because they interfered with his company's plans for a joint oil drilling venture with a state-run Russian firm); and the choice for National Security Advisor of a man who appeared on the Russian state-controlled television channel RT, called for cooperation with Russia and the Assad regime to counter the threat of radical Islamic terrorism in Syria, and heartily endorsed Trump's criticism of the European members of the alliance for not paying their fair share of the Alliance's costs.<sup>32</sup>

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30 <http://www.factcheck.org/2016/05whats-trumps-position-on-nato/>

31 In July 2016 he issued this warning: "If we cannot be properly reimbursed for the tremendous cost of our military protecting other countries, and in many cases the countries I'm talking about are extremely rich,...I would absolutely be prepared to tell those countries 'Congratulations, you will be defending yourself.'" David Sanger and Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies Against Attack," *New York Times*, July 20, 2016.

32 "[T]his is no longer the Cold War — we need to organize ourselves differently, Michael T. Flynn declared. "And, frankly, if you are part of the club, you've got to pay your bill, and for countries that don't pay their bills, there has got to be some other penalty." Quoted in James Goldgeier, "Trump's national security adviser wants to water down U.S. NATO commitments. Here's what that means," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2016.

Taken together these developments suggest that the Trump administration may seek to loosen America's ties to the Atlantic Alliance while seeking détente with Russia. If the above assessment is accurate, what can the European members of NATO do to ensure their security?

The answer may lie in proposals recently offered by several long-time students of the transatlantic relationship. After noting that the Europeans "will not do more unless the United States credibly commits to doing less," Barry Posen concluded that "The European Union provides as good a foundation for US disengagement [from Europe] as the United States will find anywhere in the world today."<sup>33</sup> Andrew Bacevich observed that "Should it choose to do so, Europe—even after the British vote to leave the EU—is fully capable of defending its eastern flank. The next administration should nudge the Europeans toward making that choice—not by precipitously withdrawing U.S. security guarantees but through a phased and deliberate devolution of responsibility" over the next decade or so. "But to get things rolling," he concluded, "the next administration's message to Europe should be clear from day one: ready your defenses; we're going home."<sup>34</sup>

The neo-realists John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt chimed in with the blunt assessment that "the United States should end its military presence in Europe and turn NATO over to the Europeans."<sup>35</sup> Jolyon Howorth, the leading expert on Europe's abortive efforts to devise a common security and defense policy—from the failure of the European Defense Community in 1954 to the current moribund Common Security and Defense Policy—, <sup>36</sup> has called for the "EU-isation" of NATO, that is, the gradual transfer of authority within the alliance to its European members. "There is no God-given law whereby Europe should be utterly reliant in perpetuity on any ally (however powerful) for its regional security," he observes. "The United States cannot 'solve' Europe's 'Russia problem.' Only the EU can do

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33 Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp.66, 90.

34 Andrew Bacevich, "Ending Endless War: A Pragmatic Military Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, September-October. 2016.

35 John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2016.

36 See his most recent book on the subject: Jolyon Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (London: Palgrave, 2014).

that. But it can do that only from a position of strategic autonomy [from NATO].”<sup>37</sup>

Faced with the possibility of a gradual American disengagement from the Continent, it remains to be seen if the EU—with or without the United Kingdom—will successfully confront the challenge of devising a robust European security and defense architecture that has eluded it for so many decades.

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37 Jolyon Howorth, “European Security Autonomy and NATO: Grasping the Nettle of Alliance EU-isation,” preliminary draft of an article to appear in a special issue of *West European Politics* in 2017.