

# WebMemo



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## The NATO First Act Would Advance Transatlantic Security

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*It is in our national interest to ensure NATO succeeds.*<sup>1</sup>

—General Bantz J. Craddock, USA, Commander,  
United States European Command, March 2008

With Barack Obama having already visited Europe twice as President, with a third visit scheduled for July, his positioning of the transatlantic alliance in his Administration's overall foreign policy is ripe for reflection. An effective strategy for maximizing America's national security and reinforcing the indivisibility of transatlantic security should emphasize NATO's role in U.S.–European relations. The NATO First Act, H.R. 2797, introduced by Reps. Michael Turner (R–OH) and Jim Marshall (D–GA) contains several elements that would achieve that aim.<sup>2</sup>

Adopting policies that bolster NATO will strengthen U.S. leadership and contribute to more effective multilateralism. As an intergovernmental alliance, NATO also allows the United States to enhance its bilateral relationships with individual allies, which must be a central tenet of America's European policy.

The NATO-first concept stands in marked contrast to the Europe-first policy as advocated in 2001 by the recently appointed U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder. Daalder's policy would essentially create a back door for America's withdrawal from the European continent in figurative, and possibly, real terms.<sup>3</sup> Neither the EU nor any single European nation is capable of stepping into the breach this withdrawal would create, leaving a dangerous power vacuum with unpredictable outcomes.

**Mutually Reinforcing Alliances.** After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the expansion of NATO and the European Union to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it was widely assumed that Europe was largely whole, free, and at peace. However, Europe is not a sea of tranquility and faces geopolitical and asymmetric challenges, including a resurgent Russia, missile proliferation, and Islamist extremism.

It is therefore important that, in order to confront these challenges, the United States and Europe have bilateral and multilateral relationships that complement one another. A NATO-first policy must make clear that NATO is America's primary multilateral alliance in Europe but not its only alliance. This already happens in practice: As an intergovernmental values-based alliance, NATO has offered America additional security options rather than demand exclusivity. For example, the Anglo–American Special Relationship continues to operate successfully in non-NATO theatres of war, such as Iraq.

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Unlike a Europe-first agenda, which will involve the supranationalization and centralization of power within the EU bureaucracy, a NATO-first policy will reinforce and complement America's enduring bilateral alliances across Europe. In this sense, the NATO First Act should be seen as a "NATO reinforcing act."

**NATO–EU Relations.** In spring 2001, Ambassador Daalder counseled that NATO and Russia should come second to a "Europe first" agenda, namely the creation of a strong, united Europe with its own military and political identity. The Obama Administration's inclination toward a deeply integrated and enlarged European Union that is capable of supplanting NATO ignores the democratic will of the peoples of Europe as well as the limitations of EU power. The low turnout in the European elections and consistent rejection of integrationist treaties such as the Lisbon Treaty in referenda demonstrate the European project's serious lack of legitimacy and credibility. In institutional, political, and military terms, the EU is not capable of supplanting NATO and is unlikely to ever be in a position to do so.

If NATO's primacy in European security affairs is lost, so is the security bargain and indivisibility of U.S.–European security. Therefore, in seeking strong European partners to bear a greater share of the global security burden, Washington must put the NATO alliance before its relationship with the EU. It must also find a working relationship with the European Union that delivers better complementarity. At present, the EU is less a military power in the making than a counterweight in the making. A NATO-first policy should avoid the current transatlantic plunge into a shotgun wedding between NATO and the European Union—a union that would give Brussels free reign to Europeanize NATO while building an EU-only military identity.

Specifically, a NATO-first policy must set forth the following principles for clarifying the NATO–EU partnership:

- NATO's primacy in the transatlantic security alliance is supreme;
- The EU should be a civilian complement to NATO rather than a separate military identity;
- There should be no duplication of NATO assets, including any separate EU operational planning and command capabilities;
- NATO must maintain at least one Supreme Command in the United States;
- NATO must reserve all resources exclusively for NATO missions; and
- The assets and resources for exclusively ESDP missions must be provided in addition to—not instead of—the members' contributions to NATO.

**Missile Defense.** Today's strategic threat environment includes the proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear technologies among rogue regimes such as North Korea and Iran. This requires the deployment of missile defenses capable of protecting all NATO allies. An extended deterrence policy based on the Cold War policy of "mutually assured destruction" is no longer sufficient to protect America and her allies.

President George W. Bush significantly advanced a range of U.S. missile defense programs and took bold steps to extend that defense umbrella to NATO allies. Specifically, he concluded the "third site" agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic to deploy elements of the U.S. ground-based missile defense system on their territories. A NATO first policy with regards to missile defense will be realized only if it reinforces mutual and indivisible security. This European buy-in contributes to the multi-layered security relationships that are now needed in the modern threat environment and sig-

1. General Bantz J. Craddock, Commander, United States European Command, statement before the Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, March 13, 2008, p. 48, at <http://www.dod.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/TestCraddock070315.pdf> (June 11, 2009).
2. NATO First Act, H.R. 2797, 111th Cong., 1st Sess., June 10, 2009, at [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:h2797ih.txt.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h2797ih.txt.pdf) (June 12, 2009).
3. Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, "Putting Europe First," *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring 2001), p. 78, at <http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/daalder/survival01.pdf> (June 10, 2009).

nificantly bolsters transatlantic security and U.S. nonproliferation efforts.<sup>4</sup>

The NATO First Act furthers these positive trends by specifically making funds available for the deployment of the third site. American and European interests would be enhanced by specifically emphasizing two additional points:

1. The proposed European locations for the long-range missile defense system reinforce NATO by strengthening the bilateral security of select European allies, particularly the Czech Republic and Poland; and
2. The proposed European locations for the long-range missile defense system reinforce NATO by bolstering the global non proliferation regime.

The NATO alliance has previously endorsed two resolutions that supported the third site deployments and called to explore linking the third site with current and future NATO missile defense systems.<sup>5</sup> A NATO-first agenda should take these installations forward, building toward a multi-layered, alliance-wide missile defense system.

**Enlargement.** A NATO-first agenda should seek to re-energize NATO's Open Door Policy and to continue the alliance's enlargement. The NATO First Act puts political and financial support behind NATO's Open Door Policy by authorizing funding for the provision of equipment, supplies, and training for Partnership for Peace nations.<sup>6</sup> Including a provision to fund training activities as well as capacity building is especially important, since NATO aspirants need to enhance their command-and-control abilities as well as build capacity. A NATO-first policy should specifically allow for the provision of any C4ISTAR components (Command,

Control, Communications, Computers, Information/Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting Acquisition and Reconnaissance).<sup>7</sup>

By directing funding toward aspirant members such as Georgia, Macedonia, and Ukraine, as well as existing members, the NATO First Act would contribute to America's long-standing bipartisan policy of promoting the democratization and integration of former Soviet satellite countries into the Euro-Atlantic community. This funding also contributes to U.S. national security objectives by:

- Increasing the number of partners and their capacity and abilities to partner with NATO on alliance missions such as Kosovo and Afghanistan, and
- Building interpersonal relationships between the militaries and commanders of partner countries.

U.S. leadership has been required at every stage of NATO enlargement in the past, and that requirement remains today. Combining much-needed resources with a pro-enlargement agenda is essential to advancing this policy goal and reaffirms America's commitment to consolidating the West's post-Cold War gains and upholding the founding principles of NATO.

**Article V.** The ultimate goal of a NATO-first policy should be to reinforce the indivisibility of transatlantic security and reaffirm America's political and military commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty's Article V mutual defense clause.<sup>8</sup> Article V is a security bond for NATO members to promote stability and deter aggressors. The NATO First Act's support for the NATO Special Operations Coordination Center contributes toward these aims by increasing funds for improved coordination and information sharing between allies' special operations forces.

4. See Baker Spring, "Europe, Missile Defense, and the Future of Extended Deterrence," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2080, September 25, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/BallisticMissileDefense/wm2080.cfm>.
5. See Bucharest Summit Declaration, issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on April 3, 2008, at [www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html](http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html) (June 15, 2009); Press release, "Final Communiqué of the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Foreign Ministers," NATO, December 3, 2008, at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-153e.html> (June 10, 2009).
6. For a list of Partnership for Peace countries, see NATO, "Signatures of Partnership for Peace Framework Document," April 21, 2008, at <http://www.nato.int/pfp/sig-cntr.htm> (June 10, 2009).
7. In testimony, General Craddock repeatedly outlined the value of enhancing command-and-control abilities and its value in building interpersonal military relationships. See Craddock, statement before the Armed Services Committee.
8. NATO, "The North Atlantic Treaty," April 4, 1949, at <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/treaty.htm> (June 10, 2009).

America's force structure and its nuclear forces in Europe must also be commensurate with its treaty obligations. In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, then-Commander of U.S. European Command General Craddock stated that America's forward deployed troops and installations are "visible manifestations of U.S. commitment and enable us to apply influence, assure access when and where needed, and preserve a leadership role in NATO."<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore understandable that Congress wants to maintain troops and bases in Europe. However, the NATO First Act should be responsive as opposed to pre-emptive. Rather than pursuing a legislative agenda that challenges the constitutional mandate of the Commander-in-Chief, Congress should insert a one year's notification requirement for any base closure, troop withdrawals, or changes to U.S. forward-deployed nuclear forces. Congress will then be able to use its constitutionally mandated purse power to either refuse or reinsert funding into the annual appropriations bill where necessary.

Finally, a NATO-first policy should ensure that reductions to the strategic nuclear forces of the United States, pursuant to current and future negotiations with Russia, are done in accordance with the need to maintain the extended nuclear deterrence policy toward Europe. A critical element of this extended deterrence policy is addressing the present imbalance between the U.S. and Russia in

non-strategic nuclear weapons. Therefore, any treaty on reductions in strategic nuclear forces below the levels established by the Moscow Treaty should be contingent on full Russian compliance with the politically binding declarations of the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991 and 1992.

**Maintaining the Primacy of NATO.** In his testimony, General Craddock stated that American leadership within NATO should be a priority in U.S.–European relations.<sup>10</sup> Maintaining the primacy of NATO and better equipping the alliance to confront current and future security challenges will achieve this goal and enhance transatlantic security. In fashioning a NATO-first agenda, the U.S. Congress and the Obama Administration should reject "Europe first" and instead take concrete steps—such as enlargement and missile defense cooperation—to advance a successful transatlantic security policy.

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9. Craddock, statement before the Armed Services Committee, p. 13.

10. *Ibid*, p. 10.