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NATO's Post-Cold War Trajectory

Decline or Regeneration?

Mark Webber, James Sperling and Martin A. Smith

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NATO's Post-Cold War Trajectory

Decline or Regeneration?

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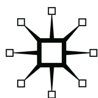

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For Della and Joy

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List of Abbreviations

ACT	Allied Command Transformation
ACV(s)	Armoured Combat Vehicle(s)
AFOR	Albania Force
AFSOUTH	NATO's Allied Forces Southern Europe
ALTBMD	Active Layer Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence
ANP	Annual National Programme
AU	African Union
AWAC	Airborne Early Warning and Control
BSI	Burden-sharing Index
C3	Command, Control and Communications
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
C4ISTAR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear
CDC	Commonwealth of Democratic Choice
CDP	Capabilities Development Plan
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CENTCOM	US Central Command
CFE	(Treaty on) Conventional Forces in Europe
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIMIC	Civil–Military Cooperation
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
COMISAF	Commander of International Security Assistance Force
CPG	Comprehensive Political Guidance
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSS	Critical Security Studies
DCI	Defence Capabilities Initiative

DMC	Declaration (on EU) Military Capabilities
DSACEUR	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe
DTIB	Defence Technological and Industrial Base
EACS	European Armaments Co-operation Strategy
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
EC	European Community
ECAP	European Capabilities Action Programme
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDEM	European Defence Equipment Market
EDRT	European Defence Research and Technology Strategy
EDTIB	European Defence Technological and Industrial Base
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EPAA	European Phased Adaptive Approach
ERRF	European Rapid Reaction Force
ESDI	European Security and Defence Identity
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUMC	European Union Military Committee
EUMS	European Union Military Staff
EXFOR	Extraction Force
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLG 2010	Headline Goal 2010
ID	Intensified Dialogue
IFOR	Implementation Force
IR	International Relations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISTAR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulations
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LoI	Letter of Intent

LTV	Long-Term Vision (for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs)
MAP	Membership Action Plan
MBFR	Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
MCD	Military Capabilities Declaration
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NACDR	North Atlantic Council Defence Minister's Report
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, Chemical
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NLI	Neoliberal Institutionalism
NNEC	NATO Network-Enabled Capability
NRC	NATO–Russia Council
NRF	NATO Response Force
NSNW	Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapon
NSS	National Security Strategy
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan
NTM-I	NATO Training Mission – Iraq
OAF	Operation Allied Force
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODF	Operation Deliberate Force
OEF-A	Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OOD	Operation Odyssey Dawn
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OUP	Operation Unified Protector
PARP	Planning and Review Process
PCC	Prague Capabilities Commitment
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PJC	Permanent Joint Council
PRT(s)	Provincial Reconstruction Team(s)
PSC	EU Political and Security Committee
QDR	Quadrennial Defence Review

R2P	Responsibility to Protect
R&D	Research and Development
R&T	Research and Technology
RCn/w/cc	Regional Commands North, West and Command Capital
RCs/e	Regional Commands South and East
RSD	Riga Summit Declaration
SACEUR	NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SC	Strategic Concept
SDR	Strategic Defence Review
SEAD	Supression of Enemy Air Defences
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SPR	Single Progress Report (on the Development of EU Military Capabilities)
STANAG(s)	Standardization Agreement(s)
UAV(s)	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle(s)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIBH	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR(s)	United Nations Security Council Resolution(s)
US	United States of America
USFOR-A	United States Forces – Afghanistan
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEAG	Western European Armaments Group
WEU	West European Union
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

1
Where is NATO Going?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been described and occasionally eulogized as the 'most successful alliance in history'.[1] To its supporters, NATO was instrumental in bringing about the end of the Cold War and, having faced down the Soviet threat, in undertaking a far-reaching process of adaptation to the post-Cold War security environment.[2] The Alliance, according to its former Secretary General Lord Robertson, has 'retooled first to help spread security and stability Eastwards across Europe, then to use its unique multinational military capabilities to bring peace to Europe's bloody and chaotic Balkan backyard, and [then] to confront the new threats of our post-9/11 world'.[3] NATO, the US Ambassador to the Alliance noted in July 2010, 'is busier than ever' – undertaking missions in Afghanistan, the Balkans and off the coast of Somalia.[4] In conjunction with a significant enlargement of its membership and the fashioning of a variety of partnerships, it would be easy to take the view that NATO has demonstrated its staying power and continuing relevance: its security 'umbrella' is, according to Robertson's successor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 'needed more than ever in this very challenging new century'.[5]

Yet for all this activity, NATO still attracts considerable scepticism. This is partly because of the difficulty of its task. The search for security is, by its very nature, a never-ending problem. As the Group of Experts appointed by NATO to advise on a new Strategic Concept has noted, 'NATO's past accomplishments provide no guarantee for the future. Between now and 2020, it will be tested by the emergence of new dangers, the many-sided demands of complex operations, and the challenge of organising itself efficiently.'[6] And this is not simply a technical matter of adapting to new circumstances; it also has profound political implications. On both sides of the Atlantic, politicians have voiced the opinion that NATO is of declining importance in light of shifting national, bilateral and multinational responses to European and global security. Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder argued in 2005 that NATO was 'no longer the primary means for dialogue in the transatlantic relationship'.[7] The outgoing US Secretary of Defence Robert

Gates noted in 2011 that future American leaders might discount NATO as a meaningful organization; it thus had 'a dim, if not dismal future'.[8] Commentators have been even more frank. According to some, the very existence of the Alliance has been called into question owing to its internal divisions, cumbersome adaptation to change, and a lack of the political and military means to carry out its self-proclaimed roles.[9]

Given these contradictory views, what is NATO's likely future? This book addresses that question. It does so by reference to NATO's development since the end of the Cold War. Our concern here is partly functional (how NATO has adapted and taken on new tasks), partly geographic (how NATO has enlarged and moved 'out of area') and partly political (how internal debates have shaped the Alliance). But it is also more than these things. Put simply and starkly, is the Alliance experiencing a process of regeneration or one of irreversible decline? NATO's future is a theme that has attracted a good deal of academic and journalistic attention. Given the historical and institutional centrality of the Alliance to Euro-Atlantic security relations, this should not be surprising. What the current volume adds to this literature is an explicit and sustained use of theory in order to shed light on NATO's development. We are not alone in this regard but this volume differs from most in its eclectic approach (thus avoiding an attachment to a single theoretical position) and in its explicit application of theoretical propositions to a range of issue-based case studies.

This first chapter sets our study within NATO's historical context, surveys NATO's development since the end of the Cold War, and summarizes the approach the volume will adopt to investigate its central concern.

NATO in transition

During the Cold War, NATO was a fixed part of Europe's geostrategic landscape. The seeming stability of international politics was expressed in Europe's division into competing military–political blocs, each of which was geared to countering the other through the massive use of retaliatory armed force, up to and including nuclear weapons. The alliance systems which solidified these blocs – NATO on the one hand and the Warsaw Pact on the other – were not unchanging in that each exhibited a degree of internal evolution, but the central rationale of each was externally generated with reference to the presumed threat presented by the other. Given this logic, the end of communist rule in eastern Europe, the unravelling of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact generated a widespread expectation that NATO, in turn, would disappear. A *Times* editorial of July 1990, for instance, noted that the 'Atlantic alliance has already broken most longevity records [... B]eyond a certain point, redefining its role must stop and the admission be made that the valiant warhorse may one day be ready to go out to grass'.[10] Significantly, this view was shared by prominent

European politicians. German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, for example, expressed the hope in a speech of March 1990 that eventually both NATO and the Warsaw Pact would be superseded by a pan-European security organization modelled on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).[11] Similarly, French President François Mitterrand put forward the idea of a European Confederation, alluding to a future Europe without NATO.[12]

These expectations, however, went unfulfilled. The so-called architecture debate of the early 1990s witnessed a championing of NATO, on the part of the UK and the US most notably, and the reassertion of the Alliance against a French preference for a European defence structure centred on the Western European Union (WEU). Thus one analyst was able to claim that, by 1995, 'European security was once again dominated by the NATO alliance and US leadership, perhaps to a greater extent than even in the last years of the Cold War'.[13] NATO's continued centrality was premised on a seemingly successful adaptation to changed circumstances. As the Cold War wound down from the late 1980s, NATO responded with a set of initiatives aimed at forging partnerships with its former adversaries and, of longer-term significance, articulating a new mission. The new Strategic Concept adopted in 1991 thus recognized the replacement of the Soviet threat by a 'new strategic environment' in which risks to Allied security are 'multi-faceted [...] and multi-directional'.[14] Some elements of the Alliance were still seen as unchanging – NATO would continue to be the principal institution for transatlantic relations, it would continue to promote the strategic balance in Europe, and it would 'deter and defend against any threat of aggression against the territory of any NATO member state'. Equally, however, NATO would seek to promote security through dialogue, cooperation, conflict prevention and crisis management, and would set in train a review of force deployments, command structures and capabilities requirements including a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. NATO was, in other words, embarking upon a process of change that would not only entail a transformation of the Alliance itself, but would contribute also to the 'building of a new European security architecture'.[15]

Having reoriented itself in this fashion, the subsequent history of NATO in the post-Cold War period has been one of an unrelenting process of change and adaptation. In June 2007, one US official summarized this process as follows: '[I]n 1994 NATO had 16 members and no partners. It had never conducted a military operation. At the end of 2005 the Alliance was running eight military operations simultaneously and had 26 members and partnership relations with another 20 countries around the world.'[16] NATO's then Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General James Jones, noted similarly that NATO had since the end of the Cold War 'becom[e] more proactive than reactive, more expeditionary than static, and more diverse in its capabilities'. And NATO, he continued, was still in the midst

of 'the most fundamental physical and philosophical transformation in its history'.[17] 'The Atlantic Alliance, which some had declared moribund at the end of the Cold War', a report of the North Atlantic Assembly proclaimed in 2011, 'has never been more operationally active than it is today.'[18]

That process of change is outlined in Table 1.1. Many of its elements will be followed through in the chapters that follow. As noted earlier, for NATO's supporters, the far-reaching adaptation it outlines shows precisely how the Alliance has risen to new challenges and faced up to a succession of highly demanding tests of its credibility. Yet such claims have usually been made against presentiments of failure. The nexus of NATO's development has, in fact, been a meeting of change and constant crisis. Five episodes, spanning most of NATO's post-Cold War history, illustrate this dynamic well. We shall return to these episodes in Chapter 3 on Operations. For now, we are less concerned with their operational significance and more for what they say about NATO's broader purposes.

The first episode is the Bosnian conflict of the early mid-1990s. Here, NATO was assailed as being divided, ineffective and lacking the means to deal with Yugoslavia's bloody collapse. Writing in August 1993, George Graham argued that NATO's hesitancy in intervening in the crisis meant it was on the verge of failing 'its first big post-Cold War test'.[19] The Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 led to even harsher views. *The Economist* argued that NATO, for all its hypothetical military might, had simply demonstrated its impotence in the face of the atrocity.[20] Within a year, however, NATO had reasserted itself. Operations Deadeye and Deliberate Force launched in August–September 1995 against Bosnian Serb targets (at the time the largest military operation in NATO's history) helped pave the way for the Dayton Peace Accords of December, and by the start of the following year some 60,000 NATO peacekeeping troops had been deployed in Bosnia to enforce its provisions. Speaking in February 1996, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana conceded that NATO had lacked 'backbone and collective will' during the conflict in former Yugoslavia, but the obituaries were ill-advised; once moved to action, NATO had proven an 'irresistible force'. The lessons of Bosnia required NATO to adapt, Solana argued, through more effective partnership with Russia, through enlargement and through internal military restructuring. These adaptations would enable NATO to become 'a peacekeeping instrument par excellence' and would consolidate its position as the central institution of 'security in the wider Europe'.[21] Some analysts of the Alliance reached a similarly positive view. Bosnia may not have been NATO's finest hour, but it had emerged with more credit than other international bodies such as the WEU, the European Union (EU) and the UN, all of which had been involved in the crisis with little to show for their efforts. As Beverley Crawford argued, 'NATO's successful show of force and the demonstration of its ability to coordinate military action when it was finally permitted to do so [...] combined to place NATO in

Table 1.1 The evolution of NATO activities during and after the Cold War

	Cold War	Post-Cold War	
Operations and military mission	*Collective defence* 'in-area' concerns – defence against the Warsaw Pact	*Security tasks* Shift to 'out-of-area' concerns and non-Article 5 crisis response operations and expeditionary missions Retention of collective defence, including defence against terrorism (involving force projection and, for territorial defence, a residual role for conventional force deployments, nuclear weapons and missile defence initiatives)	
Command and force structures	Positional defence/forward deployment premised on high readiness, extended deterrence and flexible response (key role of nuclear weapons)	Adaptation:	New command structures ESDI CJTFs Force reductions
	NATO deployments shaded according to 'high NATO' (central region), 'middle NATO' (southern flank – Italy, Greece and Turkey) and 'low NATO' (northern flank, i.e. Norway)	Transformation:	DCI/PCC/usability targets NATO Response Force
	Command structures premised on conflict with the Warsaw Pact	Changes to force structure:	Flexibility
	Large US deployment in Europe		'Transnationalization', i.e. emphasis among European members on multinational forces)
	Limited multinational forces		Reduction of US deployments in Europe
	Close military integration (standardization, interoperability, joint exercises, force planning) and common assets		Military integration in theatre

(*continued*)

Table 1.1 Continued

	Cold War	Post-Cold War
Enlargement	Limited in number and geographic scope	Extensive in number and geographic scope (See also, Membership Action Plans, Intensified Dialogue)
Partnerships	Formally absent – but (covert) cooperation with non-members, e.g. Sweden	NACC/EAPC, PfP, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Contact Countries, privileged partnerships with Russia and Ukraine
Multilateral initiatives	CSCE, MBFR, WEU	OSCE, CFE, United Nations WEU – EU (ESDP – Berlin-Plus) African Union
Civilian tasks	North Atlantic Assembly/NATO Parliamentary Assembly Scientific, cultural and economic cooperation Committee on Challenges of Modern Society Civil Emergency Planning Comprehensive Approach/CIMIC	

Sources: As well as various editions of the NATO Handbook and key NATO Declarations and Communiqués, this table has been drawn from J. R. Deni, 'The NATO Rapid Deployment Corps: Alliance Doctrine and Force Structure', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 25(3), 2004; A. King, 'Towards a Transnational Europe: The Case of the Armed Forces', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 8(3), 2005; C. Wallander, 'Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War', *International Organization*, Vol. 54(4), 2000; and 'Conclusions: Where is NATO Going?', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 25(3), 2004.

a position of institutional prominence. By the time the agreement was initialled in Dayton, NATO had been strengthened beyond anyone's wildest hopes or fears. In Bosnia, the NATO alliance established itself as Europe's only meaningful security institution.'[22]

The crisis over Kosovo some four years later initiated a similar debate. Operation Allied Force (OAF), launched against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in March 1999, was the first war NATO had undertaken against a sovereign state in its history. A prolonged air campaign eventually forced FRY President Slobodan Milošević to the negotiating table and in the agreement brokered by the US, Russia and the EU that ended the campaign, Kosovo emerged as a de facto NATO protectorate overseen by an extensive NATO peacekeeping force (KFOR). Secretary General Solana lavishly praised this outcome. NATO, in his estimation, had fought not to protect territory but to uphold values. It had stood up to the evil of ethnic cleansing and had established the conditions for peace and reconstruction. In the process, the Alliance had reasserted its credibility as Europe's principal security actor.[23] The SACEUR, General Wesley Clark, argued similarly that the conflict over Kosovo 'became a test of NATO's role in post-Cold War Europe. NATO itself was at risk of irrelevance or simply falling apart' should it have been defeated. In the event, however, the Alliance proved a capable if imperfect instrument of force. It achieved an unambiguous victory, took no casualties and maintained a high degree of internal cohesion. It was, according to Clarke, 'a true Allied operation [... and] a pattern for the future'.[24]

Yet Kosovo posed a clear challenge to NATO. As Charles Dick argued at the height of OAF, 'a NATO failure [...] could spell the end of the alliance, save perhaps as a formal shell with no real substance'. Allies, he continued, would be reluctant to commit to an organization tainted by a failure of this sort and so, in the long term, would rely increasingly on national efforts and selective responses to regional crises. In this context, NATO would wither away and Europe could well return to the catastrophic instabilities of the 1930s.[25] Although this bleak scenario did not materialize, NATO nonetheless embarked upon a campaign for which it was poorly prepared and one which lasted far longer than expected. NATO also took on a seemingly indefinite commitment to Kosovo's future stability, established the controversial precedent of acting without UN Security Council authorization, and opened up a rift in relations with Moscow deeper than at any time since the end of the Cold War. As a report of the North Atlantic Assembly concluded, Kosovo would have a lasting impact: '[V]irtually everything that has been said about the Alliance's roles and missions [would] sooner or later have to be reconsidered in the light of this event.'[26]

The crises over Bosnia and Kosovo were played out against a debate on NATO's future framed by Senator Richard Lugar's warning that the Alliance would have to go 'out-of-area or out of business'.[27] How far and how much this should be the case were questions posed in stark terms by the September

2001 attacks on the US. Up to that point, the debate on NATO had been largely confined to the so-called Euro-Atlantic area. Balkan interventions coupled with processes of enlargement and enhanced relations with Russia had affirmed NATO's centrality to European security but the watershed of '9/11' confronted NATO with the issue of global responsibilities – how to deal with security challenges such as WMD proliferation, terrorism and rogue states. In response to the al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington, the North Atlantic Council invoked for the first time in NATO's history the collective defence clause (Article 5) of the North Atlantic Treaty.[28] For Secretary General Robertson, this act demonstrated that NATO was 'not just a talking shop, but a community of nations […] utterly determined to act together' against 'the full spectrum of security challenges'. It reaffirmed NATO as a 'security-shaping organisation' that remained 'as relevant and as effective as ever'.[29]

The extent of NATO's role in these events was, however, severely circumscribed (detailed in Chapter 3). The Pentagon, in effect, spurned a series of offers of military support from NATO Allies wary of the type of constraints that had been placed on US military action during the Kosovo campaign. The broader implications of this US position for NATO were not lost on some prominent commentators. François Heisbourg saw it as the 'death of old NATO', that is an Alliance in which NATO would be the framework for a major military operation supplied largely by the US.[30] Anne Deighton, similarly, suggested that the 'relative […] inactivity' of NATO after 9/11 reflected a growing American disillusionment and was 'symptomatic of a malaise [in NATO] that ha[d] existed for more than a decade'.[31] Anatol Lieven, meanwhile, argued that NATO was 'almost completely worthless as far as the Afghan War and the "war against terrorism" are concerned'.[32]

Just as NATO had had to respond to the new challenges of the 1990s, painfully typified by Bosnia and Kosovo, 9/11 presented another watershed, reinvigorating the debate over the changes necessary to salvage NATO. A report of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly took a qualified view: '[T]he strong focus on the threat posed by terrorism in the current debate on the future of NATO [means] there is a danger of losing sight of the organisation's other security policy tasks.' NATO, the report argued, had demonstrated during the 1990s its value in three enduring respects: in preventing a renationalization of defence in Europe, in establishing partnerships with post-communist countries including Russia, and in forging a role as 'one of the most important players in the area of international crisis management and the implementation of peace missions'. NATO's Strategic Concept of 1999 had made clear that a consensus existed for a range of missions up to and including counter-terrorism even if NATO's capabilities in this area remained limited.[33] A report of the UK House of Commons Select Committee on Defence, however, carried a somewhat different emphasis. Despite the continuing importance of its peacekeeping and other tasks, it argued,

the Alliance faced a real danger of creeping irrelevance if it failed 'to adapt to the post-11 September context'.[34] As Stephen Hadley, US Deputy National Security Adviser observed in October 2002, 9/11 signified the crossing of '[a] historical line' and that 'defence in the future will be very different than defence we knew in the past. NATO must change if it is to play a critical role in defending our societies against the real threats of our time.'[35]

In this respect, by the mid-2000s, the debate on NATO's future had become closely bound up with the issue of Afghanistan. Although initially sidelined in the campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, in August 2003 NATO took over command of the UN-authorized International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and thus embarked upon its first deployment outside of Europe or North America.[36] For some, this deployment indicated NATO's continuing vitality. Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, for example, argued that the ISAF mission was 'the clearest example' of NATO's readiness to address 'new security challenges' and 'to go to the problem before it comes to us'.[37] For others, however, ISAF's performance has been a constant reminder of NATO weakness and vulnerability. US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates noted in 2007 that '[i]f an alliance of the world's greatest democracies cannot summon the will to get the job done in a mission that we agree is morally just and vital to our security, then our citizens may begin to question [...] the utility of the 60-year-old transatlantic security project itself'.[38] In even starker tones, Hans-Ulrich Klose, vice-chair of the foreign affairs committee of the German Bundestag suggested that failure in Afghanistan would be 'the end of NATO'.[39] Several years into the ISAF campaign, the prospect of a NATO 'victory' had come no nearer. In comments reported in 2010, former SACEUR and US National Security Advisor General James Jones noted that NATO's difficulties in Afghanistan meant it could be 'relegated to the dustbin of history'.[40] Unlike the Balkan campaigns, the one in Afghanistan has been longer, more difficult and (at the time of writing) still inconclusive. NATO, an organization used to success, had faced in Afghanistan, according to Adam Roberts, the real prospect of failure.[41] As some commentators pointed out, a retreat would not necessarily spell the end of NATO, but it might require the Alliance to curtail its ambitions and to confront anew questions of purpose. Would this be a NATO refocused on European stability, military–political integration and traditional collective defence?[42] Or would it be a NATO still committed to global tasks but with 'a more clear-eyed and realistic understanding of what it takes to project stability beyond the NATO homestead'?[43]

NATO's operation in Libya in 2011 added another layer to this debate. Here too the Alliance acted outside of Europe, undertook a major combat role and courted questions of purpose and relevance. Operation Unified Protector (OUP) succeeded in its principal purpose (the protection of Libyan civilians from attacks by the Gaddafi regime) as well as its ancillary ones (the enforcement of an arms embargo and a no-fly zone over Libya). OUP,

moreover, was launched in conformity with a mandate of the UN Security Council, enjoyed (at least initially) the support of the Arab League, and entailed fruitful coordination and consultation with a range of international actors including the EU, the UN, the African Union and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.[44] Yet Libya also led to a revisiting of some uncomfortable issues. Some argued positively that OUP was launched both swiftly and effectively and that – absent a credible EU or UN option – it was 'the only viable instrument' of intervention on offer.[45] Yet the campaign lasted longer than anticipated, exposed political divisions within the Alliance (a sceptical Germany and Poland effectively bowed out of OUP) and made heavy weather against a badly organized opponent armed with obsolete Warsaw Pact military equipment. 'The greatest military alliance the world has ever known', Michael Clark argued at the time, 'was made to look puny in what it could really deploy.' This was less a case of 'NATO's canny adaptation and political guile' but rather 'a laboured success that came just in time to save everyone's blushes'.[46] There were also wider issues at play. OUP came to be regarded by some commentators as a good example of humanitarian intervention, conforming to the UN agenda of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). NATO itself, however, chose not to label it as such. Because of this its pursuit of regime change (an objective not mandated by the Security Council resolution which authorized the intervention) appeared opportunistic rather than principled. NATO emerged from OUP silent on whether R2P missions would inform its future direction. What could have been a golden opportunity 'to make preventing genocide and mass atrocities a priority' for NATO (thus bolstering its credibility in light of the parallel but problematic mission in Afghanistan) was, in effect, passed up.[47]

The fissure in NATO

The narrative of NATO's post-Cold War history as surveyed here can reasonably be regarded as pivoting around a continuous debate over purpose and relevance. Alliance adaptation to meet 'new security challenges' – be this the end of the Cold War, Bosnia, Kosovo, 9/11, Afghanistan, Libya and beyond – has been a constant theme. On each of these occasions NATO has seemingly come through, but cumulatively the picture that has built up is of an Alliance in a permanent state of uncertainty and flux.

Serious enough, this is still only one part of the problem confronting the Alliance. As well as facing repeated questions over purpose, NATO has in the post-Cold War period also succumbed to an unending series of internal divisions. These have, in part, mirrored the crisis episodes detailed previously. Bosnia was the occasion for what Larry Kaplan, NATO's foremost historian, referred to as the deepest divide in NATO since the 1956 Suez crisis.[48] OAF gave rise to the view that 'NATO came close enough to breaking for its member nations to be leery of embarking on a similar challenge'.[49]

Afghanistan, meanwhile, has seen a 'fierce debate on the issues of shared risks and the principle of solidarity – the very core of any military alliance'.[50]

Division, however, has not only been about NATO operations. Allied disagreement has also attended major policy initiatives, including those covered in this volume: enlargement, NATO–EU relations and relations with Russia. The deepest internal schism, however, followed from one very specific set of events – that surrounding the American intervention in Iraq in 2003. This stands out as the single most acrimonious event of NATO's post-Cold War history. How the disagreement was articulated and how it was resolved went well beyond the circumstances of Iraq. It would have lasting implications for NATO and so is worth briefly commenting on.

The crisis over Iraq is a matter that has been discussed many times and so its detail is avoided here.[51] The specific NATO dimension emerged as a consequence of requests by the US in December 2002 that the Alliance furnish indirect military assistance for an American-led intervention, take preventive measures in support of Turkey (a NATO ally and neighbour of Iraq) and commit to post-conflict peacekeeping. By this point Germany had already made clear its opposition to the use of force, and France stood out as the main opponent to American–British diplomacy at the UN Security Council. That said, France did agree to UN Security Council Resolution 1441 of November threatening Iraq with 'serious consequences' for non-compliance with its disarmament obligations. Germany, meanwhile, made known its willingness to provide the US with logistical support should war break out.[52] The decisive break occurred early in 2003 as France and Germany joined political forces to oppose what they saw as an Anglo-American march to war. This played itself out at the Security Council in the shape of French and German resistance to a so-called second resolution authorizing force (Germany at the time occupied a non-permanent seat in the Security Council). It also found a way into NATO's institutions. In January 2003, the US requested an activation of Article 4 of the Washington Treaty on the pretext that defensive measures were necessary for a possible Iraqi attack on Turkey.[53] Four NATO Allies – Belgium and Luxembourg along with France and Germany – demanded that such planning cease on the grounds that it marked an implicit endorsement of a possible intervention against Iraq. Support for the US position came strongly from the UK as well as Denmark, Italy, Portugal and Spain, and new entrants the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, all of whom signed an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* demanding that the 'transatlantic relationship must not become a casualty' of the Iraq crisis.[54]

The crisis in the Alliance took a very public turn at the February 2003 Munich Wehrkunde conference, an annual meeting of high-ranking politicians, journalists and military officers. Here, French Minister of Defence Michèle Alliot-Marie rejected the US vision of NATO, maintaining that 'ad hoc coalitions cannot in no case [*sic*] replace the Alliance'. Her American

counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld, meanwhile blamed France for 'undermining the credibility of the NATO alliance'. US Senator John McCain went even further, accusing France and Germany of 'vacuous posturing', and by their actions threatening to send NATO the way of the League of Nations.[55]

The deadlock was eventually circumvented by shifting the planning decision to the Defence Planning Committee where France was not represented (at which point Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg backed down). However, the disagreement once again heralded NATO's demise for attentive commentators. Charles Kupchan suggested that NATO lay 'in the rubble' and was at a 'definite end'. 'The central question facing US and European policy makers', he argued, is 'not how to repair the transatlantic relationship but whether the end of alliance will take the form of an amicable separation or a nasty divorce.'[56] Robert Levine was similarly sceptical: NATO was irrelevant to American foreign policy, contributed little to countering new terrorist threats and lingered on largely because '[b]ureaucracies are difficult to kill'.[57] A good deal of official opinion was also downbeat. Nicholas Burns, the US Ambassador to NATO, referred to the division over Iraq as a 'crisis of credibility' for NATO.[58] Emil Valeb, the ambassador to NATO of the then aspirant state Bulgaria, feared for 'the cohesion of the alliance'.[59] Even Secretary General Robertson referred to the Alliance as being 'in disarray'.[60]

The basis for such comments lay in the unusually bitter nature of the dispute. US officials, including Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell, made no secret of their disdain for France and Germany, and meetings of the North Atlantic Council during February 2003 featured uncharacteristic personality clashes, diplomatic vendettas and an unwillingness to compromise.[61] To make matters worse, once the intervention in Iraq had taken place, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg chose to hold a summit which issued a call for greater European defence autonomy, a move subsequently derided by US State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher as the act of 'chocolate makers'.[62] Apart from these corrosive personal and political dynamics, the division in NATO also seemed to contain other portents: a lack of US interest in alliance management, a decline in European deference to American leadership, an absence of strategic consensus on the broader purposes of NATO and question marks over the appropriate response to an Article 4 contingency.[63] Indeed, the dispute over the latter was seen as undermining the very raison d'être of NATO, namely the presumption of allied solidarity in the event of a threat to a member.[64]

Yet the division over Iraq also illustrated something else, namely NATO's ability to repair. With the benefit of several years' distance, it is now clear that the crisis did not result in the demise of the Alliance. Indeed, within a matter of months, NATO was being talked up. In April 2003 it assumed command of ISAF and in June a decision was taken to further reform NATO's command structure. Commenting at the time, Secretary General Robertson was moved to claim that '[t]his is a new NATO', '[a] NATO transformed

[and …] able to meet its commitments when times get tough'.[65] Even Donald Rumsfeld joined the chorus. The spat over Iraq, he suggested, was typical of the Alliance. 'I've been around NATO for decades', he contended, 'and I've never seen a time when somebody didn't say NATO's history, NATO's about done, NATO's in a crisis, oh my the sky is falling.' In fact, '[t]his organization is healthy. We've had superb meetings. It's moving forward to transform itself to fit the 21st century.'[66] US Secretary of State Powell, noted similarly that the 'naysayers of NATO' would again be proven wrong. NATO's forecasted death after the Cold War and 'during the troubled times in the Balkans' was greatly exaggerated; the half century of 'solid cooperation' in NATO could not be easily set aside and on this occasion too, the Alliance would recover.[67] A good deal of press commentary also remained positive. An editorial in the conservative German newspaper *Die Welt* treated Iraq as a momentary distraction, pointing to longer-lasting trends such as enlargement, peacekeeping deployments, and force and command transformation as indicating that the Alliance was still very much 'in business'.[68] Thomas Friedman went even further. In his opinion, the period between 9/11 and the US-led invasion of Iraq was a 'historical pivot point' that substituted a struggle of 'East versus West' with 'the World of Order versus the World of Disorder'. Crucially, NATO was seen as the principal institution of order. It was, in other words, a vital component of 'a very new world'.[69]

Judging NATO in terms of a single, even deep moment of division is, then, an unreliable basis for making long-term prognostications. Some other, more rigorous method is required. The remainder of this opening chapter considers how one might go about such a task.

Is NATO finished?

The answer to this question is of the utmost significance given the central place that NATO occupies in the foreign and security policy calculations of its members. Allied governments regard NATO as the principal institutional connection between Europe and North America, the most significant collective expression of defensive reassurance in Europe and a powerful vehicle of conflict management in the Balkans and Afghanistan. And even if one regards these claims as spurious, few would deny that NATO's disappearance would have far-reaching consequences for both European and international order, would significantly affect the status of other international organizations and would require a fundamental reordering of foreign and defence policies in Europe and North America.

How then might we answer the question? For some, the post-Cold War history of NATO easily lends itself to a pessimistic narrative, a story of an organization troubled by endemic division, ill-suited to a fluid security environment, and too big and cumbersome to respond efficiently to its altered circumstances. Coupled with the lessening priority attached to

NATO in US policy, we thus have a recipe for a long-term withering away of the Alliance. As Rajan Menon suggests, NATO 'may remain in form for a number of years, but long before that it will, slowly but surely, cease to matter in substance'.[70]

This view of NATO has a seductive appeal. It offers a frank and unambiguous description of NATO's travails. It also points to a contrast between the seemingly fixed certainties of the Cold War when NATO's centrality to the West went unquestioned, and the unavoidable doubts and tumult it has faced in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. This perspective does, however, have its flaws. As Wallace Thies has argued, no one has yet provided a convincing account of how or why a crisis in NATO needs to transmogrify into the death of the Alliance. The process by which a crisis evolves into organizational decline and eventually termination is, in other words, left unspecified. If, following Thies, one is to define a 'crisis' as a moment of 'visibly heightened tensions' or a point at which 'cooperation becomes noticeably more difficult' then NATO has undeniably experienced such a point on numerous occasions.[71] But crises, as we have seen earlier, are capable of being repaired. Perhaps more remarkable, as Rumsfeld and Powell's comments of spring 2003 previously imply, crises have become an acknowledged part of the modus operandi of NATO. Far from being a presentiment of impending collapse, they have, in fact, served a quite opposite function, galvanizing the Alliance into new collective endeavours and providing a needed catalyst for the changes deemed necessary to retain operational and political viability. And even if the claim can be sustained that recent disputes are somehow worse than before, we are still left with the retort of the historian that previous disagreements were viewed with similar alarm.[72] Indeed, talk of crisis obscures as much as it illuminates. If NATO is in irredeemable crisis, why has it lasted so long? What sort of crisis would provide the tipping point beyond which NATO could not recover? And is it in fact crises that determine NATO's fate at all – are there not other underlying and longer-term forces that shape its development?[73]

Indeed, once one starts to sketch a picture of what NATO's death would look like, it becomes clear that the Alliance is not yet a candidate for palliative care. Edward Newman has laid down a set of criteria for establishing when an international organization is in crisis:

> [T]he constitutive principles upon which the arrangement is founded and operates are consistently challenged by the activities and declarations of its leading members [… T]here is an epistemic consensus [… that the] arrangement consistently fails to achieve the principal objectives for which it was created [… T]here is an epistemic consensus that the ineffectiveness and illegitimacy of a particular multilateral form are permanent as long as the constitutive principles of the organization remain the same [… and the organization is] challenged by significant alternative

arrangements which perform the same task, to which member states transfer their diplomatic attention and material resources.

If uncorrected, this cluster of pathologies will render an international organization 'obsolete in its current form' and are thus suggestive of a trend towards dissolution.[74]

Arguably, some of these circumstances have been apparent in NATO's case. As already noted, the US launched the campaign in Afghanistan without recourse to NATO channels and invaded Iraq on the assumption that a NATO consensus was neither possible nor a prerequisite of action. American unilateralism (or allied recalcitrance) is certainly contrary to the spirit of Alliance solidarity but even so it has not yet proved the undoing of NATO. In fact, the US retains an important stake in the continuing health of the Alliance. This interest cannot hide important reservations on America's part; the US has also sought to bend the Alliance to its own particular interests. But, be that as it may, such a state of affairs is hardly indicative of an institution in terminal disarray. Equally, NATO has not yet seen the type of actions which, according to Thies, signify the point at which a 'crisis becomes a prelude to disintegration'.[75] No ally has shown any inclination to renounce the North Atlantic Treaty and withdraw from NATO. Nor has any member posed an either/or choice between NATO and an alternative (be this an EU-based defence arrangement, neutrality or defensive self-sufficiency) and decided on the latter. This line of argumentation leads to a simple point: any assertion that NATO is 'dead', 'near-death' or at the end of its useful life is misleading and inaccurate.

Yet if NATO has not reached this low point of terminal crisis, how else might we characterize its current condition and its future prospects? Here a counter-argument based on a more optimistic reading of NATO's recent history can be posed. This points to the ongoing demand for NATO apparent in the accumulation of members and missions, its role in fostering European integration and the seeming ability of Allies to pull together in moments of adversity. The Iraq crisis, this position suggests, was exceptional. More normal has been the Alliance solidarity, as evidenced by the invocation of the collective defence clause (Article 5) of the North Atlantic Treaty in the aftershock of 9/11 and the military operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans. It is accepted that disagreement among Allies has occurred in these cases, but this is viewed as manageable, even normal.[76] Further, the challenges of an operation need not be a harbinger of collapse. NATO, even in the midst of its most difficult mission to date in Afghanistan, has been capable of adapting to its altered circumstances. This is not to pass judgement on the wisdom or conduct of the campaign itself (which has been the subject of sustained criticism[77]) but rather to acknowledge the ability of the Alliance to absorb the shocks to which it has been subjected and move on.[78]