

**NATO and The War in Afghanistan: Effects on US Hegemony**

Capstone Paper

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The worth of institutions to the United States has come under direct attack from the Bush Administration. Neglecting the resolutions of the UN Security Council, demonstrating little regard for the structures of NATO, and largely distancing itself from international law have been overarching themes of this administration. Institutionalism in the theory of international relations states that institutions such as the United Nations provide order, distribute power, and establish structure between states. While this is a compelling argument for cooperation within these organizations, George W. Bush has largely neglected these entities as legitimate ways to advance the goals and objectives of the United States. Bush's administration, encouraged by the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, has been one focusing on military preponderance and military might. More aptly, this administration pursues realist theory in their actions. Realism describes the world as anarchic and disorderly—the only true force that gives structure is that of security. Bush's policies, exemplified by actions and decrees have followed true values of realism.

True to realist theory, the Bush administration has paid very little attention to any importance that international organizations, namely NATO, may hold. Through actions of the United States in Afghanistan, it has become clear that the Bush Administration has no intention of planning wars with the best interest of their transatlantic allies in mind. The war in Afghanistan, however, is not progressing successfully. Seven years into the conflict, it is time to analyze why the US isn't experiencing more success. For an administration that holds military action in such high regard, its military is not completing the mission very well. Will this inauspicious predicament affect the hegemony that the United States currently enjoys?

While many realists may at first say that the failure of the war in Afghanistan will not affect the hegemony of the United States, upon closer analysis, it can be argued that the failure of the war in Afghanistan could potentially affect US hegemony through loss of legitimacy within NATO. This loss of hegemony would not occur because of the loss of a war, but because regional hegemony could be lost within Europe. This would be caused by of the United State's blatant disregard for the policies of NATO—policies that are in the best interest of the United States. This paper will seek to argue why the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is or should be important to the United States through the principles of realism.

This paper will set out to define realist thought. First, analysis of realist thinkers, mainly John J. Mearsheimer and Kenneth N. Waltz, will justify realism. Next, this paper will explore the merits of working within alliances through this realist perspective. The history of NATO will be discussed, and the justifications for United States involvement in this alliance. After this, the war in Afghanistan will be analyzed, and the effects that this war could potentially have on US hegemony through the realist perspective. Finally, this paper will submit recommendations for future administrations on how to deal with NATO and Europe within the context of realism and why it is important to focus on aspects of realism that go deeper than just military might. First, however, the use of the realist perspective must be justified.

### *WHY REALISM?*

At the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States was elevated to the level of military preponderance. The US, through military might, restored order and

democracy to the continent of Europe. After the Second World War, the United States enjoyed their position of shared dominance in a bipolar world. The United States undoubtedly rose to the position of hegemon through employing their military structures, and adhering to theories of realism. After the war was over, the United States played a crucial role in creating institutions that helped to order the system and ensure that the US had a firm grasp on the happenings of the world.

It may be more apparent and elemental to scrutinize the importance of these institutions through the lens of institutionalism, however these institutions were born out of a system of realism, therefore, they should be judged under the theories of realism. These institutions were created to increase the relative gains of the United States and their allies. Because these institutions were created within the context of a realist system, it does not make sense to analyze their worth under the auspices of any other lens of international relations.

As this paper is going to focus on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which was created to balance power of state actors, it would only be fitting to determine its worth within the context of realism. Analyzing this organization by any measure of alternate theories would still be telling of the Alliance's worth, however, it would not be telling of the Alliance's progress, or the Alliance's worth today compared to its worth upon founding. For all of these reasons, this paper will seek to analyze the importance of the mission in Afghanistan through a strict lens of realism.

## **THE THEORY OF REALISM**

Realism has a long and rich history. At its most basic level, realism recognizes the importance of military might as the key force behind relationships between states. From a realist perspective, states are constantly jockeying for hierarchical positions to offset the imbalance of balance of power in the world spectrum. Security is paramount to the survival of a state and as such, states are constantly competing with one another to maintain dominant security structures. To realists, the world is a brutal arena wherein states must take advantage of one another to try and get to the top, while preventing other states from doing the same. Realism is a study of both offensive and defensive politics.<sup>1</sup> In this world there is a constant struggle of power and cooperation is limited by the dominating logic of security competition.<sup>2</sup> The realist theorists concentrate on the role of war in the international system. Many believe that this is a pessimistic view of global politics because realists view war as both helpful and necessary in defining the hierarchy of international relations.

This view of international relations has its roots planted with some of the most renowned scholars in history. Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau all argued, in one form or another, of the merits of viewing the world from a realist perspective. Realism, however, is not solely based on the importance of warfare. Because the distribution of power is not even, states will act in their best interests, and their best interests only, to try and gain more power relative to those around it. As Claude points out, “The problem of power is here to stay; it is, realistically not a problem to be

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<sup>1</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. “A Realist Reply.” *International Security* Vol. 20, 1 (Summer 1995). 82.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

eliminated, but a problem to be managed.”<sup>3</sup> The way states manage this imbalance of power is by pursuing relative gains against others. Measuring power relatively rather than absolutely is important to realists because realists maintain the importance of having a greater percentage of the pie, not the importance of the growth of the pie as a whole. There is constantly a struggle to bring this imbalance of power back to equilibrium; therefore states act in their best interest to reduce the power of others so as to gain power themselves. Realists base their theory on certain assumptions of state actions. For the sake of this paper, we will acknowledge that these assumptions are wholly true.

John J. Mearsheimer has pointed out these five assumptions of the world.<sup>4</sup> The first assumption is that the world is anarchic, meaning that there is no entity above sovereign state actors to regulate them—no government of governments. If there were, this regulating body might ensure fairness for all state actors. Since there isn’t, equality cannot be guaranteed and is rarely achieved.

Second, states maintain military capabilities to protect against these inequalities and to harm those that try to usurp power from them. All states maintain some type of military system, no matter how small. These military systems are created to defend their borders, peoples, or ideas. Whether or not these systems are used for offensive reasons is inconsequential. Mearsheimer argues that even states that do not have typical military structures will mobilize the “feet and hands” of their people if they are called upon to defend their state.<sup>5</sup>

Third, there is no way to know or understand the intentions of others within the

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<sup>3</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*. Vol. 19, 3 (Winter 94-95) 85.

<sup>4</sup> Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” 89.

<sup>5</sup> Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” 93.

system. While states may ally with others, it is never certain what their motives and intentions are. Even one's closest allies will act in their own interest to heighten their own defensive viability. As such, even the intentions of one's closest allies can never be fully discerned.

Fourth, the survival and sovereignty of the state are the most important functions of that state. Waltz argues that "the first duty of the state is to defend itself... no one but the state can define the actions required."<sup>6</sup> Advancing one's own interests to protect the integrity of their state even at the cost of others in the system is legitimate and necessary in realist thought. Many theorists argue that in the state of nature, there is no unjust war.

Finally, states act strategically so that they can protect themselves from demise and violations of sovereignty. States will act in their best interests to further their own goals. This may include creating alliances, working against allies and any other means necessary to prevent other states from obtaining relative gains against their state. The more power one state maintains, the more likely it is that they will not need to resort to the *use* of force and instead rely on the *threat* of force. To achieve their ends, Waltz argues that "powerful states often gain their ends by peaceful means where weaker states either fail or have to resort to war."<sup>7</sup>

Working within these five truths of international relations, Mearsheimer has observed three patterns of behavior that states exhibit. The first pattern is that states fear each other. This fear is derived from the fact that states can never know others' intentions. This creates tensions and differing levels of paranoia between states.

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<sup>6</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. "Structural Realism After the Cold War," *International Security*. Vol. 25, 1. (Summer 2000). 15.

<sup>7</sup> Waltz. "Structural Realism After the Cold War," 35.

Secondly, states act to guarantee their own survival. Waltz explains this as “self-help.”<sup>8</sup> Basically, states act in their best interest no matter what the consequence is to those around them. The last trend is that states are constantly trying to increase their power position over others.<sup>9</sup>

This pattern of behavior is clearly seen in the actions taken by states. Mearsheimer points out that, “A state that ignores this balance of power can suffer enormous damage.”<sup>10</sup> States must be perpetually cognizant of their position within the hierarchy of the balance of power. As stated above, power is not distributed evenly and states act differently according to how much power they enjoy relative to those around them. Waltz argues that “States having a surplus of power are tempted to use it and weaker states fear their doing so.”<sup>11</sup> These states hedge this fear through means of alliances, compliance and/or political maneuvering. Furthermore, Waltz points out that “International politics reflects the distribution of national capabilities.”<sup>12</sup> Whether the world is multipolar, bipolar or unipolar is based on this distribution of powers between international actors.

#### *UNIPOLARITY, BIPOLARITY AND MULTIPOLARITY*

The distribution of power between states is not a free for all. Realists recognize a constant hierarchy of power and ordering within the world based on this power. William Wohlforth posits that the perception of other’s military power is nearly as important as

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<sup>8</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. “Theory of International Politics.” McGraw-Hill, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Waltz, “Structural Realism After the Cold War,” 11

<sup>10</sup> Mearsheimer, “A Realist Reply,” 90.

<sup>11</sup> Waltz, “Structural Realism After the Cold War,” 16.

<sup>12</sup> Waltz, “Structural Realism After the Cold War,” 27.



the military power that they actually enjoy.<sup>13</sup> When one state is perceived to be militarily stronger, they will not be challenged by other states. Conversely, when a state is perceived to be militarily weak, other states view them as vulnerable and contestable. The polarity of the world order is based on how many states are viewed as uncontestable.

Many realists argue that the world is peaceful and stable until vulnerability is perceived. If there are one, two or multiple states considered militarily incontestable, the likelihood of peace is higher. When states are viewed as vulnerable, other states exercise their ability to usurp that power from them, causing conflict and sometimes war.<sup>14</sup>

Wohlforth identifies multiple areas in which a state can be considered strong. These include economic strength, technological superiority, geographic convenience and above all military might. When there is an asymmetric distribution of these characteristics within one state, other states perceive this state as simultaneously strong and vulnerable. This usually leads to short lived hegemony that is quickly contested. Wohlforth states, “When the leading state excels in the production of economics and navel capabilities but not conventional land power it may seem simultaneously powerful and vulnerable.”<sup>15</sup> Ambiguity of this type makes other states resentful that the dominant state may be weak in an area in which they are strong. This causes the lines between them to be blurred, and hegemony to be challenged.

The scope of this contestability is usually reduced to regional levels. Within regions of the world, balancing of power affects relationships between the states therein. For example the states within the European Union struggle to balance the power in their

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<sup>13</sup> Wohlforth, William C. “The Stability of a Unipolar World.” *International Security*, Vol. 24, 1 (Summer 1999). 16.

<sup>14</sup> See Kenneth Waltz.

<sup>15</sup> Wohlforth, 25.

region. Likewise China and Japan hedge against each other in the Asian region. It is possible in a multipolar world that there is one hegemon in each region. Globally, other hegemonies would not be able to contest these regional powers because they are equally militarily preponderant. In other words, regions have the potential to counterbalance each other.<sup>16</sup> In a unipolar world, there is only one hegemon, and there is no other regional power that can challenge this one hegemon.

### *HEGEMONIC WAR*

Hegemony ebbs and flows. It is a cyclical phenomenon that is passed from one state to another. One state's hegemony, despite its best efforts, cannot last forever. There are three identifiable stages in a hegemonic cycle. The first is a stable world with a hierarchical order, wherein the hegemon's power is uncontested. The second happens when states that are subordinate to the hegemon begin growing disproportionately to this hegemon. Finally, these rising states come into conflict with the hegemon and conflict ensues.<sup>17</sup> Because states seek relative rather than absolute gains, these conflicts are zero-sum, meaning that one state's gain is another state's loss. When a conflict arises between hegemon and challenger, it is considered a hegemonic war. These wars cannot be predicted, and it cannot be known that a war is a hegemonic war until after the war is over, and hegemony either switches hands, or takes on different characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

Gilpin points out that there are definite factors that lead to a hegemonic war. The first and foremost is disproportionate growth of the subordinate states in a system. This

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<sup>16</sup> Wohlforth, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Gilpin, Robert. "The Theory of Hegemonic War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol. 18, 4. (Spring 1988). 592.

<sup>18</sup> Gilpin, 600.

can either be economic or political growth. Because of this growth, the challenging state will begin to expand their military might and security structures. When states begin to experience growth of their military power, the surrounding states will usually react and attempt to balance the new power structures. These systems will become polarized. It is most likely that this polarization will happen between dissimilar cultures, although it is not a requisite. This polarization leads to hegemonic war. At the conclusion of the war, a new hegemon arises, or the previous hegemon reclaims its hegemonic status—usually under a completely different or altered system.<sup>19</sup> In these conflicts, it is the second most powerful state challenging the hegemon with the other states rallying behind it. This is how the international system attempts to balance power. When there is one hegemon—regional or otherwise, the subordinate states will collectively work to usurp their power because it is in their best interest.

The idea of wars of hegemony has been around since the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides was the first to explain this phenomenon. Aptly put, the theory of hegemonic war is not a prediction that war will happen, but rather an explanation of the changing guard of hegemony. In most cases of changing hegemony, there has been a hegemonic war. Gilpin identifies three wars that have caused the world system to change, and therefore a new hegemon to be instated.<sup>20</sup> The first, he argues, was the 30 Years War from 1619-1648, the second was the French Revolution and Wars of Napoleon Bonaparte from 1792-1815, and the third were the collective World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gilpin suggests, through these examples, that hegemonic war is beneficial to the world system, in that at the conclusion of these wars, the world has experienced not only military

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Gilpin, 612.

evolution and technological advancement, but has established new norms and protocols on which the world can continue to evolve. He points to the Treaty of Westphalia, which established the idea of the sovereign state; the Treaty of Vienna; and the Treaty of Versailles, which outlawed war, as examples of this social progress born from conflict.<sup>21</sup>

Many non-realist theorists that are opposed to the idea of hegemonic war suggest that measures can and should be implemented to prevent these types of war. They point to the fact that nuclear weaponry has made hegemonic war obsolete and that the world has been ever changing to the point that hegemonic war is no longer necessary. Gilpin defends his theory. For hegemonic wars to cease:

“Humankind would have to be willing to subordinate all other values and goals to the preservation of peace. To ensure mutual survival, it would need to reject the anarchy of international relations and submit itself to the Leviathan of Thomas Hobbes. Little evidence exists to suggest that any nation is close to making this choice.”<sup>22</sup>

### *UNIPOLARITY AND THE US*

Considering that the dynamic of international relations is based on the growth of power between states, the idea of unipolarity is one that frequently comes under scrutiny. It is hard to achieve equilibrium with only one preponderant power. We currently live in a unipolar world, as the United States is the only actor in this world who has preponderant military capabilities, and security structures that cannot be contested.

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<sup>21</sup> Gilpin, 596.

<sup>22</sup> Gilpin, 611.

Considering that the theory of realism rests on principles of balancing power, many believe that a system of unipolarity, as the US is experiencing now, is unstable and precarious. Waltz argues that the international system trends towards balancing and that it is difficult to counter a sole hegemon because their power is so largely unchecked by threat of another dominant actor.<sup>23</sup> Many realists are wary that unipolarity is not durable and that the balance of power will shift quickly to prevent this unchecked power. Currently, it appears that the United States has been successful in maintaining their hegemonic edge over alternate players; some scholars argue this is because of the unique nature of the US's hegemony.<sup>24</sup>

William C. Wohlforth is one of the most vocal scholars on the durability of the United States' current hegemony. Wohlforth argues that the US's role as a hegemon is different than any other hegemon that the world has seen. Wohlforth argues that although unipolarity may be dangerous and unstable, the hegemony of the United States is durable and safe. One reason for this is that the US is so militarily preponderant that no other challengers can rise to question this hegemony. As long as this remains the case, unipolarity is not only durable, but peaceful. In fact, while the US only spends 3-3.5% of GDP on the military, it is still vastly outspending the closest potential challengers, all of which could be considered allies, and unlikely to challenge US hegemony anyway.<sup>25</sup> The current futility of challenging the US hegemony based on military might is so great that some states have even started to scale back military expenditures because they simply cannot compete.<sup>26</sup> Because of this, the current order is one of peace and stability until

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<sup>23</sup> Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," 28.

<sup>24</sup> See Wohlforth, Robert Kagan, Lectures of Jim Townsend.

<sup>25</sup> Wohlforth, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

another actor can challenge the military capabilities of the United States.<sup>27</sup> Wohlforth further argues that the United States' hegemony is one of complete symmetry in that it is equally preponderant in economic strength, technological advancement, geographic convenience, and military might. Because this strength is uncontested on any grounds, there are no hegemonic challengers.

Many realist scholars point to history to defend their cases. Wohlforth posits that past hegemons cannot be compared to the US because US military power relative to the rest of the world is a far greater luxury than any other hegemon has ever enjoyed. Multiple scholars all argue that US hegemony is far more militarily preponderant than either of Britain's hegemonic cycles. While the United States' hegemony will definitely come to an end one day, evidence suggests that this will not be any time soon.

### *THE PROBLEMS WITH POLARITY*

All hegemons meet their downfall in one way or another. Realists have acknowledged this and have written extensively on different ways in which polar forces meet their demise. As Waltz points out, "The vice to which great powers easily succumb in a multipolar world is inattention; in a bipolar world, overreaction; in a unipolar world, over extension."<sup>28</sup> Hegemonic powers must be cognizant of these vices and must hedge them accordingly.

Since this paper focuses on the ability of US hegemony to be enduring, it will mainly focus on the downfalls of unipolarity. Wohlforth states, specifically to the US that,

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<sup>27</sup> Wohlforth, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," 13.

“Maintaining unipolarity does not require limitless commitments. It involves managing the central security regimes in Europe and Asia and managing the central security on the part of the other states that any geopolitical challenge to the US is futile.”<sup>29</sup>

Most basically, the United States’ biggest threat to hegemonic dominance is that of a rising regional power that could gain favor within their region to the point that it undermines US hegemony in that region. While no one power can contest the military preponderance of the US on a global scale, regional powers could have the potential to contest the preponderance of the US in specific regions. This could be just as detrimental to their hegemonic status. Wohlforth further demonstrates this by stating, “If the US fails to translate its potential into the capabilities necessary to provide order, then great powers [regional powers] will then face incentives to provide security [within that region].”<sup>30</sup>

The way that the United States ensures this regional dependence on their hegemony is through alliances within these regions that provide security to subordinate powers. Exploiting the security dependence of these subordinate states as well as exercising unilateral power advantages enjoyed only by the lone pole, the hegemon can keep second tier states and likely hegemonic challengers in check. This will be the situation until power shifts, and these second tier states no longer have reason to trust the US to provide security.

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<sup>29</sup> Wohlforth, 40.

<sup>30</sup> Wohlforth, 39.

## **ALLIANCES AND REALISM**

Because realist theory is based so much on the idea that states act in their own interest no matter the consequence to others, it is somewhat counter intuitive to believe that alliances would fit into the theory of realism. Some realist theorists argue that alliances don't. However, states do join alliances, therefore, we must determine why. Mearsheimer argues that, "Realists recognize that great powers sometimes find institutions – especially alliances—useful for maintaining or even increasing their share of world power."<sup>31</sup> Frequently, states subscribe to alliances and unions to ensure some type of personal gain. If another state has superior power, it is in the best interest of the subordinate state to ally with it for the sake of their protection.

As Mearsheimer's assumptions of a realist world point out, states act strategically. Alliances are a good example of how states exhibit this strategic action. While it is apparent that subordinate states would try and ally with larger states to guarantee their own security, it is not necessarily apparent why a militarily preponderant state would voluntarily align with weaker states. It is not apparent what they have to gain—security wise—from weaker actors. Mearsheimer, Waltz and others recognize the importance of alliances, even for the hegemon. Great powers sometimes utilize institutions to further their own interests.

Alliances fit into the realist ideas that states act with only their best interests in mind. Hegemons and subordinate states alike use alliances for their own self gain. The United States is no exception to this rule. During the Cold War, US policy makers used NATO and other institutions to improve their relative power position vis-à-vis their main

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<sup>31</sup> Mearsheimer, "A Realist Reply," 91.



adversary, the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup> In structures of Alliances, Waltz argues that stronger states are in a power position and use this power to manipulate relatively dependent states.<sup>33</sup>

Dominant states within these structures must be careful in their actions within the Alliance, or smaller states will feel exploited, and become wary of the state providing the protection. Dependent states within an Alliance can only be so upwardly mobile. After this upward mobility is exhausted, the subordinate state will seek a way to break from the alliance and perhaps challenge the dominant player within the alliance. Because of this, the alliance will only be effective as long as all members believe that they are still obtaining relative gains through membership in the alliance.

As a hegemon already enjoys maximum power relative to the other members in an alliance, what is it, exactly, that a hegemon can gain? First and foremost, the hegemon, in this case the United States, enjoys regional power. As long as the hegemon can provide regional security, there will be no regional challengers to its hegemony. By remaining militarily preponderant, the US has the ability to serve as a regional hegemon in almost any region. The most apparent example of our regional hegemony is in Europe with NATO. In return for this regional hegemonic status, the US enjoys the ability to use bases, fly over airspace, and frequent ports in states wherein they provide security protection. Barry Posen argues that this allows the US to patrol the common areas that belong to no one, but are used by everyone.<sup>34</sup> More commonly referred to as “Command of the Commons,” this allows the United States to become more expeditious in their hegemonic role.

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<sup>32</sup> Mearsheimer, “A Realist Reply,” 89.

<sup>33</sup> Waltz, “Structural Realism After the Cold War,” 27.

<sup>34</sup> Posen, Barry. “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundations of US Hegemony.” *International Security*. Vol. 28, 3. (June 1990), 23.

The Command of the Commons is a phenomenon in international relations that should not be taken lightly. Posen argues that the reason no one else attempts to command the commons is because the barriers to entry in this field are prohibitively high.<sup>35</sup> It should also be noted that the US does, in fact need the blessing of other actors to be able to enjoy this type of global leadership. If other state actors, mainly allies, refuse US entry over airspace, access to ports, or bases on their soil, the US would have a much more difficult time in maintaining their role in the commons.<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that the US couldn't do it, which is an argument for another paper, however, it needs to be acknowledged that this command of the commons is greatly facilitated by the blessing of allies. In these situations, both subordinate and dominant states gain.

### *THE RISK OF ALLIANCES*

While alliances do have benefits for members, they also carry risk. It should not be assumed that alliances are completely beneficial for hegemonic actors. Quite on the contrary, there is much to be lost within the context of an alliance. If the hegemon does not experience any type of relative or even absolute gains, their membership in the alliance could be considered merely a drain of assets. Furthermore, as Mearsheimer points out, "Institutions have little affect on state behavior," meaning that while the dominant power within the alliance may be able to set the rules, there is no guarantee that any state will prescribe to those rules unless it is in their own best interest.<sup>37</sup>

Alliances of specific types are especially risky for the hegemon specifically. One of the types of alliances that realists frequently caution against are those of collective

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<sup>35</sup> Posen, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lecture. "Transatlantic Security Relations."

<sup>37</sup> Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 48.

security. Mearsheimer, as well as Claude are two of the most outspoken scholars against collective security. They argue that historically, and because of the flaws in the logic of collective security, these alliances are unworkable in practice.<sup>38</sup> Collective security, they argue, rests on basic assumptions of conflict and alliances that are not necessarily true.

The first of these assumptions is that in collective security situations, the alliance will fight only one aggressor at a time.<sup>39</sup> Frequently, as conflicts go, this is not the case. Directing a whole alliance towards multiple aggressors becomes complicated and difficult. Furthermore, the idea of collective security will only work if the aggressor is isolated in one location. As Claude writes, “In principle the evil-doer is supposed to find himself virtually isolated in confrontation with the massive forces of the international *posse committatus*.”<sup>40</sup> If the collective security organization is divided to conquer multiple aggressors, the entire strategy of safety in numbers becomes moot. The second false assumption is that states will suspend their own self-interest for the good of the group. Under the presumption of a realist society, this is never true. In collective defense situations, states will remain on the sidelines until their individual interests are threatened, which negates the entire purpose of the collective security organization. The final false assumption is that states within the alliance trust each other. States may trust each other enough to form alliances, but because states fear each other, it is never possible for states to place full trust in others. It is not possible that states can fully trust others in collective security situations.<sup>41</sup>

Mearsheimer ultimately defines nine reasons as to why collective security cannot

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<sup>38</sup> See Mearsheimer, “A Realist Reply” and Claude “Power and International Relations.”

<sup>39</sup> Claude, Inis L. “Power and International Relations,” Random House, 1962. 196.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Mearsheimer, “A Realist Reply.”

be fully implemented in practice. These are that (1) collective security organizations have trouble differentiating between aggressor and victim, (2) that these organizations are based on the assumption that all aggression is bad aggression (which is disputed by realists), (3-4) that pre existing friendships between states as well as historical enmity makes action difficult, (5) that burden distribution between allies becomes complicated, (6) that because of the number of contributors, rapid reaction becomes unlikely, (7) with collective security organizations small problems become international problems, (8) that the notion of automatic forced reaction violates the notion of sovereignty, and (9) that if many states view war as detrimental, there is no legitimate reason as to why they would actively seek it.<sup>42</sup> Despite these deterrents to collective security organizations, states still form these types of alliances. Some may believe that this would directly contradict the theories of realism, however through close scrutiny, these tendencies towards alliance can be justified.

### *WHY ALLY?*

There are two schools of thought within the realist theory of alignment. While these schools of thought do not directly address collective security organizations, they do explain state behavior in creating alliances with other states. These schools take into consideration the ideas shared by realists that states act in their own interest and that states work to maximize their own power and security. These two schools of thought are that of 'balancing' and that of 'bandwagoning.'

Balancing is the more evident fit into the theory of realism. Balancing occurs when states perceive inaction against a dominant power as a greater threat to their

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<sup>42</sup> Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 31-32.

survival than risking action to counteract this power. Theories of balancing state that states then take action to counteract the military might of a dominant power or hegemon. Sometimes states do this balancing internally. Because of economic prosperity they start to build their own military structures so as to compete with this dominant power. Other times, states seek to form coalitions to be able to garner the type of power necessary to challenge a current hegemon. This is one reason as to why states choose to align with others. Waltz argues that when this balancing of power happens efficiently and quickly, it is difficult for regional hegemony to emerge.<sup>43</sup> Mearsheimer believes that it is easy for states to free ride in coalitions that balance power.<sup>44</sup> While undertaking actions of balancing, states work to maximize their security by calling into question the power of a dominant player. In balancing politics, states act in their own interest and use alliances only because it serves these interests.

When Bandwagoning, states form coalitions with the dominant power instead of against it. In *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz argues that bandwagoning occurs when states decide that it is either impossible or too costly to balance a hegemon's power, and that, in the interest of their own protection, they succumb to the power of the hegemon. Bandwagoning, unlike balancing, has incentives for the hegemon. It ensures that the states within their coalition will not try to balance their power as long as the hegemon provides these states with incentives that are greater than the incentive to balance the power of this hegemon. Most realists, including Mearsheimer and Schweller argue that bandwagoning is a tactic of last resort that occurs only when subordinate states

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<sup>43</sup> Waltz, "Theory of International Politics."

<sup>44</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. "Structural Realism." Accessed from:  
[http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199298334/dunne\\_chap04.pdf](http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199298334/dunne_chap04.pdf) March 24, 2008.

believe that trying to balance the power of the hegemon is futile.<sup>45</sup> Bandwagoning somewhat contradicts some aspects of realist theory in that states cede power to a dominant actor. It can be justified, however through their relative gains against other actors in the system. If states have the protection of a hegemon, other states will not create conflict because they cannot counter a hegemon as well as the protected state. During the Cold War, European states focused on bandwagoning with the US to counter a Soviet threat.

## **NATO**

After the conclusion of the Second World War, the world was bipolar, with the Soviet Union and US assuming militarily preponderant roles. With the threat of Soviet dominance looming just to the East of the European continent, Europeans opted for the United States to provide security cover. Many Europeans viewed the Alliance as one that

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<sup>45</sup> Schweller, Randall R. "New Realist Research on Alliance: Refining, Not Refuting, Waltz's Balancing Proposition." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, 4 (December 1997) 928.

would “Keep the Soviets out, the Germans down and the Americans in,” thereby increasing the overall security of the Europeans.<sup>46</sup> NATO’s evolution as an alliance is important in understanding the balance of power in the world as it stands today. Understanding the history of the alliance is critical to understanding the current motivations for states to remain in NATO—a collective security alliance that does not necessarily fit into the logic of realist thought. Through case study of the Alliance, we will be able to determine its worth to those who are members and understand if and why NATO should continue to operate into the next decades.

### *HISTORY OF NATO*

At the conclusion of the Second World War, the European continent was wholly ravaged and decrepit. Europeans were unable to recover militarily and economically without the assistance of outside forces. While restoring economic viability was of prime importance, Europeans realized that their security was equally paramount. Europeans hoped to tie their security to the military capabilities of the United States. In the mind of Europeans, the US intervened far too late in the First and Second World Wars.<sup>47</sup> Noting their inability to protect themselves after the brutalities of the Second World War, the Europeans wanted to ensure that the United States would no longer be a reluctant contributor to their security. From this idea, NATO was born.<sup>48</sup>

On April 4, 1949 the Washington Treaty was signed, establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This treaty ended the United States legacy of isolation and

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<sup>46</sup> Considered to be the slogan of Lord Ismay, NATO’s first secretary general.

<sup>47</sup> Kaplan, Lawrence S. “NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance.” Praeger, 2004. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Kaplan, 4.

intertwined the security of the US and the security of Europe.<sup>49</sup> While politicians at the time marketed this treaty as one that served the greater good and the cause of democracy, it was really driven by notions of self-preservation, security competition and self-interest.

The Soviet Union was identified as the US's greatest threat to military dominance. The United States recognized the importance of countering this threat through balancing its power. Signing a treaty to help to protect Europe definitely helped to balance the power against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. Unknowing of the Soviet's true intentions, the US sought to balance and even over power the Soviet threat. Europeans were seeking protection from invasion. While this treaty was beneficial for both parties, the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty still took a lot of political maneuvering from both sides of the Atlantic.

First and foremost, the United States tried, when writing the treaty, to make it adhere to as many United Nations regulations as possible. This would force the organization to be subservient to the rules of a greater regulator and would ensure the American people that this was more than an alliance to seep aid to Europeans. This alliance would serve a greater purpose and follow regulations of international institutions already created. It would not be a 'free ride' for Europeans. Unfortunately for the US, NATO was not able to be considered a regional organization within the UN, as all activities of regional organizations had to be approved by the Security Council—where the Soviet Union had veto power.<sup>50</sup> Instead, NATO only adheres to Article 51 of the UN Charter that allows for regional and collective defense organizations to be created.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This point is disputed in Robert Kagan's "Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order." Knopf, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> Kaplan, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 51.



Furthermore, the name of the Alliance which included “North Atlantic” and not “European,” helped the US justify to their public that they were not assimilating into existing European structures, but that Europeans were assimilating into the US. Dean Acheson made this point very clear during his negotiations of the treaty.<sup>52</sup> Acheson himself an avid realist, stated “No people in history have ever survived who thought they could protect their freedom by making themselves inoffensive to their enemies.”<sup>53</sup>

The next debate over NATO concerned which allies would be admitted. In the eyes of some European nations, NATO would merely be an expansion of the Western European Union, decided upon in the Treaty of Brussels of 1948.<sup>54</sup> For the signatories of this document—the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France, the addition of the US within this framework would really give the treaty credible military backing.<sup>55</sup> The US, however, demanded that other members be signatories of the treaty as well. These states included Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Portugal.<sup>56</sup> While the Europeans (excluding these states!) were against this move because it would diminish the protection each received, the US demanded this because it increased the strategic locations in which they could operate and have influence.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the most contentious part of the NATO debate revolved around the actual purpose of it’s being—Article V.<sup>58</sup> Article V of the Washington Treaty states that

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<sup>52</sup> Kaplan, 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> Duston, William Thomas. “A Democrat at Home and Abroad: The Politics of Dean G. Acheson.” James Madison University, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> The Treaty of Brussels established the Western European Union, a collective security arrangement within Western Europe.

<sup>55</sup> Holworth, Jolyon, “The EU, NATO and Quest for European Autonomy” in *Defending Europe: The Quest for European Autonomy*. 7

<sup>56</sup> NATO.int

<sup>57</sup> Kaplan, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lecture. “Transatlantic Security Relations.”

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by [Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations](#), will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”<sup>59</sup>

Clearly this language allows for room for allies to use discretion in contributing troops to the allies’ cause. In order to agree to a treaty that had such provisional clauses for collective defense, the United States requested that their sovereign policies for declaring war be respected.<sup>60</sup> The Allies wanted quick and decisive action on the treaty. While the US would have preferred to massage the treaty into the best possible for US gain, Europe wanted a yes or no right away. Realizing the importance of this treaty, George Kennan negotiated this ambiguous language of Article V and the allies begrudgingly agreed. This wording made it possible for those responding to an attack to fashion this response in ways that they deemed necessary instead of ways that NATO deemed mandatory.<sup>61</sup>

The final major point of contention with the Washington Treaty came with Article III, which states:

“In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual

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<sup>59</sup> The Washington Treaty Establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Article V.

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan, 4.

<sup>61</sup> The language of Article V evades Mearsheimers 8<sup>th</sup> point that mandatory action violates state sovereignty.

aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.”<sup>62</sup>

This article exemplifies different interpretations that Europeans and Americans have of NATO. To the Europeans, this article stated that the United States would be fueling their military capabilities. To the US, this article meant that the Europeans would receive aid, but only with certain caveats and stipulations in place. To make their intentions clear to the Europeans, the US passed the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of October 1949. In this act, the United States placed provisions on military aid that went to Europe. Europeans were not pleased. The first stipulation was that to receive assistance, Europeans needed to develop a strategic concept for potential military action against an adversary. Within this caveat, the United States requested that in the case of conflict, the United States would be able to provide strategic air forces along with Britain, while the remainder of NATO allies would provide the troops on the ground.<sup>63</sup> For European allies who were expecting unconditional protection, this caveat came as quite a shock. The hierarchy of realism was being maintained within the framework of the NATO alliance. This was an unsettling realization for Europeans, and marks the first of many times that distrust within the Alliance was apparent.<sup>64</sup> The second caveat to providing military assistance to the Europeans was that the Europeans had to provide the US with air bases and access to resources in European states and territories.<sup>65</sup> The US requested this so that they could ‘better protect the allies in Europe,’ however, Europeans, once again recognized this caveat as the US gaining at the expense of the Europeans and not actually

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<sup>62</sup> Washington Treaty, Article III.

<sup>63</sup> United States: Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949. *The American Journal of International Law*. Vol. 44, 1 (1950).

<sup>64</sup> Kaplan, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949.

working towards the greater good of transatlantic security.

### *THE EVOLUTION OF NATO AND REALISM*

After the initial quarrels over the stipulations of the Washington Treaty, NATO had the Cold War to deal with. The purpose of the entire organization was to provide security to Europe after the Second World War. The evolution of NATO through the Cold War, onto the conflicts in the Balkans and into the St. Malo declaration of 1998 showed a true progression of realist intentions, as the Europeans started to grow into their own security identity.

During the Cold War, the imminent threat of the Soviet Union loomed large. The Europeans, seeking to balance the power between the Soviet Union and themselves decided to bandwagon with the United States for protection. Because Europe could not feasibly create their own military structures, they had the choice to submit to US wishes or to face the Soviet Union alone. While bandwagoning was not an optimal choice for the Europeans, realists argue it was a significantly better option than going it alone. Waltz points out that the guaranteed of NATO is far greater than the guarantee of a typical alliance. NATO transformed the way that alliances were viewed and how they were operated:

“In the old multipolar world, the core of an alliance consisted of a small number of states of comparable capability. Contributors to one another’s security were of crucial importance because they were of similar size. NATO... was a treaty of guarantee rather than an old school military alliance.”<sup>66</sup>

During the Cold War, however, that might not have been apparent. While the Cold War

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<sup>66</sup> Waltz, “Structural Realism After the Cold War,” 18.

remained just that – cold, neither the NATO countries nor the Warsaw Pact countries were able to discern the others’ intentions. True to realist thought, both parties feared the other, which led to a build up of capabilities, in this case, nuclear arms. Until great political maneuvering diffused this conflict, the world was on edge and mutually assured destruction seemed right around the corner. Mearsheimer argues that NATO was a good organization to counterbalance the USSR because it was a formal organization and more persistently legitimate than an ad hoc coalition would have been.<sup>67</sup> Mearsheimer further demonstrates the value of NATO to the US position of preponderance by stating that, “NATO was essentially an American tool for managing power in the face of the Soviet threat.”<sup>68</sup>

NATO proved to be an excellent tool for the United States in the days of the Cold War. In the argument of Lloyd Gruber, “States pursue their own interest whether the institution exists or not. The institution gives the interest legitimacy.”<sup>69</sup> Gruber is correct. During the Cold War it was in the best interest of the US to counter the Soviet’s growing military might. This balancing was aided through NATO but would have been pursued whether NATO existed or not. NATO helped to give the cause of the US greater legitimacy, which helped the US gain actual bases, and resources during the conflict.

### *POST COLD WAR NATO*

Because NATO was so efficient in deterring the Soviet threat, the military structures were never tested. Their success in the Cold War sent a sense of

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<sup>67</sup> Mearsheimer, “A Realist Reply.”

<sup>68</sup> Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” 14.

<sup>69</sup> Gruber, Lloyd. “Ruling the World: Power Politics and the Rise of Supranational Institutions.” Princeton University Press. 2000.

accomplishment into the Alliance despite the fact that they had never actually been 'battle tested.'<sup>70</sup> Despite this Cold War victory, NATO was still faced with the challenge of determining purpose after their reason for being was defeated.

Waltz argues that when there is a constancy of threat, there is constancy in policy. When this threat is absent, policy becomes confused and capricious.<sup>71</sup> While Waltz was relating this to why unipolarity can be dangerous, it can be applied to the role of NATO after the conclusion of the Cold War. Without the threat of the Soviet Union, did NATO really have a purpose anymore? Mearsheimer claims that membership in alliances only persists until the members have exhausted their use of that alliance.<sup>72</sup> For the sake of staying afloat after the fall of the Soviet Union, NATO had to reinvent itself.

From a realist perspective, the United States still had reason to be engaged in NATO. As the preponderant force, the United States was preventing the Europeans from attempting to balance their power, and furthermore, NATO was a justifiable way for the United States to continue its regional dominance in Europe.<sup>73</sup> While many argue that NATO lost any purpose after the Cold War because there was no eminent threat, it is very difficult to disband organizations after they are created. Waltz argues that if you establish an organization, even after their initial purpose has been fulfilled it will find something to do to keep it alive. Organizations are hard to form, and equally hard to disband because bureaucrats are interested in maintaining their employment.<sup>74</sup> Such was the case with NATO after the Cold War.

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<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, Robert D. "Equal Alliance, Unequal Roles." *The New York Times*. March 27, 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War."

<sup>72</sup> Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism."

<sup>73</sup> Europe, as well, had reason to remain in NATO because they still had no capacity or means to balance the unipolarity of the US.

<sup>74</sup> Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," 18.

One way that NATO sought to reinvent itself was through implementing their Partnership for Peace program (PfP). Partnership for Peace was designed to ameliorate relations between current members of NATO, potential members of NATO and non-potential members of NATO.<sup>75</sup> Bringing former adversaries within the structure of NATO not only gave the Alliance renewed purpose of democracy spreading, but allowed the Alliance to keep a close watch over the actions of these former adversaries. Partnership for Peace was a forum in which discussions between these countries could be held. This was an initiative started by the United States at the 1993 NATO Summit in Germany.<sup>76</sup> The program was launched in 1994 and had ten initial states join.<sup>77</sup> From a realist perspective, some could argue that this was merely an attempt by the United States to keep NATO relevant so that states would be encouraged to bandwagon and not balance.

NATO's struggle to force reinvention lasted until it received a call to action from the United Nations when problems arose in the Balkans. NATO's success in both Bosnia and Kosovo kept it alive into the late 1990s and early 2000s and gave it purpose for the time being. NATO once again enjoyed clarity of purpose. These missions would simply buy time before NATO would have to tackle this question of post-Cold War purpose once again.

NATO's first mission in Bosnia was a call to arms from the UN. In 1995, NATO was tasked with the responsibility to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace, which was signed in Paris and negotiated in Dayton, Ohio. This Agreement was

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<sup>75</sup> Non-potential members include those whose geography is not considered to fall within the boundaries of the North Atlantic region.

<sup>76</sup> Kaplan, 56.

<sup>77</sup> These countries were Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

recognition of the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by their respective neighbors.<sup>78</sup> NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) was tasked with ensuring this peace. IFOR was largely heralded by the international community as a success, and evolved into the Stabilization Force (SFOR).<sup>79</sup> After successful democratic elections, the international community decided that the peace process was complete and that SFOR would ensure that this peace would be lasting.<sup>80</sup> Both the IFOR and SFOR missions included numerous troops from NATO and PfP, including Russia.<sup>81</sup> This extension of NATO structures to include Russia after the Cold War is notable.<sup>82</sup> The SFOR mission concluded in 2004, with EUFOR, an EU force, taking charge for the remainder of operations.

NATO's mission in Bosnia was successful and their mission in Kosovo was met, more or less, with similar success. The mission in Kosovo, similar to the one in Bosnia, was mandated by the UN and tasked to NATO forces. The conflict arose because of a humanitarian crisis in Kosovo in which daily fighting between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Liberation Army occurred.<sup>83</sup> Ethnic tensions fueled the fighting. Due to the non-compliance of local actors instigating the fighting, NATO was forced to resort to a campaign of air strikes—Operation Allied Force, which lasted for 77

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<sup>78</sup> NATO, "The General Framework Agreement." November 30, 1995. Accessed from <http://www.nato.int/ifor/gfa/gfa-summ.htm> (April 27, 2008.)

<sup>79</sup> There were problems with the IFOR mission. Appropriate study of NATO's missions in the Balkans would include examples of these shortcomings, including NATO's inability to counter events such as the massacre in Srebrenica. For the sake of brevity and topicality, this paper will not address the full events of these missions and merely understand them as a successful deployment of NATO forces.

<sup>80</sup> NATO. History of SFOR mission : <http://www.nato.int/sfor/docu/d981116a.htm>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Including former adversaries within one's framework can be considered a triumph of the hegemon to attempt to slow balancing behavior through the incentives of bandwagoning.

<sup>83</sup> NATO. History of Kosovo Missions: <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/history.htm>



days.<sup>84</sup> Because of the air strikes, Yugoslav troops began withdrawal from the region and an eventual stop gap peace was instated. While the KFOR mission has yet to be officially concluded, NATO significantly aided the process of normalization in the region.

#### *BEYOND THE BALKANS: EU CONTEMPLATES BALANCING*

With the success of the missions in the Balkans added to NATO's repertoire of success, NATO seemed to be riding high as a needed and purposeful organization once again. During the Cold War NATO's ability to act as a deterrent through the guarantee of Article V was established, and during the wars in the Balkans, their functional capacity to complete missions successfully was demonstrated. NATO's future seemed to be bright and limitless. However, as NATO's success was being realized in the Balkans, the Europeans were starting to outgrow the necessity of protection afforded to them by the United States.

As Mearsheimer argues about alliances and working within a system, there comes a point when bandwagoning no longer outweighs the relative gains that a state can receive from balancing the power of a dominant actor.<sup>85</sup> The relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union started to change as early as the 1990s, when the EU Members of NATO stated that an EU defense policy was of priority, and things needed to be done to create a comprehensive plan for their defense. Throughout the course of the decade, through many summits, conferences, and meetings,

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Mearsheimer, "A Realist Reply."

goals were set, and policies declared to get the ball rolling on a comprehensive package that would provide EU members with a lasting defense plan.

The actual beginning of a common European Union defense policy came in February of 1992, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. The Maastricht Treaty came into force on November 1, 1993.<sup>86</sup> This Treaty called for “The eventual framing of a common defense policy which might lead to a common defense.”<sup>87</sup> Basically, this was the beginning of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union.

The next step in the framing of a EU defense community came in 1996 with the Berlin NATO Summit. At this summit, the concept of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), a NATO idea, was affirmed. It was also agreed that the EU could have access to NATO assets for crisis management operations, which the EU led separately from NATO ops.<sup>88</sup> This would be implemented through the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs),<sup>89</sup> which had been proposed by the NATO Heads of State and Government as early as 1994.<sup>90</sup> This arrangement made it so that the EU could utilize all of the assets of NATO, without needing the US to consent to or lead any programs. This was beneficial to the US in that it prevented the necessity for the US to provide protection to Europeans or involve themselves in operations that did not concern the US.<sup>91</sup> Warren Christopher,

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<sup>86</sup> The Treaty on the European Union. Maastricht, 7 February 1992.

<sup>87</sup> The Treaty on the European Union. Maastricht, 7 February 1992.

<sup>88</sup> NATO. "NATO-EU: A Strategic Partnership." <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-eu/index.html> (March 20, 2008).

<sup>89</sup> A Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) is a multinational, multi-service deployable task force generated and tailored primarily, but not exclusively, for military operations not involving the defense of Alliance territory, such as humanitarian relief and peacekeeping.

<sup>90</sup> NATO. "NATO-EU: A Strategic Partnership." <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-eu/index.html> (accessed March 20, 2008).

<sup>91</sup> This was a clever way to combat Mearsheimer's 8<sup>th</sup> point on collective security that implied these organizations turned regional conflict into international problems.

the US Secretary of State commented that this Berlin agreement “Will strengthen the European dimension within NATO,” while the French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette stated that “For the first time in alliance history, Europe will really be able to express its personality. For the first time, we have gone from words to deeds.”<sup>92</sup> Perhaps for the first time Europe was hopping off the bandwagon. This was nevertheless an exciting step forward in the formulation of a European Union Defense Alliance.

Following the Berlin NATO Summit, there was a summit at St. Malo in 1998 between French and British delegations. The agreement between Chirac and Blair had a profound impact on European Defense as a whole. This conference was encouraged by the recent atrocities that had taken place in the Balkans, and the realization by the French and the British that a Europe did not have a credible force with which to solve regional security matters. At the summit, Jacques Chirac and Tony Blair recommended that Europe establish, “The capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crisis.”<sup>93</sup>

This move on part of the United Kingdom by Tony Blair was the first step away from the UK’s normal policy of pursuing only actions that included NATO. This action greatly unnerved the United States government. Clearly, the EU was pursuing policies of balancing instead of policies of bandwagoning. To try and fix the political problem he had caused by this change in policy, Tony Blair wrote an article for the New York Times entitled “Its Time to Repay America.” In this article, Tony Blair stated that Europe owed it to the United States to remain strongly involved in NATO because of the efforts that

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<sup>92</sup> CNN.com, "Europe has Bigger Role as NATO Enters New Era." June 3, 1996.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9606/03/nato.talks/index.html> (accessed April 22, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> Franco-British Summit Joint Declaration on European Defense. Saint-Malo. December 4, 1998.

the US contributed to saving Europe in the past. He made it very clear that it would be foolish for the EU to pursue security interests on their own because the US was pivotal to the success of an EU defense, recognizing that the EU still required the protection of the hegemon.<sup>94</sup> Blair also brought up the point that if the ESDP was to function without always using NATO as its determinant of action, the structure of the EU would have to change so as to accommodate the ESDP's growing primacy. The damage, however, had been done. For the first time since the conclusion of the Second World War, Europe was starting to outgrow the protection of the United States. Mearsheimer's idea of a glass ceiling for subordinate players in an organization was playing out in true actions of states.

The St. Malo Declaration provided the EU with good preliminary goals for a European Defense Force. During the German presidency, this bilateral agreement was transformed into a European policy at the 1999 European Council in Cologne.<sup>95</sup> This was done by taking the existing European Security and Defense Identity of NATO and transforming it into a European Security and Defense Policy for the EU.<sup>96</sup> The Council decided jointly,

“That the European Union shall play its full role on the international stage. To that end, [they] intend to give the European Union the necessary means and capabilities to assume its responsibilities regarding a common European policy on security and defense.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Blair, Tony, “It’s Time to Repay America.” November 13, 1998: New York Times. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A01EFD61431F930A25752C1A96E958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1> (accessed February 15, 2008).

<sup>95</sup> Cologne European Council. “Conclusions of the Presidency.” June 3-4, 1999. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/kol1\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/kol1_en.htm) (Accessed April 2, 2008).

<sup>96</sup> Haine, Jean-Yves. “ESDP: An Overview *Institute for Security Studies* <http://www.iss-eu.org/esdp/01-jyh.pdf>. (Accessed April 14, 2008).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

Nowhere in this declaration was attention paid to the US role in the security of Europe.

### **SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 AND THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN**

The entire cannon of events leading up to the September 11 attacks on the United States are interesting in that until that point, NATO essentially played out its worth as a credible and necessary organization. NATO had proven itself in the times of Cold War Crisis. By deterring the threat of the Soviets through the idea of collective security, NATO was seen as a victor. During the Balkan Crises of the 1990s, NATO was called to action by the UN and proved to be a moderately successful mediator of those conflicts, using force when it was tasked to do so. The greatest success of NATO in the Balkans was that its military structures were used and tested, unlike in the days of the Cold War. Moving on from the Balkan crises, the EU, a blossoming organization, asserted itself and

took the decision that it could no longer depend on NATO and the US to be a protector and evolved from a bandwagoning strategy of security to that of a mild balancing strategy. The EU had started to outgrow the protection of the US and decided to begin to take charge of their own region.<sup>98</sup>

Considering this timeline, September 11, 2001 was not an opportune moment for Article V to be invoked for the first time in Alliance history. Tensions were clearly running high between alliance members-- the United States unclear of their relationship with Europe, and Europeans wary of the overbearing nature of the US within in their security structures. Had these terrorist attacks happened in Europe, it may have been easier to delineate a clear alliance policy. There is also a good chance that had these attacks occurred in Europe, NATO as a whole may have become far less important than it is today.<sup>99</sup> These attacks, however, occurred on US soil and speculations of different trajectories of NATO are worthless.

As mentioned above, NATO truly did need to reinvent itself to be able to stay afloat.<sup>100</sup> While PfP and the Balkan Wars bought time for the Alliance, NATO still did not have a clear purpose or relevant mission statement that would keep it alive into the coming decades. Then September 11, 2001 presented itself to the Alliance. Much as the attack on Pearl Harbor rallied the allies in generations before, the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> should have done the same. As Rupp states, if “North Americans and Europeans could find common ground in identifying and responding to a major threat, no

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<sup>98</sup> Wohlforth, 25.

<sup>99</sup> Based purely on speculation, an argument could be made that if these terrorist attacks happened in Europe, the EU would have called upon their right to use NATO assets under the auspices of the Berlin Plus Agreement. This way, the United States could opt out of participating in any retaliatory acts towards terrorists, yet still allow the EU to use NATO assets to carry out their mission, where their own assets were incapable of performing the tasks.

<sup>100</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. “Transatlantic Security Relations” The American University, School of International Service.

greater could have been designed than the one presented by the Al Qaeda on September 11, 2001.”<sup>101</sup> The Alliance however, did not rise to the occasion. Instead of upholding the principles of the Alliance, NATO experienced a sustained crisis of being.

### *NATO: A COMPLIANT ALLIANCE*

The opportunity that NATO was presented with on September 11 was ideal. Much like the threat of the Soviet Union, Al Qaeda was a menace to all members of NATO, which provided a clear direction for policy, and a threat that could give the alliance meaning. Tricky politics leading up to the year 2001, however, allowed this opportunity to pass the Alliance by.

At the 1999 Washington Summit of NATO, the US proposed that NATO begin to reinvent itself by tackling the threat of terrorism.<sup>102</sup> Europeans were strongly against this “because they feared it would transform NATO into a European police force instead of a military alliance.”<sup>103</sup> The lackluster communiqué put forth after this summit merely acknowledged that NATO might be affected by terrorism and should prepare accordingly.<sup>104</sup> With a clear policy on NATO’s reaction to terrorism, the clarity of action after September 11<sup>th</sup> could have been greater. Because there was no policy of response towards terrorist attacks, there was much confusion among Alliance members as to what was expected of them.

While many allies did rally behind the United States, some countries, notably

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<sup>101</sup> Rupp, Richard E. “NATO after 9/11 an Alliance in Continuing Decline,” Palgrave, 2006. 93.

<sup>102</sup> The US had sustained attacks from Al Qaeda in the past including the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, 1995/96 bombings of military spaces in Saudi Arabia and embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

<sup>103</sup> Bensahel, Nora. “The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Europe, NATO and the European Union,” RAND, 2003. 23.

<sup>104</sup> NATO. Strategic Concept of the Alliance. NATO Handbook. 1999.

Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway were not in favor of invoking Article V.<sup>105</sup> They were wary of the United State's intentions to fight a war they wanted no part of.<sup>106</sup> This outright snub of the United States after the gravest attack on their soil certainly helped to shape the Bush Administration's reaction to the day's events.

#### *ARTICLE V*

Unofficially, NATO invoked Article V on September 12, 2001.<sup>107</sup> Marking the first time in its 52-year history that this had happened, it was certainly viewed as a precedent. While some allies were quick and decisive to come to the aid of the US, some European diplomats were neither excited nor interested in changing national policy for the sake of the Alliance. Both French and Belgian diplomats made public statements that Articles of a 52-year-old treaty would not confine their right to sovereign decision taking.<sup>108</sup> The response that followed the first invocation of NATO's most important clause was less than optimal. An anonymous NATO official was quoted as stating that, "... by declaring a situation of collective defense and failing to follow up, I fear that we may have undermined Article V forever."<sup>109</sup> Mearsheimer and Waltz, through theories of

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<sup>105</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. "Transatlantic Security Relations" The American University, School of International Service.

<sup>106</sup> Lansford, Tom. "All for One: Terrorism, NATO and the United States" Ashgate, 2002. 71-75.

<sup>107</sup> Article V was officially invoked on October 2, 2001 when NATO accepted the United States' case that the attacks were directly attributable to Al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

<sup>108</sup> Daley, Suzanne. "After the Attacks: The Alliance" *The New York Times*. September 14, 2001.

<sup>109</sup> Bensahel, 45.



realism predicted this response.

But the undermining of NATO did not stop at snide comments from Europeans. Bush's ambivalence towards the Alliance only confused the purpose of NATO further. Knowing the European's disdain for the mission and their adversity to conflict, the Bush administration largely ignored Europe in crafting their plans to go to war. (Clearly this exemplifies Mearsheimer's ideas that states will pursue their own interests independent of previous Alliance commitments). Donald Rumsfeld, the outspoken and abrasive Secretary of Defense, summed up the US policy towards NATO when he said, "the mission needs to define the coalition, and we ought not to think that a coalition should define the mission."<sup>110</sup> The justifications of Rumsfeld's remarks were based on his perception that NATO could not provide the US with capabilities that the Pentagon didn't already have access to. Lord Robertson of NATO also recognized this. He stated that the US could act independently or in conjunction with as many or as few NATO allies as they desired. There was no binding or legal contract stating that the US *had* to employ the structures of NATO.<sup>111</sup> Had the US chosen to go to war alone, perhaps the global perception of NATO as it stands today wouldn't be so poor.<sup>112</sup>

The United States, did, however call upon the structures of NATO when Article V was officially invoked in October of 2001. Ironically, when the Washington Treaty was signed in 1949, the US was reluctant to come to the unconditional aid of the Europeans. Now, in 2001 it was the Europeans demonstrating reluctance. This discrepancy in deeds

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<sup>110</sup> Loeb, Vernon. "Rumsfeld Says War Will Need a Backing of 'Revolving Coalitions'" *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2001.

<sup>111</sup> Dempsey, Judy. "US Could Act Alone, Says NATO Chief," *Financial Times*, September 18, 2001.

<sup>112</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. "Transatlantic Security Relations" The American University, School of International Service.

and words caused policy problems that would overshadow the entirety of the conflict.

Mearsheimer, clearly not a strong proponent of the functionality of alliances, warns against the moment in which states actually call upon the alliance for assistance and how it is never truly reliable. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan demonstrates this:

“States must be very confident that almost all of the other states in the system will sincerely renounce aggression and will not change their minds at a later date.

States also have to be confident that when the aggressor targets them, none of the other states will get cold feet and fail to confront the trouble maker.”<sup>113</sup>

Whether Europeans got cold feet, or were just reluctant to play into the structures of a US led war is inconsequential. The fact of the matter stands that NATO’s pledge was called in and largely undermined by the inability of states that were seeking their own interests. Almost all of Mearsheimer’s 9 warnings would play out over the course of fighting in Afghanistan.

The beginning of the mission was not a complete failure. Commitments were made from European allies determined to prove that they did not require the US to lead them constantly. By 2002 the number of Europeans on the ground was nearly equal to the number of Americans.<sup>114</sup> Despite this commitment, the US was resolved to fighting the war on their own terms and using their own structures, and relegated the allies to sideline duties of support to prove that they did not require alliance help.<sup>115</sup> The inability of the US to allow NATO to fully engage the mission, and the inability of Europe to be compliant to the wishes of the US really hurt the relationship of the Alliance. By August

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<sup>113</sup> Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” 30.

<sup>114</sup> Grant, Charles. “The Eleventh of September and Beyond.” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 73, 4 (August 2002), 139.

<sup>115</sup> NATO. “Statement to the Press.” Secretary General Lord Robertson. October 4, 2001. Accessed from: <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011004b.htm> (April 22, 2008).

2003, NATO assumed all responsibility for the mission in Afghanistan when the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) took formal command of operations.

### *NATO's CURRENT CHALLENGES*

“Make no mistake, NATO is not winning in Afghanistan.”<sup>116</sup> Chairman of the Atlantic Council, and former SACEUR James L. Jones made this remark in an Issue Brief in January of 2008. Seven years after the initial invasion, the preponderant force of the United States has not been able to win the battle, and certainly not the war. Strategically, the United States is attempting two wars with Bush's Global War on Terror. The National Security Strategy of 2002, outlining the new rules of engagement, advocated preemptive strikes to prevent another September 11<sup>th</sup> from ever occurring again.<sup>117</sup> NSS-02 States:

“While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right to self-defense by acting preemptively against... terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country.”<sup>118</sup>

It further addresses NATO by declaring:

“There is little of lasting consequence that the United States can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe... The attacks of September 11 were also an attack on NATO, as NATO itself recognized when it invoked its Article V self-defense clause for the first

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<sup>116</sup> Jones, James L., “Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action.” January 2008. The Atlantic Council.

<sup>117</sup> National Security Strategy, 2002: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

time.”<sup>119</sup>

The United States changed direction militarily with this Security Strategy. Advocating preemptive strikes and seeking out adversaries the United States perhaps made one of its most bold moves in its military history. This devil-may-care attitude fits perfectly into the context of realist theory. As a militarily preponderant force, the United States had every right to fight the war in Afghanistan.<sup>120</sup> Their incongruent policies towards the Alliance, however, may have hurt the US ability to motivate their European allies into any more strategies of bandwagoning. Whether or not the gains from fighting this war on terror outweighs the possibility that Europe will begin to more actively seek policies of balancing against the United States will need to be scrutinized.

### *FIGHTING WINDMILLS*

As the only hegemon, it can be assumed that when NSS-02 was drafted no one would have assumed that six years later, the United States would be stretched thin in an increasingly unpopular quagmire of war. The invasion of Afghanistan was blessed by NATO in that the US made a compelling case that Al Qaeda and the Taliban were behind the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Iraq, however, was a different story. Unpopular with the allies, the expansion of the Global War on Terror only managed to anger an already fragmented relationship.

Fighting terrorists is a difficult task.<sup>121</sup> So difficult in fact, that seven years into the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> According to realist theory, the US had every right to declare war on Iraq as well. Since the Iraq mission is not a fully NATO sponsored mission, it is not a good case study for analyzing how realist alliance theory plays out in true actions and deeds of global actors.

<sup>121</sup> The difficulty of this war is more acute to Europeans and Canadians who don't have the military might to waste. As Robert Kagan points out, "Strong Powers generally view the world differently than weaker powers...they have different levels of tolerance for insecurity." (Of Paradise and Power)

war, the US is no farther ahead than half a decade ago. Unlike conventional warfare of yesteryear, terrorists are evasive, not easy to target and have no state to claim as their own. Asymmetrical warfare has proven to be a challenge for the US as well as NATO. The allies are becoming restless; reluctant to continue fighting in Afghanistan while the US has one goal in mind—victory. But is victory against a non-state actor really important within the context of realist theory? Is the United States acting a Don Quixote with Europe in tow as its ever-reluctant Sancho Panza?

Many realists argue that terrorists don't truly matter in the grand scheme of things. Terrorists are the windmills of the modern day. Terrorism is more a threat to be managed than a threat to be eliminated. It is a farce to believe that the United States can truly rid the world of terrorism.<sup>122</sup> Much like the Man of La Mancha, the United States is eroding their legitimacy by pursuing ridiculous causes, of targeting an organization that does not fit into the landscape of realist threat perception. Furthermore, the cause is viewed as even more ridiculous because the US is not winning the war in Afghanistan. Allies are putting caveats on troops commitments, forcing the US to complete most of the casualty-heavy, difficult fighting. Asymmetrical warfare and nation building are hurting the perception of the strength of the US military because the US military was not prepared for this type of fighting, and is experiencing difficulty achieving a decisive victory.

Ever the bitter allies, the Europeans and Canadians have been wary about the strategy of the United States. Entrenched in warfare since the beginning of the decade, states are becoming more and more skeptical of the intentions of the US as death the tolls

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<sup>122</sup> The US can undermine Al Qaeda and the Taliban, but they can no more eliminate terrorism than they can eliminate other schools of thought and strategy. The US can simply hedge against these risks and deal with them in the future.

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### *AFGHANISTAN- A TOP PRIORITY?*

Seven years after the initial entry into Afghanistan, the war is still not over. With NATO only being able to sustain around 10,000 troops in the region at any given time, the situation is becoming more and more dire as national governments are supporting the cause less and less.<sup>123</sup> NATO has claimed time and time again that Afghanistan remains their top priority, but it is clear that there is an inconsistency between words and deeds. In the past year, much literature has been written on the importance of finishing off the mission. The gains that individual states were receiving from being in Afghanistan are starting to diminish and disappear. Steven Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, threatened to remove all Canadian troops unless another 1,000 troops were surged into the region.<sup>124</sup> Recognizing the necessity for the war to be over, both France and Romania pledged troops to Afghanistan at NATO's Bucharest Summit this year.<sup>125</sup> Finally realizing that the Alliance needs to put political difference behind them, NATO needs to rally right now to finish the fighting in the region before the military perception of all players involved is squandered.

### *HAMMERS AND NAILS*

It is frequently mentioned in theory that when you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. When you do not have a hammer, nothing looks like a nail. Currently the US has all the hammers and the Europeans seemingly have none. Magnified by the

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<sup>123</sup> Rupp, 159. See also Kaplan, Equal Alliance, Unequal Roles

<sup>124</sup> NATO. Bucharest Summit Overview: <http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/1.html>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

war in Afghanistan, it has become apparent that Europeans and Americans view military threats differently. It is standard in literature of NATO that there is a definite capabilities gap between the Americans and other European allies.<sup>126</sup> The US is militarily preponderant, and while this is the source of their hegemony according to realists, it makes it difficult for full-fledged cooperation with NATO allies. As the war in Afghanistan drags on, the Europeans are losing exponentially more than the United States.

When a state has fewer military capabilities and resources, it approaches threats differently. Robert Kagan makes the analogy between being in the woods with a knife, and being in the woods with a gun. If there is a bear in the woods, the man with the knife will be reluctant to seek it out, and will merely use the knife in cases of last resort. The man with the gun, however might be more expeditious in killing the bear and will perceive the threat of the bear to be less than the perception of the man with the knife.<sup>127</sup> The US (the man with the gun) is asking the Europeans (the man with the knife) to be expeditious in their endeavors. Obviously the Europeans are reluctant to go off in search of the bear while they remain safe avoiding it.

#### *WHAT IS WRONG IN AFGHANISTAN?*

As General Jones stated, the mission in Afghanistan is not progressing successfully. While many scholars point to the fact that this is because of political maneuvering, it can be argued, quite succinctly, that balance of power politics are being played out on the battlefield, and this is the reason as to why the offensive in Afghanistan

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<sup>126</sup> In military R&D alone, the US outspends the entirety of Europe 7:1.

<sup>127</sup> Kagan, 36.

has not been met with success. At the beginning of this century, the transatlantic relationship could best be described as awkward. Europe was outgrowing their subordinate position, and the United States was struggling to keep themselves germane within the context of Europe.

Europeans have started to assert themselves through their ESDP, and have begun to try and create their own military structures separate from the United States. As Wohlforth points out, Europe is not a rising hegemon because they are not actually a state.<sup>128</sup> This does not mean that Europeans haven't outgrown the security structures of the Cold War. Torn between their appreciation of the transatlantic history and their indignancy to bandwagon with the US any longer, European policy is quite mixed on the issue of US cooperation.

Compounding the problems of the Europeans, the United States still treats the Europeans within NATO as the subordinate state.<sup>129</sup> The paradigms of the Cold War have shifted, but the United States has not yet recognized this fact. The dire situation of the Europeans during the Cold War allowed the United States to entice them to bandwagon with few tactics of motivation. With the Europeans wishing to create their own security and military structures, the United States will need to increase the motivation that they provide Europeans so that the Europeans still view bandwagoning as their most effective option. If the United States continues to assume that Europeans will bandwagon with few incentives, their logic is flawed. If the Europeans gain nothing from NATO besides an unsuccessful war of seven years, it is likely that they will abandon its structures and

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<sup>128</sup> Wohlforth, 39.

<sup>129</sup> As far as balance of power politics are concerned, Europeans are still subordinate to the US within NATO, they expect, however, to be afforded more respect than the current administration is willing to give them.



principles to seek a more intelligent strategy of self-gain in the future. The United States does not want this. Seeking regional control of Europe is still in the best interest of the US, and if some concessions to NATO allies are what it takes, the US would be intelligent to pursue this strategy.

Magnified by the fighting in Afghanistan, the intentions of both Europeans and Americans are creating problems with the actual mission itself. It has yet to be seen whether or not the transatlantic alliance will repair itself for the sake of resolution of the conflict. While it may be within the bounds of realist theory to look out for the best interest of ones country and not subordinate to the other alliance partner, it is also not in the best interest of realist theory to drag out a war as it is a drain on assets and causes the perception of ones capabilities to take a turn for the worse. It is in the best interest of both parties to conclude the fighting in Afghanistan, and *then* play out their balancing of power priorities.

## **AFTER AFGHANISTAN—IMPLICATIONS ON US HEGEMONY**

It is no secret that the Global War on Terror is affecting US legitimacy abroad. This current war is different than the World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1910s and 1940s, the United States intervened as a reluctant savior, countering the imbalance of power against their allies, and made definitive moves to restore democracy to Europe. Protecting their allies and democracy was in the best interest of the United States. Today, the United States is fighting preemptive wars to protect their future from terrorists. Is this also in the best interests of Europeans?<sup>130</sup>

This loss of legitimacy matters not to realists. As stated previously, in the state of nature, no war is unjustifiable. The United States' inability to quickly and decisively win in Afghanistan, however, is consequential to realist thought. If the United States loses in Afghanistan, will hegemony be at stake? The answer is as complicated as the question seems simple.

### *AFGHANISTAN, A WAR OF HEGEMONY?*

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<sup>130</sup> One would argue not, as Europeans blocked official action towards terrorists at the Washington Summit of 1999.

There is an easy case to be made that Afghanistan is not a war of hegemony. While it is true that hegemonic wars cannot even be realized as hegemonic wars until their conclusion, it is safe to reason that the war in Afghanistan itself will not cause the end of US hegemony.

Robert Gilpin states that, “the dynamic of international relations is based on the growth of power between states.”<sup>131</sup> First and foremost, Al Qaeda is not a state. While they may have attacked the United States, it would be impossible for them to usurp hegemony from the US. Secondly, the war in Afghanistan does not meet Gilpin’s criteria to be a hegemonic war. Of second importance to Al Qaeda’s lack of state legitimacy, they are not the current “second place” to US military might. Further, their economic and political structures are not leading to a build up of munitions. While the world may be becoming more polarized, most state actors are not beginning to stand with Al Qaeda for the sake of balancing the power of the US.<sup>132</sup> Al Qaeda is a threat to most nations, and few states view it in their best interest to side with this terrorist group. Hegemonic wars are wars of zero sum. If Al Qaeda had nothing to lose by attacking the United States, then it can be argued that they also had nothing to gain.<sup>133</sup> If Al Qaeda wins the war in Afghanistan, they will still not be a legitimate hegemonic contender.

Understanding that the stakes of the war in Afghanistan are not nearly as high as the stakes of the Cold War is important. The Bush Administration has painted a bleak picture, many times trying to insinuate that this war of ideas is just as important as the threats of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. During the Cold War, the world was

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<sup>131</sup> Gilpin, 591.

<sup>132</sup> It can be argued that the US War on Terror has marginalized the Middle East and Islam. However this is not the same as state-to-state polarization.

<sup>133</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. “Transatlantic Security Relations” The American University, School of International Service.

polarized between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In the era of Al Qaeda, there is no such polarization. Just because the US is experiencing difficulty achieving victory does not make terrorists a legitimate threat. World Order is not going to be won or lost in the mountains of Afghanistan. Because they are not a threat to US hegemony, attacking non-state actors is inconsequential in the grand scheme of maintaining hegemony.

### *THE WORTH OF AFGHANISTAN*

While it should be made absolutely clear that the war in Afghanistan in and of itself will not affect the hegemony of the United States, it is not correct to say that the war in Afghanistan does not matter to US hegemony. There are multiple ways in which this conflict is affecting US hegemony. The first is that it has proven to be a drain on US assets, weakening the perception of the US military abroad. The second is that through an unclear, and not altogether friendly policy towards NATO, the United States has undermined the necessity of the organization—an organization that they need very much.

The less important of these two facts is that the war in Afghanistan has exposed the shortcomings of the US military, and has caused a drain of US assets. Before the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States was highly regarded as the most militarily credible nation on the globe.<sup>134</sup> The capabilities of the US remain impressive. However, having the right capabilities for the job is important. All the nuclear submarines in the world will not help the US win in a situation of urban warfare.<sup>135</sup> The United States is not good at nation building, and has not proven to be successful at combating asymmetric warfare because there is a definite lack of one specific target.

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<sup>134</sup> After the War on Terror, this perception will most likely not change.

<sup>135</sup> Clearly this is true, as the United States currently owns all the nuclear submarines in the world.

Many realists argue that warfare causes militaries to evolve and progress, which is true. For the sake of Afghanistan, however, the US is too late in this evolution. While the ability to nation build and fight urban warfare may be minor competencies missing from the cannon of the US military, it does prove that the US military cannot do everything as efficiently as they would have liked to believe on September 12, 2001.

The second problem with the war in Afghanistan (and also the war in Iraq) is that it is creating a drain on US military assets. In troop strength especially, the War on Terror is causing a strain on the US military. One commander, who wishes to remain anonymous, referred to the War on Terror as a, “Gaping chest wound, with assets bleeding from the United States to the tune of millions of dollars a week. This hemorrhaging of capabilities needs to be stopped if the US is to maintain their role as the military leader of the world.”<sup>136</sup> This sentiment is true. Technologies that the United States possesses are not being decreased or undermined by the war on terror, but the belief that the US military has no limitations is certainly untrue. Bush’s strategy of being able to be forward acting in 4 regions, engaged in two conflicts and concentrated in one may have been too ambitious.<sup>137</sup> While Rumsfeld and Bush may have perceived the abilities of the US military to be limitless in 2001, even the most militarily preponderant hegemon still have bounds that must be recognized and respected if the hegemon wants to continue to enjoy this status.

While military losses can be recuperated and forces can, and most likely will, be rebuilt after the war in Afghanistan, relationships that were damaged can never be fully repaired. For this reason, it is imperative that the United States begins to repair the most

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<sup>136</sup> Interview, US Commander, Brussels Belgium. September 2006.

<sup>137</sup> United States Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, September 30, 2001. Accessed from: <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/qdr2001.pdf> (April 1, 2008.)

likely threat to their hegemony-- European indifference towards NATO.

### *THE IMPORTANCE OF EUROPE*

The United States does not need to worry about the EU rising to challenge their hegemony as it stands now. Like Al Qaeda, Europe is not a state. Europeans still attempt to regionally balance power. Wohlforth points out that while Europe is far more unified than in the days following World War II, they are not actually unified.<sup>138</sup> A unified Europe would mean that the French would take no issue assimilating their military with the military of Britain, while the whole force itself was commanded by a German, for example. This sounds ridiculous to many because this type of European cooperation is still many decades away, if it ever happens at all.

Europe, while not yet a hegemonic challenger, should still be considered very important to the future of the United States. The way that George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld crafted policy towards NATO after September 11<sup>th</sup>, marginalized the contributions of the Europeans and relegated them to the sidelines. Treating the Europeans as the tag-along little brother of the United States was insulting and belittling for a region that was attempting to take its first steps towards true structures of cooperative defense. Proving that they did not need the military backing of NATO may have seemed logical to the Bush Administration; however, it was not a sound strategic decision for the long-term of US power politics.

Europe is currently experiencing economic growth.<sup>139</sup> This growth coupled with

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<sup>138</sup> Wohlforth, 38.

<sup>139</sup> Gilpin's first contribution to hegemonic war.

the fact that the Bush Administration's general disregard for the long standing transatlantic relationship may mean that in the future, Europe will begin to stray from the functions of the Alliance. If the economy of Europe grows, eventually, so will the military structures. The United States does not want this military to grow outside of structures recommended by the US. Once the European's use for NATO is gone, so will be their desire to bandwagon within the structures of US hegemony.

### *THE FORGOTTEN IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL HEGEMONY*

The United States does not need the military structures of NATO. Donald Rumsfeld was correct in his appraisal that the Alliance can give the US no capabilities that they did not already possess themselves. What the Bush Administration did not realize about the Alliance is that it offers the United States so much more than military capabilities.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, from a realist perspective, is the only legitimate way for the United States to be justifiably involved in the politics of Europe. According to Lloyd Gruber, the United States would attempt to be involved in Europe, despite the establishment of NATO or not. This official connection between the US and Europe gives the US the ability to assert itself in the region and play the regional hegemon without its motives being questioned. Through NATO, the US enjoys use of bases, ports and airspace that Posen describes as critical to the maintenance of one's hegemony.

Some question the relevance of NATO in today's world. With the war in Afghanistan not going as well as some may have hoped, the relationship between the US

and European allies has been strained. Future failure in NATO could mean that the Europeans may begin to seek their own structures for military protection. If there is no convenience to belonging to NATO any longer, NATO will cease to exist.<sup>140</sup>

### *IMPLICATIONS OF NATO FAILURE IN AFGHANISTAN*

For the mission in Afghanistan to fail would be terminal for the Alliance. The entire Alliance was established under the idea of mutual protection. If the Alliance fails to protect its members, and suffers a loss in Afghanistan, it will lose legitimacy in the eyes of these members—many of which are questioning the Alliance anyway.<sup>141</sup> Why would any state remain in a collective security alliance that can't provide collective security? Considering their desire to expand their ESDP, create a rapid reaction force and establish military legitimacy, the EU NATO members merely need a real reason to disaffiliate from the Alliance.<sup>142</sup> The United States, for their own sake of regional control, needs to ensure that success occurs in Afghanistan relatively quickly so that the allies are reminded that NATO has been, can be and will be effective when conducting missions.

A true break from NATO is not completely realistic. Waltz points out that states still seek membership in NATO. This is true testimony to the perceived power of the United States.<sup>143</sup> At the Bucharest Summit this year, membership was extended to two more states and the Alliance discussed important aspects of missile defense for the European continent. This is to the benefit of the United States in that they are able to expand their regional hegemony. The Europeans still appreciate NATO because, after all,

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<sup>140</sup> Mearsheimer, "A Realist Reply," 91.

<sup>141</sup> German and Belgian governments especially have been outspoken against the war in Afghanistan and nationally these wars have been unpopular in the eyes of citizens.

<sup>142</sup> This is not to say that it wouldn't be difficult for the Europeans to act without NATO.

<sup>143</sup> Waltz, "Theory of International Politics."



the United States is still a preponderant force. The threat that the United States will come to the aid of any country attacked within its structures has certainly proven to be a deterrent in the past.<sup>144</sup>

Failure in Afghanistan would certainly undermine the credibility of the Alliance, and while it is not truly realistic that there would be a large attrition from NATO if they surrendered in Afghanistan, it is not unrealistic to believe that this failure is exactly what Europeans are looking for to truly jumpstart their own programs. Logically, once these programs are started, dependence on NATO, and therefore the United States will decrease substantially. While NATO will feasibly remain in tact, the threat that NATO could become a hollow shell should not be appetizing to the United States. If NATO is hollow, Europeans no longer have a forum for bandwagoning with the United States.

#### *KEEPING EUROPE DOWN, AND THE UNITED STATES IN*

The blatant disregard that the Bush administration showed in the days following 9/11, was appalling. While Mearsheimer argues that states will break with collective security organizations as soon as they are no longer beneficial, the few gains achieved by neglecting the alliance were not worth the long-term threat that a hurt and humiliated Europe poses to the United States. Pursuing strategies of balancing power against the United States will only, in the long term, hurt the United States. Europe has been a region of cooperation and bandwagoning that the United States has constantly enjoyed since its hegemonic rise in the late 1940s. Encouraging this bandwagoning was easy for the US during the Cold War. As paradigms shift, motivating states to bandwagon will cost more

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<sup>144</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. "Transatlantic Security Relations" The American University, School of International Service.

for the US. The benefits of this strategy towards Europe will far outweigh the cost of minor concessions in the long term.

As Lord Ismay stated numerous times, the purpose of NATO during the Cold War was essentially to “Keep the Germans down, the US in and the Soviets out.” Clearly, this idea is no longer applicable. A more apt saying should be that the purpose of NATO is currently to “Keep the Europeans down, the US in and ESDP controlled.” The legitimacy of an ESDP completely independent of NATO structures is the biggest threat to the United States for the foreseeable future. To be able to avoid an independent ESDP, the United States is going to have to start respecting the abilities of the Europeans. Providing concessions to Europeans would propel the Alliance into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and reflect the changing world. Many in the United States could argue that these concessions would not be worth the cost. However, and when compared to European military autonomy, they seem minor. The US does not want the Europeans to seek autonomy when it comes to defense matters. Once the Europeans no longer need the US for security, it will only be a matter of time until the US is ousted from the region completely.

Moving forward, there has been much discussion on what the United States can or should do to entice the Europeans back into trusting the Alliance. First and foremost, the United States must respect the capabilities that the Europeans do possess instead of being upset about the capabilities that they do not. The United States must realize that the European nations possess excellent abilities to do peacekeeping missions, to implement nation building programs and to stabilize regions.<sup>145</sup> The worth of the Europeans in these

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<sup>145</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. “Transatlantic Security Relations” The American University, School of International Service.

fields could be used to the United States' benefit, especially in places like Afghanistan where these types of capabilities are needed.<sup>146</sup>

Secondly, the United States can no longer monopolize the structures of the Alliance.<sup>147</sup> Thought has been given to allowing the head of SHAPE to be a European, or allowing Europeans increased leadership within the Alliance.<sup>148</sup> This will not reduce the capabilities of the United States and therefore cannot threaten US hegemony. As long as Europeans exercise leadership within an American system, the US has nothing to worry about. Furthermore, as NATO is not supragovernmental, the United States cannot be made to pursue any interests that are not their own if European leadership requests it of them. As NATO is based on consensus voting, the US always maintains the ability to say, "No." Giving Europeans greater control, however, would allow the US to pay respect to the growing institutions of Europe. If the United States plays a part in the growth of European institutions, chances are that these institutions will be crafted to work within the structures of NATO. The US has been an avid supporter of ESDP as long as the ESDP provides "no unnecessary duplication" of NATO assets. As long as there is no duplication, NATO and therefore the US will remain a viable power in the region. If the EU gives up on NATO there will be no chance of the establishment of a US friendly ESDP, and the status of the US in the region will slowly, but surely, diminish. At first glance, creating a stronger competing military force may seem counter-intuitive to realist thought. It should be made clear, however, that cooperation/interdependence and

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<sup>146</sup> Jones, James L., "Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action." January 2008. The Atlantic Council.

<sup>147</sup> Through giving concessions to the Europeans within the Alliance, the United States is not actually losing anything. As stated before, all members within the alliance will still pursue what is in their best interest. Therefore, who is in high positions within the Alliance should not actually matter.

<sup>148</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. "Transatlantic Security Relations" The American University, School of International Service.

integration are two different things.

What states must realize about NATO is that it is an organization of interdependence, not integration. Waltz makes this type of argument in *The Theory of International Politics*. European forces within NATO remain autonomous from US forces. The allies depend on one another for things that they can trust the other to provide.<sup>149</sup> Waltz argues that once states believe that they will be denied these things later, they will no longer depend upon them. This is what is happening now. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, both legitimacy from the reluctant Europeans and capabilities from the overbearing US have been denied to the other and because of this NATO has struggled.<sup>150</sup> The US projects that they are interdependent with the Europeans, even though they are definitely not. While the Europeans are hurt more by this than the United States could ever be, based on military capabilities, it would not hurt the United States to be more trusting with their European allies.<sup>151</sup> A strengthened European contingent operating within the structure of the US system (NATO) does not hurt, but helps the US.<sup>152</sup> For both Europeans and Americans to be able to gain from the Alliance in the future, in the same way they did during the Cold War, trust is necessary.

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<sup>149</sup> For the US this is legitimacy to missions, for the Europeans this is military capabilities.

<sup>150</sup> Townsend, James. The Atlantic Council, in class lectures. "Transatlantic Security Relations" The American University, School of International Service.

<sup>151</sup> Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," 16.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

A major flaw in the Bush administration was that they only focused on military preponderance and not relationships to extend the relative power of the United States. These relationships are crucial to continuing US hegemony, as recognized by realists such as Mearsheimer and Waltz. The war in Afghanistan has exacerbated these strained relationships, and for continuing US hegemony, these relationships need to be mended. Three recommendations must be given to the successor of George W. Bush to ensure that they do not make these same strategic mistakes. These recommendations are that it is unlikely that the United States will fail in Afghanistan, but it is likely that the allies may pull out; that the US needs to recognize the importance of Europe and regional hegemony; and that the EU is a growing region that the US needs to keep in check for the future sake of their hegemony.

The first recommendation is that it is unlikely that the US will fail in Afghanistan. The US needs to realize, however, that the allies do not enjoy military preponderance and there is a good chance that in the very near future, the gains they receive by fighting the war will be outweighed by the costs of the war. As the allies are already becoming frustrated with the situation in Afghanistan, the United States needs to act quickly and decisively in Afghanistan and help NATO secure a victory in the region as soon as possible.

The second recommendation is that the US needs to repair its ties with NATO. While the Bush administration only recognized the realist principle of military preponderance, they have completely neglected the ability of relationships under the theory of realism to serve just as great a purpose of self-gain. The structures of NATO

keep the United States legitimately tied to European security. It is not the institution itself that grants this legitimacy, it is the relative gains that all parties involved that creates this legitimacy. This allows the US to enjoy status as a regional hegemon. Once NATO becomes defunct, so will become the US's claims to regional hegemony.

Finally, the third recommendation is that Europe is a growing region, and their strategic importance to the United States must be recognized before it is too late. It is in the best interest of the US to encourage the Europeans to bandwagon along with the military preponderance of the United States. If Europeans break with NATO, and therefore the United States before the US can have a definitive say in the structures of the forming ESDP, it will be a strategic loss that could lead to hegemonic challenge many years down the road. Fixing this problem before it arises should be a great priority to the United States.

## **CONCLUSION**

Under theories of realism, states pursue their own interests despite the consequences that their actions have on other world actors. Because the world is anarchic, there is no government of governments to ensure equality and because of the disparity in power between states, stronger states will take advantage of the weaker states. While it may not be apparent at first, many realists advocate using alliances to further individual state gain. The United States did just that and used the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to help balance the power of the Soviet Union during the years of the Cold War. A by-product of this balancing of power was that Europeans began to count on the United States to provide security to the continent.

After the conclusion of the Cold War, NATO, while victorious, had to find ways to reinvent itself to remain pertinent in an ever-changing world. This was in the best interests of both Americans and Europeans. Through the establishment of the Partnership for Peace program and the Balkan Wars, NATO achieved legitimacy once again. When these missions were completed, NATO, once again, had to seek purpose. September 11<sup>th</sup> presented itself to the Alliance as an opportunity to do so.

Unfortunately, the Alliance did not take advantage of this opportunity and because of power balancing politics the Alliance became confused and somewhat dysfunctional. The Europeans were seeking to begin to balance the power of the US, while the US was still hoping that the Europeans would bandwagon with their power with few incentives.

The mission in Afghanistan has yet to be successful, and many are starting to

doubt the Alliance's ability to put power balancing behind them to complete the mission successfully. If the war is not met with victory, this could prove to be detrimental to the hegemony of the United States because there is a good potential that Europe will seek alternate routes to security and protection—routes that do not include the United States. Hanging onto regional hegemony in Europe should become a priority of the US government and concessions should be made to Europeans through NATO to ensure future US participation in the shaping of EU military policies.

Moving forward, the United States needs to recognize the importance of Europe as a region in which the United States can exercise regional hegemony, and plan their strategy accordingly. The administration that enters the White House after George Bush will need to be especially careful in their dealings with NATO and Europeans because continuing relationships with Europeans through NATO is in the best interest of the United States.

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