

NATO must regain influence in Europe

For the past 50 years NATO has served as an alliance. The primary aim of this alliance between the United States and the states of Western Europe has been to both contain Soviet expansion and to balance it: balance being achieved by adding the United States' immense military power to the modest power of the Western European states. Membership in NATO has changed little since its creation, and for decades the arrangement has worked well — so well that the USSR collapsed.

Obviously, victory over what Reagan called "the evil empire" is grounds for celebration. After years of murdering its own citizens and menacing much of the globe, the Soviet totalitarians in Russia and Eastern Europe are out of power and fledgling democratic republics are replacing them. A few years back, Francis Fukuyama in his text, *The End of History*, went so far as to say that the ideas of representative government and capitalism have vanquished all other notions of political economy. According to Fukuyama, all states would become democratic republics of some sort and this might well usher in an era of peace and cooperation.

In retrospect, Fukuyama's speculations look grossly overblown. One might even claim that the victory of the United States over the Soviets was Pyrrhic, a victory gained at ruinous loss. For in the days of the Cold War, excepting the Cuban Missile Crisis, the world was a relatively stable place. The United States knew who its enemies were and had a feel for just what they might or might not do. Now, the bipolar world is a weird blend of unipolarity and multipolarity. While the United States is the mightiest power on the globe, there are both new states (China and India) and old powers (Russia and Germany) who possess a great deal of muscle and could wreak all sorts of havoc if they pleased. And that says nothing of the possibility of war breaking out between the smaller European and Mediterranean states. For years the nations of the former Yugoslavia slaughtered each other. Greece and Turkey have been rattling swords over Cyprus. And Poland cannot be particularly comfortable with the reunification of Germany.

That said, the United States need not long for the Halcyon days of the Cold War. Rather, it needs to rethink its major foreign policy apparatus: NATO. First, the United States needs to rework the mission of NATO. The Soviet superpower is gone, now what?

Clearly, Russia is still a very strong state. Despite its economic woes and the partial collapse of its conventional military forces, Russia can still project its power. It's foolish to imagine that Boris will necessarily be succeeded by someone. Though this author doubts that Russia will do so with Yeltsin in power, Boris cannot stay forever. His health is shaky and there are potential successors who dream of regaining territories lost with the dissolution of the USSR.

NATO needs to continue to keep an eye on Russia. But the West cannot treat Russia as a hostile state. The last thing the United States or Europe wants is for Russia to feel isolated and ally with China. Clinton was wise to sign a friendship treaty with Russia this past

March. The treaty offers nothing concrete to Russia but at the same time sends word to the Kremlin that cooperation is possible.

Next, NATO needs to partially re-tool itself to become a peace keeping force in Europe. The United Nations just cannot do the job. Only NATO was able to stop the blood shed in the former Yugoslavia. Only NATO can prevent Turkey and Greece and other European rivals from slugging it out. A Europe at peace is in the interest of the majority of the states that compose NATO. Provided NATO keeps a large rapid deployment force in the European theater, one that can act quickly with minimum casualties to its troops and minimal costs, the member states of NATO will likely support actions which stem or quash eruptions of violence.

To bring peace to the whole of the European continent, NATO needs to

make friends with the states of the former Warsaw Pact. Recently the Clinton administration has seen fit to push NATO to offer membership to

three former Soviet satellite states, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, beginning in 1999. This is a wise maneuver, for it offers the prize of NATO membership to former communist states which create democratic capitalist institutions. As long as NATO absorbs new members, who show themselves to be committed to NATO's values and do so at a modest pace, NATO won't become a Tower of Babel incapable of concerted military action, like the United Nations.

The United States ought to avoid the extreme measures proffered by some pundits. While Peter Rodman, editor of the *National Interest*, wants NATO to offer membership to all former Soviet states including Russia, the late Francois Mitterand thought that NATO ought to dissolve itself, being replaced by a fighting force drawn only from European states. Steering the middle course, the United States should work to keep NATO as the primary military force in Western Europe. As such it serves U.S. interest by keeping a forward presence against Russia and the rest of central Asia. NATO can also serve well as a forum for states to address shared security concerns. With her awesome military forces, the U.S. offers to European states the muscle they presently lack and would need to buy were they to try to police themselves.

Finally, a U.S. led NATO counteracts the growing tendency of regionalism. In a nut, regionalism is the integration of some geographically contiguous states into de facto confederacies. Agreements such as the North American Free Trade Alliance and European Monetary Union (to say nothing of European Union) are manifestations of and a further spur to the splitting up of the globe into a few large confederacies of states which presumably will compete with one another economically if not militarily. Keeping the U.S. and Europe's security measures merged keeps America and Europe engaged and even friendly.

Here's to the end of the Cold War and the dawn of *novas ordo seclorum*. With a slightly re-tooled and U.S.-led NATO, both America, Europe, and even Russia can enjoy a new age of peaceful cooperation and the end of large scale armed conflict.

Kevin Kosar Fleeing the Cattle Rush

Letter Policy

The WSN reserves the right to edit any and all submissions for style, grammar, accuracy and/or space, and the right not to print submissions deemed libelous, in poor taste or not suited for publication in this newspaper. The opinions expressed by opinion writers and letter writers are not necessarily those of *The WSN*, and our publication of those views is not an endorsement of them. Comments, suggestions and complaints about the opinions expressed by the paper's editorials should be directed to the editor in chief.