

Summary: One does not have to look far to see the threats currently facing the Euroatlantic community, particularly those directly affecting Europe's own security. Given the volatility and dynamism of the spectrum of threats, understanding their depth and variety is critical for transatlantic partners. It is clear that overlapping values, interests, and desired outcomes between the United States, the EU, and NATO are numerous. The need for a strategic dialogue with one another and their respective publics will remain critical. This policy brief offers seven suggestions for how to strengthen transatlantic security and defense cooperation.

United in a Changing World: How to Strengthen Transatlantic Security and Defense Cooperation

by Steven Keil and Bruno L  t  

Introduction

The security challenges currently facing the transatlantic partners are numerous and complex. Emerging threats, diverging interests, geopolitical competition, and the reemergence of 20th century power politics all represent formidable policy dilemmas for the Euroatlantic community. As U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter commented during his nomination hearing before the U.S. Senate on February 4, 2015, "I think we are in a time where the number and severity of the risks is not something I've seen before in my life."¹ In Europe, numerous leaders have echoed these sentiments, also commenting on the novelty of the threats. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said a few months later that, "we are facing new threats, new challenges, coming both from the east and from the south."²

Given the volatility and dynamism of the spectrum of threats, understanding their depth and variety is critical for transatlantic partners. Beyond illuminating these chal-

lenges, even more critical is building consensus to implement policy to tackle these challenges. As EU High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini stated in early 2015 when referring to EU-U.S. cooperation, "the unity of our action, the unity of our sharing information and views and messages and narratives is a large part of our strength."³ In March, EU Council President Donald Tusk reinforced this, stating that the need for unity in tackling challenges is "maybe greater than ever before."⁴

A Spectrum of Threats Facing Transatlantic Security and Defense

One does not have to look far to see the threats currently facing the Euroatlantic community, particularly those directly affecting Europe's own security. A large number of the conflicts consuming international attention are only a short flight away from Brussels.

In Europe's east, Russia continues to walk the line between open conflict

1 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/04/defense-nominee-will-have-an-easy-path-to-a-difficult-job/>

2 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/26/remarks-president-obama-and-nato-secretary-general-jens-stoltenberg-aft>

3 <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/01/236180.htm>

4 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/09/remarks-president-obama-and-european-council-president-donald-tusk-bilat>

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and covert destabilization of the Donbas. After the annexation of Crimea, transatlantic leaders stepped up to confront the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which has returned power politics to the region. Partners implemented direct sanctions and bolstered regional allies with tools such as the European Reassurance Initiative, which provides a rotational force presence in newer European NATO members.⁵ Russia's actions in Ukraine have also demonstrated a determined indifference to long-standing agreements with Euroatlantic partners on state sovereignty and the inviolability of borders. Yet Russia's hybrid warfare, which has blended conventional and unconventional tactics, has presented an entirely new challenge for the EU, United States, and NATO. Russia's actions have certainly elicited a response from transatlantic partners, although divisions between EU member states' interest in the post-Soviet space have made a consensus in European capitals regarding the direct intent and impact of Russia's actions more difficult.

The challenges posed by Russia's hybrid warfare tactics must be addressed by transatlantic partners. It seems this will be a continued form of conflict in the 21st century, particularly for the region. Using properly measured responses to these tactics in the future will be critical, and this must also recognize the limitations of asymmetric tactics (e.g. the use of non-military tools to confront military aggression). Meeting non-conventional threats should be a focus of planning efforts by NATO, the EU, and the United States. It will be essential to determine concrete thresholds and deter action against EU and NATO member countries by would-be aggressors.

To Europe's south, a wave of violent extremism continues to engulf the Levant, with groups loyal to the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) now reaching into North and sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, transatlantic partners have been a key component of the response. In Iraq, the United States and European partners (France, the U.K., the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark) have contributed with direct airstrikes to push back gains previously solidified by ISIS. Germany has also provided arms for the Peshmerga and trained Kurdish forces. In addition, the U.K., Spain, Portugal, and Italy have contributed to training efforts, and many other European nations have given arms and monetary assistance. Beyond the conflict itself, many challenges and threats have been exported,

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/03/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-and-other-us-efforts-support>

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particularly to Europe. Destabilization of the region has caused a flood of refugee-seeking migrants to take significant risks to reach Europe. Yet the ideology and identity of the conflict has also drawn a high-level of fighters from Western Europe to the conflict zone, an estimated 4,000 according to a report released in late-January of 2015 by the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence.⁶ Both refugees and fighters pose enormous policy challenges for Europe.

But the challenges facing transatlantic partners go beyond Europe's neighborhood. Specifically, the policy implications of China's actions in the fields of cyber security, regional security issues, and economics are enormous for both Europe and the United States. At the launch of GMF's 2014 *Transatlantic Trends* report, then EU HR/VP-elect Mogherini underscored the need to turn transatlantic attention toward China's rise by commenting, "I have always been convinced that we should together pivot to Asia, the United States and the EU... it is our joint interest and it would be a strategically powerful move."⁷ However, the impact of China's increasingly assertive foreign policy, as seen in deployments of mobile artillery in disputed territories, makes it difficult to move beyond broad conversations to specific strategies for the transatlantic partners. And while cooperation in fields such as the environment have provided a boost for relations, it has been more bilateral than multilateral and there seems to be little room for a comprehensive approach for the Euroatlantic community.

From Russia to ISIS to Asia, the differentiated and multi-faceted security and defense challenges cast a long shadow and are causing serious soul-searching in Europe and the transatlantic community. A more active leadership role by countries like Germany, a tendency for the United States to yield leadership to strong European partners, and reinvigo-

⁶ <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

⁷ <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/09/25/incoming-eu-foreign-policy-chief-sees-benefits-of-pivoting-to-asia>

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rated conversations around NATO's traditional role have shifted a relatively consistent, even if unstable, status-quo over past decades. But these shifts are causing real changes in tenor and topics of European politics and transatlantic dynamics. Evidence of these shifts in Europe, particularly in Germany, can be seen by senior political leadership dusting off conversations about a "European army." And although Berlin has been traditionally hesitant to comment on the matter, Germany's defense minister, Ursula von der Leyen, commented in a radio interview in March 2015 that Europe's "interweaving of armies, with the perspective of one day having a European Army, is, in my opinion, the future."⁸ Certainly, current challenges are encouraging new dialogue, but these conversations are not without complications. And dialogue has to lead to policy to be effective.

Diverging Threat Perceptions Feeds Transatlantic Division

Beyond the security and defense challenges themselves, decision-making processes, threat perceptions, interest prioritization, and institutional divisions among the transatlantic partners present the greatest concern for the future of transatlantic security and defense cooperation. Within Europe, the challenges to the south and east have exposed differences regarding internal threat perception. This internal division has created difficulties in understanding the direction and tenacity of policy prescriptions employed by Europe and Euroatlantic institutions. Moreover, as Europe takes on an increasingly significant leadership role, given the current U.S. administration's propensity to lean on strong partners, divisions in Europe may grow more apparent. Consequently, disagreement will not be

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⁸ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1141286a-c588-11e4-bd6b-00144feab7de.html#axzz3cJt3XPK>

so strongly centered on leadership in Washington, but between European capitals.

The response to Ukraine has been unified, but given diverging threat perceptions, it at times seems to represent a reluctant coalition more than a driven consensus. There is a clear difference between the way that the Baltics and the Central and Eastern European states see Russia's action and the perspective of those whose capitals are further from Moscow. However, some in Central Europe remain less than convinced of a need for a strong response against Russian action. This division was demonstrated by a poll released on June 10, 2015, by the Pew Research Center on European perception of Russia as a threat. Data revealed that 70 percent of Poles saw Russia a major threat, while in neighboring Germany just over half of that number (38 percent) thought the same.⁹ Competition between Russia and Euroatlantic partners is likely to continue for some time, and resisting division will remain a real challenge.

In response to ISIS, there has been a more overt role for the United States in its wielding of transatlantic leadership. Yet this too has exposed certain divisions among partners. Europe's contribution to the anti-ISIS transatlantic response is significant (particularly when compared with the harsh debates over Iraq in the 2000s). However, it also comes with marked differences of opinion on policy options. European partners have abstained from anti-ISIS operations in Syria. Consequently, the United States is working with regional actors to combat those ISIS elements. Turkey, a NATO member, has assumed a Bashar al-Assad-first policy in addressing the conflict, which directly clashes with that of other Euroatlantic partners. Nevertheless, Turkey is stepping up in other aspects, particularly in working with European capitals to stop the flow of migrants into the region. However, trends within Turkey create further questions on consensus for Euroatlantic partners, particularly in Europe.

After addressing all of the crises of the immediate neighborhood, the problem exists not in transatlantic unity or consensus, but with the prioritization of policy and transatlantic bandwidth to tackle challenges in Asia. Economically speaking, the need for Europe and the United States to increasingly engage with China and other Asian countries is clear. But China's human rights abuses and growing tendency to be forceful with neighbors in the South China

⁹ <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-Russia-Ukraine-Report-FINAL-June-10-2015.pdf>

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Sea have made the relationship between Brussels/Washington, DC and Beijing increasingly complex. The potential pitfalls of the economic need, political short-comings, and instability in the South China Sea means that transatlantic partners should be united in engaging the region to ensure the greatest potential for stability and benefit.

Strong leadership that drives to consensus will be critical, whether it is coming from Washington, Brussels, or Berlin. The anti-ISIS campaign demonstrates that U.S. leadership will continue to be an indispensable component to drive the transatlantic agenda forward. Paired with a lack of public support in the United States and Europe for intervention after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a lack of leadership could be devastating. Essentially, the greatest threat posed by the current challenges could be their propensity to highlight division and exacerbate difference, which could eventually lead to a loss of confidence in Euroatlantic and EU institutions. Moreover, the competition between geopolitical thinking and regional crises requires intentional strategies that are able to address both. Creating these capacities and reserving bandwidth will be essential.

A Lack of Burden-Sharing and Military Disinvestment Weakens Transatlantic Cooperation

Beyond identifying the threats and driving a consensus, transatlantic partners remain plagued by the lack of wide-spread capabilities, integration, and the all-too-often mentioned lack of defense spending in Europe. During NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's first visit to the Oval Office in his new role in May 2015, U.S. President Barack Obama remarked "...as the strongest alliance in the history of the world, we need to make sure that each member country is properly resourcing and committing to the NATO missions that have been set forth. That's the only way that we're going to maintain the kind of collective self-defense that has been the hallmark of peace and prosperity for many, many decades now."¹⁰ Arguments have been made by some NATO members that the 2 percent GDP spending requirement is archaic and does not adequately reflect individual country contexts. But the challenges experienced in conducting operations by European partners with a diminished U.S. role are indicative of legitimate capabilities problems. In Libya, European militaries ran short of precision munitions. French forces needed the United States to refuel its own aircraft in the Mali mission.

10 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/26/remarks-president-obama-and-nato-secretary-general-jens-stoltenberg-afte>

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And in the anti-ISIS campaign, the United States shoulders a significant amount of the burden, including a high-majority of airstrikes conducted and all the targeting. A lack of adequate burden-sharing and investment in security and defense could pose a real threat to core Euroatlantic and EU interests, particularly given the number of threats facing the partnership. Adapting to the changing regional and global landscape vis-à-vis defense and security investment is essential for partners to possess the capabilities needed to confront the challenges of today and tomorrow. In the conversations surrounding a "European army," EU Commission President Jean Claude Juncker recognized this need, stating in March 2015 that it would allow allies "...to react more credibly to the threat to peace in a member state or in a neighboring state."¹¹ While the diverging security interests of member states certainly raises the question of the credibility of a European army, significant investment in security and defense by European countries, also in the NATO context, would certainly boost Euroatlantic credibility in responding to threats.

Transatlantic Cooperation Needs to be More Forward-Looking, More United, and More Flexible

While the threats of today demand the focus of Euroatlantic partners, being positioned to confront the challenges of tomorrow will be critical for transatlantic security and defense. As the adage goes, generals and politicians always prepare to fight the last war, but the transatlantic partners cannot afford to do so. Threats will continue to evolve and so must Euroatlantic policy responses. In addressing sub-conventional tactics, it is clear that cyber, strategic communications, and other non-traditional means of conflict will take on an increased role. In Ukraine, Russia's efficient use of misinformation has often complicated the Euroatlantic community's ability to respond quickly. ISIS has utilized social networking and mass media to market terror and recruit fighters. Beyond the tactics themselves,

11 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/08/us-eu-defence-juncker-idUSKBNOM40KL20150308>

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the speed of decision-making and response by the EU, United States, and NATO is also critical. This was identified in the remaking of NATO's Response Force (NRF) at the Summit in Wales. The summit also created a "Very High Readiness Joint Task Force," a quickly deployable spearhead force.¹² The threats facing the Euroatlantic community are multi-faceted and truly complex. NATO's recent revision of the NRF is only one manifestation of the recognition of this. European and U.S. partners must respond by thinking proactively, acting concertedly, driving consensus, and maintaining flexibility.

Recommendations to Strengthen Transatlantic Security and Defense Cooperation

In less than a decade, global strategic trends have changed dramatically, and the dream of expansion of transatlantic security has been replaced by a general feeling of uncertainty. Moreover, the Euroatlantic countries seem to be increasingly struggling to address, individually and collectively, questions surrounding resources, capabilities, political willingness, and support of public opinion.

There is a real need to think more in operational terms. Europe and the United States should assess the shifts taking place in their strategic environment and undertake an audit of existing capabilities and capacities across all countries in the transatlantic partnership. The question of how Europe and the United States can address the 21st century challenges should also be turned on its head. What is it that unifies the transatlantic partners in the 21st century? Is it the face-off with Russia in Eastern Europe? Is it the struggle against ISIS in the Levant? Is it the containment of Chinese power in the South and East China Seas? While the answers to these questions remain murky, one thing is clear: the security challenges faced by the transatlantic partnership are more diverse in nature than before and span a larger geographical area than before. It is in

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this context that we identify seven recommendations to strengthen transatlantic security and defense cooperation.

Avoid the Pitfalls of Misperception

The United States and Europe are often too busy openly worrying about their minor differences and diverging opinions, instead of focusing on their similarities and the vast number of objectives, interests, and values that bind them. For instance, many at the Munich Security Conference 2015 may have walked away thinking that there was a significant rift between Europe (Germany in particular) and the United States in how to address Ukraine. However, in actuality, the gap is minimal. The working relationship between Brussels, Berlin, other EU capitals, and Washington is deep and significant; every day hundreds of thousands of e-mails are sent and phone calls are made across the North-Atlantic. And while differences over tactical issues may exist, the strategic aims are largely the same. The transatlantic partners will need to think more carefully of how to frame their conversations in order to avoid misperceptions. While nothing should impede the culture of open debate and transparency in our liberal democracies, both the EU and the United States also need to realize that in today's breaking news society, perceptions can quickly become reality. A transatlantic partnership that is seen as disagreeing too frequently might result in uncertainty among allies and show weakness toward challengers. Underscoring a public message of unity and resolving perceived differences, even more than is the case today, will encourage more confidence within the transatlantic family and show strength and resolve toward foes.

Develop a Clearer Picture on the Challenges that Unite Europe and the United States

To strengthen their partnership, Europe and the United States must be able to demonstrate what unites them in the 21st century. Within the transatlantic partnership, diverging perceptions on this question occur at two levels: first, among European nations' varied national interests, and secondly, between Europe's regional concerns and the United States' perceived global responsibilities. Bridging this gap inside the transatlantic partnership should be a priority. Indeed, the ability to distinguish long-term strategic issues from short-term crises will become increasingly compelling if Europe and the United States are to deal with common threats. The Ukraine-Russia conflict may have attracted the attention of the media and public opinion, but deeper analysis demands focus on underlying long-term trends. The future of transatlantic security and defense

¹² http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm

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cooperation cannot be determined solely by the prospect of tensions with Russia. Instead, much of the transatlantic security framework for decades to come will be shaped by the U.S. rebalance toward Asia, Europe's alleged strategic independence, and budget constraints. Moreover, the question of the geographical scope of NATO operations will remain paramount. In the long run, the United States will want NATO and its European member states to be able to operate beyond the European borders once again, and NATO members will need to define how they are willing to establish security and stability along a rim that extends at least from Eastern to Central Asia and from the Middle East to North Africa. Lastly, addressing the implications of the economic crisis and the general Euroatlantic sentiment of war fatigue will remain an unavoidable task if the United States and Europe are to engage in any future expeditionary foreign policy. Many of these questions have been around for a decade and still have no ready answers.

Europeans Need to Pledge to Increased Military Capabilities

For some time, the United States has provided Europe with those elements that converted disparate military forces into effective deterrence — the immediate response brigades, the reinforcements, the strategic enablers, the pre-positioned equipment, and both the command and control and intelligence and surveillance platforms. However, can and will the United States continue to do so at a time when there is increased commitment to the Asia-Pacific and needs to return forces to a disintegrating Middle East? In the long run, the transatlantic relationship has to change. The United States cannot indefinitely support the burden of reassurance in Europe or its periphery, nor pay 73 percent of the total of NATO defense budgets. It can neither be the sole source of many strategic enablers, nor spend nearly four times per soldier as the European average. The transatlantic partnership will need to adjust to a world where the

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Europeans will need the structures, capabilities, and political will to do hard power themselves. There is no doubt that the question of the European strategic responsibilities and autonomy remains central to the transatlantic relationship. Europeans can do, and should do, more to improve their military capabilities. The campaigns in Libya or Mali have shown the limits of European military power projection. Without U.S. air refueling support, air-to-ground missiles stocks, satellite imagery, or intelligence gathering, Europeans would not have been able to take a front seat role in these conflicts. Ukraine has also shown that hard power is still very much a factor to take into account in the future of European security architecture. Europeans have to modernize their military hardware, form more capability clusters, invest in Smart Defense and multinational enablers, pool and share, identify rapid response niche capabilities, use more off-the-shelf and commercial capability, streamline research and development efforts, and form new industrial partnerships to preserve their defense industrial and technology base. Often the issue here is not to spend more, but to spend more efficiently. At their next summit, EU leaders should therefore seriously consider launching a formal pledge to increase EU member states' military capabilities. This would strengthen a similar promise that was already made at the NATO Summit 2014 in Wales. It is not only a real necessity to preserve a fragile peace in Europe, but it would also send a strong signal to Washington and the world that Europe is still a credible power to be taken seriously.

Operationalize the EU-NATO Relationship

Today, NATO and the EU are in the same boat, whether in addressing hybrid threats from Russia, the assistance to Ukraine and the countries "in between," the Balkans, and the blowback from the Arab Spring. Their interests overlap, their policies are largely identical, and their instruments are complementary. But how can the relationship between NATO and the EU be operationalized in the same way that EU member states constantly chart their strategies and harmonize their actions? At the Ministerial Meeting in Antalya on May 14, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he and Mogherini have agreed to intensify NATO-EU cooperation. This is a welcome step forward, but the relationship needs to be deeper. There is a pressing need for staff-level mechanisms, daily information-sharing, and policy/activity coordination. As the Libya and Ukraine crises, as well as Kosovo and the Gulf of Aden, have shown, there is much that can be done at the informal or staff

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levels. Can NATO better support future EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions? Can the EU Battle-groups be of use to the NATO Readiness Action Plan? Can the European Defense Agency better integrate the EU's pooling and sharing efforts with NATO's Smart Defense? What can NATO and the EU do together to face the threat of hybrid warfare and propaganda? An EU increasingly preoccupied with defense and hard power issues will show more receptivity to cooperation with NATO. Similarly, since NATO now also needs to deal with non-military threats, a strong partnership with the EU would offer a variety of advantages. There is an opportunity to be seized here.

Deal with the Lack of Public Understanding of the Link Between Peace, Prosperity, and the Role of Armed Forces

Arguably, one of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars' most lasting consequences has been its devastation on U.S. and European public opinion regarding the use of force. The June 2015 poll by the Pew Research Center confirmed public support for military force to indeed be very thin. Fifty-eight percent of German respondents, 53 percent of the French, 51 percent of the Italian, and 44 percent of U.S. respondents said their country should not use military force to defend a NATO ally if attacked by Russia.¹³ Already in 2013, the German Marshall Funds' Transatlantic Trends showed that a majority of Americans and Europeans wanted all troops to withdraw from Afghanistan. The refusal of the British parliament to support military intervention in Syria was yet another illustration of the "crisis of confidence" that has been growing between governments and their populations. The growing war fatigue has complicated the task of convincing legislators and publics of the utility to continue investing money and capabilities in the armed forces, and hence has affected political willingness across the Atlantic to react firmly to the resurgence of global power politics and aggression. Moreover, the generational change of political leadership in the United States — or the fading of the Atlanticist policymaker — will have a dramatic impact on the way transatlantic security and defense cooperation is perceived in both Europe and the United States. European capitals and Washington must make a much stronger public case for defense and the link between armed forces and the interests, diplomatic objectives, and values of Allied societies. This cannot be achieved by talking about threats or inadequate defense spending and capability gaps alone. The EU and the United

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States need a better narrative about why armed forces matter to a public fatigued by individual military operations, or that believes that because major war is irrational, somehow it will not happen. Transatlantic societies need to be exposed to this debate through parliaments, the (social) media, NGOs, and the academic community.

Keep the EU and NATO Enlargement Policy a Backbone of the Transatlantic Security and Defense Architecture

The Ukraine crisis has been another example of the transatlantic partnership's dilemma with regard to both EU and NATO enlargement. In the current security situation, the open-door policy seems to many member states to be an impossible promise to keep, at least in the short to mid-term. Hence, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko declared in March 2015 that Kyiv had no immediate plans of joining NATO and would instead focus on implementing much-needed reforms. His words were echoed shortly after by U.S. President Barack Obama, who indicated that his current priorities with regard to Ukraine did not include the question of NATO membership. Both statements highlight an important discord with both countries' past policies. Ukraine had expressed its desire to integrate into NATO structures as early as 1992. In 2002, under the government of Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine signaled its aspirations for full NATO membership and the United States has traditionally been the country's staunch supporter in this endeavor. The problem today is that EU and NATO enlargement has become a geopolitical inconvenience, a project hiding behind a barrier of legal and technical criteria that need to be met by an aspirant country. It should not be this way. The open-door policy is a highly symbolic message that has encouraged many nations in the past to push for modernization and reform. Moreover, the EU's and NATO's open door promise should certainly not be rolled back because of certain member states' fear of antagonizing Russia. Placing enlargement at the heart of the transatlantic security and defense architecture would project Brussels' and Washington's resolve beyond their borders. It would also signal that Russia does not hold veto power over the Euroatlantic integration

¹³ <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-Russia-Ukraine-Report-FINAL-June-10-2015.pdf>

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policy. In the absence of immediate enlargement prospects, both the EU and NATO should regularly reemphasize that the door remains open. A chance to show their resolve to do so would be to invite Montenegro to join the Alliance — a decision that will normally be assessed by NATO member states by the end of 2015.

Underpin Transatlantic Security and Defense Cooperation with Economic Relations

To solidify transatlantic security and defense cooperation further, Europe and the United States must also align their interests on the economic front. Initiatives such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will play a major role. TTIP has the potential to redefine transatlantic cooperation in the economic, security, and political spheres. The agreement would provide the United States and the EU with a window of opportunity to advance core values that could help shape the international trading and security system in the 21st century. Consequently, it is critical for transatlantic security and defense officials to pay attention to the developments around TTIP, which might be an issue perhaps slightly outside of their comfort zone. According to a March 2013 report of the U.K. Centre for Economic Research, TTIP could bring significant economic gains as a whole for the EU (€119 billion a year) and United States (€95 billion a year). This means that if the 28 EU members simply were to keep their current average rate of defense spending — roughly 1.5 percent of GDP — TTIP could produce an extra \$2-2.5 billion annually for military capabilities. This would be a net plus for transatlantic burden sharing. In addition, an ambitious TTIP agreement would knock down the various legal and administrative obstacles to more balanced transatlantic defense industrial trade and technology partnerships, a sector which to date often falls under strict national protectionism. The future of the transatlantic economy has implications not only for global economic governance, but also for the close political and economic linkages that have been fundamental to international stability for the last six decades. If the European economy continues to lose ground, not only will Europe become more inward looking, but the EU will not have the resources or inclination to play a larger international role and to join the United States as a partner in dealing with some of the strategic challenges around the world. The United States, for its part, may well try to turn elsewhere, and with the likely rise of new global players such as China and India, over time, the U.S. reflex of turning first to Europe when seeking cooperation may fade.

Conclusion

Transatlantic partners are already doing a great deal. The transatlantic relationship is stronger than it often receives credit for being, particularly in security and defense cooperation. Yet in renewing the relationship, the capabilities debate will remain a critical component. As Europe continues to rethink its security and defense strategies, ensuring the efficiency and proficiency of its own capabilities is a critical and necessary endeavor.

Both Europe and the United States need strong partners in confronting many of the regional and global challenges of today. Therefore, it is the responsibility of U.S. and European leaders to carry the debate forward and spread the message to respective publics regarding the importance of the transatlantic relationship and why investment in transatlantic security and defense is essential. The relationship cannot be taken for granted. It is clear that overlapping values, interests, and desired outcomes between the United States, the EU, and NATO are numerous. The need for a strategic dialogue with one another and their respective publics will remain critical.

The views expressed in GMF publications and commentary are the views of the author alone.

About the Authors

Steven Keil is a program officer and Bruno Lété is a senior program officer in GMF's Foreign and Security Policy Program.

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