REVISTA D'AFERS INTERNACIONALS 49.
New Challenges for European Security.

Robert E. Hunter
Security in the Euro-Atlantic Area

*Robert E. Hunter

NATO begins the year 2000, ready to play its part in helping to create a "Europe whole and free." This is the possibility created by circumstance and by all the efforts made during the 1990s to adapt the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to new realities and to European security needs of the next century. But a Europe "whole and free" can become reality only if the lessons of the past century, the most tragic in history, are well learned; and only if each of the nations and peoples in the Atlantic Alliance is prepared to complete the work begun by NATO, other institutions, and a wide variety of thoughtful leaders, in and out of government, in the wake of the Cold War.

Following the Second World War, a number of far-sighted people on both sides of the Atlantic understood that Europe could not return to the politics of the past that had produced the First and Second World Wars; the result of that vision was creation of the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Communities, and other institutions, both within Europe and linking it to North America. At heart, they were all directed toward security, in the broadest sense of the term. For the next four decades, these institutions —and the nations and peoples belonging to them— stood together against challenges and threats, both from abroad and from within; in the process, they also created a period of unparalleled prosperity within Western Europe and solidified democratic rights and practices throughout the region. This was an achievement of historical proportions.

After the Berlin Wall opened in November 1989, followed by the collapse of almost all the communist regimes of Central Europe and then the Soviet Union itself, many people believed it was time for at least one of these institutions —NATO— also to be dismantled. It had served its essential purpose, well and truly, as its adversary, the Warsaw Pact, was consigned to the "dustbin of history." Some commentators even
argued that history had come to an end: that the ideological struggles that had been so prominent in Europe had, after centuries, finally come to an end.

But this was not to be. History is not so malleable; and the course of human development is not so certain that all concerns with security on the Continent could be consigned to the past. Within a limited period, it again became clear that there were still further tasks to be undertaken in order to ensure that Europe would not again face the uncertainties, instabilities, and other challenges that had given it such an unfortunate history, not least in the century just ending. Fortunately, we now know, the NATO Alliance was not dismantled in the first flush of understanding that the Cold War had been brought to a successful resolution (nor had the European Union, itself created for a security purpose, been dismantled, as it had developed positive political and economic reasons for being). Indeed, even in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, all the then 16 NATO allies had come to a common understanding: that it was far better for them to continue organizing their military defenses together—including even those countries that were not formally members of the Alliance’s integrated military structure—than to go their separate ways, as had traditionally happened throughout history to successful alliances once the task that had brought them together had been achieved. In the process, it was remarkable that two countries which had not been fully engaged militarily with the Alliance moved in that direction: Spain became a full member of the integrated military structure in 1999; and France rejoined NATO’s Military Committee and created the basis for perhaps, once again, becoming a formal member of the integrated structure. Thus, perhaps unique among history’s great military alliances, NATO continued, even in the absence of a compelling rationale for its existence.

That rationale was not long in coming. By the middle of the 1990s, it was clear that the future of European security required some institution to give definition, structure, and content to efforts to enable the societies in Europe to be proof against the reemergence of circumstances that could lead to renewed threats to comity on the Continent. Paraphrasing Voltaire, if NATO did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent it. And reinvent it all sixteen allies did.

During the 1990s, the allies developed four basic goals for the Alliance, each of which has been instrumental in defining its future.

First has been to confirm America’s engagement in Europe. Unlike what happened in 1919, and for a time after 1945, the United States this time did not depart from Europe, but made clear that it was on the Continent to stay—a true European power. Indeed, this now seems to be in America a settled historical question, deeply embedded in the American psyche and politics, and accepted by broad segments of popular opinion in both political parties. For virtually all European states, this has been welcome news, including—for most but not all members of the Alliance—the willingness of the United States to provide leadership at critical moments for common enterprises. Of course, for the United States
to be engaged strategically and militarily in Europe means preserving and extending the NATO Alliance; not only is this an alliance that works and that is effective; but it is also an alliance in which the U.S. continues to have a preponderance of influence.

In parallel with this classic role for NATO in anchoring the United States to European security, the Alliance has also renewed its goal of preserving the best of what it did during the Cold War, beyond the now-defunct tasks of containing communism and Soviet power. NATO also stands as one element of a broad pattern of associations, institutions, attitudes, and practices that have achieved something that rarely happens: the actual resolution of a major historic problem, in this case ensuring a peaceful and productive place for Germany in European society. There is, today, no "German problem;" the notion that Germany and one or more neighbors would again go to war is considered nonsense. But considerable effort has gone into ensuring that outcome in the future –thus the government of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl sought to "surround" united Germany with both NATO and the European Union, so that a strong and influential Federal Republic would be seen as acting within these institutions rather than as a completely independent entity.

At the same time, something else remarkable happened during the Cold War, which only became fully evident when the scaffolding of East-West confrontation was dismantled: that the 15 members of the European Union had managed, during their years of political, social, and economic development, to achieve a success that no other association of such different states and peoples had ever done; they have abolished war as an instrument of their relations with one another: they have created a "European Civil Space." While this Civil Space is by no means under challenge, preserving institutional arrangements –of which NATO is one– remains a valuable activity.

These goals for NATO are important; but they are essentially about the past or at least about ensuring that trials and troubles of the past do not reemerge. But NATO has undertaken new tasks, as well, beginning with a particular vocation in Central Europe. Along with other institutions (notably the EU), NATO is engaged in enabling these societies that for so long languished behind the Iron Curtain (some of which had not for many years or decades even been independent states) to take their full and rightful place within the West, as free, democratic states, with market economies, fully participating in Euro-Atlantic institutions and Western life. In the process, NATO seeks to create predictability, stability, and confidence among these states –not that of the communist and Soviet times, when stability and freedom were antithetical concepts, but that of societies developing according to their own democratic lights at home and confident that they will not again become the playthings of the great powers. In central Europe, NATO has sought no less than to abolish gray areas, buffer zones, spheres of influence and –potentially– even to move the Continent beyond the three-and-a-half century practice of the balance of power as has, in fact, been successfully done in Western Europe.
A final NATO goal is perhaps the most difficult. It is in recognition that, from today’s vantage point, only one country, the Russian Federation, seems capable in the foreseeable future of again upsetting general understandings about security in Europe. Early in the 1990s, therefore, Western leaders adopted a strategy of trying to help Russia succeed as a society —politically, economically, socially. This drew upon an historic lesson learned in regard to Germany. In 1919 and afterward, Germany was severely mistreated, and many historians believe that this helped to produce Adolf Hitler’s political appeal in Germany. After the Second World War, by contrast, the allied powers treated defeated Germany the opposite way—as a country to be rehabilitated, democratized, and brought into the community of nations—and this worked, perhaps beyond even the hopes of the era’s leaders. Thus Western leaders in this decade have sought to treat Russia in the second manner: a society to be supported at home and to be drawn out of its isolation, to play a full and honored place in European life, including a role in European security. Thus NATO assumed a purpose of helping to integrate Russia in the outside world, if indeed it were prepared to play by the same rules as other European states. In this way, it has been hoped, the reemergence of a "Russian problem" can be forestalled, not through renewed containment but rather through active engagement.

These are NATO’s goals for the period ahead; they are embraced by all 19 of the allies; and during recent years, the NATO allies have taken major steps to achieve them. Indeed, the allies have had the ambition of creating a form of security on the Continent that can, at least in some measure, benefit all European states —leaving aside the handful, like the Yugoslav Republic, that are not yet prepared to respect the rights of neighbors—while no state loses in security. Thus NATO has undertaken a number of basic structural and political changes, each designed to reinforce the others, and all needed to create an overall framework of European security, though to be complemented by the efforts of other institutions, such as the EU, the Western European Union (WEU), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In the popular imagination, NATO’s most important step has been to begin taking in new members from Central Europe —known popularly as enlargement or expansion. The first three countries to join as full allies —Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic—did so in March 1999. These were the most obvious candidates for NATO membership, in that, among the 12 declared Central European aspirants, they were judged to be the most ready. The criteria, explicit or implicit, included progress in democratization, development of market economies, reform of militaries, and renunciation of any claims against neighbors. Not coincidentally, two of the three (Poland and the Czech Republic) also border on Germany—with its ambition of being "surrounded" by NATO—and sit astride the axis between Western Europe and Russia.

But the decision by the NATO heads of states and government at the Madrid Summit in July 1997 to take in these three countries was complemented by a second step: the
allies’ recommitment to keep the door to NATO membership open to other countries—specifically, to any European country ready and willing to shoulder the responsibilities of NATO membership, as a military and political-military institution. This "open door" policy has yet to be tested; but it will be in 2001, the next time the 19 allied leaders have pledged to meet at the summit and, on that occasion, to review the progress of individual aspirants in meeting at least the declared requirements for membership.

As important as enlarging NATO is for the Alliance and for Central Europe states that want the best possible assurances that they will not have to repeat any of their national nightmares in an insecure Europe, other steps taken by the Alliance are just as important in building an overall framework. Most important is the so-called Partnership for Peace (PfP), created at the time of the January 1994 NATO summit. In addition to the allies, PfP embraces 24 countries from Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, including states of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. This remarkable institution has two basic purposes. The first is to act as a means for reforming and modernizing the militaries of countries that want to join NATO, so that, when parliaments seek to learn whether they are ready to undertake responsibilities as allies, the answer is likely to be "Yes." Even more important, however, is the second PfP purpose: to enable countries that do not join NATO, at least not at first, to take part in virtually all that the Alliance does—from adopting common NATO standards and training with NATO, to engaging in allied military exercises and even taking part in NATO’s military actions, such as the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and the Kosovo Force (KFOR). PfP has in fact been a great success, especially in helping to change the militaries of many member states and in developing democratic institutions, beginning with but not limited to the militaries themselves. And along with PfP is a new sister institution, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), a fledging forum for talking about common issues.

While the first four of NATO’s efforts—enlargement, open door, PfP, and EAPC—primarily benefit the security requirements of Central European states, NATO also has its goal of drawing Russia out of its seventy-plus-year self-imposed isolation. Without compromising the interests of the Central Europeans or others, NATO thus reached out to Russia and gained its agreement to a NATO-Russia Founding Act, which was signed at the Elysee Palace in May 1997. The Founding Act consists of two broad parts: one preserves for NATO its freedom of action; but the other looks to cooperation, consultation, and even common action between NATO and Russia. The latter operates through a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) which meets at NATO headquarters in Brussels, with the two sides’ acting as equals. While ensuring that Russia’s role within the NATO Alliance, itself, is limited to a "voice but not a veto," the PJC does hold open the prospect for substantial joint efforts, including in major security areas, such as preventing the further spread if nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.
There is even an aspiration –still a long way off, if it could ever be achieved– to create a "strategic partnership" between NATO and the Russian Federation.

Along with the Founding Act and creating the PJC, NATO also gained Russian participation in the Bosnia Stabilization Force, where 1400 Russian soldiers take part on the same basis as others, including those of NATO and the PfP countries. And Russia is also taking part in KFOR, in Kosovo.

In addition to the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the allies also recognized that Ukraine has a special place in European security. Given its location, history, and current circumstances, it is clear that Ukraine's success will be important in determining whether there can, indeed, be a new era of peace on the Continent. In recognition of Ukraine's special place, the allies thus negotiated a NATO-Ukraine Charter and created a NATO-Ukraine Commission. This effort is not as ambitious as the relationship with Russia; but its role is consequential in helping Ukraine take its place within the West and preserve its independence and sovereignty.

In reforming itself to meet the needs of the 21st century, NATO also took three further steps. The first was to change its basic military doctrine and to revise its military command structure, reducing the number of its military commands from 65 to 20, as befits a Europe that is no longer divided, and where the West no longer has to confront and contain a Soviet Union. In the process, NATO has developed added capacities for peacekeeping and peacemaking, as well as the ability to deploy forces farther afield, among other things making use of a new concept, the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters.

The second step was to create a so-called Mediterranean Dialogue, designed to recognize the increased importance to the allies of countries to the south and southeast. States joining initially were Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan; and activities have so far been largely limited to occasional discussions about generalized security issues, conducted by NATO with each member individually. This is not much of a relationship; but at least it reflects that some of the allies do perceive potential challenges emanating from the far shores of the Mediterranean, though more of a political and economic nature (including migration) than relating to military issues. Creation of the Dialogue also reflects the fact that, in the post-Cold War epoque, security interests, broadly-defined, vary among different members of the Atlantic Alliance. (Far more important has been the European Union's so-called Barcelona Process.)

Finally, the NATO allies have recognized the importance both of supporting European efforts to complete integration, focussed in the European Union, and of enabling European states to undertake a greater share of the burdens of defense in the transatlantic region. Western European Union actually antedates NATO; and, in recent years, the Europeans have been developing, largely based on WEU, a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), which in time is designed to be responsive to European
Union direction as part of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In 1996, therefore, NATO reached agreement with WEU that the ESDI would be created, but within NATO, not outside of and in direct competition with it. ESDI would be "separable but not separate" from NATO; this arrangement would, in effect, allow Europeans to "borrow the army" –or, more accurately– to make use of assets in NATO, such as officers and command structures (including CJTF), and equipment, including some provided by the United States. This arrangement would enable Europeans to act militarily on their own if they chose to do so, while at the same preserving the integrity and capacity of NATO and reducing the extent to which the Europeans would need to duplicate military capacities –anyway something that few if any European states are prepared to do at a time of budgetary stringency.

By 1995, NATO had clearly agreed on its four central goals for the future and had made major progress on its key steps to implement these goals. But in the meantime, Europe, including the region closest to Western Europe, was not in fact at peace. War was raging in Bosnia, without apparent end. Early on, all the major powers of Europe –including the United States and Russia– had determined that the Bosnia conflict was of relatively minor account; that, in any event, it would be contained and kept from escalating into a wider European war. Indeed, basic responsibility in Bosnia was ceded to the United Nations which, among other things, deployed a so-called UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), while NATO limited itself to keeping aircraft from the skies over Bosnia, blockading the coast (jointly with WEU) against embargoed arms supplies, and being ready to use air power in support of UN objectives. But the war continued, with substantial loss of life and little prospect for the success of diplomatic efforts to bring it to a halt.

It became clear, however, that the NATO allies could not turn aside from the Bosnia conflict. Not only was this producing the worst suffering, tragedy, and even atrocities in Europe since the end of the World War II, but it was eroding popular confidence that NATO could be a viable security institution for the future. Indeed, the more that NATO reinvented itself and developed both new purposes and the means to fulfill them, the more it found that the moral and political basis for its continued existence depended on its taking decisive action over Bosnia. Finally, in the summer of 1995, after the atrocities at Srebrenica, the allies agreed to use air power in defense of so-called UN-designated "safe areas" in Bosnia —after seven other occasions on which NATO had reached such agreement but had then failed to follow through. And, following a Bosnian Serb provocation, NATO engaged in a 20-day air campaign. Along with a Croat-Muslim ground offensive and engagement of British and French artillery, the Bosnia War was brought to an end, the Dayton Accords were reached, NATO deployed the Implementation Force (IFOR —now SFOR), and Bosnia gained its first chance to try building a peaceful future.
The NATO allies had not yet thoroughly learned the lessons of Bosnia, however, and they were fated to face even more difficult dilemmas in Kosovo, again forced upon them by Serbia and its president, Slobodan Milosevic. Kosovo was unlike Bosnia, however, in that it was not a sovereign state but a part of Serbia. At the same time, NATO had no mandate from the United Nations Security Council to act—something of significant importance to many of the NATO allies. Further, as in Bosnia, the Alliance itself was not in charge of diplomacy over Kosovo, but had to depend on diplomatic efforts of individual states or, in this case, the so-called Contact Group of the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia. Yet diplomacy failed, in part because it was not well-conceived and in part because it was episodic—the political will to deal effectively with Kosovo was lacking. Following atrocities in a place called Racak in January 1999, the Contact Group tried a last round of diplomacy at Rambouillet and Paris and, when that failed, NATO decided to undertake what was believed would be an air campaign lasting only a few days. Milosevic, however, had other plans and used the start of NATO bombing on March 24 to launch his own massive campaign of killing tens of thousands of Albanian Kosovars—in various leadership positions—and of driving hundreds of thousands of people over the borders of Albania and Macedonia.

After 78 days, NATO eventually prevailed with its air campaign—which, uniquely in the history of modern warfare, was achieved without a single allied combat fatality—but at a heavy cost to the Albanian Kosovars and substantial destruction of the Serbian economy. KFOR was deployed and the UN took over responsibilities for leading efforts to rebuild Kosovo. Thus, as 1999 drew to a close, NATO found itself deployed in two places in the former Yugoslavia and with heavy responsibilities for security in the Balkans, overall.

In 2000, NATO faces a number of key challenges. But they all fit within the framework of the renovated Alliance; all are part of making NATO’s new instruments and practices effective. But making them effective will be the test of its role in helping to create a Europe truly “whole and free.” Several issues stand out and, not surprisingly, most have been affected by the 1999 war over Kosovo. Indeed, overlapping the Washington NATO summit, that conflict played an important role in shaping NATO’s future, at least for the period immediately ahead.

To begin with, the allies have for some time been debating the extent of NATO’s reach, as it has moved beyond its old area of activity, generally assumed to be limited by the formal requirements of Article V of the Washington Treaty, the strategic guarantee of allied territories against external aggression. The United States has been most ambitious for NATO, including a desire to see it ready to project power into areas that could, at least notionally, encompass the Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, and possibly even beyond. While not countering directly U.S. pressures for increased power-projection capabilities, most of the European allies (plus Canada) have had a more restricted view of how far
the Alliance, itself, could become engaged militarily, although they did accept that so-called "coalitions of the willing" might choose to take military action in areas where threats could emerge to the interests of one or more Western states. At the Washington summit, the allies did agree on a somewhat permissive formulation: that the Alliance was about defense of "interests" and not just territory. But the Kosovo War effectively settled debate, at least for the time being. Given the difficulties of the conflict, not least to preserve cohesion within the Alliance in face of severe misgivings on the part of several allied states about both purposes and means, it now appears that NATO will be unlikely to agree on collective military action elsewhere beyond territories already embraced by some plausible definition of the term "Europe." While there are commitments to common defense in the event of attacks on allies –including the possibility of threats from terrorism or weapons of mass destruction– discretionary military action appears to be highly circumscribed.

In tandem, the war over Kosovo also strained the limits of forbearance among many allies in terms of requirements for international legal justification for taking military action. Early in the 1990s, post-Cold War NATO agreed that it would consider taking military action, on a case-by-case basis, in response to requests either by the OSCE or by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This the Alliance did in Bosnia, in response to various UNSC resolutions. But there was no such legal basis for acting over Kosovo, because of the threat of a Russian veto. Pressed to choose to act without a formal mandate or to tolerate Serbian atrocities, the allies elected to act, but with each of them determining for itself what legal basis was sufficient. Again, in view of the course of the conflict and lessons drawn from it, many of the allies could be expected to be highly reluctant again to accept NATO military action without some form of clear external legal mandate. This does create a problem for NATO's future, since the same dilemma –a possible veto by Russia or (perhaps) China of a UNSC resolution calling upon NATO to take military action– has not disappeared. Furthermore, it is also clear that standards of international life have progressed to the point, at least in Europe, where the 352-year old doctrine that gives preference to sovereign rights of states over either domestic human or group rights is increasingly under challenge. Thus both for NATO's future and for the cause of advancing the growing requirement that states show due respect for human rights within their boundaries, there is a pressing need for updating international law –whether through amendment of the U.N. Charter or some other means. This is not a trivial matter; and it requires a thoughtful, profound solution.

Kosovo also pointed to a continuing weakness inherent in the role that NATO has been asked to play in the post-Cold War world: the gap between its role as a military instrument and the role of diplomatic actors that may have need of that instrument. Thus NATO prosecuted the war in Kosovo; but as an institution it had no role in the diplomacy whose lack of success led to NATO's being called upon to engage in its
extended air campaign. Of course, NATO is not structured to be the active diplomatic agent of its members. Not only is the NATO Secretary General not a foreign minister, imbued with the necessary powers to negotiate on behalf of the 19 member nations, but also few if any of those nations would be prepared to cede that authority to him. Nevertheless, there needs to be far closer coordination between diplomacy and a potential military role for NATO, such as was lacking both in Bosnia, prior to the NATO air actions of the summer of 1995, and prior to its 1999 air campaign over Kosovo. This puts an special burden on the leading powers of the Alliance; but if NATO is to be used wisely and on behalf of the interests of all of its members, this diplomatic-military gap needs to be narrowed considerably.

NATO’s conduct of the Kosovo War underscored the need for another reform within the Alliance or, more particularly, within the militaries of most of its members. The United States bore most of the brunt of the fighting over Kosovo—the air campaign. A major part of this was because the allies—probably without exception, despite some differences in national rhetoric—wanted, as a major requirement of policy, to minimize allied casualties, in order to sustain popular support for military action over a cause that had a major humanitarian component but little of classic strategic importance. Indeed, there were no allied combat fatalities. But this objective of limiting allied casualties required placing great emphasis on high technology weaponry, where the United States has the lion’s share of that available to allied states. (Of course, if there had been a ground phase of the military campaign, most of the risks to allied combat forces would have been borne by the European allies). This has increased pressures by the United States for its allies to modernize their military forces, where only the United Kingdom is, in relative terms, keeping pace. At the Washington summit, the allies had agreed upon a so-called Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) designed to upgrade allied military forces, especially in their ability to be deployed at some distance, to be sustainable in combat, and to be as survivable as possible. The DCI is also designed to increase the capacity for allied forces to project power, including beyond Europe, in the event that the Alliance chose to do so. After Kosovo, at the very least it became clear that the allies would need to be better able to integrate their forces—the technical NATO term is to make forces "interoperable"; but whether they will actually do so, in the face of major budget constraints, is far from clear. This is a critical issue, if there is to be a viable defense industrial base, spread across the Alliance; and if the resulting forces can, indeed, preserve the critical integrated military structure, in both theory and practice.

By the same token, the relative disparity between the size of the U.S. and allied military roles in Kosovo has provided added impetus to European allies to increase their own capacity to deal with crises without necessarily having to rely upon the United States, or at least to rely so heavily. Thus the war helped to spur efforts to develop ESDI and its companion Common Foreign and Security Policy—a move underscored when
the NATO Secretary General, Spain’s Javier Solana, assumed the new EU post of “Mr. CFSP”, the individual charged with developing common efforts and effective institutions to give the EU a capacity for action in foreign policy and –through ESDI– in defense. This added significance of ESDI, including a desire by France to see it able to act without reliance upon NATO “assets,” has stirred new debate within the Alliance about the respective roles of institutions: NATO and Western European Union (or the EU, when it assumes WEU’s responsibilities for ESDI). It is important that this debate not be overblown, however. ESDI has value because it helps in the completion of the work of European integration, because it can give Europeans a greater latitude for determining what they will do in a crisis, and because it can help to shift the relative military burdens on the two sides of the Atlantic somewhat toward the Europeans as opposed to the Americans. There should be no American objection to any of this. At the same time, the Europeans should be cautious about claiming that ESDI can do more than it can, before it gains real capabilities: for that could simply mislead the U.S. into believing it can do less. Indeed, the Kosovo War dramatized that Europe is, if anything, even more dependent on a U.S. role on the Continent than had been true before in the post-Cold War period. In any event, it is unlikely that many –if any– of the European states will spend the money needed to create military capabilities truly separate from NATO; the only real risk is that resources will be shifted from increasing capabilities relevant to NATO, without at the same time providing much ability for ESDI to act on its own.

The resource question is proving to be important in another way, as well. What has happened in the former Yugoslavia in recent years has dramatized that the Alliance has a deep stake in the future of the Balkans—a region that has grown in importance in recent years, not just for its sake, as a test whether the European Civil Space can, in time, be extended here as well as elsewhere in Central Europe, but also because of Western interests farther East, beginning with Turkey and extending to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Persian Gulf and subcontinent (with real and potential risks from one or another form of weapons of mass destruction), the Caspian Sea with its potential for oil exports, and the Caucasus, North and South. Buttressing the Balkans is thus of considerable strategic importance, and doing so will require an extended Western commitment, reflected not just in the Stabilization and Kosovo Forces, but also in the need for significant resources for development in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as in efforts to stabilize and support neighboring states, including Albania and Macedonia, as the two regional countries potentially most vulnerable, and to work for a resolution, to the extent possible, of the triangular problems of Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. At the same time, added resources are needed to make Partnership for Peace even more effective, both to reinforce success and to deepen the engagement of Central European states in Western institutions, especially as they wait for full membership in NATO and the EU. Such employment of resources, public and private (including major roles

Fundació CIDOB, 2000
for Non-Governmental Organizations, or NGOs) is, of course, an excellent investment in the future of European security and development, in all dimensions, and it should gain the full support of allied states, while the EU also plays its proper role.

At the same time, the conduct and outcome of the Kosovo conflict has played an indirect role in shaping two central questions about NATO’s future: its relations with Central Europe and Russia. The allies have prosecuted efforts regarding both; and they have kept these dual interests, with their inherent tensions, reasonably in balance: engaging Central European states progressively in Euro-Atlantic institutions (including membership already for three of them), while also reaching out to Russia and engaging it as fully in Western security policy as is acceptable to both sides and does not somehow give Russia a veto over what NATO does with the Central Europeans.

Kosovo helped to reopen some of these matters, including the issue of the pace and direction of NATO expansion. For one thing, the Kosovo War demonstrated to allies that taking in new members might not be the "free good" that many of them had assumed it to be; but in fact it could entail real security obligations. Coupled with renewed questioning of the process of enlargement, there was added pressure from Russia. During the war, Moscow did eventually support allied demands made against Serbia’s Milosevic and, indeed, soon thereafter the war came to a halt. It was not surprising that Russia demanded a price for what it saw to be its cooperation with NATO; one element was to lecture NATO about again undertaking such a military operation and insisting that discussion and decision on any such action be brought within the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. Further, Russian politicians argued that efforts to create democracy at home, as well as at least a neutral attitude toward NATO, had been dealt a serious setback. Thus, the Russian argument went, NATO must forbear from further enlargement; most particularly, it should abandon any plans to include countries that had once been part of the Soviet Union —a tactic clearly directed against the Baltic states. Some allies—including the United States— strongly rejected this demand; others, however, are certainly tempted, given deep concerns about the future of Russia and belief that it could represent the only realistic potential threat to European comity for the foreseeable future, however remote even this possibility may be.

Intensified concern about Russia’s future could come into conflict with NATO’s declared intention to include Central European states fully within Euro-Atlantic institutions —and this is clearly a Russian objective. But the balance struck in NATO policy between providing confidence for Central European states about their future —no gray areas, buffer states, or spheres of influence— is still sound policy and, indeed, a fundamental commitment that is indispensable to NATO’s future and to hopes of creating a Europe whole and free. Thus it is important for the Alliance not to cede the Russian point, and not to cede that it has more than a "voice" —certainly not a "veto"— on NATO decisions regarding third countries. And the allies must have the political will to buttress this point.
As it stands even without the role of Russia, expansion will pose difficult choices for the allies. One is the general question whether the Alliance can still be effective if it is larger. What has so far happened with the three new allies provides insufficient experience to make a final judgment, although they did stand firm with the rest of the Alliance during the Kosovo War, and they did so even though that war started less than two weeks after they joined NATO and well before they had time to adjust to the new reality. An honest appraisal has to be that they passed this "baptism of (political) fire."

But even if NATO expansion goes forward in 2001, which countries will be selected? Slovenia is likely to be on every ally’s list, and Slovakia, with a new, democratic government, could be a serious contender; indeed, its domestic political failures had kept it off the list of the first entrants. Beyond consideration of these two countries, the allies clearly divide, with the Nordics’ favoring at least one Baltic state and southern allies’ pressing for Romania, Bulgaria, or both. But these decisions are not trivial; and how NATO makes them, as well as the selections, will have an important effect on the Alliance’s future.

Building NATO’s future as an alliance equal to the demands of European security in the new century has two further important elements. The first is not directly about NATO, but about the EU. Strangely, these two institutions are both based in Brussels, but have little direct or formal contact with one another, for reasons that mostly derive from internal European politics. This needs to change, and immediately—even before the EU takes over responsibility for ESDI from the Western European Union. Both institutions are engaged in Central Europe and with Russia; both are in the former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia and Kosovo; both have ambitious plans for expansion. Sheer logic, as well as the need to coordinate all aspects of building security in Europe, in the broadest sense of the term, call for close NATO-EU ties and day-to-day cooperation.

Finally, NATO’s future depends absolutely on something often forgotten in the effort to design new security structures: gaining the political and financial support of allied parliaments and peoples. Without that support, there can be no alliance; and gaining it requires constant, committed efforts of all allied governments, not just now but well into the future. The stakes are enormous: this is truly the first generation that has ever had a chance to try building security in Europe that can stretch across the Continent, a 21st century security system that can, in some part, help to redeem the tragedies of the 20th. This is surely worth all the effort needed to make it happen.