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# The “Demise” of NATO: A Postmortem

WALLACE J. THIES

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A funny thing happened to the NATO allies as they made their way through the 1980s. A decade that began with predictions of NATO's impending demise has instead witnessed the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the virtual collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe, a partial withdrawal of Soviet forces from East Germany, and demands by the governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from their territory as well.<sup>1</sup> What many observers perceived as a succession of all-time lows in the European-American relationship at the start of the 1980s has gradually been transformed into a latter-day Golden Age during which the NATO allies hung together in the face of adversity and thereby contributed to outcomes that have made Europe more peaceful and more secure than at any time since the emergence of the modern state-system.<sup>2</sup>

How did all this come to be? Why did predictions of NATO's imminent demise prove so wrong? The rest of this essay takes the form of an exercise in retrospection—a postmortem, if you will, for a patient whose death appears to have been reported very prematurely. Its subject will be the perils inherent in speculative guesses about the future of a complex institution that has more than once confounded the judgments of experts about its vitality and future prospects. The essay's purpose is largely cautionary: if reports at the start of the 1980s of NATO's demise were greatly overstated, then judgments that the Cold War has ended with a victory for the West may themselves be treated as the product of an unwarranted euphoria in just a few years time.

Many of the predictions of the demise of NATO that were offered at the start of the 1980s are rooted, in a paradoxical way, in the changes in the military balance in Europe that began toward the end of the 1960s. Between 1968 and 1977, the combined armed forces of the Warsaw Pact countries increased by about 11 percent, from 4.27 million to 4.75 million.<sup>3</sup> The largest increases were made by the three Warsaw Pact states directly opposite the core of NATO strength along the Central Front. Soviet, Polish, and East German forces increased by 14, 12, and 25 percent respectively; Czech forces declined by a fifth; Rumanian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian forces remained about the same.

These increases were not matched by the NATO countries. Instead, the combined armed forces of the NATO countries declined in size for nine consecutive years between 1968 and 1977. Much of the decline was accounted for by reductions in American forces due to the disengagement from Indochina, but most of the European allies reduced their forces as well. Overall, the armed forces of the NATO countries decreased by 26 percent between 1968 and 1977, from 6.52 million to 4.83 million. By 1977, the NATO total was only 1.5 percent larger than that of the Warsaw Pact, the least favorable ratio for the period 1960-1982.<sup>4</sup>

A more troubling development was the increase in the offensive striking power of Soviet ground and tactical air units during the 1970s. Between 1969 and 1977, the number of troops in combat and direct support units deployed by the Warsaw Pact in the center and northern regions increased by only two percent, but the number of tanks increased by 64 percent. The number of Soviet tactical aircraft deployed in Eastern Europe increased by 15 percent between 1967 and 1977, and the Soviets further increased the offensive striking power of their tactical air units by replacing older single-purpose aircraft with modern multi-role aircraft with increased range and payload.<sup>5</sup> Overall during the 1970s, the Soviets were able to erode many of the qualitative advantages in equipment and training that the NATO countries had relied on to offset the Warsaw Pact's superior numbers of combat units and tanks.

The effect of these shifts in the military balance was to greatly improve the ability of the Soviets and their allies to launch an attack along the Central Front that would come with little or no warning. The early 1970s, however, were

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Dr. Wallace J. Thies is a member of the Department of Politics at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a 1989 NATO Research Fellow. During 1979 and 1980 he worked in the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department as an International Affairs Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations. He is a graduate of Marquette University and hold an M.A. in international relations and M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in political science from Yale University. He is the author of *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict* (1980) and *The Atlantic Alliance, Nuclear Weapons, and European Attitudes: Re-examining the Conventional Wisdom* (1983).

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characterized on the NATO side by reluctance to strengthen NATO's conventional forces to offset increases by the Warsaw Pact. Beginning in 1973 the NATO countries sought to stabilize the military balance in Europe through the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations with the Warsaw Pact. American officials exhorted their European counterparts to increase or at least maintain the size of their forces, but these appeals appear to have been aimed mostly at heading off pressure from Senator Mike Mansfield and others to reduce American troop strength in Europe. Whatever their intent, these appeals proved singularly ineffective: even as the MBFR talks proceeded inconclusively, the NATO countries made further unilateral cuts in their forces. Between 1973 and 1977 the armed forces of the NATO countries declined by about 400,000 while those of the Warsaw Pact countries rose by about 300,000.<sup>6</sup> Scholarly discussions of the military balance in Europe focused on reorganizing allied forces to permit further reductions in troop strength along the Central Front.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these adverse trends, the period 1968-1977 appears in retrospect as a relatively tranquil one in the history of NATO. With the exception of the recriminations exchanged by Americans and Europeans over the Yom Kippur War,<sup>8</sup> there was little talk of the demise of NATO.<sup>9</sup> The December 1976 meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels was described in press reports as "one of the most harmonious in a long time."<sup>10</sup> It was only *after* the Carter Administration had unveiled an ambitious set of proposals to redress the shifting military balance in Europe that talk of NATO's demise began in earnest.

Spurred on by the personal interest of the newly elected President, Carter's Defense Department made NATO its "first order of business," and within three months of the inauguration a series of memoranda detailing an action program for the alliance had been drafted within the Pentagon and approved by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.<sup>11</sup> Underlying this burst of activity was a concern within the Carter Administration that the shifts in the military balance that had occurred during the 1970s could, if left unchecked, render useless the main elements of NATO's strategy for deterrence and defense.

NATO planning during the Nixon and Ford years had been based on the assumption that the Warsaw Pact countries would require 30 days to mobilize before an attack. Even if NATO's decision to mobilize lagged a week behind that of the Pact, NATO would still have roughly three weeks in which to mobilize reserves and bring up reinforcements. Soviet improvements during the 1970s in the offensive striking power of their forces led officials in the Carter Administration to question whether that much warning time would be available in a crisis. They proposed instead that NATO forces should be prepared to meet and defeat a Warsaw Pact attack launched after only five to seven days of visible preparations.<sup>12</sup>

The Carter Administration also questioned whether NATO forces were still capable of implementing an effective forward defense, whereby a

Soviet attack would be met as far to the east as possible in order to minimize destruction in the NATO countries and to ensure West Germany's support for the alliance. An interagency review of the global military balance sent to the President in June 1977 concluded that the Warsaw Pact countries had achieved a 2:1 advantage in forces along the Central Front as a result of their improvements made during the 1970s. While this advantage was deemed "too small in itself for the attacker to have any expectation of quick or substantial victory," the report concluded that "the chance of NATO stopping an attack with minimal loss of territory and then achieving its full objective of recovering that land which had been lost appears remote at the present time."<sup>13</sup>

Finally, officials in the Carter Administration questioned whether the NATO countries could continue to rely on threats of escalation across the nuclear threshold to compensate for deficiencies in their conventional forces. NATO doctrine had always been vague on whether the role of nuclear weapons would be to blunt an attack through strikes on military targets or to coerce the Soviets into halting an attack through punitive strikes in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. The report on the global military balance sidestepped that issue, raising instead the question of whether introducing nuclear weapons would work to NATO's advantage at all: "If NATO's first use of nuclear weapons, rather than terminating hostilities, provoked a Soviet nuclear response, the consequences are not clear, but it is doubtful that [the West] would thereby obtain a military advantage and be able to reverse a losing situation."<sup>14</sup>

These considerations led the Carter Administration to conclude that NATO's first priority should be to strengthen its conventional forces and especially their ability to counter a Warsaw Pact attack launched with little or no warning. The centerpiece of the Administration's efforts to persuade the Europeans to join in an alliance-wide effort to achieve these goals was the set of proposals presented personally by President Carter during a NATO summit in London in May 1977. Because the military balance had been shifting against the West for nearly a decade, the President proposed that the alliance undertake a three-part program: first, several "quick fixes" intended to remedy its most pressing problems immediately; second, a Long-Term Defense Program aimed at improving cooperation in the development, production, and procurement of vital military equipment; and finally a multi-year commitment to real annual increases in defense spending.<sup>15</sup>

Formally, the response of the European allies was prompt and positive. The London summit was followed within a week by a meeting of defense ministers in Brussels, which accepted an American proposal for a one-year program of quick fixes that would provide increased anti-armor capability along the Central Front, increased war reserve stocks, and an improved capability to reinforce areas under attack. The ministers also agreed to draft a seven- to ten-year program focused on other high-priority needs. Finally, the ministers agreed that

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during the period 1979-1984, "an annual increase in real terms of defense budgets should be aimed at by all member countries . . . in the region of 3 percent."<sup>16</sup>

Implementation of the quick fixes proceeded relatively smoothly. During 1977 and 1978, the number of modern antitank guided missiles stockpiled by the NATO countries increased by a third, ammunition stockpiles were increased, and ammunition supplies were moved forward to improve reaction time in the event of a surprise attack.<sup>17</sup> The Long-Term Defense Program also got off to a relatively smooth start. In response to suggestions offered by the United States, the NATO defense ministers at their May 1977 meeting selected nine priority areas for inclusion. Task forces were organized to fill in details. The final draft of the LTDP was approved by defense ministers in May 1978 and ratified at the NATO summit in Washington that same month.<sup>18</sup>

Implicit in the LTDP was the assumption that only modest improvements in NATO's conventional forces were required. They needed to be strong enough to preclude a quick and easy victory by the Soviets, but not so powerful as to disturb the rough equilibrium that the Soviets had tolerated for more than 30 years. Some important steps were taken during 1978 and 1979 to attend to the imbalance that had developed during the previous ten years, but on the whole implementation of the LTDP during its first two years was sluggish and uneven.<sup>19</sup> Adherence to the commitment to increase defense spending by three percent in real terms was also spotty. The slippage between the commitments made in 1977 and 1978 and what was actually accomplished in 1978 and 1979 took on added importance in the aftermath of the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan toward the end of 1979.

The Carter Administration responded to the turmoil in Iran and Afghanistan by dispatching two carrier task forces to the Arabian Sea; by opening negotiations for access to air and naval facilities in Kenya, Oman, Somalia, and Diego Garcia; and by adding several billion dollars to the FY81 defense budget to provide the ships and aircraft needed to make the Rapid Deployment Force a reality. The order to organize an RDF had been issued by President Carter in

August 1977 in the same directive (PD-18) that had ordered enhancement of the ability of American forces in Europe to respond to short- or no-warning attacks. PD-18 envisioned the RDF as a light, mobile force organized around the Army's 82d Airborne and 101st Air-Mobile Divisions and a Marine Amphibious Force. PD-18's directives to strengthen American forces in Europe and to create a Rapid Deployment Force for Third World contingencies was symbolic of the Carter Administration's tendency during its first three years in office to compartmentalize these tasks and to overlook or deny the existence of trade-offs between them—an outlook that was fostered by a certain overconfidence concerning the ability of the RDF to prevail, even against the Soviets, in a Middle Eastern conflict.<sup>20</sup> These judgments were reevaluated in the harsh light of the hostage crisis, the sacking of the American Embassies in Pakistan and Libya, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, all of which seemed to portend for a few bleak months during the winter of 1979-80 the virtual collapse of American influence in a region of great strategic importance.

As the Carter Administration scrambled to assemble the forces and bases needed to give credibility to the President's pledge to defend the oil fields located near the Persian Gulf, officials in Washington became very much aware of the extent to which the new responsibilities being undertaken by the United States conflicted with earlier commitments to upgrade American forces in Europe. The heightened concern over Soviet intentions in the aftermath of Afghanistan meant that the number of divisions earmarked for the RDF increased to the point where it began to cut into units assigned to reinforce Europe. The Carter Administration also worried that a Persian Gulf contingency would so strain American airlift forces that it would not be possible to divert many transport aircraft to ferry reinforcements to Europe in the event the conflict spread. In addition, the Administration's plan to stockpile military equipment aboard ships in the Indian Ocean seemed likely to cut into plans to pre-position additional equipment in Europe. Finally, the diversion of a carrier task force from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea reduced the naval and tactical airpower the United States could bring to bear along NATO's southern flank.<sup>21</sup>

One immediate effect of these concerns was renewed pressure on the Europeans to increase their defense efforts. During February-March 1980, the State and Defense Departments prepared a package of measures that the Europeans would be asked to undertake. These were presented by Undersecretary of Defense Robert Komer at a special meeting of the Defense Planning Committee in Brussels in April. Komer's presentation was intended to give the Europeans time to digest the American proposals, which the Carter Administration expected would be approved at the regular meeting of defense ministers in May.<sup>22</sup>

Komer's presentation, however, did not go over well with the Europeans, who responded with complaints about the propensity of the Americans to come in with a new program every year.<sup>23</sup> These complaints precipitated

the initial round of judgments that the NATO alliance was facing not just another crisis but its greatest crisis ever. On the eve of the ministerial meeting in May, tensions within the alliance were said to have risen to such a point that it faced a "political crossroad marked by America's preoccupation with conflicts outside Europe and Europe's heightened sense of itself."<sup>24</sup> The combination of growing Soviet power and instability in the Third World had confronted the alliance with its "worst challenge" ever, while disagreements over how to respond had resulted in "strains which arguably are worse than at any point in NATO's 31-year history."<sup>25</sup> "Instead of infusing the West with a new unity of purpose," one observer commented, "the crisis over Afghanistan has left a legacy of confusion, distrust, and resentment which, in retrospect, turns the many disputes of the past into minor family squabbles."<sup>26</sup>

Despite their grumbling, the Europeans accepted the American proposal to proceed with a new package of quick fixes while drafting for review at the December meeting of defense ministers a report that would set forth "further specific measures for prompt or accelerated implementation."<sup>27</sup> The Carter Administration, however, was not off the hook just yet. In November, the governing coalition in West Germany let it be known that it was contemplating holding real growth in defense spending to 1.8 percent in 1981, a trial balloon that coincided with pressures in Great Britain to back away from an earlier commitment to three-percent real growth in defense during 1981.<sup>28</sup> Signals from Washington that the Carter Administration was inclined to have a showdown on the issue of defense spending precipitated a new round of judgments that the alliance was in its worst state ever, many of which were overtaken by events even as they appeared in print.<sup>29</sup> The West Germans backed away from the 1.8-percent figure, and sources in Brussels let it be known that the alliance as a whole was "on target" for an overall increase in defense spending of about three percent in 1981. At the Defense Planning Committee meeting in December, the defense ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the LTDP and to the goal of three-percent real annual increases in defense spending.<sup>30</sup>

The events recounted above may seem all too familiar, especially to those who experienced them firsthand, but recalling them is instructive nonetheless. It suggests that NATO was judged to be in turmoil because it was doing what defensive alliances are supposed to do—namely, responding to shifts in the balance of power between itself and its principal adversary. Defensive alliances rarely come apart because they succeed in maintaining a power equilibrium, but they have often been shattered by war or a flight into neutralism by one or more of their members because they did not attend more carefully to power considerations.<sup>31</sup> It should come as no surprise that NATO members disagreed over how to equitably divide the burden of redressing the power imbalance that had developed during the 1970s. Restoring a balance of power is not a pleasant task, especially for democracies, because it entails steps that voting publics often find

distasteful, such as increased defense spending, draft registration, extension of the military service term, higher taxes, and bigger budget deficits. While there can be no denying that resolving such issues imposed strains on the alliance, the strains in question were relatively minor compared to those the NATO allies would have faced had they been left unresolved.

The transition from Carter to Reagan brought much the same temporary glow to European-American relations that the transition from Ford to Carter had brought four years earlier. Like their predecessors, President Reagan and his associates took office convinced of the need for strong measures to redress an unfavorable balance of forces in Europe, but the objective of strengthening NATO's capabilities was pursued in such an abrasive fashion during Mr. Reagan's first term that the results achieved often seemed to be the opposite of those intended.

At the start of its tenure, the Reagan Administration attempted to distance itself from its predecessor's practice of confronting the Europeans with goals expressed in numerical or percentage terms that were to be achieved within a certain time. As explained by Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, what the alliance needed was "more emphasis on specific force increases and defense improvements" rather than "more rhetoric or disputes about percentages."<sup>32</sup> The promise of a new approach was welcomed by the Europeans, but by the middle of 1981 the Reagan Administration and the European allies were locked in a seemingly endless set of disputes, several of which were later cited in allegations of new all-time-lows in the European-American relationship.

During the first half of 1981, the attention of participants and observers alike was focused on the clash between the Reagan Administration's commitment to substantial increases in defense spending consistent with its harder line toward the Soviet Union and the Europeans' preference for detente and arms control.<sup>33</sup> Pressures from the Reagan Administration on the Europeans to increase defense spending, to acquiesce in the American decision to produce enhanced radiation weapons, and to modernize the alliance's theater-based nuclear arsenal contributed to a resurgence of antinuclear and anti-American demonstrations in Western Europe.<sup>34</sup> Rather than treat the European peace movement as a symptom of societies troubled by their lingering dependence on the United States and in need of reassurance, the Reagan Administration equated it with a failure of nerve in the face of Soviet military might. American officials complained that neutralism and pacifism were spreading in Western Europe, while the Europeans complained of insensitive statements by their American counterparts that needlessly complicated their efforts to win support for the alliance's programs.<sup>35</sup> Lectures by American officials on the proper way to counter the Soviet threat appear to have deepened rather than alleviated the anxieties felt by European publics. Indeed, it was such

anxieties that lay behind Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's remonstrance to his countrymen to "stop behaving as if the Americans are your enemies."<sup>36</sup>

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The rhetorical sparring match between the Reagan Administration and the European allies provided the catalyst for still another round of judgments by journalists and academics that the alliance was facing its greatest crisis ever. By the middle of 1981 predictions of NATO's impending demise had become fairly common: "The relationship between Western Europe and North America, alias the Atlantic Alliance, is in the early stages of what could be a terminal illness. The alliance has been in trouble plenty of times before, but this is the worst yet."<sup>37</sup> "If there were no workable NATO in three years, I wouldn't be surprised."<sup>38</sup> The "most urgent crisis" facing the Reagan Administration "is the impending collapse of NATO."<sup>39</sup> Disputes over nuclear weapon issues had become so intense that "NATO now seems in danger of crumbling."<sup>40</sup>

The alliance did make it through the rest of the year, but that did not stop observers from predicting that it was about to fall apart. By the end of 1981, "The common theme on both sides of the political spectrum, and on both sides of the Atlantic, was that the Alliance had never been so gravely troubled and so uncertainly led."<sup>41</sup> Something must be done, one observer concluded, "if NATO is not to go the way of SEATO and CENTO, those Asian and Middle Eastern cold-war alliances that died quiet deaths with hardly anybody caring."<sup>42</sup> By the middle of 1982, relations between the United States and Europe were said to "have reached the lowest point in years, perhaps since the Atlantic Alliance was founded in 1949."<sup>43</sup> Even officials in Washington, normally inclined to be defensive about their handling of relations with the European allies, conceded that the "developing split in the West" was "one of the worst since World War II."<sup>44</sup>

During 1984, however, both the tone and the substance of American policy toward Europe changed considerably, a development that appears to have been due largely to the intensification of the Soviet-American dialogue which began during President Reagan's campaign for reelection. During Mr. Reagan's first term, American officials had been inclined to lecture the Europeans on their lack of understanding of the danger posed by the Soviet Union. By the time of the Geneva summit, the Soviets were no longer the "focus of evil" but rather partners in the search for negotiated arms reductions. During President Reagan's first term, arms control initiatives had been viewed as public relations exercises intended to placate European publics or as delaying tactics to buy time for the Administration's rearmament program to establish a margin of superiority over the Soviets.<sup>45</sup> During the second term, arms control initiatives were pursued more seriously, culminating in the INF Treaty which banned the deployment by the United States and the Soviet Union of all but short-range nuclear missiles in Europe. During Reagan's first term, American defense spending rose at an average annual rate of 8.3 percent measured in real terms, and American officials

had frequently criticized the Europeans for failing to emulate the United States in this respect.<sup>46</sup> Beginning in fiscal 1986, American defense spending declined in real terms, a trend that continued throughout Reagan's second term, making it difficult for American officials to argue that the Europeans were the ones who were not pulling their weight.

History is often written in terms of turning points and dramatic developments, but sometimes it is useful to contemplate what did not happen as well as what did. Among the more interesting developments of the past decade are certain events that did not occur despite claims that they were practically inevitable. The NATO alliance did not collapse, nor did NATO governments "tremble and even fall" under the weight of divisive issues such as modernization of theater nuclear forces.<sup>47</sup> Afghanistan, INF, and the disagreement over the Soviet natural gas pipeline were all cited as qualitatively different crises that would bend the alliance to the breaking point, yet in retrospect their effects appear to have been no more serious or lasting than those stemming from earlier disagreements over German rearmament, the European Defense Community, and even Suez.<sup>48</sup> Soviet military power did not expand inexorably; indeed, a strong case can be made that at the very time NATO strategy was derided as being "in pieces, demolished by changes in the east-west balance of power," the Soviets were reaching the limits of their capability to support continued increases in military spending and beginning the process of rethinking that culminated half a decade later in *glasnost* and *perestroika*.<sup>49</sup> Nor did Soviet influence expand in keeping with alarmist predictions that received considerable play in the Western media at the start of the 1980s. Soviet "allies," both in Eastern Europe and in the Third World, appear increasingly as liabilities rather than assets—as drains on Soviet resources rather than contributors to a communist colossus. Alleged trends toward neutralism and pacifism in Western Europe also proved to be greatly overplayed—the product mainly of exaggerated judgments by observers stunned by encounters with alienated intellectuals or the results of isolated public opinion polls.<sup>50</sup>

How could so many have been so wrong about the alliance's future health and well-being? During the Carter years, NATO was often judged to be "in crisis" because it was doing what defensive alliances are supposed to do—respond to threatening imbalances of power. During the Reagan years, European-American relations were frequently judged to have hit new all-time lows because of disagreements between the United States and its European allies. Put differently, NATO was often judged to be on the brink of disintegration because the Europeans were acting like the kind of independent-minded partners the United States has always claimed to prefer.

It is helpful to recall in this regard that American entry into the Atlantic Alliance was justified by the Truman Administration not on the grounds that it would allow a permanent foothold in Europe, but as a means of disengaging from Europe without creating a dangerous power vacuum in

the process.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of the alliance was to buy time to allow the Europeans to strengthen themselves, after which an American presence in Europe was expected to be superfluous.

The framers of the North Atlantic Treaty can be criticized for an excessively optimistic vision of how the alliance was to work, but they were right on the mark in their recognition that strong allies are preferable to weak ones. It is very likely not an accident that the most self-reliant of the countries of Western Europe—France—is also the country that has the least vocal and least influential peace movement, that has been the most critical of Soviet policies, and that was the most supportive of the American position on the need to modernize the alliance's theater nuclear forces. Doing business with strong partners is rarely easy—strong allies are likely to be assertive, and assertiveness can take the form of positions that American officials occasionally find unpalatable. Relations may be strained and even tumultuous at times, but which is better: allies that are not afraid to stand up for themselves, or clients forever dependent on the protection of a patron? Encouraging self-reliance on the part of one's allies is the path most likely to lead to better relations over the long-term; dependence only breeds resentment and irritability.

Americans as a people have long been drawn to the idea that there are no political problems, only organizational problems. If allies do not appear to be working together effectively, the typical American response is that they need to "get organized," and American officials have searched restlessly for the organizational form that would allow NATO to function to its fullest potential. This propensity for organizational solutions, however, has made Americans particularly susceptible to distress and dismay when organizations show signs of strain. When the Europeans fail to offer immediate support to schemes hatched in Washington or go ahead with something even though we ask them not to, the situation is usually described by American observers as exceptionally grave, as yet another crisis for NATO, and sometimes as a precursor of the alliance's impending demise. Meg Greenfield was uncomfortably close to the truth when she wrote in May 1980, "Everyone knows [NATO] is in terrible disarray just now. It says so in the papers."<sup>52</sup>

This essay has suggested that Americans have been prone to respond with exaggerated claims to what have proven to be relatively minor stresses and strains of the sort that are quite normal for an alliance made up of actual or aspiring democratic states. The true test of the efficacy of the Atlantic Alliance is not how often the members are in complete agreement with each other but rather the extent to which it can continue to make progress toward the ideal originally espoused in the preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty: to establish and maintain a community of free states which would help each other remain independent and gradually grow closer together as the benefits of such a community became more apparent. The events of the past decade, especially the renewed

impetus toward European integration evident in "Europe 1992," suggest that the members of the alliance have continued to make progress toward that goal.

The events of the past forty years, however, suggest that such progress does not come cheaply or easily. The "spirit of Geneva," the "spirit of Camp David," and detente during the 1960s and the 1970s were all followed by renewed periods of East-West tension. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* are welcome developments in Soviet policy, but just as reports of NATO's demise now appear to have been greatly overstated, so too, in a few years time, may reports that the Cold War has ended with a victory for the West seem similarly overstated. Czarist Russia was a tenacious competitor for territory and influence whose behavior suggested that it regarded eastern Europe and south-west and central Asia as its natural spheres of influence. It would seem highly unlikely that even a Soviet Union committed to internal reform would suddenly abandon foreign policy goals rooted in centuries of Russian history. It would be a tragic irony if unwarranted euphoria were now to result in what unwarranted pessimism was unable to bring about at the start of the 1980s, namely, NATO's premature demise.

#### NOTES

1. Earl Ravenal, *NATO's Unremarked Demise* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Institute of International Studies, 1979), p. 3; Irving Kristol, "Does NATO Exist?" *Washington Quarterly*, 2 (Autumn 1979), p. 45; "Did You Say Allies?" *The Economist*, 6 June 1981, p. 11; Seymour Weiss, quoted in Leslie Gelb, "NATO Is Facing a Paralysis of Will, Experts Contend," *The New York Times*, 12 July 1981, p. 6; Irving Kristol, "NATO at a Dead End," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 1981, p. 20; Melvin Lasky, "Tremors on West Germany's Political Seismograph," *Wall Street Journal*, 21 October 1981, p. 23; William Pfaff, "The Waiting Nations," *The New Yorker*, 3 January 1983, p. 58.

2. See, for example, Paul Johnson, "Europe and the Reagan Years," *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1988-1989*, 68 (1989), 28-38.

3. The data presented in this paragraph are drawn from the annual reports of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London (IISS, *The Military Balance*), and presented in tabular form in Wallace Thies, *The Atlantic Alliance, Nuclear Weapons and European Attitudes* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Institute of International Studies, 1983), pp. 48-51.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*; IISS, *The Military Balance, 1977-1978*, pp. 103-07; Clarence A. Robinson, Jr., "Increasing Soviet Offensive Threat Spurs Stronger Europe Air Arm," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 1 August 1977, pp. 38, 45-46.

6. Thies, pp. 48-51.

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8. Lawrence Kaplan, "NATO: The Second Generation," in *NATO After Thirty Years*, ed. Lawrence Kaplan and Robert Clawson (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1981), pp. 12-13.

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14. *Ibid.*

15. *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 16 May 1977, pp. 696-704.

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