

Chapter 7

The Way Ahead

Many of the trends and challenges addressed in this report involve interests central to the security and well-being of Americans. These include concerns over the future orientation of Russia, energy security, and impeding and coping with the proliferation of WMD. Other interests, such as promoting the spread of democracy and Western values, or preventing interethnic violence, massive abuses of human rights, and the humanitarian crises that accompany such atrocities, although less clear-cut, can nevertheless generate demands for action, including sizable military operations. No nation, including “the world’s sole remaining superpower,” can secure such interests on its own. By their very nature, the challenges we face demand effective and coordinated action by a large number of states.

The United States, in short, needs partners, not just to share risks and burdens but to provide a basis for effective, multinational responses to events and trends that threaten common interests. In most cases, unilateral American initiatives to address post-Cold War security challenges are not likely to be effective, nor will they often be politically popular at home or welcomed by those abroad at whom they are directed. For their part, our European allies need a secure and stable environment in which their values and way of life may flourish. Achieving this will require active efforts to support reform and modernization throughout Europe and neighboring regions. *In extremis*, military power will be needed to cope with crises and to enforce conformity with minimal norms of state behavior. For the foreseeable future, the United States will remain the only nation capable of conducting large-scale military operations far from its borders. For these reasons, and because the United States and its allies share so many interests and values, an enduring basis exists for a continued transatlantic security partnership.

NATO is the institution best-suited to harmonizing and executing policies on security issues that affect the United States and Europe. Its members share habits of cooperation based on the experience of having worked together for decades to address common security challenges. Moreover, once a consensus is reached at the policy level, NATO's unique system of multinational headquarters, command and control centers, and common doctrine and training allows allied forces to carry out agreed policies in a well-coordinated fashion.

The Alliance is not perfectly adapted to the challenges of this changed and changing world, but it is moving in the right direction. A key factor will be the Europeans' willingness to accept greater responsibility for the defense of common interests outside of the NATO treaty area and, increasingly, beyond Europe itself. A broader conception of NATO's mandate—and the development of the military capabilities needed to support it—will be essential if the members of the Alliance are to succeed for the next 50 years in their stated purposes, including, “to unite their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security.”

This report is intended to be prescriptive in nature rather than predictive. The assessment of challenges, strategies, and forces offered here points to directions in which the United States and its allies arguably *should* move and is not indicative of where they necessarily *will* go. Each of NATO's member states—including the United States—will need to adopt significant changes in its mind-set and its patterns of defense investment if they are to make this vision of the Alliance as an effective “exporter of stability” a reality. Such changes are never easy, and the difficulties are magnified when no immediate danger looms. Nevertheless, with gradual adaptation and a willingness on both sides of the Atlantic to invest in the military and other capabilities called for to meet emerging challenges, NATO's members stand a good chance of being able to execute their ambitious strategy aimed at bringing peace, stability, and prosperity to a widening circle of nations.