What If the Russians Aren't Coming and the Americans Aren't Staying?

Robert A. Levine
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Project on
Avoiding Nuclear War:
Managing Conflict in the Nuclear Age

RAND/UCLA
Center for Soviet Studies
PREFACE

This Note explores the implications for U.S. policy of potential changes to two premises underlying that policy: According to the revised premises, the Soviets no longer threaten Western Europe and the United States will withdraw its forces (or most of its forces) from NATO. Such potential changes have been little discussed because they violate assumptions long held by policymakers and analysts.

The Note was prepared for the project on “Avoiding Nuclear War,” sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. The initial inspiration came from a series of papers on European security, but the arena for this one is the entire world, rather than Western Europe alone. The ideas were refined at the Naval War College in a worldwide political/military game covering the period 1995-2015.
SUMMARY

This Note is based on two principal premises about the next five years:

- The likelihood of a purposeful Soviet attack on Western Europe will have fallen so low that it no longer need be taken as a serious basis for Western policy
- The United States will have withdrawn all of its military forces from Europe, or perhaps all but a symbolic few, leaving behind, say, fewer than 50,000 troops, rather than the 325,000 of 1990 and before.

The Note has a dual purpose:

- To explore the American and European conditions that might bring the premises to pass
- To examine the implications for U.S. policy in the world as a whole of a radical shift away from the European focus of that policy.

The two premises are not predictions, nor is U.S. withdrawal the author's preference. Rather, both are becoming plausible enough to warrant consideration of their implications for U.S. security and foreign policy.

The first premise is based on the ongoing Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe and the increasing weakness of the Soviet economy and polity, all of which will make an attack on Western Europe increasingly unlikely, no matter what the course of internal Soviet politics. Political liberalization, if it comes, would make an attack even less likely. This is not to say that the Soviet Union or successor states will present no military dangers to the West. Turmoil in a nation armed with nuclear weapons is inevitably dangerous, but deliberate aggression of the type the West feared throughout the Cold War is becoming increasingly implausible.

The second premise is more conjectural but still plausible. A combination of factors might play on historical American isolationism to bring about complete or near-complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe. Such factors might include:
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- The end of the Soviet threat that brought U.S. forces to that continent
- A belief that an integrated Western Europe will be strong enough to take care of itself
- A declining U.S. defense budget
- Economic conflicts between the United States and Europe
- American perceptions of European shirking from common duties exemplified by the Gulf War
- A feeling that the U.S. presence is no longer wanted in Europe.

A withdrawal is not the preferred course for U.S. policy because at a time like the present, dominated by far broader uncertainties than characterized the years through 1985, the safest course would seem to be to hold to what we have: a significant and believable commitment to our West European allies through NATO. Nonetheless, withdrawal from Europe may come in the near future, and we should start examining its implications for U.S. policy around the globe.

The premises lead to three major conclusions:

1. The premised changes would affect the world less dramatically than might be assumed. The world would not look much like the one of 1985, but the security issues of the next five years are likely to depend more on the radical changes that have already taken place than on those that may occur.
   - Much of the premised Soviet change has already occurred.
   - In Europe, the results of U.S. military withdrawal might be less drastic than is sometimes assumed, because of both changes that have taken place, such as the diminution of the Soviet threat, and changes that seem well under way, particularly the integration of the European Community (EC).
   - Outside Europe, major changes in the Soviet challenge have also occurred since 1985. Other security-related issues that will confront the United States should not be sensitive to the premised withdrawal from Europe. The major exception is the continuing challenge to American interests in the Middle East, related both to oil and the U.S. commitment to Israel.
Beyond military security, the United States in the next five years will face the key issue of trade: Will the United States and the world continue to move in the free trade directions of the past, or will a bloc trading system begin to take its place?

2. Appropriate policies can minimize the dangers stemming from the withdrawal of the U.S. military presence from Europe. Such policies begin with assessing — U.S. interests in and out of Europe — the effects on these interests of the European withdrawal and then taking steps to minimize the damage.

3. The central issues for the United States will concern its global responsibilities outside Europe, where no potential substitute for U.S. power parallel to the European Community has developed. In short, Should we be the world’s policeman and the world’s director of development, community chest, and environmental volunteer as well?

Why must the United States always bear the disproportionate responsibility? The answer is that the United States is the most powerful decisionmaking entity in the developed world, and at least until the EC becomes far more integrated, politically as well as economically, than at present, the United States will remain the only multidimensional global power. Case by case in the near future, the United States will have to decide whether to accept the policeman role around the world.

In the economic area, the United States loses its uniqueness. Economic integration is likely to precede EC political and security integration, and in a few years Western Europe may build an economic decisionmaking structure similar to that of the United States. Thus, it would acquire similar responsibilities for world economic development, stability, and charitable assistance.

Free trade is a closely related economic issue. The question is becoming less whether free trade is desirable than whether it is possible, given the conflicting interests of the United States, the European Community, Japan, and other major trading nations. A three-bloc system—North America, Europe, and Japan—may become inevitable for the developed world. If so, the United States should bargain hard rather than sacrifice regional interests to an ideological free trade chimera.
Not all of these decisions and policies will be easy. Nonetheless, we could live comfortably and prosperously in a world in which our troops were no longer stationed in Europe. We may have to.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Our patriotic course is clear. It is to stay out of Europe and the Far East, which would drain our blood, our manhood, and our wealth forever. It is to concentrate on making democracy function here in the last great industrial nation which has a chance of making it function in the modern machine world.

—Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. (Progressive, Wis.), speech to the Senate, October 12, 1939

There can be no such thing as Fortress America. If ever we were reduced to the isolation implied by that term we would occupy a prison, not a fortress.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower, State of the Union Message, January 9, 1959

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty.

—President John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

Not a single American life should be sacrificed in a war for the price of oil. . . . The Europeans understand that point. So do the Japanese. . . . Why can the United States not understand that point? Why are we the only nation in the world willing to send hundreds of thousands of its sons and daughters to the Middle East to die for oil?

—Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Democrat, Mass.), speech to the Senate, January 12, 1991

Times change and so do circumstances. The title of this Note implies neither predictions nor preferences. I am not predicting that the Russians aren’t coming—that the chances of a purposeful Soviet military attack on Western Europe can be discounted to zero. Neither do I predict that the Americans aren’t staying—that U.S. forces in Europe will be stripped down to at most a symbolic level that provides an uncertain tripwire for conventional or nuclear return.¹ Nor is the military withdrawal of the United States from Europe my preference; far from it.

¹"Symbolic" and "real" commitments are, of course, not alternatives. The degree of American commitment perceived on both sides of the Atlantic is likely to go down in some proportion with the number of American troops, however, and reduction to 50,000 out of the 295,000 allowed by the agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) is about as low as any official or analyst has suggested as still conveying a meaningful U.S. commitment. Some set the floor much higher.
Rather than predictions, the removal of the Soviet threat and the American withdrawal are possibilities within a range of uncertainties that is unprecedentedly wide by the standards that prevailed throughout the Cold War. Such changes for the Soviet Union and the United States are increasing in likelihood, not in an indefinite "long run," but within the next five years. Indeed, the threat of a deliberate Soviet attack on NATO territory, while perhaps not yet completely gone, has already dramatically receded.

Soviet retreat is of course an agreed objective, but U.S. military withdrawal from Europe is not. In time of high uncertainty, such as exists today, it seems much the safest course to hold to what we have: a significant and believable commitment to our West European allies through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Leaving now and possibly having to return later could raise many more problems than staying until we see what is happening. Nonetheless, near-term developments may raise the costs of our NATO commitment to levels that the American body politic is unwilling to accept, or reduce the perceived benefits, thus leading to the effective abrogation of that commitment.

This is therefore truly intended as a "What if?" piece. The world has reached the point where the United States should explore the implications of potential changes in the basic premises underlying U.S. and Western policy for the past 45 years.

The disappearance of the Soviet threat and the drastic reduction of the U.S. military presence are becoming real possibilities, either in an action/reaction sequence or as independent events. They prompt such questions as What are the dangers in such circumstances? What are the opportunities? Above all, what are the policy options for maintaining U.S. global interests should events move in these directions? The Note thus has a dual purpose:

- To explore the American and European conditions that might bring the premises to pass
- To examine the global implications for American policy of a radical shift away from Europe, which has been at the center of that policy for 45 years.

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The analysis is divided into four sections covering why the two major premises appear increasingly plausible, what the world might look like if the Soviets ceased to threaten Western Europe and the Americans came home, the likely U.S. interests and challenges to these interests stemming from such changes, and the potential implications for U.S. policy choices. The overall conclusions are the following:

1. This new world may be substantially less traumatic than those who oppose a new American quasi isolationism automatically assume. If the Soviets aren’t going to attack Western Europe, security issues in the rest of the world may look much the same whether or not American forces stay in Europe. That is not to say that they will look like they did through 1985. Quite the contrary, much of the change has already taken place, as exemplified by the decreased likelihood of a purposeful Soviet attack.

2. Appropriate U.S. policies can minimize the dangers. Indeed, if global security is relatively insensitive to American withdrawal from Europe, then reexamination of U.S. policy choices outside of Europe is likely to lead to much the same policies that would have been arrived at anyhow.

3. A central issue for future policy choice is the role of the United States as a global power—arguably the only global power—even after it withdraws from Europe. Withdrawal based primarily on specific European conditions need not imply withdrawal from the world. Even before the degree of Soviet retreat was clear, Americans who advocated leaving NATO contended that Western Europe had become strong enough to take care of itself and no longer needed U.S. protection. In many other parts of the world, however, the United States remains the only power capable of maintaining security.

These conclusions lead to two paradoxes. First, if retaining an American military presence in Europe is unlikely to have much effect on the way the world moves, why argue for maintaining it? The answer is that even if “unlikely to have much effect” implied, say, a 90 percent probability of no effect at all, the dangerous remaining 10 percent would be well worth the small costs of hedging by retaining a residual U.S. presence.

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Second, if the presence makes that small a difference for U.S. policy choices, then why base a discussion of those choices on the withdrawal premise? The reason is that the American presence in Europe has been central to our foreign policy for so long that withdrawal would seem *prima facie* likely to change U.S. interests and capabilities to promote these interests around the globe.

The case that withdrawal would change little that has not already changed since 1985 remains to be argued. This Note presents that argument—not to encourage withdrawal, but rather to move toward the discussion of real choices that the United States will face in the 1990s, whether or not we withdraw militarily from Europe.
2. WHY MIGHT THE RUSSIANS NOT COME AND THE AMERICANS NOT STAY?

THE RUSSIANS

The argument for the disappearance of the threat of purposeful Soviet aggression against Western Europe is straightforward. It does not depend on conjectural internal liberalization of the Soviet Union or of any successor state, although Soviet liberalization would reinforce it. Rather, the reasoning depends on two changes—withdrawal and weakening—that have taken place over the past five years, neither of which seems likely to reverse in the next five, and both of which reinforce two more persistent phenomena—prudence and deterrence—that have existed throughout the Cold War.

Withdrawal and Weakening

Soviet forces are withdrawing from the East European bases and locations from which they have threatened the West since 1945. Soviet forces entered Eastern Europe not as the result of easy aggression against weak foes, but with millions of casualties incurred by defeating a powerful enemy. Once the Soviets have withdrawn, this history will likely condition their thoughts about reentry.

Although the Soviet Union retains immense military power, the polity and the economy underlying that power have weakened dramatically over the past five years. Politically, the Soviet Union seems to be in danger of swinging between civil strife and the reestablishment of strong central control by some combination of the Army, the Communist Party, and the Committee of State Security (KGB). Such phenomena of current disarray as the increasing ineffectiveness of conscription impinge directly on military capabilities. Although elite units of the Army and the KGB may continue to hold power internally, the military power of the Soviet mass may well dissipate.

Even the Soviet system's reestablishment of strong central control, however, could not restore the economy; if anything, economic salvation lies in decentralization. An economy that is not only weak, but weakening further, could not long support a military machine powerful and expensive enough to reinvade Eastern Europe and again threaten Western Europe within this time period.

If, in addition to these trends, internal liberalization were to encourage Soviet ideological rapprochement with the West, the contention that the Soviets won't be coming would be heading toward certainty. As it is, withdrawal and weakening and perhaps
liberalization reinforce two other phenomena—prudence and deterrence—with much longer histories.

Prudence and Deterrence

Despite devoting immense resources to the possibility of attacking the West, the Soviet Union never fired a shot across the Elbe. Indeed, since Stalin Soviet military forces have been used to attempt enlargement of the Soviet sphere of influence only in Afghanistan. Given the direction of the recent changes discussed above, the reversal of this historical prudence seems highly unlikely.

The potential for nuclear escalation stemming from a Soviet attack on Western Europe underlies Soviet prudence. The NATO strategies embodied in MC 14/2 and 14/3 made clear to the Soviets the possible consequences of opening that Pandora's box. Escalation was not a certainty, but it was likely enough to deter Soviet aggression even when the imbalance favoring Soviet conventional forces over NATO's was at its peak. Primarily for this reason, European political manipulations in the years following 1945 never ended in armed conflict, in contrast to the similar maneuvers in the preceding centuries.

Even without MC 14/2 and 14/3, the same fear has motivated the avoidance of direct combat between U.S. and Soviet troops anywhere in the world. Client forces fought one another—in Vietnam and Afghanistan they fought U.S. and Soviet troops—but U.S. and Soviet troops have taken great pains to avoid shooting at each other. Even if U.S. forces were to withdraw from Europe, the existential threat of nuclear escalation in the event of a Soviet attack on Western Europe would likely contribute to deterring such an attack.

That the Russians are coming, deliberately and purposefully, thus seems highly improbable. More possibly, anarchy could lead to new sorts of military dangers involving the Soviet Union, perhaps including threats to—or even from—its former Warsaw Pact satellites. These new dangers, however, would differ basically from the kind of intentional aggression against Western Europe (now including eastern Germany) that we feared for 40 years. They would call for different defensive force postures, perhaps by different nations in differently configured alliances.
THE AMERICANS

The lower limit of the U.S. withdrawal premise is full departure of U.S. troops from Europe—going down to zero rather than the 50,000-150,000 that is now generally accepted as a residual American presence. One need not postulate that dramatic a decrease, however, in order to explore the consequences of de facto withdrawal of the U.S. security commitment to Europe.

The retention of a few thousand troops in one or more garrisons or air bases, recognizably as a tripwire rather than either a fighting force or the logistic cadre for the return of such a force, would be close enough. Such a tripwire could symbolize a continued U.S. moral commitment to European security, but it would convey almost as many doubts as a full force withdrawal. The precise troop level at which such doubts would predominate cannot be predicted, but 50,000 may be the floor for a believable commitment.

End of the Soviet Threat

Why, then, might the United States withdraw? The first reason is the likelihood that the Russians aren’t coming. The explicit reason for U.S. forces in Europe since the late 1950s has been the need for American power to deter and help counter the Soviet military threat to the West.

In recent years, however, the real reasons for the continued U.S. presence have increasingly become implicit ones, not closely related to the potential for Soviet aggression set forth in official statements. The U.S. military presence has long played two such nonmilitary roles: as a general contribution to European security and stability and as the American stake on a broad political and economic, as well as military, gaming table. As the specific Soviet threat and the growth of new instabilities in Eastern and Central Europe have waned, these political and economic reasons for the U.S. presence have begun to predominate.¹

Inertia remains a powerful factor as well. Given that budgetary arguments against the continued U.S. presence will be vitiated by the certain reduction of troops to levels between 50,000 and 150,000, rather than the 325,000 who were supported through 1990, neither the remaining cost nor the fading Soviet threat is likely in itself to bring about a full withdrawal.

¹This argument is made in detail in Robert A. Levine, Keeping U.S. Troops in Europe: The Real Reason Why, RAND, N-3085-AF, September 1990.
European Trade Restrictions

A withdrawal to levels even lower than 50,000 might instead result from American resentment of political and economic acts by our European allies, acts—for example, trade restrictions—that we view as taking unfair advantage. This resentment would parallel that at various times from the 1960s through the 1980s, when Americans criticized the allies for not bearing their fair share of the burdens of our common defense of their European territory. American accusations of unfairness and ingratitude could provide the coup de grace to the retention of a significant U.S. force presence in Europe.

The rapid increase of the U.S. trade deficit in the 1980s led many Americans to feel that our allies were treating us unfairly. Most of the anger was directed at Japan, but European trade practices were also questioned. Americans were ambivalent about the economic integration of the European Community (EC), seeing it sometimes as a “Fortress Europe,” economically hostile to the United States, sometimes as opening up new market opportunities to enterprising American business.

Many Americans, however, saw the halt of negotiations on liberalizing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1990, primarily because of seemingly irreconcilable positions on agricultural issues, as a major example of European selfishness. The United States believed the EC governments to be favoring the small minority of their populations engaged in farming over the interests of world trade and prosperity and of transatlantic equity and comity. The Europeans, in contrast, saw their strong position as defense of a way of life dependent on the existence of a sturdy peasantry.

Even if papered over, however, the split over GATT implied more emphasis on traditional divisive mercantilist issues than on the unifying spirit of common Atlantic security, and it became a major indicator of a continuing trend toward European integration even at the cost of Atlantic disintegration. At the beginning of the 1990s, this tendency was increasingly visible: The “new Europe” was an exciting concept; the Atlantic tie, old and dull.

Such a trend is not inevitable—some Europeans have contended that the EC and the United States may be reunited by a common interest in Japan-bashing. The continuation of the trend remains plausible, however, and Americans are unlikely to favor continued security support of the European “ingrates.”
Aftermath of Gulf War

The long-term effects of the Persian Gulf War may also influence American adherence to Atlantic solidarity. The U.S. view of Britain as a strong ally could put an interesting twist on future alignments. The favorable political effect in the United States of France's active participation could be diluted if the French were again seen as political maneuverers seeking to undermine U.S. policy. The big question mark in Europe, however, is Germany, the European center of NATO, where most U.S. troops are currently located and where most residual troops will be based if they stay.

For arguable reasons based on their constitution and deep-seated political causes still stemming from their revulsion toward the Nazi era, the Germans did not participate militarily in the Gulf War, and Americans perceived them, at least for a time, as holding back on financial support. News of German firms' past and alleged continued technical assistance to Iraq also evoked criticism. Although U.S. dissatisfaction with Germany too may be vitiated by Japan-bashing—the Japanese were perceived as doing much worse in the Gulf War—German behavior raised many anti-German voices in the Congressional debates that preceded hostilities, and subsequent German actions helped little.

The successful outcome of the war may have enabled the frictions to cool down, but that is by no means certain. Even if this particular war does not provide a major push for U.S. withdrawal from Europe, however, it may be a precursor of other events that will help make withdrawal plausible or even probable.

Rejection and Isolationism

Trade restrictions and Gulf War consequences may combine with an American feeling that the Europeans do not want us around any more, now that they no longer perceive a threat from the East and now that they have discovered each other and believe that they can take care of themselves. Perceived lack of appreciation has led to many divorces.

In addition, the United States has a tradition of isolationism. The world of the 1990s differs vastly from that between the two World Wars, but the psychological basis remains: The oceans are vast; we are large and varied enough to do for ourselves; we are proud of our unique traditions; foreigners are foreign. The end of the Soviet threat, the perceived unfair actions of Europeans in pursuit of their trade interests, and their unwillingness to join us in bearing the burden of the defense of common interests outside their own small area (and perhaps inside as well) could return us to the 1920s, at least so far as Europe goes.
Toward the end of 1990, a French commentator wrote:

What is needed today is a "Churchillian" exhortation to convince the United States, if it wants to hold its preeminent international position, of the need to change its way of life and accept sacrifices, in a word, to pay more taxes.²

But what if Americans won't sacrifice to hold our "preeminent international position," in spite of the entreaties of our burdensharing partners?

3. WHAT MIGHT THE WORLD LOOK LIKE THEN?¹

THE "SOVIET UNION"

What will exist to the east of the current Soviet-Polish border may be governed under one Soviet authority or may be broken up into various constituent parts; it may be authoritarian, liberalizing, anarchic, or changing among those conditions. Each of these structures or nonstructures incorporates the potential for violence—perhaps involving the Soviet Union or successor(s) and what are now the border states, particularly Poland; perhaps with what may have become border states, such as the Baltic republics; perhaps in the course of events determining the status of what had been constituent parts; perhaps over political or economic issues within specific jurisdictions.

Some of the ensuing conflicts may concern the West, even involving some nations—for example, Germany or the EC feeling compelled to help defend Poland against attacks from the East. As a result, the probability of one or more West European nations being drawn into armed conflict with the Soviet Union or one of its successor states may actually be greater than during the stability of the Cold War.

No potential conflicts, however, will threaten the West as did the massive armored formations of the 1940s-1980s; none will imply the same sort of ultimate danger to West European independence implicit in the Soviet threats of the bad old days. No matter what the new configuration of the Soviet Union, the dangers to the nations from the Atlantic to the Oder-Neisse will diminish and the needed military and political postures will differ. Under this assumption about the Soviet Union, the collective resources of the countries of Western Europe would suffice to cope with the lesser threat; the assumption does not necessarily imply, however, that the Western Europeans would organize their resources for such a purpose.

The premise of Soviet retreat in Europe does not in itself imply a lessening of Soviet mischief elsewhere, but such activity has already eroded in any case. It seems unlikely for two reasons to revive soon. First, Soviet economic collapse will continue to force retrenchment, as in Cuba; in fact, the Cuban example provides a powerful warning to would-
be Soviet clients. Second, the same collapse makes communism an unattractive model for poor nations. What might revive, at worst, is opportunistic Soviet dealing with opportunistic nations, e.g., arms sales, but that would put the Soviets in a league that already has many members.

Despite the disappearance of the purposeful Soviet threat in Europe, the existential threat of the megatonnage of Soviet nuclear weapons will remain. Those weapons will continue to exist—in large numbers, even if START constraints are imposed. Who will control them remains an uncertain and frightening question, and their existence will pose threats that the United States, as well as Europe, will have to carefully guard against.

THE UNITED STATES

Even assuming withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe without specific abrogation of U.S. commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty, including the last-resort nuclear commitment, such commitments would be considered on both sides of the Atlantic to be far less dependable than before. Remaining nominal ties to Europe will not only be doubted, but will be debated on both sides of the Atlantic, loudly and continually.

Withdrawal from Europe might lead to other withdrawals, but further withdrawal is not a logical corollary of withdrawal from Europe, nor will it necessarily be forced by American political reasoning. During and since World War II, isolationism toward Europe but not the Pacific has not been atypical among Americans. General Douglas MacArthur, in the Philippines, Australia, and then Tokyo, was an Asia-first symbol to many who had been isolationists before the war. And as the Senate Majority Leader in the 1960s and 1970s, Mike Mansfield sponsored several resolutions encouraging U.S. withdrawal from Europe, all the while maintaining his interest in Japan, an interest that culminated in his long ambassadorship to that country after he left the Senate.

During this time period, the United States will also

- Certainly remain a nuclear superpower capable of destroying any other part of the world
- Probably retain its unique capability for global power projection, albeit weakened somewhat by the withdrawal from Europe
- Remain economically powerful in both absolute terms and relative to Europe and Japan
• Continue to be, as a result of the first three points, the only true global power
• Retain close ties with the rest of North America, as dictated by economics.

WESTERN EUROPE

As both cause and effect of the premised American withdrawal, the Western Europeans are most likely to move rapidly toward economic integration as the European relationship strengthens and the Atlantic relationship declines. That the trauma of U.S. withdrawal could have the opposite effect—reraising historical suspicions among European nations—is not precluded; indeed, that possibility is among the residual uncertainties that make the premised U.S. withdrawal undesirable. Nonetheless, existing trends, and European fears of the repeat of history, make integration the most likely outcome for the nations of Western Europe.

By 1995, many of the procedures of the single European market will have been operating for several years, and phase II of the European Monetary Union (EMU), scheduled for 1994, will probably have begun, especially given the additional impetus of the premised Atlantic break. The major risks to this integrative pace will come from the major EC members: German troubles with economic reconstruction of the eastern Laender could turn the Federal Republic inward, away from the Community; German and French conceptions of the European central bank—still quite different in 1991—could remain unreconciled; British recalcitrance could slow everything else.

Such problems would probably do no more than delay economic integration, however, or divide the EC into more and less integrated tiers, as has been discussed in the Community. A real breakdown is much less probable, although not precluded.

Political integration, however, will probably be slower and less simple. During the time period, the EC is likely to remain a loose confederation of strong and independent sovereignties; the European Parliament may have a few more powers than today, but all important issues “decided” by the Parliament or the EC Commission will remain subject to de facto veto by the governments of the major members of the Community. No matter what the formal institutions, the EC—at least the most powerful members—will make decisions by consensus.

As Soviet troops will have left Germany on schedule by the end of 1994, direct military threats to Western Europe will be perceived as minor. Even so, U.S. withdrawal is likely to cause European nervousness. The U.S. presence has supplied not only much of NATO’s military capability, but also the core of NATO’s military planning machinery.

American withdrawal may thus call forth a European substitute for the military alliance, including a substitute planning mechanism, perhaps within the West European Union (WEU) or another body directly under the EC. As with other European arrangements, the military structure will likely act by consensus; little pressure will exist for a security decisionmaking process tighter than that which governs the overall political confederacy. No nation seems likely to replace the United States as leader.

As one further variation on European integration, Europe may be defined to include or exclude the United Kingdom. The wholehearted support of the American effort in the Gulf War by the British, greatly appreciated by the Americans, together with the continued reluctance by either of the major British political parties to make a full operational and emotional commitment to European economic and political integration, could conceivably revive the Anglo-Saxon “special relationship.”

With or without British substitution of the Atlantic tie for the European one, however, European political and security integration are likely to lag behind economics; a true United States of Europe is still a long way off. The logic of the EMU may move from a single monetary policy to a single fiscal policy to a single powerful government making economic policy and then other major decisions as well, but that will take more than five or even ten years.

In the interim, Western Europe is more likely to resemble de Gaulle’s *Europe des patries* than the United States designed by Hamilton and Madison. Moreover, the leading *patries* will be the leading economic powers: Germany; France; Italy, if it begins to play a political role commensurate with its economic strength; and the United Kingdom.

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3The continuing emotional strength of the relationship is indicated by the comment of American radio comedian Garrison Keillor in a 1991 broadcast from London: “We didn’t mind your joining the Common Market. We knew you didn’t really mean it.” The British audience roared with laughter, and some applauded. In the unlikely event that the special relationship were to revive, the premise of this Note would have to be interpreted as the United States having removed its troops from *continental* Europe.
EASTERN EUROPE

All indicators suggest that every nation in Eastern Europe will continue in deep economic trouble throughout the 1990s. Even the reconstruction of eastern Germany, with all the economic power of western Germany behind it, is increasingly recognized as a problem that will take a lot of time as well as money to solve. The possibility is even suggested that the eastern Laender may become a chronic problem similar to Italy’s Mezzogiorno, the southern region that remains poor even as the north becomes richer and richer.

This suggestion may be unduly pessimistic: The richest and most powerful 60 million people in Western Europe ought to be able to provide powerful assistance to their 17 million brethren. If eastern Germany might be likened to the Mezzogiorno, however, the rest of Eastern Europe could be compared to the truly underdeveloped world, and unlike Germany, Poland had few rich Poles outside the national borders to help it. At best, signs of revival in some eastern nations are likely to be overwhelmed by continuing or increasing problems.

It is difficult even to guess at the effects on the new political systems of continuing years of economic distress. The hope is that the new democracies in the northern part of Central Europe will remain democratic, while the formerly communist Balkan states will become so. At worst, however, the decade may see restoration of authoritarianism in some countries, some civil strife, and perhaps even some small wars among these states. In any case, Eastern Europe will certainly not approach any ideal model.

THE REST OF THE WORLD

The rest of the world will remain far more heterogeneous than that collective title implies. What has made it into something of a single category from an American standpoint in the past has been its involvement in the East-West conflict. Now, however, the Soviets have largely withdrawn from this “third world” competition and seem unlikely to be able to return soon.

It is a useful oversimplification to divide the rest of the world into three tiers: the rich; the poor; and the Middle East, which although containing both rich and poor nations, is both different from the rest of the rest and particularly important to U.S. policy.
• The prototype of the rich rest of the world will remain Japan. In addition, this category will include a set of heterogeneous competing sovereignties:
  — The “Asian Tigers,” including perhaps some new ones\(^4\)
  — Australia and New Zealand
  — Perhaps by the end of the century, also Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa.

• The poor countries are also heterogeneous. Their primary characteristics are very low per capita income and a seeming inability to improve that statistic, largely because of the vicious interactions between failed economic development and failed population control. As a result, Malthusian economics will likely dominate many of them. Even among the poor, however, two sub-tiers should be distinguished, because the distinction will be important to the consideration of U.S. interests and policies in this world:
  — The poor, but so large as to be nonetheless powerful (e.g., China, India, perhaps Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, and Mexico)
  — All the rest, the poor and largely powerless of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

• The division of the Middle East into Israel and the Arab world (not to mention Iran) is of particular importance to the United States, but the Arab nations themselves hardly form a monolith. The Arabs have as many fault lines as there are interactions among different states. Although the Arab nations fit into the rich and poor categories, they must be singled out for separate consideration by U.S. policy:
  — First, because of their common conflict with Israel
  — Second, because they operate under their own internecine dynamic
  — Third, because they continue to control large quantities of oil that will remain important to the United States for many years to come.

These factors form a baseline for the consideration of U.S. interests and policies to defend and promote these interests in the hypothetical but plausible world in which the Russians and the Americans have gone home.

\(^{4}\)The “Asian Tigers” are the group of East Asian nations—South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—that developed economically very rapidly over the past 10-15 years. Malaysia is sometimes included in this group.
4. WHAT ARE LIKELY U.S. INTERESTS AND POTENTIAL CHALLENGES TO THESE INTERESTS?

U.S. INTERESTS

The questions here are What has the United States counted as its key national interests in recent years and earlier? and How might the interests so adduced extend into the hypothesized future? The general criterion is, and has always been, our ability to maintain and improve “our way of life” as we interpret it. The interests include security interests, economic interests, environmental interests, and ideological interests.

Security Interests

Security of the U.S. homeland against nuclear attack. Nuclear weapons will remain a central concern of U.S. security. Other weapons of mass destruction may also threaten the United States, but at least under current technology the nuclear threat remains the most dangerous.

Security of national borders. This classical vital interest may be interpreted to include not only security against attack on the United States, but also security against massive migration.

Security of access to key resources. Oil is the obvious case in point, but there may be others.

Security of other areas of the world. For the past half-century, we have included Europe here, and the connotation of the premised U.S. withdrawal is not that we believe a free Europe to have become less essential to our interests, but that the threat to European freedom has become so small and Europe’s own potential so substantial that the Europeans now need little American help. Other areas whose security continues to be considered important to the United States include Mexico and Canada and perhaps other parts of the Americas, as well as Israel and Japan. In addition, other regions may have specific economic or political importance, but which areas and what reasons are not fully predictable in advance.

Security against terrorism, drugs, etc. In a list that starts with nuclear attack, such interests, although not trivial, have thus far received less attention, but that could change.
Security against insecurity. Rather than a tautology, this might be considered a summary central interest. Even if the real threats to national security turn out to be insubstantial in this time period, fears among the American electorate could lead to what was termed in the wake of McCarthyism "the paranoid style in American politics."¹

Economic Interests

The summary interest is a prosperous American standard of living; the necessary condition is economic growth, both to support a growing population and to avoid harsh internal struggles over distribution and redistribution of a static national product. Prosperity and growth will require access to oil and other resources; new technologies are not likely to provide economical substitutes within the time period. In addition, free trade, allowing the United States open access to world markets, has been a traditional American interest.

Environmental Interests

Environmental interests are still difficult to evaluate, but they are nonetheless real. Some of the dire threats of which environmentalists warn—e.g., global warming turning our croplands into deserts—may become serious issues.

Ideological Interests

Whether promotion of our democratic ideology is an American world interest is in itself the subject of an ideological debate. Some would confine the concept of interests—or at least of vital interests—to the protection of security and prosperity; others want to protect and promote their version of American ideology throughout the world.

In fact, the aspects of U.S. ideology that were backed by a strong consensus—support for democracy and opposition to aggression—played the major role in determining U.S. policy at least from 1940 to 1985, first against fascism, then against communism. Now that fascism and communism have been defeated on a global scale, however, the future role of ideology becomes conjectural.

¹Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics: And Other Essays, Knopf, New York, 1965. Senator Joseph McCarthy began his reign of terror soon after the start of the Cold War, before the United States had committed troops to NATO. Many of his followers contended (he himself was never particularly clear on this or many other matters) that our focus on combating communism overseas turned us away from the real, internal problem.
CHALLENGES TO U.S. INTERESTS

The above-listed interests are traditional, stemming from both the continuity of American history and the specificity of the Cold War. The question, then, is How may the changed future postulated here challenge the interests differently from the recent past, through 1985?

The summary answer is that the future world will differ greatly from that of 1985, but most U.S. interests in the first part of the 1990s are likely to remain much as they would have been with or without the new premises postulated here. Substantial and dramatic changes have already taken place since the Cold War (e.g., the great reduction in the Soviet threat to U.S. interests in Europe); other changes seem relatively insensitive to U.S. troop withdrawal from Europe (e.g., increased nuclear proliferation). True, some issues sensitive to the withdrawal premises will remain, but these are likely to seem small relative to what has already taken place and to what we will have to cope with in any case.

Security Interests

Security against nuclear attack. The threat of a nuclear attack on the United States has always been extremely small, as indeed has the likelihood of any U.S. involvement in a nuclear war.2 The end of the Cold War and the presumption that the Russians aren’t coming reduce the threat even further.

Nonetheless, as long as the Soviets—or the Russians—retain a megatonnage that can destroy the United States, we will retain an active interest in avoiding nuclear attack, including attack by some rogue regime with control of what are now Soviet strategic nuclear weapons. Further, although the rise of other nuclear superpowers, defined as such by their capability to wreak massive destruction on the United States, is quite unlikely within this period, the longer-run possibility suggests that we will need to retain a strong deterrent capability.

What may be more possible than U.S.-Soviet war, even in the first half of the 1990s, however, is a “small” nuclear war not initially involving either the United States or the Soviet Union. Looked at coldly, such a war, were it confined to territories well beyond our borders, would not harm us physically. The extent to which we might want to act on behalf of some world interest in stability, morality, or ideology, however, would probably become a major issue for U.S. policy, an issue that defined the degree of our quasi isolationism.

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2The definitive study is McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years, Random House, New York, 1990.
In any case, further nuclear proliferation would facilitate both small nuclear wars and nuclear terrorism (discussed below with other forms of terrorism). Such proliferation would in itself thus be a challenge to U.S. interests, albeit not one particularly sensitive to U.S. military withdrawal from Europe.

Security of U.S. borders. That our borders might be threatened by military attack in the mid-1990s is beyond belief. This marks a crucial change in the history of American interests. As recently as World War II, we had a real fear that if the Nazis took over Europe, they would threaten the Americas and ultimately the United States itself. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor did violate American territory, and the Pacific coast did feel threatened for a time. Going further back in history, the incident of the Zimmerman telegram exposed real—albeit silly—German plans to attack the United States through Mexico before our entry into World War I.

These threats of direct attacks on the United States by hostile power across the seas provided a major argument against American isolationism. The nuclear age has substituted a different threat to the United States. As long as bombers, missiles, and/or submarines based in the continental United States have global reach, a U.S. troop withdrawal from Europe, should we choose to move in that direction, will not affect the intercontinental deterrence that we have depended on to prevent nuclear attacks on our homeland.

Rather than military attack, the border challenge that may arise in the 1990s is the threat of mass migration. How serious this will be—and indeed whether it is a disadvantage or an advantage in supplying cheap labor for jobs otherwise difficult to fill—is an open question.

Security of access to resources. While oil may be the only crucial resource currently under threat, it will remain important. To be sure, the United States, unlike most of its current allies, has substantial petroleum resources of its own, and also copious supplies of natural gas and coal. Further, conservation and other alternatives could over time reduce substantially our dependence on imported oil.

Nonetheless, the potential disruption of our economy from a sudden interruption of Middle Eastern or other overseas supplies would make protection of our access to these supplies a continued central national interest. In the mid-1990s, no more than in the 1980s and the early 1990s, will we be able to ignore the threat that a hostile Ayatollah Khomeini or Saddam Hussein might put his hand on the valve that could cut off a major portion of the oil we still depend on?
European basing for U.S. forces does relate to this issue. The Gulf War showed the value of having substantial forces based near the Middle East. But, the cuts in troop levels toward 50,000, which are going to take place with or without the further withdrawals below that number that are premised here, will make the remaining U.S. Europe-based forces much less important in the future.

European bases, however, could serve as transit stops in a Middle East crisis. The question, then, is whether future U.S. use requires precrisis presence on these bases, or whether base use will depend on coincident interests with the Europeans on whose soil the bases are located. Common interests in the Gulf crisis led France to give us access to French bases in France; for the Libyan raid, however, even in the full flush of the Cold War none of our continental allies would let us use bases that were nominally our own. If future interests are common, initial U.S. absence from the bases, while not irrelevant, is likely to be remediable.

**Security of Europe.** The United States may no longer perceive any plausible large-scale threats to European security, but the security of Western Europe will nonetheless remain an American vital interest. Should that region fall under the domination of a hostile totalitarian power, as it did from 1940-1945 and as we feared it might after 1945, the situation would create a substantial economic, ideological, and perhaps even military threat to the United States and an extreme threat to our “security against insecurity.”

The fall of Europe is becoming unlikely to the vanishing point, however. The retreat of Soviet communism has pushed that totalitarian threat to the West toward zero; the fundamental democratic stability of all of the major and most of the smaller West European nations has eliminated internal insecurity of the 1920s and 1930s type. The probable continued integration of the West reinforces the concrete of these foundations. These factors make the premise of American withdrawal seem plausible.

The stability of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, is much less certain. But, with the exception of a possible rogue Soviet nuclear threat, the situation there presents minimal danger to U.S. interests other than ideological. For the eastern nations other than the part(s) of the Soviet Union that might end up with the nuclear arsenal, the hard question that must be asked in relation to U.S. security, and indeed that of Western Europe as well, is So what?

Continued economic and political weakness may lead to war between eastern states, or civil war or totalitarianism within them. This may concern the strong West, but is quite unlikely to threaten its security in any substantial way. The world differs from that of 1914,
or even 1985. Great-power hostilities in 1914 led from Sarajevo to the Somme, but with the fading of the Soviet threat, such hostilities no longer exist in Europe. The 1991 battles among the southern Slavs, while distressful to the United States as well as to those who share the continent with Yugoslavia, carried no chance of repeating the escalation of World War I.

**Security of Israel.** Whether for reasons of defense of democratic ideology, honor in maintaining a strong and historical commitment, retention of our only stable alliance in the Middle East, or domestic American politics, Israeli security is likely to remain an important interest of the United States. Israeli actions distasteful to many Americans might shake this interest, but it is unlikely to destroy it. Nor is the Arab challenge to Israel, and thus to the American concern with the security of that nation, likely to go away, although a degree of detente seems at least possible.

As in the case of threats to the Middle Eastern oil supply, continued U.S. presence in Europe seems less significant than common interests with Europe. History suggests that most European nations feel less of a commitment to Israel than we do.

**Security of East Asia.** Relations with Japan are uppermost on this agenda, but do we mean the security of Japan or security from Japan? Japan’s undoubted importance to the United States stems from its economic power, but Americans have increasingly considered that power a threat.

The reduction of the Soviet threat has strengthened Japan’s security. Even if the need for a U.S. security guarantee to Japan were to disappear, however, the United States would still retain substantial interests from Korea around to the Indian subcontinent. Unlike Europe, these nations may be threatened militarily (perhaps by one another), with no overall indigenous political, let alone military, apparatus to oppose the threats; hence a continued weight should be put on U.S. bases in Japan. Perhaps more important, were Japan to build its own military forces to guarantee its security after a U.S. departure, Japan’s neighbors would likely view that country as a threat, as perhaps the United States ultimately might, although the latter is unlikely within our time period.

The issues for South Korea resemble those for Japan in many ways. South Korea’s growing economic power makes it important to the United States; we retain a security commitment and troops; our bases enable us to project power throughout the area. South Korea still fears aggression by its communist neighbor, North Korea. The South may or may not be able to defend against the North on its own, but while the possibility of aggression exists, the American commitment remains important to the South and a meaningful challenge to U.S. interests may also remain.
Threats to U.S. interests may also stem from the rest of East Asia, but it is difficult to specify in advance where. Though China is huge, it is not a military threat to the United States, and we have apparently made our ideological peace with that nation on the basis of noninterference. Our trade with China is growing rapidly, but it remains smaller than our other trading relationships. None of this means, however, that China will present no challenges to American interests. China contains many sources of instability and potential challenges, as does the rest of Asia.

We do not know where challenges to U.S. interests in Asia will arise. We do know, however, that Asia differs basically from Europe in that it lacks a stable core like the EC, capable without our help of providing an indigenous security mechanism for the region. Our withdrawal from Asia could lead to major realignments of political, economic, and security policy on the part of many smaller Asian nations as they adjusted to the overwhelming and uncompensated weight of China and Japan. This situation could easily threaten U.S. interests.

Security of other areas. What is true of the rest of Asia holds even truer for the remainder of the world, including Africa, South and Central America, and Oceania. In each of these areas, different groups of nations present different problems: The better-off nations may turn aggressive or become targets of aggression, depending on the ratio of their wealth to their military power; the poor but large may be tempted by expansionism, particularly against the rich but militarily weak; the poor, small, and weak may become chaotic and export their chaos.

From the viewpoint of U.S. interests, we must treat this heterogeneity of issues and nations for the grab bag that it is. Because the United States cannot afford to prepare specifically for each potential contingency, it must prepare broadly to meet the unexpected in these areas, aware that

- Instability will continue.
- Challenges to U.S. interests (e.g., resource or ideological interests) may well arise.
- We do not know in advance where such problems might occur.
- Unlike in Europe and perhaps the Middle East, where not only are the problems more predictable but common interests with other major powers in combating these problems can be expected, the United States is likely to have to depend mainly on its own resources in these parts of the world.
Security against terrorism, drugs, etc. With one potential exception, future challenges to U.S. security are likely to be managed as they are now and have been in the past: by trying to contain them and living with what remains. The exception is nuclear terrorism, or conceivably terrorism based on other weapons of mass destruction. As noted, it seems extremely unlikely that a new superpower, capable of destroying the United States, will arise in this time period.

However, nations—or groups—capable of manufacturing nuclear or biological weapons and doing great harm to the United States by delivering them by one means or another (including clandestine) already exist. What has been lacking so far is a combination of the capability and the motivation to take the high risks involved. This situation may change as terrorist groups that have the motivation gain access to the capability.

The distance is not great between destroying a large airplane with a small explosive packet and destroying a small city with clandestinely assembled components or with biological poison smuggled in by a small craft usually used to bring in narcotics. A military presence in Europe has little to do with it.

Security against insecurity. Some may contend that the remaining threats to U.S. security will add up to very little. If so, we could abandon all but basic precautions and devote our budgets and ourselves to the internal well-being and the external competitiveness of the United States. For that conclusion to follow, however, most Americans would have to believe the basic contention.

Isolationism in the United States tends to reflect the paranoid style in American politics. When we feel cut off from the rest of the world, we tend to worry that “they” are “out to get us.” An external pullback might distress at least the neoisolationists, who, following in the footsteps of the liberal-progressive isolationists of the 1930s, would want to turn inward to grapple with our own problems of poverty and low productivity.

Economic Interests

Resources. The energy-borne American economic system will continue to depend on petroleum for some time to come. This is not to argue against conservation, alternative sources, increased domestic production, or even gasoline taxes and prices as high as they are in Europe. It is simply to restate the obvious—that some measures may lessen our dependence, but none will make it go away.
Trade. If continued movement toward freer trade is a U.S. interest, then this hypothesized new world will strongly challenge it. Indeed, the premise of American withdrawal from Europe has been based in large measure on a breakdown of recent efforts to open the system further. This breakdown has already begun; it might be repaired, or more likely papered over. Without basic repair, however, a three-bloc system will most likely result in the developed world, a system that is already building. The three blocs will encompass North America, the EC, and Japan, with Japan perhaps becoming the leader of a large Asian bloc, including the “Asian Tigers,” and ultimately perhaps others.

In this scenario, the most likely challenge to U.S. interests will be not the threat to free trade, but the threat to the North American position in the bloc system and to maintaining that position without a trade war. Perhaps the internationalization of industry has made trade wars obsolete. Even if this is not yet the case, however, competition among trading blocs may operate under mutually respected rules. Managed properly by government and business, competition need not lead to war or even to economic disaster. An Adam Smith-like international division of labor might in theory produce a better trading system, but the theory may be beyond reality for the next decade or so.

Environmental Interests

If American interests are based on our ability to maintain and improve our way of life, then environmental degradation has already challenged these interests. Until recently, the issues have been primarily internal, but global warming and holes in the ozone layer have caused other countries to challenge the United States and us to challenge them. While these phenomena may not have serious effects during this time period, a convincing demonstration that they may be imminent could make them a major threat to American interests. Further demonstration of warming, and of its effects on our shorelines and our crops, for example, could make its avoidance a central consideration for policy.

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3This argument is made in Robert B. Reich, The Work of Nations, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1991. Although that study may not be the last word, it makes a strong case against protectionism as a defense of national interests.
Ideological Interests

The Soviet Union seems to be moving sporadically, sometimes toward Western democratic and capitalist ideology, sometimes away. Whatever the overall direction, however, the specific Cold War challenges to the West seem unlikely to be renewed. The Soviet—and Chinese—systems are now seen as working so poorly that they do not present any kind of attractive alternative to nations that in the past might have "moved into the socialist camp." The external expansionist aspects of Soviet ideology have also gone by the board, again in large measure because of weakness.

American ideology consists of more than anticommunism, however. Even the complete disappearance of the Soviet and Chinese challenges would still threaten democracy or international morality in one part of the world or another. Two such potential threats are familiar, one new:

- One familiar threat stems from the old domino theory, which lost popularity, as well as intellectual respectability, as an operating principle when the full costs of the Vietnam War became apparent and when the falling Vietnam domino knocked over only the proximate ones, in the remainder of Indochina. Nonetheless, a more recent variant is provided by the American contention that Saddam Hussein had to be punished for his aggression against Kuwait, else others might feel free to commit aggression with impunity.

- A second old threat to our ideology might arise from a noncommunist move against a small democratic nation. The cases here are few, perhaps only Israel.

- A newer challenge would consist of a nuclear threat to any nation, no matter what its governance. The United States and the Soviet Union have not had to face the question of what we would do if a nuclear country threatened a nonnuclear neighbor, not to mention the possibility of a nuclear exchange, e.g., between India and Pakistan. We may have to.

In addition, the positive promotion of democracy, as well as such related considerations as relief of economic misery in parts of the world, are likely to remain U.S. concerns. These ideological interests also fit into the continuing long-run American strategy based on the belief that a more democratic, less poor world would present fewer threats to concrete American interests, e.g., in resource access.
As the Cold War has become history, American reactions to other external threats have most frequently coupled the defense of our ideology with more concrete interests. We are more likely to defend another nation against aggression when our access to oil supplies is also at risk than to defend a nation that is free, proud, and poor: Kuwait has become more important than Cambodia. And while it would be better to stand side by side with our erstwhile European allies on these issues, whether we do so will depend less on whether U.S. troops are still on the continent than it will on joint needs for jeopardized resources.

As suggested in the Introduction, the new world hypothesized here need not be a traumatically unpleasant one. The central threat of purposeful Soviet aggression will have disappeared, and with it the protracted ideological conflict, as well as the worries and costs of assisting in the defense of Europe. The Soviet nuclear challenge will have continued to attenuate. We will have accepted mercantilist reality on trade matters, and although we would have preferred free trade, modern mercantilism can be managed without bringing about the trade wars of the past.

Major concerns will continue, particularly the need to maintain access to resources on which we depend. Terrorism, drugs, and the environment may present new issues in new parts of the world.

All in all, however, this world would be one in which the United States could live comfortably and prosperously; indeed, U.S. interests, and challenges to these interests, would not differ much from those that would exist even if we were to remain in Europe. While the challenges would differ from those before 1985, most of the changes have already taken place. Although some of us might prefer a set of U.S. policies better hedged against the unpredictable in Europe, U.S. withdrawal across the Atlantic would not end in disaster.
5. HOW CAN U.S. POLICY SUPPORT U.S. INTERESTS?

What are U.S. policy options in this new world, both to cope with our remaining external challenges and to provide the security that would minimize unnecessary challenges from within? If interests and challenges are relatively insensitive to the withdrawal premise, then so will be the policy options.

One question cuts across most of the interests and challenges: Should we be the world’s policeman? The issue is not limited to policing, however. Should we be the world’s director of development, community chest, environmental volunteer? If not us, who?

The United States will continue to have major national interests in

- Free access to resources
- Stability in the rest of the world
- Combating terrorism and drugs
- Preventing environmental deterioration
- Defending democracy
- Preventing nuclear aggression.

So will all the developed world—the EC, Japan, and the relatively well-off portion of the rest of the world.

Then, Why us? Because we are much the most powerful decisionmaking entity in the developed world, and unless the EC becomes far more integrated, we will remain the most powerful. Soviet nuclear capabilities will continue; the Soviet Union, or the heir to its weapons, will remain a superpower still capable of world destruction (albeit suicidally). Our economic power, however, plus our massive nuclear capability and conventional military power and the capability to project that power anywhere, have already made the United States the only multidimensional global power.

As the only superpower, we face the dilemma of whether or not to use our troops or treasure to defend interests that are at the same time the joint interests of all relatively well-off nations. If we do, some developed nations will contribute; some will not, but they will nevertheless benefit from our expenditures and risks. If we do not act, however, nobody will, because nobody else can, and our own interests will suffer.
For European security, the cooperative arrangements of NATO have resolved this dilemma for 40 years. Americans have grumbled about burdensharing, but the NATO arrangements enabled us to parcel out much of the cost and responsibility. Under the premises of this Note—the reduced Soviet threat and the continued integration of Europe—the security arrangement for Europe will have shifted to self-help. Because such self-help will have become feasible, the situation presents no unresolvable problems for U.S. policy.

Thus, while the United States can accept a quasi-isolationist position for Europe, what are our policy choices for all the other American and joint interests throughout the world, where collective self-help can provide no substitute for American power? An examination of policy choices and of potential political, security, and economic postures follows. It is intended to open up analysis of the implications of a world quite different from the one we have been used to, not to report the results of such analysis.

SECURITY POLICY CHOICES

Security policy choices will involve both political considerations and implications for U.S. military posture.

Political Aspects

The political challenges to U.S. security in the hypothesized world fall into five categories, each of which carries different implications for policy:

- Deterrable nuclear threats to the United States
- Predictable threats to Israel and perhaps other areas
- Mass migration, particularly from south of the United States
- Threats to resource access
- Unpredictable threats from other nations; terrorism; drugs; ideology; third-party nuclear war. Predictably, other challenges to U.S. interests will appear; less predictable is what these threats might be and where they might occur.

The first three of these lie largely outside of the world policeman dilemma.

Deterrable nuclear threats to the United States, as noted, are even less likely than they had been, but the potential terror is so great that we must maintain a credible U.S. and/or sea-based deterrent posture. That is a given for all of the security and military posture issues discussed below.
Any current view of American interests must assume our continued special relationship with Israel, as well as continued Arab/Israeli hostility. The Israeli challenge is peculiarly American (and, of course, Israeli) for reasons based on a mixture of U.S. ideology, ethnicity, and politics. Although EC members have maintained commitments to the integrity of Israel as a state, these differ fundamentally from and go much less deep than the American commitment. In addition to Israel, the United States has a special interest in South Korea, but the nature and degree of the threat there is less predictable.

Threats from mass migration will not be limited to the United States, but for each threatened area they will be local and different. Western Europe may be on the receiving end of uncontrollable migration from the Soviet Union and the East, and southern Europe from North Africa.

For the United States, the migrants will come from Mexico and Central and South America. Whether the numbers will be much larger than they are now, and whether they will actually be a threat, or an economic advantage and a cultural stimulus, are open questions. But if the quasi-isolationist and perhaps paranoid American body politic interprets the migrants as a security threat, then by the criteria used here they will be a security threat, to be coped with by the United States acting for itself.

Restrictions on resource access and at least some of the unpredictable miscellany of other threats, however, begin to bring out the world policeman dilemma more sharply.

The divisions engendered by the Gulf War underline the plausibility of the Americans-aren’t-staying premise. The prime and immediate threat stemming from Iraq’s initial takeover of Kuwait was the obvious possibility that Saddam Hussein would go beyond Kuwait to Saudi Arabia or that Saudi fear of Saddam would put the world’s largest oil producer under strong Iraqi political influence. Either way, a dangerous and unpredictable dictator would effectively control a major portion of the oil supply on which the economies of the United States and of Europe and Japan depended.

The United States, and only the United States, however, could prevent the Iraqi takeover with an immediate decision to make commitments and provide sufficient quickly available military contingents to make the commitments real. President Bush made the decision, providing the commitments and the troops that set the structure for both decisionmaking and contributions, from the initial response in August 1990 through the war that began in January 1991.
The United States—the policeman—consulted the European and Japanese beneficiaries, as well as supporters from the Arab world, and worked through the UN, but it then made the decisions. It solicited military and fiscal assistance from the same nations (more like a sheriff gathering a posse than the world policeman of the standard phrase). It obtained most, if not all, of what it wanted, but it made the investments without waiting for the promises or delivery of support.\footnote{The pattern with local Gulf nations whose support was absolutely necessary, of course, differed somewhat.}

The policeman/sheriff/posse mechanism worked well in the Gulf, albeit generating resentments in the United States that might ultimately contribute to the U.S. withdrawal premised here. We have no guarantee, however, that the mechanism can work in the future, nor will we know this far enough in advance to base American decisions on the answer. As things stand now, in deciding future policy the United States will have to choose between (1) acting in the U.S. and joint interest without knowing whether the others who will benefit will support us and (2) not acting and thus sacrificing our own interest. That is the world policeman dilemma.

Future U.S. choices of this type will have to be made case by case. We do not know whether the Gulf outcome will encourage or discourage the American body politic with regard to taking the policeman role. One policy action, if pursued now, however, could lessen the dilemmas for future cases and lighten the American burden of responsibility: the establishment of international structures capable of making conditional commitments to mutual decisionmaking and mutual contributions.

Even in the Gulf case, three existing structures, had they been able to operate effectively for this purpose, could have mounted military power equal to or greater than that of the United States.

- NATO’s power exceeds that of its largest member, the United States, and NATO provides a set of conditional commitments and a decisionmaking mechanism to apply that power to the fulfillment of commitments. In 1990-1991, however, the NATO charter still excluded “out-of-area” actions; i.e., the power could be applied only to defend a member of NATO.

- The combined military strength of EC member nations would have had the gross power, but neither the EC nor the WEU provided a decisionmaking mechanism that might have used that power.\footnote{In addition, having operated almost entirely in a NATO/European context for so...}
• The combined military strength of the membership of the United Nations could also have provided the power. The United States used the UN mechanism to reinforce its decisions, but the advance commitment of the UN is only to the broadest and vaguest definition of "collective security."

Thus, the U.S. interest now lies in anticipating its dilemma by pursuing collective security and collective obligation mechanisms for the broad range of world policeman cases that might arise

• In defense of resources
• In opposition to drugs
• In opposition to nuclear or other terrorism
• For containment or even reduction of nuclear proliferation
• In defense or pursuit of common ideology or the norms of world morality
• In other contingencies that we cannot now guess.

To suspend for a moment the premise of this Note, if NATO were to remain in effective existence, that would seem the best place to start. An enhanced NATO charter explicitly covering out-of-area contingencies would not be a panacea—each member would still decide for itself, with the United States still in the lead—but the presumption would be that it would act as a unified alliance within the charter.

Returning to the premised world, however, or to a world with a NATO that refused to enlarge its charter, a purely European (WEU or EC) security mechanism could still provide some relief for the American policing dilemma. The decision mechanism might not be robust, and it would carry no guarantee that its views would coincide with those of the United States. Nonetheless, the creation of an alternative capability—the sum of the European military parts—to intervene in the European interest if Europe decided to do so would exist at least in principle. The United States—quasi-isolationist or not—would benefit from and therefore should encourage such movement.

Neither of these mechanisms is perfect—neither involves Japan, for example—and making the UN into a true decisionmaking body seems far beyond the time horizon here. But we are not dealing in absolutes; the world will surely continue to have crises, and the long, the Europeans were short on such essential military capabilities as lift and various sorts of intelligence. The United States had to supply these in the Gulf.
United States, as putative policeman, will almost as surely have to make the first decision. The knowledge that this will happen should lead us to search now for ways to make our lot easier when it does happen.

**Implications for Military Posture**

The premise that American forces have left Europe carries with it no logical corollary that they also will have departed from their other locations outside the United States. The conditions that may make U.S. withdrawal from Europe plausible—the drastic reduction in the Soviet threat, trade conflict, and the perception that Europe now wants to and can take care of itself—apply to some, but not all, other overseas security arrangements.

The Japanese and Korean situations come the closest. We have had sharp trade disputes with these two nations, and Americans have faulted Japan’s failure to support us fully in the Gulf. But Japan and Korea differ from Europe because (1) East Asia is more likely to continue to challenge U.S. interests in various ways and (2) Japan and Korea both lie close to sources of real insecurity, specifically, the somewhat inchoate challenge of China and, in the case of South Korea, also the quite concrete threat from its northern counterpart.

In addition, unlike in Europe, where forces organized by the EC or the WEU to maintain West European security after the U.S. departure will carry no threats to Western Europe’s neighbors, in Asia any substantial increase in Japanese military power would constitute a threat and could increase regional instability. For these reasons, although the same causes that could lead the United States to withdraw from Europe might also pull us out of Japan and Korea, the differences suggest that the situations should be considered on their own merits.

Elsewhere, in any case, U.S. overseas military dispositions have different foundations and vary in size and quality. In the Philippines, Singapore, the Middle East, and Panama, each actual or potential arrangement has a basis in mutual security and in economics, but the mutuality is less symmetrical than in Japan and Korea. In none of these smaller nations does the question of that nation’s taking on a major part of the burden of defending itself, nor its trade competition with the United States, nor its role in supporting our battles raise serious questions.

We are in these countries because we and they find it in the interest of each for us to be there. We may retreat voluntarily from some of the bases, or be forced out, but the decisions differ from those in Europe, Japan, or Korea.
As an issue of policy choice for the United States, then, the question becomes: Given that all or almost all American forces are leaving Europe, how much overseas basing structure can the United States retain or does it want to retain?

The answer must be determined individually, for each base, each situation, and each agreement, depending on specific costs as well as benefits. The overall presumption, however, is that many major bases will remain important. If the United States retains the range of interests postulated here—from access to petroleum, through defense of our ideology and our view of international morality, to hedges against a variety of unpredictable threats that may arise in various corners of the globe—then a capability to maintain forces in these corners will continue to be a valuable asset.

Even without withdrawal from Europe, budget reductions are going to move our military stance away from the in-place regional defense postures that we have maintained since the early 1950s, toward smaller and more flexible forces rapidly deployable in different directions. The continental United States is a long way from some theaters of potential interest, however, and flexibility would be enhanced by the continuation of at least a core basing system facilitating U.S. activity in various parts of the world, even including some sort of base-return rights in Europe.

Indeed, suppose that political and economic events were to widen the English Channel and narrow the Atlantic. The continuation of a U.S. military presence under a renewed special relationship with the United Kingdom even after we had left the continent would contribute much to the flexible defense of American interests.

ECONOMIC AND OTHER POLICY CHOICES

For nonsecurity realms of policy, the world policeman metaphor becomes the world treasurer for assistance to the poor nations; the world liberal for international trade; the world protector of the environment. For each of these, the United States has a specific interest, but it is part of a joint interest with all nations or all developed nations, and any single nation opting out of the costs can still receive the benefits.

Unlike in the world policeman case, however, the United States is no longer the only global power. An economically integrated Europe, and Japan, may play as equals or more than equals. Indeed, the United States could not solve the problems by itself even if it were so inclined.
Paradoxically, its lesser relative economic strength puts the United States in a stronger position than does its relatively greater security strength. The best way to ease the world policeman dilemma would be to arrange collective security commitments in advance and then to gather the posse when the crisis arose. But, because no other nation has the power, the United States could not plausibly say “This time, you, not me.”

For economics, the you-not-me statement would be plausible, and it might lead to bargaining, the more so because the failure of a bargain would be less likely to irreparably harm the world than would the failure to act, for example, against the Iraqi aggression in Kuwait. *The United States therefore needs to bargain hard.*

**Economic assistance** presents a complex bargaining situation. Japan has already taken the lead in large parts of the underdeveloped world of Asia and Africa. Western Europe has the lead in aiding Eastern Europe. The United States still leads the Japanese as the major provider of assistance to Latin America and to several Middle Eastern nations; it remains to be seen who, other than the wealthier Arabs, will help reconstruct Kuwait and Iraq.

The interests of the United States and of other nations in providing assistance are ideological and moral, but they are also based on traditional self-interests in future markets and sources of resources. The needed bargains thus include elements both of determining fair shares for the charity portion and maintaining national interests in the investment competition. The United States should recognize both aspects and contribute and bargain accordingly.

**Trade** presents the most complex, the most discussed, and the most difficult bargaining situation. Simple economic theory contends that everyone is better off as a result of the division of labor that comes from completely free trade. The theory is mostly correct in the aggregate, but not for all the partners in the aggregation, or for all economic and social groups in the partner nations. Moreover, the United States must deal for itself rather than concern itself with abstract worldwide interest. The world game is being played not only between the United States and the EC, but above all among those two and Japan. Japan is tough, but in the final analysis it must bargain because it must have trade.

Hard American bargaining that would run the risk of moving toward protectionism in return for a chance to move closer to free trade might benefit us, particularly since the United States may well be better off under mutual protectionism than with unilateral concessions to its two bargaining partners.\(^3\) The U.S. position requires analysis that has yet to be done.

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\(^3\)Such bargaining would differ from a national “industrial policy”—public planning and manipulation of research and development, investment, etc. in order to make the United
In any case, movement toward free trade may be off the agenda for some time to come. We may already have entered into a bloc-to-bloc bargaining world. Such a world would be oligopolistic, rather than purely competitive as postulated by Adam Smith, but oligopolies do not necessarily lead to harsh industrial wars. Quite the contrary, they tend to avoid extreme competition in their own interest. Lacking a realistic possibility of free trade, modified oligopolistic competition—kept honest by the outside threats of the “Asian Tigers” and other hungry new entrants—might, at least for a while, provide an acceptable policy.

Environment is the latest, and potentially the most frightening, element that will disturb our peaceful quasi-isolationist state and force us to consider our role in achieving joint benefits—or avoiding joint disaster. Having recognized that as the largest and richest economy in the world, we have contributed the most to creating the carbon dioxide that may cause global warming and to depleting the ozone layer, we should voluntarily do the most to reverse these environmental insults.

Even with regard to the environment, however, we cannot do it by ourselves. Brazil’s burning of the rain forests, Eastern Europe’s cumulated pollution and continued dependence on dirty processes, the pollution caused by the rest of the industrial world, and the development needs of the poor world have all contributed. To solve the problem, we must nevertheless bargain for contributions by others. For the United States, in all international policy areas from military security to the environment, the 1990s may be the decade of the tough bargain.

That the Russians aren’t coming in this time period, not in the massive military terms defined here, is a near certainty. That the Americans aren’t staying in Europe, or anywhere else, is still a policy matter to be decided. This Note suggests that the United States would be better off if we stayed in Europe and elsewhere—as a hedge against uncertainty and as an aid to creating the collective mechanisms that can soften our world policeman and our other U.S. interest and joint interest dilemmas.

If we leave Europe, however, we will do better to recognize that quasi isolationism, which would be more limited than historic isolationism, is as far as we can move toward separation from the rest of the world. Continuing unavoidable interests across the globe will call for continuing

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States more competitive. The major problem with an industrial policy is that whatever it may accomplish elsewhere, particularly in Japan, it would not work in the United States.
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- Worldwide military basing insofar as we can achieve it
- Participation in world affairs
- Bargaining.

Even so, the world of the Americans aren't staying need not be a disaster. The United States would have much the same interests and face much the same challenges to these interests whether we had zero or 100,000 troops in Europe; therefore, U.S. policy choices will also remain much the same. We can live in a world in which our troops are no longer stationed in Europe. We may have to.