



Executive Summary

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A TRANSATLANTIC BARGAIN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: THE UNITED STATES, EUROPE, AND THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE

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In the words of Aldous Huxley, “The charms of history and its enigmatic lessons consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different.” The same may be said of the transatlantic bargain that has underpinned NATO since its founding, and framed the relationship between the United States and its European allies. A source of both enduring stability as well as perpetual discord, the transatlantic bargain was always a balance between a U.S. commitment to European security in return for a position of U.S. leadership and dominance of NATO, alongside an expectation that Europeans would accelerate efforts to provide for their own defense. Such a balance remains the essence of the bargain in the 21st century, but the context within which the bargain has to operate has changed dramatically, and the nature of America’s relationship with the Alliance is perhaps under more scrutiny than ever before.

In the context of the contemporary security environment, one characterized by the complexity of modern operations requiring a range of civilian and military capabilities, and a changing world characterized by the diffusion of power and the rise of China, the Atlantic Alliance—and the transatlantic bargain that underpins it—must by necessity reorient itself to the changing landscape it inhabits. The combined experiences of its missions in the Balkans, a decade-long expeditionary operation in Afghanistan, and

its most recent mission in Libya, coupled with a climate of fiscal austerity on both sides of the Atlantic, have placed the bargain under immense strain. During the first Obama administration, it became evident that Washington is becoming less and less willing to tolerate what it sees as fundamental gaps within the Alliance—in defense spending, capabilities, and military transformation—and, as a result, it is signaling more forcefully than ever to its European allies, as well as NATO partners, that they must take on a greater share of Alliance burdens, accelerate efforts to generate capabilities and resources, and move away from a deeply-entrenched culture of dependency.

Revising the bargain requires new ways of thinking, both in the United States and Europe. There are signs, however, that not only is there a consensus on the need to revise the transatlantic bargain, but the outlines of what such a bargain might look like are beginning to emerge. U.S. rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific and a reduction in U.S. forces in Europe in no way signal a turning away from Europe, only recognition that the United States inhabits a changing world; this is a process that essentially has been underway since the end of the Cold War, but has been accelerated in the context of the challenges and demands of a decade of war, a climate of austerity, and the rise of new centers of power. U.S. political and military leaders should

continue to affirm NATO's enduring importance and value for America. The United States has already begun to signal a shift in mindset: the U.S. military is reconfiguring its force posture to reflect the wider strategic rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific, but to offset European fears over a reduced U.S. commitment to Europe, the U.S. military should, and will, continue to support regular rotational deployments to conduct joint training with its European allies and ensure both sides are able to operate together on future missions. The role of the U.S. Army in Europe (USAREUR), although reduced in size, will also continue to play a pivotal role in building partner capacity and fostering interoperability through ongoing training and exercises with European allies. Continuing multinational Landpower exercises of the kind currently undertaken by USAREUR will be another valuable tool in demonstrating the U.S. military's ongoing commitment to capacity building and partnership in Europe.

At the same time, allies in Europe must learn to think about transatlantic relations with a new maturity. While Europe has its own internal difficulties that complicate the challenge of revising the transatlantic bargain at a time when multinational defense collaboration is accelerating across Europe, there are signs at least that European allies recognize and understand the importance of more efficient and coordinated efforts to generate resources and capabilities. Such efforts can play an important role in reducing their dependency on Washington.

A revised transatlantic bargain for the 21st century cannot simply be one between the United States and NATO, but must acknowledge and reflect the growing complexity of the European security architecture. Forging a truly strategic partnership between the United States, NATO, and the European Union (EU) may well require a rethinking of the relationship between these two institutions, based on a pragmatic understanding of how European security has evolved since the end of the Cold War. NATO may, at least in the short term, continue to be the primary

mechanism for conducting military operations, with the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) playing a supporting role or taking on only small-scale missions. However, the EU's growing competency in a range of issues from climate change and terrorism, to energy security, development, and crisis management make it a critical actor in transatlantic security affairs. It must, therefore, be at the center of a revised bargain.

Such a bargain requires a shift in thinking about European security matters on both sides of the Atlantic. Washington should resist the tendency to compartmentalize the "U.S. and NATO" and the "U.S. and EU" but endeavor to encourage a more integrated and nuanced approach to transatlantic security relations. In Europe, political will and a more sound fiscal basis are required if CSDP is to achieve its potential and the EU is to take its place at the center of a revised bargain. The transatlantic bargain was a Cold War construct suited to its time; what is required now is a transatlantic bargain that can balance hope and realism, and generate a new culture of transatlantic partnership.

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