



The End of Alliances

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As the Cold War came to an end, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama heralded the “End of History.” Decades earlier, the sociologist Daniel Bell had predicted the “End of Ideology.” While we wait for these grand visions to be universalized in practice, we can anticipate a change that, although more mundane, is more likely to occur sooner: the end of alliances. Military alliances, multilateral and bilateral, have been central to the diplomacy and national security strategy of the United States for more than 50 years—so much so that most Americans will find it hard to imagine a world without them. But such a world is coming, and as with all big changes, it will bring both new opportunities and new vulnerabilities.

Yet the United States is hardly unfamiliar with such a world. In fact, the Cold War era in which such alliances were the pillars of American strategy was an exception and a stark departure for a country that has traditionally been chary of long-term military commitments. The aversion to binding military ties with other countries was true from the outset (the 1778 alliance with France being the exception that proves the rule); the young American republic arose determined to blaze a new trail and regarded alliances with distaste—as pathways to debilitating entanglements and entrapment in the sordid politics of (to quote our current secretary of defense) “old Europe.” This sentiment ran through George Washington’s Farewell Address (as well as Thomas Jefferson’s own subsequent warning against “entangling alliances”) and defined America’s worldview for some 150 years. Convenient-

ly, the physical separation offered by two oceans enabled idealism and pragmatism to blend in an appealing design.

As the Industrial Revolution created weapons and modes of transportation that extended the reach and lethality of military threats, Americans were forced to reconsider the utility of alliances. And so we entered into them to fight the two World Wars—although eagerly discarding them after World War I, as if they were strange and ill-fitting clothes. The retrenchment could not be repeated after World War II; once Germany and Japan were defeated, our erstwhile Soviet partner quickly became our new security problem, and we decided we needed long-term allies to help deal with it. Mindful of the lessons of the interwar years, American strategists also feared that disorder would result from an abrupt departure by the United States from Europe. They believed, furthermore, that the balance of forces would tilt sharply against the United States if Soviet influence, let alone control, were to extend to Western Europe and Japan, which, despite their devastation by war, were expected to emerge again as centers of wealth and industry.¹

Western Europe, for its part, welcomed American protection. World War II had been another sobering lesson about the perils of not counterbalancing German power. An American military presence on the continent—permanent, substantial, visible, and codified by treaty—was, therefore, reassuring. These were the circumstances that produced the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), whose purpose

Lord Ismay, its first secretary general, famously characterized as “keeping the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in.”

NATO proved to be a harbinger of a wider transformation—one that would have global ramifications—in the theory and practice of American statecraft. The logic that gave rise to the Atlantic alliance produced an array of other military pacts that spanned the globe. The United States did not, therefore, merely shed its animus toward alliances; it set about forming them with the fervor of a new convert.

The zeal produced a chain of alliances that included NATO; the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO); ANZUS, our partnership with Australia and New Zealand; and bilateral treaties with Japan and South Korea. The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)—formed by Britain, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and (until 1958, when its monarchy was overthrown) Iraq—benefited from our blessing, though not our participation.²

“Containment,” America’s strategy during the Cold War, yielded what is arguably its greatest foreign policy triumph—the collapse of the Soviet-led communist system—and it rested on this network of anti-communist alliances planted around the Soviet Union’s periphery. The ubiquity of alliances assembled or approved of by Washington during the Cold War prompted observers to describe this phase of American foreign policy as “pactomania.”

Since the Cold War lasted for nearly half a century, most Americans cannot remember a time when alliances were not an essential component in our strategic toolkit. The demise of this familiar institution will therefore necessitate big changes in the ways we think about, and act in, the world. The changes are unlikely to be welcomed—perhaps even acknowledged, until the evidence becomes overwhelming—by academic experts and bureaucracies “specializing” in national security issues. Their theories, policy

prescriptions, reputations, influence, and rewards have, for decades, derived from this earlier, more familiar world. The prospect of entering into unknown terrain can hardly be welcome. Yet alliances have always been contextual and contingent. Pageantry and proclamations accompany their creation, and permanent interests and eternal principles are invoked hopefully, but change over time eventually corrodes such institutions, which ultimately are rooted in particular historical circumstances.

The transience of alliances—think of SEATO and CENTO, for example—is worth remembering as the debate about the utility of our Cold War partnerships gains momentum. This debate is still at an early stage, and those who question the rationale for maintaining our current alliances in a post-Cold War world—and doubt their endurance—are a minority and tend to be dismissed as alarmists and Cassandras who do not appreciate the lofty ideals cementing these partnerships, or as isolationists who cannot understand that the world is too complex for the United States to go it alone.

The prevailing view is that NATO and the other pacts to which we adhere will adapt, evolve, and acquire new reasons for being. But this view rests more on faith than on evidence and is mistaken—for one basic reason. When circumstances change, shared practical objectives, which are far more vital to the health and life spans of alliances than ethereal sentiments, begin to erode. In the words of the nineteenth-century British foreign secretary Lord Palmerston, nations do not have “permanent friends, only permanent interests.” The next decade will reveal the veracity of Palmerston’s dictum.

The Ailing Atlantic Alliance

There is general agreement in the American foreign policy community that the strategic context that nourished our post-World War II system of alliances has changed—if only

because the change is too stark to deny. What is not appreciated—because of intellectual habits and institutional routines fertilized by familiarity—is that the new world threatens to render that system of alliances superfluous, not because of the shortcomings and errors of particular U.S. leaders, but on account of deeper global changes that transcend the comings and goings of presidents, prime ministers, and foreign ministers.

Still, the propensity to reduce international politics to the vagaries of individual personalities remains strong. Consider, for example, the prevailing explanation for the spat within NATO over the war against Saddam Hussein. Generally, American commentators explained it by invoking French contrarianism, personified by President Jacques Chirac, or electoral opportunism, represented by German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. In the lead-up to the war, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld contrasted the spinelessness of France and Germany to the gritty loyalty of NATO's new East European members; President Bush hailed the courage of the leaders of England, Italy, and Spain who unflinchingly supported his Iraq policy and remained resolute during the war itself. In virtually all of these countries, however, in the new and old Europe alike, public opinion solidly opposed using military means to topple the Iraqi regime. The split over Iraq is an important landmark in the strategic estrangement between the United States and some of NATO's pivotal members—a particular manifestation of a deeper process, not an aberration stemming from Chirac's craving to play *de Gaulle* or the parochial priorities of Schroeder's pollsters.

NATO's waywardness will not, therefore, cease once Iraq no longer dominates the headlines and airwaves. Nor, contrary to the claim of Robert Kagan, a leading neoconservative thinker, is it primarily the result of the divide between European pacifism and American realism.³ A divergence in outlook

and predisposition of planetary proportions (“Americans are from Mars, Europeans are from Venus,” in Kagan's now-fashionable phrase) could not have occurred suddenly, in the decade following the Soviet Union's implosion. And if it is not recent, why did the Atlantic alliance work so well for nearly half a century?

Quirky personalities or cultural incompatibilities may add to the uncertainty about the future of NATO, but they are less important than the sweeping changes that have occurred in the global balance of power since 1991. In essence, NATO outlasted the Soviet Union, the clear and common enemy that gave it purpose and unity, even in trying times. Now that the supreme threat has vanished, the alliance lacks coherence. “If only we had Brezhnev back!” lamented a former British foreign secretary.⁴ Ironically, NATO faces irrelevance on account of its success.

If the Anglo-American campaign against Saddam (yes, there were others in the “coalition of the willing,” but they are too numerous to list and amounted to little more than a multilateral patina on what was an American war, with the British playing a subsidiary role) reveals anything about the Atlantic alliance, it is this: the disagreements between the United States, NATO's traditional leader, and two of the alliance's principal members, France and Germany, were caused by substantive and substantial differences over how to address the threats posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the wisdom of preventive war, and the likely effect of the invasion and occupation of Iraq on the already delicate equilibrium in the Middle East.

In much of Western Europe—not just in France and Germany—neither the governments nor the public believed that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction program was the clear and present danger the Bush administration insisted it was, or that the links between al-Qaeda and the Iraqi dictator were as strong and unambiguous as

Washington claimed. The disunity revealed the deep distrust of America's immense power and motives in Europe, most of whose countries saw the Bush administration's dire warnings about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction and alleged support of terrorism as a cover for its real goal: regime change. It was not a matter of differing "perceptions" or poor "communication." NATO's dissidents understood the Bush administration's position perfectly. They simply rejected it.

What was remarkable and without precedent in NATO's history, however, was that the split took the form of a public, and often testy, quarrel. The brazen challenge to Washington that was mounted (among others) by France and Germany was made possible by a signal change: the disappearance of the Soviet Union and, with it, the Cold War. The new world contains a paradox. America's power stands unrivaled. But with Brezhnev gone, so to speak, Europe is freer than ever before to defy it. The risks involved have been reduced—and so has the value of American protection.

That Russia and China broke with the United States on Iraq was not terribly surprising (though it did surprise those in the United States who argued that Russia had irrevocably opted for the West after 9/11). What was surprising was that key members of NATO did not just break ranks with Washington; they worked hard to thwart American policy. Consider some examples. As the momentum for war increased, France, Germany, and Belgium tried to block the transfer to Turkey—a fellow NATO member—of military equipment intended both to strengthen Turkey's defenses against Iraq and to induce the Turkish parliament to permit the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division to open a northern front against Saddam. The stakes being high, the mutiny was hardly minor. Once the Bush administration began drafting a second U.N. resolution—shelved for lack of support in the Security Council—to build international support for

making war against Saddam, there was much speculation about what France and Germany would do. Tellingly, few American observers believed that France would shirk from using its veto, or that Germany, then serving as a nonpermanent member of the council, would automatically support Washington. Some seasoned observers were nonetheless convinced that the French would have to pull back from the brink, realizing the damage that would be done to NATO. But they were proven wrong.⁵ Indeed, despite the hazards of counterfactual claims, it is not unreasonable to assume that France (and Germany) would have opposed the resolution had it been put up for a vote. Perhaps the most dramatic example of alliance altercations, however, was France's warning to NATO's East-Central European members, and the Baltic states and Romania and Bulgaria (who have since joined NATO but also seek membership in the European Union) that they were acting like delinquent children and would be punished for backing the United States. This was more than a matter of Chirac's arrogance and ham-handedness (the focus of American press reports); France was in effect fomenting rebellion against the United States and challenging its leadership of the alliance. These incidents, taken together, were so serious that, following the tiff over supplying arms to Turkey, a leading French foreign policy expert exclaimed: "Welcome to the end of the Atlantic alliance."⁶

Evidence of a rupture in NATO mounted even after the destruction of Saddam's regime. Germany and France joined Russia in reaffirming openly their opposition to the war and made no effort to hide their continuing differences with the United States. France, Germany, and Belgium convened to discuss the creation of a command structure for an independent European force. True, the triumvirate stated that it was not trying to undermine, let alone supplant, NATO. It is also true that, absent British participation and sharp and sustained increases in Euro-

pean defense spending, a continental military force will prove hollow even if it becomes a reality. What such comforting caveats miss, however, is that these acts of dissidence would have been unimaginable during the Cold War. With the Russian bear at Europe's gates, there was far too much to lose. Furthermore, the three mutineers could hardly have believed that Washington would regard their summit gathering benignly. They either did not care or had concluded that NATO would not be around much longer and that they had better start thinking about a new security arrangement for Europe. Either way, the episode bodes ill for the future of the alliance.

The squabble over Iraq was really only one, albeit critically important, episode in what amounts to the unraveling of NATO in slow motion. Key continental European members of the alliance had already begun to see the world differently from the United States years earlier. In 1998, France's foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, described the United States as a "hyperpower," and despite subsequent attempts by French spokesmen to put a neutral veneer on the term, it was not meant as a compliment or statement of fact, but as a warning about unbalanced power. Nor was the assessment, which was extreme even by Gaullist standards, a solitary sentiment.⁷ Other European leaders, including former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, a stolid supporter of the alliance, have voiced the same concern in one form or another. Such views highlight a significant change: during the Cold War the magnitude of American power reassured Europeans; it now makes them resentful. The discomfort about a unipolar world—which is to say one in which American power is peerless—runs wide and deep in Europe. The uneasiness about a Pax Americana, already widespread in Russia and China, has become common on the continent as well. There has been a striking role reversal; Moscow, the principal threat to Western

Europe's security during the Cold War, is now a kindred spirit.

A "West" Without NATO?

NATO's boosters are busy ginning up new missions designed to steady the wobbly alliance, among them the war against terrorism, peacekeeping in war-ravaged countries or "failed states," and the promotion of liberal democracy. Yet these are not unifying objectives for a *military* alliance. Diffuse and amorphous, they will neither evoke passion nor build consensus. The new job description being written for NATO will also extend its reach beyond Europe, but such ventures—"out of area operations"—have typically produced friction, not fellowship, in the past. Furthermore, it is hardly self-evident that NATO has a comparative advantage over states with which the United States has convergent interests, but not a formal alliance, when it comes to putative partners for such missions. Nor is clear why these missions require a grand military alliance.

Meanwhile, what is undeniable is that Americans are growing impatient about what they see as ungrateful European moralizing, while Europeans resent what they view as an American habit of defining solidarity as reflexive agreement. Under these circumstances, if the United States decides, as a matter of policy, to threaten or punish allies who have the temerity to dissent, NATO will become less an alliance than a bad marriage.⁸ Changes in the political leadership of European countries, redefinitions of NATO's objectives, and the fear of America's wrath will not banish the basic problem, which is that even an alliance that succeeded magnificently cannot long survive the disappearance of the strategic conditions that enabled this success. In his famous address before Congress on April 19, 1951, Gen. Douglas MacArthur observed that "old soldiers never die, they just fade away." The same may apply to NATO.

To some, this verdict may seem odd. NATO, after all, has been expanding. Al-

ready an alliance of 16 states in 1991, it added the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1997; and in November 2002, it approved the entry of 7 other states: the 3 Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), plus Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Alas, expansion—not all that uncommon as an organizational response to uncertainty of purpose—promises to make NATO less coherent without making it much more powerful or relevant.⁹ The admission of many new members of diverse backgrounds will make decisionmaking, which NATO's unanimity rule already makes cumbersome, even more complicated. Furthermore, the new members from East-Central Europe, the Baltic region, and the Balkans do not appreciably increase the alliance's military clout or reduce its major deficiencies, such as an anemic power-projection capability.

Nor will expansion be a cure for NATO's decreasing utility for *American* security needs. The alliance lacks the equipment to deploy significant numbers of combat troops outside Europe, and a dramatic change on that front is unlikely given the past patterns and future direction of European defense spending. NATO also ties down more than 100,000 American forces at a time when the major threats now confronting the United States lie outside the European continent. These threats will place a premium on seapower, long-range aircraft, and light forces, making unwise large, long-term deployments of armored units on foreign territory.¹⁰ Those seeking to redesign and rejuvenate NATO suggest joint operations beyond Europe as one solution; but NATO's expanding membership will make it harder to reach agreement on such out of area operations, which were contentious even when the alliance was smaller. Likewise, now that the European Union has grown from its initial membership of 6, to 25, with additional applicants in the queue, it will prove even tougher to reach agreement on the political and operational decisions needed to create

an EU military force capable of supplementing American power outside of Europe.¹¹ Redefining NATO's geographical scope will also create trans-Atlantic differences over the division of labor. American strategists envisage the United States fighting the wars and NATO keeping the ensuing peace. While this formula is understandable given Europe's inability to mount far-flung campaigns, it will not appeal to Europeans. It allots them the longer, messier, and inglorious part of a deal wherein "America does the cooking; Europe does the washing up."¹²

The upshot of NATO's diminishing significance is not that the United States can (or should) act alone as the all-powerful lord of a unipolar world. Nor does it follow that Europe and the United States will move from concord to discord, or that the West will be split asunder by the blood-and-iron struggles that marked the centuries from the Hapsburgs' quest for European dominance in the latter part of the sixteenth century to Hitler's imperialist ventures in the interwar period. Europe and the United States are still bound by many common interests, and that will not change (although there will be other issues on which America and Europe, and Europe itself, will be divided). A world without NATO need not be one in which Europe and the United States are antagonists, let alone enemies, or in which the appellation "the West" is an anachronism. Diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic will have to identify and build on convergent interests and try to contain the damage created by divergent ones to sustain constructive cooperation between Europe and America. That will necessitate sound diplomacy, imagination, and pragmatism—but not necessarily a military pact such as NATO.

The current European members of NATO will form alliances (bilateral and multilateral) or tacit alignments to protect themselves, and the Atlantic alliance could form the basis for a purely European defense community. Europe unquestionably has the eco-

conomic wherewithal to safeguard its security; what it lacks is the will. NATO's creeping irrelevance may actually supply this vital ingredient, stimulate European solutions, and end the strategic infantilization created by a half-century of dependence on the United States. There is, of course, no reason why the United States could not—through diplomacy as well as economic assistance, arms sales, and military training—bolster the ability of Europe's weakest states to defend themselves and to participate as effective members in Europe's security arrangements. The enlargement of the European Union and the consolidation of democracy in the EU's current and prospective members from East-Central Europe, the Baltic states, and the Balkans should, in any event, create a setting in which war and insecurity recede so that the United States needs no longer be the *sine qua non* for peace in Europe.

Korea: Coming of Age

The obsolescence of Cold War pacts is not confined to Europe. Nowhere is the validity of this observation more starkly demonstrated than on the Korean peninsula. Fifty years after the end of the Korean War, 37,000 American troops remain stationed in 96 South Korean bases, and a good portion are pressed up against the 155-mile long De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) as a trip-wire to deter, or failing that to defeat, North Korean forces. (As evidence mounted this year that North Korea was acquiring nuclear weapons, the United States prepared to deploy American troops further south, away from the DMZ.) The terms of the alliance between the United States and South Korea are set forth in the Mutual Defense Treaty, signed on October 1, 1951. The treaty is to remain in effect "indefinitely" unless either side gives a one-year notice of intent to terminate it.¹³

The menace of an overmilitarized, totalitarian, and aggressive North Korea remains. In the recent past, North Korea has

spent nearly a third of its GNP on its military. Hard-pressed to continue the pattern in the face of an ongoing economic crisis, it is now acquiring—indeed, may already have acquired—nuclear weapons to supplement its numerical advantage over South Korea in tanks, artillery tubes, combat aircraft, and soldiers, and to offset its economic weakness and lack of other armaments that are technologically the equal of South Korea's. But far from bringing Washington and Seoul closer together, discussions on how to deal with this threat now create friction; instead of increasing South Korea's confidence in the United States, the specter of North Korea wielding nuclear weapons has reduced it. The United States has grown skeptical about using economic and political incentives to moderate North Korean behavior; South Koreans, by contrast, place far greater hope in conciliation—which was the essence of the "Sunshine Policy" initiated by former president Kim Dae Jung.

Despite the meager results of that approach thus far, Kim's successor Roh Moo-hyun undoubtedly shares its underlying premises. During the 2002 South Korean presidential campaign, which ended with his victory over a conservative candidate who advocated a hard line toward Pyongyang, Roh made it clear that he opposes tougher alternatives and would engage North Korea in negotiations despite American reservations.¹⁴ This approach is supported by the majority of South Koreans. Indeed, the election of the 56-year-old Roh, a human rights lawyer, itself demonstrated both the influence that younger voters have in South Korean elections and the effects of generational change on South Korean attitudes toward the United States. That many South Koreans now regard George W. Bush as a gunslinger whose bellicose instincts are a greater danger to them than Kim Jong-Il's lust for nuclear arms testifies to the change that has occurred in the U.S.-South Korean relationship.

This does not mean that the alliance teeters on the brink of collapse; and some additional caveats are in order. Television news, increasingly important as a source of information in America, favors brief and dramatic segments. The result, when it comes to the intermittent anti-American demonstrations in South Korea is that drama trumps detail. While ill-will toward the United States and the belief that the American military presence in South Korea actually reduces the country's safety have increased, these sentiments have their deepest roots among young people born after the Korean War, who view the conflict as ancient history. Yet opinion polls reveal considerable apprehension among South Koreans about North Korea in general and a nuclear North Korea in particular, and when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld alluded to the possible redeployment elsewhere of U.S. forces now based on the peninsula, South Koreans did not react with full-throated enthusiasm.

However necessary such qualifications may be, they do not change the fact that the end of the Cold War and South Korea's developing ties with Russia and China have permitted South Koreans to express their deepening antagonism toward the United States more freely. As a result, the alliance is weakening and dissatisfaction is more widely manifest than in the past. The ranks of anti-American demonstrators are no longer filled chiefly with students from the far left. The protests are more numerous and account for a bigger slice of the population, and the grievances expressed go beyond the concern that American troops increase the likelihood of war (it is well to keep in mind that Seoul, home to almost a quarter of all South Koreans, is only 30 miles from the DMZ and would be decimated were war to break out).

Not a few South Koreans now see the American military presence as a symbol of national subservience. The sense of subordination was perhaps more tolerable decades

ago, when South Korea was roughly on a par with North Korea economically, but South Korea today is an industrial power and a leading exporter of sophisticated machinery and equipment worldwide.¹⁵ Arrangements accepted in bygone years have become not just anomalies, but irritants. Consider, as an example, that South Korea's military forces, which were placed under the U.S.-led United Nations Command at the beginning of the Korean War, remained under the direction of an American general until 1994, and that, even today, they would return to American command in wartime. The standard argument that this system was designed, in part, to prevent an inter-Korean war initiated by the South simply will not wash anymore; it prettifies an anachronism that many South Koreans also see as an indignity.

The increase in South Korea's economic might and national self-confidence that occurred during the decades of the Cold War has changed the context of the U.S.-South Korean alliance, and longstanding irritants, controversies, and suspicions now have a newfound capacity for disruption.¹⁶ They include lingering questions about the precise role (through prior knowledge, complicity, or negligence) that American commanders played in the massacres perpetrated against civilian protestors in Cheju (1948) and Kwangju (1980); altercations between South Koreans and American soldiers; and extra-territorial agreements that place American soldiers beyond the reach of South Korean laws. None of these are new problems, but all are now more divisive, and promise to become even more so.

As with the Atlantic alliance, better mutual understanding and a greater willingness to agree on "the facts" may help, but only at the margins. It may well be, for example, that South Koreans are wrong to fear that American toughness toward Pyongyang will culminate in North Korea's collapse and saddle them with an economic burden that would threaten South Korea's economic

prospects, strain its social fabric, and create political upheaval. But the dread evoked by this scenario will not be erased by American scholars who, sitting thousands of miles away in Washington, demonstrate empirically that South Korea is strong enough to shoulder the weight. If only the contest between facts and fears were that simple.

The strains in the Washington-Seoul alliance are, of course, not one-sided. Americans are not as divided over the military partnership as South Koreans are, but in time they too will begin to question its wisdom and doubt its staying power. It was one thing to behold images of anti-American demonstrators in South Korea chanting and burning the American flag during the latter part of the twentieth century. That same spectacle will be harder to stomach as the twenty-first century unfolds, especially because the logic of underwriting South Korea's defense will appear increasingly dubious now that South Korea is a modern, prosperous, highly educated country, whose products are a common sight in the American marketplace, while North Korea increasingly epitomizes stagnation and failure.

As the margin of South Korea's superiority over the North increases, the persuasiveness of the argument that it needs open-ended American protection will decrease. A comparison of South Korea and North Korea using standard measures of power reveals just how big the margin is.¹⁷ South Korea's population is twice the size of North Korea's; its GNP in 2003 was \$931 billion, compared to \$22 billion for North Korea; its per capita GNP is 19 times larger than the North's.

Indeed, the proposition that North Korea has military superiority over South Korea is rarely scrutinized. True, North Korea does have the numerical edge in the major components of military power (manpower, tanks, artillery, and combat aircraft). But South Korean forces have advanced (American-made) weapons that are immeasurably better than North Korea's shopworn Soviet

and Chinese armaments, the bulk of which date from the 1960s.¹⁸ South Korea's troops are also far better trained; conduct more frequent and complex exercises; possess better logistics and communication; and are densely concentrated and well entrenched along the DMZ. The South's topography and its carefully plotted plans to demolish bridges and roads in the event of an attack will limit the North's avenues of advance. Furthermore, even without an alliance, the United States could continue selling South Korea the armaments it needs to deter, and if necessary defeat, an attack by North Korea.

The economic disparity between North Korea and South Korea also makes for a gross mismatch in *potential* power. South Korea now devotes only 2.8 percent of its GNP to defense spending, compared to 31.3 percent for North Korea. Were the South to increase its proportion to, say, 5 percent—which it could do without undue strain, given its far larger economy—North Korea, which already hovers at the edge of economic disaster, would simply be unable to compete. In addition, because North Korea's coffers are empty (its external debt totals \$12 billion) it cannot modernize its outdated arsenal through purchases abroad. By contrast, South Korea has recovered from the 1997–99 economic crisis and—thanks to the resumption of rapid growth—has amassed \$129 billion in foreign exchange reserves that it can use to replenish and modernize its military stock through purchases of American weaponry. Meanwhile, North Korea's strategic position has also been eroded by its growing isolation and the altered priorities of its traditional and reliable patrons and providers. One of them, the Soviet Union, has disappeared, and Russia, its successor state, has built extensive ties with South Korea; another, China, is enmeshed in a network of profitable transactions with South Korea and is no longer an unequivocal supporter of Pyongyang. In fact, China views North Korea's risk-laden attempts to use the threat of building nu-

clear weapons as a way of prying economic benefits and political recognition from the United States with increasing exasperation and has cut back oil supplies in an attempt to restrain this brinksmanship.

True, North Korea remains dangerous and unpredictable, but it is an economic basket case and its political system is about as suited to the twenty-first century as the horse and buggy are to America's interstate highway system. The proposition that South Korea is incapable of defending itself against this moth-eaten adversary is laughable, and if anti-Americanism becomes a fixture in South Korean politics, the American public will soon tire of the existing military arrangement, which rests on that very premise.

Americans' patience will be taxed further if political strains in the alliance coincide with a prolonged slump in the U.S. economy. Trotting out statistics on South Korea's contribution to the costs of stationing American troops on its soil will have little effect because the rationale for continued U.S. deployments there will no longer be compelling. Moreover, the 37,000 troops of the American Eighth Army based in South Korea are trained and equipped only to fight North Korea and cannot usefully or easily be transported and utilized elsewhere: potential Pacific trouble spots such as Taiwan or Southeast Asia are too far away.¹⁹

Proposals to reshape the alliance so that it remains relevant in the future fall into two categories. The first recommends expanding its military scope to providing security to the wider region. Left unanswered is the important question of whether and why South Koreans would be eager to be drawn into distant and, possibly, dangerous missions.²⁰ The second calls on the alliance to retain the traditional missions of deterrence and war fighting on the peninsula but to embrace wider goals, such as the promotion of markets, democracy, and human rights in East Asia. A question raised earlier about NATO's future is apposite here:

Why do these (worthy) goals require a U.S.-South Korea military alliance?

Perhaps the most serious challenge facing the U.S.-South Korean alliance is North Korea—not its menace but its mortality. The seriousness of North Korea's economic problems, which spring from the essence of its political system and cannot therefore be remedied without undermining it, are increasing. And while it is true that North Korea's obituary has been written many times and that the resilience of despotisms must not be underestimated, the unraveling of North Korea and the emergence, as a result, of a unified Korean peninsula is no longer a faraway fantasy but a serious possibility.

North Korea's end may prove quick or slow; the consequences for South Korea could be manageable economically and politically, or chaotic and expensive. What is certain is that the emergence of a reunified Korea will cause the case for permanent U.S. bases to crumble. American troops may have to remain on the peninsula for a relatively brief transitional phase, but that will be all.

Japan: Culture vs. Strategic Exigency

If the United States military were to leave Korea, Japan would be the only Asia-Pacific country hosting a major network of American bases. The Japanese calculus under such circumstances cannot be predicted with certainty. One possibility is that Japan might cling to the United States, believing that the end of the U.S.-Japanese alliance (based on the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation Between Japan and the United States, signed in 1960)²¹ would result in an American disengagement from the entire Western Pacific, leaving the region less secure and more exposed to rising powers, above all, China. Alternatively, Japan might not want to be the sole remaining platform for American power in East Asia and, having witnessed the transience of alliances, prepare to defend itself on its own.

The vast majority of those—Westerners and Japanese—who study Japanese foreign and defense policy reject the possibility of Japan becoming substantially more powerful and militarily independent. The reasons for this mainstream assessment are well known: the trauma of World War II, which convinced most Japanese that militarism is a recipe for catastrophe; the searing experience and memory of Japanese cities being fire-bombed and, worst of all, eviscerated by nuclear weapons; the consequent, and abiding, public opposition in Japan to its becoming a military power; constitutional restraints, particularly Article IX of Japan's constitution, which proscribes the creation of a national military—and is the reason why Japan's armed forces are called "Self Defense Forces" and why there is no defense minister or ministry of defense, but rather, a "Defense Agency." Thus the notion of a pacifist Japan, wedded to cultural and economic pursuits and determined to shape the world only through "soft power"—the "trading state," as the political scientist Richard Rosecrance has called it—is deeply lodged in the minds of scholars, policymakers, and the public (both in Japan and in the West). So much so that challenges to its principal postulates are dead on arrival: they are perceived to stem from ignorance about Japan's supposed uniqueness or from an undue enthusiasm for military power as an instrument of policy.

But the prevailing paradigm is in fact hardly unassailable. There is, to begin with, no historical basis to the claim that what Japan is now doing (or not doing) on defense matters must be what it will continue to do (or not to do) more or less indefinitely.

Since the Tokugawa Shogunate (1615–1867), there have been sharp twists and turns in the means and ends Japan has chosen to deal with the wider world. These have occurred as a result of a synergy between changes in Japan's domestic order and in the external environment. Moreover, the buildup of Japan's military might did not

automatically plunge it into war and imperialist adventurism to a degree that set it apart from other great powers. To be sure, from 1931 to 1945 Japan did engage in imperial excess and brutality toward its neighbors; but that did not necessarily reflect a "norm" or national "pathology." (And true, Japan engaged in wars of conquest between 1895 and 1931, but its behavior hardly set it apart from the Western imperial powers, whose colonies in the nineteenth century covered much of the world, providing a model for Japan, a late starter and rising power.) It is crass and simplistic to imply that a Japan that chooses to boost its military strength will soon act like an alcoholic who comes upon a bottle of whiskey. This is not to say that Japan should become a military superpower (that is unlikely), that only good can come from increases in Japanese military spending, or that nothing bad can result from Japanese rearmament. Still, the claim that Japan's present course will extend indefinitely into the future is ahistorical, and the implication that Japan is fated to choose between military "minimalism" and full-blown "neo-imperialism" presents a false dichotomy.

Japan's national security policy could be reoriented—as it has been in the past—by many developments that may occur in the context of diminishing confidence in the United States. These include persistent threats to Japan's sea lanes and distant oil supplies; increasing doubts over whether American military forces will remain in East Asia; the rise of a powerful, supernationalistic China bent on realizing its own territorial claims and becoming East Asia's hegemon; a North Korea with nuclear weapons and long-range missiles; and a reunified and powerful Korea that aligns itself with China against Japan.

Therefore, however rock solid the U.S.-Japan alliance now seems to be, it is not immune to the winds of change. Owing to shifts in the East Asian balance of power, Japan could choose—or be forced—to pro-

tect its long-term interests either independently or in cooperation with the United States, but without a formal alliance or American bases on its territory. It will not be the first nation to have chosen such a strategy. The view that Japan must remain forever tethered to the United States because of an immutable cultural aversion to armaments or on account of its defeat and destruction in 1945 may be commonplace, but no less false for that. There is a range of strategic options available to Japan between the extremes of relying entirely on American protection, while retaining an anemic military force, and embarking on an unrestrained arms buildup that culminates in a replay of the 1930s and 1940s. What Japan is, in fact, most likely to do is to move from its present incongruous position to one of greater military strength and independence.

Any transformation in Japan's military policy will not happen quickly. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) suffer from numerous weaknesses even when it comes to homeland defense, let alone projecting power beyond the horizon. Only 1 percent of Japan's GNP is devoted to defense and fully half of its military budget covers wages, benefits, and administrative overhead, leaving little for developing and purchasing weapons. This pattern is unlikely to change significantly absent a dramatic shift in the current East Asian power balance. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that Japan has the world's second largest economy, with a GNP of \$3.5 trillion. One percent of that sum is a substantial amount, and even small increases in the proportion of total economic production devoted to defense could lead to substantial changes in Japanese military capabilities.

Even today, Japan has a more complicated attitude toward military power than is commonly thought. Japan's defense budget, currently at \$42.6 billion, is the world's third largest. And, as the Japan specialist Richard Samuels has pointed out, Japanese defense spending has grown by 5 to 8 per-

cent a year for most of the years since the mid-1960s, and doubled in the course of the 1980s, making it one of the fastest growing items in the national budget. The economic recessions that have plagued Japan since 1993 have prevented increases in defense spending since 1995, but the eventual return of economic growth will change this pattern.²² Japan is widely seen as weak militarily, but the JSDF has 240,000 troops, making it larger than the armed forces of Britain and only slightly smaller than France's. While the JSDF does not have as many armaments as the military establishments of Britain and France, its major weapons systems are both relatively new and technologically advanced.²³ Because of the importance Tokyo attaches to keeping the U.S. alliance healthy, and the irritation that Japan's trade surpluses have caused in the United States, Japan has acceded to American pressure to buy significant amounts of U.S. weaponry, which have increased the JSDF's capabilities. The value of Japan's defense production is small—Richard Samuels estimates that it is less than one-half of 1 percent of total industrial output—but the country's post-World War II leadership has worked consistently to promote a robust independent capability. It would be utterly wrong, therefore, to assume that Japan has neglected to develop its capabilities for armament production so as to focus on economic advancement at home and diplomacy abroad. Furthermore, because there is no clear separation between civilian and defense industries in Japan, technological advancements in nonmilitary research and development and production have created an impressive national capability to manufacture an array of technologically sophisticated armaments.²⁴ Groups within the Japanese Defense Agency, the JSDF, the powerful Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and the Liberal Democratic Party (which has been in power for virtually the entire postwar era) have pressed persistently for expanding national defense production,

and drastic changes that threaten Japan's security would make their efforts even more effective.²⁵

Neither in theory nor in practice has Japanese defense policy stood still since 1945.²⁶ Read literally, Article IX prohibits a national military establishment, but during the Cold War the United States encouraged Japan to expand its defense capabilities, and it did so. The legal groundwork was prepared by a constitutional reinterpretation, which, in essence was that Article IX could not deny the inherent right of every sovereign state to self-defense; hence the "Self Defense Forces" and not, say, the "Japanese Armed Forces." We also now know that principles prohibiting the introduction of nuclear weapons onto Japanese soil (and their possession or manufacture by Japan) were finessed: Japan did not ask whether American ships and submarines that called at, or were based in, Japanese ports carried such weapons, which suited the United States just fine given its "neither confirm nor deny" policy relating to nuclear weapons aboard its naval vessels.

More recently, there has been a wide-ranging defense debate within Japan itself. The weaknesses of the JSDF—it is unable to deter or defend against an attack on the homeland or to conduct operations far from home—apprehension created by China's expanding military capabilities, North Korea's worrisome quest for nuclear weapons, fears about instability in Indonesia (the bulk of Japan's imports and exports flow through the Malacca Strait), and doubts about America's reliability as a protector have also prompted discussions of once-taboo topics.²⁷

Proponents of jettisoning military minimalism are to be found both within the government and in academic circles. They have called for removing constitutional restraints on the acquisition and use of military power, building weapons that extend the reach of the JSDF (aircraft that can refuel in flight and aircraft carriers, for instance), erecting a national missile defense system,

even acquiring nuclear arms and the capability to eliminate nuclear threats with preemptive strikes. Advocates of such initiatives are no longer considered extremists or militarists and, in some cases, include senior officials who, in earlier times, would have been fired for their lack of caution. For example, it was the current head of the JDA, Shigeru Ishiba (born in 1957 Ishiba typifies the willingness of Japan's postwar generation to discuss military policy with a forthrightness rare among older Japanese) who, amidst the apprehension created by North Korea's nuclear weapons program, proposed earlier this year that Japan should consider preemptive strikes against nuclear threats—and then ordered the JDA to examine the possible purchase of Tomahawk cruise missiles from the United States to acquire the requisite capability. (Japan asserted the right in principle to have nuclear weapons for defensive purposes as early as 1957, and the option of resorting to preemption, for which Ishiba has gained so much publicity lately, was enunciated as early as 1954.) The breadth of Japan's defense debate and the changes in its national security policy point to a shift in public opinion and (as in South Korea) the effects of generational change. Japanese have undoubtedly become more comfortable with and receptive to discussions that invoke the national interest and advocate the need for stronger military forces. The election of Shintaro Ishihara, a hawkish and outspoken nationalist, as Tokyo's governor is in this regard both a landmark and a bellwether.

And there has been more than just talk. Japan's recent defense legislation broadens the range of permitted activities governing weapons developed and procured, missions planned, and training undertaken.²⁸ Concrete steps have been taken, or are being planned, to strengthen military capabilities and to expand the repertoire of out-of-area missions.²⁹ Tests have been conducted to equip Japan's F-15 jets (purchased from the United States and built under license in

Japan) for aerial refueling, and the 2002 fiscal year budget appropriated funds for the first of four aerial refueling tankers. This is more than a technical change; what is truly significant is the political decision to acquire a capability that East Asian states, particularly China, have long flagged as a benchmark of Japan's military ambitions. Furthermore, it is part of a broader process. For instance, while Japan does not have aircraft carriers, discussions about building them have not been idle chatter.³⁰ The JSDF has acquired two *Osumi*-class amphibious support ships, which, while small (they displace only 13,500 tons), have large decks to accommodate helicopters, and conceivably, vertical-takeoff-and-landing (VSTOL) jets. Two more *Osumi*-class ships are being built, and a larger version (with a displacement of 22,000 tons) is said to be under consideration.

Also in the works is a new class of "helicopter-carrying destroyers," which will have two flight decks and a hangar and will further increase the Maritime Self-Defense Force's sea-based air capability, particularly if these vessels ultimately accommodate vertical-takeoff-and-landing (VSTOL) jets. Four such destroyers are planned, and the 2004 fiscal year budget is expected to allocate funds for the first one. Japan already has 16 submarines, with newer models having improved the fleet's capability since the mid-1990s. Four of the latest submarines, the 3,600-ton *Oyashio* class, are now in service, and the MSDF is slated to receive another six by the end of 2007. Future classes are expected to feature power plants incorporating breakthroughs that deliver the advantages of air-independent propulsion (AIP), while removing disadvantages having to do with safety and limitations on speed. There have also been important new additions to the surface fleet since the 1980s. The fourth, and final, *Kongo*-class Aegis destroyer entered service in the fall of 1998, and nine *Murasame*-class destroyers were added to the MSDF between 1997 and 2001. The Japanese

navy's ability to sustain distant operations is still limited by the lack of sea-based air support and a weak capacity for underway replenishment, and while there is still much to be done in both these areas, the planned helicopter-carrying destroyer represents an important step in addressing the former weakness, while the acquisition of four 15,800-ton *Towanda*-class multi-purpose replenishment ships between 1987 and 1991 has improved the fleet's logistical capabilities. However gradually, the changes underway will lead to a Japanese navy with the ability to mount and sustain distant operations.

There have been changes on other fronts as well that suggest that Japan's defense policy is far more dynamic and responsive to changes in the external environment than is generally assumed. For example, in response to advances in North Korea's ballistic missile program (demonstrated by the firing of a Taepodong missile over Japan in 1998), the Japanese government decided to beef up its remote surveillance capabilities. In 2003, it launched two of its own military reconnaissance satellites into orbit in a clear effort to cease relying solely on the United States for intelligence gathered by satellites, despite American opposition.³¹

Beyond providing the JSDF with new hardware, the government has also expanded its activities. As early as 1981, in discussions with the United States, Japan made a major change in its defense policy by assuming responsibility for defending the sea lanes out to a distance of 1,000 nautical miles from its shores. And since the early 1990s, Japan has discussed with India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations the possibility of MSDF patrols to curb piracy in the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. Although vehement opposition from China has prevented action on these ideas, what is significant is Japan's willingness to consider them. More recent legislative changes adopted since the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States

and designed to expand the scope of the JSDF's activities have enabled the Japanese government to authorize the MSDF to refuel and support American warships based in the Indian Ocean as part of the antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan and to transport a Thai military construction battalion to that country.³²

Unlike India and China (both of whom do aspire to become major military powers), Japan's military potential is not limited by a lack of wealth or technical know-how, which is no trivial matter. The chief impediment is political—lack of support at home, fear of a militarily powerful Japan abroad. This is not a minor consideration, but, in the end, Japan will not defy the iron logic of a world where threats abound and self-help is consequently the only dependable option. If Japan faces new and severe dangers, it will not stand still—and its wealth and technology will enable a transformation in military capacity that few countries can achieve. If Tokyo were to increase defense spending from 1 percent to 4 percent of GNP, this would, within a decade, immensely improve Japan's capacity to mount an independent defense. Such a change would require major catalysts and the most likely ones are a powerful and nationalistic China, an unreliable America, threats to the sea lanes leading from the Persian Gulf to Northeast Asia, and a North Korea with nuclear weapons. Japanese defense experts do not rule out such contingencies; to the contrary, they discuss them regularly because no responsible defense planner can afford not to do so.

Changes in Japan's defense policy will create a radically different setting for the U.S.-Japan alliance. It has not suddenly become irrelevant, but its purposes are much less clear: Who is the adversary? What is the nature of the new common threats? How can the alliance deal with them? What new obligations must each partner undertake? There is no doubt that influential Japanese policymakers are asking precisely

these questions. And while the September 1997 "Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation" has been portrayed by Washington and Tokyo as a reaffirmation of the alliance and as evidence of its continuing relevance, it fails to offer compelling answers.

Many ideas have been advanced—by Americans and Japanese—to ensure the alliance's continued relevancy and resilience. But, in one form or another, they involve extending its geographical scope to unstable areas beyond Northeast Asia, and consequently are received warily both in Japan and in neighboring countries. Given the anxieties aroused in East Asia by discussions about increasing Japan's military role, a key requirement for new missions is that they keep Japan's military power within "safe" limits. One way forward is cooperation between the United States and Japan on "comprehensive security," which broadens the definition of security, downplays the military element, and emphasizes cooperative strategies to address economic, social, and environmental problems that spread beyond particular countries and regions. The U.S.-Japan alliance could conceivably appropriate this safer, less traditional concept and remake itself accordingly. Certainly, two of the world's wealthiest powers could do much good by pooling their money and expertise to mitigate ills ranging from pollution to hunger. But why do they require a *military* alliance to do so?

Maybe there is no need to redefine the goals of the alliance because the traditional aims are still sufficient to keep it going. Perhaps increases in Japan's military capabilities could actually strengthen its alliance with the United States. That is precisely the motive of some Japanese officials and scholars who advocate enlarging Japan's military role.³³ But the calls for a more robust military also come from Japanese who have a very different outlook—on the world in general and the alliance in particular. They want to make Japan more powerful and in-

dependent, but not necessarily as a means to reinforcing the alliance. In fact, their fear is that the alliance will not remain an effective and reliable source of security for Japan. They believe that military weakness prevents Japan from resisting American efforts to shape its foreign and defense policies, and they want to change that. As they see it, the problem is that Japan's dependence on American military power has placed it in a position where the nature and extent of threats are defined less by Japanese national interests than by the needs of the United States.³⁴

The value of the alliance will also be assessed more stringently by Washington in the post-Cold War era because the United States now faces threats that are different than before, both in terms of their points of origin and their nature. It is a safe bet that we are at an early stage in reassessing the means and ends of national security and that the continued deployment of 46,000 troops and substantial air, ground, and naval assets in the Japanese archipelago will, in time, appear infeasible and imprudent. And the imbalance of obligations within the U.S.-Japan alliance is among the reasons why this is likely. Article V of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security obligates the United States to spill blood and spend treasure to defend Japan; but it does not require Japan to defend the United States, or even U.S. forces in the Pacific, unless they are attacked "in the territories administered by Japan." This imbalance in obligations will, no matter the original justification, appear increasingly odd to Americans, not least because Japan does not lack the resources to defend itself.

The axiom that the United States must eternally hold a security umbrella over Japan will become steadily less compelling as new circumstances arise. Among the most plausible of these are a prolonged economic downturn in the United States; trade disputes with Japan that create far greater political acrimony now that the Soviet threat

is gone; threats to American security that, because they are new, provoke debate on the wisdom of deploying troops and military assets on the territory of an ally from a bygone era for contingencies overtaken by time. Some American critics have long complained that defending Japan amounts to a subsidy paid by American taxpayers and that the \$5 billion in "host nation support" covers little of the total cost.³⁵

A Familiar Future

So where are we headed? The familiar, seemingly eternal—and, let it be said, extraordinarily successful—alliances that anchored American grand strategy during the Cold War are destined for extinction over the next decade. Heroic efforts will doubtless be made to redesign and resuscitate them. But they will prove fruitless.

This is no reason for despair—either in the United States or in the countries that have been protected by these alliances. America will revert to a pattern it has followed for most of its history, operating in the world without fixed, long-term alliances and pursuing its interests and safeguarding its security in cooperation with a range of partners. This is all to the good: the problems of diplomacy and national security are variegated, and states (and organizations) that are useful and appropriate for the pursuit of one goal will not necessarily be the ones best suited for another. In a world that presents threats and opportunities wholly different from those encountered during the Cold War, the United States will be best served by agile and creative statecraft that looks beyond—but does not exclude—traditional friends and solutions, and that musters alignments and coalitions that vary according to the context.

The absence of quasi-permanent military alliances will, therefore, not mean the absence of alignments; there will be a great many of the latter, which will be created by the convergence of America's interests with those of other states over specific issues and

challenges. And there is no reason why our traditional allies should not be among these states; a shared past and sheer familiarity guarantee that they will be. Yet the United States will also find new partners, including states from which it was separated on account of the Cold War.

India, a country that was aligned with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, is a case in point. Cooperation between the United States and India has been on the upswing since the early 1990s and has even included joint naval patrols in the Strait of Malacca, regular meetings on global security issues, military-to-military contacts, and discussions about the possible sale of U.S. arms. Poland promises to be another. Its interests intersect with those of the United States, and to argue that Poland's membership in NATO is the reason for that is to confuse cause and effect.

Nor will the lack of alliances require the United States to disengage from parts of the world where it was entrenched militarily. America can be involved in Europe and Japan and on the Korean peninsula in a variety of ways without being bound by formal defense treaties. Think of the Marshall Plan or the Truman Doctrine, neither of which required us to enter into long-term military alliances. Or consider Israel, which is invariably referred to as an ally, even though there is no formal alliance between it and the United States. Yet it is hard to think of a country with which we have ties that are as extensive and deep. The commonly heard argument that the end of NATO will inevitably erode the American position in Europe is hardly persuasive. To return to Lord Ismay, the Germans are "down" (in the sense that they are integrated into the EU and have used cooperation as the watchword for dealings with their neighbors for over 50 years); the Russians are "out" (the idea that Russia, mired in innumerable domestic problems, poses a threat to the Baltic states or the states of East-Central Europe is far-fetched, as evidenced by the very small pro-

portion of their budgets that these states have devoted to defense spending since 1991); and the United States can remain "in" Europe and contribute to its stability in many ways without stationing thousands of troops there.

As for Japan and South Korea (or a reunified Korea), they too can pursue their interests and protect their territory through many means without maintaining formal military alliances with the United States. These are the wealthy centers of global capitalism. They have the resources to do more for their own defense and, when independent efforts do not suffice, they can form alignments and even alliances with their neighbors, just as states have done for centuries. What they lack is willpower and confidence, which have been diminished by 50 years of dependence on the United States and supplanted by strategic solipsism.

While the claim that the end of American-led alliances will promote German hegemony or Japanese militarism is so commonplace as to be seemingly beyond challenge, it ignores the changes that have occurred within Germany and Japan, and in Europe and East Asia over the past half-century. It consigns the United States to maintaining obligations that are now of questionable worth in a world of new challenges. And it smacks of hubris in implying that without an American presence that takes the form of military pacts, these regions will be consumed by upheaval because the countries within them are incapable of managing their own affairs.

The end of America's alliances with its present partners need not—indeed, will not—culminate in estrangement, let alone enmity, between us and them. The ties, interconnections, and dependencies that have developed over the decades on multiple fronts are too numerous and substantial for that to happen. The conclusion that our Cold War alliances will fade away is emphatically not a call for isolationism, which is neither desirable nor possible in an inter-

dependent world. It is also not a recommendation that the United States should throw cooperation to the wind and attempt to remake the world more or less single-handedly: indeed, it should not because it cannot. Although the world will remain unipolar for at least a generation (there is no candidate on the horizon capable of surpassing American military and economic power), a state that does not have military allies but wields unprecedented power need not be guided by *hauteur*.

We are, then, at the end of an era—but not necessarily at the beginning of an entirely new one. We have advanced our interests without military alliances for most of our history, and with remarkable success. In that sense, the future that beckons is a familiar one. ●

Notes

I have benefited from discussions over the years with Victor Cha, Thomas Christensen, Nicholas Eberstadt, Aaron Friedberg, Paul Giarra, Michael Green, Andrew Marshall, Alexander J. Motyl, Stephen Rosen, Richard J. Samuels, and S. Enders Wimbush. Nicholas X. Rizopoulos read the manuscript in its final stages, offering his typically incisive comments. I am grateful to Sue Horton, editor of “Sunday Opinion” at the *Los Angeles Times*, for giving me the opportunity to present the initial version of the arguments advanced here in her pages (on March 2, 2003) and to Cathy Popkin and Richard Samuels for reading an early draft of this essay. In thanking these individuals, I should add that they do not necessarily share my conclusions.

1. Outside these traditional centers of industrial and military power, the advance of decolonization in the decades following World War II was creating a collection of newly independent states, which would become known as the Third World. As the Cold War gained momentum, the United States used bilateral and multilateral alliances, economic aid, and even military interventions and counterinsurgency operations to thwart the (real or imagined) spread of Soviet influence in these former colonies—particularly in radical nationalist regimes where the inchoate versions of socialism held considerable appeal, the Soviet

Union was considered a friend, and the Soviet model was admired. The overall American objective was to enlist Asian and African allies in the worldwide competition against the Soviet Union, or, at a minimum, to counter Soviet influence.

2. Until 1958, CENTO was called the Baghdad Pact.

3. See Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

4. Quoted in Timothy Garton Ash, “How the West Can Be One,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 26, 2003, p. 13.

5. Henry Kissinger, for example, remarked that the fracas over Iraq could prove “catastrophic for the Atlantic alliance,” but, perhaps for that very reason, concluded that “in the end, French realism will not permit France to stand aside while its strongest ally—which has stood by it through two world wars and the Cold War—pursues its vital interests with a coalition of the willing” (Henry A. Kissinger, “Role Reversal and Alliance Realities,” *Washington Post*, February 10, 2003).

6. Francois Heisbourg, quoted in Michael J. Glennon, “Why the Security Council Failed,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82 (May/June 2003), p. 25.

7. I do not mean to say that Védérine, a Socialist, is himself a Gaullist, but that his characterization was quintessentially so.

8. Some displays of pique, notably the decision to replace “French fries” with “Freedom fries” on the House of Representatives’ menu—without, as it happens, doing anything about the word “menu” itself—did not have the positive consequences for America’s reputation that congressional Francophobes might have envisaged.

9. See Sean Kay, “Putting NATO Back Together Again,” *Current History*, vol. 102 (March 2003), pp. 106–112.

10. See William Richard Smyser, “American Might Is Sailing Away from Europe,” *Financial Times*, March 2, 2003. Smyser does not, however, believe that this portends the end of NATO.

11. Tony Judt, “Europe Finds No Counterweight to American Power,” *New York Times*, April 20, 2003.

12. The phrase is that of Timothy Garton Ash, in “How the West Can Be One.”

13. In essence, the treaty calls upon the parties to “consult together whenever, in the opinion of either of them, the political independence or security of either of the Parties is threatened by external armed attack” and “to develop appropriate means to deter armed attack” and to “take suitable measures in consultation and agreement to implement this Treaty and to further its purposes” (Article II); to regard “an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control” as a threat to “its own peace and safety” and to “meet the common danger in accordance with its own constitutional processes” (Article III). Under Article IV, South Korea gives the United States “the right to dispose...land, air, and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea...” For the full text of the treaty, see www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/korea/kor001.htm.

14. This increases the possibility of a widening of the gap between the United States and South Korea. A graphic demonstration that this could happen occurred in March 2003, when North Korean jets tried to force a U.S. surveillance plane operating in international airspace to land, a move that suggested that Pyongyang was planning to hold the crew hostage. Roh’s insistence that the United States proceed cautiously despite this incident did not please Washington. See Robyn Lim, “South Korea: The Yanks May Go Home,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 12, 2003.

15. On the economic transformation, see Alice Amsden, *Asia’s Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

16. See Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: Norton, 1997), esp. ch. 6; Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), ch. 4; and Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

17. The data comparing North and South Korea’s economic and military power are from Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook 2002*, available at www.cia.gov. (The CIA calculates GNP figures on the basis of purchasing power parity; the figures for 2002 are estimates.)

18. One of the most thorough analyses of the inter-Korean military balance is provided by Michael O’Hanlon, “Stopping a North Korean Invasion: Why Defending South Korea Is Easier Than the Pentagon Thinks,” *International Security*, vol. 22 (spring 1998), pp. 135–170. O’Hanlon neither anticipates nor advocates the end of the alliance between the United States and South Korea.

19. Victor D. Cha, “Focus on the Future, Not on the North,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26 (winter 2002/03), p. 95.

20. Cha, “Focus on the Future,” offers many creative ideas for reshaping the alliance.

21. The treaty now in effect was signed in January 1960 and became operational in June 1960. The first security treaty, “The Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan,” was signed on September 8, 1951, and entered into force on April 28, 1952, but it has expired and been superseded by the 1960 treaty. I refer in this article to the 1960 treaty, which, in essence, calls for consultations between the United States and Japan in the event that “the security of Japan or international peace and security in the Far East is threatened (Article III) and for joint action against armed attacks “against either party in the territories under the administration of Japan” (Article V); and provides U.S. “land, air and naval forces” the right to use “facilities and areas in Japan” (Article VI). Article X stipulates that either party may terminate the treaty after giving one-year notice but only after the treaty has been in effect for 10 years. Text of the treaty in Michael J. Green and Patrick Cronin, *The US-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), appendix 2, pp. 330–32. The text of the 1951 treaty is available at www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/japan/japan001.htm.

22. The figure for Japan’s defense budget is from International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2002–2003* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 299; Richard J. Samuels, *Rich Nation, Strong Army: National Security and the Technological Transformation of Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 323.

23. For the composition and weapon systems of the JSDF and its size in relation to the armed forces of Britain and France, see International Institute for

Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2002–2003* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 39–42, 60–63, 151–52.

24. This is a major theme in Samuels, *Rich Nation, Strong Army*, on whose analysis I rely here. See esp. ch. 9; his estimate of defense production's share of total Japanese output appears on pp. 319–20.

25. See Michael J. Green, *Arming Japan: Defense Production, Alliance Politics, and the Postwar Search for Autonomy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). METI was previously known as the Ministry for International Trade and Industry (MITI).

26. For a more detailed discussion, see Rajan Menon, "Japan: The Once and Future Superpower," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 53 (January–February 1997), pp. 29–34; and Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996).

27. For recent examples, see Masashi Nishihara, "Japan Needs to Protect Itself Against North Korea," *International Herald Tribune*, March 4, 2003; Richard Lloyd-Parry and Robert Thomson, "Japan Seeks Parasol in Shade of US Umbrella," *London Times*, February 26, 2003; Robin Gedye and Colin Joyce, "Tokyo Threat Marks End of Pacifism," www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content...s%2F2003%2f02%2f15%2Fwkor114.xml&site=5; "Debate: Should the 'Peace' Constitution Be Revised?" *Asahi Shimbun*, April 28, 2003; Richard Lloyd-Parry and Robert Thomson, "Japan to Review Defence Policy to Cope with New Threats," *London Times*, February 26, 2003; Ayako Doi, "Unforeseen Consequences: Japan's Emerging Nuclear Debate," *PacNet*, no. 12, March 13, 2003; Gillian Tett and Alexandra Harney, "Japan's Defence Role Scrutinized," *Financial Times*, June 13, 2001; Sebastian Moffett, "Japan Begins to Doubt Its Defense Capabilities," *Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 2003.

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sponsibility for Japan, who kindly shared with me his expertise on the JSDF.

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34. This point was suggested to me by Paul Giarra.

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