

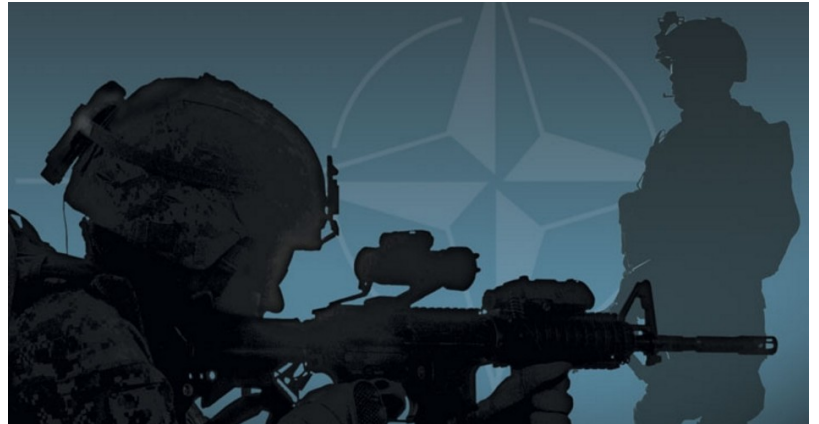


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NATO: From Defense to Offense

All America and much of the world had already heard President Barrack Obama's pledge to not send U.S. combat units back into Iraq where up to 160,000 U.S. troops were engaged in combat during the Iraq War of 2003-2011. But to be sure we got the message, he said it again in his September 10 address to the nation on how he plans to deal with the jihadists known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. While announcing the dispatch of an additional 475 U.S. military personnel to Iraq — bringing the total to about 1,600, the president emphasized his pledge.



"As I have said before, these American forces will not have a combat mission — we will not get dragged into another ground war in Iraq," he said. "But they are needed to support Iraqi and Kurdish forces with training, intelligence and equipment."

But during the debate that followed over whether the effort to, in the president's words, "degrade and ultimately destroy" the Islamic State can succeed without U.S. ground forces, what went largely overlooked was Obama's plan to commit American "boots on the ground" elsewhere. American troops will soon be in Estonia. And Latvia. And Lithuania. In a speech that received considerably less attention, Obama, in the Estonian capital Tallinn on September 3, spoke of plans for a new NATO readiness force to facilitate potential military interventions in the Baltic nations.

"Here in the Baltics, it would mean positioning more American equipment so it's ready if needed," Obama said. "It would mean more training and exercises between our militaries. And it would mean more U.S. forces — including American boots on the ground — continuously rotating through Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania."

Those independent states, formerly part of the Soviet Union, are now among the 28 member states of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that began in 1949 with 12 member nations for the purpose of defending non-communist Europe against Soviet aggression. While political talk of America's many commitments around the globe often include mention of "mission creep," the United States and NATO went on a mission gallop when the former satellite states of the Soviet Union were freed from ties to Moscow in the 1990s. What that means in terms of America's far-flung military commitments and war guarantees was spelled out clearly and emphatically by the U.S. president in his September 3 address in Tallinn, when he spoke of the crucial Article 5 of the NATO pact:

And I say to the people of Estonia and the people of the Baltics, today we are bound by our treaty Alliance. We have a solemn duty to each other. Article 5 is crystal clear: An attack on one is an attack on all. So if, in such a moment, you ever ask again, "who will come to help," you'll know the answer — the NATO Alliance, including the Armed Forces of the United States of America, "right here, [at] present, now!" We'll be here for Estonia. We will be here for Latvia. We will be here for Lithuania. You



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lost your independence once before. With NATO, you will never lose it again.

And according to the treaty commitment the president described so clearly, we will be there if need be for each and every one of our 24 other NATO partners we are pledged to defend. It is seldom the topic of editorials or Sunday morning talk shows, so even reasonably well-informed Americans might not be aware that their sons and daughters may be called upon to die on battlefields in countries whose very existence might remain unknown to us until some real or artificially created crisis propels one or more of them onto the front pages of our daily newspapers and the lead stories on nightly newscasts. If President Obama, Vice President Biden, and congressional war hawks such as John McCain have their way, NATO and its mutual defense commitments will be extended even further to take in still more members, including Ukraine, where a Russian separatist movement supported by Moscow has brought on U.S. and European economic sanctions against Russia, and the former Russian province of Georgia, where Russian and Georgian troops clashed over the status of South Ossetia in 2008. NATO plans for troop movements in Eastern Europe and the Balkans have already prompted Russian president Vladimir Putin to announce plans for development of a new generation of nuclear weapons to counter what he sees as a Western threat. Further NATO expansion could have American soldiers and Marines committed to fight and die to defend South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two provinces of Georgia illegally occupied by Russian troops, according to a declaration passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate this summer before Congress left town for a five-week vacation. When the United States is not plunging into international gang wars as the world's policeman, it is issuing citations as the planet's traffic cop.

“Worse Than Original Sin”

“I don't care if entangling alliances have been considered worse than original sin since George Washington's time,” John D. Hickerson, State Department director of European affairs, told his colleague, Theodore C. Achilles. “We've got to have a peacetime military alliance with Western Europe. And we've got to get it ratified.”

It was New Year's Eve, 1947, and much of the world was still in the early stages of recovery from the devastating effects of two world wars waged within a span of scarcely more than 30 years. Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations, created after World War I, failed, and much of the blame was attributed to the refusal of the U.S. Senate to ratify the treaty and bring the United States, an emerging postwar power, into the world body. Franklin Roosevelt, who had served in the Wilson administration as assistant secretary of the Navy, was determined to succeed where his mentor had failed, and at the end of World War II, the United Nations won the approval of even alleged “diehard isolationists” in the Senate such as Robert Taft of Ohio and Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan. Vandenberg, in fact, played a key role in the creation of the new world organization he believed would eliminate the need for the type of competing military alliances that can turn regional conflicts into world wars. But the Soviet Union, a Western ally in the war against Hitler's Germany, moved quickly at war's end to consolidate its territorial gains in the war, bringing the Eastern European states of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia to join the Baltic states in the Soviet orbit. Fear of Soviet expansionism and aggression sparked a desire in the West for a defensive alliance to keep the Russian bear at bay. For American conservatives, the postwar arrangements for collective security pitted their anti-communist convictions against the long-held tradition of avoiding those “entangling alliances” that Hickerson had described dismissively as “worse than original sin.” It is a conflict with a history older than the nation itself.



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Early inhabitants of the shining “city on a hill” in the New World treasured the isolation from the corrupt and perpetually warring governments of Europe. As the rivalry between England and France spread to the American colonies, the colonists appreciated the British war against the French in North America in the 1760s but were reluctant to pay taxes or supply troops to support the war. Ironically, the republic would heed Washington’s and Jefferson’s warnings against “entangling alliances” for its first century and a half, though the nation gained its independence with the help of an alliance with France against England. The Treaty of 1778 provided the colonists, deprived of their commercial ties with Britain, with new markets as well as a crucial military ally in France. France’s bloody revolution of 1789 and the wars that followed cooled America’s friendship with France and led to the Neutrality Acts of 1793 and 1794 that kept the new American nation out of the war between France and England. The treaty with France was formally ended with the Convention of 1800. It would be nearly 150 years before the United States entered another treaty of military alliance with any of the nations of Europe.

Taft’s Warning

In early 1948, a communist coup in Prague, as well as Soviet pressure on Norway to sign a non-aggression treaty with the communist bloc and the possibility of a communist victory in Italy’s election, combined to heighten fears of Soviet expansion in a war-weakened Europe. Communist influence in France was yet another cause of anxiety among leaders of the Western nations, mindful as they were of British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery’s observation that all that kept the Soviet Union and its army of 25 million from marching to the English Channel was an inadequate supply of shoes. With encouragement from the U.S. State Department, Britain and France, along with Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, signed a 50-year mutual defense treaty that promised an integration of their forces and a guarantee that an attack against one would be an attack against all. The Brussels-based alliance sought the added membership of the United States, which had emerged from the war as the world’s foremost industrial and military power and had already become involved in the economic recovery and security of Western Europe with the Marshall Plan.

The ink was hardly dry on the Brussels pact when conversations about a North Atlantic security alliance were held with British and Canadian representatives at the Pentagon. The United States did not immediately join the Western union, however, due to internal political concerns. The country was climbing down from the extraordinary and unprecedented military buildup for World War II. There were concerns that the alliance would drain scarce resources from President Truman’s shrinking military budget. Traditional non-interventionists such as Senator Vandenberg, by then actively involved in the United Nations, feared the new alliance would undermine the UN’s mission. And there was Senator Robert A. Taft, the Senate majority leader, “Mr. Republican” and a determined foe of efforts to draw the United States into Europe’s wars.

Taft was also strongly anti-communist, however, and supported the concept of letting the Kremlin know that if Russia attacked Western Europe, “the United States would be in the war.” But the NATO treaty when presented to the U.S. Senate in 1949 went beyond that, Taft argued. He compared it unfavorably to the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed in the early days of the Republic, which served notice to European nations to stay out of conflicts in the Western Hemisphere.

“Under the Monroe Doctrine we could change our policy at any time,” Taft said in explaining his vote against the NATO alliance. “We could judge whether perhaps one of the countries had given cause for



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the attack. Only Congress could declare a war in pursuance of the doctrine." The North Atlantic pact, on the other hand, "obligates us to go to war if at any time during the next 20 years anyone makes an armed attack on any of the 12 nations." What's more, under cover of the treaty obligation, "the President can take us into war without Congress." Arming all the member nations against the Soviet Union went beyond deterrence to provocation, Taft said. "It thus becomes an offensive and defensive military alliance against Russia. I believe our foreign policy should be aimed primarily at security and peace, and I believe such an alliance is more likely to produce war than peace." The Russians, who came out of the Second World War with the world's largest army, might decide that war "might" better occur now rather than after the arming of Europe is completed," Taft warned. Arming nations on Russia's border would be especially provocative the Ohioan said, backing up that point with a question that might well be pondered by those now in Congress who are eager to send arms to Ukraine:

"How would we feel if Russia undertook to arm a country on our border; Mexico, for instance?"

Bankruptcy for "Security"?

Taft also raised an economic objection to NATO that is even more relevant today than it was in 1949. "Furthermore, can we afford this new project of foreign assistance?" he asked. "I think I am as much against Communist aggression as anyone, both at home and abroad; certainly more than a State Department which has let the Communists overrun all of China.... But we can't let them scare us into bankruptcy and the surrender of all liberty, or let them determine our foreign policies."

Taft's objections to fiscal profligacy should be embarrassing to today's solons, most of whom went to Congress claiming to be fiscal conservatives. "We are already spending \$15,000,000,000 on our armed forces and have the most powerful Air Force in the world and the only atomic bomb," Taft said. "We are spending \$7,000,000,000 a year on economic aid to build up those countries to a condition of prosperity where communism cannot make internal progress. Shall we start another project whose cost is incalculable, at the very time when we have a deficit of 1,800,000,000 dollars and a prospective deficit of three to five billion? The one essential defense against communism is to keep this country financially and economically sound. If the President is unwilling to recommend more taxes for fear of creating a depression, then we must have reached the limit of our taxpaying ability and we ought not to start a new and unnecessary building project."

Even allowing for inflation, which Washington does all the time, the numbers cited by Taft as cause for concern about rising deficits are dwarfed by annual deficits of several hundreds of billions of dollars — indeed, in one recent year one *trillion dollars* — that are accepted as routine by Washington's politicians and pundits who typically deplore the more than \$17 trillion national debt in one breath and cry in the next that the nation is not spending nearly enough for "defense."

Today, when the European Union has a larger population and a greater Gross Domestic Product than the United States, the majority of NATO's military spending is still being done by Washington. According to an August 29, 2014 report in the *Wall Street Journal*, "The U.S. accounts for about 73% of the roughly \$1 trillion in total military spending by NATO countries each year." That's about \$730 billion the United States is paying for the defense of 27 other nations as well as our own. Washington is citing the alleged "renewed threat from Russia" in its efforts to pressure member nations to increase their military "preparedness."



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"If a nation relies on the alliance as a bit of a whole-life insurance policy for security, you have to pay the premiums of that life insurance," Douglas Lute, U.S. ambassador to NATO, told the *Journal*. But nations that have been relying for nearly 70 years on America's armed forces and nuclear umbrella to shield them from danger are reluctant to pony up now.

Decade Without End

The treaty passed with bipartisan support, and for the next several decades, Taft's worst fears did not come true. The United States did not go to war with Russia. But NATO's size and mission have grown considerably and may still be growing. The 12 nations originally in the pact — Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States — became 14 in 1952 when Greece and Turkey joined. Germany joined in 1955. U.S. nuclear missiles near the Russian border in Turkey were regarded as a provocation by Moscow and their secret removal was part of the agreement that ended the crisis over missiles in Cuba in 1962. Spain joined NATO in 1982. Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland were added to the NATO roster in 1999 and nine more Eastern European countries were added by 2009, bringing the alliance to its current membership of 28 nations.

Despite military budget constraints, the United States not only provided arms for its NATO allies but began the post-World War II practice of stationing U.S. armed forces in NATO countries, a security arrangement widely believed to be temporary until our European allies were sufficiently recovered from the war to provide for their own defense. That, apparently, was the way general of the Army and future president Dwight D. Eisenhower saw it. Upon taking command of NATO in 1951, Eisenhower said, "If in ten years, all American troops stationed in Europe for national defense purposes have not been returned to the United States, then this whole project will have failed."

Recalling that prediction, Pat Buchanan wrote in his 1999 book, *A Republic Not an Empire*, "True to his word, in 1961, Ike urged John F. Kennedy to begin bringing the troops home." But if actions speak louder than words, Eisenhower, who did not leave office until January 1961, might have begun bringing some of the troops home himself. "True to his word," Ike urged the next guy to do it, just as he saved his warning about the military-industrial complex, as important as it was, for his farewell address.

NATO and the New World Order

It is, of course, possible Eisenhower did not at all mean what he said in 1951, but merely intended to allay the fears of Americans concerned with the prospect of the United States defending much of the world in perpetuity. Either way, NATO has, in fact, become as permanent a part of the geopolitical scene as the United Nations and is, in fact, a significant pillar of the UN. Indeed, the NATO treaty had references in almost every one of its articles to Article 53 of the UN Charter, which recognizes the right of nations to form regional defense coalitions. As James Perloff documented in *The Shadows of Power*, the influential Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) saw NATO as a needed first step toward achieving its long-term goal of a one-world government. In 1948, the year the Treaty of Brussels was inked and one year prior to the signing of the NATO treaty, the CFR publication *Foreign Affairs* pointed out that a "regional organization of nations, formed to operate within the framework of the United Nations, can only strengthen that organization." Shortly after the NATO treaty was ratified by the U.S. Senate, CFR member Elmo Roper wrote in a pamphlet entitled *The Goal Is Government of All the World*:



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But the Atlantic Pact (NATO) need not be our last effort toward greater unity. It can be converted into one more sound and important step working for world peace. It can be one of the most positive moves in the direction of One World.

In short, Perloff observed, NATO was seen as a “halfway house” on the road to a new world order, in which the independence of once-sovereign nations would be, if not eliminated altogether, made subordinate to the dictates of international organizations with a monopoly on military power for “peacekeeping” purposes.

On the Offensive

Before President Clinton committed U.S. troops to a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, he sent American pilots on a NATO bombing campaign against Serb targets in both Serbia and Kosovo in 1999 to stop a campaign of “ethnic cleansing” in Kosovo during the war that had broken out in the former Yugoslavia. The deaths of thousands, including an estimated 1,600 civilians, were attributed to the aerial assaults that went on for the better part of three months without authorization of Congress, verifying the warning Robert Taft issued half a century earlier. In fact, the House of Representatives voted three times against the intervention, but Clinton proceeded with it anyway in violation of both the U.S. Constitution and the War Powers Act of 1973. The 8,000 U.S. troops sent to Bosnia under the auspices of the United Nations were bearing arms in a land where Americans had never fought before and where no American interests were at stake. The warring factions were not NATO members, nor had they attacked or threatened NATO members. The action went far beyond the mission of the supposedly defensive alliance. Madeleine Albright, Clinton’s Secretary of State, declared NATO must extend its reach as a “force for peace from the Middle East to Central Africa.”

President Obama showed a similar disregard for the Constitution and the defensive mission of the alliance in 2011 when he committed U.S. bombers to a months-long aerial assault on targets in Libya to rescue insurgent fighters in Benghazi and bring about the overthrow of the government led by Moammar Gadhafi. The result has been further chaos and bloodshed throughout Libya, the freeing up of jihadists to carry their war into Syria and Iraq, and the September 2012 assault by rebel forces on the U.S. outpost in Benghazi, killing the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans.

France recently joined the U.S. bombing campaign against Islamic State targets in Iraq in an air war that President Obama has since extended into Syria to deny the terrorists a safe haven. Meanwhile, the Obama administration is seeking cooperation in the war against the Islamic terrorists from Russia, even as the United States and the European Union ramp up economic sanctions against that same nation for supporting the armed pro-Russian separatist movement in Ukraine — despite the fact that the U.S. State Department encouraged the February 2014 coup that drove out the Russian-friendly government of Viktor Yanukovich, to be replaced by the pro-Europe administration of Petro Poroshenko. After Russian troops moved into Crimea and the movement there to separate from Ukraine and join Russia was approved by a Crimean plebiscite and a vote of the Crimean parliament, the United States and European nations imposed financial sanctions and a travel ban on Russian authorities, despite the fact that Crimea had been a part of Russia going back to the 18th century.

Meanwhile, the United States and NATO continue to hold joint military exercises with Ukraine, which Russians might regard as a provocation, much as we might view Russian naval exercises off the coast of Puerto Rico, were they to occur. In 1963, John F. Kennedy told West Berliners, surrounded by a



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communist regime, that all free men were citizens of Berlin. But Senator John McCain tried to stretch the doctrine of collective security to the point of absurdity during his ill-fated campaign for president in 2008. After Russia clashed with Georgia that summer over the status of South Ossetia, McCain had a message for Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili: "I know I speak for every American when I say to him today, we are all Georgians."

He didn't ask us, and one might guess the number of Americans who aspire to be Georgians in the sense that McCain meant it are few in number. In this still free and still independent country, the only Americans who call themselves Georgians hail from somewhere between Alabama and South Carolina. They, like most of us, prefer to remain Americans, regardless of the grand imperial vision of Senator John McCain and other war hawks of the new world order.



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