



Obama's Support for NATO

NATO celebrated its 60th anniversary during its April 3-4 summit in Strasbourg/Kehl, and President Barack Obama was one of the celebrants. Speaking in Strasbourg, France, on April 3, the new president affirmed U.S. support for the military alliance and for the concept of collective security that undergirds it and ties the fate of our own nation to that of all other NATO members.

President Obama put it this way: “Exactly 60 years ago [on April 4], we ensured our shared security when 12 of our nations signed a treaty in Washington that spelled out a simple agreement: An attack on one would be viewed as an attack on all.” NATO has expanded over the years and, as Obama also pointed out, is now comprised of 28 member nations. Two of those nations, Albania and Croatia, formally became members of the alliance just last week, another event that was celebrated at the Strasbourg/Kehl summit.



Under NATO, the United States is expected to view an attack on any of the 27 other member nations — including Soviet-era Warsaw Pact nations that provided the rationale for creating NATO in 1949 — as an attack upon the United States. Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty makes this clear: “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” On April 4, the government leaders participating in the Strasbourg/Kehl summit reaffirmed NATO’s commitment to this principle of collective security in their “Declaration on Alliance Security: “Article 5 ... will remain the cornerstone of our Alliance.” And as already noted, Obama made clear a day earlier that he also supports this cornerstone of NATO.

Obama takes this position despite the fact that Article 5 of the North American Treaty, as applied to our own country, unconstitutionally trumps the congressional power to declare war whenever one or more of 27 other NATO members is attacked. Moreover, every new member of NATO would create an additional possibility for the United States being dragged into a war. Georgia, for example, is expected to join NATO in the future. If Georgia were already a member of NATO during its war with Russia last year, the United States, along with all other NATO members, would have been expected to come to its aid. Of course, this is a point Obama did not make in his Strasbourg remarks.

Not that Obama fails to see a need for NATO’s military intervention. Obama supports what he calls NATO’s “first mission overseas in Afghanistan,” where the lion’s share of the military effort is being shouldered by America. He says that this mission “tests whether nations can come together in common



Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on April 5, 2009

purpose on behalf of our common security. That's what we did together in the 20th century. And now we need an alliance that is even stronger than when it brought down a mighty wall in Berlin."

The world faces multiple threats, not all of them military, according to Obama: "Whether it's the recession or climate change, or terrorism, or drug trafficking, poverty, or the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we have learned that without a doubt there's no quarter of the globe that can wall itself off from the threats of the 21st century." To counter these threats, Obama does not view NATO in isolation but as part of European integration. He also envisions the United States as becoming more heavily entangled with Europe.

In Strasbourg, Obama approvingly noted the presence of European integration: "Now, today in this city, the presence of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe stand as symbols of a Europe that is united peaceful and free." However, he also noted that in America, "instead of celebrating your dynamic union and seeking to partner with you to meet common challenges, there have been times where America has shown arrogance and been dismissive, even derisive." Moreover, "in Europe, there is an anti-Americanism that is at once casual but can also be insidious. Instead of recognizing the good that America so often does in the world, there have been times where Europeans choose to blame America for much of what's bad."

According to Obama:

[These attitudes] fail to acknowledge the fundamental truth that America cannot confront the challenges of this century alone, but that Europe cannot confront them without America.

So I've come to Europe this week to renew our partnership, one in which America listens and learns from our friends and allies, but where our friends and allies bear their share of the burden. Together, we must forge common solutions to our common problems.

So let me say this as clearly as I can: America is changing, but it cannot be America alone that changes. We are confronting the greatest economic crisis since World War II. The only way to confront this unprecedented crisis is through unprecedented coordination.

He added: "As we restore our common prosperity, we must stand up for our common security."

Obama's vision for increasingly tying the United States to Europe and the rest of the world is contrary to the advice George Washington gave in his Farewell Address to the nation:

Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?

It is our true policy of any permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world.

Obviously, the internationalist president who now occupies the White House is very different from our first president.

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