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U.S. Combat Forces in Germany

Mission Accomplished

Lieutenant David Brian Lasher, U.S. Navy

THE PRESENCE of American combat troops in the Federal Republic of Germany was an important symbol of the United States's commitment to its position in world affairs for more than forty-five years. Now that Germany has been reunited, a fundamental reexamination of this commitment is in order. The purpose of this article is to examine the future of those troops in a united Germany—the role those forces may play, the level of presence that can be expected—and to recommend a U.S. policy in regard to this commitment.

The reader must understand at the outset what this article is *not*. It is not a study of the role of U.S. forces in Europe as a whole. It does not address the future of U.S. forces in the Mediterranean or Britain, except to note that those countries will, in some way, be affected by events in Germany. Accordingly, this essay should not be viewed as a general treatment of the issue of forward deployment. The scope of this article is limited specifically to the role of U.S. combat troops in Germany and its directly related ramifications.

Two fundamental assumptions underlie this article. The first is that the ideological pretext for invasion of Western Europe by the Soviet Union no longer exists. This does not mean that tensions have been eliminated. On the contrary, the disintegration of the old Tsarist empire portends a highly unpredictable state of affairs. Rather, it indicates that a sustained attack on the West by the Soviets is not only impractical, but improbable as well.

The second assumption is that World War II was an aberration for the German people, that it was the result of unique historical circumstances that had more to do with Versailles, the depression, and the incorrigible will of Adolf Hitler than it did with the German people themselves. Over the past five hundred years the Germans have been important contributors in all realms of humanity. Likewise, it must not be forgotten that over the centuries few people (albeit sometimes their victims) have suffered more than they from the tragedies of war.

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We posit, therefore, a future Germany which is most likely to use its influence in a judicious manner.

U.S. forces have played an important role in Germany over the past forty-five years. They have ensured stability, defended common interests, symbolized the U.S. commitment to the region, and have afforded the U.S. government a certain amount of influence. They have also produced tensions that have worked to the detriment of all concerned. To best understand the role U.S. forces can play in the future of a united Germany, it is necessary first to review the past.

A Change in Mission: From Occupation to Protection

The primary purpose of the military occupation of Germany after World War II was to provide necessary security for the demilitarization and de-Nazification of that country.¹ The goal was to “restore local self-government and to introduce elective and representative principles . . . as rapidly as was consistent with military security and the purposes of the military occupation.”² Thus, U.S. troops remained in Germany to provide stability upon which to rebuild Germany, a Germany based on democratic freedoms.

This commitment was not taken lightly. The Truman administration let it be known that American forces would remain in Germany for as long as necessary. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes declared this when he said, “security forces will probably have to remain in Germany for a long period. I want no misunderstanding. We will not shirk our duty. We are not withdrawing. We are staying here. As long as there is an occupation army in Germany, American armed forces will be part of that occupation army.”³ However, a long time does not mean forever. In no way was an American presence seen as permanent. Once Germany was reestablished and headed in the right direction, it was understood that those forces would be brought home.

While the primary aim of the occupation of Germany was being accomplished, a new mission arose. The threat from the Soviet Union became a new rationale for maintaining an American presence. A year after the North Atlantic Treaty was signed, a communique was issued. It stated that the “Allied Governments consider that their forces in Germany have in addition to their occupation duties also the important role of acting as security forces for the protection and defense of the free world, including the German Federal Republic and the western sectors of Berlin. To make this protection more effective the Allied Governments will increase and reinforce their forces in Germany. They will treat any attack against the Federal Republic or Berlin from any quarter as an attack upon themselves.”⁴ The American presence was vital for Western Europe at the time because the U.S. was the only nation capable of fulfilling this protective function. Thus it became clear that U.S. forces would

remain in Germany as long as they were needed, even if their mission did not remain the same.

By the time the Eisenhower administration took office, the role of the American military as an army of occupation had virtually ceased to be a *modus operandi* and had become instead a *modus vivendi*. In October 1954, the Protocol on Termination of the Occupation Regime in Germany was signed, granting the Federal Republic of Germany “the full authority of a sovereign state over its internal and external affairs.”⁵ Within a decade, the original goal of the American presence had been achieved.

Shared Responsibilities

The Eisenhower administration continued the policy set forth by Truman. It too saw the Soviet Union as the most serious threat to Western security, and it viewed the United States’s commitment to Germany as the keystone of its policy. This policy was clearly defined, and there was general agreement between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany as to how it should be carried out. In a joint declaration issued in May 1957 (two years after the entry of the Federal Republic into Nato), the president and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer agreed that the “basic aim of the policies of their two countries is the maintenance of peace in freedom. To that end it is the common policy of their governments to work for the achievement of conditions in which all nations can live in peace and freedom and devote their energies and resources to promoting the welfare of their peoples.”⁶ One sees in this declaration that the basic aim of U.S. foreign policy has since remained consistent, even after the events of 1990—the ultimate goal was not better relations with the Soviets *per se* (which has now been achieved), but a more peaceful world order.

The joint declaration of 1957 also made clear that relations with the Soviet Union were the biggest barrier to that ultimate goal. The two countries, it continued, “agreed that the realization of these conditions depends upon the removal of the causes of tension existing between the Soviet Union and the Free World.”⁷ This threat was not “a” barrier but *the* barrier, the most important one at the time. Yet, a reduction of tensions was less important than the basic aim of “peace in freedom.”

Attempting to reduce tensions between the Soviet Union and the Free World could hardly be identified as the role of American troops in Germany. Instead, their presence showed that the preservation of freedom for the West was the highest priority. This required a credible defense. Since West Germany and the other nations in Europe were unable to carry that burden by themselves, the United States was willing to share it. The joint declaration went on to note that the two nations “. . . agreed that the defensive strength of NATO must be further improved in the face of the continuing Soviet threat and the absence of a

dependable agreement for major reductions of armaments. The German Federal Government will proceed as rapidly as possible with building up its agreed contribution to the Western collective defense system. For the purpose of contributing its fair share to the defense of the North Atlantic area, the United States intends to maintain forces in Europe, including Germany, as long as the threat to the area exists."⁸ From this statement the reader can understand the clarity with which the Eisenhower administration approached the role of U.S. forces in West Germany. The purpose of their presence was not some abstract concept such as "stability" or "influence," but was simply the defense of the West from Soviet attack. The troops were not there simply as a symbol of our interests in the region but as a necessary part of a collective defense required to meet the Soviet threat.

The joint statement also identified the limits of the American presence. The West Germans were to carry as much of the burden as possible. The American presence was limited in scope to "its fair share" and in duration to only "as long as the threat exists." This suggests that as soon as the West no longer required a collective defense the American forces were to be withdrawn.

This analysis is supported by statements by President Eisenhower. Before he became commander in chief he had written, "if in ten years all American troops stationed in Europe . . . have not been returned to the United States, then this whole project [Nato] will have failed."⁹ After two full terms as president his attitude appeared to have changed little. Shortly after leaving office he remarked that for "eight years in the White House I believed and have announced to my associates that a reduction of American strength in Europe should be initiated as soon as European economies were restored. . . . I believe the time has now come [for] withdrawing some of those troops."¹⁰ Yet, as we know, the commitment of American troops was not reduced over the next three decades. This was because the emphasis shifted over time from necessity to symbolism.

A Continuing Commitment

President Kennedy's inaugural address set the stage for a continued American presence in Europe. He saw the United States as the guarantor of freedom in the West. His words rang loudly: ". . . Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This we pledge and more. . . ." Thus, the United States would stand by its allies. To withdraw from West Germany, even only partially, now became increasingly problematic because such a move would have serious political ramifications. The American presence was becoming ever more symbolic.

This symbolism was re-echoed during the Berlin crisis of 1961. President Kennedy said that the American forces in West Germany and Berlin were

essential to the "morale" of that country "and to the faith of the entire Western world."¹¹ The mission of U.S. troops remained the same: to deter Soviet attack and defend the freedom of Western Europe. What had changed was that the U.S. commitment would not be significantly reduced, regardless of the ability of Western Europe in general, and of West Germany in particular, to pay for its own defense. The presence of the U.S. military was synonymous with its commitment to the alliance, and this commitment had become sacrosanct. As President Kennedy put it, ". . . the strength of the alliance on which our security depends is dependent in turn on our willingness to meet our commitment to them."¹²

We are not suggesting that the U.S. forces in West Germany were unnecessary or that they did not serve a legitimate military function. To the contrary, deterrence requires military commitment, and it was essential that the allies knew that the U.S. would fulfill its obligations. Commitments, however, sometimes take on a life of their own. In this case perhaps the American presence would not have been reduced even if the threat had diminished. The symbolism of presence had become as important as the presence itself. This was not exactly what the Eisenhower administration had had in mind.

Subsequent administrations accepted the political linkage set forth by Kennedy. Elliot Richardson, under secretary of state during the Nixon administration, noted that "the United States military presence in Europe, whether we like it or not, continues to be taken as tangible evidence of our commitment."¹³ Under President Reagan the U.S. commitment was steadfast. His administration provided the impetus that reversed what author Paul Johnson called the "demoralization" of the West "with the steady expansion of Soviet power and influence."¹⁴ During the 1980s the level of American forces in West Germany actually increased.¹⁵ By the end of the decade, the policy of stationing American armed forces in Europe, including West Germany, would achieve its objectives.

Where U.S. Policy Stands Today

The results of the American military commitment to Western Europe's defense have become manifest in current events. On 3 October 1990, Germany was finally reunited after forty-five years. On 19 November 1990, a conventional arms treaty was signed significantly reducing the number of weapons in Europe.¹⁶ On 2 December 1990, Germany held its first free, fair, and competitive election in more than half a century. Follow-on negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States were scheduled to reduce the level of troops of each side in Europe to well below the 195,000 agreed to in February 1990.¹⁷ At this writing it seems quite possible that President Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev will soon meet to sign the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, first

contemplated under the Reagan administration.¹⁸ There has been, by any standards, an extraordinary turn of events.

What does all of this mean for the stationing of U.S. troops in Germany? Primarily, it implies a significantly reduced American role. As recently as January 1990, General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that 225,000 was the "minimum" credible U.S. presence for Nato's current defensive mission.¹⁹ Yet, as already noted, the administration is already negotiating to reduce those forces well below these levels. In June a member of the House Armed Services Committee said the figure will drop from the current 325,000 in Europe to 50,000 by the end of the decade.²⁰ These numbers, of course, refer to Europe as a whole.

From these numbers two inferences can be drawn. The first is that force levels in Germany would be somewhat less than the figures of 100,000 (in 1995) and 50,000 (in 2000). However, inasmuch as the Soviets have agreed to withdraw all forces from Germany by 1994 (see note 17), it is not unreasonable to assume further that the vast majority of those cuts would come from Germany itself. This reasoning supports a second inference, that the number of American combat troops in that nation could be nearly zero by the year 2000. Pressures within both Germany and the United States make it likely that this second assumption will hold true. However, such a withdrawal is unlikely to be planned during the current administration. Since the stationing of American forces has been so successful a policy, there will be significant reluctance to abandon it.

Thus, the total withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Germany is more likely to be the result of historical forces than of farsighted policy implemented in the near term. This essay will argue that U.S. interests can best be served by planning for a total withdrawal now, thereby avoiding an issue that is likely to become divisive by the mid-1990s.

One reason to believe that there will continue to be a significant U.S. military presence (on the order of tens of thousands) in Germany is that statements by administration officials indicate this is so. For example, when Secretary of State James Baker was asked by George Will if forces in the Middle East would be returned to Europe (whence they had come) once the present conflict was resolved, the secretary answered that many would be. The justifications given were that the U.S. still has "interests" there and that "instability" in Eastern Europe required their presence.²¹

Yet, a more substantial reason to believe that the American presence will remain significant is bureaucratic inertia. It has already been mentioned that during the Kennedy administration the symbolic aspect took on an increasing priority; since the 1980s, it has become essentially institutionalized. In June 1988, Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci noted that "collective security and the strategy of forward defense have been central to our national security for more than four decades. . . . The same coalition strategy that has secured our interests

for four decades remains central to our national security today—as it will remain in the years ahead, in spite of the inevitable changes in international circumstances.”²² This attitude has pervaded administration thinking. In a speech delivered at the Aspen Institute in August 1990, President Bush stated that “important American interests in Europe and the Pacific, in the Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf, all are key reasons why maintaining a forward presence will remain an indispensable element of our strategy. . . . And the United States will keep a force in Europe as long as our allies want and need us there. . . . As we and our allies adapt NATO to a changing world, the size and shape of our forces is destined to change, to suit new and less threatening circumstances. But we will remain in Europe to deter any new dangers, to be a force for stability and to reassure all of Europe—East and West—that the European balance will remain secure.”²³

Thus, the United States will maintain a military presence in Europe because of its “interests” in the region and because “new dangers” could create instability. However, such a policy does not explain how U.S. interests can best be served, nor does it demonstrate that a U.S. military presence is necessary to deal with the sources of instability.

In regard to Germany, the administration has left itself a way out. When discussing a military presence it has always talked about Europe as a whole, being careful to avoid naming any specific country such as Germany. While it seems obvious that officials have been discussing the U.S. commitment in terms of Central Europe, such a connection could be denied—the administration could easily say that it always thought in terms of Europe as a whole, especially with respect to the role of naval forces. While this is possible, it appears unlikely. The administration seems content to support a large presence in Germany. The momentum of the American commitment is difficult to stop.

There are certain questions that have to be answered concerning the present policy. When the president said that the United States would maintain a presence in Europe for as long as “[they] want and need us there,” does that mean the U.S. will remain until the allies ask its forces to leave? If the allied governments are asking the U.S. to remain, are they reflecting the will of their peoples? Could the U.S. be creating a divisive issue within each host country, thereby undermining the most friendly elements? Finally, what exactly is meant by “need?”

Sources of instability are not, in and of themselves, a reason to commit the U.S. military to a continued presence in Europe. It depends on the type and severity of the instability. Political instability may best be addressed by promoting democratic institution-building; or, it may require economic assistance and support for policies promoting economic growth. Neither of these necessarily require the U.S. military. If the justification for maintaining a continued presence in Europe, and especially in Germany, is as officially stated, then that policy is bound to be increasingly challenged as time goes on.

A View from Germany

The stationing of American forces has had a profound effect on the German nation. Until the Vietnam War that presence was overwhelmingly viewed as positive. For those who had experienced World War II, American soldiers were a protective element during the rebuilding of the German nation. The Marshall Plan and the Berlin Airlift were seen as tremendous contributions to West Germany's freedom. In time, however, with the Vietnam War and a growing percentage of Germans who could not recall such events firsthand, anti-Americanism began to develop.

In the early 1970s terrorists began to attack American facilities. In 1972, four American soldiers stationed in Frankfurt and Heidelberg were killed by members of the Baader-Meinhof Gang.²⁴ Such attacks continued into the next decade. In September 1981 a bomb blast at Ramstein Air Base wounded twenty people. An assassination attempt was made shortly thereafter on General Frederick Kroegen, commander of U.S. Army forces in Europe; it was the fourth attack on U.S. personnel and property within a month and the tenth in that year.²⁵ In August 1985 an American serviceman was shot, and a bomb exploded at the Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt killing two Americans and injuring twenty others. That same month, incendiary devices were planted aboard a U.S. Army troop train bound for West Berlin, and an American Armed Forces Radio Network transmitter was blown up.²⁶ While these attacks were the work of left-wing extremists, anti-Americanism also increased among the population as a whole.

Massive demonstrations against deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles and stockpiling of chemical weapons in Europe were held throughout the early 1980s. Yet, such protests were rooted not only in those issues but also in large part in the presence of American combat troops themselves. In the mid-1970s there was growing resistance in Germany to renewing an offset-costs agreement that had greatly subsidized the American presence since 1961.²⁷ Just as important were the large number of offences perpetrated by Americans that exacerbated tensions with German civilians. Irritation from low-flying aircraft and related aviation accidents in rural areas were a constant strain.²⁸ Other incidents, such as drunkenness, drugs, rape, and AIDS infection among the servicemen will occur as long as there are Americans present in significant numbers.²⁹ Each time something bad happens that can be connected to an American soldier, anti-Americanism is bound to result.

Leaders of political parties have captured and echoed such sentiment. In the early 1980s the Green party, an anti-nuclear and pro-environment movement, was able to capture seats in parliament. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) also has voiced concern over the U.S. presence. At one rally in 1981, a former mayor of Berlin, Heinrich Albertz, turned to then Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and

asked, "why are we so ashamed to admit that we in the two parts of Germany don't have any allies but are an occupied country . . . the artillery range of the superpowers?" During that period former Chancellor Willy Brandt had described Bonn's relationship with Washington as that of a "vassal."³⁰

As other foreign troops leave the area it will become increasingly difficult to justify a continued American presence. Not only have events forced all Soviet forces out of Czechoslovakia and Hungary (as previously noted, they are scheduled to leave Germany by 1994), but allied forces are leaving Germany, as well.³¹ The unravelling of the Allied presence began when Belgium announced it would withdraw its 25,000 troops from Germany, in stages.³² Thereafter the Netherlands made plans to pull out some 750 troops over the next two years, leaving only around 4,000 Dutch soldiers by 1992.³³ Canada and Great Britain have also announced partial withdrawals.³⁴ The biggest indicator, however, that the whole foreign deterrent force may be leaving Germany came when France announced that it would bring home some 30,000 of its 51,000 soldiers in the next two to three years, with a total withdrawal by 1995.³⁵ With so many allied soldiers leaving, to continue any sizeable U.S. presence will become increasingly problematic.

Many have argued that in fact Germans want Americans to remain because they help the German economy. In Rhineland-Palatinate, the area of heaviest American concentration, it is estimated that the U.S. military spends about \$2.7 billion a year.³⁶ It is interesting to note in that connection that an official paper written by that state's government called for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from nearly half of its twenty-three facilities occupied by those forces.³⁷ Hesse, another state that will be greatly affected by U.S. troop reductions, has also argued in favor of their departure.³⁸ While such a pullout would cause a temporary disruption of local economies, the overall impact is likely to be negligible. The withdrawal of American troops will open up housing to thousands of persons, and experts have said that the departure of those troops would be more than offset by the influx of East Germans and ethnic Germans from Poland and the Soviet Union.³⁹ Furthermore, the SDP has already established an "Office for Disarmament" to "minimize and socially secure the risk of unemployment for German civilian employees."⁴⁰ Most importantly, an economic argument on behalf of Germany is no justification in itself for the United States to maintain a military presence in Germany.

Others have argued that military presence will give the United States government special influence in Germany and the region. This argument is also suspect. Chancellor Willy Brandt noted in 1971 that a "strong and considerable U.S. presence" in fact "guaranteed a say in decisions about the future of Europe."⁴¹ That, however, was at a time when the mission was clearly defined, the military presence was seen by Germans generally as appropriate, and the number of troops was considerably greater than it will be in the not too distant

future. It is difficult to understand how U.S. forces can have a positive influence on events when they are seen as increasingly irrelevant by the German people. In a poll in West Germany before reunification, only thirty percent supported having U.S. troops there.⁴² In view of the events of this year, that number is likely to have declined further still.

The United States may best be able to influence events in Eastern Europe by using the proper tools and by keeping a low profile. Michael Dobbs of *The Washington Post* pointed out after the Libyan raid in April 1986 that "anti-American sentiment tends to be strongest in countries, such as Britain or West Germany, whose foreign policy is perceived as tied to Washington."⁴³ If the United States is not careful how it attempts to project its influence, the results could easily become counterproductive.

An Increasing Disunity

Yet, the greatest impetus that may force the United States to withdraw all its combat forces from Germany by the end of this century will probably come from Washington itself. Over the last two decades Americans have become increasingly reluctant to continue to support an overseas presence in Europe; without a clearly defined mission in the future, the consensus for maintaining that presence is likely to evaporate.

Opposition to the U.S. commitment in Europe began to surface in the late 1960s. After repeated low-profile appeals for a reduction of U.S. military expenditures in Europe had been largely ignored, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Montana) finally brought the issue to a head. In May 1971 he proposed an amendment that would have cut the 300,000 U.S. forces in Europe in half by the end of that year. Though defeated by the Nixon administration, the attempt was a harbinger of increasing congressional interest in the conduct of American foreign policy, and this extended to the American presence in Europe.⁴⁴

Efforts in the Senate to reduce the military presence in Europe surfaced again in the 1980s. In May 1982 Assistant Senate Majority Leader Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) attempted to block funding for maintaining U.S. troops in Europe unless the allies increased their defense spending. Unlike "Mansfield's Rebellion," which was supported primarily by liberals, this legislation received the support of liberals and conservatives alike.⁴⁵ Later, in December 1982, the Reagan administration was forced to exert a significant effort in order to avert lame-duck congressional approval of similar cutbacks.⁴⁶

Summarizing an argument once made by Irving Kristol, co-editor of *The Public Interest* and a professor at New York University, Tom Bethell explained the effect of the U.S. commitment to Europe as follows: "The U.S. presence in Western Europe, more than forty years after winning the war that brought us

there, has created a dependent and demoralized set of allies. Just as welfare dependency corrupts inner-city dwellers, so military dependency has corrupted our European allies. . . . The Europeans could easily defend themselves. But, Kristol said, they don't want to. 'And why should they, when in fact they can get away with funding social services which they believe, probably correctly, to be very popular?' They can get away with this because of our commitment to spend our money on their defense."⁴⁷ It was such sentiment that caused members of congress to become increasingly vocal in their opposition to the U.S. military commitment in Europe.

In 1984 the Reagan administration received another challenge. In 1978 President Carter had received a commitment from Nato allies that they would increase their defense spending by three percent per year after inflation. After a Pentagon report released in June 1984 concluded that only the U.S., Canada, and Luxembourg had consistently met those goals, Senator Sam Nunn (D-Georgia), the ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, proposed that the United States withdraw one-third of its troops from Western Europe unless the allies increased their defense spending. The senator's purpose, however, was not to reduce the U.S. commitment; rather, as he remarked after the 55-41 vote in favor of the administration, "I achieved what I set out to do, trigger a serious debate. The main objective is to provoke European allies into doing more."⁴⁸

Similar efforts were made by other congressional members. Representatives Pat Schroeder (D-Colorado) and Richard Gephardt (D-Missouri) authored a bill in 1987 that would have imposed a tariff at a rate equal to the difference between an ally's defense spending (as a percentage of its gross national product) and that of the United States. As in Senator Nunn's case, the bill was not designed actually to become national policy; it was a "two-by-four" (as Schroeder aides called it) meant to attract attention and stimulate debate.⁴⁹

By the latter half of the 1980s, opposition to the extensive U.S. military commitment was being expressed in a growing number of circles. Former secretary of state Henry Kissinger and former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski had both called as early as 1986 for a gradual withdrawal of a substantial portion of American forces in Europe.⁵⁰ Shortly thereafter, broad support for a massive withdrawal of U.S. forces grew rapidly.

In December 1989 former assistant secretary of defense Richard Perle believed that the role of the United States in Western Europe's security was rapidly diminishing.⁵¹ Senators Nunn (now Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman) and Albert Gore, Jr., (D-Tennessee) said that the assertion of "minimum" forces in Europe by administration officials would be irrelevant if the Soviets withdraw from Europe.⁵² Furthermore, former secretary of defense, CIA director, and energy secretary James Schlesinger wrote in a statement prepared for the Senate Armed Services Committee, "the time has come, more

or less, for Europe to move toward the condition stated by former [West German] Chancellor Helmut Schmidt—Europe should be defended [primarily] by French and German forces.”⁵³ Thus, if the administration plans to maintain a significant presence in Europe, and in Germany in particular, it could very well be saddled with an unpopular policy.

A special mention should be made of the use of the U.S. military in Europe as a political lever. This lever, if used improperly by either the Congress or the administration, could be very damaging to American interests. For instance, talk of troop withdrawal only aggravated strains in the alliance while undermining U.S. negotiating efforts with the Soviets. To make matters worse, such threats often had little to do with the alliance itself. Some critics called for the removal of American troops from Europe because allies were hesitant to support U.S. policy elsewhere in the world.⁵⁴ While such bludgeoning may be successful in the short term, it creates resentment that is not easily forgotten.

The use of a military presence to project political influence is, therefore, a two-edged sword. Politics can sometimes make it very difficult to use that tool judiciously. The commitment of American forces abroad should serve one purpose: the protection of the host country or of U.S. interests within it from immediate threats. To justify that presence under any other pretext sets a dangerous precedent.

A Possible Solution

If the withdrawal of American combat troops from Germany is the proper course for U.S. policy, then it is important to understand the security arrangement that might result. There would be a more central role for Germany and a less public one for the United States. While a direct U.S. presence in Germany would be miniscule by today's standards, ties between the United States and Germany would not necessarily be weakened.

It may be helpful to speculate on the size of the U.S. presence that one can expect (see table). Assuming the Soviet threat diminishes further, these numbers are likely to be reduced across the board. For the sake of argument, this article *assumes* that the U.S. military presence in Germany can be reduced to less than 1,000 by the year 2000.⁵⁵

This massive reduction will leave Germany with the overwhelming responsibility for not only its own security but also for overseeing peaceful change in Eastern Europe. Is Germany willing to accept such a challenge? Its leadership indicates that it is. In a speech delivered to the American Council on Germany, Chancellor Helmut Kohl said, “a future Germany, firmly anchored in the West, will . . . live up to its share of responsibility for ensuring peaceful and stable reforms in neighbouring Eastern and South-Eastern countries.”⁵⁶ Nowhere in

that speech did he mention a need for continued U.S. military presence in Germany.

While the removal of U.S. combat troops would mean a less immediate presence, it need not necessarily result in looser ties. Joint exercises could be held on a more frequent basis, personnel exchange programs could be expanded, and wartime host nation support agreements could help maintain a close working relationship.⁵⁷ The two nations could also maximize cooperation on research and development projects, especially the Strategic Defense Initiative and other major systems, while continuing to share intelligence on relevant matters. Chancellor Kohl stated, "a future united Germany will remain linked to the United States in close friendship and responsible partnership."⁵⁸ The U.S. government should take him at his word.

The removal of American combat troops from Germany would leave the U.S. administration free to re-deploy those forces as it sees fit.⁵⁹ However, there would also be continued responsibilities. While Germany's foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has announced that his country will in the future be free of nuclear, bacteriological, and chemical weapons, Germany may still desire a nuclear umbrella.⁶⁰ That does not mean that such an umbrella would serve as a tripwire to deter a conventional attack as in the past. Instead, the United States could promise to retaliate on behalf of Germany against any nation that used nuclear weapons offensively against that country.⁶¹

The removal of U.S. forces from Germany need be neither permanent nor irreversible. It should not be done hastily but in a methodical manner, over the next ten years. If events in the Soviet Union were somehow to reverse themselves so as directly to threaten Western Europe with invasion, the withdrawal itself could be reversed.

It is also important for U.S. allies to know that its forces *can* be returned to Europe if need be. Rapid deployment forces and heavy lift capability should accordingly be strengthened. To argue that the United States military should stay in Europe because it would be difficult to return if it ever left could be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the U.S. were to be asked to leave Europe under less than favorable circumstances because it had overstayed its welcome, then it might well not be able to return. If, on the other hand, the U.S. were to leave on its own accord while promising to continue to honor the North Atlantic Treaty, it might actually improve its chances of maintaining close relations.

The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Germany would send the proper signal. It would let all Germans know that their role in the post Cold War world is both welcome and essential. When Chancellor Adenauer addressed the U.S. House of Representatives in 1957 he said, ". . . the German people trust in you. Preserve your trust in them. This I ask of you."⁶² A troop pullout would demonstrate that the United States had confidence and trust in German leadership.

DoD PERSONNEL IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER

Country	Total	Military	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps
Belgium	7,379	2,278	1,507	126	614	31
Denmark	148	65	17	17	22	9
France	185	80	15	9	19	37
Germany ^a	559,694	246,687	206,508	332	39,741	106
Greece	7,210	3,298	518	574	2,188	18
Greenland	200	191	0	0	191	0
Iceland	5,171	3,209	3	1,797	1,321	88
Italy	37,703	16,108	4,118	6,174	5,533	283
Luxembourg	41	12	5	0	0	7
Netherlands	7,406	2,859	885	18	1,945	11
Norway	646	226	37	39	123	27
Portugal	5,195	2,022	60	740	1,210	12
Spain	22,708	8,574	18	3,663	4,735	158
Turkey	10,036	4,805	1,144	115	3,527	19
United Kingdom	67,814	27,200	271	2,356	24,193	380
Afloat	<u>18,384</u>	<u>18,384</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>15,915</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,469</u>
Total	749,920	335,998	215,106	31,875	85,362	3,655
Average per Country	48,769	21,174	14,340	1,064	5,691	79
% Forces in Germany	75	73	96	1	47	3
Total ^b	190,226	89,311	8,598	31,543	45,621	3,549
Average per Country ^b	12,274	5,066	614	1,116	3,259	77

Source: *DOD Worldwide Manpower Distribution*, pp. 2-5 (Table 309A).

Note: Presence as of December 31, 1989. Total includes all military, civilian, and dependent personnel in the country. Military is limited to those personnel in active duty status.

^aFormer FRG, West Berlin.

^bExcluding Germany.

Conclusion

The success of any policy must be measured by its relevance to its goals. For the purpose of deterring a Soviet attack, the deployment of U.S. armed forces to Germany must be viewed as a tremendous success. By maintaining such a large presence even after the economies of Western Europe were able to provide for more of their own defense, the United States added credibility to its commitment to defend against a possible attack. While the importance of credibility can not be overlooked, it was only part of the reason for the policy's success.

Perhaps even more important than credibility was the goal of the policy itself. A long-term commitment is not possible in a democracy without a clearly defined policy that receives broadly based support. The deployment of American troops to Europe was an expensive proposition. Yet those troops were performing a mission of deterrence that only the military was capable of doing; the people understood this. The Soviets were an identifiable threat—there was consensus that they had to be checked, and this goal was clearly stated.

In 1957, Chancellor Adenauer outlined Germany's foreign policy principles for the postwar period. Addressing the United States Senate, he identified his nation's priorities: "the first principle," he said, "the guiding motive, of our policy is freedom. . . . Our second goal is peace. . . . The third principle of our policy is unity. . . . Freedom, peace, unity—these are the aims of our policy, a policy designed to give effect to the great ideals that determine the progress of humanity."⁶³ During the Cold War, Germans recognized that these three principles required the backing of a large-scale U.S. military presence on their soil. In 1990, they fulfilled the third principle, unity, while holding true to the first two. If the U.S. military presence were to end, it could hardly be argued that the United States had not honored its side of the bargain. On the other hand, if the U.S. were to overstay its welcome, it could easily mar the tremendous success that all its commitment had accomplished.

In saying that American troops will remain in Germany for as long as those countries want us there, President Bush is likely to face increasing opposition. In 1981 former British prime minister Harold Macmillan said on American television, "why should the United States provide military protection for Europe, given that Europe is larger, more heavily populated, and richer than the United States?"⁶⁴ Why indeed? By remaining in Germany, U.S. forces would be performing a mission that could, should, and would be performed by the Germans themselves. Furthermore, the threat of instability in Eastern Europe might be better addressed by supporting the reformation of political institutions there along democratic lines, or by assisting economic growth. These are hardly roles for the United States military. If the U.S. wants to solidify its influence in the region, it should provide assistance that those nations can better use.

The American commitment in Europe must not take on a life of its own. Without a clear policy, domestic political support will be difficult to realize. If the role of U.S. forces is to protect against "instability" and to promote U.S. "interests," then an inherently amorphous mission is struggling to take form, perhaps hopelessly. In 1970, Elliot Richardson had argued that it was not yet time to reduce the number of American military personnel in Europe. However, he also added that "we hope that conditions will eventually come about which will render their presence altogether unnecessary. . . . The basic cement holding together the Alliance is still the threat from the East. . . . When there is no more threat to the security of the nations of Western Europe, there will be no more

need for NATO. And only when the confrontation in Europe truly ends and a genuine peace replaces the always precarious peace of mutual deterrence will the role of our troops be finally accomplished."⁶⁵ The United States has honored its commitments. The situation that was hoped for throughout the Cold War has now arrived. A firm timetable should be established to bring those troops home.

Notes

1. "Address by Secretary of State Byrnes on United States Policy Regarding Germany, Stuttgart, September 6, 1946," *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Publication Number 9446, p. 95. (Hereafter cited as *Documents*)

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

4. "Communique by the Western Foreign Ministers Outlining Steps for Liberalization of Relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, Issued at New York and Washington, September 19, 1950," *Documents*, p. 342. This communique operationalized Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty which reads, "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." See also "Tripartite Declaration Providing Security Assurances to Western Europe, Germany, and Berlin, May 27, 1952," *Documents*, pp. 384-385.

5. "Convention on Relations Between the Three Powers and the Federal Republic of Germany, May 26, 1952. As Amended by Schedule I of the Protocol on Termination of the Occupation Regime in Germany, Signed at Paris, October 23, 1954," *Documents*, p. 425. This protocol meant that Nato required the consent of the Federal Republic of Germany to station troops on its territory. See also "Protocols on German Occupation and Accession to NATO Transmitted to Senate," *Department of State Bulletin*, 6 December 1954, p. 847.

6. "Visit of Chancellor Adenauer of the Federal Republic of Germany," *Department of State Bulletin*, 17 June 1957, p. 955.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 956.

9. Tom Bethell, "Losing Ground in Europe," *National Review*, 19 December 1986, p. 36. This observation comes from a letter General Eisenhower sent to a friend while Supreme Allied Commander.

10. James Chace, "Ike was Right," *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1987, p. 39.

11. John F. Kennedy, "The Berlin Crisis: We Fulfill Our Pledge to West Germany," *Vital Speeches*, 15 August 1961, p. 643.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Elliot Richardson, "United States and Western Europe," *Vital Speeches*, 15 February 1970, p. 259. President Nixon opposed reductions in the U.S. presence because he thought it would undermine the alliance and also the U.S. position at the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks. See "President Nixon Urges Senate to Reject European Forces Reduction Measure," *Department of State Bulletin*, 20 December 1971.

14. Paul Johnson, *Modern Times* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), p. 696.

15. U.S. troop levels in West Germany, which were as low as 208,000 in 1976, had reached 246,687 by the end of the 80s. See "Now-Fewer US Forces Abroad Than in Any Year Since 1940," *U.S. News & World Report*, 27 December 1976, p. 37; and *Department of Defense Worldwide Manpower Distribution by Geographical Area*, Director for Information, Operations and Reports, 31 December 1989, Table 309, p. 4.

16. "OOVer and Out," *The Economist*, 24 November 1990, p. 50.

17. "Conventional Weapons: The New Limits in Europe," *The New York Times*, 18 November 1990, p.

12. In addition, the Soviets agreed to withdraw all of their forces from Germany by 1994. Also, the limit of 195,000 was set for "Central Europe," not Europe as a whole. See R. W. Apple, "Bush Calls on Soviets to Join in Deep Troop Cuts for Europe as Germans See Path to Unity," *The New York Times*, 1 February 1990, p. A1. This is a prime indication that the administration is still thinking in terms of troops stationed in Germany.

18. Tom Raum, "US-Soviet Summit Set for February," *Monterey Herald*, 13 December 1990, p. A1. This meeting was first scheduled for 11-13 February 1991, but was postponed due to the situation in the Baltics and the war to liberate Kuwait.

19. Patrick Tyler, "Clenny Pledges Flexibility on Europe Troop Cuts," *The Washington Post*, 2 February 1990, p. 17. Other defense officials accepted 150,000 ground and air forces in Europe as the "political

minimum." See Patrick Tyler and Molly Moore, "US Military in Europe Being Reshaped," *The Washington Post*, 17 December 1989, p. 1.

20. Pat Schroeder, "Bring Our Troops Back Home—And Save a Few Billion," *The Washington Post*, 24 June 1990, p. C5.

21. "This Week With David Brinkley," ABC News, 9 December 1990. In addition, Secretary Baker said that the allies, as well as the Soviets, have said privately that they desire U.S. forces to remain. In this author's opinion, if the allies want a U.S. military presence in the region, then they should ask the administration to station such troops on their own soil.

22. Frank Carlucci, "America's Alliance Structure: The New Isolationism," *Vital Speeches*, 1 June 1988, pp. 483-484.

23. George Bush, "United States Defenses: Reshaping Our Forces," *Vital Speeches*, 1 September 1990, pp. 677-678.

24. "Bombs and Bombast Against US Bases," *Newsweek*, 14 September 1981, p. 54.

25. Frederick Pajnton, "Return of the Red Army Faction," *Time*, 28 September 1981, p. 38.

26. "German Terrorism Bares New Fangs," *U.S. News & World Report*, 26 August 1985, p. 10.

27. Laurence Doty, "German Resistance Growing to Renewing Offset Agreement," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 7 July 1975. In 1976 the United States was forced to terminate that agreement. See "A Deal that Firms Ties Between Bonn, Washington," *U.S. News & World Report*, 2 August 1976, p. 53.

28. Only this year has the aircraft issue finally been settled. See "Armed Forces Planning Reduced Troop Strength," FBIS-WEU, 27 March 1990, p. 13; and "Kohl to Discuss Low Flights with Allies," FBIS-WEU, 24 July 1990, p. 4. The agreement raised the minimum level of flight from seventy-five to three hundred meters.

29. Haig Simonian, "The US General Who Believes His Mission Continues," *London Financial Times*, 21 November 1989, p. 3. It should also be noted that U.S. troops are now subject to German laws. See "Bahr: Foreign Troops to Lose Special Rights," FBIS-WEU, 14 September 1990, p. 1.

30. Kim Rogal, "Declaring War on America," *Newsweek*, 28 September 1981, p. 47.

31. Pressure for a total withdrawal of Soviet forces from those countries began early in 1990. See "Prague Wants Soviet Pullout by Year's End," *The New York Times*, 10 January 1990; and Alan Riding, "Hungary Seeks Withdrawal of Soviet Forces in Two Years," *The New York Times*, 19 January 1990. In addition, Polish leaders have said they want all Soviet troops out of their country, and they are beginning to press the issue. See Michael Gordon, "Troop-Cut Plan Tries to Match Changes in Europe," *The New York Times*, 1 February 1990, p. A12. For projected Soviet levels in Eastern Europe in 1991, see Rick Atkinson and Gary Lee, "Coming Apart at the Seams," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 3-9 December 1990, p. 7.

32. "Belgium Plans to Withdraw Its Troops from West Germany," *The Washington Post*, 26 January 1990, p. 16.

33. Craig Whitney, "Momentum Grows for Military Spending Cuts in West Europe," *The New York Times*, 31 January 1990, p. A24.

34. "USSR's Chernyshev on NATO Cuts in Germany," FBIS-WEU, 24 September 1990, p. 13.

35. "US, UK Withdrawal From Germany Demanded," FBIS-WEU, 4 September 1990, pp. 5-6; "French Division To Remain," FBIS-WEU, 18 September 1990, p. 3; and "Withdrawal of 30,000 Troops from FRG Planned," FBIS-WEU, 18 September 1990, p. 15.

36. Ray Moseley, "West Germans Brace for a Civilian Fallout from Exodus of US Soldiers," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 June 1990, p. 6.

37. "Rhineland-Palatinate Urges US Troop Removal," FBIS-WEU, 27 March 1990, p. 12.

38. "Hesse Government Wants US Troop Reduction," FBIS-WEU, 5 April 1990, p. 3.

39. Robert Pear, "Economic Effect of Cutting Troops in Europe Assessed," *The New York Times*, 2 February 1990, p. 10.

40. "Hesse Government Wants US Troop Reduction."

41. "Exclusive Interview With German Chancellor Willy Brandt: Why US Must Stay in Europe," *U.S. News & World Report*, 14 June 1971, p. 39.

42. John Fialka and Andy Pasztor, "Coming Home: Warsaw Pact's Disarray Could Finally Slash US Forces in Europe," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 November 1989, p. 1.

43. Bethell, "Losing Ground in Europe," p. 35.

44. "Foreign Policy: Mansfield's Rebellion," *Newsweek*, 24 May 1971, pp. 18-19.

45. Michael Feazel, "NATO Withdrawal Threatened," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 10 May 1982, p. 15.

46. Paul Mann, "White House Fights NATO Curtailments," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 6 December 1982, pp. 22-24.

47. Bethell, "Losing Ground in Europe," p. 32.

48. Jacob V. Lamar, "Friend and Foe: The Senate takes on NATO," *Time*, 2 July 1984, p. 14.

49. Morton M. Kondracke, "Make 'Em Pay: The 1988 Sleeper Issue," *The New Republic*, 12 October 1987, p. 16.
50. Gar Alperovitz, "Naked NATO: America's Europe Problem," *The New Republic*, 29 September 1986, p. 20.
51. "Former DOD Assistant Secretary Richard Perle Sees End of NATO," *Inside the Army*, 25 December 1989, p. 1.
52. Tyler, "Cheney Pledges Flexibility," p. 17.
53. James R. Schlesinger, "Cut US Forces in Europe—Now," *The Washington Post*, 11 February 1990, p. C7.
54. Chace, "Ike Was Right," p. 39.
55. The number 1,000 is largely arbitrary but does have this rationale: if the army, air force, and navy each maintained three hundred men and the marines kept their present one hundred, the resulting 1,000 would suffice for coordination with the armed forces of various countries present. The figure is small enough to imply virtually no combat potential but large enough to reflect the continued importance of U.S.-German military relations.
56. Helmut Kohl, "A United Germany in a United Europe," *Vital Speeches*, 1 July 1990, p. 548.
57. A wartime host nation support agreement makes available certain personnel and assets in support of U.S. forces that would deploy to Germany in the event of a crisis or war. For an example, see "US, FRG Sign Wartime Host Nation Support Agreement," *Department of State Bulletin*, June 1982, p. 61.
58. Kohl, p. 547.
59. Work on a reconstitution strategy is well under way. See James J. Tritten, "America Promises to Come Back: A New National Strategy," Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, May 1991.
60. "US, UK Withdrawal From Germany Demanded," p. 6. U.S. chemical weapons have already been withdrawn. See "PRAVDA: CW No Longer Burdens Treaty," *FBIS-WEU*, 24 September 1990, p. 12.
61. Others have argued that a combined French and British nuclear force could serve as a deterrent for Europe, as well. See Francois Heisbourg, "Defending Europe Without Uncle Sam," *The Independent*, December 18, 1989, p. 1.
62. Konrad Adenauer, "Address to House of Representatives, May 18," *Department of State Bulletin*, 17 June 1957, p. 958.
63. Konrad Adenauer, "Address to Senate, May 18," *Department of State Bulletin*, 17 June 1957, pp. 958-960.
64. William F. Buckley, "Ambassador Galbraith's Mission," *National Review*, 30 April 1982, p. 509.
65. Elliot Richardson, "US and Western Europe," p. 260.

Ψ

You never know what is enough unless you
know what is more than enough.

William Blake
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell