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NATO in the age of ‘America First’

Present and future trans-Atlantic cooperation

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to provide an analysis of the current trans-Atlantic relationship between the United States and Europe by examining the current state and issues faced by NATO. Using a theoretical framework comprised of liberalist and realist notions in foreign policy, the ideological rift between the US and Europe is analyzed. It will be argued that the international system has become more complex, due to non-state actors and modern, nonconventional means of warfare, such as hybrid warfare. Subsequently, the various tiers that have formed within NATO are examined, looking at their view of NATO's purpose and identity in a post-Cold War, 21st century international world order. Additionally, President Trump's isolationist rhetoric is then related to the effects his presidency has on America's relationship with Europe. These perspectives will be negotiated in order to answer the research question: Is trans-Atlantic cooperation of NATO members going to change due to Trump's isolationist agenda? It will be argued the challenges facing the current international system call for increased cooperation of NATO's Allies. Moreover, in spite of Trump's rhetoric, American commitment to Europe will continue unabatedly.

Keywords

NATO, United States, Europe, Russia, Cold War, post-Cold War, trans-Atlantic relations, international relations, Grand Strategy, cyber security, terrorism, realism, liberalism, Hobbes, Kant, foreign policy, tiers, military, hybrid warfare, Alliance, defense, international security, nuclear nonproliferation, networks of cooperation.

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Introduction

President Trump addressed America's allies at the NATO headquarters in Brussels in May 2017 during a series of European summits. He expressed his disapproval of the fact that the majority of European countries are not spending enough on defense to bolster collective security. He warned the US will not heed Article 5, which ensures protection of all NATO Allies, if its European members would not increase their defense spending. Shortly after Trump's address to NATO, Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, stated, "recent days have shown me that the times when we could rely completely on others are over to a certain extent" (Carrel & Rinke, par. 4). She expressed strong disapproval of America's tendency towards isolationism, which, according to her, will get in the way of a healthy relationship with Europe and the rest of the world. Her response indicates Europe needs to become more independent in terms of defense and security, and shows that Europe is starting to realize America is becoming a less reliable ally. Other European leaders, such as French President Emmanuel Macron, have taken a stance similar to Merkel's, accusing Trump of disregarding the interests of America's closest allies (Cummings, par. 3).

This has sparked a debate about the question whether Trump's presidency is part of a larger rift developing between the United States and Europe. A significant share of President Trump's rhetoric has revolved around the pledge to put 'America First,' seeming to signal a turn towards isolationism in America's foreign relations. American foreign policy has been characterized by isolationism before at various points in history, such as the period before World War II and after America's involvement in Korea and Vietnam (Haffa 31). Originally founded as a military alliance, NATO describes its purpose these days as being "an intergovernmental organization which provides a forum where members can consult together on any issues they may choose to raise and take decisions on political and military matters affecting their security ("NATO's Purpose", par. 3). As such, Trump's isolationism has focused a lot on the Alliance. In order to assess whether the Trump administration is part of a larger, long-term American retreat from Europe, this thesis will examine how the international system has transformed since the end of the Cold War and in which ways this has affected the trans-Atlantic Alliance. The international system has gone through a number of changes, each of which poses various, new challenges and risks for NATO's members. As containing communism was the prime objective for NATO's founding after World War II, the fall of the Soviet Union ushered in a new era for NATO. As Allies no longer have one shared adversary, it has become more difficult to reach consensus. At the same time, globalism and technology have created new threats and challenges, as the world becomes more interconnected. The

same developments that create new difficulties and problems also provide opportunities for NATO to take on new roles and objectives, stimulating cooperation among its members. This has led NATO to transform from a collective defense organization to a collective security organization, with no specific enemy, but a broader set of international security issues (Rupp 154). To analyze these changes in the international system and the ways in which this has affected NATO, the chapters of this thesis will address different areas pertaining to the main research question “Is trans-Atlantic cooperation of NATO members going to change due to Trump’s isolationist agenda?” Due to NATO’s transformation from a collective defense organization to a collective security organization, Michta argues, “transatlanticism in the form that had once defined U.S.-European relations clearly belongs to the past” (130). Thus, trans-Atlantic cooperation had already changed, long before Trump’s presidency. At the same time, focusing on international security more broadly these days, NATO has remained an important organization for cooperation between the US and Europe. Moreover, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated in 2017 that NATO continues to be an important bulwark against Russia (Kaufman 252).

The first chapter will provide a theoretical framework, examining two paradigms of international relations. Incorporating ideas of Robert Kagan and Joseph Nye, two renowned scholars in this field, the following question will be addressed. Are Europe and the United States drifting apart in today’s international system? Kagan’s perspective leans towards realism, and implies that the United States and Europe are drifting apart caused by ideological differences in foreign policy. Nye is regarded as a liberal constructivist, and as such emphasizes the institutions and connections between the US and Europe that stimulate cooperation. Due to changes in the international system, new challenges and threats have appeared, which call for innovative forms of cooperation among NATO members. This chapter will negotiate these perspectives, and raise some suggestions for potential conciliation and synthesis. Chapter two will subsequently look closer at the main issues dividing NATO’s member states. Which opinions do members hold regarding the Alliance’s purpose in the 21st century? European countries are turning their focus inward on their own issues, such as the refugee crisis caused by the Syrian Civil War. Moreover, the existence of the European Security and Defense Policy contributes to tensions between European and American security policy. Various events since the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks reveal underlying discord about NATO’s purpose as an Alliance. These and other challenges have led to the development of tiers within NATO, divided over countries’ self-interest and vision of NATO. Having looked at the international system as well as the various points of disagreement within

NATO in the first two chapters, chapter three will finally examine the question “Does President Trump represent a break from NATO policy of preceding administrations?” In the media as well as the academic world, Trump’s isolationism is commonly framed as defining his ‘Grand Strategy.’ As will be discussed, a Grand Strategy as such does not exist, for various reasons. A distinction needs to be made between the President’s rhetoric and the actual policies that are implemented. Applying these insights to Donald Trump, various cases will be analyzed that indicate that Trump’s policies, as opposed to his rhetoric, are in fact not pointing in the direction of an isolationist America.

Chapter 1: The transatlantic drift

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in 1949 primarily as a military alliance in order to structure the post-World War II trans-Atlantic connection between the United States and Europe and prevent the expansion of communism (Thies 90). The Alliance originally consisted of the following twelve countries: Denmark, Norway, Iceland, France, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. It is worthwhile to take notice of the history of trans-Atlantic relations in order to understand how America related to Europe before, and at the time of, NATO's founding. Changes in America and Europe's positions in the world have continued to affect this relationship. Although this bond is multi-faceted, NATO is a prime example of an entity that embodies this relationship. An academic debate has existed surrounding the issue of the transatlantic drift, as scholars have argued that the United States and Europe are drifting apart, challenging the existence and effectiveness of NATO. Combined with the fact that the Cold War has ended, this has led some to argue NATO has become obsolete, and will cease to exist shortly. Therefore, opponents of NATO are arguing for increased autonomy in terms of Europe's defense (Schreer 10). Other scholars are more optimistic and see different, contemporary roles for NATO in the 21st century. Geir Lundestad, a key scholar of trans-Atlantic affairs, sees this debate as a negotiation between optimists who see opportunities for cooperation versus pessimists who focus on conflict between its members (Lundestad 8). NATO supporters raise a number of contemporary issues of international security that require cooperation between its members. Although the Cold War is over, Russian incursion into central and Eastern European states is an area where NATO can still have a clear role, countering Russia through cooperation of its members (Haass 284). A similar key issue that some scholars argue is contributing to the rift between the US and its European NATO Allies revolves around burden sharing regarding defense spending. President Trump has called for European states to increase their defense spending to 2 percent of their GDP. Yet, NATO would only really benefit if European nations manage to coordinate their spending, for countries to strengthen instead of duplicate each other's resources (Haass 284). Moreover, NATO members should invest in measures aimed at 'hybrid defense' (Galeotti, par. 3). Instead of focusing on physical or 'kinetic' warfare, hybrid warfare these days incorporates technology, creating the need for active cyber security policy. These are some examples of the debate surrounding NATO's identity and purpose in the 21st century. Scholars of different schools of thought of international relations present various perspectives on the issue of trans-Atlantic relations. Two prominent scholars' perspectives have been selected for discussion,

providing this thesis with a theoretical framework that will relate to all other parts of the discussion. Their perspectives will be negotiated in order to answer the following question: Are Europe and the United States drifting apart? Firstly, renowned scholar Robert Kagan will be discussed, as he offers a predominantly realist interpretation of America's relation with Europe. Kagan's narrative on the history of trans-Atlantic relations includes parts of NATO's history. Secondly, Joseph Nye's perspective will be discussed, in order to juxtapose Kagan's perspective with a liberalist interpretation of the trans-Atlantic dependence and NATO's relevance in this. These two scholars have been chosen because their perspectives summarize the opposite positions of the debate. Kagan on the one hand, effectively explains the ideological difference between the US and Europe that inspires discordance in the Alliance. Nye on the other hand describes how and why cooperation is nevertheless still possible and necessary.

In 'Of Paradise and Power,' Robert Kagan provides an elaborate, historical perspective on today's relationship between the United States and Europe, and the consequences this brings for the NATO alliance. The United States and Europe have developed a gap in military power, but what is truly at the core of the increasing rift between the US and Europe is a gap in ideology regarding the use of power in opposition to the use of more diplomatic strategies in international affairs. According to Kagan, these two disparities might reinforce each other and potentially be irreversible (11). In fact, Europeans and Americans these days have completely different worldviews and live in different worlds altogether. Whereas the United States continues to resort to military power and, increasingly, unilateralism, in foreign policy, Europeans have developed a preference for negotiation, cooperation and diplomacy to solve disputes. The Mars-Venus analogy comes to mind in this regard. This difference in ideology is manifested through disagreement and tension between NATO members.

Today's difference between American and European ideology for international relations used to be quite the opposite. "Americans are children of the Enlightenment, too, and in the early years of the republic were more faithful apostles of its creed" (Kagan 8). The original American settlers had come from Europe in the hope of establishing a haven where they could put to practice their enlightened political ideas. The European continent, at this time, was subject to great-power politics or 'Machtpolitik,' promoting nationalist ideologies and the use of physical force (Kagan 8). As is the case for Europe in the present, early American foreign policy put a strong emphasis on international law, diplomacy and trade, instead of mere power. However, to call the Founding Fathers' political beliefs utopian would

be incorrect. They were certainly aware of international power politics, but simply in no position to match Europe's power. The United States was still a nation in development during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and compared to Europe it was considerably weaker. This is a good example of the ways in which capability and ideology are mutually reinforcing. During the ensuing two centuries up to the present, the situation turned around, as the Americans are now in a position of international dominance and power, whereas Europe has become the weaker party in this aspect (Kagan 9).

World War I can be identified as the first event that started the decline of European power and confidence. The conflict negatively affected the balance of power that had characterized Europe since 1871 after the establishment of Germany, by heavily damaging three of the five central European powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia (Kagan 12). Not only did Europe suffer the destruction of the war, but its economies were also weakened, resulting in a dependence on American banks as early as the interwar period. Moreover, this European catastrophe was a devastating blow to French and British morale. Horrified by the war's atrocities, Great Britain started demobilizing its troops after the war. At the same time, the British were convinced that France, rather than Germany, would pose the biggest challenge to European peace, thus continuously demanding the French to reduce their military might. In essence, "the interwar era was Europe's first attempt to move beyond power politics, to make a virtue out of weakness" (Kagan 13). Also, Europe was already showing signs of a move towards collective security, embodied by the League of Nations. All of this served the overarching goal of preventing a war as terrible as World War I from ever happening again. However, the League of Nations, envisaged by President Woodrow Wilson, was unsuccessful, in large part due to the fact that the United States did not join this association (Wittkopf et al. 35). Thus, in the 1930's, instead of collective security, including American support, Europe resorted to a policy of appeasement in the face of rising Nazi Germany. By now, Europe was making policy from a position of weakness, fearing another great war on the continent. As became clear in hindsight, Europe failed to appease rising Germany, which ultimately resulted in a powerful enemy that could no longer be stopped (Bottom 382). The conflict that followed damaged European power and wealth tremendously.

The next significant step in the decline of Europe's power followed the end of World War II, when the European nations found themselves no longer able to maintain control over their colonial empires in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and ceded these territories to the United States (Kagan 16). Following World War II, American opinion called for Europe to become a "third force" in a restored multipolar world order, as was the case before the two

wars. London was expected to fulfill a leading position, as it was strong enough to resist the Soviet Union, which would allow the United States to leave the continent. Yet, this desire was unrealistic, as Europe developed a strategic dependence on American support during the entirety of the Cold War. Shortly into the Cold War, disagreement and debate already developed, as Americans wanted Europe to have a sufficient military capability of its own, governed by NATO. However, this would mean Europeans would suffer most casualties in case of fighting with the Soviets (Kagan 18). Still recovering from the war, Europe's economies were initially unable to spend on building up their military power. At a later stage of the Cold War, when these economies had regenerated significantly, the guarantee for American nuclear protection subsequently still averted European investment in their military, keeping them from attaining their pre-war eminence. From the European perspective, NATO was a way to keep the United States in Europe. Kagan provides an enlightening analysis of the psychology that characterizes those with power relative to those who are weak. The following adage aptly summarizes this difference in perspective on security and risk: "When you have a hammer, all problems start to look like nails. When you don't have a hammer, you don't want anything to look like a nail." (Kagan 28). It could be added that especially when one of two allies has a hammer large enough for both, this principle applies even more so.

Yet, it will be clear by now that the military gap between the US and Europe is not merely based on force and material resources, as it stems from a deeper disparity in ideology that arose from the events mentioned thus far. Ideology reinforces the gap in power, in potentially irreversible manner. Central to Kagan's explanation of American and European foreign policy is the distinction between the 'Hobbesian' and 'Kantian' perspective on relations between states and their use of power. "Europeans have stepped out of the Hobbesian world of anarchy into the Kantian world of perpetual peace" (Kagan 57). Europe's contemporary Kantian worldview is based on negotiation, diplomacy, trade relations, international law, specifically pertaining to military force, a preference for seduction rather than coercion, and multilateral instead of unilateral action. These characteristics are consciously implemented as a way to prevent Europe's past of *Machtpolitik* and nationalism from repeating itself. As such, Europe's foreign policy strategy can be regarded as idealism or more commonly liberalism. The European postmodern order is no longer subject to a balance of power strategy, as it approaches international relations in a more moral manner (Kagan 55). However, Europe's Kantian world of peace and international cooperation stands in direct connection to the United States. As ideal as the Kantian world may seem, its existence is based on a paradox, as it is enabled by the United States, which itself is not part of it.

In order to understand this, one needs to be aware of a different view of the international world order, namely that of the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes. The Hobbesian world order, described in his book *Leviathan*, written in 1651, depicts the world through a social contract binding all citizens. Heavily basing this view on political realism, Hobbes argued, in a natural state of existence, without any government or authority, human beings live in a continuous, anarchical state in which everyone fights with everyone for survival (Holmes 374). This view can be extended to apply to states in the international world order. In order to stop this perpetual state of fighting, Hobbes theorized that humans create a social contract, which stipulates that all citizens give up their right to use force to a higher authority, named the Leviathan. This sovereign, through his absolute power, in return cares for the protection of all citizens.

This is where the paradox of the Kantian world becomes relevant. By providing Europe with external protection, it is not necessary for Europe to have its own power to create and maintain peace and security on the continent. “Europe’s new Kantian order could flourish only under the umbrella of American power exercised according to the rules of the old Hobbesian order” (Kagan 73). The United States enables Europe to live in a Kantian paradise, while it is stuck in the historical Hobbesian world itself (Kagan 76). Indeed, a double standard can be observed, considering the Kantian, liberal worldview within the confines of Europe, while placing the United States in a Hobbesian context. Adhering to international law and diplomacy, rather than force, is thus only possible for Europe because it ‘outsourced’ a large part of its security issues. In turn, this causes Europe to focus more on issues within its own borders, such as immigration and integration, and less on threats and challenges that go beyond the European Union, including those related to NATO. Moreover, Europe has developed a mission to spread the values of a liberal world order: negotiation, diplomacy, cooperation and multilateralism, all with the overarching objective of opposing power politics. Their objective to oppose the use of power does not require European power, while it simultaneously heavily depends on America’s security guarantee. The National Interest, an American international affairs magazine associated with a realist interpretation of foreign policy, writes that, although Russia poses a real threat to Europe, it “has no chance of threatening America directly in ways which cannot be deterred by America’s still-formidable nuclear forces” (White, par. 15). So although America maintains its nuclear umbrella, this implies additional American deployment to Europe would not be required these days, as the costs outweigh the benefits. This is an example of American opinion in response to Europe’s liberal worldview of diplomacy and international law.

Robert Kagan's perspective on the current transatlantic rift between the United States and its European NATO Allies draws heavily from realism. Any paradigm in international relations theory assumes a state of anarchy, in which no laws or rules exist. In the case of realism, states deal with this through self-help, in order to ensure states' own survival. This then leads to a balance of power, in which conflict is always possible but not always occurs. Power thus plays a large role for states, according to this theory, in the fight for survival. Realism mainly comes back in Kagan's view of the role the United States plays, being stuck in an ancient, Hobbesian world, enabling Europe to enjoy peace and security.

However, it is important to be aware of Kagan's realist bias in order to come to an objective understanding of the current international system. Moreover, his writings exhibit a strong bias towards the United States. Therefore, it is productive and appropriate to consider alternative schools of thought in order to compare and contrast Kagan's realist oriented view of transatlantic relations and NATO. Liberalism, to begin with, refers to a set of beliefs about international relations that differs strongly from realism. Just like the latter, the paradigm of liberalism assumes anarchy to be the status quo. However, liberalists view anarchy as less dangerous, because the risk of conflict between states is reduced through the development of trade relations, supranational organizations and other means of international cooperation ("Realism, Liberalism" 640). NATO can be viewed through this lens, as it is a body for military cooperation to ensure the security of its members. Constructivism, secondly, adds another perspective on the natural, anarchical state of international relations. Rather than saying that states fight for their own survival through self-help, it argues that the structure of the international system is constructed by ideas, perceptions and ideals. Although this can sound rather abstract, in essence, this means that states and other actors develop interests, which may or may not clash, based on their perception of the international system.

Joseph Nye is a renowned scholar of international relations, who is considered a liberal constructivist. Under Democratic President Bill Clinton, Nye was Chair of the National Intelligence Council and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. In his book 'Is the American Century Over?' Nye examines whether the United States' hegemony on the world stage is coming to an end. This question is multi-faceted, as it incorporates many different areas of America's influence on the rest of the world, such as militarily, politically, economically and culturally. A different way of characterizing these is through the distinction between hard power and soft power, both of which matter in Nye's opinion (25). America's position of leadership is a central tenet of NATO's past, present and especially future. In a nutshell, the world is not moving towards a post-American era, for a

number of reasons that apply to American leadership within NATO as well. “The American century is not over, but because of transnational and non-state forces, it is definitely changing in important ways” (Nye 28). With regard to Europe, the United States is therefore not pulling away, but different nonconventional networks and connections are starting to develop, outside of government control.

The current era can be regarded as a ‘global information age,’ in an information-based world. Because of the inherent power of information and intelligence, power is distributed in more complicated ways, partly out of government control. “Conventional wisdom has always held that the government with the largest military prevails, but in an information age it may be the state (or non-states) with the best story that wins” (Nye 127). This is an example of constructivism in Nye’s perspective. Nye implies soft power is becoming increasingly significant. Indeed, the power of information, disseminated through the Internet, has proven itself countless times, for example by inspiring and mobilizing uprisings in the Arab Spring. Areas like terrorism and cyber security are also strongly connected to the greater availability of information. Terrorist networks like ISIS spread their propaganda using the Internet, allowing them to mobilize recruits all around the world. These recruits either travel to Syria to join forces, or are assisted in carrying out attacks in Western countries. Threats to cyber security are also numerous and can have multi-faceted consequences to domestic and international systems. Moreover, cyber attacks are part of a larger strategy called ‘hybrid warfare,’ which combines conventional military force with nonconventional strategies, such as cyber warfare, often employed by non-state actors (Stowell, par. 3). Examples of hybrid warfare and threats to cyber security are numerous these days, as fake news is used to influence foreign political elections, and espionage has become increasingly digital.

The distribution of power that has developed since the end of the Cold War up until the present has become more complex. As such, this demands a more nuanced evaluation of American and European power and the supposed transatlantic power gap or rift, compared to Kagan’s perspective. The fall of the Soviet Union brought an end to the bipolar system dominated by the Soviets and the Americans. During the Cold War, the world order was mainly defined through power, with the arms race between the Americans and the Soviets as a prime indicator. In today’s international system, however, a nation’s power can be analyzed using several levels of analysis, which Nye refers to as a three-dimensional chess game (118). Firstly, the highest chessboard represents military power. The United States will remain in a leading position for some considerable time on this level. Secondly, looking at economic power, represented by the middle chessboard, a multipolar system has existed for over a

decade. The main powers that make up this multipolar context are the United States, Europe, China, Japan and various other growing economies. Lastly, and most importantly to the discussion at hand, the bottom board is identified as “the realm of transnational relations that cross borders outside government control” (Nye 118). This area is where a relatively broad range of non-state actors operate, like bankers making electronic transfers of capital, the transfer of weapons by terrorist groups, hackers affecting cyber security, and other issues such as the outbreak of pandemic diseases and climate change (Nye 119). In essence, what these issues on the bottom board of transnational relations have in common is that they are not bound by state borders. Power is diffused in a broad manner making it impossible and illogical to speak of a unipolar, multipolar, or hegemonic situation. It is not possible to solve the challenges posed by this situation through conventional military means.

Instead, so-called ‘networks of cooperation’ will be necessary for states and non-state agencies to effectively deal with these matters. In essence, bodies like NATO will have to reinvent themselves and adopt these new challenges. This means that cooperation, as opposed to isolationism is the way forward. Nye’s three-layered distribution of power reveals an underlying tension or struggle between two different perspectives on the distribution of power. On the one hand, power is distributed in a hierarchical setting, as applies to military power. Hierarchy in the international system remains to define the top chessboard, namely military power, in some ways. On the other hand, the current international system seems to be moving towards a system made up of networks of cooperation, located on the bottom supranational chessboard (Nye 119). In the present, networks between states as well as non-state actors are becoming more relevant and have the potential to completely replace traditional hierarchies of power between states.

Julian Assange is a contemporary example of a non-state actor causing major consequences for governments, politics and the international system. His website, WikiLeaks, leaked a large amount of emails belonging to the 2016 presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton. This had serious consequences for the presidential candidate, who ultimately conceded the presidential race to Donald Trump. Whistleblowers like Assange raise a number of issues and threats to states’ security that transcend national borders and law. His example shows the enormous impact that one individual can have by leaking information, gained through hacking into a military computer (Siddiqui, par. 6). NATO has the potential, and is already working, to stimulate cooperation in cyber security policy and manage threats such as Assange. As such, this shows Nye’s perspective is applicable to the Alliance, as modern challenges like this require cooperation between countries.

To conclude, Kagan and Nye both make relevant remarks about current relations between the United States and Europe. Their ideas are reflected in the challenges and internal issues that NATO is currently dealing with. Kagan's concept of an ideological divergence between the US and Europe makes sense from a historical as well as contemporary standpoint. Indeed, the wars fought by America in the last two decades still seem to follow the pattern of resorting to military force mostly employing traditional forms of conducting war. It can indeed be argued that the United States enables Europe to live in a Kantian world governed by diplomacy and international law, while America itself remains in a Hobbesian situation governed by use of force. President Trump seems to represent a continuation of the ideological rift between the US and Europe as such, as his rhetoric calls for American isolationism. Yet, some critical notes can be made about Kagan's perspective. As argued by Nye, changes in the international system are also opening opportunities for new forms of cooperation. As a military alliance, NATO needs to adapt to these challenges and strategies, even though this standpoint has encountered resistance. "Despite the growing literature on irregular war, war among the peoples, the utility of force, hybrid war, and so forth, the belief that major industrial war is the only security function the Alliance should serve has proven difficult to shake" (Chivvis 72). Thus, even though the Cold War is over, NATO continues to be regarded as a conventional military alliance, with war as its main purpose. Since 9/11, and perhaps even before that, the United States has been struggling to deal with non-conventional actors and adversaries, such as terrorist groups. Although military and nuclear capabilities continue to matter, the era of traditional power competition is disappearing. This idea is confirmed by Nye, as he argues the distribution of power in the international system is becoming more complex and diffuse, which also applies to warfare. Non-state actors use technology and information to their advantage, and are unbound by territory. Coming back to the issue of defense spending, the need to spend on the military is just as strong as the need to invest in hybrid defense. "A failure to address nonkinetic defense undermines the solidarity and common confidence building at NATO's heart" (Galeotti, par. 3). Ergo, in order to remain credible as an organization for international defense and security, NATO needs to adjust to these new threats. NATO is in a position to structure and manage networks of cooperation on these issues. The Alliance is already moving to stimulate its members to cooperate and deal with some of these contemporary challenges to international security. For example, NATO was involved in supporting a cyber crisis simulation workshop, referred to as "Disruptive Dilemmas", at the GLOBSEC Forum 2019 in Slovakia on June 6th 2019. This event included a keynote discussion about "navigating digital disruptions in countering

terrorism,” as well as other talks about disinformation and artificial intelligence (“NATO supports”, par. 2). Exercises like these are a way to create more awareness of the increasing need for modern nonconventional warfare expertise and cooperation.

With regard to the question whether America and Europe are drifting apart, it can therefore be argued that contemporary, nonconventional challenges to security are calling for increased cooperation. This does not mean the ideological difference between the US and Europe, as discussed by Kagan, will suddenly disappear because of this increasing need for cooperation. The need for a traditional military capability will not fully disappear. However, on the long term, the American proclivity to resort to conventional use of force will decrease, as it will come to realize more and more challenges and enemies will need to be dealt with in alternative, nonconventional ways, through cooperation and specialized international networks.

Chapter 2: Multi-tier NATO

As the previous chapter demonstrates, NATO is currently is faced by internal clashes in ideology in foreign policy among its members, as well as modern challenges to peace and security posed by non-state actors. These challenges differ strongly from those existing at the time of NATO's founding in 1949. "With the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with the rise of non-state actors affecting international security, many new security threats emerged" ("NATO's Purpose", par. 2). Moreover, NATO's membership has grown from the initial 12 to the current 29 member states, which also makes consensus more difficult. This has led to different views on NATO's purpose and identity in the post-Cold War era among its members, leading to a divide into three separate tiers. Which opinions exist among NATO allies regarding NATO's purpose in the 21st century? How does disagreement among these different tiers within NATO affect the Alliance's cohesion and effectiveness? Understanding the different viewpoints is relevant to predicting how the Alliance will develop in the future and what obstacles there are. Before analyzing and negotiating these three tiers, an overview is included of some key events in NATO's history that have led to disagreement among these tiers.

Divergent views on matters of policy and strategy already characterized NATO during the Cold War (Noetzel & Schreer 212). However, the threat posed by the Soviets and the Warsaw pact countries functioned as a uniting factor, leaving NATO allies no other choice for security but to cooperate. Regardless, the tensions within the alliance were very real, particularly those pertaining to the role played by the United States. American leadership has been, and still is, a contentious issue that is responsible for a large share of NATO's strategic challenges. In the face of the common communist threat posed by the Soviet Union, the other allies accepted American leadership. "Until the end of the Cold War, then, the strategic approaches of NATO members were largely shaped by US grand strategic doctrine, which linked its national security posture to the principles of 'liberal democratic internationalism'." (Noetzel & Schreer 213) This situation remained until about a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when NATO started developing a new, broader set of goals and focus areas. From this moment, two developments can be discerned throughout the 1990s that signified a decrease in NATO's cohesion.

The first one is the implementation of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in 1999. An "institutional mechanism for decision-taking and a credible military capacity for regional peace-keeping," this set of goals and strategies composed by the European Union forms a distinct set of security and defense policies (Howorth 238). Although

the ESDP was intended to be complementary to the North Atlantic Treaty, disagreement has existed concerning its implementation in juxtaposition with NATO. The coexistence of NATO and the ESDP can be regarded as emblematic of the larger question concerning what role the United States should play within the Alliance with Europe. From the American perspective, the ESDP undermines the North Atlantic Treaty. Yet, for some European countries like France, it is an effective, and necessary means to reduce American influence in European matters of security and defense (Noetzel & Schreer 213). Thus, this reveals the underlying tension and disagreement behind the two accords.

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th 2001 were the source of additional tension within the Atlantic alliance. In response to the attacks, NATO invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, making this the first time in the alliance's history. Article 5 states, "collective defence means that an attack against one Ally is considered as an attack against all Allies" ("The North," par. 6). President Bush declared a War on Terror, after which the United States together with British forces invaded Afghanistan on October 7th, 2001. Afghanistan, ruled by the Taliban, was thought to be harboring al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. The invasion's objective was therefore to topple the Taliban regime and track down bin Laden. Even though Article 5 of the NATO charter was invoked, the United States made little use of NATO forces during the military operations in Afghanistan (Sloan 216). Apart from the effectiveness of this decision, politically and strategically this was not received well. "Most European allies understood it as implying that the United States did not perceive the alliance to be of primary value in its efforts to shape the changing global security order" (Noetzel & Schreer 214). Over the course of the mission in Afghanistan, NATO troops were indeed involved, but European allies were critical of American strategy now. The aftermath of 9/11 thus added to already existing tensions regarding America's leadership in NATO.

A second example of declining consensus within NATO was the Iraq War in 2003. The invasion of Iraq, led by the United States, was based on the view that Iraq, under the dictator Saddam Hussein's regime, had weapons of mass destruction in its possession, and was alleged to be harboring al-Qaeda. This event caused a substantial rift within the Alliance between those who supported and those who opposed the American effort. As Noetzel and Schreer mention, from Washington's perspective, this further demonstrated the declining relevance of NATO (214). Opponents of war, such as France and Germany, argued the Alliance no longer succeeds to offer an effective forum to debate foreign policy of its members (Noetzel & Schreer 215). The Iraq War therefore did not only create more

disagreement, but also added to the sentiment of NATO becoming irrelevant and ineffective as a military alliance in the 21st century.

Looking at the tiers within NATO, the 'reformist' camp, firstly, mainly consisting of Anglo-Saxon NATO members, supports a broader role in today's geopolitical process, arguing that NATO should focus its resources on the challenges and risks pertaining to the nonproliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological arms. An issue of particular relevance these days concerns the threat of nuclear terrorism. Terrorist groups are able to acquire more advanced weapon systems, for example, through extremist, or dictatorial regimes. North Korea is an example of a so-called state sponsor of terrorism. Moreover, rogue states like North Korea are known to be responsible for disseminating nuclear arms technology to other countries, like Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. Pyongyang has in fact even assisted Syria in the design of a nuclear reactor (Ong 13). The regimes mentioned here, in turn, have more ties to terrorist groups, and their unstable regimes and unpredictable foreign policy pose further danger to international peace and security. The issue of 21st century terrorism poses a difficult set of challenges for NATO and its member states. The fact that terrorists are non-state actors, unbound by international law or diplomatic norms of behavior, is a completely separate matter of great importance to NATO, as will be discussed subsequently. The additional threat of terrorist organizations having the potential to obtain nuclear weapons further increases international security concerns and the risk of great disaster. It is of the greatest importance to prevent nuclear weapons, as well as other powerful technological capabilities, from falling into the wrong hands. On the whole, proponents of the reformist vision support a larger role for NATO in global security. One of the ways to attain this goal is to increase cooperation with other countries that are not part of NATO. This is referring to partnerships with states like Australia or Japan, which maintain a friendly relationship and support collaboration and assistance on mutual goals and challenges. The ultimate goal of NATO's efforts, according to the 'reformers,' should be to spread and strengthen liberal norms and values, as well as to maintain an international liberal democratic order. "In short, the reformist camp sees NATO's interests best served through continued integration into US grand strategic considerations" (Noetzel & Schreer 216). Thus, it should be stressed that the reformists' vision for NATO is one that incorporates the interests and point of view of the United States, in support of more global cooperation and alliance.

The second tier, composed of France, Germany and some other states, supports the 'status quo,' and directly oppose the reformist tier, as they are doubtful about a global alliance. Instead, the status quo camp is more concerned with the interests and challenges

pertaining to the European continent. Specifically, they are of the opinion that decisions made among members of the alliance constrain the effective management of regional security concerns, and thus impede the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). Additionally, they are afraid the establishment of a 'globalized alliance' would alienate other world powers, like Russia and Japan (Noetzel & Schreer 216). NATO enlargement has been a contentious issue for the most part of NATO's existence, as Russia argues that adding Central or Eastern European states to the alliance would be a direct threat to Russian interests and territory. Regarding Germany, for example, an economic component can be discerned in its relationship with Russia, as the latter provides the Germans with a considerable portion of their gas consumption. At 2018's NATO summit, President Trump expressed disapproval of this fact. During a discussion concerning burden sharing, the President revealed his objection to the unfair nature of the current situation, in which the United States provides Europe, including Germany, with American security and defense capabilities, while the latter channels large quantities of money to Russia. In turn, Russia opposes the United States and its Western allies in many ways (Clemente, par. 4). Therefore, the Trump administration has called Germany's increasing dependence on Russian energy a threat to the NATO alliance. This issue is an example of existing tensions between the reformist and status quo tiers. The emphasis on European concerns already raised controversy during the George W. Bush administration, when countries belonging to the status quo camp within NATO refused to let American NATO policy influence their own policy.

The third tier is referred to as the 'reversal' tier, and is made up of central European states, such as the Baltics and Poland. Their standpoint revolves around the threat of a resurgent Russia. The Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014 is the most recent realization of this fear among central European countries. Because of this incursion and increasing signs of Russian expansionism, like Russia's involvement in South-Ossetia in 2008, the reversal tier states emphasize Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. For these countries, this specific Article was the main reason for joining NATO to begin with. Expansion of the Soviet Union technically stopped at the end of the Cold War, but the threat of being annexed is still real, as becomes clear from the Crimean peninsula. Therefore, reversal tier states argue for increased defense capabilities to secure their territory. This is confirmed by Ian J. Brzezinski, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy during the first term of George W. Bush's presidency. Poland, for example, has been pushing for increased NATO presence in its country by adding permanent NATO bases. Reversal tier states, according to Brzezinski, should not be regarded as second-rank

members of NATO, based on the fact that central or eastern European states see less NATO presence. In fact, Brzezinski argues, this is likely to change in the near future, as he deems this essential in communicating to Russia that NATO cares and protects these countries. Although he supports American deployment to these regions, such an effort should be strengthened by European contributions (Brzezinski, par. 5). Besides the deployment of troops, reversal tier states also require training, combined with external support through weapons and intelligence (Haass 217). The risk of Russian incursion will thus have to be addressed through external as well as internal assistance.

Despite existing tensions and disagreement between these tiers, NATO has in fact been successful at adjusting to a new strategic world order after the demise of the Soviet Union. The Alliance continues to exist and operate in conflicts around the world, proving critics wrong who predicted the end of the Cold War would terminate NATO's purpose and reason to exist. The organization has effectively adjusted to a new, post-Cold War world order, "by developing new strategic concepts (1991 and 1999), incorporating new members, reorganizing its military structures and deploying troops to theatres across the world" (Noetzel & Schreer 211). Although the initial motive for founding the Alliance, namely containing the Soviet Union during the Cold War, has ceased to exist, new challenges have been taken on. These contemporary challenges of the 21st century derive from a transformed, modern international system, with new kinds of actors, technology, and foreign policy strategies. These new strategies and objectives have resulted in a decrease in coherence and consensus among the Allied states, leading to the aforementioned tiers. NATO's new challenges and strategies are resulting in disagreement as members find it increasingly difficult to come to decisions on policy.

Looking back at chapter one, in which two paradigms of international relations in the 21st century were negotiated, various remarks can be added to conclude this chapter. To recapitulate, Kagan represents the argument for an ideological drift between America and Europe in terms of joint action within the NATO alliance. Contrarily, Nye presents the case for increased cooperation in the face of modern, supranational threats and challenges. Starting with the reformist tier, these countries support increased global cooperation, in order to deal with the aforementioned contemporary issues, predominantly being terrorism, rogue regimes and nuclear nonproliferation. The status quo tier would agree with Kagan's view of the United States and Europe drifting apart in terms of foreign policy ideology. As they are doubtful of a global alliance and exhibit a stronger inward focus on European issues, countries like Germany and France have been in conflict with American interests. The

example of Germany's dependence on Russian gas would be an example of this. Lastly, the reversal tier is less concerned with the issues on the reformist camp's agenda, such as nuclear nonproliferation, and more focused on their own survival in the face of revived Russian expansionist ambitions. Nevertheless, focusing on increased collective defense and security, it can be said these central European states are in favor of increased cooperation, and thus add further substance to Nye's perspective.

To conclude, NATO has adopted new strategies and challenges in a post-Cold War international system. However, as the existence of different tiers within the alliance indicates, this has made it increasingly difficult to find consensus. As NATO has taken on a broader set of challenges relating to collective security rather than collective defense, "the organization's credibility and effectiveness will be stretched" (Rupp 155). Some might question whether NATO still truly has a definite identity, or whether it is simply struggling to unite its members under one mission. Simultaneously, compromise is essential to the existence of any multinational entity and therefore does not have to decrease effectiveness or credibility. Thus, the tiers existing within NATO represent different national interests, but do not prevent the Alliance to operate effectively.

Chapter 3: President Trump's isolationist rhetoric

Since his campaign for election in 2016, President Trump's foreign policy has emphasized to put America first and no longer let its allies, or adversaries for that matter, take advantage of the United States in all forms of international relations. America's supposedly unfair trade relations with China, Europe and other countries have been argued to harm America's economy, leading to isolationist economic policies, like tariffs. In terms of defense and matters of international security, Trump has focused on NATO, arguing that Europe, one of its largest allies, needs to contribute more to collective security through increased defense spending at the national level. At first glance, this seems to demonstrate a perspective on America's role within the alliance and trans-Atlantic relations that differs profoundly from preceding administrations. Popular news outlets, for instance, commonly juxtapose Trump's isolationism with Obama's attitude towards Europe. This issue, however, is connected to a larger, more abstract debate surrounding presidents' policies. In order to assess the question whether President Trump's administration represents a break from NATO policy of preceding administrations, it is appropriate to pay attention to the issue of 'Grand Strategy.' A common debate exists in the academic world and elsewhere surrounding the topic of a president's 'Grand Strategy.' It will be argued that no president can adopt a single Grand Strategy underlying each single policy. Moreover, a section follows in which this view is applied to President Trump's policies, answering the question "Does President Trump represent a break from preceding administrations in terms of America's relation to NATO and the trans-Atlantic Alliance?" President Bush and President Obama argued for increased defense spending of NATO Allies too. What distinguishes their arguments from Trump's NATO related rhetoric, "is how central the issue of defense spending is to Trump's assessment of NATO's value, or lack thereof, to the United States" (Wilkie, par. 13). Trump's comments seem to convey the idea that insufficient spending on European defense and security capabilities is at the core of the difficulties and challenges NATO currently deals with. Moreover, Trump has made comments about a possible American withdrawal from NATO, if Europe does increase defense spending. Previous presidents did not connect consequences of such a severe nature to the issue of European burden sharing. At least in rhetoric, Trump thus seems to indicate a break from past presidents. However, the ensuing discussion will examine whether this is reflected in actual policy towards NATO and Europe.

The concept of a 'Grand Strategy' refers to a larger, overarching view of the president's long-term goals. It can be seen as a vision to be fulfilled through a specific set of policies and strategies. This can be applied broadly to include all aspects of foreign relations,

but it can also be defined more narrowly as the principal security interests with regards to a country's sovereignty and power (Haffa 26). Looking at the media, some sources readily use this concept in discussing Trump's policies, seemingly assuming it in fact exists. For example, the Japan Times writes, "as unpredictable as Trump can be, several of his key foreign policy moves suggest that his administration is pursuing a Grand Strategy aimed at reviving America's global power" (Chellaney, par. 5). In contrast, in an article for *foreignaffairs.com*, it is argued that internal hurdles, such as disagreement caused by partisan politics, make it impossible for the President's policies to be implemented in a way that could conform to a single Grand Strategy (Popescu, par. 2). In addition, the *International Policy Digest* offers another, more nuanced view, as Wagner argues that the Trump administration does in fact have a concrete strategy in mind to achieve a very specific set of objectives, but that the international community does not fully comprehend what these objectives really are (Wagner, par. 1). He argues that Trump's strategy pursues the overarching objective of preserving America's dominance as a world leader in all areas of international relations, ranging from trade to defense to technological innovation. Due to the conditions and circumstances of the presidency, a 'grand strategy' as such is not attainable or plausible to implement without making compromises, regardless of the president's talent as a leader.

To fully comprehend what makes the concept and adoption of a grand strategy difficult, if not unrealistic, one needs to be aware of the underlying process and actors involved in implementing policy. Most importantly, a distinction needs to be made between the rhetorical and operational dimensions of foreign policy strategy. A president employs a certain rhetoric about his objectives and intentions. This part of policymaking is most commonly discussed in the media. It could be said that the President's rhetoric is what comes to most peoples' minds when thinking about Grand Strategy: the often-repeated comments and mottos. In the case of Trump, this would be 'America First,' or 'Make America Great Again.' However, besides the rhetorical dimension, there is also the operational dimension of implementing policy. The road from expressing slogans on national TV to implementing policy on the ground is far more complicated than the media seem to imply. There are countless elements and steps in the process of formulating an objective and subsequently creating a strategy to pursue that objective. The complex nature of this process makes it difficult and highly unlikely for a president to successfully implement and follow a single Grand Strategy in a nation's foreign policy. The topic of American policymaking could be analyzed in a separate thesis, as it is large and multifaceted. In light of the topic of this thesis

and the discussion of Grand Strategy, some important remarks should be made, pertaining to how this complex situation came to be, and some of the main challenges it introduces.

Looking at foreign policy of the United States, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a very significant historical event, causing many changes, as well as new challenges to the international system. Throughout the Cold War, it was possible for the United States to implement a clear grand strategy, as they were able to focus on one single adversary, namely the Soviet Union. Moreover, the threats posed by the Soviets were of a narrow, restricted nature, mainly consisting of ideological strife and the threat of nuclear annihilation. The entire international system was divided into the capitalist West versus the communist Soviets. This led to a relatively unambiguous, limited set of engagements, through several proxy wars in Europe and Asia.

This stands in strong contrast with the current international system, in which the distribution of power is more complicated, as elaborated on previously. Non-state actors and nonconventional forms of warfare, such as attacks on cyber security and the spread of disinformation, require foreign policy that is more complex and contextual, compared to the unambiguous anti-Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War.

The new challenges and threats characterizing today's international system form only one of multiple reasons for arguing a president's foreign policy cannot completely adhere to one singular Grand Strategy. An additional issue pertaining to the operational dimension of American foreign strategy and policy is the bureaucratic dimension of American military activity and security. Compared to the president and other politicians, military personnel, such as commanders and generals, have far superior insight into the military's operations and its limitations (Dombrowski & Reich 1019). When politicians propose to raise the military budget or increase the number of troops deployed abroad, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Military intervention is far more complicated, due to modern challenges from unconventional actors, the need for advanced technology, and simply limited resources. Therefore, when the President implements a supposed 'Grand Strategy,' these policies trickle down to the operational level, where situational limitations lead to more context-dependent, different implementation.

Thus, due to the complexity of the 21st century's international system, as well as the difference between a president's rhetoric and what can actually be done, it is difficult, if not impossible, to summarize a president's policies under one single Grand Strategy. This can also be applied to president Trump's rhetoric and policy regarding NATO. Long before he announced his candidacy for the 2016 presidential elections, Trump already called NATO

obsolete, and he has continuously been criticizing America's allies for taking advantage of America's protection. His rhetoric has focused on burden sharing, requiring all NATO members to spend a minimum of 2% of their GDP on defense. In July of 2018, Trump even went so far as to call for raising the minimum to 4% of members' GDP (Crerar & MacAskill, par. 4). These demands, coupled with the threat to withdraw from NATO, are part of president Trump's 'America First' motto and general move towards isolationism. This also stands in connection with similar policies in other areas, such as trade tariffs to counter the supposed unfair trade deficit with China and others.

Keeping the focus on NATO, Trump's 'America First' stance towards the alliance can not be seen as part of a Grand Strategy. Instead, it would be more appropriate to regard it as a predominantly contextual set of policies, dependent on operational conditions and restrictions. In other words, Trump's NATO rhetoric differs from the actual policies currently in place. To illustrate, there is a large number of cases, in which members of the President's administration actively and independently acted to ease controversy and quarrels caused by Trump's rhetoric. For example, "three of Trump's most senior foreign and security policy advisers—Vice-President Mike Pence, Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—all journeyed to Europe to reassure NATO allies" (Dombrowski & Reich 1027). Moreover, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, visited multiple European countries, easing concerns raised by Trump's rhetoric, declaring that the US continues to honor its allegiance with Europe. Indeed, this points towards a seemingly unchanged American position towards NATO, compared to preceding administrations. Moreover, several important military exercises, deployment of troops and materiel, and related American activities in Europe have continued under Trump. "Trump's threats notwithstanding, US policy has indeed moved to strengthen, not weaken its engagement in NATO" (Schreer 13). For example, the European Reassurance Initiative, which was implemented during the Obama administration in 2014, aimed at increasing the American presence in Europe after Russia annexed Crimea, has not been ended under Trump's presidency. Moreover, as recent as June 12th 2019, President Trump announced 1,000 troops, coming from the 52,000 troops stationed in Germany, will be sent to Poland. Even though there will not be a permanent Polish base yet, the troops are to send a message to expansionist Moscow. There are already 5,000 American troops rotating through Poland, due to a 2016 NATO agreement in reaction to Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014 (Fabian, par. 4). This further confirms America's commitment to supporting its European Allies. Also, these 1,000 troops will bring with them a variety of drones and other advanced military technology.

Thus, US forces are making an effort to incorporate modern, nonconventional technology and innovations into the military, as discussed in previous chapters.

To conclude, Trump's presidency does not represent a break from NATO policy of past administrations, for the various reasons presented in this chapter. To begin with, it has been established that a president's policies are highly unlikely to conform to one, comprehensive Grand Strategy. Today's international system is composed of a highly complex set of state- and non-state actors, which utilize modern technology for good and bad purposes. This already came to light in the preceding chapters, where it was argued international relations can be analyzed on different levels. This calls for context-specific, calibrated strategies for each engagement, intervention and challenges in foreign relations. With regards to policymaking, this means that Trump's isolationist 'America First' rhetoric does not translate into policy of corresponding nature. Trump has not been able to take drastic measures to withdraw from NATO, nor compel its members to increase defense spending to the required 2 percent. Moreover, the distinction between the rhetorical and operational aspects of policymaking poses further obstacles for a president to directly adhere to his Grand Strategy. The scope of this thesis only allowed little attention to this subject lightly. Yet, several cases show that high-ranking American military personnel have actively defied Trump's rhetoric, by reassuring Europe of continued American support and engagement. For this reason, it can be argued that Trump's presidency does not represent a break from NATO policy of preceding presidents. Significant American support programs to Europe, such as the 2014 European Reassurance Initiative implemented by Obama, remain in place. Although the president seems to continue to embrace his 'America First' slogan, the relationship between the United States and Europe does not seem to follow this pattern.

Conclusion

From a historical as well as contemporary standpoint, the ideological rift in foreign policy and intervention proposed by Kagan can certainly be observed. This seems to apply especially considering the psychology behind having a superior military capability that causes and enables the United States to act accordingly towards its allies and the rest of the international system. President Trump's isolationist rhetoric seems to be a natural consequence of these facts, as the United States pays a high price for safeguarding its Allies, whilst these seem to not contribute themselves. This has led to Trump's call for Europe's NATO members to raise their defense spending to 2 percent of their GDP. In turn, this dynamic has seen disapproval from Europe. Leaders such as Angela Merkel of Germany and Emmanuel Macron of France denounce the direction America seems to be taking under Trump, arguing that isolationism is the least desirable route in the 21st century in regard to the trans-Atlantic relationship.

The international system has undergone significant changes since the end of the Cold War. The distribution of power has become more complex, due to the effects of globalism, non-state actors and technological innovation, such as the Internet. Whereas, previously, adversarial states and governments posed the biggest threat to peace and security, these days the international system faces non-state actors, who are unbound by territory or international law. Actors of this kind, such as terrorists groups, international crime organizations and individual hackers, use technology and nonconventional means to attack and obstruct governments and societies. What these groups have in common is that they make use of technology allowing them to connect through networks around the globe. Therefore, in order to deal with these actors, alliances like NATO naturally need to think along these lines as well. Instead of conventional use of force, networks of cooperation need to be established, specializing in contemporary threat management. Some examples have been mentioned, such as joint cyber security exercises. These measures should not replace conventional military capability, as traditional warfare is not going away or decreasing. Yet, power in the international system is no longer solely preserved nor defined by military force. The bottom chessboard, namely transnational relations, is becoming an increasingly important arena of the international stage.

Several arguments can be made about the three tiers that have come to define and divide NATO's member states. On the one hand, the tiers can be seen as symptomatic of the disagreement and tension caused by uncertainty about NATO's purpose and identity in the 21st century. While the reformists argue for an increased, broader role in dealing with today's

international challenges, the status quo tier opposes a globalized alliance out of fear that this would impede with European interests and policymaking. As such, these differences in perspective on NATO's role as an Alliance aptly correspond with the difference between Kagan and Nye's outlook on the current and future trans-Atlantic relationship. On the other hand, the existence of tiers also reflects that NATO already has adjusted its mission and role to new international threats to defense and security. This has caused NATO to become more complex in its identity and members, which naturally makes it more difficult to reach consensus. It could therefore be argued that disagreement is normal and not problematic to the Alliance's effectiveness, survival or credibility.

Lastly, chapter three has looked into what role President Trump plays in this narrative and debate surrounding NATO and the relationship between the United States and Europe. There is a great difference between the President's isolationist rhetoric and what is actually happening in terms of policy. On an abstract level, this distinction was referred to as the rhetorical level versus the operational level of a President's policies. Analyzing the exact process of American policymaking and the role and power the President has in this transcended the scope of this thesis, as it is such a complex topic. Nevertheless, some examples were included that tell a lot about how much Trump's rhetoric really affects American trans-Atlantic policy. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and even Vice-President Mike Pence are only three of many other members of Trump's administration that have actively made an effort to reassure America's European allies of their continued commitment to trans-Atlantic security and defense. Moreover, previous American engagement and initiatives have remained unaltered, since Trump took office. The United States, independently and through NATO, continues to support and reassure their European Allies against Russia's revived expansionism, international terrorism and similar threats. As was argued, these programs have in some cases even been strengthened and enhanced.

These insights brings us back to the research question formulated in the introduction: Is trans-Atlantic cooperation of NATO members going to change due to Trump's isolationist agenda? President Trump's isolationist rhetoric is not affecting significant change to American foreign policy for Europe or NATO. Regarding the trans-Atlantic ideological rift proposed by Kagan, it can be argued that Trump's presidency is not worsening or increasing this supposed rift. Although his isolationist rhetoric seems to be in line with Kagan's perspective that America is turning away from Europe, reality does not seem to substantiate that idea, as American commitment to Europe is not decreasing. Moreover, there are many

opportunities for NATO to adjust to the contemporary challenges in today's world, and NATO is indeed already moving to focus on these. The increasing need for cooperation will not instantaneously amend the ideological rift in foreign policy between America and Europe. But as NATO increasingly adopts modern challenges and objectives, cooperation on nonconventional strategies will grow in importance relative to conventional military intervention. Reviving its relevance and credibility in dealing with today's challenges, this is likely to strengthen the NATO Alliance between America and Europe on the long term.

Reflection

Regarding the method of analysis chosen for this thesis, a theoretical framework was employed, based on the perspectives of Robert Kagan and Joseph Nye, two prominent scholars of trans-Atlantic relations. The juxtaposition of these scholars' narratives successfully captured the key points of disagreement and divergence among NATO's member states. It can be said that this theoretical framework offered a rather abstract analysis of US-European relations. Therefore, concrete, specific examples of policy and American engagement in Europe were introduced to make the theory more relevant and applied. At the same time, the topics addressed in the ensuing chapters could effectively be related to, and placed within, this theoretical framework. Examining the positions of the three tiers of NATO Allies for example, their standpoints revealed a direct correlation, as they come down to either supporting or opposing increased global cooperation. Finally, an examination of the President's rhetoric and supposed Grand Strategy gave a concrete, useful view of what Trump has actually been able to achieve with his isolationist agenda, leading to the conclusion of this thesis.

In order to approach the topic of trans-Atlantic relations between Europe and the United States, NATO was selected as an object of study. At the core, NATO is a military alliance, and therefore only represents part of the overall relationship. Moreover, many of the topics discussed in this thesis reach beyond just the US and Europe. For instance, terrorism, cyber warfare and international security are issues that connect every part of the world. Similarly, issues not directly related to defense and security also have consequences in this area. Climate change, for example, has the potential to produce consequential threats to each part of the world. Another example would be the economic side of geopolitics. As Nye argues in his chessboard analogy, an economic multipolar distribution of power currently exists. Trade and trade agreements represent an additional dimension of international relations defined more broadly. This thesis has examined how Trump's isolationism and pledge to put

‘America First’ affects America’s relations with Europe by focusing on NATO. Therefore, it mostly looked at matters related to defense and international security. However, Trump’s rhetoric also targets other areas, such as trade, as recent tariff wars have recently shown. Future research would need to examine the ways in which contemporary defense and security issues, posed by terrorism and hybrid warfare, are related to other aspects of geopolitics, such as trade and climate change. For instance, America’s relation with China is multifaceted in this manner, as technological strife and trade are challenging their diplomatic ties. Finally, this thesis has sought to examine how Trump’s rhetoric affects America’s relationship with Europe and NATO. Clearly, only after Trump’s presidency will scholars be able to come to a comprehensive assessment of the President’s impact. Yet, as is common in assessing any president’s legacy, this might remain contested indefinitely.

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