

Katonah Great Decisions December 6, 2011  
The Atlantic Alliance: What's the Future?  
Summary of Discussion by Elizabeth Hall

This page of preliminary information might make it easier to follow the discussion.

THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE: “ When Americans think of the Atlantic alliance, they normally think of the military partnership between the United States and Europe (i.e., NATO). But for European nations, like France, the Atlantic alliance is increasingly coming to mean the European Union. While an American general has and always will command NATO, the 25 nations of the European Union will soon begin deploying their own forces under the command of a European officer. Moreover, when NATO invoked its collective defense clause after 9/11 and was ready to participate as an alliance in the war in Afghanistan, the United States ignored Europe and toppled the Taliban in Afghanistan without NATO.” Lawrence J. Korb, Center for American Progress  
Member states of the EU (with year of entry):

Austria (1995); Belgium (1952); Bulgaria (2007); Cyprus (2004); Czech Republic (2004); Denmark (1973); Estonia (2004); Finland (1995); France (1952); Germany (1952); Greece (1981); Hungary (2004); Ireland (1973); Italy (1952); Latvia (2004); Lithuania (2004); Luxembourg (1952); Malta (2004); Netherlands (1952); Poland (2004); Portugal (1986); Romania (2007); Slovakia (2004); Slovenia (2004); Spain (1986); United Kingdom (1973).

Candidate Countries: Croatia; Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Iceland; Montenegro; Turkey. [Information from Europa, Gateway to the European Union]

#### NATO Members

Founding members: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, United States. Joining later: Greece, Turkey, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia.

NATO involvement in Afghanistan apparently resulted from members' view that 9/11 was a threat to member nations. Article 5 agrees that an armed attack against one member will be seen as an attack against them all. [According to [www.history.com/topics/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato](http://www.history.com/topics/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato), this was the first time NATO invoked Article 5.] Article 4-a says that the members will always defend each other.

Russia (after the USSR) saw the “defense shield” of NATO as a threat. Russia has a similar organization with the former members of USSR. Brzezinski thinks Russia tends to be paranoid.

Question 1: Going forward, is a united and strong Europe—both economically and politically—important to U.S. foreign policy interests? If so, why? If not, why not? The U.S. has not

fostered the idea of a European army. Eisenhower thought European nations should have their own army with a European general who could decide to use nuclear arms. He reversed the idea later in his career. Konrad Adenauer [chancellor of West Germany, 1949-1963] was in favor of a German nuclear force. It never happened. There were demonstrations against German rearmament.

It's natural for any nation to want nuclear arms. If North Korea didn't have nuclear arms, it wouldn't exist.

NATO is an amorphous term for me. I'm wondering what its purpose is. Why (rather than for short-term purposes) should we have a strong presence in Europe. NATO has 14,000 employees in Brussels. Is the organization maintained by bureaucratic inertia? What's its purpose now? The article that Joe sent out this morning argues for the importance of NATO. Among its arguments: Military might still matters. New economic and military powers are entering the field. The transatlantic partnership is still the main engine of global security. There is heavy pressure now on us to keep spending lots of money on the military. NATO was designed around political and military need. Now we're moving under the pressure of economic needs.

The argument is that there is also a military crisis. A new Jihad-type segment that could develop. Should we throw NATO away? Tell me its purpose, then I'll tell you if we should throw it away. It's an alternative to a military army.

We used to have SEATO, and we threw that away.

The vetoes in the Security Council of the UN blocks any UN action. NATO is the only effective body outside the UN that can get support of the world. Look at Libya in that regard. Bottom line: it was effective. If there had been no NATO action, Khadafi would still be in power; the Arab spring would be in deep freeze.

It also dresses up American actions as multilateral actions.

As for the cost, members contribute a percentage of their GNP. The real expenditure is not the bureaucrats in Belgium; it's the military cost of operations.

NATO took action in Libya because civilians were being slaughtered. It took action because Libya has a lot of oil.

We still don't know the final outcome of the Libyan action.

And we don't know what the effect of actions against Putin's party in Russia will be. Culturally, there are gaps among the world's cultures. Are the gaps getting smaller? Are cultures breaking down under the influence of mass media?

NATO is not “Europe.” Countries within the European Union are very different. Only 15 were downgraded by Standard & Poor.

Let’s get back to the value of NATO. We tend to think of it as keeping Russia OUT, but it also keeps Germany and other countries DOWN.

What would be the benefit to the U.S. of bringing Russia into NATO?

I don’t think the European Union would allow Russia in. People don’t realize that if you have professional qualification in any member country, you can practice your profession in any country of the European Union.

Europe is becoming increasingly dependent on Russia for energy (oil and gas)—both north and south. That gives Russia increasingly greater power. It can cut off supplies. In time, economic integration leads to political integration. So bringing Russia into NATO might have favorable long-term effects.

Consider the fact that in NATO decisions have to be unanimous. With Russia as a member, NATO would be in the same situation as the Security Council.

NATO is Europe’s army. Its operations are our biggest expense—not the annual contribution. We are paying for 79 percent of their military expenses (but that includes Afghanistan).

Question 2: Is the survival of the Euro an important goal for Europe and the U.S. If so, why? If not, why not?

Nobody knows how bad its failure would be. [Seventeen members of the EU use the Euro, as well as the Institutions of the European Union, five additional small European countries {Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Montenegro and Vatican City and the disputed territory of Kosovo}. Another 175 million people worldwide use currencies that are pegged to the euro, including 150 million people in Africa.]

Bonds of every country would be slaughtered. Greece got into European Union by hiding the extent of its debt. Goldman-Sachs showed them how.

A weak Euro means a weak dollar. What do you compare currency to? Swiss franc? Commodities? The dollar is getting weaker when compared to the Swiss franc. Look at the whole picture. Look at gold prices.

The U.S. is the only country that can print money whenever it needs more dollars.

The U.S. is becoming more involved in Europe's situation. We're trying to push Europe to do more.

Peripheral European countries feel that German dominance is coming back to Europe. England hates it because it leaves them out.

Question #5 Should Turkey replace Greece in the EU, or should Turkey be admitted to the EU? The speaker we had at the Chappaqua group tilted toward Turkey. Turkey has turned toward the Middle East, but has begun to shift back somewhat.

This conversation could have taken place in 1911, but with one big difference. No one any longer assumes that War would be the inevitable outcome.

It's important that NATO and the EU survive.

This is largely a "blue state" group. What would a "red state" say—that the lack of war is due to American military spending?

All this borrowing around the world has made a very small group of people hugely rich.