
AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN R. GALVIN

The end of the Cold War brought radical changes to NATO. The enemy the organization was created to defend against had vanished. The nature of threats to security in Europe had evolved. Whether and how NATO should address these concerns have been the subjects of discussion and debate for several years. New tensions are arising as former Warsaw Pact countries prepare to join NATO over Russian opposition. The Fletcher Forum discussed these and other issues with John R. Galvin.

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NATO was created to offer collective security against the Soviet threat. This would have obligated the United States to come to the aid of a partner nation. Was there opposition to tying the United States to other countries when NATO was proposed? How was it overcome? What about in other member countries?

This goes back to the period of the late 1940s. In the Congressional Record in the United States at that time, there was great concern with what the United States called the "United States of Europe." In other words, they were hoping to see some kind of European unification as early as the immediate post-World War II years. I find it interesting that there was more mention of that than of the term NATO. But, obviously NATO was in some way connected to that. And, there was a feeling about entangling alliances. After World War II, the United States was the greatest power in the world, but it was faced by another great power. And so that fear of entangling alliances was not that difficult to overcome. Although at the end of the war, with a certain

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feeling of exhaustion and so forth, it wasn't easy to recommit ourselves. That's why I think that President Truman chose General Eisenhower, because he was such a powerful figure. Truman commissioned Eisenhower to visit the nations to commit to gun sales and to indicate the United States' commitment. More than that, Truman wanted Eisenhower to play the same role he had played during the end of the war: that is the unifying figure himself, the figure of encouragement, the man with the big smile, who said everything was going to be alright.

How were different leadership styles and cultures integrated into a multinational body? How well did this integration work?

The different leadership, cultures and ideas were integrated by bringing in ambassadors just like at the United Nations, which of course was in its infancy at that time. There were certain things that were done to try to integrate even more. Within the NATO headquarters, the ambassadors had their own staffs. Those staffs formed committees, which created hundreds of different committees, working groups, focus groups and so forth, so at any one time an ambassador might have several people at different committee meetings, and reporting back to him. These activities were obviously all integrated. When there was something called "special interest" to a single country, that could be taken care of in the office of the ambassador.

Eisenhower did an interesting thing at the supreme headquarters, which was the military part of NATO. There was a tendency in the nations to try to influence the military staffs at SHAPE. Higher ranking officers would come into individual offices and exert pressure that way. So, Eisenhower created a separate group of military officers who represented each country. They were given offices separate from the staff so that if something came in that was related to a single country it went straight to that office and not to the staff.

As far as leadership styles go, since the nations had fought a war or against each other, and all were essentially in Europe, they were familiar with and influenced by each others' leadership styles. It was not difficult to integrate French and American military thinking because French thinking had influenced the American military at its creation, even down to the types of uniforms worn. And, of course there had been a strong British influence also, and even a German influence. These influences had gone back and forth over the decades and centuries so there wasn't much of a problem in integrating them.

What about in the forces?

There were different attempts at integration and we learned lessons. For example, we found it is not a good idea to try to integrate the crew of a ship, with fleets from different nations. It is not a good idea to integrate below the division or corps level in the services. It's better to line up corps from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United States, and so forth all the way down the line from the Baltics to the Alps and put them on line together. It would have been a good idea, but it really was not practical, to integrate the logistics because these were things that each country needed to

do on its own with its own troops. Feeding the people is one of the things. Even though *food* is a relatively common thing, *feeding* is a rather different matter. So, some things were not as integrated as others.

Now, there is more integration simply because the expected response is not to a massive attack but to a crisis.

Had the Soviets invaded part of a member nation, say southwestern Germany, from Regensburg to the Czech border, or through Georgia into eastern Turkey, how do you think NATO would have responded? How confident were you of partner support if it had been the United States rather than a European partner who had needed assistance?

Had the Soviets invaded, NATO would have responded. There's no doubt in my mind whatsoever. I'm entirely confident that all of the nations would have fought. That's why they created NATO. Greece and Turkey were on the flanks, and the borders of those countries were as sacrosanct as any other country's and they would have fought as well.

In fact, the North Atlantic Council recognized that it would be very difficult to get 16 nations to decide what to do if the Soviets invaded. So, NATO had made in advance the political decisions necessary for the defense of its territories. Those decisions may have been more far-reaching than NATO itself imagined. As a commander, I thought about those a lot when I was in charge of the defense of Western Europe. With the exception of the use of nuclear weapons over nine years, everything else was pretty much programmed in advance for the first few days of any kind of a NATO war. Those issues had been resolved by NATO decisions that were carefully laid out in terms of phases. As soon as a phase was initiated, certain things could be done. For instance, if the Soviets had crossed the border, the military had already had instructions to defend and fight the Soviets if they came. The fighting would have started right away with the first units that made contact with each other. So, I had no doubt that that would have happened. For example, when the Gulf War started, and Saddam Hussein said something like, "I will take this war to the capitals of my enemies," many people, myself included, interpreted that to mean that there would be terrorism that would take place in large cities in western Europe, especially where American troops were located. So therefore, I wanted to put forces on alert. But, when I looked at what would happen if I called for a certain alert measure, I realized that at that measure, trucks would have taken barbed wire to the Fulda Gap [near the old East German Border]. So I couldn't use the old alert measures.

I had to use different portions of the measures. But, as I started to use those, I then realized how useful the measures had been. When I said I needed to establish some surveillance along the Turkish border, rather than that I needed Alert Measure 135, which would have been almost automatic, the North

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Atlantic Council members said, "What is surveillance? Could you explain this to us?" So, I was in the process of explaining military terms when I desperately needed action on the things that I was asking for. There was a great deficiency in the fact that all these alert measures were laid out. But, in laying them out, and then simply waiting to have the military request them, the NATO political leadership had really committed itself to a vast number of activities under each of these labels. Its flexibility was really questionable. If it questioned Alert Measure 135, it would then delay, and there would have been this dilemma—either you give the military all or none, or in such small piece-by-piece increments. It had its weaknesses as well as its strengths, I would not have changed it—not as a political leader, or a military leader.

From a Western point of view, the purpose of NATO was defensive. What assurances were made to the Soviets that it was, in fact, a defensive organization, and how? Did they believe it?

First of all, it isn't simply from the Western point of view that NATO was defensive. It is a fact that NATO was defensive, though it would be stretching the point to say that the Soviet Union was defensive. We had no plans whatsoever for any kind of attack on the Soviet Union. If we had had plans like that, knowing how difficult it is for anybody to keep a secret let alone the military to keep a secret, it would have come out sometime, somewhere. Someone would have found one of those plans.

What plans were made for dealing with an intra-NATO conflict, such as between Greece and Turkey?

There were no plans to stop, for example, some kind of international conflict between Greece and Turkey. We didn't anticipate that and it didn't happen. If there had been a conflict, the rest of the NATO nations would have done everything they could to try to stop the conflict at an early point, but it didn't come up. When the Cyprus question came up in 1974, the pressures applied by NATO nations helped avoid a conflict. But, I certainly don't think NATO should try to take the credit for something like that when the credit really belongs in the hands of Greeks and Turks who had a terrible problem but did not end up at war. And, I think that's an indication of good judgment and stability on both sides.

Now that the Soviet Union has collapsed and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are transforming themselves into democratic, capitalist states, what is the continuing need for NATO? What is the threat? Why do the Russians need to be excluded?

I believe that we do need international structure for peace and stability. I'm not sure I'm entirely in agreement with NATO expansion in precisely the way that it is being considered, but I do think that we need to do such things as strongly support the United Nations and support regional stability structure where we can. And, until we can achieve this, let's support regional forums, regional intercommunications and a recognition of the interdependence of

countries in this increasingly shrinking planet on which we live. I hope that NATO will play a role in that.

Why do the Russians need to be excluded? That's the question that I might ask. I don't think the Russians should be excluded from the international arrangements for stability in Europe since the Russians *are* Europeans. Nor should they be excluded from any structures that we create in the Pacific because they are a Pacific nation, or an Asian nation as well as a European nation. So, I think in fact that it would threaten stability to leave the Russians out. Therefore, I think that current plans should include making appropriate arrangements with the Russians. If they're not successful, I don't think we should go too far with NATO expansion.

Andrei Kozyrev has said that just as the Warsaw Pact has dissolved, so should NATO. Why should NATO continue in the absence of the Warsaw Pact? Kozyrev suggested reassessing security needs and forming a new organization to address these concerns. What do you think of that idea?

The primary importance of NATO is an aggregation of collective international military power completely subordinate to collective international political decision-making. We have never had anything like that in the world before. There has always been a problem even with individual national militaries and the decision-making at the national level in which militaries have taken over governments. Political control of the military is essential for ensuring stability and peace. NATO is a prime example of that, and therefore something that we should be very careful to preserve if we can. However, we should not preserve NATO as a defense against an attack by the Russians. If we feel there's going to be an attack by the Russians, then we've never really left the Cold War. So we have to decide, "Are we out of the Cold War or are we in?" At the end of World War II, even though we had suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazis and the Japanese forces, we immediately declared that they were no longer our adversaries and we worked very hard to help them with their future development. That turned out to be the most intelligent thing we could possibly have done. We learned that after World War I, and we applied it. After World War I, we tried to pound the Germans into the ground with reparations, and some countries were more at fault than others. The result was Uncle Adolph and all that the Nazis did. After the war, we sought reconciliation more than witch hunts, although there were the Nuremberg Trials, which I think were necessary. We tried for reconciliation, and we got it. I think that reconciliation should be first now.

What will be expected of new NATO members, such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic?

That's a more difficult question—not because there's not an answer, but because there are so many answers, and it is hard to pick one. If new nations

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come in, we should expect of them what we expect from those that are already members: that is to be good members and to abide by the North Atlantic Treaty. However, I do think that the new strategy of crisis management needs to be elucidated and emphasized. The old strategy of defense against attack, in other words, Article 5, needs to be thrown out. However, NATO is sticking with that old strategy and trying to have a new strategy at the same

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time. You really can't have a strategy of crisis management that says you have no enemies whatsoever, and that your only enemy is instability, while also having a strategy of massive defense against an attack by Russia. Yet, that is how Article 5 now stands. If we're wondering who else is going to attack us, are we going to worry about an attack from Algeria or Chad, or is Iceland going to run wild? Where is this attack going to come from? If we mean the Russians, let's say so and say that we're back in the Cold War. If it's not the Russians, then let's clearly say that and sit down with the Russians and figure out what the security of Europe should look like.

Given Russia's current leadership uncertainties, structural weaknesses in their new democratic system, and strong anti-Western political sentiments, how can the United States maintain its leadership role in Europe and also accommodate the changing sensitivities of Russia?

No matter how you look at other countries around the world, or how those other countries look at you, there can be talk of weaknesses. If that's where we want to concentrate, then we will certainly have a difficult time in the twenty-first century. And, maybe the twenty-first century will be even more bloody than the one that preceded it, which was the bloodiest in the history of mankind.

What we ought to emphasize is that these nations are full of human beings just like us who want peace, stability and prosperity, and who want a kind future for their children. We should act as if people want the same kinds of things that we want. And, let's sit down and figure out how to do that. An element of international structure is necessary. The United Nations can't simply try to control 15 or 20 or 30 different operations all over the world at the same time. It needs help from regional and subregional structures for peace and security, and I mean by that political and military structures. Those will only come about through time. Until then, we may have to do as we did in response to the attack on Kuwait by Iraq. A major nation may have to aggregate to itself smaller nations and take on a mandate from the United Nations

to get something done. Let's hope that we can see our way through to regional structures.

Conversely, some fear that regional structures can reinforce the regional hegemony of the major nations in the region. I don't think that it's a strong enough argument to give up and accept the anarchic way that we have approached world security in the past, which was simply to be ready to form and to reform all kinds of alliances and balances of power which led to nothing but war.

Describe a world community in which NATO would be obsolete. From where and in what form will the next major security threat come?

I don't know when NATO will be obsolete. NATO is a very specific stability structure. I don't think stability structures will ever be obsolete. In fact, we should bemoan the fact that they are missing in many places right now. That's already been answered in things I've said earlier. Future threats will include instability manifested in terrorism, small and medium-sized wars, and the use of weapons of mass destruction—rather than a single great nation triggering a World War III. We've reached a point where there is an understanding that a world war might lead to the use of weapons so destructive that we could be eliminated as inhabitants of the planet. While there would be a self-restriction on that basis, there are still so many reasons, demographic and otherwise, for trouble in the future that we must create ways of collectively understanding and addressing the problems. That's why I'm for structure, but structure really means collective interaction and collective understanding of interdependency.

Father J. Bryan Hehir, in a talk at Fletcher last fall, described a changing model of security and military intervention, as well as changing ideas of sovereignty. What do you think of this idea, and has the time come for using force for humanitarian actions? What role would the United States or NATO play?

As you know, I was present at Father Bryan's talk and I thought it was a very good apprehension of what might happen in the future and how we might respond. I tend to agree with his changing model of security and military intervention. He said that there were times when intervention was justified, and I think that's something that needs a mandate. If it is justified, then it ought to be fairly easy to get NATO approval for an intervention. And when you do, you're about as close as you can get to an approval that is justified under existing international law. Although not entirely, because it is still a mandate that could be subject to objections by some nations. But, it's as close as you can get. What he said makes sense to me.

What new precedents are being set for challenging the ideas of sovereignty? Have the conflicts in the Gulf or the former Yugoslavia changed the way we consider sovereignty?

The issues that are challenging ideas of sovereignty are not Iraq or Yugoslavia, Bosnia, anything like that. Rather, it's forces such as international fi-

nance, banking, trade, business, international communication. All these things are crossing borders in an uncontrolled manner, while at the same time countries are functioning as if their borders were inviolate. Borders have never been less protected than they are right now, and they probably shouldn't be. In fact, some of the major improvements of the past century have been due to communications and other things crossing borders. In the future, you're going to see a weakening of the classical idea of sovereignty. Those nations that hold onto it will be antique and more and more irrelevant.

In hindsight, what are some of NATO's biggest successes? What challenges do you see for current and future leaders?

That's easy. The biggest success was that there was no World War III. And, after all, NATO was created to contain the Soviet Union, and thus to contain Communism. Communism was an idea that had a lot of good aspects to it but, in the end, was entirely destructive to nations. It proved to be a vast, fatal

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mistake. There were some people, like George Kennan, who understood that the best thing to do was not to fight the Soviets because they were so powerful. Even winning would have been so costly that it was prohibitive even to think about it. It was enough to simply contain them and defend oneself. Even in containing them, it was important not to go too far. Although Vietnam was a disaster, a debacle, the one good element in that was that the United States recognized that containment could be taken too far. Better to give a little (although it took 50,000 deaths to figure out) than to stay with containment when it was a losing cause in a given place. However, I

wouldn't say the same was true of the U.S. activity in Greece in 1947, or the creation of NATO and protection of Western Europe, or with the containment of Soviet influence in Central and Eastern Europe. NATO did a lot to make that all happen. I became a soldier in 1948. In 1992, when I left that life, the world had changed completely. I do think that NATO was an enormous success, and I'm very proud and happy that I had a soldier's part in it.

How have advances in technology changed ideas of, and approaches to, security? What other changes or developments have had an impact on security?

As changes in technology become available to everybody, security becomes a question of decision-making on other issues, such as on emotional issues, and issues of national questions, and so forth. Changes in technology have certainly not made security easier. When we had no technology at all, we were fairly secure. The United States could declare war on Great Britain and win. But 3,000 miles of ocean meant a lot back then. It doesn't mean very much now. It means a few minutes of flight of a missile. It makes it that much more difficult, it means decisions must be made in much less time, and it is

the major development that has had an impact on security. I wish we had developed our sensibilities as much as we have developed our technology, and then we probably would not have the problems that we have today.

Thank you for speaking with us about these important issues.



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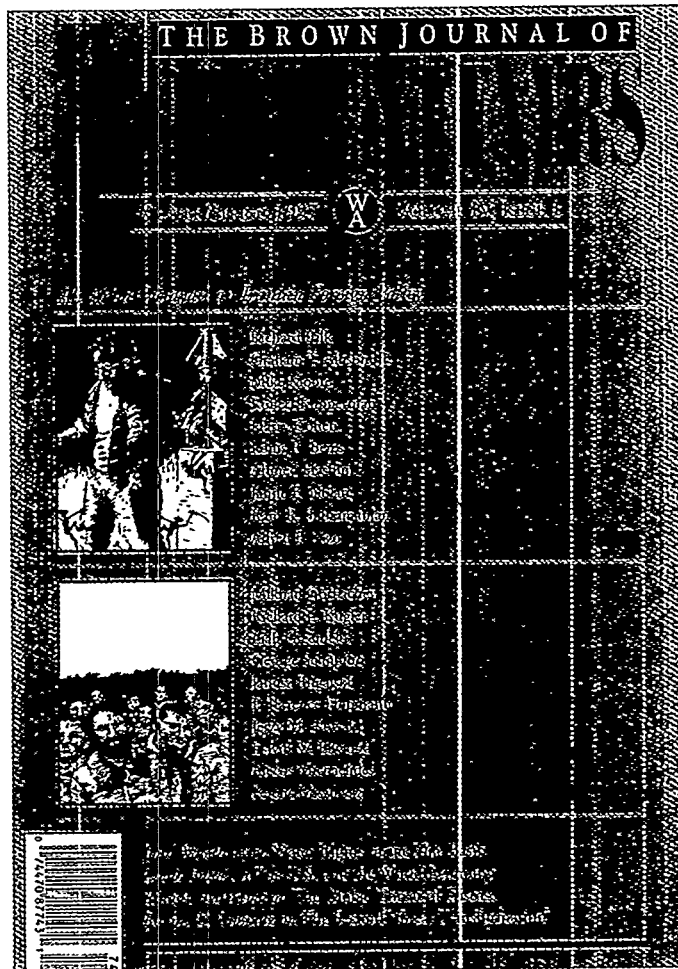
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