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NATO

NATO'S UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Is Demography Destiny?

By JEFFREY SIMON

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) finds itself increasingly stressed by current and prospective demographic shifts within its membership that will almost certainly hamper its collective ability to deploy operational forces and further strain the transatlantic relationship in the years ahead.

NATO has shifted from large conscript forces, which were useful for its territorial defense during the Cold War, toward smaller, all-volunteer military establishments to carry out expeditionary operations. This shift has had different political consequences in Europe and the United States and has resulted in increasingly diverging views of the role of the military and how it contributes to security and defense.

Demographically, the gap between U.S. and European NATO members' military age cohorts is widening, with the U.S. cohort increasing while the European numbers shrink. At the same time, diverging immigration patterns and shifting internal demographics could erode the common historic identity of the United States and Europe and affect the transatlantic relationship. A relatively young and growing U.S. population will contribute to its slightly enhanced global economic profile in 2050, while Europe's aging and shrinking productive population will be a factor in its diminishing presence.

Finally, the world's population and the locus of its economic growth will continue to reflect the inexorable shift away from the Eurocentric world that existed when NATO was created in 1949, leading to Europe's rapid demographic marginalization and relative economic decline by 2050.

Anticipating Change

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is no stranger to controversy. Over the past 60 years, it has endured disputes over defense strategy, the role of nuclear weapons, the size and composition of its membership, and how best to respond to looming challenges beyond its immediate territory. Today, however, the Atlantic Alliance finds itself increasingly stressed by emerging socioeconomic and political changes among the Allies—changes that are fundamentally influenced by larger

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Table 1. Comparative Trends in Defense Establishments of NATO Cold War European Members*

	Strength of Defense Establishments (military)					Conscription Terms (months)			
	1990	1995	1999	2004	2008	1995	1999	2004	2008
United Kingdom	308,000	274,800	210,800	205,000	195,900	0	0	0	0
France**	550,000	502,000	421,000	347,000	301,000 (2015)	12	12	0	0
Germany	545,000	352,000	322,000	258,000	245,000	15	12	10 [130,000]	9 [55,000]
Spain**	263,000	210,000	155,000	124,000	124,000	12	12	0	0
Italy**	493,000	435,000	391,000	315,000	298,000	12	12	0	0
Netherlands	104,000	67,000	55,000	51,000	51,000	12	0	0	0
Belgium	106,000	47,000	43,000	40,000	39,000	0	0	0	0
Denmark	31,000	27,000	25,000	20,000	18,000	9	9	9	4 [5,700]
Norway	51,000	38,000	33,000	22,000	20,000	8–9	8–9	8–9	8–9 [11,000]
Portugal	87,000	78,000	72,000	39,000	41,000	N/A	7	0	0
Greece	201,000	213,000	205,000	132,000	142,000	12–36	12–36	12–36	12 [100,000]
Turkey	769,000	805,000	797,000	502,000	496,000	16–18	16–18	12–15	12–15 [391,000]
Total Force	3,509,000	3,048,800	2,729,800	2,055,000	1,970,900				
Professional				1,407,300	1,408,200				

Key: *Iceland and Luxembourg excluded; **for 2007, France: 100,000 Gendarmerie; Spain: 80,000 Civil Guards; Italy: 110,000 Carabinieri; N/A = not available; (#) = year; [#] = number of conscripts.

Sources: "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence," NATO Press Release M–DPC–2 (1999)152, December 2, 1999, table 6; North Atlantic Treaty Organization International Staff, Defence Policy and Planning Division, "NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence," December 20, 2007, table 6.

demographic shifts now occurring within its membership and that, taken together, will almost certainly hamper its collective ability to deploy operational forces and further strain the transatlantic relationship in the years ahead. This paper offers a preliminary assessment of these trends, focusing specifically on the kinds of impacts that each is having, or will have, upon the Allies and the challenges for Alliance solidarity that may result.

Military Capacity: How Usable?

The most immediate trend of concern is already being seen within NATO's military manpower base. The shift from large conscript forces, which were useful in the defense of European territory during the Cold War, toward smaller, all-volunteer military establishments with a more expeditionary focus has had different and somewhat unexpected political consequences in Europe and the United States.

When the Cold War ended in 1989–1990, the United States had an all-volunteer force of 2,181,000 troops, while NATO's European Allies had 3,509,000 troops (roughly 60 percent more) under arms (see table 1). All European Allies—with the sole exception of the United Kingdom, which had an all-volunteer force since 1963—maintained largely conscript forces. During the Cold War, NATO's main role was the territorial defense of Europe; it never engaged in expeditionary operations. Such missions only began in the early 1990s with air and naval operations in the Balkans and expanded dramatically in December 1995, when the Dayton Accords resulted in the deployment of a 60,000-troop Implementation Force and follow-on Stabilization Force to Bosnia-Herzegovina. After a 78-day bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999, NATO deployed a 50,000-troop Kosovo Force, 16,000 of which remain there today. In August 2003, NATO assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force, which was authorized after the events of September 11 and the start of the U.S.-led Operation *Enduring Freedom* and now maintains 52,700 troops in Afghanistan.

Since 1989, when the former Soviet threat to Europe was diminishing and out-of-area risks were increasing, NATO's European armed forces declined by more than 1.5 million troops. When Europe was beginning to respond to new risks, it had already lost roughly half a million troops by 1995, then another 300,000 by 1999, and 700,000 more by 2004; by 2008, only 1,970,000 troops remained. At the same time, most of European NATO was abandoning conscription and moving toward smaller, all-volunteer forces. By 2008, seven of NATO's military establishments had become professional; of the five military establishments retaining conscription (because of long-held threat perceptions in Turkey and Greece, territorial defense traditions in Norway and Denmark, and Germany's commitment to *Innere Fuhrung*, or "citizens in uniform"), conscript terms have shortened because of declining social support. In sum, in 2008, the 12 Cold War European NATO countries man a force roughly equivalent to that of the United States—about 1,400,000 professional troops.

During the post–Cold War period, NATO has added 10 new members (in 1999 and 2004) and has extended invitations to Croatia and Albania for entry in 2009. The militaries of NATO's new members have experienced the same trends as the established members (see table 2). As expeditionary operations had become the main focus of NATO's attention, the new members focused on developing this capability and participated in NATO operations to enhance their admission prospects.

In 1999, the 10 militaries counted 230,000 professionals among their 618,000 troops. By 2004, their total force declined to 409,000 troops, but their professional strength *increased* to 270,000. By 2008, 8 of the 10 new members had become totally professional

(with only Lithuania and Estonia retaining conscription for a small part of their armed forces). As a result, 314,000 of their 317,000 troops were professional soldiers and could be counted toward augmenting European NATO's potential deployable force.

But as European militaries have shifted to smaller, all-volunteer forces concentrated in fewer caserns, significant social and political consequences resulted. Public unease over the expeditionary use of military forces that one might have expected with heavy reliance upon young conscripts has not eased with the shift toward professional soldiers; if anything, those anxieties have increased. As defense was no longer the priority that it had been during the Cold War and armed forces were becoming less visible to their publics, many European societies began to raise questions about their utility. This was particularly the case when used in unpopular expeditionary operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Additionally, as the armed forces no longer constituted the large voting blocks of earlier years, they were becoming less politically important to their elites. This situation has already become acute in Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic,[1] and is becoming more so with the other new members, with the notable exception of Poland.

Defense versus Security

Along with, and compounded by, these shifts in military capacity is the reemergence of diverging views within the Alliance of the role of the military in meeting current security challenges. In the aftermath of 9/11, although the United States did create a Department of Homeland Security, it substantially increased defense expenditures, consistently allocating 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to defense since 2004.[2] The defense budget allocations reflect the fact that the U.S. public and political elite continued to see the military as providing a significant role in the defense of the country. For the United States, the main lesson of 9/11 was that emerging nonstate threats should be interdicted before they reach the American homeland, and the U.S. military has proved to be the best available instrument for that purpose.

In contrast, most European NATO members are increasingly focusing on internal security, not defense, as a predominant concern. Not only do the recent White

Table 2. Comparative Trends in Defense Establishments of New NATO Members

	Strength of Defense Establishments (military)				Conscription Terms (months)			
	1995	1999	2004	2008	1995	1999	2004	2008
Hungary	68,261	52,200	30,000	20,000	12	9	6	0 (2005)
Poland	278,600	205,000	150,000	(2010) 120,000	18	12	12	0 (2010)
Czech Republic	73,591	56,247	38,000	25,000	12	12	12	0 (2005)
Slovakia	52,015	45,483	30,000	18,000	12	12	9	0 (2005)
Romania	217,400	150,000	93,000	75,000	12	12	12	0 (2007)
Bulgaria	118,000	82,000	40,000	34,000	18	12	6–9	0 (2008)
Lithuania	8,000	9,850	11,450	10,000	12	[3,500] 12	[4,000] 12	[1,500] 12
Latvia	4,615	5,500	4,250	4,900	12	[1,500] 12	[300] 12	0 (2007)
Estonia	3,270	3,800	3,800	3,800	[2,000] 12	12	8–11	[1,500] 8–11
Slovenia	N/A	7,800	6,900	7,000	N/A	7	0	0
Total Force*	820,000	618,000	409,000	317,000				
Professional*	N/A	230,000	270,000	314,700				

Key: *Numbers approximate; N/A = not available; (#) = year; [#] = number of conscripts.

Sources: Jeffrey Simon, *NATO Expeditionary Operations: Impacts on New Members and Partners*, Institute for National Strategic Studies Occasional Paper 1 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, March 2005), table 4; North Atlantic Treaty Organization International Staff, Defence Policy and Planning Division, "NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence," December 20, 2007.

Table 3. Comparative Trends in Defense Budgets of NATO's Cold War European Members*

	Defense Budget as Percent of Gross Domestic Product			
	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2007
	(average current prices)			
United Kingdom	3.7	2.7	2.4	2.3
France	3.3	2.9	2.5	2.0
Germany	2.1	1.6	1.4	1.3
Spain	1.6	1.3	1.2	1.2
Italy	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.8
Netherlands	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.5
Belgium	2.0	1.5	1.3	1.1
Denmark	1.9	1.7	1.5	1.3
Norway	2.8	2.2	1.9	1.4
Portugal	2.4	2.1	1.7	1.5
Greece	3.9	4.1	3.2	2.8
Turkey	3.8	4.4	4.2	2.7

Key: *United States, Canada, and Luxembourg excluded.

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization International Staff, Defence Policy and Planning Division, "NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence," December 20, 2007, table 3.

Table 4. Comparative Trends in Defense Budgets of New NATO Members

	Defense Budget as Percent of Gross Domestic Product			
	1995	1999	2004	2007
	(current prices)			
Hungary	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.1
Poland	2.4	2.2	1.8	1.9
Czech Republic	2.6	1.9	2.0	1.6
Slovakia	2.6	1.7	1.7	1.7
Romania	N/A	1.8	2.0	1.9
Bulgaria	2.6	2.1	2.5	2.0
Lithuania	0.5	1.5	1.4	1.2
Latvia	0.5	0.8	1.3	1.7
Estonia	1.1	N/A	1.6	1.6
Slovenia	N/A	1.5	1.7	1.7

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization International Staff, Defence Policy and Planning Division, "NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence," December 20, 2007, table 3.

Table 5. Selected NATO European Member Population, 2000–2050 (medium variant)

	Population (thousands)		Difference	
	2000	2050	Absolute	Percentage
United Kingdom	59,415	58,933	–482	–0.8
France	59,200	63,100	+3,900	+6.6
Germany	82,017	70,805	–11,212	–13.7
Spain	39,910	31,282	–8,629	–21.6
Italy	57,530	42,962	–14,568	–25.3
Netherlands	15,868	15,845	–18	–0.1
Belgium	10,249	9,583	–667	–6.5
Denmark	5,320	5,080	–240	–4.5
Portugal	10,016	9,006	–1,010	–10.1
Greece	10,610	8,983	–1,627	–15.3
Turkey	66,700	98,800	+32,100	+48.1
Total w/o France and Turkey	290,935	252,479	–38,453	–13.2
Total w/ France and Turkey	(416,835)	(414,379)	–2,457	–0.6

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Council, *World Demographic Trends: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Report E/CN.9/2001/4, tables 4, 6.

Table 6. New NATO Members: Projected Population Trends, 2000–2050 (medium variant)

	Population (thousands)		Difference	
	2000	2050	Absolute	Percentage
Hungary	9,968	7,486	–2,481	–24.9
Poland	38,605	33,370	–5,235	–13.6
Czech Republic	10,272	8,429	–1.842	–17.9
Slovakia	5,399	4,674	–724	–13.4
Romania	22,438	18,150	–4,288	–19.1
Bulgaria	7,949	4,531	–3,419	–43.0
Lithuania	3,696	2,989	–707	–19.1
Latvia	2,421	1,744	–677	–28.0
Estonia	1,393	752	–642	–46.1
Slovenia	1,988	1,527	–461	–23.2
Total	104,129	83,652	–20,476	–19.7

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Council, *World Demographic Trends: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Report E/CN.9/2001/4, table 6.

Papers issued by the United Kingdom, Germany, and France reflect their growing internal security concerns,[3] but also their defense budgets, as well as those of other European NATO allies, seem to correspond to those perceptions. While European interior ministries are enlarging and playing more important roles in addressing security concerns, their defense budgets have been stagnating or decreasing.

This downward defense trend has been consistent among NATO's Cold War European members since 1990 (see table 3) and is unlikely to change any time in the future. Only 4 of the 12 Allies maintain budgets meeting the generally accepted 2 percent of GDP threshold: the United Kingdom and France, with all-volunteer and expeditionary capabilities and experience, and Greece and Turkey, with large conscript forces and mutual defense concerns. France pledges to hold its defense budget constant at 2 percent until 2012 but will reduce its defense establishment by 54,000 over the next 7 years. Belgium, Denmark, Germany, and Spain have defense budgets that have declined to 1.3 percent or lower.

When a terrorist train bombing killed 191 and wounded more than 1,400 in Madrid in 2004, Spain did *not* want NATO to invoke Article 5; it increased its interior ministry budget and held defense expenditures steady at 1.2 percent. When other NATO European members have faced similar challenges, they, too, have focused on internal security institutions, where NATO's defense instruments are less relevant. This emphasis conforms to the traditional tendency in many parts of Europe to view terrorism as a law enforcement problem first and foremost, thus falling within the purview of a country's police and public security apparatus, rather than a threat to be countered by military means. In sum, internal security challenges are becoming more relevant to European societies and political elites, an area where NATO's Article 5 has a *diminishing* role to play. Hence, many European NATO members apparently see defense allocations as *less* relevant to deal with their security challenges.

The same stasis or downward trend has been evident even among NATO's 10 new members since their accession (see table 4). Only Bulgaria meets the 2 percent goal, and only Poland and Romania come close at 1.9 percent. Despite earlier promises, some Allies—Hungary, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic—have clearly returned disappointing defense results. And this trend is *not* likely to change among NATO's new Allies in the near future.

In marked contrast to NATO's Cold War and new European members, the United States continues to see defense as a vital instrument to deal with threats. These diverging transatlantic views on how the military contributes to defense and security are likely to exert further pressure on European defense budgets and military forces and on the transatlantic relationship.

Shrinking Military Age Cohort

The issues of shrinking force size and resource commitments, while significant in their own right, pale in comparison to a much more profound challenge: U.S. and European NATO members' military service cohorts are moving in opposite directions.

The U.S. population of 283,230,000 in 2000 is projected to grow to roughly 397,063,000 in 2050.[4] During the same period, the U.S. median age of 35.5 is to increase only slightly to 36.2 in 2050.[5] Hence, the United States should have an adequate cohort available for military service at current troop levels. In marked contrast, European

(Cold War and new) NATO members[6] not only will experience population decline, but also the median age of 37.7 in 2000 is projected to rise to 47 in 2050.[7] What this means is that the Europeans' declining military service cohort could affect their ability to meet planned force levels and make it more difficult to modernize their smaller, expensive professional forces in the face of mounting health and social costs for their aging populations. Some European Allies actually may have to face the question of whether they will be able to maintain a viable military.

Among NATO's Cold War European members (see table 5), the declining cohort and aging problem will be felt most acutely in Italy and Spain, where overall declines of 21 to 25 percent in population are projected. As a result, between 2005 and 2050, Italy's population over the age of 60 will increase substantially from 25.5 to 41.6 percent, and Spain's from 21.4 to 39.7 percent. Although Germany, Greece, and Portugal have overall projected population declines of 10 to 15 percent, they also will experience an aging challenge. Between 2005 and 2050, the 60-and-over population will increase in Greece from 23 to 36.8 percent; in Portugal from 22.3 to 36.3 percent; and in Germany from 25.1 to 35 percent.[8] In all these cases, a shrinking 15- to 59-year-old cohort will find it more difficult to fill out military billets to maintain existing force levels, while the need to subsidize the increasing health care and social welfare costs of an aging population will compete with efforts to maintain and modernize existing armed forces. Even France and the United Kingdom, which have relatively more favorable demographics, face challenges. In 2005, both had 60-and-over populations of 21.1 percent; by 2050, those French and British populations will be 33 and 29.4 percent, respectively.[9] In sum, NATO's European Cold War members will find it increasingly difficult to recruit, retain, and modernize their military establishments.

If this situation appears challenging for NATO's European Cold War–era members, it is even more dire for the Alliance's new members (see table 6), whose populations are projected to experience *substantial* decline. Between 2005 and 2050, Bulgaria and Estonia are projected to shrink to almost half their current size, facing declines of 43 and 46.1 percent, respectively. Bulgaria's 60-and-over population is forecast to increase from 22.4 to 38 percent, and Estonia's from 21.6 to 33.6 percent. Latvia, Hungary, and Slovenia are expected to face population declines of 28, 24.9, and 23.2 percent, respectively. Although their actual declines will be more moderate than those of Bulgaria and Estonia, they will face the burden of subsidizing an even larger aging population. Between 2005 and 2050, Latvia's 60-and-over population is projected to more than double from 22.5 to 48 percent, Slovenia's from 20.5 to 40.2 percent, and Hungary's from 20.8 to 36.2 percent. Although the Czech Republic and Lithuania face lower overall population declines, they also share the burden of almost doubling 60-and-over populations, facing increases from 20 to 39.3 percent and 20.7 to 37.9 percent, respectively.[10] Hence, NATO's new members will find it even more challenging than the European Cold War members to retain modernized military establishments at their already significantly reduced troop levels.

In summary, the Europeans' diminished cohort will make it increasingly difficult for their militaries to meet existing, already much smaller, all-volunteer force recruitment goals. Mounting health and welfare costs for an aging population will also compete more with resources necessary to modernize those smaller forces. Recruitment and retention pressures are already evident in Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania. Declining European cohorts have resulted in lower intake standards and smaller forces and will further fuel the already strained transatlantic burdensharing debate.

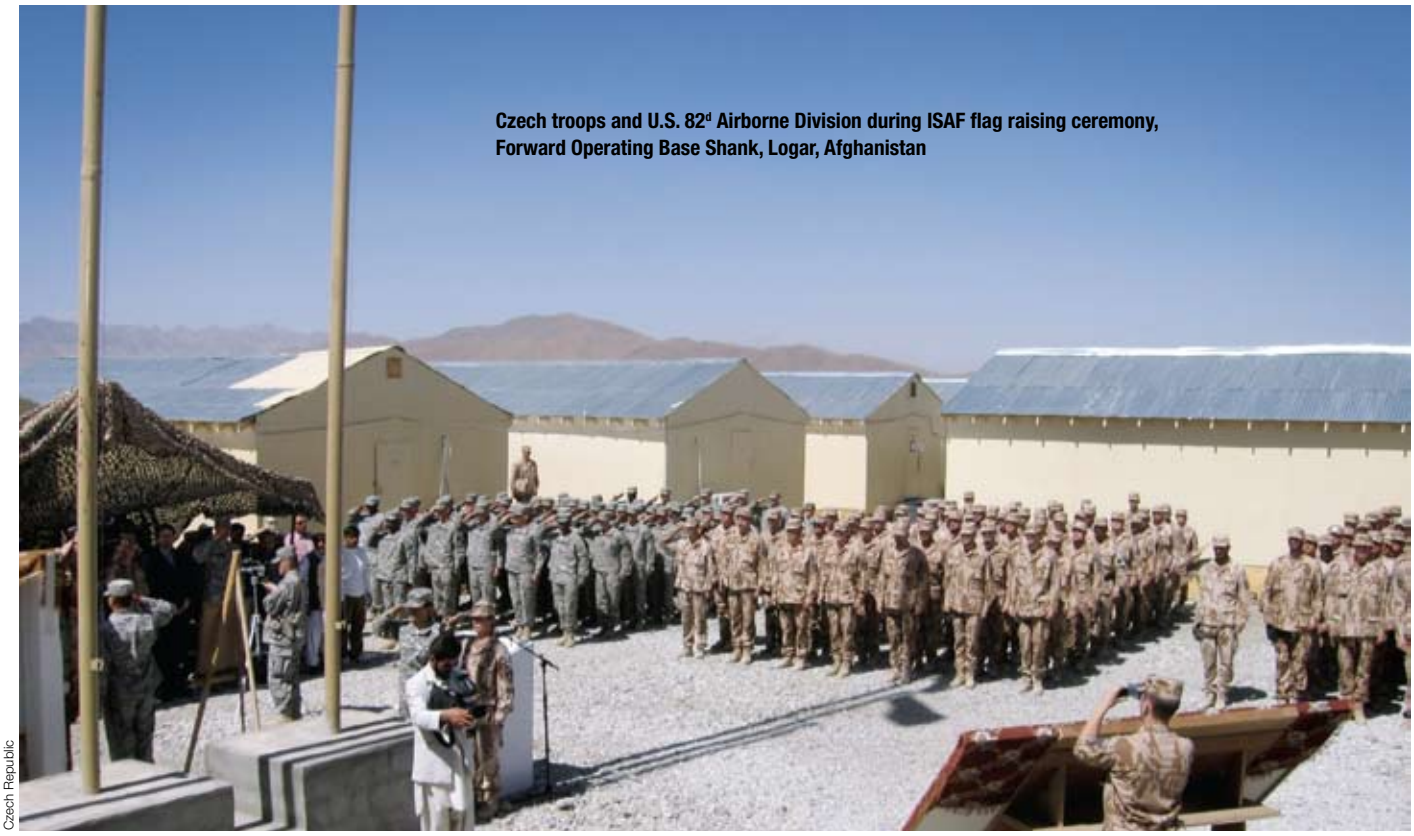
Impact of Immigration

Any assessment of shifting demographics within the Alliance must consider the distinctive impact of diverging immigration patterns in Europe and the United States and the potential for these patterns to erode a common historic identity. As fertility declines in Europe, the contribution of international migration to its population growth is increasing in significance. Although immigration is one way to increase the number of European cohorts available for military service, other demographic forces are pulling the United States and European NATO countries in different directions. Worldwide, the countries with the highest levels of net emigration annually are projected to be China (–329,000), Mexico (–306,000), India (–241,000), Philippines (–180,000), Pakistan (–167,000), and Indonesia (–164,000).[11]

While the United States and Europe will be net receivers of international migrants, their intake composition is increasingly different. The traditional U.S. immigration pattern increasingly has shifted away from Europe, while Europe's is increasingly shifting toward immigration from Muslim lands in Asia Minor, the Middle East and Southwest Asia, and the Maghreb. This could pull each side of the Atlantic in different directions.

The United States faces immigration demographics that are very different from Europe; its birth rate is higher, and it can absorb many more immigrants. From 2005 to 2050, the United States is projected to receive 1.1 million immigrants annually, many of whom are Hispanic (Spanish is rapidly becoming its second language) and Asian, whose populations will triple in size. The Hispanic population, 42 million in 2005, will rise to 128 million in 2050, constituting 29 percent of the U.S. population (compared to 14 percent in 2005 and 3.5 percent in 1960). The Asian population, 14 million in 2005, will grow to 41 million in 2050, constituting 9 percent of the U.S. population (compared to 5 percent in 2005 and 0.6 percent in 1960).[12] This means that 38 percent of the U.S. population will be either Hispanic or Asian in 2050, compared to only 4.1 percent in 1960.

During the same period, the internal demographics of NATO's European Allies face drastic changes as well. Germany is projected to receive 150,000 immigrants annually, Italy 139,000, the United Kingdom 130,000, and Spain 123,000.[13] Immigration from Turkey, the Muslim East, and North Africa to fill labor shortfalls is already having an impact on intercommunal relations and security concerns. Since the attacks of September 11, public anxieties about an influx of Muslim populations into Europe have risen, sparked in part by numerous outbreaks of violence. Security concerns have increased since the Madrid commuter train bombings on March 11, 2004; the assassination of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands in November 2004; terrorist bombings in London in July 2005; weeks of street violence and car bombings in France in October-November 2005; and widespread riots following the publication of cartoons offensive to some Muslims in a Danish newspaper in February 2006. Pew public opinion polls in Spain, Germany,



Czech troops and U.S. 82d Airborne Division during ISAF flag raising ceremony, Forward Operating Base Shank, Logar, Afghanistan

Czech Republic

Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands indicate that between 70 and 78 percent are either somewhat or very concerned about Islamic extremism.[14] While Muslims in the United Kingdom constitute roughly 3 percent of overall population (mostly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis), in Germany, 4 percent (mostly Turks), in France, 8 percent (mostly Algerians), in Spain, 2 percent (mostly Moroccans), and in the Netherlands, 6.6 percent (mostly Indonesians, Turks, and Moroccans),[15] their fertility rates are three times higher than non-Muslims.[16] Muslim immigration has contributed to European NATO's increasing focus on internal security (rather than defense) and will likely have an impact on Europe's political relations with the external Islamic world.

While Muslim population growth resulting from immigration and higher fertility rates is clearly a factor within European NATO, it is also having an impact in wider Europe. During the same period (2005–2050), Russia's population is projected to decline from 145.5 million to 104.3 million, with Muslims approaching the majority of the population. Ukraine, facing increasing pressures in South Crimea, will decline from 49.6 to 29.9 million.[17] Similarly, demographics in the Balkans will evidence some local Muslim populations (Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina) approaching majorities.

In summary, U.S. and Europe's diverging and shifting internal demographics will likely continue to pull each side of the Atlantic in different directions. The U.S. reorientation from predominantly European to increasingly Hispanic and Asian will likely pull diaspora attention toward these regions, while Europe's increasingly Muslim diaspora probably will draw attention in different directions.

The Age Factor

Another phenomenon, closely connected to immigration, is that of aging. While a relatively young and growing U.S. population will be a factor in its slightly enhanced global economic profile in 2050, Europe's aging and shrinking productive population will contribute to its diminishing presence.

Within Europe's NATO members, the link between aging and productivity will be especially acute. Europe's fertility rates remain low (decreasing from 1.9 in the mid-1980s to 1.4) and are projected to decline over the next decade;[18] its active working population will decline from 331 million to 243 million.[19] Hence, fewer productive people will need to devote more resources to provide health and social services to an aging European population. As a result, according to some estimates, the share of the gross world product (GWP) of the 15 European Union (EU 15) members as of 1995 will decline from roughly 22 percent in 2003 to 12 percent in 2050.[20] Europe's aging population will comprise a shrinking portion of the global population with resulting economic, social, and security consequences.

In marked contrast to Europe, the U.S. population will actually increase during the same time. Due to higher fertility rates (2.1) and immigration flows, the median age of the U.S. population (35.5 in 2003) will rise only slightly (36.2 in 2050),[21] and its active working population will actually *increase* from 269 million in 2003 to 355 million in 2050. And according to some estimates, the U.S. share of GWP is projected to *increase* from roughly 23 percent now to 26 percent in 2050.[22] In other words, the U.S. experience will significantly diverge from that of Europe. This factor, combined with immigration patterns noted earlier, could also have a dramatic effect on its identity and political orientation. While Europe will remain important to the United States, Asia and Latin America will be gaining in relative economic, social, and domestic political importance. These trends, too, are likely to have an impact on the transatlantic

relationship and the Alliance's future as we move toward the mid-21st century.

Demographic and Economic Marginalization

Finally, there is a global reality to be considered: The world's population will continue to reflect the inexorable shift away from the Eurocentric world that existed when NATO was created in 1949 to the rapid demographic-economic marginalization of Europe by 2050.

In 1950, the world population stood at 2.519 billion; shortly after NATO's 50th anniversary in 2000, the world population stood at 6.057 billion. Over those 50 years, the North American (including Canada) share of world population of 172 million (or 6.8 percent share) grew to 314 million (or 5.2 percent). In marked contrast to North America, although the population of the 25 member nations of the EU (the EU 25 as of 2004)—350 million (at 13.9 percent)—had grown to 452 million, this represented a *decline* to 7.5 percent of the world population. In effect, Europe registered a significant demographic marginalization within the world.[23]

Over the next decades, Europe's demographic marginalization will become more rapid and will result in relative economic decline. If NATO still exists in 2050, it will do so in a world with a population projected to be 9.322 billion. The North American population is projected at 438 million (or 4.7 percent) with a 26 percent share of GWP; the EU 25, forecast as down from 452 million to 431 million (or 4.6 percent), is projected to only share slightly more than 12 percent of the GWP. Significantly, thanks to an increasingly non-European diaspora, U.S. political attention will shift away from Europe and toward Latin America and Asia as these areas become more important. The population of Latin America and the Caribbean, which stood at 519 million in 2000 (up from 167 million in 1950), is projected to surpass Europe by more than 30 percent in 2050, with a population of 806 million (or 8.6 percent).

In Asia, China counted 1.275 billion in 2000 (up from 554.8 million in 1950) and is projected to be at 1.462 billion in 2050 (or 15.7 percent). During the same period, India's population of 1 billion in 2000 (up from 357.6 million in 1950) is projected to be 1.57 billion (or 16.8 percent of the world population) in 2050.[24] The two countries together will comprise 32.5 percent of the total world population and will play a larger role in the world economy. China's 25 percent share of GWP in 2050 will be roughly equal to that of the United States and twice that of the EU 15. Internal demographic factors and external global shifts increasingly will draw the attention of the United States away from its traditional European focus. Europe's rapid demographic marginalization and diminishing social, economic, and political weight will mean that it will no longer be the "center" of the world or of U.S. attention.

Is Demography Destiny?

As the French philosopher August Comte suggested in his now-famous formula, a society's demographic inheritance can indeed be a decisive factor in its fate. And what is true for countries is no less true for alliances. The future of the Alliance is increasingly challenged by a range of problems that are fundamentally rooted in its social demography, and these problems will very likely continue to divide the two sides of the Atlantic. The Alliance's future is being influenced by Europe's shifting from large conscript armed forces to smaller, all-volunteer forces and by diverging transatlantic views on the military's role in providing defense and security. In addition, as the Alliance advances toward the middle of the 21st century, increasing U.S.-European demographic divergences will likely continue, reflecting the shrinking European population cohort available for defense establishments; altered immigration patterns will further loosen traditional social ties; aging European populations will compete with defense for ever scarcer resources; and the changing global population mix will reflect Europe's demographic marginalization and relative economic decline.

How will the diminishing overall "weight" of the "West" affect both Europe's and the U.S. positions and roles in the world? How relevant will NATO be to U.S. and European interests in 2050? Will the trends discussed above loosen further or actually undermine Article 5, the transatlantic foundation of the past half-century, or could these trends conceivably foster a sober Euroatlantic community discussion that could ignite the spark to seek a newly defined mutual security organization that could pull both sides of the Atlantic together to fend off the outside world?

No one can answer these questions in any definitive way. What is clear is that as Europe's 60-and-over population expands and as NATO approaches its 60th anniversary in 2009, these social, economic, and demographic factors need to be consciously weighed by the Alliance as it looks ahead to writing a new Strategic Concept. A reexamination of the 1949 Washington Treaty and an assessment of how NATO responded successfully to 20th-century world challenges might be in order as the basis to explore how the Washington Treaty might be refocused, updated, and/or recast to deal with the greatly transformed world of the mid-21st century. If in fact NATO's Article 5 has less relevance in a 21st-century world, and if internal security concerns are becoming more pertinent to Europe than external defense, NATO's overriding task should be to identify what, if any, transatlantic interests remain—be they international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts and failed states, transnational crime, energy and cyber security, migration, pandemic disease, or global warming—and how the Alliance can best act with common purpose in light of them. Without such concerted action, it is hard to foresee how demography will not prove to be NATO's Achilles' heel. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] Interviews with senior Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Czech defense officials in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Washington, DC, on April 26, 2007, June 3, 2008, and June 17, 2008.

[2] North Atlantic Treaty Organization International Staff, Defence Policy and Planning Division, "NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence," December 20, 2007, table 3, "Defence Expenditures as Percent of Gross Domestic Product," available at <www.nato.int/docu/pr/2005/p050609.pdf>.

[3] The United Kingdom White Paper sees "no major conventional threats . . . but the threat from proliferation and international terrorism remains very real. [Hence] defence forces must support Home defence and security in support of the Home Office and civil authorities . . . achieved through Joint Regional Liaison Officers to protect our citizens at home." *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper* (London: Ministry of Defence, December 2003), 3, 9. The German White Paper portrays internal and external security becoming increasingly interwoven, arguing that "the need for the protection of the population and of the infrastructure has increased in importance as a result of the growing threat that terrorist

attacks pose to German territory" and calling for "expanding the Constitutional framework for the deployment of the armed forces." *White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Defence, 2006), 9, 57. The French White Paper claims "the traditional distinction between internal and external security has lost its relevance," adding that uncertainty requires the ability to anticipate and take decisions autonomously. Hence, it calls for increased expenditures for intelligence and establishing a new Defence and National Security Council. *The French White Paper on Defence and National Security* (Paris: President of the Republic, 2008), 5, 11, 16.

[4] United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council, *World Demographic Trends: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Report E/CN.9/2001/4, table 4, "Countries with a Population of 50 Million or More, 1950, 2000, and 2050 (Medium Variant)" (New York: UN, 2004), 17. A recent Pew Research Center Report projects similar trends for the United States, showing an increase from 296 million in 2005 to 438 million in 2050. See Jeffrey S. Passel and D' Vera Cohn, *U.S. Population Projections: 2005–2050* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, February 11, 2008), 8.

[5] Calculations of University of Michigan demographer Bill Frey cited in "Half a Billion Americans?—Demography and the West," *The Economist* (London), August 24, 2002, 22.

[6] With the notable exceptions of Turkey and France, which project population increases, and the United Kingdom and Netherlands, which fundamentally remain unchanged.

[7] *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, UN Report ST/ESA/SER.A/261/ES (New York: UN, 2007), 9. These figures are similar to median age (the age that divides the older and younger halves of the population) calculations. In Europe in 2002, the median age was 38 years; by 2050, it will be 51. In Germany, it will be 53; in Italy, 57. See Peter G. Peterson, "The Global Impact of a 'Gray Dawn,'" Heritage Lectures No. 729 (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, February 26, 2002), 4.

[8] Jack A. Goldstone, "Flash Points and Tipping Points: Security Implications of Global Population Changes, 2005–2025," paper presented to the Conference on Population Changes and Global Security, Berlin, Germany, November 13, 2006, table 5, 47.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, 13.

[12] See Passel and Cohn, figure 6, "Population by Race and Ethnicity, Actual and Projected: 1960, 2005, and 2050," 9.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, July 2005), 3. These figures also held in 2006. See Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, July 2006), 5.

[15] *An Uncertain Road: Muslims and the Future of Europe* (Washington, DC: The Pew Forum, October 2005), 3; and Maarten Alders, "Forecasting the Population with a Foreign Background in the Netherlands," Paper for the Joint Eurostat–United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Work Session on Demographic Projections, Vienna, September 21–23, 2005, 6.

[16] Omer Taspinar argued in 2003 that the Muslim birth rate in Europe is three times higher than for non-Muslims, and that if current trends continue, the Muslim population in Europe will nearly double by 2015, while the non-Muslim population will shrink by 3.5 percent. See *Europe's Muslim Street* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003), available at <www.brookings.edu/opinions/2003/03middleeast_taspinar.aspx?p=1>.

[17] *World Demographic Trends: Report of the Secretary-General*, 20.

[18] "Half a Billion Americans?—Demography and the West," 22.

[19] John Vinocur, "A Gloomy Scenario for Europe's Economy," *International Herald Tribune*, May 14, 2003.

[20] Ibid.

[21] "Half a Billion Americans?—Demography and the West."

[22] Ibid.

[23] See Paul Demeny and Geoffrey McNicoll, "The Political Demography of the World System, 2000–2050," Population Council Working Paper No. 213, 2006, table 1, "Population and Population Change by Major Country and Region, 1950–2050," 31.

[24] See *World Demographic Trends: Report of the Secretary-General*, table 1, "Estimated and Projected Population of the World, Major Development Groups and Major Areas, 1950, 2000, and 2050," and table 4, "Countries with a Population of 50 Million or More, 1950, 2000, and 2050 (Medium Variant)," 9, 17.