Chapter 6

The evolution of the ‘Atlantic Community’

Transatlantic relations have been a core issue in European – especially West European – security since the end of the Second World War. The first section of this chapter examines the nature of the transatlantic relationship and its Cold War evolution. Attention then moves, in the second section, to considering its development during the years since 1989. It will then be argued, in the third and final section, that the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo have played a key role in helping to refine and reshape the nature and basis of the relationship during the period since the Cold War ended.

Origins of the transatlantic relationship

The ‘transatlantic relationship’ was essentially a product of the Second World War. Prior to American involvement in that conflict – informally from 1940 and officially from December 1941 – the United States had, with one exception, chosen to remain aloof from European security affairs. The exception had been US involvement in the latter stages of the First World War. Even then, however, there was a distinct undercurrent of ambiguity about the American stance. US participation was as an ‘associated power’ rather than a full ally of France and Great Britain. In addition, as is well known, President Woodrow Wilson subsequently failed in his efforts to persuade the Senate to ratify US participation in the post-war League of Nations.

The introspective stance was by no means uncontroversial inside the US in the period between the two world wars. These years were characterised by a ‘great debate’ between so-called ‘isolationists’ on the one hand and ‘internationalists’ on the other. In addition this period,
especially during the 1920s, saw the emergence of the US as the pivotal player in the world financial system and also as a leading global commercial power.\(^1\) The extent of American influence was graphically demonstrated by the impact on European economies of the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

Thus, there was an important, if not necessarily politically close, relationship between the US and major European states even before the outbreak of the Second World War. However the label ‘transatlantic relationship’ was seldom used to describe it. This term denotes something more profound and positive than the usual economic and political intercourse between states in the international system. Two core elements characterised the emerging relationship from the 1940s. They were: close co-operation in the military arena, and the perception that a ‘community of values’ bound states in Western Europe together with the US.

The military co-operation was an obvious product of participation in the common struggle against Germany, Italy and Japan during the first half of the 1940s. There was, from the beginning, a sense that this co-operation was motivated by something more than simple military expediency. This was particularly apparent in relations between the US and the UK. Even before the formal entry of the US into the war, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had been working to maximise American support for the UK’s war effort, in large part on the basis of an ideological appeal to President Franklin Roosevelt. This found its most tangible expression in the Atlantic Charter, which the two leaders signed in August 1941. To be sure, the main objective of the exercise for the British government had been to shore up practical American support for its war effort. Nevertheless, as the underlying basis of the Atlantic Charter there were declared to be ‘certain common principles … for a better future for the world’. Chief among those listed were opposition to territorial aggrandisement and ‘the abandonment of the use of force’.\(^2\)

Anglo-American co-operation was, therefore, being premised upon a concept of shared views about the nature of international relations and the ways in which countries should conduct themselves. The Atlantic Charter marked out relations between the US and UK as being qualitatively distinct from those which they held with other countries – even allied ones. In this context it is instructive to note that the Soviet Union, which was in the early desperate stages of its defence against Nazi aggression in August 1941, was not a party to the Charter and was mentioned only in passing in its preamble. Other ‘free
governments in exile’ in London, such as the French and Poles, were not mentioned at all.

The Atlantic Charter represents the starting point of what was to become the distinctive transatlantic relationship. In 1966 Harold van B. Cleveland rightly asserted that:

The change [from traditional patterns of international relations] came in World War II when the Western democracies found themselves allied against a regime which sought not merely territorial aggrandizement or other national advantage, but rather the imposition on Europe of a totalitarian and imperialist new order. The idea of a Western community united not simply by a common military threat but by a common devotion to democratic freedoms was born of that struggle.

Transatlantic relations during the Cold War

The onset of the Cold War had the effect of both extending and institutionalising the military-ideological relationship that had developed between the US and the UK since 1941. As Cleveland has argued, the ideological component ‘was perfected and strengthened when the Nazi threat was replaced by that of Communist Russia, whose thrust was even more explicitly directed at the foundations of Western political and economic order’. An extension and institutionalisation of the wartime relationship beyond its Anglo-American core was carried through via the negotiation and signing of the Washington Treaty in 1949 and the subsequent construction of the institution (NATO) which supported it.

Nine West European countries and one other North American one joined the Americans and British as founder members of NATO. Most of these had been allied with the two core powers against the Axis in the Second World War. However it is noteworthy that the boundaries of NATO were deliberately set wider than this; bringing in Portugal, which had been neutral in the war, and more particularly Italy. The decision to admit a former Axis state was the subject of considerable debate. That it was made reflects the extent to which the ideological threat from Communism was keenly felt, especially in the United States, during the late 1940s. The concern was not so much about a direct Soviet attack on Italy, but rather the internal threat of a Communist take-over given that the local Communist Party was strong and enjoyed significant popular support.
The notion of shared fundamental values was written into the Washington Treaty. The preamble is clear on this score, stating that the signatories ‘are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law’. Article 2 states that signatories:

will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.8

The early years of NATO were dominated by concerns connected with the need to organise an effective deterrence and defence effort against the perceived threat of Soviet attack. Although present in the treaty, ‘common values’ thinking had only a limited operational impact. NATO included countries where democracy was shaky (such as Italy or France under the Fourth Republic) or even non-existent (such as Portugal). This called into question the extent to which the alleged ‘common heritage’ of democracy really mattered, at least when set against the pragmatic feeling that ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’.9

Discussions during the first half of the 1950s centred on the proposed creation of the EDC and the concurrent issue of the potential rearmament of the FRG. At this time there was an expectation in some influential quarters in the US, up to and including President Eisenhower, that the successful creation of an EDC would facilitate an American military withdrawal from Western Europe.10 It was never clear what, if any, real strength a continuing American political commitment to the Washington Treaty would have had if this had, in fact, come about.

*The emerging ‘Atlantic Community’*

The idea that a perceptible ‘Atlantic Community’ was coming into being, or else should be created, began to surface in the mid-1950s. During the Cold War era it went through three formative phases in its evolution. The first was apparent in 1955–56, the second during 1957 and the third from 1961–63.
In its first phase, the idea had two points of origin. First, the collapse of the EDC project in 1954 strongly suggested that a substantial US commitment to the defence of Western Europe would be necessary into the indefinite future. Second, following the death of Stalin in 1953, a slow but increasingly perceptible ‘thaw’ set into East–West relations. Great store was set by many in a meeting of the leaders of the US, UK, France and the Soviet Union ‘at the summit’ in Geneva in July 1955. Although the Geneva summit achieved no real breakthroughs, the ‘spirit of Geneva’ was, nevertheless, evoked for months and years afterwards to denote hopes and expectations of better times ahead in East–West relations.

By the mid-1950s some felt that a rethinking of NATO was required in order to safeguard its future against any charges that improving East–West relations made it less important or even unnecessary. Developing the idea that NATO was the institutional embodiment of a broad Atlantic Community seemed to be the best means of waylaying this negative possibility.

One of the first arguments along these lines appeared in *The Economist* in February 1955. Its editorial comments offered an early definition of what actually constituted the community:

> It is a group of countries that share certain ideas of what is important in western civilisation, and are prepared to organise themselves to see that these ideas survive. It is an organisation which, although based on the concept that Luxembourg and Iceland have as much right to be heard in its councils as the United States, has gone a long way towards recognising the economic and military facts of life. It is a partnership in which each country pulls its own weight and in which each carries the weight to which it is entitled.11

*The Economist*’s editorial writers were clearly making the assumption that the Atlantic Community equated to the membership of NATO and that NATO was its organisational manifestation. NATO was not, therefore, simply a military alliance. It was more fundamentally, a sharing of enduring values amongst a group of western countries. This would exist *whether or not there was a Soviet threat*.

This did not mean that an operational Atlantic Community was already in being. Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson argued shortly after the Geneva summit that:

> NATO cannot live on fear alone. It cannot become the source of a real Atlantic community if it remains organized to deal only with the military threat which first brought it into being. A renewed emphasis on the
Pearson’s views are important because he was the NATO leader who, more than any other at the time, concerned himself with the issue of developing the community. He believed that the existence of shared values in itself was not enough to keep NATO going at a time of apparently lessening military threat. What was needed was for member states effectively to operationalise the community by engaging in regular and extensive multilateral consultations across a range of issues.

A May 1956 NAC meeting affirmed the importance of developing the institution’s non-military side. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles suggested that the best way to make progress, and to satisfy the reformists that something was being done, was to ask those same reformists to produce a report setting out their views and making recommendations for improvements. Pearson was given the job of drafting, together with two colleagues – Gaetano Martino of Italy and Halvard Lange of Norway. The media dubbed them the ‘three wise men’.

The Suez crisis in the autumn of 1956 posed a serious political threat to NATO. The French and British had deliberately kept their allies completely in the dark about their preparations for military intervention in the Middle East. Once the interventions were launched the Eisenhower administration took the view that, because the French and British had disregarded any sense of political obligation to consult, neither did it feel bound. As a result the US in effect threatened economic warfare in order to force France and the UK to cease military operations and withdraw their forces from the Suez Canal zone.

The fallout from the Suez crisis arguably helped save the wise mens’ report from being effectively filed and forgotten. Pearson and his colleagues presented it to the NAC in December 1956. The main thrust of the report was to entrench norms of consultation amongst the member states so that, as a contemporary report in The Economist put it, ‘henceforth, a country’s failure to consult becomes a sin of commission, and not just of omission as in the past’. This account correctly identified the paragraphs on enhanced political consultation as being the report’s most significant feature, adding that ‘the NATO treaty would not originally have been signed if these provisions had been included’.

Lester Pearson and his fellow wise men sought explicitly to establish a fully fledged consultative and behavioural regime amongst the
NATO membership. The basic principles were set out in paragraph 42 of their report:

Consultation within an alliance means more than exchange of information, though that is necessary. It means more than letting the NATO Council know about national decisions that have already been taken; or trying to enlist support for those decisions. It means the discussion of problems collectively, in the early stages of policy formation, and before national positions become fixed. At best, this will result in collective decisions on matters of common interest affecting the Alliance. At the least, it will ensure that no action is taken by one member without a knowledge of the views of the others.\(^\text{15}\)

All this was fine as far as it went. Consultation within NATO arguably did improve after 1956.\(^\text{16}\) Yet the wider and more general broadening-out that Pearson had originally wanted did not happen.

The impact of Suez did, however, help to ensure that interest in the Atlantic Community concept was maintained. The second phase of interest – during 1957 – followed on directly. 1957 saw the publication of the first significant academic contribution to the debate. This was *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* – the results of a study by a group of scholars working at Princeton University. The most important feature of this study was that it introduced the concept of ‘security community’ into the debate. This term was used to describe a situation where ‘there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way’.\(^\text{17}\)

Contrary to subsequent received wisdom, the Princeton scholars did *not* conclude that a security community already existed amongst NATO members as a whole. They argued that war had become inconceivable between certain countries (such as Canada and the US and the US and UK) but that there were still concerns about the FRG – at that time a NATO member of just three years’ standing.\(^\text{18}\) Rather, the authors suggested, the North Atlantic Area (which they defined as embracing not just the NATO members but also Cold War neutrals in Europe) was a less demanding ‘political community’ in 1957. This they defined as a ‘social group with a process of political communication, some machinery for enforcement, and some popular habits of compliance’, although ‘a political community is not necessarily able to prevent war within the area it covers’.\(^\text{19}\)

The Princeton study helped to make the concept of Atlantic Community respectable in serious academic and policy-making circles. Its publication dovetailed with an evident desire amongst NATO
members, most especially the core Anglo-American partners, to ensure that efforts to patch up the serious breach in NATO cohesion opened by the Suez affair were consolidated and strengthened. To this end, a NATO summit meeting was proposed – the first such gathering in the institution’s history. It took place in Paris in December 1957.

In Paris the term ‘interdependence’ was introduced into political discourse for the first time. NATO leaders declared that ‘our Alliance ... must organize its political and economic strength on the principle of interdependence’. They stated further that ‘we have agreed to co-operate closely to enable us to carry the necessary burden of defence without sacrificing the individual liberties or the welfare of our peoples. We shall reach this goal only by recognizing our interdependence and by combining our efforts and skills in order to make better use of our resources’. As used by the NATO leaders, therefore, the idea of interdependence appeared to denote a more sustained effort at defence burden sharing, with the elimination of wasteful duplicative and purely national efforts.

Some, however, argued that wider political equality should be part of the package as well. This was based on an instinctive feeling that terms such as ‘community’ and ‘interdependence’ denote relations based upon broad equality. In NATO, however, this was never the case. There was one clearly pre-eminent power amongst the membership and in military security terms Western Europe was a dependent on, rather than being genuinely interdependent with, the United States. This was reportedly the source of some discord at the Paris summit, with complaints from the French, among others. In London The Economist was moved to declare, in commenting on the Paris summit, that ‘till economic integration cements the European nations, including Britain, together, and enables them to talk to the Americans on a more equal level of achievement, the NATO “community” will remain an embryo’.

Thus, for some the construction of the Atlantic Community remained an unfulfilled aspiration. It certainly continued to be so in the years immediately following the first NATO summit. This was mainly because western leaders had more pressing concerns to attend to; chiefly the protracted Berlin crisis which dominated the period 1958–61. Closer to home, the United States also had the fallout from the 1959 Cuban revolution to contend with. There was in consequence a lull in discussion about the development of the Atlantic Community until the early 1960s.
The topic returned to the agenda from 1961. This was mainly in consequence of the coming to power in the US of the Kennedy administration. A number of suggestions were put forward by serving or recently retired high officials for developing a stronger and more comprehensive Atlantic Community, based upon but not restricted to NATO. But it was not until President Kennedy expressed his personal interest in the subject that decisive progress seemed possible. He did so most clearly in his famous Independence Day address in July 1962. This speech represented, in effect, the first official response of the United States to the process of European integration, which had been underway in the EEC since 1957–58.

Kennedy sounded positive. He declared that ‘the United States looks on this vast new enterprise [i.e. European integration] with hope and admiration. We do not regard a strong and united Europe as a rival but as a partner’. He proceeded to offer EEC leaders an implicit deal: a greater say in transatlantic and NATO decision-making in return for more effective military burden sharing within NATO. He stated that ‘we see in … Europe a partner with whom we can deal on a basis of full equality in all the great and burdensome tasks of building and defending a community of free nations’. Coming to the crux of his speech, the President asserted:

I will say here and now, on this Day of Independence, that the United States will be ready for a Declaration of Interdependence, that we will be prepared to discuss with a united Europe the ways and means of forming a concrete Atlantic partnership, a mutually beneficial partnership between the new union now emerging in Europe and the old American Union founded here 175 years ago.

In retrospect, this speech represented the high-water mark of official interest in the development of a more profound Atlantic Community during the Cold War years. It was never followed through; for a variety of reasons. Kennedy himself was, of course, removed from the scene less than eighteen months later. For its part the EEC, as noted in Chapter 5, stayed clear of defence and military issues in any guise right up until the end of the Cold War. Also, Kennedy’s 1962 vision appeared predicated upon the development of ‘federal institutions’ for the EEC. Serious progress in this direction was blocked by President de Gaulle later in the 1960s. Some doubted whether the whole idea of what came to be called the ‘dumbbell’ view of the Atlantic Alliance, with a united Europe standing co-equal with the United States, could work productively in any event.
For the remainder of the Cold War period, the notion of trying to build a viable Atlantic Community lost salience amongst leaders in NATO member states. To be sure, variations on the theme continued to surface in official NATO statements from time to time, but these appeared increasingly ritualistic. In 1966, Cleveland argued that such a community as did exist was essentially ‘defensive and reactive’, a ‘[military] coalition and not a political community’. By 1989 the concept seemed all but dead and buried.

The Atlantic Community since the Cold War

Since the Cold War ended, there have been those who have denigrated the idea that any underlying sense of community could continue to exist sans the Soviet threat. John Holmes, a former US diplomat, has echoed Cleveland’s views of the 1960s in claiming that ‘the [NATO] alliance has remained an alliance, a convenience rather than an emotional reality’. Stephen Walt has argued, starting from a similar standpoint, that ‘the high-water mark of transatlantic security cooperation is past’. He points to transatlantic disputes and disagreements in a number of areas during the 1990s. He also notes, in common with others, the apparently rising importance of Asia as a factor in US security, economic and commercial policies. Christopher Layne, meanwhile, has baldly asserted that ‘Atlantic Community’ is ‘a term that is a code phrase for overall American leadership’ rather than anything more profound or genuinely multilateral.

In assessing these views, it is helpful to distinguish between the idea of a security community as defined by the Princeton Study Group in 1957 and what Michael Brenner has more recently called a ‘civic community’. The main distinction between the two is that the latter is based more fundamentally and explicitly on shared norms and values whereas the former, as Brenner puts it, can reflect ‘merely the calculated preference of states’. The discussions here will now consider each in turn.

The Atlantic security community

For a security community to exist, war should, ideally, be both structurally and conceptually inconceivable. Countries within a security community should, therefore, first be incapable of mounting military
operations against one another; the so-called ‘structural incapacity to attack’. Second, their leaders should share an unwritten but general understanding that war would never be considered against other countries within the security community, however serious and protracted disputes with them may become.

The first benchmark, that of structural incapacity for offensive operations, could in theory be attained in two ways. One would be to integrate the armed forces of the NATO member states so comprehensively that it would become physically impossible for any national leader to detach ‘their’ forces for separate operations either against neighbours and allies or anywhere else. This indeed was the kind of root-and-branch military integration envisaged in the EDC plans in the early 1950s. Had these been adopted they would likely have led to the appointment of a European Defence Minister and to the establishing of a common budget.

A second, and perhaps more realistic, way in which a structural incapacity to attack could be entrenched would involve NATO member states adopting proposals which were in vogue during the 1980s for what was then called ‘Non Offensive Defence’ (NOD). As its name suggested, NOD thinking boiled down to support for the proposition that participating countries should eschew both weapons systems and military concepts and tactics which gave them the option to attack and conduct offensive military operations beyond their own borders. Such ideas were highly controversial during the Cold War period and were criticised by some who argued that adoption of such a posture would dangerously constrain NATO’s options for responding to a Soviet attack without necessarily increasing its ability to deter such an attack. Others argued that it was, in any event, not easy to define and agree on either types of weaponry or military tactics which were exclusively defensive and would be accepted as such by all relevant governments.32

Neither of these two structural alternatives has ever been adopted in the transatlantic area. Limited military integration has developed within NATO since the 1950s but this has fallen short of the kind of integration envisaged under the EDC and necessary to guarantee the structural incapacity to attack. The vast bulk of members’ fighting forces remain under national control in peacetime and there is no legal obligation on any member state (except, historically, the pre-1990 FRG) to actually release NATO-assigned forces to multinational control even in a crisis. In operational situations, national control is ultimately maintained, via the red card system discussed in Chapter 2.
A structural incapacity to attack does not exist today amongst all members of the supposed Atlantic security community. In terms of the size and capabilities of their armed forces, the US and, to a lesser extent, France and the UK can certainly mount significant offensive operations if they want to do so. In certain respects the FRG could too, though here the picture is somewhat more complicated because of historical and, until relatively recently, constitutional constraints. In structural terms, therefore, the existence of an Atlantic security community does not look quite as assured as is sometimes assumed.

What can be said about the state of affairs in the conceptual arena? Is it credible to believe that leaders would ever seriously consider going to war against a fellow NATO (or EU) member or, conversely, feel threatened by the prospect of military attack by their allies? Here the case for stating that a developed security community exists does seem stronger. After all, the bottom line is that no NATO or EU member has gone to war with another member since 1949 and 1957 respectively, nor, discounting for a moment the Greece-Turkish fringe in NATO, ever seriously threatened to do so. How can this be explained?

One of the most popular explanatory theories focuses on the so-called ‘democratic peace’. Democratic peace theory draws heavily upon West European and North American experiences – especially relations amongst member states of the EU – for empirical support of its basic proposition that mature democracies never go to war with each other. One might expect greater support for this view with reference to the EU than to NATO given that, as noted earlier, the latter has never insisted de facto that all its member states be mature democracies. Thus, tensions between Greece and Turkey can be ascribed to the persisting failure to establish a mature democracy in the latter.

Another popular explanation for the absence of war amongst NATO/EU members since 1945 emphasises the role of increasing interdependence amongst them. According to this view in its simplest form the greater the network of ties and contacts between countries, especially in the economic and commercial arenas, the lower the risk of war. This is because these countries will have come to depend increasingly on one another for supplies of vital materials and for export markets and will not wish to see their access to these disrupted.

Although the connection between interdependence and peace might thus appear to be self-evident it should not be accepted at face value. As John Lewis Gaddis has reminded us, there is very little historical support for the assertion that relations of apparent inter-
dependence *automatically* promote international peace. Gaddis makes his point by citing the specific examples of economic interdependence that existed amongst the major powers in Europe on the eve of the First World War, and he also notes that the US was Japan’s largest trading partner in 1941.34

During the 1970s, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye developed the concept of *complex* interdependence. They argued that in a few regions of the world (Western Europe and North America) relations of interdependence were marked by a web of connections, links and relations which provided contact and communication not only between governments but also between a range of other interest groups within wider societies. The role of international institutions was important in providing forums for communication and co-operation. Keohane and Nye argued that, because the web joining states and societies together had become so dense, distinctions between military, economic and political issues were becoming increasingly blurred. As a consequence, military power was no longer seen as the final arbiter of disputes and disagreements in regions where complex interdependence exists.35

Jaap de Wilde has argued that the mere existence of interdependence, of whatever form, neither presumes nor leads to equality between states and, as a result, the potential for conflict remains and may even increase as two or more unequal states are drawn ever closer together. What really matter, in de Wilde’s view, are *perceptions*. As he puts it, ‘the existence of economic and ideological interdependence by itself [is] not enough; it [has] to be recognized’. Citing other writers, de Wilde elaborates on this point:

Since 1945 the Western democracies seemed to have learned the lesson. Marshall aid was offered and within a few years the enemy states were accepted as equal partners in all kinds of international organizations. Mutual interests outweighed national sentiments. Russett and Starr affirm that this had more to do with the perception of interdependence (the psychological dimension, as they call it) than with the mere facts of interdependence. Much of what is being seen as interdependence is not new, but is just being recognized for the first time. The ‘material’ facts of interdependence do not necessarily make for peace by themselves; the ‘immaterial’ facts must be present as well.36

The essential foundations of the Atlantic security community today are the perceptions of interdependence which have developed amongst those countries which make it up – the members of NATO and the EU. This has enabled discrepancies in size and relative power to
be overlooked. Most especially, it has facilitated a historic reconciliation between the FRG and its European neighbours. In 1957, it may be recalled, the Princeton Study Group refrained from describing the North Atlantic Area as a security community largely on account of continuing concerns and suspicions about the Germans. Since that time, however, things have changed. Thus, for example, the Benelux states appear to have had few problems integrating themselves further within the European Union alongside the FRG, which by most objective measurements is the single most powerful state within the EU.

If not perfect, relations within Western Europe, North America and between the two regions – collectively labelled here as the ‘transatlantic area’ – do represent the closest that any group of countries has yet come to attaining a security community.

For some this community is essentially ‘European’ rather than ‘Atlantic’. In 1997 John Holmes wrote that:

The idea of Europe as a community has flourished, and the cohabitation of the Western European nations within the European Union (EU) has reached the point that separation, much less divorce, seems impossible. In contrast, could the fifty-year-old relationship between Europe and the United States come to an end? Yes, though not immediately, and not inevitably.

Holmes thus implied that the US role in the security community was neither as strong nor as necessary as that of the West European participants. However, such a view seriously undervalues the United States’ pivotal role as what Josef Joffé has called ‘Europe’s pacifier’. During the Cold War, it performed this role by extending a security guarantee, backed in the final analysis by nuclear weapons, to its NATO allies and also by taking on the role of NATO’s leader. As Joffé puts it, ‘by extending its guarantee, the United States removed the prime structural cause of conflict among states – the search for an autonomous defense policy’. Further:

By sparing the West Europeans the necessity of autonomous choice in matters of defense, the United States removed the systemic cause of conflict that had underlain so many of Europe’s past wars (World War I is perhaps the best example.) By protecting Western Europe against others, the United States also protected the half-continent against itself. And by paving the way from international anarchy to security community the United States not only defused ancient rivalries but also built the indispensable foundation for future cooperation.
The United States continued to play a ‘pacifier’ role among its allies during the 1990s. This was most clearly seen in the context of relations between Greece and Turkey. In 1996 the US took the lead in defusing heightened tensions between the two, which some had thought might actually lead to war, over disputed islets in the Aegean Sea. Richard Holbrooke, the American mediator, reportedly accused EU members of ‘literally sleeping through the night’ as the US worked to defuse the crisis.39 In the following year Madeleine Albright reportedly engaged in ‘more than a week of quiet shuttle diplomacy’ in order to persuade Greek and Turkish leaders to agree a joint statement at a NATO summit in Madrid.40

To imply that the United States is an optional extra in the security community is, therefore, not justified. Whilst its role, arguably, is not quite as fundamental as it was during the Cold War, it is still key – not least because of its continuing role as the leader of NATO. This is one of the two core institutional underpinnings of the contemporary Atlantic security community (the other being the European Union). NATO, by definition, could not exist without the United States.

*The Atlantic civic community*

The core feature of the Atlantic civic community, as defined above, is the role played by shared fundamental norms and values. Those most often described are individual freedom, political democracy and the rule of law. Where can one best look for evidence for the existence of such a community? There are two main schools of thought. The broad-sweep school identifies the existence of common outlooks and shared viewpoints between Europeans and North Americans based, as Christopher Layne has written, on ‘the friendship and web of historical, political, and cultural ties’ uniting peoples in the two continents.41 For commentators such as Layne, the existence of particular international institutions, such as NATO, is not necessary for the underlying community of values to be maintained. Layne, indeed, has argued that ‘Atlanticism’ could survive even if NATO were wound up.

The second school of thought is NATO-focused. Adherents of this view argue that NATO, if not the sole repository of the values of the civic community, does at least represent their most important institutional embodiment. Both Michael Brenner and Thomas Risse-Kappen have developed arguments along these lines. Brenner has called NATO an ‘incorporated partnership’, explaining the term thus:
Incorporation has carried the allies beyond policy parallelism or ad hoc collaboration to concert ... Moreover, the articles of incorporation stipulate fixed obligations of the signatory states, establish routine procedures for consultation and joint decision making, and create mechanisms for review and oversight of actions taken. NATO structures are the organizational expression of those undertakings. They provide the staff, the integrated commands, the facilities and resources for carrying out missions. A political culture has evolved around them with a distinct set of norms and expectations. They counter the disposition of member governments to rethink the exceptional commitments that they have made.42

Risse-Kappen has argued in similar vein. In his view, NATO is of prime importance because ‘as an institution [it] is explicitly built around norms of democratic decision-making, that is, nonhierarchy, frequent consultation implying co-determination, and consensus-building. Its institutional rules and procedures are formulated in such a way as to allow the allies to influence each other’.43

The major part of Cooperation Among Democracies, Risse-Kappen’s key work in this area, is devoted to a series of case studies demonstrating the extent to which the European NATO members were able to influence US foreign policy decision-making through the NATO structures at key junctures during the Cold War. Brenner has also stressed the importance of this factor, writing that ‘the culture of multilateralism [within NATO] eases the apprehensions of weaker states about possible domination by the stronger. The consensus rule amplifies the voice of the weaker; it opens opportunity for resisting the will of the stronger – especially that of the United States as the overwhelmingly most powerful and acknowledged leader of the Alliance’.44

The existence of an Atlantic civic community remains a contentious issue. On one level it could be argued that, like beauty, it exists in the eye of the beholder. On another level, however, what ultimately matters are the perceptions of key leaders and policy makers within the relevant countries. If, in reaching their decisions, their approaches are conditioned by the view that a community of shared norms and values does actually exist, then they will operationalise such a belief. They will do this by consulting routinely and, even more significantly, the more powerful will allow the views and agendas of other members of the community to influence their own national policy-making processes before final decisions are reached.
South East Europe: challenges to the Atlantic Community

The successive crises in Bosnia and Kosovo have, arguably, made the most significant impact on the post-Cold War Atlantic Community as a whole. In this section, their impact, and the ways in which they were dealt with, will be explored in order to determine the extent to which this confirms or undermines the existence of a still viable and significant Atlantic Community now that the Cold War has ended. Because there is little dispute over the existence of a substantial security community, attention will be focused on the more controversial issue of the alleged community of shared norms and values.

Bosnia

During the Cold War period it seemed scarcely conceivable that NATO would become involved in peacekeeping-type military operations. From 1992, however, this situation changed rapidly and fundamentally. Beginning in the spring of that year, when the first tentative contacts were established between the UN Secretary-General and his NATO counterpart (at the initiative of the former), institutional and operational relations between the UN and NATO started to develop. The major catalyst for this was the conflict in Bosnia and the efforts of the international community to bring it under control and, if possible, broker a peace settlement.45

Once the first NATO assets and resources had been committed to Bosnia over the course of the second half of 1992, the institution quickly acquired a distinct stake in the success of international operations there and a disincentive to admit failure and withdraw. This was largely a product of concerns about NATO’s credibility being on the line, as discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, during the years 1993 and 1994, far from seriously contemplating withdrawal from Bosnia, NATO became progressively more involved. This was particularly evident in the decision, from spring 1993, to offer airpower to support UN humanitarian relief operations and, later, to underpin attempts to declare and maintain certain Bosnian towns and cities as ‘safe areas’.

There was, however, a mounting tide of criticism, especially in the United States, of NATO’s apparent inability to actually stop the fighting. In a widely cited article published in the summer of 1993, one American analyst went so far as to assert that ‘the Western alliance
is dead … it seems likely that history will record the failure of NATO to respond to the Bosnian war with military force as evidence of the demise of an alliance that lasted for half a century”.46 This was by no means an isolated view.

At the same time, there was little evidence of a desire on the part of either the Clinton administration or in the US Congress to commit American troops to military action in the midst of a brutal civil war. As an alternative, a number of senators, led by Bob Dole, began to argue for a withdrawal of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the lifting of the UN arms embargo against the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government.47 This would have allowed it to import (American) military equipment in order to be able to fight on more equitable terms against the Bosnian Serbs, which the Dole supporters saw as being the main aggressors. Also proposed was the use of NATO airstrikes against the Serbs.

Despite the President having been rhetorically committed to a similar ‘lift-and-strike’ approach since his successful 1992 election campaign, the Clinton administration had not pushed for this to be adopted during its first twenty-two months in office. This was despite the Senate having passed a bill to terminate US compliance with the UN arms embargo in May 1994.48 The main reason for the administration’s hesitation was the strong opposition of France and the UK, the two NATO members with the largest troop commitments to UNPROFOR. In mid-November 1994, in the wake of crushing Republican victories in mid-term congressional elections, the administration changed its position. It agreed to prohibit US ships – which had been deployed under NATO command in the Adriatic since 1992 to enforce compliance with the embargo – from doing so in the case of cargoes destined for the Bosnian government. The administration tried to play down the significance of the move and stressed that NATO allies had been ‘consulted’,49 but the decision nevertheless aroused widespread displeasure amongst the European allies.

By coincidence, most of them were meeting under the auspices of the WEU in the same week that the American decision was announced. The WEU members declared that they:

> take note with regret of the US measures to modify its participation with respect to the enforcement of the arms embargo in the Combined WEU/NATO Operation SHARP GUARD in the Adriatic. In this context, they particularly stress the importance that the US in NATO structures will continue to observe fully the mandatory provisions of all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.50
Despite the fact that the language was as diplomatic as could reasonably be expected, this was nevertheless an unprecedented collective public rebuke for the US by its West European allies. To some commentators the American decision and European reaction raised the prospect of a Suez-type breakdown in transatlantic relations.51

In fact, as in the 1950s there was a sense of urgency in moving to repair relations and forestall the possibility of NATO being permanently debilitated. Within ten days of the US decision, NATO launched its most significant airstrikes thus far, against Bosnian Serb military positions threatening the town of Bihac. The rationale behind these had at least as much to do with publicly demonstrating NATO’s unity and ability to act as with any strategic or humanitarian concerns. The then Secretary-General, Willy Claes, admitted as much when he said that ‘this operation … indicates clearly … that NATO is not dead at all. This was a multinational operation – Americans, British, French and Dutch pilots … those who pretend that America is not willing to go on to cooperate are making a serious mistake, I think’.52

In the year following the November 1994 controversy, the Clinton administration executed an effective volte-face in its Bosnia policy and decided to become much more actively involved in trying to bring about a settlement. The administration’s main motivation was the desire to reassert US leadership in European security affairs – with a revitalised NATO as the chosen vehicle through which to do this. In August 1995 NATO, with the US in the vanguard, launched Operation Deliberate Force. This, coupled with reverses on the ground, helped convince the Bosnian Serb leadership to accept a ceasefire and engage in the political negotiations that eventually produced the Dayton accords in November.

The most remarkable turnaround in US policy was still to come. Up until 1995, the sine qua non of American policy had been a refusal to deploy ground forces in Bosnia. Once the Dayton accords were reached, however, the Clinton administration went on the political offensive to persuade Congress to agree to send 20,000 US troops to be part of the NATO-led IFOR. This appeal was underpinned by frequent reference to NATO’s credibility being on the line, as noted in Chapter 2.

The year 1995 was also important in witnessing the emergence of a new ‘Clinton Doctrine’. This was almost certainly inspired in large part by the desire of the administration to put the previous year’s low point in relations with Europe behind it and reassert the essential importance of the transatlantic link. Back in 1957, it may be recalled,
the US had come up with the idea of interdependence as a way of expressing an ideological conviction that transatlantic relations were fundamentally strong. In 1995 the chosen idea, offered as part of the Clinton administration’s ‘Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement’, was that of the United States as a ‘European power’.

In June, the Pentagon issued a document on *United States Security Strategy for Europe and NATO*. This declared that ‘America has been a European power, it remains a European power, and it will continue to be a European power’. It expanded on this statement thus:

> Europe represents the world’s greatest concentration of nations and peoples which share our commitment to democracy and market economies. America’s cultural heritage and institutions largely spring from European roots. Our most important multilateral alliance – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – is centered there. The continent is also one of the world’s greatest centres of economic power and represents a massive export market for US products. Thus, our continued political, cultural, and economic well-being is inextricably tied to Europe.53

For American leaders the European power concept was, this statement suggested, based upon a combination of shared values and strategic and economic interests. It was, argued prominent Americans, the values aspect that really made the relationship distinctive, however. If shared values were not present, the US would, in Ronald Steel’s words, ‘not [be] a European nation, any more than it is an Asian nation’. Rather, it would be ‘an Atlantic power, and a Pacific one, with interests in both continents’.54

Joseph Nye, who served as a senior official in the first Clinton administration, subsequently wrote that:

> In a larger sense, the United States shares the values of democracy and human rights more thoroughly with the majority of European countries than with most other states. Values matter in American foreign policy, and the commonality of values between the United States and Europe is an important force keeping the two sides together. The United States is the progeny of a certain island European power, the legacy of which is evident in US political structures, legal mechanisms and civil protections, and language.55

The idea of the United States as a European power represented, in effect, a dressing up of the old Atlantic Community concept in different garb. Set against the background of the Bosnian crisis, however, this was something of a *post facto* development. A sense of
shared values had *not* been a prominent factor in determining western policy towards Bosnia in the first place. Specifically, the notion of a value-driven humanitarian intervention did not surface in a serious way until the Kosovo crisis began to move centre-stage.

*Kosovo*

In the spring and early summer of 1999, NATO leaders’ public statements stressed repeatedly that *Operation Allied Force* was being fought for values, and not territory or narrow national interests in the traditional sense. Czech President Vaclav Havel, in an address to the Canadian Parliament, said that:

> This is probably the first war ever fought that is not being fought in the name of interests, but in the name of certain principles and values. If it is possible to say about a war that it is ethical, or that it is fought for ethical reasons, it is true of this war. Kosovo has no oil fields whose output might perhaps attract somebody’s interest; no member country of the Alliance has any territorial claims there; and, Milosevic is not threatening either the territorial integrity, or any other integrity, of any NATO member. Nevertheless, the Alliance is fighting. It is fighting in the name of human interest for the fate of other human beings … This war gives human rights precedence over the rights of states.\(^56\)

In similar vein, Alexander Vershbow was quoted as saying that ‘NATO is now in the business of defending common values and interests as well as the territory of its members. Our shared values – freedom, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights – are themselves every bit as much worth defending as is our territory’.\(^57\)

The quotations above illustrate a key point about the shared values that exist within the transatlantic area in the post-Cold War environment. They are viewed by NATO members as being available for export to non-NATO members within the wider Europe. Additionally, any perceived assault upon them is increasingly now viewed as being a strike against the contemporary Atlantic Community and its members.

To argue that NATO’s action over Kosovo was not in any way interest-driven is overly simplistic. It would be more accurate to claim that NATO *was* fighting for perceived interests, but that its members interpreted their interests in a different way to the Cold War years. NATO had been formed with the clear objectives, enshrined in Article 5 of its treaty, of deterring and if necessary defending against a territorial assault on any of its members. Even then, however, a
‘values’ element was built into the Washington Treaty. Since the Cold War ended, and particularly as a result of NATO’s response to the Kosovo crisis, this latter element has moved increasingly to the fore.

The ‘idea of Europe’

During the Kosovo crisis, reference was sometimes made to ‘a certain idea of Europe’ being under assault. Javier Solana referred to it in a speech in Berlin in June 1999, just before the end of Operation Allied Force. His remarks offer useful insights into this strand of NATO thinking:

What makes NATO so united in this crisis is the fact that in Kosovo our long term interests and our values converge. For behind the plight of the Kosovars there is even more at stake: the future of the project of Europe. The conflict between Belgrade and the rest of the international community is a conflict between two visions of Europe. One vision – Milosevic’s vision – is a Europe of ethnically pure states, a Europe of nationalism, authoritarianism and xenophobia. The other vision, upheld by NATO and the European Union and many other countries, is of a Europe of integration, democracy and ethnic pluralism. This is the vision that has turned Europe and North America into the closest, most democratic and prosperous community ever built ... If this positive vision of Europe is to prevail, if Europe is to enter the 21st century as a community of states practicing democracy, pluralism and human rights, we simply cannot tolerate this carnage at its centre.

In understanding how and why member states were motivated by these concerns, it is important to bear in mind the extent to which their concept of NATO’s area of responsibility has changed since the end of the Cold War. Before, the term ‘NATO area’ was specifically defined in the Washington Treaty. It was considered important to be specific because an attack against this area would have triggered an Article 5 collective response.

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO members have adopted a new formulation to describe their wider and broader sphere of interest – the ‘Euro-Atlantic Area’ (EAA) and they have been willing to conduct ‘non-Article 5 operations’ within this area. EAA is a label that came into circulation following the creation of NATO’s EAPC in 1997. Membership of the EAPC embraces all NATO members, all the former Warsaw Pact states and their successors, the Soviet successor states and most of the countries of South East Europe, with
the important exceptions of the FRY and Bosnia. It defines the parameters of the Euro-Atlantic Area.

When the EAPC was formally established, its founding document spoke of the commitment of all participants to ‘strengthen and extend peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, on the basis of the shared values and principles which underlie their co-operation’.60 These were identified as ‘protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and safeguarding of freedom, justice, and peace through democracy’.61

NATO’s response to the Kosovo crisis suggested to some that a de facto European collective security arrangement might be coming into being under the auspices of the EAPC. Traditional definitions of collective security stress the internal policing role of involved countries; i.e. their obligation to take action against any of their number whose behaviour violates accepted standards or threatens to disturb order and security. Yet, Kosovo cannot truly be described as a collective security action. The FRY was not a member of the EAPC and hence not a part of the Euro-Atlantic Area. Operation Allied Force was, therefore, an act of collective defence against outside aggression – the first such in NATO’s history. It was not, however, an Article 5 operation. What was being defended, in this instance, was not territory but, rather, the common values of the Euro-Atlantic community.

In this context the diplomatic and psychological importance of the EAPC meeting which took place on the margins of the NATO Washington summit in April 1999 should not be underestimated. Although EAPC members failed explicitly to endorse NATO’s air attacks on the FRY they nevertheless ‘expressed support for the demands of the international community’ and ‘emphasized their abhorrence of the policies of violence, repression and ethnic cleansing being carried out by the FRY authorities in Kosovo’.62 NATO officials subsequently acknowledged the value – for reasons of legitimisation – of this endorsement from the only multilateral body that brings together NATO and its European partner states.63

**Conclusions**

The Atlantic Community is, arguably, at least as strong today as before 1989. To recall, Karl Deutsch et al. did not think that a transatlantic security community existed, beyond a few bilateral relationships, when first discussing the concept in the late 1950s. Apart from the special
case of Greece–Turkey relations, few would question its existence today. In terms of the civic community – or ‘community of values’ – between the US and its European allies, this has become if anything more overt, if not stronger, since the Cold War’s end.

During the 1990s, NATO expanded in the obvious, narrow, sense of taking in more members. More profoundly, the members’ understanding of what constituted their area of responsibility was broadened significantly with the adoption of the concept of the Euro-Atlantic Area. This is not simply a geographical entity. Nor is it institutionally defined. Only a minority of EAA states are members of NATO, and some have made clear that they do not wish to join. Rather, the Euro-Atlantic Area is best described as being a community of shared norms and values.

The NATO response to the crisis in Kosovo demonstrated that threats to shared values were sufficient to bring about a robust transatlantic response, even though there had been no direct threat to any member of the Atlantic Community, or the EAA, in a traditional, territorial sense.

Notes

2 Declaration of Principles issued by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Website reference www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b41081a.htm.
3 In this context it is worth noting that NATO officially regards the Charter as being one of the principal ‘antecedents of the Alliance’ and it is referred to as such in NATO publications and on the institution’s website.
5 Ibid., p. 151.
6 The nine were France, Italy, the Benelux states, Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Portugal. The other North American country was Canada.
7 For in-depth analysis of the decision to admit Italy as a founder member of NATO see E. T. Smith, The United States, Italy and NATO, 1947–52 (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991).

11 ‘NATO’s Next Five Years’, *The Economist* (5 February 1955), 438.


14 ‘NATO’s watershed’, *The Economist* (22 December 1956), 1057.


16 This is a key theme for discussion in M. A. Smith, *NATO in the First Decade after the Cold War* (Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2000).


26 See, for example, the *Declaration on Atlantic Relations*, which was adopted at NATO’s 25th anniversary summit in June 1974. Website reference www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c740618b.htm.


30 Layne, *Death Knell for NATO?*, p. 4.


37 Holmes, *The United States and Europe after the Cold War*, pp. 1–2.


43 Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies*, p. 36.


47 The embargo, passed in 1992, was being enforced against all parties to the Bosnian conflict.

48 *An Act to remove the United States arms embargo of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (S.2042)*, One Hundred Third Congress, Second Session. Website reference http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/useftp.cgi?IPaddress=162.140.64.64/.../103_cong_bill.


54 R. Steel, *Temptations of a Superpower* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 80. Steel makes clear that he does not subscribe to the view that the US is a European power in the sense discussed here.


59 It was, according to Article 6, ‘the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America’ and ‘the forces, vessels or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories … or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer’. See *NATO Facts and Figures*, p. 377.


63 Authors’ interviews with NATO officials, November 2001.