

THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE

Cordesman: U.S. Push on Greater Middle East Could Cause NATO, EU Friction

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16, 2004 — The Bush administration's effort to expand the NATO and European role in transforming the Middle East likely will provoke new debates regarding Iraq, Afghanistan, and the role of NATO and the European Union, according to a new report by **Anthony Cordesman**, CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy.

"If there is any bottom line to this complex mix of issues, it is that the Bush administration is now planning to start initiatives that are going to invoke countless aspects of the law of unintended consequences," Cordesman writes.

"While it is acting from selfish motives, the United States is defining tangible power projection missions far beyond the periphery of NATO for the first time since the end of the Cold War – if not the first time since NATO began addressing the issue. Whether the end result will be a rebirth of the Transatlantic alliance or a new Pandora's box, it will be one of the most interesting developments of 2004 and probably for many years to come."

The new report, "The Transatlantic Alliance: Is 2004 the Year of the Greater Middle East?," outlines why the Bush administration is focused on expanding the missions of the transatlantic alliance and analyzes Middle East oil and regional demography. According to Cordesman, such motivations include American force transformation problems; energy dependence on the Middle East; US long-term strategic interests in the region; and the growing need for more resources challenge.

Cordesman examines four main regional initiatives of the Bush administration for 2004:

- Steady build-up of the NATO security presence in Afghanistan during 2004, as well as the role European forces will play in fighting Taliban forces.
- Modify the military posture in Iraq so that it has a US-led NATO command to deal with military advice and security assistance after the transfer of power, with the option of a UN-led political and economic effort.
- Restructure the US force posture and deployments in Europe to suit a power projection mission into the Middle East and Central Asia. Reduce the US presence and facilities in areas like Germany, and create new facilities and bases for power projection in Eastern and Southern Europe.
- Shift from the creation of largely generic power projection capabilities in NATO to actual deployments focused on the greater Middle East.

Cordesman asserts that there are two practical challenges to these initiatives. "The first is the political realities of the transatlantic alliance and whether the Bush administration's efforts to make 2004 the year of the 'Greater Middle East' will actually receive serious European and NATO support. The second is whether the West can create a meaningful approach to the most critical problems involved." He later explores what he deems the most critical problems involved:

- **Iraq:** "Involvement of other European nations in this mission means a major commitment to NATO vs. the EU."
- **Afghanistan:** "Until Russia has a clear role, the prospect of a major NATO mission may be less than enticing..."
- **The Arab-Israeli challenge:** *Can NATO/European role in Iraq and Afghanistan be decoupled from the Arab-Israeli peace issue?"*
- **The Iranian challenge:** "Europe may join the US in seeking to block Iranian proliferation, but it does not see Iran as part of an axis of evil."
- The **war on terrorism**;
- **Immigration and North Africa**; and
- The **clash between civilizations** vs. the clash within a civilization: "The problems in the West's approach to the "Greater Middle East" are compounded by a lack of understanding of Islam, Iran, and the Arab world..."

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**The Transatlantic Alliance:
Is 2004 the Year of the Greater Middle East?**
http://csis.org/features/040101_TransatlanticAlliance.pdf

Also located in: The Iraq Briefing Book, "Post War-Iraq"
<http://www.csis.org/features/iraq.cfm>

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