

1961

USAF Broken Arrow nuclear weapon mishap in B-52 crash near Yuba City, Ca.

1964

A jury in Dallas finds Jack Ruby guilty of killing Lee Harvey Oswald, the assumed assassin of **John F. Kennedy**.

1967

The body of U.S. President **John F. Kennedy** is moved to a permanent burial place at Arlington National Cemetery.



1978

The **Israel Defense Forces** invade and occupies southern Lebanon in Operation Litani.

What's the US role in NATO?

President Donald Trump has many bad ideas. Reconsidering America's role in NATO isn't one of them



BARRY R POSEN

NATO, a military alliance, was formed specifically to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating Europe, whose principal powers — Germany, France, Italy and Britain — had been so devastated by World War II that they were vulnerable to Soviet coercion, subversion or conquest. NATO also became a vehicle for rehabilitating the Axis powers — Germany and Italy — under the victors' tutelage.

America had an enduring interest in ensuring that the Continent not fall under the domination of a single, capable, hostile power: That could pose a serious threat to America. The Truman administration was clear on this point: The main purpose of stationing US military forces in Europe in the early 1950s was to stay long enough to right the balance of power, not to stay forever.

By the 1960s, the balance was restored. Western Europe's economies were booming; Britain and France had become nuclear powers; German militarism had been tamed, even as a new, large modern army emerged in West Germany. During the Vietnam War, America was so free of worry about the Soviet threat that it essentially milked its conventional forces in Europe to support its war in Indochina. Its European allies contributed nothing to America's effort in Vietnam. By 1968, with the collapse of Czechoslovakia's government and army, the Soviet-controlled Warsaw Pact alliance also appeared less capable.

In the early 1970s, Sen Mike Mansfield, D-Mont, led an effort to cut the US troop presence in Europe. It lost momentum in part because the Soviet Union conducted an ill-fated military buildup, which contributed to its economic failures in the 1980s. Mansfield's campaign was also opposed by the Europeans, who preferred to keep their US security blanket, and by President Richard Nixon and his chief foreign affairs adviser, Henry Kissinger, who rejected what he considered congressional meddling in foreign policy. Oddly, troop reductions in Europe would have been consistent with the "Nixon Doctrine," which called explicitly



for allies to do much more in their own defence.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the last vestiges of a major security threat to NATO, and with it, the rationale for the US military presence in Europe. Russia's annexation of Crimea and its violent machinations in Eastern Ukraine haven't improved its ability to threaten NATO. Instead they have placed Putin in the penalty box. The European Union, like America, reacted appropriately by imposing punishing sanctions on Russia.

The whole misadventure has diminished Russian power. Europeans are able to defend themselves. France and Germany together equal Russia's population, enormously outweigh the country economically and outspend it militarily.

The dysfunctional turn in European domestic politics seems to be enabled by elites who fear no foreign threats because the United States dutifully promises to take care of them.

But organisations don't like going out of business, and NATO was a "good brand," making it useful for other projects. So NATO took on a new goal: banishing security competition from all of Europe

and its periphery, and bringing liberal democracy to former subjects of the Soviet empire. Instead of being re-evaluated, NATO got bigger.

NATO's expansion now requires the United States to defend all the new member states from both conventional and nuclear threats — a tall order given their proximity to Russia and a strategically unnecessary project since they can contribute nothing to US national security.

From an organisation that could succeed simply by deterring a major military threat, NATO turned into an expansive project to make all of Western Eurasia safe, liberal and democratic — goals that are much more complicated.

NATO's wars in Bosnia, Kosovo and Libya all depended on sig-

nificant US military capability; none produced functioning liberal democracies. Among three of post-Cold War NATO's new members — Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria — democracy is now suffering erosion or is in actual retreat. NATO's 2008 Bucharest summit declaration that Ukraine and Georgia "will become members of NATO" proved alarming to Russia — and helped pave the way to wars. In other words, NATO's well-intended political project is an expensive failure.

Ironically, NATO also encourages fecklessness among its members in ways that can be likened to what financiers call the "moral hazard" phenomenon, in which excessive insurance, offered for an ostensibly good purpose, promotes risky behaviour by those insured.

America's wealthy European allies have underfunded their own militaries, secure in the credibility of America's commitment. Even the most martial European powers, France and Britain, don't spend enough today to pay for their much-reduced post-Cold War force structures. They barely reach the alliance's obligation to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence. France and Germany spend roughly half, and Britain two-thirds, of what the United States does per soldier; unless they have achieved remarkable levels of efficiency, they must be cutting corners.

Germany today spends only about 1.25 per cent of GDP on defence, leaving the German armed forces a sad remnant of their very capable Cold War incarnation. Until 1990, that army could put a dozen heavily armed divisions into the field a few days after mobilisation. Today it would be lucky to get one fully equipped division into the field. Less than half of German military equipment is ready for combat.

While European and US politicians and pundits wring their hands about the Russian military threat, European governments and militaries practice business as usual.

The dysfunctional turn in European domestic politics seems to be enabled by elites who fear no foreign threats because the United States dutifully promises to take care of them.

(Barry R Posen, a professor of political science at MIT and director of its Security Studies Programme, is the author of "Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy".)



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Directed Secy to hold an emergency meeting with all Airlines to prepare a contingency plan to avoid inconvenience to passengers. While passenger safety is a zero tolerance issue, efforts are already on to minimise the impact on passenger movement as their convenience is important

@sureshpprabhu

02



Franked The Kingdom of Bahrain second on the list of best places for women to work. Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women protects & promotes women's rights & their full participation in society, making Bahrain a champion of women's rights in the region

@LatifaBntEbrahim

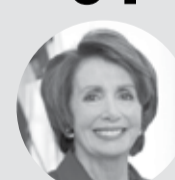
03



Iapplaud Governor Newsom for placing a moratorium on the death penalty in California. I have long opposed the death penalty because it is immoral, discriminatory, ineffective & a misuse of taxpayer dollars. This is an important day for justice.

@SenKamalaHarris

04



In an effort to avoid voting in favor of the House's resolution to terminate Trump's #FakeEmergency, GOP senators are proposing legislation to allow Trump to violate the Constitution *just this once.* The House will not take up this legislation to give President Trump a pass.

@SpeakerPelosi

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

CIVILIAN'S TRIBUNE

Second Brexit poll not against democracy

Freezing democracy by preventing a further vote is undemocratic. Intrinsic to democracy is regular consultation of the people.

You might argue that after an overwhelming majority vote it would be unnecessary to have any further votes

on a topic for some time; however, the reverse logic equally applies.

A small majority indicates that the electorate is seriously divided and, as events and people move on, that majority opinion could easily shift.

Given that the terms of the EU with-

drawal agreement were unknown at the time of voting, that the Leave vote was not overwhelming, that two countries in the UK voted to remain and that the UK faces some of the most important series of decisions in its recent history, exercising further democracy can only

be just.

It is quite ridiculous to suggest that calling for a vote is against democracy. Voting is what democracy is all about and it should not exclude the option to change direction completely.

P Young