

NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROLONGED CONFLICT

THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

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Why did Sierra Leone experience such a protracted civil war between 1991 and 2002? Sierra Leone has been beset with challenges since achieving independence from Britain in 1961, in particular its brutal civil war that resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of almost a third of the total population. Yet Sierra Leone is now one of the more stable countries in West Africa due to its recently re-established democratic government and increasingly transparent, peaceful, and credible elections since 1996 following a series of turbulent regime transitions. This has finally resulted in the representation of multiple ethnic groups and political parties within the national government. Economically, however, Sierra Leone remains an extremely poor nation with tremendous income inequality despite its substantial mineral, agricultural, and fishery resources. As a nation heavily reliant on primary commodity exports (*see graph on page 38*), Sierra Leone continues to depend on alluvial diamond mining as its major source of hard currency earnings, accounting for nearly half of all exports (CIA World Factbook). Since diamonds are not prone to sudden depreciations in value, they are therefore a more stable form of currency than the Leone). In addition to its abundance in highly valuable natural resources, Sierra Leone boasts an ethnically diverse population with multiple prominent ethnic groups, each predominantly occupying a particular region and possessing a

unique cultural history and language.

The dependent variable examined in this paper is civil war. In particular, it seeks to investigate what factors led to the brutal eleven-year civil war in Sierra Leone. The lengthy duration of conflict in Sierra Leone is an atypical case as it exceeds the average nine-year duration of armed conflict for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1945 and 1999.¹ However, the causes for this inconsistency are not readily apparent, because Sierra Leone—like its Sub-Saharan African neighbors—also possesses significant ethnic diversity and has experienced repeated regime transitions (*see graph on page 38 for estimated ethnic group population shares*). During the course of the eleven-year civil war, Sierra Leone underwent multiple regime transitions among different forms of authoritarian rule, from one-party systems to military regimes, before the ultimate emergence of a democratic administration.

This paper argues that Sierra Leone's protracted civil war during the 1990s cannot be accounted for by common explanations regarding the causes of protracted civil wars, such as ethnic diversity or a weak government during a period of regime transition. Instead, the prolonged nature of the civil war can be attributed to the presence of highly valuable natural resources and Sierra Leone's heavy dependence on these primary export commodities. Natural resources are therefore the main independent variable in

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THE AVAILABILITY OF CERTAIN COMMODITIES THAT ARE EITHER HIGHLY VALUED OR GEOGRAPHICALLY CONCENTRATED, SUCH AS DIAMONDS, CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR PREDATION BY REBELS

this paper, in particular, the presence of easily extractable natural resources. These resources led to a prolonged civil war because they provided the rebel movement, comprised of Liberian and Sierra Leonean insurgents substantially supported by Liberian President Charles Taylor, with easily lootable assets and convenient sources of funding for sustaining the conflict.² The availability of certain commodities that are either highly valued or geographically concentrated, such as diamonds in the case of Sierra Leone, creates opportunities for predation by rebels. Rebels are able to use force to loot and tax such commodities, thereby enabling rebel movements to acquire a source of sustainable financing that can be used to perpetuate conflict.³

EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Some scholars hypothesize that the presence of a weak government during a period of regime transition may prolong civil war because insurgents are better able to thrive if the government and military to which they are opposed are relatively weak.⁴ A weak government is defined as one that is badly financed, organizationally incompetent, corrupt, politically divided, and poorly informed at the local level.⁵ However, this explanation does not sufficiently explain Sierra Leone's prolonged civil war between 1991 and 2002, because Sierra Leone did not experience civil war between 1978 and 1990 despite multiple regime transitions and

a series of weak governments during that period. Surprisingly, Sierra Leone has today become relatively stable due to its recently re-established democratic government and increasingly transparent, peaceful, and credible elections—implemented since 1996 during the height of the civil war conflict.

Moreover, despite multiple regime transitions throughout the eleven-year conflict, Sierra Leone's governments and military opposing the rebel movement cannot be considered particularly weak in terms of either corruption or organizational incompetence. This fact is exemplified by the Ernest Bai Koroma administration's multi-faceted efforts since 1997 to implement more transparent leadership in Sierra Leone. First, the administration sought to fight and prevent corruption by establishing an anti-corruption commission to investigate and prosecute suspect government officials. In addition, it initiated a wide-scale public sector reform program to reduce and prevent wasteful government spending. Since government administrations during the civil war had recognized and sought to tackle corruption and organizational incompetence while strengthening their capacity to impose regulations, Sierra Leone's prolonged civil war cannot be explained by the presence of a weak government during a period of regime transition.

Other scholars hypothesize that an ethnically diverse population may prolong

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civil war because ethnic wars, defined as wars among communities in conflict over the power relationship existing between them and the state, appear to last longer than non-ethnic wars.⁶ The logic underlying this argument is that opposing communities in ethnic civil conflicts are believed to hold irreconcilable visions regarding the state's identity, borders, and citizenship. For this reason, opposing ethnic communities do not seek to control a state in which all ethnic groups accept the existing identity of the state, but rather seek to redefine—often through violent means—the very identity of the state itself. This, however, is not the case in Sierra Leone, a country in which none of the major ethnic groups, including Temne, Mende, Limba, or Kono, have sought to monopolize the identity of the state itself. Instead, these groups' political aim was to obtain equal political representation within the national government, a goal that has now largely been achieved.

Scholars also hypothesize that the protection of ethnic identity is much more closely associated with protecting political rights and supporting democracy than it is with economic gain. Therefore ethnic grievances are most likely to be exacerbated by a lack of political and civil rights, coupled with the state's inability to nurture diverse ethnic identities within its cultural and political system.⁷

But this explanation also fails to explain the cause of prolonged civil war in Sierra Leone,

since multiple ethnic groups have been represented in national government since independence, and different ethnic groups are accorded equal political and civil rights.

Finally, ethnic diversity is believed to be especially problematic for domestic stability if a single ethnic group accounts for forty to sixty percent of the overall population and is able to dominate the others. In such polarized societies, it is theoretically easier for insurgents to sustain a rebellion.⁸ However, ethnic polarization was not a factor during the Sierra Leone civil war, as no single ethnic group accounted for forty to sixty percent of the overall population (*see graph on page 38*). In summary, explanations based on ethnic diversity are insufficient to explain the prolonged nature of the civil war in Sierra Leone.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since financing is an important determinant of a rebel movement's viability, this paper hypothesizes that African countries that are highly dependent upon exports of a few primary commodities are more likely to experience prolonged civil war. This is because the availability of such commodities creates opportunities for predation by rebels. Specifically, rebels can use force to loot and then informally tax these commodities, generating funds that can be used to sustain rebel movements and ultimately prolong

THE RUF DESTROYED SCHOOLS LIKE THIS ONE IN THEIR CAMPAIGN TO “RESTORE POWER AND WEALTH TO THE PEOPLE”



conflict.⁹ The presence of natural resources affects the length of civil war because it determines the rebels' ability to continue waging war and thereby prolong the duration of conflict. In particular, prolonged internal conflict is most likely to occur when rebels are able to tax resources that are immobile and geographically concentrated, such as minerals.¹⁰

In addition, the availability of certain commodities that can be easily looted because they are highly valued or geographically concentrated creates further opportunities for rebel predation. Countries that possess valuable commodities like diamonds or gold are therefore at higher risk of experiencing prolonged conflict, because the opportunity to loot and tax such commodities not only enables but encourages rebels to sustain conflict.

Enclave economies, defined as countries in which more than seventy-five percent exports consist of minerals, timber, or agricultural products, may uniquely enable rebels to continue fighting if they can control and obtain revenue from these exports.¹¹ Prolonged civil war may be especially likely if rebels control enclave production, because their relative monopoly on funds earned enables them to acquire and maintain the labor force and equipment necessary to survive against government forces.¹²

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by securing the financial resources necessary to continue waging war—particularly through control of natural resources.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The mechanisms through which natural resources affect the likelihood of prolonged civil war are illustrated in Sierra Leone's civil war. Because prolonged conflict is often motivated and enabled by predation of natural resource exports and valuable commodities, Sierra Leone is an ideal case to test this hypothesis due to its abundance of easily extractable natural resources, particularly diamonds.¹³ The availability of certain commodities that may be easily looted as a result of their value and geographic concentration creates opportunities for rebels to forcefully seize and subsequently tax them to fund continued insurgency.

The causal mechanism linking natural resources to prolonged civil war is the costs of sustaining a rebel movement—especially labor and armaments—against government forces. In essence, this requires the rebellion itself to generate revenue.¹⁴ The circumstances determining a rebel movement's financial viability are thus incredibly important, since prolonged civil wars can only occur when rebel groups can sustain their large organizations.¹⁵ This is evident in the case of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone,

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the central rebel movement that opposed the government throughout the eleven-year conflict. It was only able to do so by profiting through trade in conflict diamonds, defined as diamonds originating from areas controlled by rebel forces opposed to a country's internationally recognized government. The Revolutionary United Front rebel movement



*ALLUVIAL MINING REMAINS A MAJOR
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in Sierra Leone initially coalesced in opposition to the elite and corrupt government, claiming that it sought to restore power and wealth to the people. But the prolonged civil war that resulted from the rebels' insurgency would not have been possible without the revenue it acquired by looting alluvial diamond mines throughout the country and placing high informal taxes on the revenue generated.¹⁶

The claim that enclave production is particularly likely to cause prolonged civil war appears true in the case of Sierra Leone. The country's many easily extractable natural resources, most notably alluvial diamonds, allowed the rebel movement to continue funding its operations and thereby sustaining the conflict.¹⁷ The Eastern and Southern regions of Sierra Leone are abundant in these diamonds, which are accessible to anyone with a shovel and sieve. The Revolutionary United Front was thus able to fund its military action through illicit trade in conflict diamonds. Specifically, the Revolutionary United Front used funds from alluvial diamond mines to purchase weapons and ammunition from neighboring countries such as Guinea and Liberia.¹⁸ The fact that trade in conflict diamonds prolonged the civil war in Sierra Leone is reflected by International Criminal Court's recent conviction of Liberian president Charles Taylor for his role in sustaining the conflict by trading weapons and military training for diamonds, thereby enabling the Revolutionary United Front to sustain its brutal



PRESIDENT ERNEST BAI KOROMA WITH US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF SIERRA LEONE'S ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS

campaign.

Certain primary commodity exports, such as minerals, provide an ideal source of rebel financing because rebels can potentially enjoy huge profits by seizing control of geographically concentrated resources.¹⁹ This is certainly true in the case of Sierra Leone, an enclave economy in which minerals account for approximately eighty percent of total exports. Revolutionary United Front rebels were able to reap sizeable profits after capturing and holding diamond mines in the Southern and Eastern regions of the country. Prolonged civil wars are more likely to occur in countries that have enclave economies because rebels are able to continue fighting as long as they can obtain revenue from the enclaves under their control. Enclave predation is most likely when there is high asset specificity, geographic concentration of resources, and high-value products.²⁰

It is therefore no coincidence that the civil war in Sierra Leone began in the Eastern town of Koidu, where most of the county's diamonds are concentrated and a major traditional site of alluvial mining. During the latter half of the civil war, Koidu was controlled almost exclusively by Revolutionary United Front rebels who used brutal force to seize and tax diamonds extracted there.²¹ The presence of easily extractable diamonds provided a powerful incentive for the continuation of civil war violence, and the rebels maintained control of important mining districts such as Kono

and Koidu by expelling thousands of civilians through brutally violent means.²²

In addition to providing rebel movements with a source of continued funding, increasing evidence indicates that natural resources also prolong civil war by increasing levels of rebel violence. Some scholars argue this is because the resource base under rebel control affects the type of soldiers who are recruited.²³ Rebels fighting in a resource-poor area tend to attract committed soldiers, whereas rebels fighting in natural-resource-rich-areas tend to attract opportunist soldiers who are less disciplined and use more indiscriminate violence.²⁴ This holds true in the case of Sierra Leone, where the Revolutionary United Front rebels brutally amputated the hands, arms, and legs of tens of thousands of Sierra Leoneans with machetes throughout the conflict. The Revolutionary United Front indicated that a major reason for these actions was to prevent victims from mining alluvial diamonds, which rebels feared could have been used to support government forces and defeat their rebel movement.²⁵

Sierra Leone's civil war provides abundant evidence about how rebel organizations generate revenue through the informal taxation of the rents on primary commodity exports, thereby enabling prolonged civil war to occur due to heavy economic dependence on natural resource exports.²⁶ In Sierra Leone, the availability of

THIS CONCLUSION SUGGESTS THAT IF GOVERNMENTS ARE ABLE TO PREVENT REBELS FROM HOLDING AND TAXING EXPORT ENCLAVES, MOST OF THE MOTIVATION AND NECESSARY FUNDING FOR REBEL GROUPS WOULD DISAPPEAR

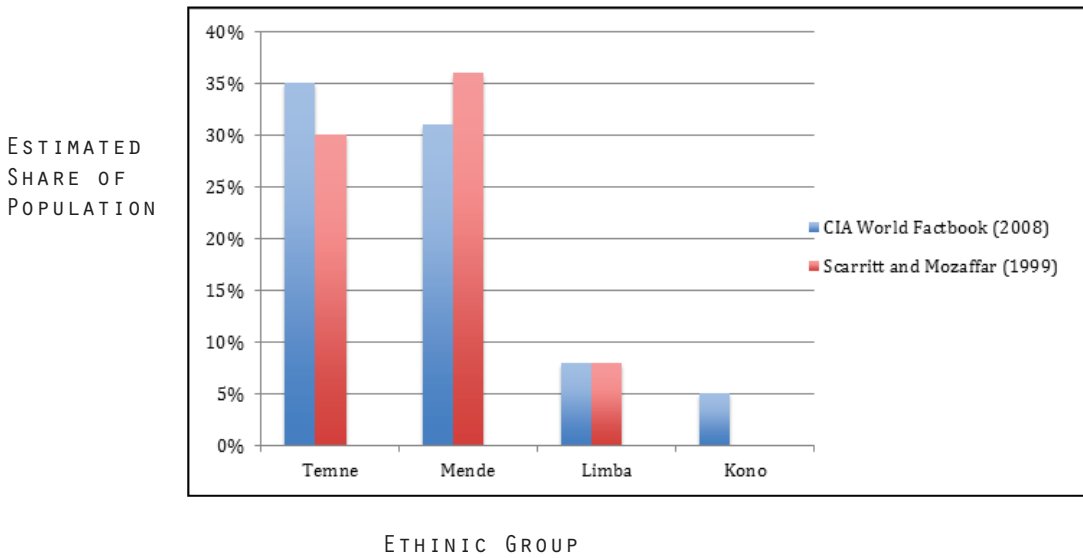
natural resources provided insurgents with easily lootable assets to seize and a source of income for sustaining the rebel movement.²⁷ The prolonged nature of the civil war in Sierra Leone can be specifically attributed to the presence of alluvial diamonds; illicit trade in these diamonds gave the rebel movement the resources it needed to sustain the conflict for an extended period of time.²⁸

CONCLUSION

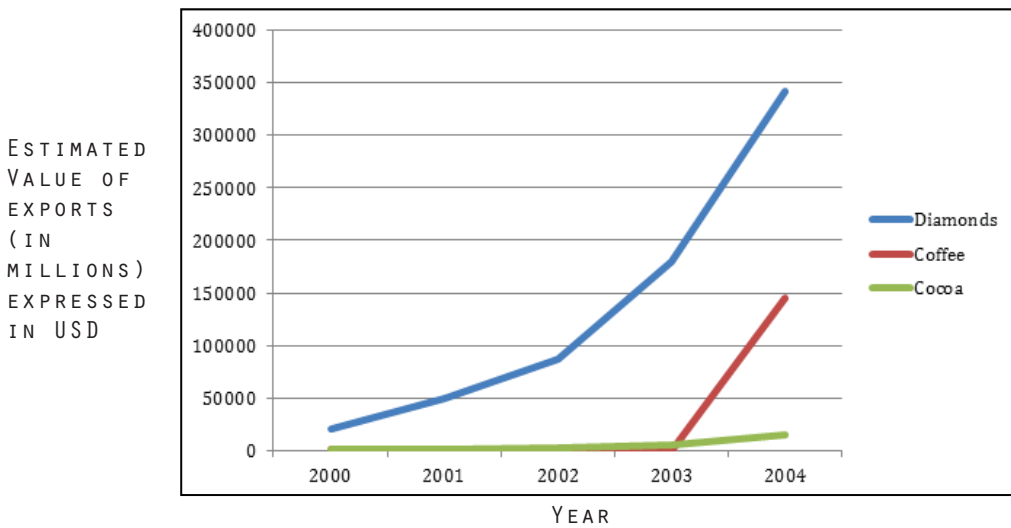
Sierra Leone's lengthy civil war between 1991 and 2002 presents two important findings for African politics. First, it demonstrates how the presence of natural resources prolongs conflict by providing easily lootable assets for rebel movements to seize and use to fund continued operations. Second, it suggests that the presence of natural resources affects the type of soldiers recruited and causes higher levels of violence likely to prolong civil conflict. These findings have important implications for African politics, especially given many African economies' dependence on natural resources. Contrary to existing explanations of ethnic diversity and the presence of weak governments during periods of regime transition, this paper argues that some of Africa's prolonged civil wars may be best explained by economic factors such as heavy dependence on export enclaves, which are vulnerable to rebel control and predation.²⁹ Rebel organizations may be able to

generate the revenue they need to sustain conflict through informal taxation of the rents on primary commodity exports, such as diamonds.³⁰ This conclusion suggests that if governments are able to prevent rebels from holding and taxing export enclaves, most of the motivation and necessary funding for rebel groups would disappear, and disaffected groups may be unlikely to attempt such rebel movements in the first.³¹ Instead, isolated pockets of disorder might exist throughout a country, but they would be financially unable to sustain rebellion for long periods of time.³²

ESTIMATED POPULATION SHARES FOR SALIENT ETHNIC GROUPS IN SIERRA LEONE



ESTIMATED VALUE OF SIERRA LEONE'S PRIMARY COMMODITY EXPORTS 2000 - 2004



THE EFFECTS OF THE US PIVOT TO ASIA ON EUROPEAN STRATEGIC COOPERATION

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The current state of European strategic cooperation is optimistically described as “splintered” and pessimistically labeled as “nonexistent” by politicians and pundits alike. A potential retreat of the EU to staunch intergovernmentalism frustrates those who hoped Europe could reach its supranational potential to address global strategic challenges. The EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), its subsidiary Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), the European Defense Agency (EDA), and the European External Action Service (EEAS) were all designed to address modern strategic challenges, which can no longer be described as “state-versus-state.” Terrorists, who operate globally and without national affiliation, pose a significant threat to national and regional security. Cyber warfare also presents a strategic challenge for those who shaped the original European institutions. The age of interstate conflict in Europe is over, but Europeans have struggled to adapt to a shifting security paradigm. Recently, spying scandals, misguided austerity, and loudening right-wing nationalism have further slowed down European strategic development.

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has been the “white knight” of the European strategic community. From aiding Western Europe while under German oppression in consecutive world wars to smaller-scale operational assistance in the Western Balkans, the US has neutralized European strategic

shortcomings. Moreover, the very framework of European strategy and European cooperation was molded by the US. From founding NATO as a deterrent to the rearmament of West Germany to pushing for European integration post-Cold War to stabilize Eastern Europe and nurturing the European monetary union to further integrate transatlantic trade relationships, the US has had a hand in the pocket of European affairs.¹ However, that era may be coming to a close. The Obama administration has indicated that the US will adopt a “lead from behind” mentality in the ‘European Neighborhood’ as it rebalances its strategic objectives to the Pacific.² Furthermore, the US has ordered the withdrawal of thousands of troops from Europe.³ The impact of the “pivot”, the withdrawal of the troops, and what these buzzwords truly mean, will be the focus of this article.

Ostensibly, Europe has only two options in the wake of a potential US “abandonment”: unite in the security vacuum left by America’s withdrawal or fail to achieve European strategic cooperation and witness the potential collapse of the EU. However, both options are sensational and unlikely. This article will suggest a third, more probable outcome: a fledgling EU security nexus held afloat by continued American support. This article will begin by unpacking the perceived US abandonment of Europe, then will turn to an analysis of Europe’s three options, and finish with a discussion of the future of Europe and the US.

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THE MYTH OF “U.S. ABANDONMENT”

The US withdrawal of troops from Europe is more symbolically significant than operationally relevant. The nature of this withdrawal requires further dissection. To begin, it must be underscored that with the exception of a slight spike in the 1980s, the US has been withdrawing scores of troops from Europe consistently over the last half century (from 438,859 in 1957 to 98,087 in 2005).⁴ Second, the reduction of American soldiers is not equivalent to a reduced military presence in Europe. In fact, the US has increased its missile-defense capabilities in Europe over the past few years during this supposed “pivot.” In February 2012, the US Navy announced that several guided-missile destroyers would be stationed at a base in Rota, Spain, as part of a new joint US-NATO European missile defense shield that is currently under construction. Additionally, existing US military units in Germany and Italy are being “modernized, reorganized and given newer equipment.”⁵ US military involvement in Europe is not disappearing, as reported in the press; it is being remodeled with continued investment in military technology upstaging troop withdrawals.

Further, despite decades of continued US troop withdrawal in Europe, transatlantic cooperation has rarely been called into question. US troops have effectively assisted European strategic actions in warring nations such as

Kosovo and Libya, despite their ever dwindling numbers. However, as British Defense Secretary John Nott warned in 1982 in the wake of US troop reductions from Europe during the Cold War, “It is well to remember that it is not only numbers, but the perception of change, that is important. Any reduction which was perceived to cast doubt on the strength of the American commitment to Europe would serve only to weaken deterrence.”⁶ Although Europe is no longer under constant threat of a Soviet nuclear attack, the Secretary’s warning is still relevant. The perception of a US abandonment of Europe is disturbing to Europeans unsure of how to cooperate in the absence of the US, and how to maintain security and defense dominance without US support. Even though US abandonment is a myth, there is a real threat that Europe will—in the words of Henry Kissinger—“analyze themselves into self-fulfilling prophecies.”⁷ Even the perception of a Europe without American support could be enough to destabilize the continent.

The US “pivot to Asia,” a term coined by the Obama administration that has caused severe anxiety for European politicians and academics, may be no more than a public relations move by the administration in response to a rising China. China’s military budget has eclipsed the \$100 billion mark (according to China’s state media), allowing for developments in cyber technology and weapons capabilities, including a new fleet of nuclear-powered ballistic missile

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submarines.⁸ America's security hegemony in the Pacific is waning. The well-publicized "pivot" may be designed to reassure those anxious about a US decline and to send a strong message to China's new administration.

Recently, President Obama reassured Europe that "our relationship with our European allies and partners is the cornerstone of our engagement with the world, and a catalyst for global cooperation. In no other region does the United States have such a close alignment of values, interests, capabilities, and goals."⁹ Regardless, the message is clear: America no longer desires to mediate European strategic cooperation. In his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Georgetown University Professor Charles Kupchan said, "the drawdown of U.S. troop levels in Europe and the prospect of a 'pivot' to Asia should help convince Europeans that 'free-riding in perpetuity' is not an option."¹⁰ Even if the "pivot" never develops beyond the hypothetical, the message to Europe is clear: "pool it or lose it."¹¹

EUROPE'S FIRST OPTION: RENEWED STRATEGIC COOPERATION

Europe's first option is what many Europeans and Americans have been advocating for decades: the creation of a strategically united Europe, effective without constant supervision and intervention from the US. One short-term

fix to US "abandonment" is an infusion of money by EU members. The EU possesses a sophisticated Defense Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB) and military potential second to none.¹² However, their potential will never be realized at current defense spending levels. The EU spends an average of 1.67% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defense, compared to 4.9% in the US, and the CFSP is woefully underfunded.¹³ Unfortunately, the prospect of member states increasing their defense budget is growing ever more unlikely. The Eurozone financial crisis is unrelenting, sapping funds from foreign security and defense to domestic crises. Further, a growing voice of right-wing nationalism prevents the member states to committing more money to a supranational network.¹⁴

Winston Churchill's quote is appropriate: "Gentlemen, we have run out of money. Now we have to think."¹⁵ Without the infusion of money, the EU must think its way into cooperation, a far more durable, yet difficult, approach. However, this is unlikely for two reasons. The first is the debate between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. Intergovernmentalists, representing the majority of EU heads of state today, believe that security and defense is fundamentally a national enterprise. A core principle of sovereignty is national security defense—a government is entrusted with ensuring the protection of their people and their people's interests. While the

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*EUROPE IS AMERICA'S DEPUTY SHERIFF.
WHY FIRE THE DEPUTY SHERIFF FOR A
POTENTIALLY THREATENING PARTNER IN ASIA?*

definition of 'protection' and 'people's interests' is unclear, the reluctance of EU member states to relinquish this core principle in favor of supranational control may be reasonable. The French nuclear program is a useful example. The French boast an estimated 300 nuclear weapons, which they have publicized to the world. Although they, like supranationalists, ardently push for a strong EU CSDP and recommitted to NATO under President Sarkozy, the French refuse to share their weapons, believing national ownership is their right.¹⁶ In the security domain, individual state interests reign supreme.

The second reason greater cooperation is unlikely is because Article V of the NATO Treaty—"an attack on one is an attack on all"—thwarts EU member state participation in CSDP.¹⁷ This too is understandable—why spend the money and effort to build up defense capabilities if NATO guarantees national security? Critics argue that this 'lazy' mindset is potentially harmful to the future of Europe—and they may be correct—but the mindset of the states is nevertheless rational. Because of the NATO/US safety net, European states are unlikely to increase defense spending and wholeheartedly push for strategic cooperation.

EUROPE'S SECOND OPTION:
COLLAPSE OF CFSP

The prospect of a strategically united Europe is fading; intergovernmentalists might argue

the very possibility was a pipe dream all along. Could the withdrawal of US troops be the knockout punch for supranational ambitions of EU cooperation? This is not likely for one simple reason: the US will not allow the collapse of the European project. From an economic perspective, abandonment is senseless. Since the Marshall Plan and several other post-war US investments, the US has spent a great deal of money both reconstructing and creating a Europe that suits American strategic interests. Further, in 2011, US direct investment in Europe accounted for more than half (or \$2.3 trillion) of their global sum.¹⁸ To withdraw completely—while that investment is still yielding returns—would be a waste.

Moreover, Europe is—and will remain—America's closest ally for a variety of reasons. As Obama mentioned in the NATO Summit of 2010, the US and Europe have a "close alignment of values, interests, capabilities, and goals."¹⁹ Europe is America's deputy sheriff. Why fire the deputy sheriff for a potentially threatening partner in Asia? The positive returns of an exclusive relationship between the US and Asian partners would have to greatly outweigh the potential damages caused by an ineffective Europe. For the foreseeable future, it is unlikely that such a union will come into existence.

A THIRD OPTION: LESS GLORIFIED
SURVIVAL



LE TERRIBLE (S 916) OF THE FRENCH NAVY. THE FRENCH MAINTAIN THEIR OWN NUCLEAR DETERRENT, DEMONSTRATING THE RESERVATION OF EU MEMBER STATES TO RELINQUISH NATIONAL SECURITY TO SUPRANATIONAL CONTROL.

The third option for Europe, although the least salutary, is the disintegration of the EU security regime, leaving the entire continent reliant on US support. Europe will not increase strategic cooperation because of a lack of domestic will and money, a hesitancy to relinquish intergovernmentalist control in the domain of security and defense, and the security blanket of America, despite the so-called “pivot to Asia.” Europe will not fail entirely because the US will not allow the devolvement of national strategic interests. Consequently, the likely scenario for the foreseeable future is a stalemate of inefficiency.

FUTURE FOR EUROPE

The future for European strategic cooperation will likely be limited. The EU will struggle to maintain any joint operational capabilities due to a lack of efficiency and cooperation, rather than equipment and personnel. The US will be forced to supply greater security assistance in order to preserve transatlantic interests. The future of European strategic cooperation will likely mirror the EU’s response to the 2011 Libya crisis. In the Libya crisis, a cluster of member states (including the UK and France) proposed a joint action while others (including Denmark and Germany) opposed it. Despite EU fragmentation, the mission was carried out successfully and the US indeed “led from behind.”²⁰ Future cooperation

may be in splintered form, but it will function via alliances of subgroups of member states with largely logistical help from the US.

Eventually, the financial crisis in Europe will recede. In a best case scenario, increasing GDPs and fewer domestic concerns will propel European countries to refocus on strategic cooperation. However, it is far more likely that Europe will continue to stumble along and be guided and protected by the US. The greatest fear for Europe and the world is not the collapse of the European security union (because of the NATO safety net), but rather the collapse of the economic union, which would have grave effects on the global economy. Europeans have shown a greater propensity to cooperate with one another in economic matters, but intergovernmentalist attitudes in the security sector will certainly strain intra-European relations.

FUTURE FOR THE U.S.

The future for the US under option three is not bright. America is likely to grow even more overextended in the face of the “pivot” to Asia, which will likely correspond to greater economic and military involvement in the Pacific, and further maintenance of the European project. Growing nationalism and isolationism brewing at home threaten America’s strategic agenda. According to a recent Rasmussen poll, “51 percent of voters surveyed said they wanted all US troops out of Europe, now. Only 29 percent

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*CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF
STAFF GEN MARTIN DEMPSEY DISCUSSES
REGIONAL SECURITY IN ASIA.*



favored keeping the troops where they are.”²¹ As established earlier, US troop levels in Europe do not necessarily impact military presence on the continent. However, the isolationist attitude of an ever-growing majority of Americans is telling. Opinions, such as the following written by famous conservative Patrick J. Buchanan are widely shared: “As for Europe, the Red Army went home decades ago. Eastern Europe and the Baltic republics are free. As President Eisenhower urged JFK 50 years ago, we should bring U.S. troops home and let Europe man up to its own defense. No one threatens Europe today, and we could sell them all the missiles, tanks, ships, guns, and planes they need to defend themselves.”²² Many Americans do not want to be involved strategically with Europe any longer, despite the benefits of a European partnership. It is unclear how the US government will be able to convey to the US public that a continued strategic relationship with Europe is essential, and if the American people will listen.

Additionally, the US faces a shrinking defense budget. American historian Michael Auslin recently described the US budget crisis: “Pivot funding is in danger from sequestration—forced budget cuts resulting from larger budget politicking in Washington—that, if allowed to proceed, will cut another \$500 billion from a defense budget already reduced by \$900 billion since 2009.”²³ If the US can barely pay for “pivot funding”, how will they pay for global strategic objectives, specifically in Europe? The rebuttal:

“but, the US has survived thus far” is myopic. US strategic overextension under such budget stresses is unsustainable. Either a restructuring of the US budget, such as the reallocation of funds from Social Security to defense, an abandonment of a geostrategic program, greater European responsibility in NATO, or another cut will have to occur to keep the US fiscally afloat.

CONCLUSION

The US will not abandon European security in the wake of failed European security cooperation. They will maintain a robust military presence in Europe, honor NATO agreements, and continue to treat the EU as its key global ally. However, continued US military support may have grave consequences for the wellbeing of American domestic politics, and a failed CFSP may endanger the European Union as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article was conceived during my foreign study at the Institute of European Studies (IES) at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, through a program coordinated by the University of Southern California. I am indebted to IES Professor Luis Simon and Doctoral Researcher Daniel Fiott for their thoughtful comments on an initial version of this article.