Through a direct military presence in several countries, and through defense guarantees to NATO member states, the United States is strongly involved in European defense and security matters. Imagine that the U.S. withdraws its troops from Europe, and that the NATO alliance dissolves. Perform the following task:

*Conduct an analysis of the likely primary effects of a U.S. withdrawal on peace, stability, and security in Europe in the coming years or decades.*

Your text must
- focus particularly on the relationship between major powers in Europe
- take as its point of departure relevant theoretical arguments
- make explicit comparisons with interwar Europe

Of course, given the nature of the task, students are granted a fair bit of leeway with regard to the arguments put forth, the paper’s theoretical basis, and its conclusions. Still, a top-level paper should:
- **Draw heavily on the course’s required readings.** Papers that fail to take the required readings seriously will not achieve a top grade irrespective of the general quality of the analysis. We do not, however, seek long descriptions of academic texts. Solid papers should contribute with an independently-crafted analysis – and should present independently-crafted conclusions.
- **Focus its argument(s) and analysis.** Academic and policy-centered discussions about the hypothetical future of a Europe more independent of the United States involve a broad set of arguments. Students cannot elaborate on all of these, lest the analysis become too shallow. Placing particular emphasis on, for instance, predictions following from realist theory is perfectly fine. But so, too, is using, say, democratic peace theory as the paper’s main theoretical basis. Others might highlight the literature on the (purported) obsolescence of major-power war, while still others will chose to base their main argument on some version of hegemonic stability theory and/or texts that single out the distribution of power as the main explanatory variable. The point is that there is no such thing as one “correct” (or “wrong”) theory; the overall quality of the analysis is what matters most, whether one foresees increased instability or a continuation of the status quo. Yet please be aware that papers need also engage “opponents” of the chosen theoretical direction; if a long-term democratic peace is expected to hold in Europe, typical “realist” arguments (concerning the anarchic international self-help system, the ubiquitous objectives of power and influence, the security dilemma, nuclear proliferation,
the effects of a multipolar structure, and the like) should or must still be taken seriously in the analysis.

- **Make explicit comparisons with interwar Europe.** Papers need to confront the basic question of what has changed (and what has not changed) from the interwar period – where the relative absence of U.S. influence is comparable to the scenario in this task – to the present (and likely future). Again, students are accorded leeway concerning what they choose to emphasize the most; the important thing is that the comparisons are made in a relatively systematic and credible way, whether one prefers to highlight regime type, ideology, economic development (or management), the existence of the European Union, nuclear weapons, or other explanatory factors.

- **Focus primarily on the major powers in Europe.** A fair assumption is that issues concerning peace, security, and stability first and foremost – though by no means exclusively – are shaped by major-power politics. Be sure, therefore, to emphasize in your analysis the likely responses by countries such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (and/or Italy, Spain, Poland, Turkey, the EU) to a U.S. “withdrawal.” Importantly, do not forget that Russia – past, present, and future – is also a European power of significant clout. With respect to the latter point, it is also perfectly fine to use the ongoing case of the “geopolitical battle” over Ukraine as an empirical illustration.

- **Be explicit about the differences (and similarities) between peace, stability, and security.** These three concepts do not describe the same phenomenon. A Europe without war is not necessarily a Europe without aggravated security competition (armaments/alliances) between the major states. And it is not necessarily a Europe that remains stable in the sense, for example, that patterns of alliances, influence, and the prevalence of the use of different means of power (e.g., economic, military, and “soft” power) remain static.

- **Go beyond the required readings.** The inclusion of relevant additional theoretical or empirical information will likely strengthen the analysis.

- **Resemble the form of academic papers.** We do not expect a fully-fledged term paper, but we do except the text to be fairly well-structured. Importantly, students must follow basic guidelines as regards referencing. Note also that papers should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words. Papers that are substantially shorter or longer than this will receive a grade deduction.