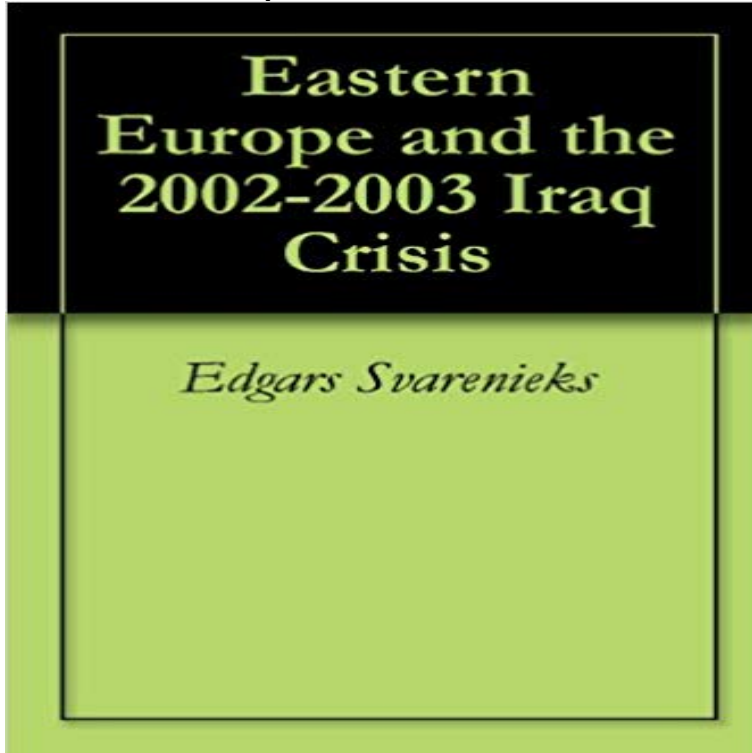


Eastern Europe and the 2002-2003 Iraq Crisis



In the 2002-2003 Iraq crisis, most Eastern European countries aimed first of all to maintain positive relations with their main strategic partner, the United States. This priority was closely connected with NATO, Eastern Europe's preferred collective defense organization. Eastern European governments were concerned that if they supported the position of France and Germany regarding the Iraq crisis, the greater U.S. frustration with present and future European NATO partners might have eventually led to a weakening of the NATO collective defense commitment and a reduction in U.S. interest in Europe. This outcome would have signified the disappearance of the security guarantee that most Eastern European countries have been seeking since the beginning of the 1990s and that they would prefer to rely on in the long term. Eastern European countries are prepared to make significant efforts to uphold NATO's effectiveness. Indeed, the main mission of Eastern Europe in the future may be to keep the United States effectively engaged in Europe and to sustain NATO's cohesion and relevance. It is possible that NATO will survive in the long term partly because Eastern European countries have enthusiastically embraced this alliance.

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