

TRANSCRIPT
RETHINKING THE ENLARGEMENT PARADIGM
Saturday March 15, 2008

Discussants: **The Hon. Carl Bildt**, Foreign Affairs Minister, Sweden
 The Hon. Mircea Dan Geoană, President of the Foreign Affairs
 Committee, Romanian Senate
 Amb. Marc Grossmann, Vice Chairman, The Cohen Group; and
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 The Hon. Maris Riekstins, Foreign Affairs Minister, Latvia

Moderator: **Dr. Ronald Asmus**, Executive Director of the Brussels Office, The
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RONALD ASMUS: If everybody could just stay seated we're going to get setup.

Welcome to this afternoon sessions entitled 'Rethinking the Enlargement Paradigm' or perhaps it should be a question; do we need to rethink the enlargement paradigm? I think many people in this room would agree with me and I think the panelists would agree that the enlargement of the EU-NATO is seen as a tremendous historical success. One of the great projects that America and Europe worked on in the 1990s and something that has changed the map of Europe for the better.

But at the same time, if we look at the debate we see that the debate in the West is changing. We have what we call enlargement fatigue questioning about whether this process should continue. How it should continue. We have a new set of candidates further East which are a little bit more interesting, complicated, perhaps than their predecessors and we have a different Russia which is even more adamant than it was a decade ago in its opposition to enlargement.

We have to discuss with us these issues today the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Carl Bildt. The former Foreign Minister of Romania and current candidate for the Prime Minister of Romania, Mircea Dan Geoană; Maris Riekstins, Foreign Minister of Latvia and Marc Grossmann, former Undersecretary of State from the United States.

Carl, the first question goes to you which is you sit in the EU Council. You are a leading European politician and spokesperson on the enlargement issue. Do you feel 'enlargement fatigue' and do you think there is this need for a new strategic narrative for why enlargement is still important why Europeans in particular should still support it?

CARL BILDT: Well starting with the enlargement fatigue, to a certain extent that is a phenomenon that is there. That is not new. I mean if you go through every single



enlargement that has been there from the EU of the six to the EU of the -- whatever nine, 12, 15, 27. It's always been a process where there's been sort of a lot of people skeptical is this a wise thing to do. Then the thing has happened and people have said yes on the ballot it was a good thing and at the same time it was an extremely good thing and then there's some hesitancy before one moves into the next stage. That's always been the case.

I mean some people still think bringing Britain was probably a mistake and there were people who voted against Sweden and the European Parliament, so there's always been that hesitancy. Now the last -- the 10, the Baltics and Central Europe is not only as you say our success. It was the great success of Europe during the last 10, 15 years. It is really what has laid the foundation for a new European Renaissance in terms of peace and prosperity.

When we go beyond that, we encounter of course areas that are somewhat different. With the Baltics and the Central Europeans we're dealing with the countries that were just beyond the Iron Curtain. Just beyond that famous line between Trieste and Stettin. Cities that look more or less like our cities if we look at it from the post card version of geopolitics. When we move into the Balkans it's different. When we move into Turkey it's different. When we move into Southern Ukraine it's different, and accordingly, I think we need to have more of a profound discussion and a new strategic rationale for doing it.

For me, it's obvious. It's about the peace and prosperity. As long as we haven't brought in firmly and secured stable direction for countries like the Ukraine, Turkey, Serbia to take three swing states in important parts of Europe. There's an element of uncertainty in the overall European situation that could come back and haunt us at some period in the future and thus possibly also threaten to unravel what we wanted to achieve.

ASMUS: Mircea Geoană, in less than three weeks as we heard from Secretary General Scheffer Bucharest will be hosting the next NATO summit. Enlargement will be a major issue for that summit, the so called Adriatic-3, but the rest of the Balkans and the question of MAP for Georgia and Ukraine. You were one of the first Foreign Ministers who at the end of 1990s said, NATO enlargement cannot stop at Romania, cannot stop on the western edge of the Black Sea, has to go across the Black Sea to the eastern edge to countries like Georgia and go north to countries like Ukraine.

When you go to Paris, when you go to Berlin and London and you have to make that argument as well as to Washington, as you have been many times convincing some of us that this was the next logical step how do you make that case and what do you say to Europeans who are perhaps a bit more skeptical and how much success do you think you've had or other people like you have had who are part of the last wave of enlargement now trying to make the case that it has to continue?

MIRCEA GEOANĂ: Listen, I remember that when were talking about getting seven new members in Prague, and I was starting together with you and other friends to

speaking about that people said we should be nuts to believe that we can really swallow seven new members from the Baltic to the Black Sea as President Bush has put it in the famous Warsaw speech.

So we are doing now in Bucharest we are doing a small piece of what needs to be done. In area three, I hope that the Macedonia name should be somehow addressed. It will be a pity for this country not to join, but I firmly believe that Bucharest should be not just an Adriatic 3 summit, should be also be a clear commitment to future enlargements towards Georgia, towards Ukraine. Of course if these countries and peoples really want that.

What I believe would be different from the previous rounds of enlargement when NATO went first and EU followed. NATO went first and EU followed. I think that time has come for us and probably the Berlin Summit in 2009 when the stars, the constellation will hopefully fall into place. With EU elections, with American elections, with you know EU-US coordination better.

I think the time has come to accept that in the future EU might come first and NATO afterwards in some cases. I believe that for Georgia, NATO will come first irrespective of the timing of that situation. For Ukraine, it might be different. Of course Turkey as Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt said, it is, I think, the grand bargain will be if the French are coming into the NATO military structure back which will be a major, major change in the atmosphere and the relationship within the transatlantic community, I think Paris should lift its observations against Turkey EU membership.

So when I go and I talk to -- hopefully talk to leaders in Europe and in the new America administration, I make first the moral case. I see Sascha Vandra right there in the corner. I see lots of friends that have started this journey 15 years ago when nobody believed that NATO will ever enlarge and EU will ever enlarge that we have a moral obligation to fulfill the dream of a Europe whole and free. I also advise my friends and other friends in Europe not to start again with *Ostpolitik* in Berlin; *la politique orientale* in Paris with -- I don't know what in Rome. What else in Bucharest or Warsaw.

So the time has come for us to really engage Russia in a more comprehensive way, engage Russia with a capital E, as Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has said, but I do believe that we will never be able to say a country cannot join just because somebody else has a potential leader.

And the last point. I do not believe that we should really avoid the difficult discussion in Europe about money and the cost of enlargement especially of the EU. Europe works for the American friends into financial perspectives but with the perspectives of seven years. 2014, is the end of the current budgetary exercising union so if I would go to speak to the German Chancellor or to the French President or to anybody else, or to

Commissioners like Olli Rehn and the others or Barroso's in the Commission, I will start planning what kind of enlargement we should have for the European Union.

And the last point, I think for the Balkan region, for the Balkan subregion would be dangerous to have one country which is far advanced like Croatia probably also joining the EU, not only NATO in the next few weeks. That's great news and we welcome that and to leave Serbia with none. I think this will be a certain -- slight dis-balance of the micro-regional level and I think we have to make all the efforts in the world and I would mention something. Even if the Serbs decide something else on the elections that are ahead right now, because I don't believe we can really play with that bullet twice for the presidential race, and now with the parliamentary snap elections in Belgrade. So to cut it short, nobody believed that Romania will make it. I can tell you that other countries will make it and the journey is far from being over.

ASMUS: And do you think the journey in the decade ahead is going to be harder than it was for you and your colleagues and your neighbors in the '90s?

GEOANĂ: Will be much harder of course also because of the -- not only because of the fact that there are countries that have not witnessed democracy for 70 years. We have not witnessed democracy for 45 years and it's still difficult for us. Not only because of the density of the strategic problems are increasing as we go further east. But I also believe that speaking of NATO global partners in the future. I think one country we should engage energetically with is India.

I believe that as we go into the greater Middle East, we'll discover new potential partnerships with Russia. So I believe that in a certain way is more difficult in a different sense as we grow into the great tectonic place of the planet for the twenty first century might be easier because they are smaller pieces into the broader architecture of global security in the 21 century.

ASMUS: Maris Riekstins, Latvia, the Baltic states more generally. In some ways, you were the Cinderella story of the 1990s. The small countries that no one thought could make it who did make it and are in many ways models of success of reform. I know that your success has inspired many of the countries who are talked about today. They have Ukrainians and Georgians sitting in the audience here and many of my Georgian friends have said to me or said to me it was only after you go in that they really truly started to believe that they to could aspire to join NATO. They didn't really believe it was possible but your success made them lift their own aspirations and to really start working hard to fulfill the same goals for their countries.

But you also know what it's like to sit outside the door not knowing what was happening on the other side. Living with that messy western debate which is a little bit similar to the messy western debate we have today about Georgia and Ukraine. About



whether they're really part of Europe or whether they're really democratic. Whether they're really qualified. Whether we really are able to step up and not listen to the Russians, or push back the Russian complaints and do this.

What is your advise to our Ukrainian and Georgian friends here in the audience and perhaps listening to Brussels Forum about how to deal with that sometimes complicated, sometimes messy, sometime ambiguous, western debate about the future of enlargement?

MARIS RIEKSTINS: I think that in this context talking about the enlargement of NATO and European Union, I'm in somewhat privileged situation because really I do know how it is to be at the door steps of those organizations and now when we are participating in internal debates within those organizations about the future, ways about our responsibility it's much more easy for me to understand the expectations of our Georgian and Ukrainian friends -- our friends in Balkan region and elsewhere.

I think -- as you mentioned, we are or we might be a good source of inspiration for those countries. A source of inspiration for very practical reasons. How to reform your societies. How to reform your military structures. How to establish a public dialogue with different groups of our societies. But also it is a source of inspirations in a sense that we have demonstrated that really there is a possibility to overcome some stigmas like it was in case of Baltic states, that we will never get into the NATO. When we have raised this possibilities in mid of '90s, I think the majority of our European friends today diplomatically are saying they raise their eyebrows. At that stage they didn't believe we would succeed but we succeeded.

But I think on more practical nature, I think that we can advise our friends in Georgia and Ukraine that first of all stay on message. Be consistent. Try to be even better than everyone expects you to be and that was our approach in early years of our process of integration into European Union and NATO that there were people saying that they have these concerns and those concerns and what about democratic institutions, what about the roles of free market economy and we have set our target that we have to be in our roles better than everyone expects us to be.

So in doing so, you can take away any argument, any argument which might lead to the negative decision be it in European Council or NATO -- NATO Summit. But at the same time, I would like to stress here that we should not underestimate the importance of the wording that we are putting into those documents. Not underestimate how the countries in the waiting rooms are following so closely every and single word which we are writing down in those papers because I think that they considered this question in a very simple, simple way.

Are we accepted or are we rejected as a potential members of those two important organizations? I think that there is no middle way, and when I hear today that they are ideas



about thinking of new titles for action plans or whatever, I think don't fool ourselves. I think -- I mean the rules have been set a number of years ago and if we are going to change those rules during the game then we would lose our credibility and we have to avoid that.

ASMUS: One just follow up question. If I heard you right, and if I were to ask you, again, talking to our friends in the Balkans, Ukraine, Georgia, elsewhere, who may be aspiring to join NATO, the single most important lesson you draw from your experience, or two or three lessons.

One is, perform. Performance.

RIEKSTINS: Yes, because this is a performance based process.

ASMUS: Performance.

RIEKSTINS: This is a performance based process. From one hand, there should be a very credible open door policy from those two organizations. And the second very important principle is that this is a performance based process.

If we are going to adopt new members only due to political considerations, then I'm afraid we can fail.

ASMUS: Marc Grossman, you had the pleasure of working on both fronts of post-Cold War enlargement, the Class of '97, as I call them, and the Class of 2002, and two different American administrations, President Clinton and President Bush.

I think you know, and I think all of us know, that enlargement only happened with the United States playing an active, if not key, leadership role, and by laying out this bigger strategic framework that allowed us to enlarge to simultaneously reach out to Russia and to pull this all together.

But there are doubts today among some about whether the United States, after September 11, facing Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, all the problems we've been talking about in this Forum. Do you think the United States has the energy, patience and the commitment to make this a priority for another decade?

Because I think basically it took a decade to do the Baltic to the Black Sea Vision and the countries we're talking about today, probably will be a decade before this gets done as well.

Do you think the United States can do it again?



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MARC GROSSMAN: Well, first of all, thank you very much for having me. I recognize I'm a poor substitute for Senator Voinovich, but there we are.

My answer to your question is yes, I do think the United States can manage that task. And the reason I say that, really, is three-fold. First, I think it's worth emphasizing two points that all of the colleagues have made no doubt better than I will.

First of all, that I do think it's worthwhile for us to stop, and you mentioned it, and you all mentioned it, it's worthwhile stopping just for a moment, and again emphasizing the importance to the strategic viability of all of our countries of enlargement, both NATO enlargement and EU enlargement.

And sometimes I think we just kind of pass by it too quickly. And we ought to stop just for a moment, and I think this is especially true of Europeans, and recognize what an astonishing strategic success enlargement has been, and the astonishing strategic success that enlargement will be in the future.

And that is worth emphasizing, I believe, over and over again. Because as we consider what to do next, we need to consider what lessons we have learned from the past. And that lesson, I believe, is that these are very successful policies.

Second, I just want to say to Mr. Geoană, I agree also in terms of the emphasis of the moral argument here. And that is to go back to the idea, as you did, that there needs to be a recommitment to a Europe whole, free and at peace.

And if we can recommit ourselves to these principles, whole, free and at peace, I think it leads to the strategic conversation that you are asking me about.

And so that's why I say, three, yes, I do think the United States is still capable of generating this interest. And I would say to you with respect that it is post-9/11 that makes it even more important that we do so.

And when you say that I had the good fortune, and it was the good fortune to be involved in both classes of expansion, the important part of the second class of expansion was that it had to do with the response to 9/11.

And when I think about the agenda that is out there today, and we heard a little bit about it discussed yesterday in the session with the BBC, there Afghanistan, and there's energy security, and there's counter-terrorism and there's climate change. It seems to me every single one of those new issues is relevant to NATO, it's relevant to the European Union, it's relevant to the transatlantic relationship.



And as the United States considers how to deal with all of those issues, I can't imagine that it will deal with them any other way than through these institutions. And I think that was part of the message of the Secretary General.

Final point. I believe that any President who takes the oath of office on the 20th of January, 2009, a little bit like Jim Steinberg said this morning, any President who takes the oath of office will be dealing with these issues, will be looking for allies and friends, will be looking for these multilateral institutions, will be looking for a way to manage the security questions after 9/11.

And so I believe the United States is not just capable of considering this in a strategic concept, but also working hard to make sure that it's successful.

ASMUS: Final question on Russia. As you know, part of the strategy of the '90s was, as we were opening NATO's door to the east, we were also reaching out to a Russia that we thought was moving, or wanted to move west as well.

President Bush did the same thing after 2001, Class of 2002. Today, we're less clear which way Russia is going, whether it wants to be part of the west. It seems even more adamant in its opposition to NATO enlargement as we are talking about countries closer to its borders.

Yesterday, I think in that chair, you heard Konstantin Kosachev, who maybe is here, Konstantin if you are here, let me know -- OK, good, good, good. He said Russia did consider itself to be part of this community of western values.

Do you think we need a different approach to Russia for a future round of enlargement, E.U. and NATO?

GROSSMAN: Well, I'd say three things. First, again, I was very taken with the points that you made, sir, yesterday. And I thought the idea that here was a Russia that was interested in the rule of law, the environment, fighting terrorism, global warming, climate change, all of these things seem to me positive.

So the first thing I would say is, is that we need to kind of lift up the agenda as we began to talk about yesterday. And if we're talking about those issues, I think that we can engage Russia in a positive conversation.

The Secretary General just talked about also the possibilities in Afghanistan itself, for example, in counter-narcotics or perhaps in some non-military support.

Second, if we're prepared to do that, then, as the secretary general said, the engagement, capital E, seems to me the obvious way forward. And if we were talking to



this Russia that is interested, capable of being part of the world stage again on the big issues, then it seems to me we might be able to put into better context some of the other issues like enlargement.

And I just agree with all of my colleagues here that NATO will enlarge as NATO decides to enlarge. But I think surely there's a way to enlarge this conversation with Russia so that this isn't the only thing people are talking about, and both Russians and Americans and our transatlantic allies see it in a larger context.

ASMUS: OK. Several people have commented about this panel, that we have four people up here who are pro-enlargement, and that we do not really have the full debate. So I'm going to go to the audience earlier and try to bring the diversity of views.

In addition to letting you ask questions, I was also going to pick on one or two people who I want to get specific national views into this debate. And Eckart's looking at me because he knows I'm going to pick on him, or suspects as much.

If Senator Voinovich has been here, the question I was going to ask Senator Voinovich, Eckart, is I testified last week before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on enlargement. And what was striking to me was that from left to right, across the committee, you had a unanimous view that we needed to do MAP for Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest, in addition to A3, although there was some questions about A3, about qualifications and credentials, but let's leave those aside.

I was recently talking to someone in your country's Foreign Ministry and asked what was the view of the foreign affairs committee of the German Bundestag? And this person said to me, you couldn't find a person in the foreign affairs committee of the German Bundestag that supports MAP to Ukraine and Georgia today.

Now for those of us who know the 1990's, we know that it was the closest possible cooperation between Germany and the United States that made NATO enlargement possible. It was the cornerstone around which this consensus strategy was built.

Do you think America and Germany are on different wavelengths when it comes to the future of enlargement? Do you think these differences are overstated? If we have different views, why do you think we have different views? And Marcus, if you think you're going to get away without being asked something, don't fool yourself.

But I'll start with Eckart Van Klaeden from the German Bundestag.

ECKART VAN KLAEDEN: Thank you...

ASMUS: I've got all of my Germans right here in front me, so I can...

VAN KLAEDEN: Yes, we are a bunch. First of all, I think the differences are overstated, and the reasons we think the Foreign Affairs Committee in Germany are different, of course, why we think today Membership Action Plan Georgia and Ukraine is not the right thing.

And from my point of view, I would underline today it is not a question of if, in my assessment, it's a question of when. And if we look, for instance, at Ukraine, we see that less than 30 percent of the population are for NATO membership.

And I think we should avoid a situation where a country comes into the MAP and leaves it. We had such events, for instance, with Malta, and this is something we should avoid.

And we also see that Yulia Tymoshenko, in several meetings, was quite reluctant, even as she has signed this letter. But she was quite reluctant on the MAP now in Bucharest.

And so we think that the agreement in the Ukraine for Membership Action Plan should grow a little bit more and maybe we should have it later.

And regarding Georgia, I would say we have to look at the Frozen Conflicts, and to say very, very shortly, we don't want to have another Cyprus within NATO.

Where we have differences also in our view and our internal German debate is the role of Russia. My personal view is that there cannot be a Russian veto on that, so if these countries are ready for Membership Action Plan, they should get it, even if Russia would be against it.

ASMUS: Great. And Eckart Van Klaeden is on the Russian Night Owl this evening, so you'll hear more about his personal views about Russia after dinner.

So first Temuri -- I'm sorry, you all have to introduce yourselves. I know you all by first name, but maybe not everyone else in this audience does. And then Alina.

TEMURI YAKOBASHVILI (Minister for Reintegration, Georgia): my name is Temuri Yakobashvili, actually, I...

ASMUS: And you can actually ask a question of the panelists in addition to letting us know what you're here.

YAKOBASHVILI: Probably I'm the rare exception to them that I'm not going to ask a questions but challenge the German delegation, because what I heard now, it's a little

bit contradictory because if you say that you like Georgia's MAP to, you know, Frozen Conflicts, then that's what I call giving veto rights to Russia. Very simple.

You are just repeating what Putin said. And it's very unfortunate, if you was link it to something else. I don't know level of democracy in Georgia or, you known, (inaudible) and time is not right.

And you say that it's not a question of if, it's a question of when. So do you have any magic stick that we will solve this territorial problems of Frozen Conflicts by next year, and how?

And I believe that, you know, giving to Georgia a membership action plan is a very significant way forward to solving these problems in a peaceful. And if you put it ahead of the carriage, or of Georgian drive to NATO, then you say that, you know, it will never happen because you have these problems, and those problems will be always there because Russia is not interested to solve them because it doesn't want Georgia to join NATO.

ASMUS: OK. Alina.

ALINA MUNGIU-PIPPIDI: Thank you. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Hertie School of Governance and Romanian Academic Society. My question is actually from two politicians from new members countries.

We tend to speak of E.U. enlargement fatigue like it's just out of the lack of shape of old European member states. But in fact, there has been quite considerable developments in the last two years showing that there is some backsliding of East-Central Europe.

If you look at the Freedom House indicators for these countries, you can see that since accession started, Poland was downgraded five times, and Poland was one of the most advanced countries, a model for all of us.

In the last year alone, in Latvia, in Romania and in Slovenia, there have been attempts to restrict powers and actually close down the anti-corruption agencies which have been created at the request of the European Union as part of the conditionality for these countries.

So I guess my question really is, don't you think that the best way in which we can help these new accession countries is by substantially keeping the commitments we have done to the European Union, or otherwise the disappointment with us will be paid precisely by the countries that we claim we want to help get in?

Thank you.



ASMUS: We're going to take one more question, and then come back to the panel. And if Eckart, you and any of your German colleagues want to jump in, just raise your hand.

Hryhoriy Nemeria, maybe you can help us understand what your boss' position on NATO enlargement really is.

(LAUGHTER)

HRYHORIY NEMYRIA: Yes, my boss' position was that it is consistent and it's based on the coalition agreement, and we know how Germany respects what's written in the coalition agreements, which basically says for the first time in the Ukrainian history that this coalition, in favor of Ukraine's NATO membership, my boss presided in the cabinet ministers' meeting, who unanimously voted for the governmental program where the Membership Action Plan was put on the spot for the first time with a clarity that never existed before.

And my boss is consistent in the performance based principle that this year, and that was very different from the previous years, already in favor of the NATO-Ukraine annual target plan has been approved by the government unanimously.

So this is the performance based. I don't know whether your doubts come from the Yulia Tymoshenko position. Maybe it's because there was just a very brief meeting with Chancellor Merkel in Lisbon, and we are looking forward to see a full meeting when there will be a chance for the prime minister of Ukraine and the chancellor of Germany to meet.

But let me assure you that this is a no contradiction between the Yulia Tymoshenko's view, the president's view, and it was clearly expressed in the letter signed on January 11.

As far as the public opinion is concerned, it is true, it's less than 30 percent. The highest now is 25 percent who are in favor of Ukraine's NATO membership. But the MAP is not the membership today or tomorrow. The MAP is an opportunity to move in an ordered way to the membership.

And we know the example of other countries where the beginning of the process. In Lithuania, it was 16 percent, in Slovakia less than 30 percent. But because of the political will that was clearly expressed, because of the delivery and the performance shown, the education happened, public education, and that was less conflictual than it was before.

So nothing is impossible if there is a political will, and there is a political will that exists. So I don't think this is the arguments, tactical arguments. I think the real arguments are a strategic one, arguments of the substance.

This is about independence, this is about freedom of choice, and this is what the Ukrainian citizens have basically chosen when they voted this government in for the third time after the Orange Revolution gave it a chance to deliver on the promises.

And one of the promises of the Orange Revolution was a sovereign Euro-Atlantic and European choice of Ukraine. There is a consistency, and we hope this consistency will find a positive response soon in Bucharest. Thanks.

ASMUS: I want to come back to the panel now. There's a question to the representatives of Central and Eastern Europe. But Carl, I know you wanted to jump in.

And when you listen to this debate, and as I'm sure you listen to it also in the EU Council, not just the NATO...

BILDT: But this is a NATO debate. We don't discuss those issues in the EU

(LAUGHTER)

ASMUS: I know, but that hasn't prevented you from having views before, and so. No, but are these really tactical differences, or do we have a broader set of issues we need to wrestle with?

BILDT: Well, I just want to jump in on the question of has there been a backsliding in Central Europe? Is there a perception of such a thing?

I don't think that perception is there, but I do think that if you want to go to, say, go around the Members of the European Parliament and ask them about the most recent round of enlargement, they would probably tend to say that Bulgaria and Romania were let in perhaps a year or two early.

And of course, we know that there are special mechanisms in place, because there is the feeling that they still have to do fairly substantial work on things like corruption and the rule of the law. And they're on a special watch list arrangement.

And that has led to debate in the Council, and we did have a very extensive debate somewhat more than a year ago, December of '06, when we forged a new consensus of enlargement, that there will be renewed emphasis on the quality of the implementation.

I mean, the strategic rationale was clearly there for moving fairly fast, including Romania and Bulgaria, for reasons that are more familiar from the NATO debate than from the E.U. debate normally. But when we move forward, I think there will be a harder emphasis on actually not only taking the decisions on the laws and the legislations and the

rules and the regulations, but actually implementing them and implementing them over a period of time.

I think this is essentially something that is good, because this helps the transformation of these societies. And as we move into these societies that we are now discussing, they, of course, have a somewhat longer way to go.

Accordingly, they need more help. They need more of these conditionalities. But that conditionality will be applied perhaps with somewhat stricter rigor than what we saw in the last round of enlargement.

There I'm talking EU., which of course if you compare with NATO, and I'm sort -- I'm coming from a country that doesn't even have a Membership Action Plan, not even intensified dialogue, so I'm not going to speak too much about that.

But NATO relates to security sector reform. EU relates to reform of practically every single aspect of society, and including things like environmental standards and gender equality and corruption practices and telecommunication legislation. So of course it is a far more demanding, but ultimately also far -- well, not necessarily far more, but immensely rewarding exercise of transforming society.

(LAUGHTER)

ASMUS: Good catch. Thank you for catching yourself on that on.

Mircea Dan Geoană, is Romania backsliding? You heard what Alina had to say. Is that the country, Romania, where you are a politician?

GEOANĂ: I don't think we are moving backwards, but we are not moving forwards as fast as we should. So there is a big expectation of countries fully benefiting from fresh membership into the E.U., Structural Funds, Cohesion Funds, and the, if you want, also the foreign investors positive attitude towards a new member of the E.U.

So it's more complex. And also the politics of Romania are a little bit more paralyzed.

But coming back to the question, I remember visiting Moscow in 2002, just after Romania joined NATO. And we were received by President Putin, and I have to say probably he was, you know, playing a little bit, but he didn't seem worried that much about Romania's NATO membership.

But he was more concerned about Romania's E.U. membership, because there was clearly an economic competition between the ambition of Russia, of coming back and



getting influence back into Central Europe anyway they can. And he seemed to me more concerned about the enlargement of the E.U. into Central, Eastern Europe.

So my point, and I think this is also what some of the key European nations have to decide about Ukraine, because this is a big piece we are discussing about, is the place of Ukraine into the European Union in the foreseeable future or not?

And I think this is the right question to ask in Berlin, this is the right question to ask in Paris, and to ask everywhere, because on the NATO side, things are, in terms of practicalities, a little bit easier if those countries want to join.

So this is a big thing that we have not discussed in Europe and we are fooling around for years and years where are the limits of Europe by discussing about Turkey and not discussing about Ukraine. And I think this is the key question.

The third thing, I was Chairman of the AOC in 2001 when we tried to rescue Macedonia, with Lord Robertson and Javier Solana, from the brink of civil war. And I have to say that I'm very much concerned about the capacity of the new states, recognized or not, in the Balkans to be able to perform accession into the EU

Not NATO, that much, because we can eventually get those criteria, performance based, a little bit easier. But I have my personal doubts that statelets of small dimensions, of little viability and little cohesion, would be able to really cope with the fantastic demand of our *acquis communautaire* and the transformation of those societies.

And here I think we have a big question mark, and if Afghanistan is the litmus test for the future of the credibility of NATO, the Balkan integration of all countries and all nations in the Balkans into the EU is the litmus test for Europe. And here I think we have a big problem. We have a big problem on our hands.

ASMUS: Maris, I'm going to come to you in a minute on Alina's question, but I want to go back to Carl. But Carl, I want to add something to what you -- let me add something to the question, because at the bar last night, and the bar at a Brussels forum conference is a very important place, there was discussion of this new eastern dimension of the EU, which was discussed at the council meeting over the last two days.

Is this what the 'E' needs to develop, in your view? And what could something like a new eastern dimension to match the new Mediterranean outreach proposal look like? Are you talking about the same thing when Mircea talks about this?

BILDT: Well, partly, but first time I've seen that particular point.

I think it's a very good point. I mean, you can ask yourself how are these fairly small society states going to cope? And you can say, are they really ready for integration in the European Union? Very valid question.

But you could also turn that argument around, and I would say, if not integrated, it's going to get worse. I mean, if you take a place called Kosovo, might have heard of it, I mean, absolutely monumental challenges of getting some sort of viable economy going there.

And even building a functioning state, to be quite honest. That will not work without that being integrated into a firm, regional framework. And that can only be provided over time by the European Union.

This is going to be immensely difficult, but we have no choice. We are committed to the peace and prosperity of all of Europe, as we all say, so difficult it's going to be.

Then coming to your question, I do think, if you look, again, from the EU enlargement point of view, there are three things that we need to do at the moment in terms of focusing the debate. One is that one, that dimension. Not totally, coming only out of the bar, but coming out of discussions that we've had at the European Council and prior to that.

When we've now launched this Union of the Mediterranean, which is essentially reinforced cooperation, Barcelona process plus, plus, plus turbo version of that, with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

That's a good thing. That gives a strong political scene. What we need to do now is to something, perhaps not similar, but something that sends the same signals towards the east, primarily, Ukraine, potentially Belarus.

It's not there, to put it in the mildest possible terms. Moldova as well, and offer them a new deal. We are on our way with Ukraine, we are discussing this enhanced agreement, called 'deep free trade', which goes quite far, very far in terms of coordination of regulations and rules and energy legislation and transport infrastructure and things like that.

That could be done into something. And that was discussed, although rather briefly, at the conclusion of the Council, yesterday I think it was.

Then we need to do a new start in the western Balkans. I think there are ways of leapfrogging that particular process, so we take them faster into, all of them, more or less, into more a demanding stage of both assessment of their situation and implementation of the acquis.



I'm not going to say they've got to be members very fast, but new start, leapfrog them into a new phase of it. And then Turkey is immensely important. We have a new situation. The new president of Cyprus is going to meet with Mr. Talat from Northern Cyprus, the Turkish-Cypriot leader, next week.

This year might be the last chance of really overcoming the division of Cyprus. We need to invest a lot of political energies to support that process. It's primarily within the U.N. framework, but E.U. countries and the U.S. have a strong role to play.

If we can move that forward and overcome, at the same time, the isolation of Northern Cyprus, overcome the blockage that is the non-implementation of the Ankara Protocol, then we are in a new mood.

Also concerning Turkey and moving that forward, that's also got to have vastly positive ramifications for the issue that was discussed in the last session, that is, E.U.-NATO cooperation, where we have problems ranging from Afghanistan, from Kabul to Mitrovitsa, to use one of these phrases.

So these three things are possible. I mean, new eastern deal, a new start and leapfrogging the Balkans, and then a lot of energies into overcoming the division of Cyprus, then we might get into a new phase of enlargement of the E.U.

But, as I said, the quality requirements are going to be more strict than they were previously.

ASMUS: I want, several of German colleagues and friends have raised their hands, so I want to give them the right to jump back in, just to show that I'm politically balanced, Volker Stanzel the Political Director for the German Foreign Office, gets the microphone, before I give Eckart a chance to also respond to some of the questions directed at him.

Volker, good to see you again.

VOLKER STANZEL: Ron, you started by saying that on the podium, there are only people, who are pro-enlargement and those who are against enlargement may be in the audience. And then, you turned right away to the Germans, here.

ASMUS: No, it was just a coincidence.

STANZEL: I will join the line that's it's coincidence.

ASMUS: It's because you're important.

STANZEL: Eckart Van Klaeden has clearly said that it's a question of when and not of if. And, in the cases of Ukraine and Georgia and the question of MAP has given the two major reasons, but there's another aspect there that you have mentioned, which is the Russia factor. And, I think, why should we avoid that. Why shouldn't we discuss the Russia factor? It's something that we need to discuss about. It's not of veto or not veto. It's the question of taking into regard the regional environment of a question like the enlargement to the east of NATO.

Now, Russia is presently in the process of great internal changes and changes that also concern its foreign policy with a new president there. There will be a new administration. And the impact of having a new administration, presumably will be as great as it will be next year in the United States.

Now, why do we have to insist on giving MAP to Ukraine and Georgia, apart from the two reasons that Eckart Van Klaeden has mentioned at this point in time? Wouldn't it be better to try to figure out how to resolve, for example, the frozen conflicts, with a new administration in Russia and thus facilitate this process of integrating both Ukraine and Georgia on a longer timeline into NATO? And maybe if we are decreasing the tensions in the region by achieving that, the path onto true membership will not be longer than if we start now at a point in time where we would, of course, increase conflicts with Russia. Is that really necessary? What's the point of insisting on this precise year for giving MAP to Ukraine and Georgia? Thank you.

ASMUS: Eckhart, did he cover? Do you want to add here? Then, we'll --

RALF FÜCKS: Maybe, the --

ASMUS: Ralph, I'm going to come to you in a little bit here.

FÜCKS: Yep.

ECKART VAN KLAEDEN: Maybe two little points. First of all, a question from our Ukrainian colleague was, where our reluctance comes from Yulia Tymoshenko's behavior. It was, I think, who it was it in Brussels on January the 28th, when not only the Germans, but also others thought that she was quite reluctant on the Membership Action Plan idea. And our concern comes from the observation that Ukraine and the Poles are proof of that. Has that re-made up its decision in which direction the country wants to go. And, I know both arguments that, on the one hand, what we all want and I stress again, not if, when, that you Ukraine comes closer to the West, but on the other hand, such a Membership Action Plan also could encourage the opponents in your country to try to hinder it. And, as I said, if we have what we always -- what we also had, a country like Ukraine leaving the Membership Action Plan again, this would hurt NATO very, very much.

And regarding Georgia, with -- I see this argument that -- regarding the frozen conflicts, this could offer Russia an indirect veto. And, also, I agree with that. You can't use it in that way. Volker Stanzel gave you one reason. And the other reason, of course, is that the internal reforms in Georgia has to be improved. It is your opposition that says that the election of the president was not quite fair. And the OCSE also had some concerns regarding the elections. And, I think, in April or May, you will have your parliamentary -- your elections to parliament. So, let's see and we encourage you to go on the way to democracy and rule of law and, as I said, not if, but when. And, you're right if you say the frozen conflicts cannot give Russia an indirect veto, but it's the mixture of several reasons.

ASMUS: Ralph, I'm going to come to you in a second. I'm first going to go to Mr. Gryshchenko, who is from Ukraine, but from the other side of the political aisle, the opposition. So, we want to hear perhaps a voice from blue in opposed to orange, and then I'm going to come to Maris, and then I'm going to you, Ralph.

KONSTYANTYN GRYSHCENKO (Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ukraine): Well, thank you. I believe that there is very wide support for the idea that was aired by Mircea Geoană that first, in this age, the membership, or our movement toward integration into EU should be a priority. It would open multitude of other opportunities, including internal debate about what next in the security area.

For Ukraine, part of the dilemma is not only a multitude of reasons why should not be in NATO in general, that a rather large portion of population believes in. But, if you even detract from that, get away from it, part of the reason for our eastern neighbors to join NATO first was that it was opening the path towards EU membership. Now, we are hearing very clear and loud from Brussels, from the capitals, of total de-linkage of these two issues.

If you only have mostly obligations and being part of the security mechanism or security structure that now takes upon itself responsibility far away in Afghanistan, in other places, and you don't have a comparable asset that you could explain to your population that it would bring also to you the membership, which is widely supported of EU to Ukrainian public, you don't have a case.

Now, about this particular logic from the German side. I must say that for me personally that was one reason why the government should not have sent this letter to NATO, because it provides an opportunity for those who don't wish to see Ukraine in NATO in any case to use the position of the opposing forces for their own reasons. We need to understand better whether essentially NATO and it's members want to have Ukraine in NATO in general, because it was Ukraine that sent a brigade to Iraq. There our soldiers really served there on a scale that most of the members were not able to mobilize.



We are participating in every joint operation with, including NATO, on the United Nations. We provide an input into security. We are not simply the consumers of security.

Nonetheless, it's always as if Ukraine is begging to get in. There needs to be a strategic assessment essentially. What the NATO member states and United States really wishes. And not really to point towards its internal debate. Internally, we cannot move towards NATO when 53% at least is not supporting it after 16 years.

ASMUS: Okay.

GRYSHCHENKO: Let me simply one more point here. In 16 years, we had a change of generation and still the level of support of very minimum. I believe that we need to work together with current government to provide an opportunity to understand better what NATO's all about and to have an open and free debate. And only then, move forward. But still, the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian opposition will wait for response from Washington, from Paris and from Germany. It will be interpreted, in any case, as a signal, how you expect Ukraine to be in 5 to 10 years.

ASMUS: Okay.

GRYSHCHENKO: Thank you.

ASMUS: Maris Riekstins. Do you -- what do you -- this is the debate that presumably is taking place in the NATO council. When you hear these arguments, do you think NATO has made up its mind on whether Ukraine should be a member?

RIEKSTINS: Well, I can refer just to what Secretary General mentioned an hour ago that we have some working days to go, but since there was a reference made to Latvia with connection to corruption. And I know that it's always very difficult to make a correction of technical errors in history books. Nevertheless, I would just like you to check your sources of information. Never, idea of limiting or somehow interfering in the practical matters of our corruption bureau in Latvia was considered at the level of government. That was not the case. Even more, I think we have a -- we gave additional financial resources and means to that institution for this year and this year's budget.

Few comments on the issues discussed here before.

On enlargement fatigue. I think that one of the reasons why we are discussing this issue of enlargement fatigue is that the previous enlargement processes, they were mainly eastern oriented. And we brought the countries into those two organizations from the east of Europe. And, let's be frank, the information among the general public in the old member countries about the nations, about the culture of those countries is somewhat limited. I would love to see a debate on enlargement fatigue if, for instance, Sweden and Finland



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would like to decide that they are willing to join NATO alliance, which for me personally, given the fact or given the very active relations of those countries, is NATO doesn't seem completely crazy idea. But I would like to see that debate on enlargement fatigue if that will come to our agenda.

On Russia, I think it's very important to start with question, what is the point of departure for that issue? Is Russia interested in having in their neighborhood a stable, prosperous and predictable countries? I think, yes. Given the previous experience of previous enlargement rounds and we have witnessed that those rounds have brought more stability, more prosperity to the countries involved. I think it ought to be in Russia's interest to have them anchored as soon as possible in Euro-Atlantic family.

ASMUS: Okay. We're going to bring in a Russian or two in a second. But first, Marc Grossman. Do you think the United States has made up its mind? And can you tell Konstantyn here and Hryhorija that there's a consensus in the U.S.? Okay. Don't worry. First you, then Slava, at the back there.

MARC GROSSMAN (Vice Chairman, The Cohen Group): I don't have any idea whether the United States has made up its mind. But, I do think, the reason I asked for the floor is I think, sir, you make a really important point that I'd like to reemphasize, which is the question of the public. And I think one of the reasons that publics in Ukraine, publics in other NATO countries, publics in the countries -- they don't support this alliance as much as they did anymore, is because they have lost precisely what you said, people can't answer the question of what it's for and what's the purpose. And I think, with all due respect, I know this is the North American accent, but people may be having that challenge with the European Union as well. And that's one of the reasons that the treaty was so difficult. And so, I would just say that the conversation that we are having here this afternoon is very important. And all of the issues that we are talking about are extremely important. But we need to step back a little bit, I think, and raise our sights, because if we're to speak to all of our peoples about the next round of challenges as the Secretary General did, they are about climate change and energy security and terrorism. And it seems to me anyway, you can't solve those problems unless there's a strong NATO. You can't solve those problems unless there's a Europe whole, free and at peace. You cannot solve those problems unless you're in some positive conservation engagement with Russia. And so, I would say, I don't say that anything we've talked about here today is not important, it's really very important. But I think in the larger context of what the future is -- it holds for all of us, we have to recommit ourselves to those issues and recognize that the institutions that we have are the answer to those questions. And that seems to me as how I would go back to the public in the United States. How you might consider talking to the public in Ukraine or all the other countries represented here today.



ASMUS: Okay. We have lots of people that want to talk. Ralf, you've been patient. Then, Slava, then Lena, Kosachev, here. See if I can remember it all. Okay. To Konstantyn, yes.

FÜCKS: I want to focus on the issue of EU enlargement and I would say in terms of stability, prosperity and democracy promotion, that's even more important than the NATO question. And, restricting factor here is not Russia. And it would only be half of the story if we would focus alone on the question if Turkey, Ukraine and Georgia are ready to join the European Union. How far they fulfill the Copenhagen criteria and so on and so forth.

The other side of this story, and we should be frank and honest to ourselves, is the European Union capable for further integration of countries like Ukraine and Turkey and Georgia? And what will happen with the European Union if economic, social, cultural heterogeneity and differences within the Union will increase? Will that undermine coherence? And will that weaken solidarity within the European Union? And that is the hidden debate and Brussels and in other places.

And I think we have to be clear that if we want enlargement of the European Union, if we want really the European Union -- go at the geographical borders of Europe, we will have to accept, I'm afraid, that it will be more a union of states and less a political union that we dreamed some years ago. But I think this is a crucial issue we have to debate on.

ASMUS: Great.

Ralph: And I would be interested what the two foreign ministers think about that.

ASMUS: Slava Nikinov.

VYACHESLAV NIKONOV: Thank you. Russians were silent until now, probably because the initial notion is that we don't care what Russians have to say about it.

ASMUS: I was waiting for you to raise your hand. That's all right.

NIKONOV: We have our agenda. We are going ahead, so why listen to Russia. So. On the other hand, in Russia, we do not have debate on NATO enlargement, because it is a consensus issue. We do consider it to be harmful to Russian national security and presenting probably existential threat to Russia. Well, of course, engagement from capital letter E is a great thing, but if you want to engage a country without discussing with it, it's existential challenges, I don't think it will go anywhere.

ASMUS: Okay. Can I just -- help us understand why you use the word existential and why you saying --



NIKONOV: Imagine a situation of conflict in South Ossetia. It's no easier to bring South Ossetia or Abkhazia back to Georgia, than say Kosovo back to Serbia. And, does that mean, Article V situation? Does that mean a doomsday scenario? I don't think so. Actually, this is quite serious. This is about guarantees. This is about nuclear guarantees to the member states. And that is, I think, quite serious.

NATO expansion is here addressed as astonishing strategic success. In my view, astonishing strategic success for Europe would be a Russia as an ally, but what the NATO enlargement managed to achieve was a successful elimination of any pro-western forces inside Russia. I don't know of any Russian politicians, who would argue for NATO expansion. I think it was quite counterproductive for long-term interests of Europe.

Well, NATO here was described as area of prosperity, extension this area of prosperity, the enlargement process, but it's not about -- just about prosperity. It's also about hardware. Actually, the deal on the first wave of enlargement was as, let me remind you, was no nukes, no troops, no infrastructure. Fortunately, no nukes, but there are new troops. Romania by the way --

GEOANĂ: We were the second wave.

NIKONOV: Okay. Second. But anyway. Something we agree on, on the first wave, does not apply to the second wave? Okay. Understandable. Critical infrastructure. National missile defenses in Poland, Czech Republic. These are components of nuclear deterrents. It's not just about expanding areas of prosperity.

So, I think, it's a serious issue. And that, of course, the argument is, these countries apply and these countries comply. Well, Georgia was downgraded after the recent political crisis and elections to countries with very problematic democratic development. It doesn't matter. Ukraine, most of the population doesn't matter. My friend, Hryhorija, found 25% of Ukrainians. And, I don't know where you find them. I never saw a public opinion poll showing more 20% of Ukrainians wanting to join NATO. The country doesn't want to. So, maybe it's about something else rather than expanding this area of prosperity or introducing the countries, which want to join.

In my mind, we should think bigger instead of considering that we did something which went well, which created no major international crisis. This is isn't a long-term interest of everybody. I think what is in the long-term interest of everybody is to create a non-divided community of nations in Europe and Russia being the largest European nation. Thank you.

ASMUS: Lena, you're next.

UNKNOWN: Thank you very much. Could you tell me, please, where you see the enlargement fatigue, because when you use that, I started to think, the Eurobarometer opinion polls show that there is a high support for European integration and it's not decreasing since 15 years. Indeed has even increased in the last year. The economy of the new member states, most of them is doing extremely well. Economy of some western countries has been doing very well, because of the -- as a result of the enlargement. The treaty crisis was not an affect direct if at all of enlargement. So, I'm curious, where do you find this enlargement fatigue before we start discussing about future enlargements?

Second point is, not if, but when. If we can speak about enlargement fatigue, we can speak also about waiting fatigue or expectation fatigue. And it's very, very dangerous. And we had that I think Poland. How long you can wait being promised every two years that we get in? Lack of date means lack of -- date always mobilizes and has very important psychological effects on societies and on elites. Lack of date can be treated as lack of will. And the Turkey example is quoted very frequently in that context. There is a lack of date and now we don't -- we are not sure if Turkey will ever get into European Union. So, the lack of date, not only fatigues those who are for, but also mobilizes those who are against. And we don't know why waiting what can happen in the meantime. So, I'm not saying that some things should happen immediately, but some dates and should be and some plans should be set in. Thank you very much.

ASMUS: Okay. We only have like 10 or 12 minutes left and I'm going to come to a couple of people. Yes. So, I'm going to ask you to be brief. Konstantin, I'm going to come to you next, but I want to ask you a question and I want to respond to Slava just. And we could have this debate tonight again at the bar.

I was part of the NATO Russia negotiating team that negotiated the NATO Russia final act. There was nothing the United States has done that violates the terms of that agreement. And I just want to state that. We can talk about the details. There's a lot of people, who were part of the negotiations in this room, I just, I want to say, I disagree with you on that.

But I think the bigger question that a lot of us have who were part of this process is that when we look at Europe today, we think you have more stability on your western border than at any time in recent history. I often say, at any time, since Napoleon. So, choose your date. There's more democracy, more stability, no prosperity. There is no western threat to Russia coming from Europe or from NATO. And the one thing, I think, we have a very hard time understanding, and I think I agree with Volker, these are the things we need to have honest conversations about, is why you keep on coming back to -- I mean, Konstantin, you said yesterday, you sat up here and said you want to be part of this bigger community. We see a Russia that is always invoking the enemy at the gate. And we're the enemy. And we think, we've become much less of an enemy than ever before. But, when I go to Moscow, and I will be the first one to say, I've been trying for 15 years to convince



Russians that we're -- NATO enlargement isn't a threat, and I know I failed. I sometimes say, I've convinced 5 Russians, maybe 6 on a good day. But why can't we get over this issue? Why is it that Slava here says existential threat? Which, frankly, seems ludicrous to most of us. What do you say to that? But you've got to brief and we'll have another session tonight, because we only got 10 minutes. I apologize for that.

KONSTANTIN KOSACHEV: Thank you. To me, it's quite simple. I see here people being extremely happy about the ongoing process on enlargement and more and more countries becoming members of the club. And there, I do understand that emotion. The problem is that Russia is not a beneficiary of that ongoing process. It does not bring any good news to Russia, because we are not the member of the club and we will not be the member of the club anytime in the future. And this is a great problem. Please do not expect for us to be happy about seeing more and more countries becoming members of the club, where we do not belong and where we cannot influence the process -- the decision making process.

My colleague from Romania cited Mr. Putin from the meeting of 2002, being -- who seemed to be more concerned about the European Union enlargement. And, I believe that was a true impression, but that impression is from the year of 2002, when Russia was mostly concerned about more than 10 countries accessing the European Union and most of them traditional partners of our country. But that experience has been rather good. They've succeeded to come over. The troubles which appeared and I think the European Union enlargement is not longer any big problem for us, while NATO enlargement still is, because in case of NATO enlargement, in very many cases, we have seen that promises we were given before, were never fulfilled, like the theoretical promises from Mr. Gorbachev's time not to take into NATO the former Soviet Union states. I think that agreement existed more or less. And ending with the juridical legal commitment not to deploy a substantial military forces in new coming countries and we know what is going about Romania and Bulgaria and some other countries.

Now, speaking in more humanitarian terms, I will give you two small examples, both of them are about Ukraine. One, we have two districts on our border, Rostov on our side, Lugansk on the Ukrainian side. 660 kilometers of border which does not exist at all, but which will appear in case Ukraine becomes a member state of NATO. There we have for example a town with a street which is called Friendship Street with a railway going just in the middle of the street and this is the border between Russia and Ukraine. This border is being crossed every day by 3,000 Russian citizens going on the Ukrainian side and 6,500 people crossing that border each day from the Ukrainian side going for jobs in Russia.

In case we do not address that type of problem, in case we will continue to have that discussion, just in geopolitical terms, I think we may harm interests of both Ukraine and Russia. And the second fact, just small second fact, I cannot confirm that, because I read it in mass media but I think that the real situation is not far from that fact. I read that Russia is

capable to produce just 17 percent of its military production without any kind of cooperation with Ukraine and I think the same goes for Ukraine because I think our military industries are related. So I think possible membership of Ukraine in NATO could have very positive consequences for Russian economy and for Ukrainian.

ASMUS: Okay, we are down to thirty seconds, Markus can you ask your question in thirty seconds, okay, Kestutis, thirty seconds, back row, microphone, Heather thirty seconds, okay and then we come back briefly, go ahead.

KESTUTIS JANKAUSKAS:

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HRYHORIY NEMRYIA: Look this is a real values test, because what we've been told there is a lack of democracy in Ukraine. For three last years there were three elections in Ukraine in all three it was the opposition who won. Now we have a democratically elected government, who, for the first time, take courage to say that we do want to join. So this is the test for the values.

ASMUS: Right.

NEMYRIA: The answer should be based on the values and the sovereign population, and we're ready to be engaged with their Russian friends and with Germany -- whoever wants to do -- to do this sort of calculation to decide when it would be better.

But again, this is the clear answer. It's not Malta that's in and out. You know, Malta was in and out. The new Malta now is a member of the European Union.

ASMUS: Thank you. Any burning need for any closing remarks? Otherwise, I'm going to hand it to Craig Kennedy, who's been looking at me for five minutes, saying, "End it."

BILDT: We cannot remain silent on this subject.

ASMUS: OK. Briefly.

BILDT: Very briefly on the question, which is on the enlargement of the EU, is a wider one, a looser one and a weaker one, because that's really the core of the debate. And Heather's question we improvised with a good answer.



The 27 has not produced gridlock. It works extremely well. Those of us who sit around the council table every month, and sometimes more frequently than that, knows that if the dividing line is sometimes off, they're not sort of there's a core that wants to jump forward with political union.

On the contrary, I mean, the most acrimonious debate that I have encountered in the last two years, which was really on the verge of fist fighting, was between the Benelux countries.

(LAUGHTER)

Right. It had its entertainment value, I can tell you. So the dividing lines are in those. And also if you look at the history of the union, as long as it was only six, it couldn't even decide on implementing the Rome Treaty provisions on majority vote. It was blocked by the French veto, the Luxembourg Compromise.

It was only enlargement that facilitated the institutional evolution that we now see culminating in the Lisbon Treaty. And I would even argue that the union of the 27 works distinctly better than, say, the union of the 12 or the 15 that I was able to observe in the early and in the mid-90s -- distinctly better.

Add to that that it is a greater weight on the global scale. We are half a billion people. We are the by far largest integrated economy in the world. We are the largest trading power. We are bigger than the number two and the number three taken together.

There's a currency you might have heard of -- the euro -- that you can compare with the dollar, for example. That is not an insignificant and not a weak currency.

ASMUS: Thank you, Karl.

BILDT: So it's a stronger union and a better union.

ASMUS: Great. Briefly, Mircea.

GEOANĂ: What I will try to basically to say is that we have something to offer to Russia in terms of the West. And this is not about small pieces of territory here and there. It's about the global strategic architecture, and I think this is what will happen.

The E -- capital E -- is about -- nuclear stuff -- it's about many other things -- missile defense and things in common that we need to do in the 21st century.

ASMUS: Thank you. OK.



GEOANĂ: The second point is do not -- I would really encourage our Russian friends -- and I say friends -- not to fall into the illusion that enlargement will not continue, because it will, because this is the sense of history.

And the third -- and probably Transnistria will be probably even more interesting, than Ossetia or Abkhazia in that context. And thirdly, if you overplay your energy card, we might be seeing Azerbaijan a member of NATO sooner than you expect.

ASMUS: Maris, see if you can match that, you know.

(LAUGHTER)

ASMUS: Quiet, please. We have to wrap up, yes.

RIEKSTINS: Well, I think that this is one of the most interesting debates I've participated in the last couple of months on this particular subject.

And I think that we see clearly here that there are still some issues we have to sort out about the Membership Action Plan. There are still some people here in this room who believe that map -- this is another guarantee for membership, which it's not.

As you see with Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, it took -- well, if the decision in Bucharest will be positive, it took nine years for them to go through that process. And I think that we have time for us in the future, in the coming years, to have these discussions with Russian participation, with Ukraine, European, America.

And thanks to GMF for organizing this. Thank you so much.

ASMUS: Thank you.

Mr. Grossman?

GROSSMAN: I just have three quick points. One is that I think it's really important to emphasize that has gone through this whole debate about no veto.

Second, I was asked the other day whether, in this debate about enlargement, whether I was sorry, even with all the imperfections, that we had proceeded with the NATO expansion that we had. And I must say I'm not sorry.

And the person went on then to ask me, "Well, why do I think I'd be sorry in the future about this next round of expansion?" I don't think I would.



The third point is, and I'm sorry to be boring about this subject, but I very, very much respect the debate that we've had here today, but it could go on forever. And I think if you listened to the points that Mr. Kouchner made yesterday and Mr. de Hoop Scheffer made today, that that is part of the answer and the way out of this debate, because if we would lift our sights to some of the future challenge that we would have, I think it would answer some of the questions about enlargement for what and enlargement to whom and enlargement with whom.

And I hope that's a point that I hope people will take away.

ASMUS: Thank you.

Join me in a round of applause for our speakers.

(APPLAUSE)

KENNEDY: Thank you, Ron.

ASMUS: Some of us will be at the bar tonight to continue the discussion, but...

KENNEDY: So, as the Secretary General mentioned, in 2006 we did something like this before the NATO summit in Riga, and out of that we developed a really great partnership with the government of Latvia. And we were looking for something to highlight that partnership, and when you go outside, there are wonderful cookies and other things from Latvia that you're going to really like.

And then we'll see you back here at 6:30 for a really excellent panel on competitiveness and the economy. So we'll see you back in a half hour. Thank you.

Thank all of you.

[END]