
THE
BUCHAREST
CONFERENCE

P A P E R S

NATO AND AFGHANISTAN:
SAVING THE STATE-BUILDING ENTERPRISE

DAOUD YAQUB AND WILLIAM MALEY

NATO EXPANSION AND MODERN EUROPE

BRUCE P. JACKSON

AN EVOLVING NATO:
PRO-DEMOCRACY OR ANTI-RUSSIA?

ROBIN SHEPHERD AND PAUL CORNISH

NATO AND GLOBAL CYBER DEFENSE

REX B. HUGHES

EDITED BY ROBIN SHEPHERD

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The Bucharest Papers

Published ahead of the Bucharest Conference, the Bucharest Papers are written by independent authors on the topics of NATO's mission in Afghanistan; NATO enlargement; NATO's relationship with Russia; and global cyber defense and NATO. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of GMF, Chatham House, or the Romanian Foreign Ministry, organizing partners of the Bucharest Conference. Comments from readers are welcome; reply to the mailing address above or by e-mail to info@gmfus.org.

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The Bucharest Conference is organized by the German Marshall Fund of the United States in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chatham House. The event brings together leaders from both sides of the Atlantic to discuss the most pressing challenges facing NATO and its member states. For more information, please visit <http://www.bucharestconference.org>.

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THE
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P A P E R S

3

PREFACE

5

NATO AND AFGHANISTAN:
SAVING THE STATE-BUILDING ENTERPRISE

DAOUD YAQUB AND WILLIAM MALEY

18

NATO EXPANSION AND MODERN EUROPE

BRUCE P. JACKSON

29

AN EVOLVING NATO:
PRO-DEMOCRACY OR ANTI-RUSSIA?

ROBIN SHEPHERD AND PAUL CORNISH

41

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REX B. HUGHES

EDITED BY ROBIN SHEPHERD

PREFACE

As host of the 2008 NATO Summit, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to Bucharest. In many ways every NATO summit is a defining moment for the alliance. The Bucharest Summit is no exception.

Along with what have become the familiar challenges for NATO when dealing with questions about enlargement and its evolving relationship with Russia, the alliance is now faced with the mounting challenge of ensuring that the mission in Afghanistan ultimately emerges as a success. NATO's success in Afghanistan is key for the future of that country, for our fight against terrorism, and thus for our own defense. We must ensure that the progress is irreversible.

NATO leaders are also grappling with decisions about the alliance's reach beyond Europe's borders and the implications of new kinds of strategic threats in the domain of cyberspace. We also look forward to defining NATO's value added in energy security taking the decision from the Riga Summit one step further.

The Bucharest Conference Papers, which address these topics, are the result of collaboration between the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Chatham House, and the Romanian Foreign Ministry, which have jointly endeavored in organizing the Bucharest Conference on the sidelines of the Bucharest NATO Summit. The papers provide different viewpoints about NATO's ongoing transformation and seek to redefine the terms of debate on issues that are critical to its future.

As the alliance moves to meet these and new missions, its leaders must maintain a clear sense of what to do, how to do it, and why the alliance has embarked on any particular mission. Maintaining its preeminent role as the greatest collective security organization in world history, NATO will address these challenges directly at Bucharest.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank these institutions for preparing the food-for-thought papers. I wish you an enjoyable stay in Bucharest and look forward to welcoming you in Romania again soon.

Traian Băsescu
President
Republic of Romania

NATO AND AFGHANISTAN: SAVING THE STATE-BUILDING ENTERPRISE

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Afghanistan presents NATO with both its greatest opportunity and its most pressing threat. An alliance established to secure Europe from the might of the Soviet Union at a time dominated by Cold War tensions is now struggling to find its direction in a very different environment, and is under pressure to transform its way of operating at both military and political levels. The current tensions within the alliance do not constitute the first intramural crisis in NATO's history, but they are potentially the most corrosive. If NATO's Afghanistan mission comes to be seen as a failure, it is difficult to envisage other constructive purposes to which the alliance might readily be put in a post-Soviet world. NATO as an *Atlantic* alliance depends on a web of working relationships between NATO capitals, which a failure in a theater of operations such as Afghanistan could easily rupture.

Yet between these capitals there are indeed subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) differences in understanding what the Afghanistan mission involves, and how it should be conceived. These differences are rooted in the countries' senses of what roles they should play in the world, in their distinct military cultures, and in their own domestic politics. For some in Washington, Afghanistan is one of a number of theaters in a global struggle, and perhaps not the most important. In December 2007, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, remarked that "in Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq we do what we must." Yet to many observers in Europe, Iraq is a war of choice, and as a result Europe has no particular duty to shoulder a heavier burden in Afghanistan. The Afghan government and people are victims of this tension.

Nevertheless, there are still significant opportunities for NATO to grasp in Afghanistan. The momentum of transition can be recovered if the right policy settings are put in place. NATO's current approach is flawed. It is constrained by national caveats that create uneven capabilities. It involves minimal investment, matched by minimal results. Ordinary Afghans do not feel that their lives have been made secure by an international presence. The state-building exercise has largely passed them by. And in too many parts of too many provinces, ordinary people are being subjected to brutality and violence by killers operating from sanctuaries in Pakistan about which NATO members appear bewilderingly silent. In August 2007, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, speaking at the Kabul "Peace Jirga," said, "there is no doubt Afghan militants are supported from Pakistan soil. The problem that you have in your region is because support is provided from our side." This should be as intolerable for NATO as it is for Afghanistan. Sustained, relentless pressure on Pakistan to choke off this support must be the centerpiece of an integrated NATO approach to Afghanistan. Only once the problem of the sanctuaries has been solved will real progress on other fronts be possible.

CHALLENGES IN STABILIZING AFGHANISTAN: POLITICAL AND SECURITY DIMENSIONS

The situation in Afghanistan is close to critical. This is not so much a result of recent misjudgments as of deeper problems in the post-2001 transition, which are now becoming more and more obvious. The complex and overlapping structure of post-Taliban ministries, the heavy footprint of the international donor community, the failure to maintain momentum through the rapid expansion beyond Kabul of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the political and operational weaknesses of the NATO alliance, the inadequacy of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) as a substitute for ISAF expansion, and the availability to the Taliban of sanctuaries in Pakistan have all contributed to the present combustible situation, as has the spread of organized crime networks and the surge in opium cultivation.

But so have deeper social and economic fault lines. The Taliban's ability to function in southern Afghanistan depends in part on the labyrinthine complexities of tribal politics, and on their ability to paint themselves as defenders of poor opium farmers (and their dependents, notably wage-laborers) who fear the eradication of crops in an economy where decades of destruction have limited the range of viable livelihoods. (It is important also to recognize that there is no single "opium problem" in Afghanistan with a single "cure"; rather, there is considerable variation in the factors underpinning opium cultivation, and consequently in the measures that are likely to be effective in addressing the "opium issue.") An equally severe challenge arises from the continuing activity of illegal armed groups—nominally to

be disbanded under the so-called “DIAG process”—which blunt the capacity of even the best Afghan provincial officials to deliver good governance. All these problems have interacted with each other in complex ways. One consequence is that there is no single “magic” solution to Afghanistan’s problems, but rather a need for coherent policies and appropriate mechanisms of implementation, both within and beyond Afghanistan’s borders, across a range of different spheres. State-building requires security, but durable security requires a legitimate state. The future of Afghanistan depends on how effectively these problems are addressed, and so does the future of NATO.

The Taliban are not in a position to march on Kabul, but that has never been their immediate intention. Their principal strategic aim, and that of their backers, is rather to sustain that level of violence required to sap the will of NATO and other states currently supporting the Karzai government. The mere spectacle of such a weakening discourages ordinary Afghans from actively supporting the government and encourages them to sit on the fence. From the Taliban’s viewpoint, it opens the door for them at some point in the future to press their demands on Kabul from a position of strength. The nightmare scenario arising from this is that of a West Asian “badlands” region flowing from Pakistan into Afghanistan in which the sovereignty of the Afghan and Pakistani states is almost entirely nominal and local groups with radical agendas merge with Al-Qaeda and readily find hospitality—in other words, an expanded version of the very conditions that led to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

REFINING INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIVES: COUNTERTERRORISM, STATE-BUILDING, AND TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO

One of the sources of confusion in Afghanistan is that different actors have been pursuing parallel, overlapping, and uncoordinated agendas, in ways that work against comprehensive successes being achieved. The Afghan government remains structurally weak and dependent in many respects. The United States has been long distracted by the Iraq conflict, and now increasingly by the change of administration that will come in January 2009. NATO itself has been buffeted by the diverse priorities of its own member states. All this has been very obvious, to Afghan and non-Afghan observers alike, and the effect has been to undermine confidence that Afghanistan’s transition will ultimately succeed. Afghanistan and the Afghans need to be returned to the center of our focus.

Defining the Afghan mission as part of a “global war on terror” has fostered an unduly-narrow understanding of how Afghanistan’s problems should be solved. It suggests a need simply for “counterterrorism” operations on Afghan territory to eliminate a known

enemy. But the agenda of “state-building” since 2001 has also been unduly narrow, focusing on the establishment of a western-style democratic political system in Kabul, a society in which decades of disruption have seen political loyalties shift to a range of non-state actors with their own claims to legitimacy. (On average, Afghanistan in the decade following the April 1978 communist coup witnessed “unnatural deaths” totaling over 240 people *every day*. To put this in perspective, the Madrid bombings of March 2004 caused 191 deaths.) Amidst all this, what has been lost is a sense of the positive connection between state-building and counterterrorism. In the long run, what pays dividends is not the killing or capture of individual terrorists, but rather the elimination of environments in which they can thrive. Few environments are as accommodating as that of the failed, collapsed, or severely-disrupted state. State-building is thus not a drain on counterterrorism, but rather an essential condition for it to succeed. But much hinges on what kind of state is built. A state, to be legitimate, must act in such a way that it wins real and meaningful support from the bulk of the population. This, in turn, requires attention to day-to-day security and access to effective justice for ordinary people so that they have a stake in the success of the state and lend support to its consolidation. In Afghanistan, justice and security are largely missing from ordinary peoples’ lives. However, the centralized approach to building justice and security has not worked, and a new focus on local institutions is necessary.

NATO’S ROLE IN PROMOTING SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: WINNING RATHER THAN “NOT LOSING”

In 2001, a significant shift occurred in Afghan society, one that presented the world with a unique opportunity in the post-Taliban transition: for the first time in their history Afghans wanted and welcomed foreign troops in their country in the hope that they would alter the *status quo*. The average Afghan felt disdain for the Taliban leadership and Al-Qaeda terrorists, but also for the criminal and predatory behavior of a significant number of local officials and armed groups. However, the international approach to security in Afghanistan reflected a narrow focus on hunting Al-Qaeda, while ignoring basic personal security for Afghan citizens. This sentiment was clearly reflected in a speech to the New America Foundation in August 2006 by Ambassador James Dobbins, the U.S. envoy to the 2001 Bonn Process, when he remarked that “my instructions didn’t say anything about democracy...We wanted a government that would work with us to track down remaining Al-Qaeda elements.”

Although a modest shift has occurred in the international approach to the provision of security in Afghanistan, there are still very significant gaps to overcome due to past neglect and missed opportunities. It is essential to complement counterterrorism operations with equal focus on delivering security to the Afghans and building the capacity of Afghan law

and order institutions. The resources committed to increasing personal security for Afghans are still far less than those committed to the building of state security institutions such as the army and the police. Figures cited in a December 2005 World Bank study showed that only 3 percent of security expenditure was directed to the justice sector. Furthermore, police reform has fallen far short of what is required. Afghan citizens must feel personally secure in order to understand and participate in the process of change and to make informed choices without fear of reprisals or intimidation. To this end, building the institutional capacity of the Afghan state to deliver security for ordinary Afghans should not be incidental to fighting Al-Qaeda, but should receive equal attention and resources. This is the key to winning rather than “not losing.”

Lessons learned from previous international interventions in the last several decades clearly indicate that international commitment and resources are not infinite. For this reason, one must promptly seize the opportunity to effect long-lasting change by building the capacity of national institutions to ensure a smooth and sustained transition to stability as international commitment decreases. The successful implantation of such a seamless transition is widely accepted as the ultimate exit strategy in post-conflict transition for the international community.

CHALLENGES OF COORDINATION

The international community, including governments, donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) talks endlessly of coordination. Yet no one truly wants to be coordinated. The challenges posed by lack of coordination are clear: waste, inefficiency, duplication, *ad hoc* solutions or structures, and institutional tensions. There are many “lessons learned” reports detailing the importance of coordination on the ground, and many governmental and academic agencies discuss these challenges at length. Yet looking at the current situation in Afghanistan, one could easily conclude that while we know the benefits of coherent and strategic coordination, perhaps the real issue is “lessons *not yet* learned.”

The international community is not a homogeneous entity and the requirement for demonstrable progress in donor capitals is occasionally inconsistent with international consensus and Afghan capacity-building and ownership. The temptation to promote personalities that can quickly deliver, rather than exercise patience to promote and develop national institutions, can be overwhelming. The rapid turnover of military personnel may be a common occurrence in western military institutions, but it does not bode well for long-term institution building in a post-conflict transition. In Afghanistan’s case, the rapid rotation of ISAF lead-countries may have certain benefits, but it also has shortfalls that should be addressed. From the

first deployment of ISAF I in December 2001 to the current deployment of ISAF XI in February 2008, with each new rotation or change of lead-country, significant turnover in personnel has also occurred at the NATO/ISAF headquarters. While it is understandable for those deployed to engage in combat operations to be rotated quickly, the challenges of coordination in the Afghan context require much longer tours for NATO/ISAF staff, especially for the policy and intelligence teams. Longer deployments would not only enable the staff to develop much deeper knowledge and cultural understanding, but could also help them to establish better relationships with their counterparts in the Afghan government. Lengthier deployments could additionally reduce some of the pressures from donor capitals to deliver results quickly, and allow the staff to approach their tasks with long-term strategic vision.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PRT MODEL

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were first deployed to Gardez, Kunduz, and Bamiyan by the United States in 2003. The PRTs are joint teams composed of civilian and military personnel. These teams have now expanded to 25 locations in Afghanistan under the auspices of the NATO-led ISAF. The PRT model initially highlighted three areas of activities: security, support to the central government, and reconstruction; later on, the ISAF PRTs also added the mandate of facilitating security sector reform. Though the objectives of the PRTs appear noble, achieving progress in these sectors has proved to be problematic. PRTs do not operate in a vacuum; one must place them in the context of the current setting in Afghanistan. They have a general mandate to engage in essential state-building tasks, yet have vulnerabilities that can undermine, or at the very least limit their effectiveness in discharging, the very tasks they are envisioned to accomplish. Some PRTs, such as the New Zealand PRT in Bamiyan and the early British PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, have struck the right balance between delivering results locally and allowing Afghan priorities to flourish. Others have been much less successful.

First of all, the security imperatives driven by counterterrorism operations that require cooperation from local actors have on occasion been at odds with the development and reconstruction agendas and priorities of local institutions. PRT commanders have little control over key assets such as transport, and often must support the military mission of maneuver forces co-located with the teams. Military missions are often associated with gaining short-term tactical advantage, and can thus compromise long-term strategic objectives essential to reconstruction and development priorities. Furthermore, military deployments in combat theaters are replete with short-term rotations that hamper efforts to sustain institutional knowledge in a very complex environment. With each new rotation of troops or personnel,

there is a tendency to reinvent the wheel. It is cumbersome to rebuild trust with new arrivals in an unstable locality, trust that previously may have been painstakingly built through many interactions. In some parts of Afghanistan, the locals have become so cynical about these personnel rotations that whenever their houses are once again searched by coalition soldiers, they assume that there has been yet another rotation and new soldiers have arrived who have not been adequately briefed on their predecessors' activities. The tribal elders then have to go through the process of rebuilding trust with the new international security elements. More importantly, those whose houses are searched needlessly suffer fresh loss of face in a society in which standing and reputation are very important to a person's sense of dignity.

In order to achieve synergies and results in the stability, reconstruction, and development agendas, PRTs must learn to coordinate their activities within the civil and military components comprising the PRT, and coordinate with other PRTs, local personalities and officials, national authorities, national capitals, embassies, UN agencies, and other international elements. Coordination is a task that has proven to be difficult even for large and well-staffed institutions, and it is time-consuming. It is far from clear that PRTs are adequately resourced and staffed to meet this challenge.

As long-time observers have noted, Afghanistan is a kaleidoscope of micro-societies, based on ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, and geographic alliances or in some instances the influence of a dominant personality. The last three decades of conflict have disrupted these micro-societies significantly, have altered the leadership dynamics at the local levels, and have made many Afghan state institutions vulnerable to corruption. Any state-building enterprise must account for these vulnerabilities and disruptions. Success in extending the writ of the central government wholly depends on re-establishing the dynamics of appropriate and institutionalized channels of interaction between these micro-societies and the central authorities.

PRT operational practice on the ground, however, does not reflect this approach and therefore undermines traditional leaders within these micro-societies. Such dignitaries and local notables are disenfranchised at the level of the central state because the state-building enterprise has a significant focus upon managing relations with a donor community using technical skills that tribal leaders lack; and traditional leaders are also disenfranchised at the local level as a result of the allocation of state offices in rural areas to potential spoilers as rewards. This has created a great deal of frustration and even anger among people in that sphere of social life. Yet these traditional leaders and elements are the very figures whose active support could critically tip the balance in favor of more effective consolidation of state structures and eventually the defeat of the insurgency. Thus, PRTs have a very mixed record. While some have

performed well, others have inadvertently thwarted the strengthening of the Afghan state by in effect replacing it at local levels.

TRANSATLANTIC TENSIONS OVER AFGHANISTAN: WAYS OF MOVING FORWARD

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates commented in February 2008 that many European allies “have a problem with our involvement in Iraq and project that to Afghanistan.” Though Gates has a long legacy to overcome, his forthright remarks on the Iraq-Afghanistan linkage are a welcome departure from the enigmatic logic advanced by the Bush-Cheney axis of the administration and some military leaders. For instance, at a White House press conference in July 2007, Frances F. Townsend, homeland security adviser to President Bush, denied that Iraq and Afghanistan were separate conflicts. “These are clearly a single conflict by a single determined enemy who is looking for safe haven,” said Townsend. While it may be convenient or necessary in certain circles in Washington to advance the view that the central front in the war on terror is Iraq, this logic is not widely accepted elsewhere in the world. The more the U.S. administration has sought to link Iraq and Afghanistan, the more flawed and nebulous the concept has become for the European public, and the more public support for combat operations in Afghanistan drops. *Transatlantic Trends*, a public opinion survey released annually by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, showed in 2007 that European support for combat operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan was only about 30 percent. The U.S. administration cannot continue to assign secondary status to Afghanistan but demand that its NATO partners put their troops’ lives at risk in Afghanistan’s mountains and on its plains. This is particularly the case when U.S. resource commitments fall short of U.S. rhetoric. On January 31, 2008, this was captured in the observation of U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. during a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “We’ve spent about as much on development aid in Afghanistan over the past five years as we spend on the war in Iraq every three weeks,” said Biden. Nor should the United States seek to use Afghanistan as a platform to exact rapid transformation of the alliance in order to have greater European involvement in the “global war on terror.” If the United States wants NATO to play a greater role in Afghanistan, it must permanently de-link Iraq and Afghanistan.

All said and done, the material demands that NATO currently faces are not enormous—essentially 20 additional helicopters, several hundred trainers for police, and three maneuver battalions. Every day that passes without these modest demands being met sees NATO’s credibility slip a little further.

SOVEREIGNTY, LOCAL OWNERSHIP, AND LEGITIMACY

While the Afghan government is formally sovereign and told by the international community that it is in the driver's seat, in many respects it enjoys the sovereignty of the taxi driver, subject to the passengers' decisions about the direction the taxi should take. This is not so in all spheres, as the recent blocking of a nominee for appointment as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General made clear. However, it is largely true in areas where the mobilization of substantial resources is required. This is a significant obstacle to the building of its credibility in Afghanistan, where credit for reconstruction all too easily goes to NGOs, international organizations, or private commercial contractors funded by donors who have opted to bypass the Afghan state.

This is often defended by reference to the limited absorptive capacity of Afghan government agencies, and there is some truth in this complaint. It points, however, to a deeper flaw in the approach to state-building that has been taken by the donors, namely the reluctance to engage in serious capacity-building programs and an over-reliance on experts brought in at considerable cost from developed countries. In some areas, this has produced worthwhile returns, but there have been some strikingly perverse consequences. These include the payment of astronomical salaries to international consultants or Afghans holding Western passports, whose work is not necessarily superior to that of locally-employed Afghans who receive only a tiny fraction of what international advisors and émigrés are paid. Properly-chosen and properly-deployed consultants and trainers lead to positive results. On the other hand, poorly-chosen and inappropriately-placed consultants and trainers lead to negative results for both the international community and local institutions. Poor planning and poorly-chosen personnel also militate against the development of local capacities on which long-term sustainability depends, since unqualified or inappropriately-placed consultants create dysfunctionalities, blur missions and roles, and create paralysis in the system that can persist long after they depart. This problem has been compounded by the problem of the "second civil service," namely the network of non-state agencies undertaking state-like activities, which acts as a beacon for talented locals; by the return or survival of some bureaucrats from Afghanistan's past who are unequal to the management of a modern state but tenacious in blocking the endeavors of those who are—often by seeking to exploit patronage networks or links to donors; and by a proliferation of bureaucratic offices that compete with each other and draw foreign patrons into their struggles, often to the point that the patrons themselves become active participants in bureaucratic battles.

The dilemma for the Afghan government is that it is confronted by all the expectations that a population normally entertains of a sovereign government, while lacking

the capacities to meet those expectations. This is a recipe for a crisis of state legitimacy from which the only winners will be the Taliban. Since expectations can be managed to only a limited degree, it is vital to take steps to enhance the state's capacities, and to put on display some of the goods that a competent state can deliver. It is far better to do a few key things well than many things badly. Again, the focus for this activity should be at the district level rather than simply in Kabul. Kabul's role should be the setting of strategic priorities and the monitoring of their implementation.

POLITICAL SOLUTIONS: MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF INSURGENCY

The persistence of costly insurgent activity in southern and eastern Afghanistan has prompted some discussion of whether there might be a "political solution" to the challenge posed by the "Neo-Taliban." At one level, of course, the door has long been open—through the "Program for Strengthening of Peace"—for former Taliban combatants to pledge to accept the new constitution, and this program has by most accounts been uncontroversial. Nor is there any particular problem with moves to engage with fence-sitters, or even groups that for reasons of perceived self-interest may at some time have lent support to the insurgency. The same is not true, however, of proposals to enter negotiations with hard-core Taliban. It should be noted that while the Afghan government expelled two European officials in December 2007 for allegedly dealing with Taliban elements in Helmand, it was not on the basis that contacts of that kind were beyond the pale, but rather on the basis that it was the right of the Afghan government to play the lead role in undertaking such activities.

Given that the Taliban leadership in Pakistan remains intransigent, and has ready access to new combatants being trained in its Pakistan-based sanctuaries, even a successful strategy of negotiating with Taliban in Afghanistan might simply change the mix of forces to be confronted. But there is a potential second-order effect to highlight as well. As noted earlier, the mere spectacle of high-level negotiations with the Taliban may deter Afghans from throwing their weight behind the Afghan government, lest they be left stranded if a later deal with the Taliban gives the Taliban local dominance. Even riskier is the idea of paying Taliban sympathizers to support the government. This strategy of appealing to the financial self-interest of local actors was attempted by the regime of Dr. Najibullah between 1989 and 1992 using Soviet-supplied funds, and its weakness was exposed by the collapse of the regime within months of the cut-off of those funds at the end of 1991. Such an approach also invites Afghans to take up an adversarial stance toward Kabul (in the hope that they will be paid to be cooperative), and in the worst case could result in Western governments inadvertently funding the Taliban in exchange for trivial cooperation.

PRACTICAL STEPS IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE: PRIORITIES, RESOURCES, AND SEQUENCING

There are, however, a number of useful practical steps that can be taken to address the governance problems that Afghanistan faces. So far, rebuilding the central state has been a priority objective for the Afghan leadership and its supporters. This has been at the expense of local government, where opportunities exist to re-engage with significant elements of the population, particularly tribal elders who have been disenfranchised at the levels of both the center and the periphery. Reinvigorating local government should be given top priority in governance reforms. The provincial councils which were elected in 2005 have done little to empower local forces, largely through lack of significant constitutional responsibilities. Funds for local projects have been repeatedly promised or pledged, but in terms of on-the-ground delivery, a huge gap remains. This should be bridged as a matter of urgency. This may require attention not only to circumstances in Afghanistan, but also to the appropriation and audit mechanisms in donor states that often militate quite unrealistically against the prompt supply of funds when they are needed.

At the level of the central state, there is a desperate need to open channels of promotion on merit, and to provide support for meritorious appointees as they work within ministries and agencies. The contentious political atmosphere within and between various components of the Afghan state has seen the state lose some of its best staff, something it can ill afford. This problem cannot be easily overcome, but donors should consider discussing with the Afghan government ways of ensuring that the monies being supplied are well-used by the best possible staff. It may also be useful to reconsider the structure and operation of the Afghan bureaucracy, which is riddled with requirements for multiple official signatures in a way that simply fosters corruption. This was not considered as part of the constitution-drafting process that was concerned with the design of central political institutions rather than the ministerial structure of the government. There is little evidence that this particular issue has been considered seriously at all.

PRACTICAL STEPS IN PROMOTING SECURITY: RECOGNIZING THE *ABSOLUTE CENTRALITY* OF SANCTUARIES IN PAKISTAN

Statistics clearly demonstrate that 2007 saw a sharp rise in casualty figures and violence in Afghanistan. Officials are quick to point out that the Taliban failed to capture any major territory in 2007 and that NATO won every tactical engagement against the Taliban. Yet,

that does not accurately reflect the reality as seen on the ground, nor does it set an appropriate standard for success. A primary tactical objective of the insurgency is to create distance and division between the population and government authorities, and to disrupt delivery of services in order to de-legitimize the Afghan government and its international supporters. Numerous polls and data indicate a growing trend toward disillusionment of Afghans in their expectations of both the Afghan government and its international backers.

Since the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in 2001, a great number of insurgents have been eliminated, a large number have been captured, and a significant number have been reconciled with mainstream society. Yet the threat to Afghan stability has not diminished. The insurgency continues to be fed unabatedly by a steady supply of recruits from long-established networks in Pakistan nurtured by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate, and more recently by some elements within Afghanistan as tribal differences and rivalries, together with fears of opium eradication, are exploited by the Taliban and their associates to recruit foot soldiers. (Other foot soldiers are directly supplied by drug barons.) Without a comprehensive approach to Afghanistan's security problems involving robust action on both sides of the border with Pakistan, the "end state" of a democratic and sustainable Afghanistan as defined by the Afghan government and its international partners will not be achieved. Thus far, the international mission in Afghanistan has failed to recognize the inherent contradiction in seeking to promote stability in Afghanistan while upholding Pakistan as a reliable partner in the "global war on terror." Such confidence in Pakistan is completely misplaced, and the evidence of the use of Pakistan's territory for nefarious purposes such as training of suicide bombers is compelling, as a September 2007 UN study showed.

The centrality of the safe havens for Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan has not been given international attention commensurate to the dangers those safe havens pose for stability in the region and indeed the world. Fearful of pressuring Pakistan, Western leaderships have allowed this threat to fester for much too long. It is true that Pakistan is far from stable, but it is more likely to be radically destabilized by the continuation of a perilous entanglement with extremism than by Western pressure to bring that entanglement to a halt. (Indeed, when the United States applied pressure on Pakistan to prevent Taliban disruption of Afghanistan's 2004 presidential election, it proved notably successful.) The confidence of Afghan leaders in the United States and its NATO partners has been sorely tested by what they see as undue willingness of Western politicians to accept at face value Pakistan's protestations of innocence — especially when commanders serving in Afghanistan are prepared to speak with greater candor.

The last time the international community turned a blind eye to Pakistani advancement of its so-called “national interest” through active promotion of the Taliban, airplanes struck the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington.

Thus, there is an immediate need for governments in the region and the international community to work vigorously in order to disrupt the insurgents’ supply chain and dismantle the infrastructure that exists largely on the Pakistani side of the border. If action is not taken promptly, tactical battle success on the ground against the insurgents in Afghanistan will continue to be compromised. Afghans, Europeans, Americans, and troops from other allied nations will continue to take casualties in an environment where public support for combat operations in Afghanistan is eroding.

CONCLUSION

All is not yet lost. There is still hope and scope to build on the goodwill of the Afghans to deliver dividends of a peaceful, stable society to a beleaguered population that has waited three decades to see their lives improve. The ingredients for success do exist and success is achievable. However, if NATO is to succeed, it must subordinate its members’ parochial objectives to Afghanistan’s greater needs. It must recognize that what *Afghans* see as threats are the threats that have to be addressed. It must ensure that it structures deployments with sufficient continuity of tenure to maintain a proper grasp of the challenges in Afghanistan. It must come to terms with the limitations of its current PRT instruments in the diverse environments in which they operate. Finally, it must be prepared robustly to confront the threat to stability in Afghanistan that sanctuaries in Pakistan pose. On this all else depends. “Muddling through” with less than this is no longer a credible option; it is simply a recipe for a waste of money and lives.

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NATO EXPANSION AND MODERN EUROPE

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For centuries, the Balkans and Europe's East have deserved their reputations for igniting wider European wars and have given to European history the place names of "genocide" and "mass starvation." In 1949, the creation of NATO secured the post-World War II peace in Western Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has played a transformational role in building a second peace—this time in Central and Eastern Europe.

Now, NATO has an opportunity to lay the foundations for a third European peace—this time in the Balkans—and to open a dialogue that could lead to a fourth—a more constructive relationship between Europe and Russia.

In terms of the enlargement debate, the NATO alliance faced two critical questions as it prepared for the 2008 April Summit in Bucharest. The first was whether to invite Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to join NATO, a decision that is the culmination of a 15-year effort to end the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. The second was what relationship Ukraine and Georgia would have with NATO. Would they be set on a course that could lead to eventual NATO membership, or would they be excluded?

Regarding the Balkans, critics have long argued that Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia are simply not ready for NATO membership. Farther east, they worry about the fragility of democratic institutions in Georgia and Ukraine. They also have concerns about the effect that NATO engagement with those countries would have on relations with Russia and on

European publics skittish about further enlargement of the European Union (for which NATO enlargement has been a traditional precursor).

These larger issues created a series of interrelated questions shaping the decisions of the 26 NATO leaders in Bucharest:

- (1) How have the two recent expansions of the NATO alliance—in 1999 that included Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary; and in 2004 that included Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria—affected U.S. and European security and the integrity and capability of NATO? What does this experience tell us about the prospect of further enlargement?
- (2) What are the qualifications of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia both against NATO standards and relative to previous candidates at the point of entering the alliance?
- (3) What criteria does NATO actually use in making these important decisions and how have these criteria changed over time?
- (4) What is the status of the Western Balkans as a whole and how would the entry of three new NATO members affect the stability of Southeast Europe and the security of Europe more generally?
- (5) Assuming that the alliance takes a major step forward in the Western Balkans, what is being done for the democracies of Europe's East, such as Ukraine and Georgia, not considered for membership at Bucharest? Are they being left behind?
- (6) What about Russia? How would the third expansion of NATO since 1989 and our engagement with Ukraine and Georgia affect Russia's perceptions of the West and its relations with our European allies?
- (7) Finally, what are the implications of the Bucharest Summit for the foundations of the Atlantic alliance, for how the United States and Europe share burdens, and for our effectiveness in working together in global politics?

This is not merely a rhetorical exercise. Although these questions are demanding, we have accumulated a great deal of experience in the development and integration of newly freed European states since the fall of the Berlin Wall. There is extensive and overwhelming empirical evidence that informs us of how NATO expansion has helped build the Europe we see today and the significant role it is likely to play in Europe's future.

BACKGROUND ON NATO EXPANSION

The post-Cold War expansions of NATO to the Visegrad countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary and then to the larger and more diverse Vilnius Group were actually very different in terms of process and significance for Europe. In terms of process, particularly in the United States, an organized examination of the democratic credentials and institutions of candidate countries took something of a back seat to other issues during the initial round of expansion. (Slovakia, although technically part of the Visegrad Group was, however, relegated to the Vilnius Group due to backsliding on democracy under Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar. Its democratic shortcomings were so blatant that they could not be ignored). The intellectual debate swung on how expansion would affect relations with Russia and whether the United States needed to remain in Europe at all. The history of the Visegrad States under communism received far more attention than democracy benchmarks—such as the extent of government corruption and treatment of minorities—would in subsequent expansions.

The first expansion in 1999 was a strategic expansion that was decided without the benefit of Individual Partnership Action Plans, Intensified Dialogues, or Membership Action Plans, which a tireless NATO bureaucracy built up later. There simply was no Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the time Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary entered NATO. These countries were invited to join NATO because morally they were seen to have had a historic claim to return to the community of European states from whom they had been separated by a series of 20th century totalitarianisms and, strategically, because the West wanted to eliminate the insecurity of the North German Plain. (They were also seen as leading examples of good democratic practice, market reforms, and regional stabilizing forces, but these were not the decisive factors.) Simply, the Visegrad accession was the last step in ending the danger of war on a historically bloody plain that stretches from Moscow through Poland and Germany into northern France. More than ten years after this decision was made in July 1997 at the Madrid Summit, the NATO allies have every reason to be proud of their decision.

The second phase of expansion began at NATO's 50th anniversary Washington Summit in April 1999, when MAP was established, and soon grew to include Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. MAP was a response to the refusal of the NATO allies to go forward with invitations to Slovenia and Romania at the Madrid Summit in July 1997. While many observers thought these rejections were unfair, NATO leaders believed that inadequate reform and weak democratic institutions, particularly in Romania, prevented NATO from doing what it otherwise had been prepared to do. They reasoned that the next generation of NATO candidates would need a self-improvement course before invitations could be extended.

It was at this moment that NATO formally entered the democracy support business. There were several immediate consequences of the creation of a class of candidate countries. The class for NATO aspirants that had been given a NATO perspective but no specific date for invitation could be quite large, and ten candidates joined that class virtually overnight, some with very weak credentials and limited histories as democracies. The class of candidates was diverse both historically and geographically since the Vilnius Group was not claiming a single, overarching strategic rationale. Basically, the Vilnius Group claimed to represent the social and political restoration of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, which would render "whole" a Europe divided in the 20th century. The sense of the unifying character of the second expansion was illustrated in the frequent references to the concept of "a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace," and in President Bush's speech at Warsaw University, where he maintained that Europe must extend "from the Baltic to the Black Sea" to achieve this objective. The Vilnius Group did precisely that, and seven countries from the Group, which was simply a self-help political club formed during a conference in Lithuania in May 2000, were invited to join NATO at the Prague Summit in June 2002. Although both the process of qualification and the significance for Europe were different from the Visegrad Group, the result has clearly strengthened the NATO alliance and Europe itself.

QUALIFICATIONS OF ALBANIA, CROATIA, AND MACEDONIA

In terms of enlargement, the first question facing the NATO allies as they geared up for the Bucharest Summit was whether or not nine years of MAP qualified Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia (members of the Adriatic Charter) to enter NATO. Critics say that nine-year period does not qualify them. But the fact is that Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia have spent six more years in rigorous preparation for NATO membership than the seven other original members of the Vilnius Group, and it shows.

Today, Croatia has the most impressive all-around economic performance of any country in Southern Europe. In recent years, Albania has contributed more soldiers to missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and international peacekeeping than most NATO allies. And, since the end of the Balkan wars in 1999, Macedonia has arguably covered more ground in building an integrated, multi-ethnic society in a short time than any other European nation. We now have a chance to bring Catholic Croatia, secular-Islamic Albania, and multi-ethnic, Orthodox Macedonia into the Euroatlantic community of democracies. If it remains the case that qualification for NATO membership is predominantly determined by the “social criteria” of democratic reform as well as military contributions to international peacekeeping, then the three so-called “Adriatic Charter” countries in the Western Balkans are indeed fully qualified.

Nevertheless, since NATO has adjusted its criteria for membership and its rationale for expansion in the recent past, it is possible that a third expansion might be driven by different criteria and with unique characteristics.

In addition to democratic criteria, the NATO allies seem to view Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia strategically in terms of *Southeast Europe*, politically in terms of *European integration*, and geopolitically in terms of *the partnership in the Balkans between the European Union and NATO*.

Strategically, invitations to Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia bring the NATO security architecture inside the Western Balkans, which remains the last unstable region in Central and Eastern Europe. The strategic claim of Poland and its Visegrad neighbors was to end the insecurity of the North German Plain. The Balkan candidates can begin to build a system of shared security that will contribute to reducing the instability of the Western Balkans, thereby strengthening Southeast Europe in both political and economic terms.

The strategic claim is closely linked with the political dimensions of the question. NATO’s early extension of a membership perspective to Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia and its tenacity in preparing the Adriatic Charter candidates for membership clearly reflects a political understanding of what the European Union decided at the EU Summit in Thessaloniki. In the communiqué from Thessaloniki, the European Union “guaranteed” all the countries of the Western Balkans eventual membership in all of Europe’s institutions. If it is the intention of the European Union to bring the Western Balkans into the political and market institutions of Europe, then it is obviously an implied mission of NATO to help strengthen these candidates where it can and to ensure that a security structure will be in place so that EU integration goes forward when its leaders see fit. Since Croatia is already

closing in on the final chapters of EU candidacy, NATO invitations are, if anything, somewhat behind schedule.

The complementarity of European Union and NATO objectives is even more pronounced if we look at the qualifications of the candidates in geopolitical terms. Since 1994, the Western Balkans, more than any other place in the world, has taught NATO and the European Union (as well as the United States and Europe) how to work effectively together. This applies across the entire spectrum of human rights, intervention, peacekeeping, reconstruction, capacity-building, and integration missions to name but a few of the tasks that have been undertaken in this defining collaboration to rescue and rebuild the former Yugoslavia.

What NATO and the European Union achieve or do not achieve in the Western Balkans may well define what we will undertake, or fail to address, throughout the Euroatlantic system in the future. In this analysis, the NATO allies face an obligation to take any and all steps to ensure that the Western Balkans has the highest probability of success. Issuing invitations to three qualified candidates is one of those steps, but the alliance should not stop there. Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia need an Intensified Dialogue with NATO on membership issues. This is the preliminary dialogue that anticipates that Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia will soon enter MAP and the path to NATO membership.

So, looked at in terms of democratic, strategic, political, and geopolitical criteria, and compared to the two previous rounds of expansion, the candidates for invitation at the Bucharest Summit have had an overwhelming case to make in their favor. Moreover, a failure to decide exposes the alliance to significant risks. Any further delay on the candidacies of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia would diminish regional stability just as Kosovo begins its extended period of supervised independence, and would confuse and undercut the European Union as it takes over chief security responsibilities from the United States and NATO throughout the region. An inability to close the book in the Balkans would also dangerously slow our engagement with Europe's East.

THE REMAINING QUESTION OF EUROPE'S EAST

The Balkan accession question notwithstanding, there remains the question of Europe's East that might someday form the basis for a fourth expansion. Both Ukraine and Georgia have sent letters to the NATO Secretary-General formally requesting entry into MAP.

Both countries have long since completed the Individual Partnership Program, and they have breezed through the Intensified Dialogue on membership. Their senior officials argue, and Western military analysts broadly agree, that Ukraine and Georgia have been kept in NATO's waiting room for so long that they have completed the majority of the technical military reform tasks in the Action Plan and are already interoperable with NATO forces. For Ukraine, Bucharest emerges as the second try for MAP. During the Istanbul Summit in 2004, President Kuchma requested MAP, but the alliance refused on the grounds that Ukraine had sold radars to Iraq. (Although that particular charge turned out to be false—we did not find Ukrainian radars in Iraq—the NATO allies undoubtedly made the right decision overall.)

As we have seen from Poland to the Adriatic Charter, the processes of NATO and its purposes change all the time. Looking at the requests of Ukraine and Georgia, we already know that military criteria play almost no role in how we define our interest in the success of those two former Soviet republics. Actually, these countries are not asking for NATO membership, although they would be delighted if we treated them as prospective members. They are asking for the tools with which to complete their reforms and ultimately to qualify for membership consideration. In effect, MAP has become a kindergarten for countries seeking to improve their credentials for an EU perspective. In this respect, it is similar to the European Union's Neighborhood Policy.

What NATO must decide is how the alliance should engage with Ukraine and Georgia in the course of what might be an extended process of strengthening democratic institutions, resolving so-called "frozen conflicts," and establishing their overall political orientation. In this sense, Ukraine and Georgia most closely resemble Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia when they entered MAP to the degree that political and democratic criteria determine the speed and extent of their integration into the European Union and NATO.

Many NATO allies believe that, despite the astounding pace of reform since the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia stumbled in November 2007 when it cracked down on an opposition demonstration. Likewise, despite the vibrant political pluralism of Ukraine and its repeated free and fair elections, it seems that the country has great problems in sustaining a governing coalition or in reaching important political decisions without a fistfight in parliament. But these failings should surely be seen as the familiar juvenile delinquencies of young democracies finding their way in the post-Soviet world. Helping them past this early fragility is an important reason for them to be offered a collaborative relationship with NATO.

As important as it is to understand that NATO's criteria on expansion are constantly changing, it is also important to understand what NATO's engagement and pre-accession programs are not. MAP offers no guarantee of future membership in NATO, let alone in the European Union. To be precise, MAP would initiate an open-ended process that anticipates that Georgia and Ukraine will spend many years resolving critical national questions of stability, territorial integrity, institutional capacity, and the resolution of frozen conflicts before making a political decision to pursue NATO membership. In this sense, the first phase of engagement in Europe's East will be a process of discovery wherein Europe learns more about the character, capability, and political intentions of Ukraine and Georgia and these countries understand the evolving requirements of both NATO and the European Union.

Russia's interests are in no way injured by closer relations between NATO and Russia's neighbors. Over time, Ukraine and Georgia would become more stable and undoubtedly more prosperous. Invariably, countries in the process of building closer relations with NATO find that they can safely demilitarize and devote more of their energies to multilateral conflict resolution with neighbors. Ultimately, closer relations between Europe and Ukraine and Georgia would bring Russia closer to Europe and would make necessary dialogues with Russia on democracy and energy that much easier.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE BUCHAREST SUMMIT FOR THE RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP

Critics of NATO often cite past expansions as a decisive factor in the deterioration of Russia's relationship with NATO, the United States, and Europe. Although NATO influences the security, integration, and engagement of Europe in the east and, therefore, influences Europe's relationship with Russia, it can certainly be argued that NATO exerts a positive influence on Russia over the longer term.

To the extent that NATO and the European Union succeed in the stabilization and integration of the Western Balkans, Serbian insecurities and historical anxieties may cease to be a neuralgic issue in Russia's relations with the international community. Similarly, as discussed above, closer relations with Ukraine and Georgia will remove the security concerns that make addressing "frozen conflicts" extremely difficult and will serve further to demilitarize the unstable regions of what Russia once regarded as its "near abroad." As a historical rule, the persistence of political vacuums between Europe and Russia and the isolation of the fearful, fragile states trapped within this belt of political instability are a danger and a barrier to both Europe and Russia. Since the mid 1990s, NATO has done more than any institution to remove the physical insecurity, end the isolation, and open doors to Europe's East and Russia. As a result

of NATO's success in these areas, it is now possible to envision new kinds of relationships with Russia that would make the NATO Russian Federation Founding Act and the NATO-Russia Council look like distant, cave-dwelling ancestors.

If the Bucharest Summit succeeds, both in the completion of a Southeast European security system in the Balkans and a decisive, long-term engagement with Ukraine and Georgia, it would not be premature to speculate about a new relationship with Russia.

As mentioned above, the military dimension of the relationship will continue to decline. Interminable negotiations on the levels of nuclear and conventional forces, which dominated the late 1970s and 1980s, attract all the excitement of a disco revival. It is beside the point. The hopes of the last few years that Russia and the United States had found common cause in areas such as North Korea, Iran, and counter-proliferation generally have failed to justify their early promise. Not only was the Russian government reluctant to help Europe and the United States on problems associated with the potential development of an Iranian nuclear program, but Russia seemed to have even less influence with North Korea than the United States. As a result, the Russia-NATO Council remains little more than a vehicle to allow the Russian President to appear at NATO Summits.

By the same token, it is clear that Russia and the rest of the Euroatlantic community are not going to reach a common understanding on the nature of democracy, standards of human rights, the protection of the press, limitations on state power, and many other political values that are the foundations of NATO and EU member states.

However, the decisions at the Bucharest Summit may set the stage for recognition that Russia and Europe have common economic interests and should begin more fully to discuss the appropriate terms of trade. Already, the European Union is about to open free trade discussions with Ukraine, and NATO has put Europe's energy security on its agenda. While it is more likely that the European Union will take the leading role in whatever relationship develops on energy and related issues in trade and development, it may well be said in the future that NATO created the conditions that made closer relations between Russia and Europe on economic matters possible, primarily by means of three expansions and a new engagement in Europe's East.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUMMIT FOR NATO

When the NATO allies met in November 2006 in Riga, Latvia, they described their next meeting in Bucharest as “an expansion summit.” Since then, equally consequential issues concerning the success of NATO operations in Afghanistan and how missile defenses will work in the overall defense architecture of Europe have been added to the agenda. Success or failure on any of these questions will affect the strength and integrity of NATO for years to come.

Still, it was the question of NATO membership that first signaled that the Bucharest Summit was likely to be a historic event in the NATO alliance and in the development of modern Europe more generally. If the Bucharest Summit does invite Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to join NATO; if the alliance formally invites Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia to start on the path to NATO and European integration; and if NATO invites Georgia and Ukraine to enter MAP, beginning a serious and sustained relationship with Europe’s East, what affect will NATO have had on modern Europe? Answers to that question may be summarized thus:

- ▶ NATO membership for Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia would be a major step toward the complete integration of Southeast Europe into Euroatlantic institutions and would provide the security foundations for an enduring peace in the Western Balkans.
- ▶ Invitations to Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia to begin a dialogue on NATO would formally parallel the policies of the European Union toward the countries of the Central Balkans. This would be an important signal that NATO and Europe’s Security and Defense Policy are equal partners in future challenges.
- ▶ Invitations to Georgia and Ukraine to enter NATO’s Membership Action Plan would signal a breakthrough engagement with Europe’s East that would strengthen the democratic and economic development of both countries and may, ultimately, set the stage for closer relations with Russia.
- ▶ Finally, the decisions at the Bucharest Summit, taken as a whole, would announce that there is a new balance in burden-sharing between the European Union and NATO. In each affirmative decision at Bucharest, NATO would be anticipating an EU decision (for Croatia, NATO membership would precede EU membership) or NATO will be following the lead of EU policy (Ukraine’s MAP would follow the EU’s Neighborhood policy by two years.)

CONCLUSION: AN EVOLVING SUCCESS STORY

NATO's adaptability to the changing needs and various objectives of Visegrad, Vilnius, the Adriatic Charter, the Western Balkan, and now the post-Soviet democracies in Europe's East is nothing short of extraordinary. The NATO allies seem quite agile in changing their mission from ending insecurity in the North German Plain, to completing Central and Eastern Europe, to stabilizing and helping to integrate the Western Balkans, to strengthening democratic institutions where possible, and to providing the relationships with Ukraine and Georgia that may bring them to a political decision on NATO membership and an EU perspective. NATO's Open Door policy has clearly played a critical role in the development of modern Europe after 1989 and stands as one of the most clearheaded decisions made by the alliance since the Marshall Plan. Looking back on the history of NATO's initial engagements and expansions, there is no positive decision that the allies have had cause to subsequently regret. Each NATO dialogue, Membership Action Plan, and NATO invitation has made the transatlantic alliance more effective and has served to unite and strengthen the political order of modern Europe.

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AN EVOLVING NATO: PRO-DEMOCRACY OR ANTI-RUSSIA?

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“NATO, even as it grows, is no enemy of Russia... Let us tell all those who have struggled to build democracy and free markets what we have told the Poles: from now on, what you build, you keep.”

—U.S. President George W. Bush, July 2001

“We see that military resources of certain states and members of the NATO alliance are being built up right by our borders and in contravention of previously reached agreements... We cannot allow ourselves to remain indifferent to the obvious ‘muscle-flexing.’”

—Russian President Vladimir Putin, November 2007

In April 2004, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov penned an opinion piece in the *New York Times* to coincide with the largest round of NATO enlargement since the end of the Cold War. Entitled “As NATO grows so do Russia’s worries,” Ivanov’s article opened with the (doubtful) claim that Russia had been “remarkably calm” about the accession to the alliance of seven formerly communist countries, including the three Baltic states. He then proceeded to a question, which was all the more poignant because of the understated manner in which it was posed. “Why,” he asked, “is an organization that was designed to oppose the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe still necessary in today’s world?”

To be fair to the Russian defense minister, this is a question that politicians, analysts, military people, and scholars in Europe and North America have themselves asked about NATO since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. But Ivanov’s statement has to be

set against a background of increasingly critical observations by many senior Russian officials in recent years and an inclination to ask awkward questions: What is NATO for? What is NATO against? What are the limits (territorial and political) of its expansion? According to what is fast becoming the orthodox narrative within Moscow's political and strategic establishment, an expanding NATO is at best an unnecessary curiosity in the (long since) post-Cold War world, possibly an irritation or even an insult to Russia. At worst, NATO is cast as a direct threat to Russia's national security.

NATO and its supporters, of course, have long argued that expansion of the alliance is about consolidating democracy. Moreover, it is argued that by locking new and old NATO members into an integrated military command structure, regional security is taken to new levels, with benefits for all concerned. According to this view, not only do existing and new member states benefit from the expansion of a settled security community, but a non-member such as Russia need no longer fear instability on its western borders. The clear implication is that Russian fears about NATO expansion are misplaced, probably springing from nothing more substantial than a mix of wounded national pride and post-imperial pique at seeing an American dominated alliance gain a foothold in countries Russia had long been accustomed to seeing as part of its own geopolitical backyard. Russia is seen as having singularly failed to adapt to the reality that the Brezhnev Doctrine, with its jealously protected sphere of ideological and territorial influence on Russia's periphery, no longer applies, and no longer needs to apply.

To be sure, as the diplomats from both sides would be quick to point out, confrontation is far from the whole story in the current relationship between Russia and NATO. In January 2008, the fourth in a series of joint NATO-Russia (Theater Missile Defense) exercises took place in Germany under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council established in 2002. The NATO-Russia Council itself grew out of the signing of the NATO-Russian Federation Founding Act of May 1997. NATO and Russia have thus not merely sought to allay each others' concerns. They have signed agreements and implemented them. Dialogue is more or less constant. In December 2007 and January 2008 alone, for example, there was a NATO-Russia Council meeting at NATO headquarters attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov; a NATO-Russia seminar on nuclear weapons incidents and accidents; the publication of a NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defense; and, as mentioned above, the NATO-Russia exercise in Germany.

And yet, it is plain for all to see that NATO-Russia relations remain deeply problematic. Amid all the events relevant to NATO's engagement with Russia in the last few months, one towers above them all in significance. In December 2007, NATO felt obliged to issue

a statement of deep “regret” about Russia’s decision that month to suspend implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty—one of the most retrograde steps in NATO-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War.

The aim of this paper is to ask which of these competing narratives of NATO—pro-democracy or anti-Russia—stands up to scrutiny. Has NATO genuinely transformed itself from the days of the Cold War, when it was locked into an adversarial partnership with the former Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization, into a benign and stabilizing presence in Europe and beyond? Or, conversely, does an enlarged and enlarging NATO, with ever more impressive military and communications capability and a predilection for political outreach and interventionist (or “expeditionary”) military operations beyond its original treaty area, represent a security threat to Russia?

BACK IN (THE DAYS OF) THE USSR

For nearly three decades since the April 1949 signing of the Washington Treaty that created NATO, its strategic outlook rested on the declarations made in that treaty and on general, largely unwritten assumptions of Soviet hostility and impending aggression (political and/or military). During this period, NATO strategy was to be found in a series of political guidance papers, principally the December 1949 “Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area,” and the December 1956 “North Atlantic Council (NAC) Political Directive.” These papers, in turn, informed a series of military strategies: the initial Medium Term Defense Plan (MTDP), the December 1948 MC 48 paper with its emphasis on nuclear responses—both strategic and tactical, and the May 1957 MC 14/2 that sought to reduce the emphasis on nuclear reliance in favor of conventional forces. In 1967, NATO moved away from its adversarial grand strategy to one which, in the spirit of *détente*, accepted the possibility of cooperation with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, particularly in the fields of arms control and disarmament. The embodiment of the new grand strategy of defense with *détente* was the December 1967 report entitled “The Future Tasks of the Alliance,” otherwise known as the Harmel Report or Doctrine. In terms of NATO’s collective strategy, the December 1956 Political Directive was replaced at the same time, making way for the adoption in December 1967 of a new military strategy known as Flexible Response. The 1967 arrangement lasted until the late 1980s, when the end of the Cold War brought about a “fundamental reorientation of the alliance’s overall grand strategy,” together with the military strategies that drew from it. It could be argued with some conviction that this series of political declarations and military strategies were evidence of a politico-military alliance that knew very clearly both what it was “for” and what it was “against.”

This process of careful adaptation to the gradually evolving strategic map of Europe came to a dramatic halt in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, an event that threatened to wash away many of the concepts and certainties around which NATO's members had gathered for the preceding 40 years. What did "defense" and "security" mean without the antagonism of the Cold War? Why, how, and with what intensity should states cooperate in these areas, now that "threat" had become politically incorrect, only to be replaced in diplomatic and military language by the rather more nebulous "risks" and "instability"? Without a clear, convincing military danger, what rationale could there be for complex and expensive organizations such as NATO, and what should be the alliance's structure, missions, and membership? For some political leaders and officials, the preferred response to the cataclysmic events of 1989 was to assume that NATO's 22-year-old military strategy, with its twin pillars of "forward defense" and "flexible response" would somehow manage to keep pace with change. But a fundamental strategic reassessment was inevitable.

ADAPTING TO A NEW WORLD ORDER

At the London Summit in July 1990, NATO leaders acknowledged recent changes in Europe and stated plainly that, "as a consequence, this alliance must and will adapt." The London Declaration set the tone for subsequent change in the alliance. Adaptation would be both political and military. NATO's leaders reaffirmed the Harmel Doctrine's position that "security and stability do not lie solely in the military dimension" and set for themselves the goal of enhancing the "political component of our alliance." In the name of political adaptation, Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty would be re-emphasized to promote "stability," "well-being," and "economic collaboration" among NATO's members. NATO would also, importantly, "reach out" and extend "the hand of friendship" to former Warsaw Pact adversaries. In time of course, "reaching out" to Eastern Europe would develop into the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the Partnership for Peace program, and the slow-moving enlargement debate. Military adaptation would also take place. NATO's defense ministers had already decided to review the alliance's military strategy and the operational plans and doctrines that flowed from it. The London Declaration confirmed this decision and spoke of replacing "forward defense" with "reduced forward presence," of modifying the flexible response strategy and of developing "new force plans consistent with the revolutionary changes in Europe."

The essence of the NATO alliance's strategic concept of November 1991, therefore, was to emphasize political security (democracy and free markets) rather than military and territorial defense (the "threat" from Russia). There was a sense that the threat, which NATO must henceforth confront, would not be the traditional scenario of organized aggression by an identifiable and largely predictable adversary, but the amorphous and dislocated notion of

“instability.” At the same time, however, NATO’s leaders insisted that the alliance would remain a collective defense organization as defined by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and a new military strategy was produced in due course.

This ambivalence (or, perhaps, constructive ambiguity) resurfaced at the end of the 1990s, when the alliance embarked upon another re-examination of its mission and structure. As the 1990s progressed, it had become increasingly difficult to ignore calls to re-examine the 1991 strategic concept. Revealingly, a good deal of the resistance to such calls had come from within the alliance, from those NATO leaders who opposed a revision “because too much would be turned upside down.” Nevertheless, in April 1994, the alliance’s military chiefs initiated a revision of the military strategy that was accepted by NATO’s foreign and defense ministers in June 1996 at the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting in Berlin. One year later, at the NATO Summit in Madrid, leaders also agreed to revise the 1991 Strategic Concept, in order to ensure that alliance strategy remained “fully consistent with Europe’s new security situation and challenges.”

In some respects, the 1999 new Strategic Concept was an admirable attempt to embrace the complexity of international security after the Cold War, and to describe an equally complex array of responses available to the alliance. That said, the document was arguably so expansive and ambitious that its credibility suffered. In a still-evolving strategic climate, the NATO alliance set itself a very broad range of tasks:

“[The alliance] must safeguard common security interests in an environment of further, often unpredictable change. It must maintain collective defense and reinforce the transatlantic link and ensure a balance that allows the European allies to assume greater responsibility. It must deepen its relations with its partners and prepare for the accession of new members. It must, above all, maintain the political will and the military means required by the entire range of its missions.”

Part II of the document—“strategic perspectives”—lists anything and everything (“uncertainty and instability,” “ethnic and religious rivalries,” “the abuse of human rights,” and the “dissolution of states”), which could lead to conflict and which could thereby, directly or indirectly, impinge upon the security of the NATO alliance. Part IV of the concept—“Guidelines for the Alliance’s Forces”—uses fairly traditional language to insist that “the primary role of alliance military forces is to protect peace and to guarantee the territorial integrity, political independence, and security of member states.”

It is difficult to identify any function of ground, naval, and air forces that NATO failed to consider:

“Alliance forces will be structured to reflect the multinational and joint nature of alliance missions. Essential tasks will include controlling, protecting, and defending territory; ensuring the unimpeded use of sea, air and land lines of communication; sea control and protecting the deployment of the alliance’s sea-based deterrent; conducting independent and combined air operations; ensuring a secure air environment and effective extended air defense; surveillance, intelligence, reconnaissance and electronic warfare; strategic lift; and providing effective and flexible command and control facilities, including deployable combined and joint headquarters.”

While the enlargement of the NATO alliance had not yet become a serious prospect in 1991 (and is therefore not mentioned in the 1991 document), by 1999 much had happened in the field of outreach (NACC/EAPC, PfP) and enlargement (the admission of three new members in March 1999 and the decision to sustain the “open door” policy). Accordingly, the 1999 Strategic Concept refers explicitly to enlargement and asserts repeatedly the need to enable military cooperation with NATO partner countries. Cooperation with non-NATO members was also considered and, in a gesture that would have been unthinkable in 1991 and must have been at least disconcerting to Russia, the 1999 Strategic Concept even included something of a security commitment to partner countries: “NATO has undertaken to consult with any active participant in the Partnership if that Partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security.”

NATO’s leaders were not solely concerned with the alliance’s military posture, however, and were increasingly conscious of NATO’s broader and “softer” political character as a community of values. By late 1998 and early 1999—as the Kosovo crisis deepened—the alliance appeared on the verge of a new wave of thinking about the values it embodied. Comments made by various NATO political leaders and senior officials created the impression that any threat, anywhere, to the alliance’s core values, rather than to its territory or interests, could now justify a call to arms. Thus, in early 1999, a NATO spokesman argued that “the maintenance of the democratic order in the Euroatlantic area has replaced resisting the Soviet threat as the main rationale for alliance defense policy.” And shortly after the suspension of the air campaign against Serbia on June 10, NATO’s Secretary-General claimed that “in responding to the Kosovo crisis, the alliance has sent a strong signal that it will defend the basic values of the Atlantic community: liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.”

NATO's strategic revision processes of 1991 and 1999 share important characteristics. Both documents offer such an ambitious and comprehensive strategic outlook that it is hard to find a major element of the debate regarding NATO's role, composition, and future, which had been overlooked. A somewhat less charitable interpretation, of course, would be that on both occasions NATO found it impossible to abandon those missions, capabilities, and aspirations to which it had become so closely attached over several decades. These two documents, spanning the uncertain decade of the 1990s, when NATO's relations with Russia were awkward and volatile, provide invaluable insights as to the way in which NATO's leaders have in the past responded to change, and give important clues as to likely future behavior. Confronted by a very unfamiliar strategic context, with the principal strategic adversary of many decades no longer identifiable as a threat, the arguably rational response of NATO's leaders was to seek to sustain as much of the alliance's past as the present could bear, to seek to muddle through with a series of incremental steps rather than fundamental change, and to seek to avoid either self- or externally-imposed limitations on its scope and activities. NATO's leaders have in recent years adopted what might be called an open-ended approach designed to keep as many options in play as possible. Yet whatever the merits of this policy, it is one that has led to confusion on the part of outside observers and non-members (such as Russia) keen to debate NATO's core rationale. It is also an approach that to some extent cedes the rhetorical initiative to NATO's critics (especially Russia) who can focus on whichever part of NATO's own broad narrative is most useful for their purposes. It remains to be seen whether NATO will persist with this approach during the next review of NATO's strategic concept in 2008/2009, although it seems likely that NATO's leaders will be interested less in the metaphysics of alliance cooperation than in more mundane issues of burden- and risk-sharing in Afghanistan.

ARE RUSSIAN CONCERNS ABOUT EXPANSION JUST SO MUCH RHETORIC?

With all this in mind, it may be helpful in trying to assess the question of whether Russia has anything to worry about from NATO to conduct a brief thought experiment that strips out of the debate some of our own core assumptions, emotional attachments, and preconceptions. Imagine, for a moment, that there is no such country called Russia, no Soviet past, no democracy in the West, that there are no such countries as Britain, Germany, Poland, or the United States, and so on. The map remains as we know it in terms of states delineated by familiar borders. But it is a map full of blanks. All that we are allowed to believe at this stage is that there are two military power blocs standing side by side: Bloc A and Bloc B. One assumption is also allowed: each bloc is suspicious of the other's motives. Now, consider a number of developments in the last decade or so.

First, Bloc A has grown in size from comprising 16 countries in 1998 to representing 26 countries today. Bloc B has remained alone as just one country. Second, the expansion of Bloc A has brought it right to Bloc B’s borders, whereas previously a buffer zone had existed. Third, consider the relative change in that period in the size of the respective armed forces and the respective capacities to deploy military hardware. Bloc A now has 1.9 million men and women under arms compared with 2.1 million just over a decade ago—a decline of 9.5 percent. Bloc B has 578,000 personnel compared with 749,000—a decline of 23 percent. Bloc A’s combat aircraft numbers have edged up slightly to 4,121, while Bloc B’s combat aircraft numbers have collapsed by 31 percent to 1,967. Bloc A’s attack helicopter numbers have risen by over 9 percent to 1,305, while block B’s have fallen by 44 percent to 447. And so the list goes on.

Given the allowed assumption that Bloc A and Bloc B view each other with suspicion, it would be understandable if Bloc B were concerned about recent developments. Its military strategists, like strategists everywhere, must consider a range of scenarios as to how political relations between the two blocs might develop. In the worst case, if it came to a fight, Bloc B’s ability to defend itself looks seriously diminished. It is surely right to be worried. (Strategic analysts describe this moment of suspicion and mistrust in international relations as a “security dilemma,” after John Herz’s pioneering analysis in the 1940s. In a classic security dilemma, vulnerability is emphasized and inter-state politics become characterized by mistrust and by hedging against the worst-case. As this self-reinforcing process goes on, each side seeks to take appropriate steps to secure its interests. The other side sees this as offensive preparations—rather than a defensive posture—and reacts accordingly. At some point, one side might decide that its security is best assured not by defensive measures, but by pre-emptive action of some sort.)

| Table 1: NATO and Russia—Relative Military Capability | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| CFE* | NATO | | | Russian Federation | |
| | 1998 | 2007 | NATO-Plus** | 1998 | 2007 |
| Manpower | 2,142,989 | 1,880,168 | 2,116,268 | 748,776 | 577,763 |
| Tanks | 13,591 | 13,514 | 17,134 | 5,559 | 5,063 |
| Armored Combat Vehicles | 21,344 | 28,195 | 33,108 | 9,841 | 9,871 |
| Artillery | 13,439 | 16,042 | 23,222 | 5,999 | 5,918 |
| Attack Helicopters | 1,194 | 1,305 | 1,525 | 805 | 447 |
| Combat Aircraft | 4,118 | 4,121 | 4,702 | 2,868 | 1,967 |

Sources: IISS, *Military Balance 1998/99* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 305; U.K. Defence Statistics 2007, <http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/ukds/2007/c3/table315.html>; IISS, *Military Balance 2008* (London: Routledge, 2008).

* The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which was signed in Paris in November 1990 and entered into force in July 1992, sets limits on military manpower and five categories of treaty limited equipment within a treaty area known as “Atlantic to the Urals.” **NATO-Plus describes the 2008 NATO membership with the addition of Georgia, Ukraine, and the Adriatic Three—Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. Figures in this column are no more than an approximation based on various data sources.

Bloc A of course is meant to represent NATO and Bloc B Russia (See Table 1). Such thought experiments certainly have their limits. However, in this case, it does at least have the merit of showing that, from a purely “realist,” power political, or self-help perspective, Russian concerns about NATO expansion cannot simply be dismissed as fanciful. Russian power has *objectively* decreased substantially in recent years compared with NATO’s, and the relative change in the power stakes has been directly affected by NATO enlargement. There is also a technological dimension to Russia’s atavistic fear of encirclement; U.S. military, communications, and space technology enable extremely precise surveillance and targeting, and with a global reach. Russia might, therefore, be justified in feeling encircled both in the traditional, territorial sense and in a technological sense. With all of this in mind, we might ask how West European governments or the United States would feel in similar circumstances?

SO DOES AN EXPANDED NATO REALLY THREATEN RUSSIA?

With Central and East European countries’ security now guaranteed by NATO, it is not unreasonable to argue that they have been emboldened in taking stronger positions against Russia than they otherwise might have done. This is true in the European Union generally. It is also true in relation to support among several Central and East European countries for pro-Western forces in countries such as Belarus, Ukraine, and Georgia where Russia has adopted the opposite stance. These countries’ NATO membership can thus be seen as allowing them to operate in a manner that aims, at least in part, to thwart Russian ambitions.

This does not mean that an expanded NATO harms Russia, *per se*. But it does mean that an expanded NATO harms Russia’s ability to pursue an anti-democratic agenda (as discussed below). NATO expansion also has the effect of narrowing the options available to Moscow. In other words, Russia’s objection to NATO enlargement might well be both substantive and procedural in that it might foreclose on a number of foreign, trade, and economic policies that Russia might otherwise have wanted to have available for the future. The furor over the planned placing of anti-missile defense systems in the Czech Republic and Poland may have hit the headlines, but we should not lightly dismiss other Russian priorities that attract less attention.

A REALITY CHECK ON RUSSIAN FEARS

Much of the above has, of course, been an exercise in empathy—a willingness to try and see this debate from the Russian point of view rather than simply to dismiss Moscow’s objections as meaningless. The picture now needs to be balanced out with a strong dose of

reality. There are two key questions: First, what are NATO's ambitions *vis-à-vis* Russia? Second, how are Russia's interests defined?

As to the first, and put simply, NATO has no aggressive ambitions toward Russia at all. NATO has no territorial claims against Russia. No NATO country is run by political elites with warlike intentions toward Russia. Neither is there any reason to believe that this situation will change over time. For those who would argue against this and would claim that that long-term strategic planning requires Russian defense elites to consider worst case scenarios involving radical shifts in political and military ambitions inside NATO and its member states, there are two responses. In the first response, no one is arguing that Russia should completely disband its military capabilities in its western regions in any case. In the second response, even if one were forced to entertain the prospect of cataclysmic change in the Western value system—a shift from democracy toward neo-fascism for instance—there is no reason to believe that Russia would be any more likely to be threatened by this than NATO members themselves in relation to each other. Even working with such a fantastically unlikely scenario that Britain, France, Germany, and Italy all become neo-fascist, militarist, or expansionist states, history suggests that they are as likely to go to war with each other and their West European neighbors as they are with Russia. The more one plays with such worst case scenarios, the more absurd the idea of a direct strategic threat from NATO toward Russia becomes.

The question of Russia's interests more broadly conceived, however, is less clear cut. If Russia is now (consciously or subconsciously) defining itself as a neo-authoritarian state that wishes to see neo-authoritarianism expanded rather than diminished as a force in its "near abroad," then NATO expansion, premised on the spread of democracy, can indeed be construed as anti-Russian. More accurately, though less elegantly, NATO is *anti-anti-democracy*. If Russia has chosen an anti-democratic path, it will inevitably collide at some point and at some level with a NATO that is expanding a pro-democratic alliance right in Russia's backyard.

In this sense, the two narratives set up for adjudication at the beginning of this paper are both right. NATO is both pro-democracy and anti-Russian. By this view, Russia's current leadership is right to be concerned about an expanding NATO since an expanding NATO necessarily implies an expansion of a value system that Russia now opposes.

CONCLUSION: LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

So, what is to be done? How do we move forward from here?

In formulating policy, we should accept the reality that Russia, as its current leadership defines the country's priorities, is never going to welcome NATO enlargement, especially to former Soviet republics. Indeed, Russia is unlikely to be happy about NATO whatever its size or reach. Nevertheless, and while never seeking to humiliate Russia, NATO's leaders must surely be bold in standing up for the standards and values embodied in the alliance and in offering membership to any potential member that meets the requirements. If Russia's current leadership sees this as contrary to Russia's interests, then so much the worse for Russia's interests. It is Russia's problem, not NATO's, that the Russian establishment has chosen to see all this in terms of a zero-sum game.

It is also worth pointing out that both sides in this debate—NATO and the Russian Federation—are in a state of flux. In most circumstances, this would not make for a good and durable relationship. Good long-term analysis of NATO/Russian relations (from both sides) should accept the evolving nature of the relationship and should avoid the temptation to present a particular disagreement here or there as evidence of a fundamental and insoluble crisis. The point here is that the NATO/Russia relationship is in transition to a new equilibrium. If both sides can accept that (rather than assume that one side of the relationship is calm, ordered, and predictable while the other side is in chaos or gripped by sinister machinations), then NATO-Russia relations become an opportunity for both sides to develop a clearer and more stable sense of what they are about.

In public relations terms, it would be sensible to adopt a twin-track strategy. In the first instance, NATO and especially its member states must continue to fight the rhetorical battle for a return to democratic values in Russia itself. This more than anything else lies at the core of the ongoing tensions. Such tensions would largely dissolve if Russia were to make a decisive move back toward democracy, especially if such a move were accompanied by the kind of thoroughgoing reappraisal of the Soviet past that has been so conspicuously absent in the Putin years.

Given that such calls are unlikely to yield much success in the short-term, however, the second track should be for NATO and its constituent states to be much bolder and more vocal in stressing the real strategic challenges that Russia (and the West) should be concerned about. And this does not simply involve a predictable discussion of the (very real) threat posed by a militant Islam.

For while sections of the Russian foreign policy and defense elite conjure up apocalyptic visions of the consequences, for example, of Estonian (or possible Georgian or Ukrainian) NATO membership, it would surely not go amiss to remind Moscow of the potential ambitions of the emerging colossus on its far eastern rim, China. The population of this part of the Russian far east is estimated at around 7.5 million, compared with ten times that number of Chinese in the region over the border. NATO has no claims or ambitions toward the vast territory or abundant natural resources (not least oil, gas, water, and timber) in this and proximate regions of Russia. It does not take a strategic genius to see that China may one day harbor such ambitions, if it does not already. If Western leaders can help turn Russia's gaze away from the west and toward the east, this may reduce the tensions associated with an enlarged and enlarging NATO. It may simultaneously build a platform for much closer, long-term cooperation between Russia and NATO in addressing one of the great strategic challenges of this century rather than leaving Moscow to wax hot and cold about issues that largely derive from the challenges of the last century.

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NATO AND GLOBAL CYBER DEFENSE

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Implementation of NATO's first cyber defense policy marks the beginning of a new era in collective defense. This historic policy should be viewed as a significant step forward for the NATO alliance as it seeks to develop new tactics and capabilities to defend against future cyber attacks. In an age when billions of dollars of online transactions rely on the safety and integrity of vital information systems, nations can no longer tolerate the level or severity of cyber attacks experienced in recent years. NATO should play a role along with national and international law enforcement agencies in keeping the global "information lanes" of commerce open for business by treating them as the equivalent of international sea lanes. This paper discusses the initial NATO response to cyber defense while also examining other relevant issues that NATO policy planners need to consider as the alliance attempts to build sufficient capacity and expertise both to deter and to defend against future cyber attacks. As with other post-Cold War threats, cyber defense is an area where traditional lines of authority between civilian and military organizations have become blurred. Upon developing an effective cyber defense strategy, NATO planners would be wise to think far outside of traditional military culture. As recent events have shown, cyber enemies could span the spectrum from sophisticated terrorists to geeky teenagers.

With the global nature of 21st century telecommunications and online systems, greater levels of international technical and legal cooperation will also be necessary. Beyond reacting to recent cyber attacks and disruptions within the borders of NATO members, there are

immediate concerns for NATO policy planners for responses to future cyber threats. Some issues relate to the underlying security architecture of information-communications networks. Other issues fall in the area of international law and enforcement, as well as criminality. Certain issues raise questions of civil liberties while others require delicate police and military coordination. What then will be official NATO responsibility? What authority within the alliance determines whether a specific cyber attack is a criminal attack, a terrorist attack, or an act of war? As NATO policy planners begin more formally to engage the topic of cyber defense, what issues should they be considering as they chart the way forward?

WHY CYBER DEFENSE NOW?

As with many significant policy transformations, the impetus for NATO's cyber defense policy was born out of a crisis. The famed bronze Red Army statue incident in Tallinn, Estonia, in the spring of 2007 appeared to be the catalyst for NATO's first cyber defense policy. Estonian authorities incurred the wrath of ethnic Russians after relocating a Soviet World War II monument from a public park to a war cemetery in Tallinn. When rioting and looting were followed by a severe cyber attack on the national communications infrastructure, many Estonians laid the blame squarely at Russia's door. The severity and length of the attacks directed at one of NATO's most electronically connected members put the alliance on guard. If a highly wired small state could be brought to its knees by a well orchestrated Internet-based attack, then what type of havoc could be wrought upon larger states with more heterogeneous systems and critical infrastructure open to attack? Cyber defense policy discussions must be framed to clarify just where and how cyber operations overlap into international relations, foreign policy, international law, and major alliances. War historians are obvious resources for analyzing how the current network-communications technologies play into more traditional definitions of information warfare.

WHAT DOES INFORMATION WARFARE ENTAIL?

Applying a definition from the U.S. Air Force (USAF) from 1995, information warfare could be considered as "an action within the information environment taken to deny, exploit, corrupt, or destroy an adversary's information, information systems, and information operations, while protecting friendly forces against similar actions." The USAF, therefore, formulated its possible responses in both defensive and offensive terms. As argued by General Michael E. Ryan, USAF chief of staff in 1998, information or cyber warfare takes place when information operations are "conducted to defend one's own information and information systems or attacking and affecting an adversary's information and information systems. The defensive aspect, *defensive counterinformation*, much like *strategic air defense*, is always operative.

Conversely, the offensive aspect, *offensive counterinformation*, is primarily conducted during times of crisis or conflict.”

Ryan was explicit in stating that “the fundamentals of information warfare— affecting an adversary’s information and information-based systems and defending one’s own— have not changed through time. What has changed is the means and route of attack.” Today’s information environment presents inherent capabilities and liabilities previously unknown to friendly forces. These capabilities must be exploited, and the liabilities must be effectively managed, he argued. Ryan further stated that “information-in-warfare and information warfare, though separate and distinct, must be closely integrated with each other.”

Professor George J. Stein of the U.S. Air War College has also provided valuable insights. Writing in 1996, Stein argued that “bombing an enemy telephone exchange with iron bombs or corrupting the adversary’s telephone switching system through electronic warfare or a computer attack are all, equally, information warfare.” He further stated, “it is the targets, not the method of combat, which define information warfare for the USAF.” Cyber war or command-and-control warfare may corrupt information systems without a major disturbance to physical facilities. To Stein, cyber war is net war. Such definitions and positions clearly offer concepts for NATO cyber defense ministers to research and debate.

LIBERAL ECONOMIC ORDER

The liberal economic order has been built on the free flow of international commerce. Similar thinking was expressed in the mid 19th century “Manchester Creed,” which advocated free trade over protectionism with the ideal that open and expanded trade would provide little reason for warmongering. For trade and transport in the 18th and 19th centuries, responsibility to keep open the shipping lanes lay mainly with the Dutch and the British governments. During the 20th century, the responsibility for open seas eventually transferred to the United States, its role reinforced following World War II. For over a century, U.S. naval strategy was largely shaped by the writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan who claimed that a strong navy was the key to a strong foreign policy. Geo-strategist Mahan spelled out his doctrine of “sea denial” versus “sea control”—influencing naval strategy beyond that of the United States.

In World War II, the Germans largely embarked upon a sea denial strategy— generally sporadic warfare in which even a weaker fleet may strike and cause havoc where or when it chooses. With a sea control strategy, by contrast, the British and Americans endeavored

to carry out planned operations leading to large scale naval victories in the Atlantic. The free world military of allied and friendly nations carried on maritime trade protection with extensions to air and space. Current U.S. military planners have attempted to adapt Mahan's doctrine to the cyberspace domain in the form of information denial and information control. Recent Chinese and Russian infiltration of the Pentagon, Whitehall, and the Bundesregierung could be seen as attempts at information-denial while U.S. architectural controls on core Internet infrastructure could be viewed in terms of an information-control strategy.

In a global information economy, it could be argued that keeping the Internet open for business and free from major disruption is now on par with keeping the sea and air lanes open. While ocean routes remain a vital means of commerce, the sea role in transporting economic value has been surpassed by that of the air. In the future, it is likely that cyber transport will also close much of the air value gap as more business bytes are transmitted via the Internet and other broadband networks. In addition to the disruption of networks for information and trade, utility networks for power, fuel, and water distribution may, in a number of instances, also be vulnerable to digital network assaults. The near ubiquitous diffusion of the Internet Protocol (IP)—the method or set of rules by which data is sent from one computer to another on the Internet—into the global information domain has increased the risk to information and control systems worldwide, whether national or transnational. Nearly all mainstream commercial and military information systems in NATO use IP for data transmission.

RAND researchers John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt see 21st century networked politics inaugurating a shift from *Realpolitik* to *Noöpolitik* (or *noöspolitik* from the *noösphere* concept coined by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin from the Greek *noös* for mind). Rather than the “hard power” connotations of *Realpolitik*, *Noöpolitik* relies on the “soft power” of knowledge and networking. Writing in 2007, Arquilla and Ronfeldt maintained that states are the “paramount actors in the international system,” but that stronger states work “conjointly with non-governmental organizations and other civil non-state actors.” (They allow for the alternate terms of “cyberpolitik,” “netpolitik,” or “infopolitik.”) Thus, the processes that balance relationships among the state, the market, and civil-society prompt actors around the globe to choose *Noöpolitik* over *Realpolitik* as a more modern paradigm by which to understand current realities and to act accordingly.

A WAY FORWARD

A February 2008 summary report from NATO-HQ outlined the establishment of the Cyber Defense Management Authority (CDMA), in accordance with NATO's Cyber Defense Policy that was promulgated at the informal February meeting of defense ministers in

Vilnius. As the NATO-wide authority on cyber defense, the CDMA is charged with initiating and coordinating “immediate and effective cyber defense action where appropriate” and thus is the authority charged with directing and managing the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC). The planned CDMA is on the agenda for agreement at the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest.

To enhance cooperation and coordination by member countries, the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence was established in Estonia in the fall of 2007 with national sponsorship. The stated focus of the Center of Excellence included improving cyber defense interoperability with NATO Network Enabled Capability; developing Cooperative Cyber Defense doctrine; enhancing education, training and awareness; providing cyber defense support for experimentation; and determining legal aspects of cyber defense. With the early approval of several nations, the Center of Excellence is expected to seek North Atlantic Council approval and recognition as a formal International Military Organization.

In response to questions from this author, a spokesman from within NATO’s Computer Incident Response Capability organization said that the function of groups such as his own was to provide coordination of security policy within NATO and with member countries on all security subjects, including cyber defense. NATO Cyber Defense Policy responds to attacks that target its own networks as well as member country network infrastructure with its capabilities “clearly defined in formal NATO documents” or “high level formal decision and working level documents like the Concept of Operations” under the NCIRC 2008.

Involvement by partner countries has been limited for several reasons, he said. “In support of this role, NATO Office of Security is also responsible to draft and coordinate the related NATO documents for approval of appropriate NATO committees, to initiate working relations and to organize workshops with National CD Capabilities.” NATO maintains a cooperative arrangement with various members of industry. But at the time of this writing, there was no evidence that NATO and the UN share a working relationship for cyber defense.

While the early measures are significant, there are other issues of which NATO policymakers should be aware as the Alliance ramps up various national and collective capabilities in the coming years. While NATO considers cyber defense to be largely a national responsibility, the interconnectedness of both public and private telecommunications networks make efficient cross-border cooperation fundamental to future success in securing cyberspace. So, in which areas should NATO members be concentrating their efforts both nationally and collectively?

NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY

While NATO is well placed to make recommendations, each country should be encouraged to develop its own national cyber security strategy. A basic template for such a strategy may be found in a 2003 White House publication, the *U.S. National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace*. The development of a national cyber security strategy is an important step forward in recognizing key national vulnerabilities and then producing a comprehensive set of policies and recommended courses of action to remedy any key problems. Such a high-level strategy also provides a framework for both organizing and prioritizing public and private efforts. In its national cyber security strategy, the United States put a heavy emphasis on developing a division of labor between what is a public responsibility (defending critical infrastructure) and what is a private responsibility (defending local area networks).

COMPUTER EMERGENCY READINESS TEAMS (CERTS)

One of the most effective tools for combating cyber attacks has been the national-level Computer Emergency Readiness Team (CERT). Several NATO countries have taken steps to create national-level CERTs. Model examples are those of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. CERTs bring a real-time capability at the national level to monitor and deter attacks before they lead to a national or international crisis. The U.S.-CERT, under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security, is also responsible for administering the national cyber alert system, a color-coded threat advisory system that communicates the national alert level and the degree of vulnerability to cyber attack.

The CERT concept was developed at Carnegie Mellon University in the United States, with the first 24 hour team established there in 1988. At the time, Carnegie Mellon researchers determined that a growing number of network intrusions required a centralized emergency response team to deal directly with threats in real time before they escalated into national-level emergencies. Today, there are over 250 operational CERTs worldwide. All NATO countries should aspire to bring their own national level CERTs online by 2010.

Based upon decisions taken in Prague in 2002 and Istanbul in 2004, NATO established its own CERT—the NATO Computer Incident Response Center—at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. The primary responsibility of the NATO Computer Incident Response Center is to defend core NATO systems against cyber attack. All NATO member countries have been tasked to create CERTs. However, at the present time there are some NATO countries that do not yet have fully operational CERT capabilities. This is a major

security gap that needs to be corrected in the coming year. In order to be good “Internet neighbors,” each country should take the minimum steps necessary to secure their national networks and implement best security practices within their borders.

CYBERSPACE COMMAND

For countries looking to bring offensive war-fighting capabilities to the cyber domain, the USAF may offer a future model. In September 2007, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the formation of the USAF, the Pentagon announced plans to establish the world’s first cyberspace command within the 8th Air Force at Barksdale in the state of Louisiana. The cyberspace command fell initially under the direction of Lt. General Robert J. Elder, Jr. As commander of the 8th Air Force, Elder envisioned the Air Force Cyber Command as being a “global service” for its global operations to connect through cyberspace, as he put it in a January 2007 unclassified briefing. He did not shy away from the prospect of his 8th Air Force or “Mighty Eighth” command engaging in cyber warfare, speaking of Air Force “cyber war-fighting capabilities” and “war-fighting missions.”

In establishing the provisional cyberspace command, U.S. Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynne proclaimed in a Pentagon address for the USAF 60th anniversary celebration there, “the aim is to develop a major command that stands alongside Air Force Space Command and Air Combat Command as the provider of forces that the President, combatant commanders, and the American people can rely on for preserving the freedom of access and commerce, in air, space, and now cyberspace.”

The commercial utility of cyberspace is, of course, at the forefront of the Western neoliberal market order. U.S. military strategist Dr. Lani Kass for the Air Force Cyberspace Task Force in 2006 defined cyberspace as the neural network of the United States. Kass presented the domains of the sea, space, air, land, *and cyberspace* as falling under the seven *D*’s of military command: detect, deter, deceive, disrupt, defend, deny, and defeat. Kass maintained that, “without cyber dominance, operations in all domains [are] at risk” with “global effects at the speed of light.”

An annual exercise of the U.S. European Command known as Combined Endeavor is conducted through NATO’s Partnership for Peace. Its aim is to establish multinational communications compatibility and interoperability of systems for multinational operations. The Command Endeavor exercises plan and test command, control, communications, and computer systems.

INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND AGREEMENTS

Must NATO restrict its operations so that a cyber defense response to a network attack does not violate or appear to violate the territorial integrity or the political independence of any state? Would NATO be advised to avoid collective action that would be considered an intrusion into a sovereign state? Are there parallels to earlier accusations that NATO violated the UN Charter by carrying out attacks against Serbia in the 1990s? Could a collective NATO response to disable a communications network be found necessary? How will NATO square its cyber attack responses with the UN as the source of international legality?

The responses of General Georges d'Hollander and NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in early February indicate that discussions preliminary to the Bucharest NATO Summit were not leading to an aggressive cyber defense force with war-fighting capabilities. D'Hollander, in an interview with *EurActiv*, was careful to place NATO cyber defense actions within Article 4, which calls upon the "Parties" to "consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened." The Secretary-General, in a press conference in Vilnius during the defense ministers' meeting, emphasized that cyber defense was a "national responsibility" and that there was general acceptance among NATO defense ministers of this concept.

If cyber defense is basically a national responsibility, what may NATO member countries legitimately do under a range of laws—international law, armed conflict law, telecommunications or satellite law, and criminal law? What will actually or legally become the responsibility of the NATO command? In 1999, U.S. Major David J. DiCenso, writing in the *Airpower Journal*, succinctly summed up the range of legal issues as information warfare is increasingly thought about and talked about in the real world of computer-aided global communications.

He called for the necessity of assessing or redefining a number of military concepts relative to national electronic communications and information warfare: What would be classified a "weapon system?" Is telecommunication a medium or a location? DiCenso argued that the treaties of INTELSAT (Satellite Organization Agreement) and INMARSAT (Convention on the International Maritime Satellite Organization) in embodying international telecom law do in fact apply to information warfare. These two treaties stipulate that covered satellite communications be for "peaceful purposes." He expressed doubt about a position that holds "aggressive use of a satellite communications system to protect the security of a nation qualifies as a defensive or 'peaceful purpose.'" Where do established communication treaties apply in NATO cyber defense actions?

National criminal laws covering, among others, intentional falsification, unauthorized access to stored information, privacy, credit and financial information, industrial espionage, and major network intrusions in the United States would prohibit a military response until the culprit is identified or assistance is requested by the national investigative or policing body, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the U.K. Serious and Organised Crime Agency. If the culprit is determined in the United States to have been a foreign source, the investigation would involve the Central Intelligence Agency while financial intrusions would usually come under the Secret Service. MI5 is charged with investigating threats to U.K. national security.

Recognition of the “customary laws” of nations form much of international law, as DiCenso was careful to explain. Thus, the Law of Armed Conflict already exists and the same principles would apply to what he calls the “cyberspace battlefield,” where both combatants and non-combatants are protected. Defining the scope and severity of the damage are definitely challenges for domestic and allied commands. How will NATO accommodate the realm of the major Western alliance with the realm of criminality and enforcement under international laws? During the last decade, there have been discussions about amending the laws of war to include cyber attacks, but no country or group of countries had seriously pursued this line of thinking. Instead, countries had found mutual benefit in a status quo of strategic ambiguity. However, the interest by the United States and other developed powers in turning cyberspace into a premier 21st century war-fighting domain may prompt a new interest in securing an international cyber defense treaty that would more clearly delineate what is permissible and what virtual acts may indeed constitute an act of war.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

At the 2006 Riga NATO Summit, Secretary-General De Hoop Scheffer suggested that NATO become “an alliance with global partners.” Because of the global reach of cyberspace, cyber defense is an area where NATO needs to think in global terms. Since a large share of Internet attacks originate from the Asia-Pacific region, it will be important for the relevant NATO commands to establish cooperative links with national cyber defense teams throughout the region. Such relationships present opportunities for NATO to create confidence-building measures in the area of cyber security and training. Joint committees should be established that would ensure the smooth flow of electronic and forensic digital data during a cyber attack. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former U.S. foreign policy and security advisor, recommended that the alliance consider adding NATO-friendly, like-minded states such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan as outside “Participants” ranking below member states, but above “Partners.” However,

Germany and France have so far resisted such a proposal, as reported in the *NATO Research Paper* of November 2007.

Cooperation with private-sector firms and international organizations out of the alliance area should also be encouraged. NATO technical and communications divisions have long maintained relationships with international organizations, such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the International Standards Organization (ISO). As the technical landscape evolves, NATO should also be encouraged to develop contacts with NGOs as well, including the Internet Society (ISOC) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). Private-sector computer firms in non-NATO countries, such as Huawei (China), Samsung (Korea), and InfoSys (India), generate many of the new dominant standards in telecom and IT systems. Therefore, it is important that NATO cyber defense teams develop close relationships with these firms in order to win their confidence as partners for cyber peace. Private sector partnerships should be expanded via the NATO Consultation, Command, and Control Agency, and the Net-Centric Implementation Directive, both of which already maintain relations with private-sector bodies. There is an opportunity for NATO to engage other thought leaders and epistemic communities on cyber defense. It is important for NATO to become a net contributor to the wider global policy and technical discourse in cyber defense.

CYBER DRILLS

Another method of preparation that is worth exploring at the collective level involves multinational drilling and simulation. Again, the United States offers the best model for countries interested in pursuing this approach. Thus far, the largest scale critical infrastructure cyber attack drill or National Cyber Exercise, conducted in February of 2006, was called “Cyber Storm I.” While the drill was intended to coordinate a U.S. response to a domestic-situated national emergency, the governments of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were also invited to participate. The Cyber Storm drill was based on a scenario of malicious anti-globalization agitators attacking a variety of critical infrastructure systems in the United States using the Internet. The exercise was a unique venture in that it brought together high-level government officials (federal/state/local) with senior technical leadership (public/private) to solve problems in real time. In the wake of 9/11, the U.S. government has taken to regarding simulations that bring official directors and planners together with first responders for emergency and enforcement as important exercises for finding out where major problems may occur in advance of an actual crisis. A follow-on, “Cyber Storm II,” is planned for the spring of 2008 with even more extensive international participation scheduled.

CONCLUSION

In the run-up to the April 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO took a historic step forward toward implementing a collective cyber defense. The new NATO Policy for Cyber Defense, the Cyber Management Authority, and the Cyber Centre of Excellence all contribute to strengthening the cyber-based capabilities of the alliance. However, there is still much foundational work to be done within the alliance, especially at the national level. As has been discussed, the open information lanes of the Internet and other connected network systems are vital to the economic success of all nations. As the cyber attacks following the Estonian bronze statue incident have shown, a severe enough cyber attack can bring an advanced information economy to its knees in a matter of hours. While it is unlikely that a pure cyber attack may ever require Article 5 to be invoked, the potential for serious Article 4 breaches remains real. NATO must have in place consultative structures that allow for an efficient exchange of sensitive information—before, during, and after an attack. Legal systems should be harmonized where possible to allow countries to cooperate more closely on criminal matters as they unfold in real time. Since cyber attacks take only seconds to launch, it is important that requests for information not be bogged down in what we may call the old order “analog” courts. The lack of an international treaty infrastructure addressing state-sponsored cyber attack remains a real concern.

The simple fact that the world’s most consequential military alliance has found a collective interest in helping to secure cyberspace and networked systems represents a major step forward. At the very least, it shows that cyber security is no longer strictly a problem of national law enforcement. Keeping the world’s information lanes open and safe for commerce is in the collective interest of all NATO countries and other like-minded liberal democratic nations. The new capabilities that NATO will bring online in 2008 and beyond go a long way toward strengthening the integrity of cyberspace and reducing the operational freedom of rogue cyber terrorists. NATO can and should play a lead role in helping to establish best-practices and new channels for the efficient sharing of information. However, much more remains to be done, especially if a major crisis is to be averted. The Bucharest NATO Summit provides a high-profile venue to begin exploring some of these issues with both government and private experts.

Because so many facets of cyber defense are new and puzzling, it is as important to raise questions as it is to provide answers at this stage. Much of the current cyber defense policy has been developed under the strong guidance and influence of technical experts. In many of the most critical areas, the legal and political discourses still lag significantly behind.

It is imperative that the alliance continues to close the all-important technology policy gap in order to position NATO as a global authority in cyber defense.

Dr. Rex B. Hughes, a research associate of the Communications Research Network at Cambridge University, recently completed his doctoral work on the British response to global telecommunications convergence through the Cambridge Centre of International Studies and Wolfson College. Senior government and business officials in the Euroatlantic and Asia-Pacific regions have sought his dual expertise in information technology and international politics.

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