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NATO Defense College
Collège de Défense de l'OTAN

*NATO before Bucharest:
the Alliance at the Crossroads*

Immediate Report

Research Division
Rome, January 2008

**NATO before Bucharest:
The Alliance at the Crossroads**

Strategic Assessment Workshop

Conference Report

The third NATO Strategic Assessment Seminar, organized by the Research Division, was held in Rome on 28th January 2008. The idea of this conference series is to provide a forum for a constructive exchange at the working level of the transatlantic security and the international think tank community. This time, about 50 NATO officials, military representatives, diplomats, leading academics, and senior security experts met to discuss key NATO questions in the run up to the Bucharest summit. The debates focused on four main areas: Afghanistan, Energy Security, NATO Enlargement and Global Partnership.

Afghanistan

- Since agreement over what constitutes a “victory“ or a “defeat” in Afghanistan remains elusive, it is still debatable whether a potential “loss” by NATO in Afghanistan would mean the end of the North Atlantic Alliance.
- From a U.S. perspective (government and public opinion), Afghanistan is a “make or break issue”. A perceived failure would be blamed primarily on insufficient European engagement in the region.
- The duration of NATO’s mission in Afghanistan is also contentious. The point can be made that NATO has to signal its readiness to stay engaged until the goal of stability and a self-sustaining development has been achieved. This would be the only way of convincing the Taliban of the futility of their efforts. On the other hand, setting an end date of 2010 – 2012 for NATO’s major military engagement would force the government in Kabul to increase its efforts to exert authority and to stand on its own feet.
- In contrast to the political assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, NATO’s military judgment is based mainly on the clear-cut criteria described in the OPLAN (which contains five phases: 1. Assessment, 2. Expansion, 3. Stabilization, 4. Transition, 5. Redeployment). Despite significant scepticism about the Alliance’s prospects of progressing through these stages, currently NATO is in phase 3. The increase in the fighting and the rise in casualty figures are only partly the result of the resurgent Taliban forces. They are also a consequence of NATO constantly widening its area of operations.
- Pakistan is increasingly likely to show similarities with (pre-War) Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, further aggravating the situation.
- NATO has serious shortcomings in the field of “strategic communication”. Many ISAF countries have failed to communicate sufficiently the need for military engagement in Afghanistan to their publics. Hence public support is being eroded, particularly in view of the rising number of casualties. Furthermore, NATO has allowed the Taliban and the Islamist circles to achieve “information dominance” (i.e. displaying civil casualties on the internet). Only after a long debate, does NATO now seem prepared to release documents showing Taliban atrocities against the civilian population (teachers, policemen, female officials).
- ISAF has adopted a new tactic to limit non-combatant casualties: if there is any possibility of endangering civilians, the planned military operation will not take place.

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Energy Security

- The Riga summit declaration stated that NATO has a role in safeguarding the supply of energy as this is one of the major interests of its member states. Since energy dependency and scarcity will remain a fact of life for Europe and America, the energy question will be of increasing relevance.
- Energy-related questions are not new for NATO. Already during the Cold War, NATO was committed to protecting the sea lines of communication and had built up a pipeline network to secure the oil supply (at least for military operations). Equally, the dispute between Russia and Ukraine in January 2006 brought a new and different focus to discussions on energy security.
- The Alliance is not going to take the lead position in energy security, but is seeking to “add value”. NATO has some unique capabilities which will enable it to protect the free flow of energy from the producer to consumer. (maritime surveillance, anti-piracy and anti-terrorism measures, civil defence and emergency management capabilities). It can also bring “deterrent” influence to bear to counter political threats to energy security.
- Moreover, NATO has working partnerships with Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. It is also a synergetic instrument for consultation and information exchange since it includes – apart from the EU - the United States, Canada, Norway and Turkey.

NATO Enlargement

- With regard to Ukraine and Georgia, there was broad agreement that the Bucharest summit would be too early to offer a MAP to these two countries. Too many questions (Russian-Georgian dispute, lasting democratic orientation of Ukraine, role of the Black Sea Fleet) remain unresolved. However, this does not exclude accession at a later stage, after sufficient democratic reforms and internal transformation.
- Including Georgia in the “Intensified Dialogue” was a clear signal to the other Caucasian republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan) that in the long run they too had prospects of membership.
- Russia is likely to remain a troubling factor for NATO in any debate over Ukraine and Georgia: if NATO offers the possibility of membership to these countries, it will further fuel Russian phobias about an allegedly “expansionist” NATO. If NATO does not give a MAP to Ukraine and Georgia it will encourage those in Moscow who believe that expressing threats against NATO will change the course of the Alliance.
- With regard to the “Adriatic Three”, there is a broad consensus that Croatia is ripe to receive an invitation in Bucharest (however, Croatia will hold a referendum on NATO admission). Albania has made significant progress on its way towards NATO. FYROM is lagging behind and is hampered by a serious dispute with Greece, a NATO member, over its constitutional name “Macedonia”. Still, the decision will be a political one, which is likely to be affected by all the dynamics which characterized the last two rounds of enlargement.

Global Partnership

- The Riga summit envisaged intensified relations with important non-European democratic partners like Australia. Some Allies raised the idea of a “Stability Providers’ Forum” for consultations with these countries. This concept did not find sufficient support, either among NATO member states or among the envisaged partner countries. Today, the idea of a “Global Partnership” has been extended from national states to international organizations.

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- In Bucharest, there will be a meeting of NATO Heads of State and Government with the Heads of State of those nations contributing to the ISAF. Thus the “Global Partnership” approach has shifted from institutional regulations to practical cooperation.
- However, this approach is limited to those partners contributing to ISAF. Hence the problem remains of how to include like-minded and militarily like-minded countries into NATO consultations on issues that go beyond Afghanistan.
- Still, there is some doubt about including countries from different non-European geographical contexts – even if only for consultations – as this might weaken NATO’s political cohesion. Moreover, there is an ongoing suspicion outside NATO that “Global Partnership” would lead to an enlargement of the Alliance on a global scale.
- However, a consensus emerged from all the discussions that “Global Partnership” was not about global membership. NATO’s global approach is also not an attempt by the United States to instrumentalize the Alliance and make it a tool of America’s global strategy. Rather, it is a way of extending NATO’s international network in order to prepare the Alliance better to take on global challenges.

Dr Karl-Heinz KAMP
Rome, 29 January 2008

**ANNEX 1
PROGRAMME**

**NATO before Bucharest:
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MONDAY 28 January 2008

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

Location: Ismay Auditorium, Second Floor, NATO Defense College, Rome

0900-0910 **Welcome remarks** by Lt. Gen. Marc Vankeirsbilck, Commandant, NATO Defense College.

0910-0930 **Keynote speech: NATO Before Bucharest**
Vice Admiral Fernando Del Pozo, former Director of the NATO International Military Staff.

0930-1100 **Afghanistan: Make or Break for the Alliance?**

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Frédéric Bozo, Professor at the Sorbonne (University of Paris III, Department of European Studies), Paris.

Speaker I: Prof. Stephen Szabo, Executive Director, Transatlantic Academy, German Marshall Fund of the US, Washington D.C.

Speaker II: Lt. Col. Adam Ewell, J3 Ops, Allied Joint Forces Command, Brunssum.

1100-1130 Coffee break

1100-1300 **Energy Security:
What Role for NATO?**

Moderator: Mr. John Roberts, Energy Security Specialist, Platts, UK

Speaker I: Dr. Andrew Monaghan, Research Adviser, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome.

Speaker II: Mr. Christophe-Alexandre Paillard, Senior Expert for Economic Affairs, Secrétariat Général de la défense nationale, Paris.

1300-1415 Buffet lunch

1415-1545 **Getting Enlargement Right**

Moderator: Dr. Donald Jensen, Director of Research and Analysis, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Washington.

Speaker I: Mr. James Sherr, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham.

Speaker II: Mr. Jonathan Parish, Senior Policy Planning Officer and Speechwriter, Office of the Secretary General, NATO Headquarters.

1545-1615 Coffee Break in the College Mess and reimbursement procedures for entitled speakers

1615-1745 **Global Partners or Global NATO?**

Moderator: Dr. Carlo Masala, Professor, University of the German Armed Forces, Munich.

Speaker I: Dr. Henning Riecke, Director, Security Policy Program, German Council on Foreign Relations, Berlin.

Speaker II: Mr. Matthew Kidd, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to NATO HQ, Brussels.

1800 -1810 **Closing Remarks:** Dr. Karl-Heinz Kamp, Director Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome.