NATO AT A CROSSROAD: CAN IT COPE WITH POST-SEPTEMBER 11TH AND ENLARGEMENT CHALLENGES?

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NATO stands at a crossroad. It has been there before, but this time is different. As the Alliance proceeds to the Prague Summit in November 2002, it needs to focus on first order priorities and address the serious challenges that beset it. First, NATO needs to both look at how it can adapt existing capabilities and whether it should develop new ones to deal with post-September 11th security challenges. NATO also needs to assess whether it is best suited to take on some of the post-September 11th challenges, which will help clarify the answer to the question: capabilities for what? Second, NATO needs to seriously reexamine its risk assessments and explore whether the U.S. and its European allies' perceptions are converging or diverging; and if the answer is the latter, to explore the potential dangers and consequences of this. Third, as NATO will likely emerge from the Prague Summit substantially enlarged, the Alliance must simultaneously deal with the administrative impact and burdens resulting from a greatly enlarged organization that will stress political icnic and tJ Tpo 6 Tpo 6ffeicnss of its deicsion-making. Standing at a icossroad, enrgemenaneitJ Tpo 6r provide th catalysvitalizingTO to ic with 21st Century challenges or render it irrelevant.

NATO's Past

During the Cold War when there was a consensus on the threat that NATO faced, the Alliance passed many defense tests; tJ se included crises in Berlin in 1961 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Perhaps NATO's greatest Cold War test, though, came with the dual track decision between 1978-1984. This was a long-term effort to hold the Alliance

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NATO's Post-September 11 Challenges

NATO's first post-September 11th challenge involves capabilities. During the Cold War even though a NATO Military Committee 161 threat assessment existed along with a consensus on the necessary capabilities to defend the GIUK and Fulda Gaps, a capabilities gap nevertheless persisted. In the post-Cold War period, assessments of risks became diffuse and, at times, more ambiguous. After initial difficulties, NATO in the mid-1990s now engaged in numerous out of area peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. Toward the end of the decade, debates about the territorial limits of NATO's out of area operations and the capabilities gap continued to become more pronounced. In recognition of the capabilities problem and in an effort to rectify it, NATO's April 1999 Washington Summit launched the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) along with yet a "new" Strategic Concept.

If we were to assess the initiative's progress since the accession of NATO's three new members Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic on 12 March 1999 and after the events of 11 September 2001, we would have to conclude that the capabilities gap in 2002 is wider than it has ever been. In response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the U.S. has increased defense expenditures by $48 billion (a sum equal to the entire U.K. defense budget), while most NATO allies' budgets have remained unchanged. The gap will only increase. Hence NATO must answer the question of what capabilities it really needs in order to do what? Is it still necessary or is it even counterproductive to pursue a broad-based 58 task DCI that will encourage building some Alliance capabilities that may be either redundant, outdated when they appear in the inventory, or even not needed at all in the post September 11 environment? Is it in NATO's long-term institutional interest to perpetuate and deepen a burden-sharing relationship where the U.S. does the heavy war fighting and the European allies fulfill the mopping up and peacekeeping functions? If the answer is no, then NATO needs to adopt what Richard Kugler has called a "new" NATO Defense Transformation Initiative (NDTI) that differs from the DCI in that it has a narrower focus on new missions and prepares a small, but select number of forces for them. Its centerpiece is the creation of a small European "spearhead strike force" with high tech capabilities for expeditionary missions. If adopted this would allow NATO's European allies to contribute small *niche* units (e.g., police, engineering, de-mining, chemical decontamination, alpine, and special forces) with secure communications, ample readiness, and capable of deploying, sustaining, and operating with U.S. forces through the entire conflict spectrum. This would provide a more constructive burden-sharing arrangement for the post-September 11 NATO.

NATO's second post-September 11th challenge involves risk assessments. Assuming that the allies can agree on a new Defense Initiative and muster the political will to actually develop the forces, their utility is still contingent upon common risk assessments. Indeed, the threat assessments of the Cold War have become more diffuse and ambiguous in the post-Cold War period, particularly in the debate on the territorial limits for out of area operations. Though the out of area debate ended temporarily on

the potential of preparing them for NATO membership far more effectively than the original January 1994 Partnership for Peace program or July 1997 Enhanced Partnership for Peace prepared Poland, Hungary, or the Czech Republic. During the past three years the MAP has become a more versatile instrument for forging and building defense and civil-military reform. The MAP process will help not only to inform Alliance decisions on choosing new members at the 2002 Prague Summit, but also to ease post-accession challenges for invitees.

The next round of NATO enlargement needs to build on the lessons learned from the 1999 enlargement and capitalize on the successful MAP process. If one begins with the recognition that all nine MAP partners are fundamentally weaker than NATO's three new members, and that NATO is facing serious higher priority post-September 11 security challenges, one logical policy option would be to postpone enlargement and announce that NATO "will invite one or more" at the next NATO Summit in 2005. Though "logical" this option has been rejected as not being politically viable. So, NATO will choose among the nine MAP candidates and the invitation list is likely to vary between one and nine!

In attempting to construct various options, a few credible lists emerge if NATO adheres to previously stated principles on democratic oversight of the military as outlined

Slovakia if Meciar returned would be consistent with NATO policy and understood by many Slovaks, although Meciar will promote Slovakia's exclusion as NATO "hypocrisy."

Third, an invitation list of five (or four without Slovakia) that excluded Romania and Bulgaria, the two largest MAP members (populations of 23 and 7.9 million respectively) with the greatest potential to provide military capability, could fuel the agendas of domestic nationalists and populists and undermine southeast European stability and security. Assuming the likelihood of their delayed EU accession, a "dual rejection" would result in the drawing of lines in Europe!

The remaining four MAP partners are very small with limited potential capacities and bring serious deficiencies to the table. Although relatively wealthy, Slovenia (2 million) has consistently devoted little interest, energy, or resources to defense and lacks popular support for NATO. Based upon the lessons of the 1999 enlargement that demonstrated that once in NATO all leverage is lost, there is no reason to believe that this will change for Slovenia after an invitation. The three Baltic MAP partners—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—who are also very small (with respective populations of 1.5, 2.55, and 3.6 million)--have real defense interests arising from concerns about Russia. At the same time Latvia and Estonia have sizable Russian-speaking ethnic minorities, many whom do not have citizenship, and political systems that have evidenced some instability over the past decade. In effect, Slovenia and the three Baltic MAP partners (with 9.5 million people) would have four votes on the NAC (with Slovakia's 5.5 million, 15 million would have 5 votes).

In sum, NATO should invite seven (six if Slovakia returns Meciar to power in the September elections)! This list could be argued credibly because *all* seven have serious deficiencies that are weighed differently by individuals and allies. Any grouping less than seven (or six without Slovakia) will likely result in "new dividing lines" because NATO cannot *credibly* distinguish among the seven.

But an invitation list of seven would also place enormous stress on NATO political institutions. First, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) would enlarge from 19 to 26 with some additional modifications to accommodate the Russian Federation. Recalling the "lessons learned" from the Czech Republic's NAC performance during the 1999 Kosovo air campaign, and considering the "seven" newest members' more tenuous democratic and institutional development coupled with the potential for more diverse risk assessments among allies suggests that NATO might think about modifying NAC procedures. This may also be necessary because the relative "weight" of votes on the NAC will change. Of the present 19 NAC members there is the "giant" United States (285 million), seven large (40-80 million) members—Germany, Turkey, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Poland, and seven medium-sized (10 to 20 million) members—Canada, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. The NAC only has four small states—Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and Luxembourg. With an enlargement of seven, the Alliance will be importing six more small states altering significantly their "one country, one vote" balance on the NAC. For

these reasons, NATO might consider moving either toward weighted voting on the NAC, or to consensus minus one, or to a "grand" majority (60 percent plus) to implement policy.

Second, repeating the fairly rapid "Madrid-style" accession of nineteen months (from July 1997 to 12 March 1999) for the seven new members would add substantial burden to NATO's institutions and further weaken the Alliance by aggravating NATO's capabilities and risk assessment gaps. Nineteen months proved inadequate for the new members to fulfill the minimal military requirements (MMRs) that NATO required. Under great political pressure to meet the 12 March 1999 accession deadline, the Alliance made concessions. Hence, the time for post-Prague accession preparation needs to be lengthened! Since the seven new members will also be in the queue for EU accession, like Hungary and the Czech Republic they will likely feel the need to heed to the EU's agenda. If the EU and NATO have been unsuccessful in resolving the diverging risk assessment gap, the resulting tensions within NATO *could* become aggravated.

Third, in order to solve this problem and ensure necessary adherence to NATO "criteria," the completion of specific "core requirements" should occur *before* actual accession! This will ensure new members will maintain certain minimal capacities to