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After the Summit: Long-Term Consequences for NATO

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Weeks after the NATO summit in Bucharest there is an ongoing debate in academic circles and in the media on whether the meeting of the heads of states and government was a success or a failure. Some editorials express the disappointment of their authors with the allegedly meager results of the top level meeting in the Romanian capital. Decisions not taken were seen as proof of a divided NATO. Others acclaim the summit and saw those points the Alliance agreed upon as another proof of NATO's ability to find consensus on major steps in its evolution.

On second thoughts, though, this debate appears to be fruitless, since there are no commonly accepted criteria for the success of a NATO summit. Neither the length of the summit declaration nor the quantity of items being discussed says anything about the relevance of the meeting. Even the number of agreed decisions can't be regarded as a yardstick for its relevance, as one can always argue that it would have been better for NATO's future if this or that decision had not been taken.

Of much greater relevance is the question of what the long term implications of the decisions and the debates of the Bucharest summit are. What trends will emanate from that meeting and what topics will remain on the agenda for the next NATO summit already scheduled for spring 2009 in Strasbourg (France) and Kehl (Germany)? What are the problems NATO will be confronted with?

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1. NATO's Summit Inflation

In the past, NATO meetings on the level of the heads of states and governments had primarily two purposes. The first, more explicit one was to mark turning points in the Alliance's history and to facilitate particularly important political decisions that had to be taken on the highest political level. The 1990 London summit, only months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, or the Washington Summit in 1999, when the 50th anniversary of NATO was commemorated, a new Strategic Concept was adopted and three new members joined the Alliance, are specific examples.

A second, more implicit purpose of summits was to speed up NATO's internal evolution, as every summit meeting puts pressure on the decision making processes in NATO and in the member states' capitals. The need and the readiness for consensus tend to grow the closer the deadline of summits comes. Furthermore, summits always had the flavor of the exceptional. They took place occasionally - about every two or three years.

Currently, though, NATO is facing an inflation of summit meetings, some of which seem justified neither by path breaking historical events nor by the need to speed up NATO's decision making. Instead, a concentration of summits has been dictated by the political calendar. The Riga summit in November 2006 had been tauntingly characterized as "a summit in search of an occasion", since it had been scheduled without a pressing set of decisions to be taken. Thus, NATO had problems finding adequate topics for the summit agenda and at the end many of the decisions were postponed. Only seventeen months later, another summit had to be squeezed in, primarily to allow President George W. Bush a farewell meeting with the NATO Allies. One key result of that summit was the invitation to Albania and Croatia to begin accession talks on NATO membership.

In spring 2009, the heads of states and governments will meet again to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Alliance. This summit was originally planned to take place in Berlin (the appropriate location for such a historic event as the Cold War ended there) but for political reasons, the venue has been moved to the Franco-German border region of Strasbourg and Kehl. Initially, this summit was supposed to welcome the invitees from Bucharest as full members of the Alliance. However, given ratification requirements in most NATO countries, the legal preconditions are unlikely to be completed by spring 2009, so that some NATO members are thinking about holding another summit purely for the enlargement ceremony in autumn 2009.

In 2010 there will be a summit once again, probably in Lisbon, to adopt NATO's new Strategic Concept. This was initially to be completed for the anniversary meeting in 2009, but since the new US administration will only take office in January that year, another summit has to be arranged.

The negative consequences of such an inflation of summits are palpable. As each NATO meeting on the highest political level will be accompanied by tremendous media attention (fuelled not least by NATO and the capitals of the member states themselves) the expectations of the summit will be enormous. Hardly any meeting of the heads of states and government will be able to meet these exaggerated aspirations, and general disappointment is inevitable. Summits that fall behind the general hype will be regarded as failure or even as a disaster. Furthermore, contentious issues of minor relevance might be bloated by the media excitement and the general summit dynamics – the bizarre debate in Bucharest on whether or not to take Ukraine and Georgia into NATO's "Membership Action Plan" is one of the recent examples. Lastly, the summit inflation has a harmful impact on NATO's decision making, as it eases the pressure for consensus. Knowing that there will be another summit coming soon arouses the temptation to postpone contentious issues instead of solving them.

As a result, both initial purposes of summits – i.e. fostering NATO's cohesion by highlighting remarkable decisions and speeding up NATO's evolution – are likely to suffer from summit meetings, whose results vindicate neither the effort nor the general attention. Instead, an image of disunity will erode NATO's standing inside and outside the Alliance. The post-Bucharest debate on the summit as a "success" or a "failure" is a case in point.

2. Afghanistan: Changing the "Winning" Rhetoric

NATO is still at war in Afghanistan. Hence, the Afghanistan problem is going to dominate any NATO summit as long as the Alliance remains engaged in the Hindu Kush.

At the Bucharest meeting NATO has achieved significant progress – not at least by demonstrating that the Alliance is able to bring together the top representatives of international organizations (UN Secretary General, World Bank Managing Director, EU Commission President, and EU High Representative) to achieve better coordination between civil and military stabilization efforts. Furthermore, since the NATO summit in Riga the number of NATO forces in Afghanistan has risen considerably by about 50 percent.

Still the major long term challenge for the Alliance will be to determine and to communicate what it intends to achieve in Afghanistan. This is particularly crucial since there is an ongoing debate on whether NATO is “winning” or “losing” the war. Some observers regard the outcome of NATO’s mission as a make or break issue for the Alliance: according to this view, losing in Afghanistan lead to the end of NATO as a vital organization.

Such disputes might be intellectually challenging; however, their practical use is limited. Given the preponderance of its armed forces, the NATO led international coalition in Afghanistan can hardly “lose” in a military sense. Yet, for a number of implicit problems, it might be unable to “win” either:

- Although stabilization and nation building had been exercised in the past, NATO as an institution had no blueprint of an operation of that size. It is no surprise therefore, that the challenges of reconstruction of one of the poorest and most war-torn countries were grossly underrated. Even the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, as a representative of a country that is highly engaged in the military fighting in Afghanistan, is on record as confessing “...we are all undercommitted.”²
- NATO is not fighting against a state but against an insurgency. The opponent does not differentiate between combatants and non-combatants (the Taliban also target civil aid workers), nor will the insurgency accept defeat. If defeat is not accepted by the opponent, victory can – by definition – not be achieved.
- NATO’s success in Afghanistan is crucially dependent on non military institutions (EU, UN, World Bank, NGOs) that NATO only has a limited influence upon. Many of these organizations have severe problems in cooperating with each other – let alone with NATO. Hence, regardless of the popular rhetoric of “holistic efforts” or “comprehensive approaches”, the indispensable coordination of civil and military efforts is more easily said than done.

Given these problems, “victory” or “defeat” seem to be inappropriate criteria to depict the outcome of the war. Likewise, to “win” appears to be an unsuitable goal for NATO’s mission in the Hindu Kush. Instead, NATO could circumscribe the success it aspires to in Afghanistan with terms like “more security” or “less instability”. Replacing absolute categories with relative ones is more than just semantics and mirrors the situation in Afghanistan more

aply. Furthermore, such a wording is more in line with NATO’s Operational Plan for Afghanistan (OPLAN), which also aims at relative improvements in the areas of security, capacity building and development.

The communication of this terminology could be achieved by an orchestrated attempt by NATO officials and policy makers in NATO’s capitals to choose the wording in official statements appropriately. A precedent for this was the effort in some NATO countries to replace the term “NATO enlargement” by “NATO opening”, to strip NATO’s rhetoric from any antagonistic spin vis-à-vis Russia (admittedly with limited success as many Russian decision makers still enlargement as an “expansion”).

The open question though is whether a justification of the civil-military campaign in Afghanistan based on a flexible rationale like “more security” will be resilient enough to ensure public support even in the case of rising numbers of casualties. How are we to avoid the public suspicion that the new rhetoric is more of a “window-dressing” to camouflage the aggravation of NATO’s situation in Afghanistan? Such unintended interpretations can only be prevented if the terminology is embedded in a cohesive and cogent justification for NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan in general. A coherent case has to be made that a dangerous (and currently open-ended) operation far beyond NATO’s geographical borders can well be in the vital security interest of all member states.

So far, many NATO governments have failed to get this message across adequately. Some have – mostly for domestic political reasons – not even tried to do so. Should the political negligence and reluctance to explain NATO’s presence in the Hindu Kush to an increasingly critical public continue, the entire stabilization mission might be more threatened by the erosion of the “home front” than by successful actions on the part of the Taliban.

3. The Perspectives for the Enlargement Process

The question of admitting new members to NATO has been a continuous issue on almost all NATO summits ever since the German Defense Minister Volker Ruehe brought up the issue in spring 1993. As in many occasions in the past, the enlargement question again had received disproportionate attention prior to the Bucharest meeting. This was due to the fact that the narrower question of which of the three applicant countries, Albania, Croatia

² Harper, “NATO Underestimated Afghanistan Challenge”, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), April 2, 2008.

and Macedonia (FYROM), should be invited to join NATO was overlapped by the broader issue of how to deal with the membership ambitions of Georgia and Ukraine and whether to take both countries into NATO's "Membership Action Plan" (MAP) – a special program to prepare applicants for NATO membership. Representatives of both governments used the debate to express strident accusations of NATO bowing to Russian desires, if Ukraine and Georgia were not accepted to take part in the MAP process.

As if this were not enough, a bizarre debate between Greece and the Macedonian government over the future name of Macedonia (FYROM) heated up the debate further. At the end, only two of the applicants were invited to become members, whereas the Macedonian request was put on hold. Theoretically, Macedonia can be invited later after an agreement with Greece has been achieved, but time is running out because of administrative reasons. In July 2008, NATO intends to launch the ratification process in the member states. Should a consensus over the name still be pending, Macedonia would not be in the "ratification package" together with Albania and Croatia – a separate process would have to be started.

Leaving aside these political and legal details, four long term trends for enlargement seem reasonable:

- The first assumption is that after the admission of the next two or three applicants there will be a long pause in the process of NATO enlargement. The reasons are manifold. Albania, Croatia and Macedonia were the last more or less "uncontested" applicant countries, which were held in the MAP process for almost a decade. In contrast, the membership of Ukraine and Georgia (not the "if" but the "when") is disputed. Supporters in NATO point to the strategic relevance, particularly of Ukraine, whereas skeptics warn of the danger that the democratization processes in both countries are not yet sustainable enough to justify rapid admission to NATO. Furthermore, many NATO members would like to see the Russian-Georgian tensions solved before Georgia becomes a NATO member. Another reason for a likely enlargement pause is that other possible candidates for NATO membership, like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro or even Serbia, appear to still have a long way to go to qualify for NATO membership. In result, NATO's door is not closing but it will take some time until NATO reaches consensus on other countries to join.
- The second notion is that the enlargement process has lost part of its relevance. With regard to NATO, enlargement increasingly becomes a victim of its own success. With every new member taken, NATO comes

closer to its goal of creating a "Europe whole and free" – and the political task of contributing significantly to the transformation of Eastern Europe is more and more fulfilled.

For countries interested in membership, enlargement has lost part of its former attraction as well. In the past, there was always an implied linkage between membership in NATO and in the European Union. Following the logic that transformation to democracy has a political, a military and an economic dimension, those who joined NATO sooner or later became members of the EU. Given the "enlargement fatigue" in the EU (which is a reality, albeit officially denied), this nexus of both enlargement processes currently does not exist. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that countries like Albania or Ukraine are going to become EU members soon. Joining NATO is not necessarily a pledge to become an EU member as well – at least not in the short and medium perspective. The downside of this development is that the Euro-Atlantic community has lost one incentive to encourage and support political changes in transformation states.

- Thirdly, concerning the security interests of those NATO members admitted after the cold war, NATO currently faces a dilemma. With the end of the East-West conflict, most of NATO's Western European members have almost excluded the possibility of a military threat to their territorial integrity from their strategic reasoning. The Alliance is seen as an institution to export stability, to prevent and to manage crises or to take on military threats far beyond NATO's borders. In contrast, most East European members emphasize the relevance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty as an assurance against an immediate military threat from abroad. In fact, NATO rhetorically emphasizes the continuing relevance of Article 5 as well. In reality, though – with the notable exception of the debate over missile defense for the Alliance's territory – NATO's planning processes focus primarily on stabilization and reconstruction missions abroad. In the meantime, countries like Poland are looking for bilateral security agreements with the United States. Evidently, Warsaw and other East European capitals do not regard NATO's security assurances as credible enough. Should NATO not find plausible answers to these concerns, the cohesion of the Alliance in general might be jeopardized.
- As a fourth notion – NATO has to discuss and to find a consensus on the perspectives of enlargement: where does enlargement end? Currently, there seem to be different interpretations on both sides of the Atlantic. In most European capitals Article 10 of the Washington treaty, which declares that any other *European* state

can be invited to join, is seen as the yardstick for the geographical limitations of NATO. Thus, the Alliance would further consist of a number of European plus two North American states. The U.S. enthusiasm for Georgia becoming a NATO member, although Georgia is at least geographically not located in Europe, indicates a different interpretation. Decision makers in Washington frequently speak about the need for NATO to “outreach to Eurasia”³. Moreover, it is not by accident that most academic articles arguing in favor of NATO membership for Israel, or even for any democratic state on a global scale have been written by American authors. This is not to dismiss such lines of reasoning. However, Alliance consent on how to proceed has to be found.

With the diminishing relevance of enlargement, another topic has arisen. NATO’s pressing task will be to manage its relationships to those countries, which have no intention of joining as full members, but share NATO’s values and contribute to NATO’s military operations. Australia or New Zealand are specific examples of likeminded contributors (formally called “contact countries”) who risk the lives of their soldiers in NATO’s mission in Afghanistan and have a vested interest in gaining greater influence on the Alliance’s decision making processes. The American idea of a “global partnership” which agreed to consulting these states on a rank above the usual level of partnerships but below the benefits of full membership did not win the support of all NATO members. On the other hand, some “contact countries” have made clear that they insist on a greater say in NATO activities they are a part of. A solution of this issue is long overdue.

4. How to Deal with Russia?

Russia was not explicitly on the summit agenda in Bucharest. Moscow’s views, though, were a factor in almost all deliberations and indeed set the parameters for the debates on missile defense, NATO enlargement and the Balkans. The long term challenge for NATO is to decide what kind of relationship it wants with its difficult yet indispensable partner Russia.

A close look at security cooperation between NATO and Russia reveals parallel worlds. On the one hand, Russia increasingly defines itself in opposition to NATO and the United States. Aware of its energy wealth, it is flexing its

muscles. The Russian leadership has responded to missile defense bases in Eastern Europe and the admission of new NATO members by suspending the agreement to reduce conventional forces in Europe. It has threatened to retarget positions in Western Europe with its missiles – even if this appears to be a more symbolic action, its belligerent undertone is obvious. President Putin had also reserved the explicit right to abandon other arms control agreements, including those regulating nuclear arms. While Russian generals have threatened neighboring countries and NATO members, the political leadership in Moscow has done nothing to rein them in (no NATO top military commander would dare to reason publicly about military actions against Russia). The Baltic States have had to defend themselves against attacks on their computer networks – attacks which could be traced back to Russian sources.

Nevertheless, within the NATO-Russia Council a world of pragmatic cooperation exists parallel to this world of confrontation. Joint military exercises have been held both in NATO states and on Russian territory. There are close consultations in areas as sensitive as armed forces reform, terrorism, and tactical missile defenses. Even if this cooperation could be improved in terms of quality, the regular exchanges between NATO and Russia offer a sharp contrast to the view that the two countries are arch rivals. Alas, the more the harsh tones from Moscow impede pragmatic cooperation the more difficult it becomes for these parallel universes to coexist.

This unfortunate trend must be reversed or at least substantially slowed if the cooperative relationship between NATO and Russia is to be placed on a firm footing. What is required from NATO is a realistic assessment of the present situation. Given the developments in Russia, one can hardly expect the political leadership in Moscow to act meekly on the international stage. Consequently, NATO must attempt to distinguish between rhetoric and reality, between legitimate Russian security interests and calculating political arguments. The real question facing NATO is what concrete potential for action lies behind Moscow’s posturing.

Russia’s claim to world power status seems to rest on three pillars: its international importance as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council; its oil and gas reserves; and the might of its armed forces. Upon closer inspection, though, all three pillars are hollow.

³ See the transcript of the speech of Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher at the Bucharest Conference, Bucharest, April 1, 2008, at: <http://www.bucharestconference.org>

Despite its seat on the Security Council, Russia was unable to prevent NATO from taking military action against Yugoslavia in 1999. With its attack on Iraq, the United States was also able to override opposition from Russia. Nor could Moscow block Kosovo's declaration of independence earlier this year.

Russia's energy wealth is a limited means to apply pressure in the international arena. Russia is dependent on both Western markets and – to a lesser degree - on Western drilling technologies and expertise. After all, nearly 70 percent of Gazprom earnings originate from sales to EU states. Mismanagement and insufficient reinvestment of earnings are the primary causes of its poorly maintained pipelines and infrastructure. Moreover, Western industrial nations will increasingly substitute oil and gas with other energy sources if prices continue to soar.

As for the military, while Russia regularly announces huge arms projects, both prolonged chronic underfunding and mismanagement have kept them from getting off the ground. These problems also undermine military effectiveness. Russian forces are woefully in need of modernization. In June 2005 the Russian Security Council was forced to concede that the five-year plan to reform the armed forces had failed and that Russia's national security could not be guaranteed.

Belligerent gestures by the Russian leadership and the planting of the Russian flag on the seabed beneath the North Pole do not change the fact that Moscow has constantly attempted to measure itself against an opponent that is out of its league—in terms of both economic might and military technology. This inferiority complex explains Russian security arguments that are otherwise hard to grasp. After all, Russian experts can hardly believe that ten American missile defense systems in Poland will seriously weaken or render ineffective Russia's missile potential. What they fear is the West's ability to deploy yet another high-tech system – one that has military relevance.

The ultimate goal is to steer relations to calmer seas and to prevent the rhetoric of daily politics from undermining pragmatic cooperation. This requires a dual strategy: NATO should take Russia's concerns into account but at the same time stand firm on Russia's antagonistic and intimidating behavior – be it against NATO itself or against its partners.

- First of all, relations with Moscow should not be strained by fruitless debates that are seen as provocation by Russia. NATO's enlargement process should be conducted carefully, while keeping NATO's door open and at the same time taking Russian

concerns into account. Countries applying for NATO membership should meet the political and military standards of an alliance of democracies. The decision not to award Georgia and Ukraine the MAP was not an act of "appeasement" to Moscow, as some voices claimed, but it accurately reflected doubts in NATO about the preparedness of both countries to fulfill requirements for a MAP.

- Second, NATO must improve the inner state of the Alliance. Certainly, transatlantic relations have improved dramatically since the Iraq War. However, there continue to be cracks in transatlantic structures into which Russia might drive a wedge: there are still undifferentiated American complaints about European alleged "free riding", countered by European blanket judgments on putative U.S. unilateralism. If mutual accusations and misperceptions could be overcome, members could strengthen unity in relation to third parties. NATO could much more effectively pursue the double-edged strategy of cooperating with Russia whenever possible, and clearly calling by their name anti-democratic tendencies and neo-imperialist rhetoric.
- Third, there is no NATO policy toward Russia that is accepted by all members. Even on the continent, the positions of the East Central Europeans differ markedly from those of their Western counterparts. A clear definition of NATO interests has been replaced by the fuzzy concept of "strategic partnership." It is urgently necessary to reach consensus on a joint Russia strategy.
- Fourth, since NATO and the European Union face the same problem of building a partnership with an extremely difficult counterpart. Therefore, as with many other topics of mutual concern, close cooperation on this issue would be necessary. Alas, coordination simply does not happen. Russia experts in both organizations, though they toil just a few miles apart in Brussels, hardly know one another. If attempts fail to thaw this "frozen conflict" between the two institutions in Brussels, Russia will be able to play them off against one another.

Since Russia is going to remain a topic in NATO's future summits, NATO has to develop a consensual position on how to deal with Moscow. It has nothing to do with Western hubris or an anti-Russian stance if Russia is reminded that cooperation with NATO, as an alliance of democratic states, requires compliance with democratic rules. The "strategic partnership" that all sides want is only possible if basic democratic principles are respected.

5. Transatlantic Relations

Countering the views of those who predict the transatlantic divorce on an annual basis and despite fierce debates in NATO over a number of security questions, Bucharest has proven again that the American-European relationship has improved significantly over the recent years. Ideological positions on both sides of the Atlantic – i.e. American intentions to go it alone versus European objectives to counterbalance the US “hyperpuissance” – have been disproved by reality. Given the current and forthcoming developments that the positive transatlantic trend is likely to sustain in the longer run, the reasons for optimism are various.

- First, since the end of the cold war, skeptics have held the view that the United States will inevitably lose its interest in the North Atlantic Alliance and in Europe in general. The popular view that with the demise of the Soviet Union Washington would no longer need Europe as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” served for many as an argument to build an autonomous European defense capability. This assessment has proven wrong. America will not reduce its engagement in NATO simply because the Alliance has constantly evolved and is now in a shape the United States always wanted it to be: militarily usable and globally deployable. In that function, NATO serves as a key element in America’s global strategy: a value based organization of likeminded countries able to act politically and militarily wherever and whenever necessary. At the same time, NATO’s principle of all decisions to be taken unanimously is a protection against the danger of the Alliance being abused as a “world policeman” by an overly assertive administration in Washington.
- Second, following the enlargement in 2009, almost 50 percent of NATO member states originate from the former “Eastern Bloc”. They still regard NATO as a defense alliance and appraise the United States as their protector against military threats from abroad. This does not mean that these countries will always easily bow to U.S. positions. As the ongoing debate over the deployment of missile defense capabilities in Poland and the Czech Republic has shown, Eastern European governments do not simply accept US proposals but engage themselves in tough negotiations to defend their own interests. However, they will certainly not support plain anti-American positions, should they come up in one or more member countries.

- Thirdly, political decision makers on both sides of the Atlantic have understood the relevance of stable transatlantic relations with NATO as the crucial link between America and Europe. None of the three presidential candidates in the United States has expressed reservations with regard to NATO or to European Allies. Likewise, no political leader in a key European NATO member state currently steers an anti-NATO or anti-American course.

Nevertheless, a general positive trend in the transatlantic relations will not exclude fierce disagreement on pressing issues like transatlantic burden sharing. Any new U.S. president is likely to request more European engagement (civil and military) in trouble spots of common interest like Afghanistan or the Middle East. So far, some European allies have tended to hide their insufficient international engagement by pointing to the allegedly belligerent strategies of the unpopular Bush administration. Particularly if a Democratic candidate makes it into the White House, it will be increasingly difficult for European governments to ignore American requests for common efforts in international crisis regions.

6. Changes in NATO’s Internal Geometry

Notwithstanding the fact that NATO, as an Alliance of sovereign and democratic states, always had differing sub-groupings within the organization, the core geometry was more or less fixed. The United States, as the supreme power, frequently coordinated positions with the three major European countries, the United Kingdom, France and Germany. Established by practice, the so called “Quad” became an unofficial leadership instrument which could be enriched as and when needed by other countries.⁴ Even within the Quad, the roles of the members were predetermined with France, often in political opposition to the US (for practical reasons, France being a reliable ally with a significant military contribution) and with Germany, who tried to mediate between Washington and Paris. Although the deep transatlantic rifts in the wake of the Iraq crisis temporarily disabled the Quad, the utility of such a tacit “management board” is out of the question.

In future, the internal geometry and therefore the composition of the leadership group is likely to change for two reasons: the radical change of France’s NATO policy and Germany’s loss of influence within the Alliance.

⁴ In connection with the Kosovo War, Italy played a crucial role as well – the “Quad” temporarily became a “Quint”.

France's move back to full integration into the North Atlantic Alliance seems to be a serious effort and not a tactical attempt by the new government in Paris. Apparently, France's new transatlantic policy does not primarily aim at prestigious command posts within NATO but more at U.S. recognition of the reality of a common European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). This is not a new French aspiration, but the method of achieving it has fundamentally changed. For years, the French government tried to build up autonomous European defense capabilities as a means of *emancipation* from the alleged American "hyperpuissance". President Sarkozy has transformed this reasoning into a much more cooperative approach regarding a European defense identity as a *synergy* to transatlantic defense efforts.

In turn, the U.S. administration has reacted in a remarkably positive way to the French moves. Gone are the days when the then U.S. representative to NATO, Ambassador Nicholas Burns, characterized the EU attempts to build up an independent military planning cell as "the greatest threat to the future of the Alliance". Instead, every successful step taken by the European Union to strengthen its military capacities is welcomed by Washington as an improvement for Euro-Atlantic capabilities in general.

Germany's loss of influence is a development which has gradually materialized over the past two years. When the Grand Coalition took office in late 2005 it started with a number of pro-Atlantic gestures – Angela Merkel was the first German chancellor to come to NATO on her inaugural visit as the new head of government. In the meantime, though, many Allies express concern that the transatlantic symbolism was not sufficiently underpinned by action. Chancellor Merkel still enjoys a high reputation, particularly in Washington. Germany in general, though, is widely regarded as a NATO member that is not prepared to take a fair share in Afghanistan and is blocking a number of NATO projects mostly for domestic reasons. Moreover, a rapid German engagement in NATO's Response Force (NRF) is rendered almost impossible by legal provisions that link any military action to the approval of the parliament. As one high ranking NATO representative put it: "Germany has taken the position that France traditionally held within the Alliance".

Both developments, French reappraisal and German lack of engagement, are likely to entail two consequences.

- For the European Union there will be a U.S. legitimized leadership of France within the European Security and Defense Policy.
- In NATO, the geometry will change: France will significantly gain influence, the U.K. will keep up its traditional "special relationship" with the U.S., and Germany will fall considerably behind.

7. Conclusions

The jury is still out on whether the trends and changes outlined above will be positive or negative for NATO's general adaptation to new security requirements. They will certainly determine the agenda of forthcoming NATO summits and should find their way into the coming deliberations on a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance.

The Bucharest summit was another positive step in NATO's adaptation to new security requirements, albeit a small one which is far from being fully sustainable. Progress in the evolution of the Alliance might be foiled by political activism which leads to more and more summit meetings. Achievements in Afghanistan tend to be vitiated by unrealistic prospects. Enlargement needs to be fully embedded in NATO's strategic rationale. NATO's goals vis-à-vis Russia must be clarified beyond the inflationary use of the hollow term "strategic partnership". Finally, even positive trends in the transatlantic relationship will not prevent changes in the internal geometry of NATO. Allies have to come to grips with the fact that the influence of the member states within the Alliance will be determined less by the size of the country or its population than by the contributions they make to NATO's performance in ongoing and forthcoming missions. In reverse of the historical statement "no taxation without representation", inadequate risk sharing will translate into a decreasing influence in NATO's decision making processes.

NATO is facing tough decision which cannot be papered over with celebrations of 60 years of history: after the summit is before the summit.