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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 coherence and the effectiveness of its decision-making. Standing at a crossroad, enlargement can either provide the catalyst for revitalizing NATO to cope 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; these 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 together. Maintaining alliance cohesion was ultimately successful, but proved quite challenging despite the presence of a clear threat. Though the Alliance never invoked

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Article 5 during the Cold War, the Soviet-Warsaw Pact forward deployed forces remained an omnipresent reminder of it.

The post-Cold War period was marked by the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact and with their eclipse, the perception of common threat. NATO began redefining its mission and self at the July 1990 London Summit (no dividing lines), through the November 1991 Rome Summit's issuance of a New (now old) Strategic Concept, and the January 1994 Brussels Summit which established the groundwork for post-Cold War NATO by reiterating the Alliance's openness to enlarge (Article 10) and launching Partnership For Peace (PFP) and Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) as support for European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), now ESDP. Ever since, most of the United States and NATO's attention has been focused on the resulting programs and institutional developments.

Many, myself included, thought that the post-Cold War NATO would be increasingly an Article 4 Alliance; that IFOR/SFOR and KFOR deployments in Bosnia and Kosovo would be the "bread and butter" of NATO's defense efforts, with the 78-day Kosovo bombing campaign representing the high end of NATO's conflict spectrum. Indeed, NATO's Article 4 deployments would severely test the sufficiency of common values for binding the Alliance in the absence of a Soviet/Warsaw Pact threat, particularly when questions were raised about "out of area" deployments. The incentives of possible NATO membership and the April 1999 Washington Summit's "Statement on Kosovo," which guaranteed territorial protection, contributed to non-member partner support.

Although the 1994 Brussels Summit also issued a declaration "to intensify our efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery," it remained in the background. But when NATO invoked Article 5 on 12 September 2001, this issue was raised to the forefront of NATO's post-Cold War agenda; to the degree that NATO had been searching for a mission bridging the 21st Century, it found one!

On 12 September 2001 NATO re-emerged as an Article 5 post-Cold War Alliance and ended the out-of-area debate. On the one hand, this was symbolically significant; on the other hand, like the 1978 "dual-track" decision NATO now faces its most serious test, since the counter-terrorism campaign will be long-term. The United States and NATO's actions will test and prove the reality or hollowness of our "common values" rhetoric. Once the images of New York and Washington destruction fade from allied newspapers' front pages and consciousness, if the U.S., with its new post-11 September risk assessment, continues to press for allied support that might carry domestic dangers and challenges for them, we will gain full measure of the Alliance. It will be actions, not just rhetoric that counts, particularly since Article 5 continues to remain operative. If the Alliance holds firm, it might reinvent itself along "new" Article 5 defense and security lines; if NATO wavers in its support of U.S. defense operations in combating terrorism, Article 4 missions will not be enough to sustain it and the U.S. will need to think about "new" 21st Century defense mechanisms beyond NATO.

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

September 12th when NATO invoked Article 5, the real test for the Alliance could come as the war continues to unfold and potentially proceed to other locations.

NATO's real challenge will be to prevent diverging risk assessments from developing between the U.S. and European NATO allies! Clearly the United States perception of risk *has* changed, and increasing defense expenditures by \$48 billion reflects this. Although European NATO allies invoked Article 5 and *some* have provided defense assistance in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, the war's long-term impact on their risk assessments remains unclear, especially when searching for any increases in defense expenditures. At what point will NATO's Article 5 become inoperative? Additionally, NATO needs to ensure that its relationship with the EU ESDP and emerging Rapid Reaction Force is complementary and does not become competitive. This will require better communication and might necessitate institutional adaptations to promote coordination. NATO and the EU also might consider modifying Petersburg Tasks to facilitate joint task force efforts in counter terrorism. These efforts, though, can be easily undermined especially if some EU members do not really want these relationships to emerge. If divergent risk assessments emerge between the EU and NATO, then NATO's future role becomes increasingly murky *even* if the necessary European defense capabilities are constructed.

NATO's Post-2002 Enlargement Challenge

Assuming a *substantially* enlarged Alliance after the Prague Summit, another NATO challenge will be whether it will be able to cope with and effectively resolve the Alliance's capabilities and risk assessment challenges. As the Alliance's center of gravity continues to shift from defense to a more security-oriented organization, it now needs to improve its intelligence cooperation to include sharing of interior (police and border control) and finance (banking) information. This will require broadened cooperation with allies' Home and Interior Ministries. While these activities are normally within the province of the EU's Third Pillar, improved coordination with NATO is necessary. Participation of Finance Ministers on committees and at NATO ministerial sessions also might facilitate the necessary political support for financing various modernization programs and building necessary defense forces. Developing these institutional capacities will also further challenge an enlarged NATO.

Will enlargement help NATO solve these challenges or only make them worse? Certainly if the enlargement process ignores NATO's capabilities/risk assessment challenges, both will likely get worse because the Membership Action Plan (MAP) partners' institutional capacities are substantially weaker than NATO's three new members, whose performance has been less than ideal. But if the enlargement process takes these challenges into account, then enlargement might actually become part of the security solution.

The Membership Action Plan introduced at the April 1999 Washington Summit has witnessed the evolution of a defense reform process among MAP partners that carries

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 in the 1995 *Study on NATO Enlargement* and on the political/economic, defense/military, resources, security, and legal issues as outlined in the five chapters of the 1999 MAP.

First, although all nine MAP members are substantially weaker than NATO's three new members, two of the partners—Albania and Macedonia—are clearly the weakest in that the fundamentals of their statehood have been in question and they are "consuming" NATO's security and defense resources. Omitting them from an invitation list while re-energizing and modifying their participation in the MAP process would make credible NATO's Article 10 commitment to openness and prevent "drawing lines" in Europe. In sum, a credible list of seven emerges.

Second, postponing the naming of invitees until the November Summit is due, in part, to NATO's concerns that Vladimir Meciar might return to power after the September 2002 parliamentary elections in Slovakia. If Meciar were to return to power, NATO would find it difficult to invite Slovakia (population of 5.5 million) unless it were to disregard the principle of democratic governance embedded in the 1995 *Study on NATO Enlargement* and 1999 MAP Chapter 1. Although the Slovak elections are one reason for the delay in naming invitees, there are a number of other elections that can cloud the political waters. The fact that no government in Central and East Europe since 1989 has yet succeeded itself suggests an embryonic, if unsettled democratic evolution. Populist/nationalist politics were evident in the 2000 Romanian elections with fears of Vadim Tudor's return, the June and September 2001 Bulgarian parliamentary and presidential elections of a "tsar" Simeon II and "ex-communist" Georgi Parvenov, heated nationalist atmospherics in Hungary in April 2002, and possibility for surprises in upcoming elections in the Czech Republic in June, Slovakia in September, and Latvia in October. Any of these could and likely will influence decisions at Prague. Omitting

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 contribute to NATO, rather than becoming “consumers” who will require NATO assistance. Hence, the adoption of an accession process based upon completion of “core requirements” in an elongated and staggered accession period could prevent weakening NATO. By keeping incentives in place for building core capacities before accession, NATO should prevent the disappointing results experienced in the 1999 enlargement where promises made before accession on defense budgets and force goals, then remained unfulfilled after becoming members. In effect, adopting core requirements before accession likely will result in staggered accession for the seven MAP partners. If for political reasons NATO cannot take this approach, it needs to develop, like the EU, a means to penalize non-performers. This is important not just for NATO, but it is in the interest of the new members. The premature loss of NATO’s external incentives, which have exerted a positive influence on partners’ reforms, will likely have a negative impact on the new members’ reform process.

If the Alliance can achieve compliance of new members, then NATO will be able to invite seven, deliver on its political commitment to Article 10 by maintaining a credible “open door,” and *not* draw any new dividing lines in Europe. As a result of NATO’s experience with PFP, enhanced PFP, and the MAP evaluation process, NATO has developed the necessary tools on the International Staff. It is time to use them.

To conclude, NATO stands at a crossroad. If it must enlarge at Prague, NATO needs to enlarge in ways both before and after accession so as to ensure minimal compliance of new members to political and military standards so as to not further weaken the institution’s political, defense and security roles. If the Alliance fails to adhere to its standards or to develop the institutional means to ensure compliance, NATO’s positive role in encouraging necessary reform in the region will be undermined, and the organization could find itself increasingly marginalized.