

NATO's Frontiers: Eurasia, The Mediterranean, And The Greater Middle East.

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Heritage.org, DC ; 10/1/2006

Seventeen years since the fall of the Berlin Wall is sufficient time to reflect upon the amazing transformation of NATO and its frontiers. From bringing the Central European states back into their European home, whole and free, to extending membership to the former captive nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, NATO has done very well indeed.

New Challenges

NATO today is a player in a world which has fundamentally changed from the organization's beginnings in 1949. Gone are Joseph Stalin and his double-headed monster of repressive secret police and the Red Army. Gone are the Soviet Union and its global empire. Western Europe is safe from a conventional attack directed by Moscow. The bipolar, rigid world of two ideologically opposing blocs and military machines is a part of 20th century history.

However, many Europeans and Americans have died of terrorist violence in the last five years. The source of the violence is another hateful, totalitarian ideology- radical Islam. And the sources of that ideology, its training and recruiting grounds, as well as its sources of funding are in the Greater Middle East, including the Mediterranean basin, through the Fertile Crescent, and into the remote valleys and gorges of the Caucasus and Pakistan, the deserts of Central Asia, the plateaus of Afghanistan.

This is no longer a conventional threat of panzer divisions in the Fulda Gap, or intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from Totsk or Balakovo in Russia. Today's suicide bombers may be indoctrinated by Gulf-based mullahs, trained in camps in the Northwestern province in Pakistan or in the battle-fields of Iraq, funded by an illegal charity "front" in London, and execute their gruesome work in Madrid or Paris. Most important, they have the freedom to replicate their hateful views in Paris and London and on the Internet with little to nothing done to shut them down.

But there are additional threats. Russia is slowly drifting away from the common Euro-Atlantic system of values and shared net threat assessments. It is pursuing a policy to exclude NATO and the United States from Central Asia and keep the "frozen conflicts" in Moldova, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Karabakh on ice.

While Russia participates in joint exercises with NATO, such as Operation Active Endeavor, which will include two Black Sea Fleet ships taking part in counter-proliferation activities in the Mediterranean, Moscow is threatening Ukraine not to pursue membership in the Alliance. Russia wants other post-Soviet countries to conduct all contacts with NATO through the Collective Security Treaty Organization- a new version of the old CIS Warsaw Pact that the Ministry of Defense and the Kremlin control.

Political instability and state failure in the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as in the Muslim states of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East, is another long-term systemic threat, which may endanger Europe and North America.

Failed leaders produce failed policies. Failed policies generate failed states. Those, like Afghanistan under the Taliban, spawn safe havens for terrorists. It is happening in Somalia and other parts of Africa, and in the Northwestern province of Pakistan. It is happening in southern Afghanistan, where thankfully NATO is expanding its operations. And it may happen in Gaza, the Northern Caucasus, the Ferghana Valley, and in the highlands of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

To be an effective provider of security, NATO is concerned today with the entire spectrum of problems and potential problems—from the Iranian nuclear and missile program, which will threaten Europe, to emerging networks of terrorist organizations which spawn cells capable of massive urban terrorist attacks in Europe.

At the same time, many politicians and analysts say that NATO cannot be everywhere and do everything. When you look on the map and see NATO in Darfur and Pakistan, you realize that even NATO, with its vast capabilities, is limited—and must limit itself—in its geographic scope and ambition.

Implementing Existing Commitments

NATO still needs to fully implement commitments it took upon itself in Prague, Berlin, and Istanbul.

At their 2002 meeting in Prague, NATO heads of state and government opened a new chapter in the Alliance's history by inviting seven countries, including the three Baltic States, to accession talks and committing themselves to equip NATO with new capabilities to meet the security threats of the 21st century.

The two-day "transformation summit," which took place on November 21-22, 2002, ended with the adoption of far-reaching decisions on the Alliance's future roles and tasks. These included the creation of a cutting-edge NATO Response Force, a commitment to enhance the Alliance's military capabilities, and a statement on Iraq.

Specifically, members agreed to the following:

NATO Response Force. A technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable, and sustainable force will include land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly wherever needed.

Streamlined Military Command. NATO's command structure will be restructured into a leaner, more efficient, effective, and deployable command structure in order to meet the operational requirements for the full range of Alliance missions.

Prague Capabilities Commitment. Individual allies have made firm and specific political commitments to improve their capabilities in areas key to modern military operations, such as strategic air and sealift and air-to-ground surveillance.

Defense Against New Threats. An agreement was reached on a military concept for defense against terrorism, and five specific initiatives in the area of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons defense were endorsed to enhance the Alliance's defense capabilities against weapons of mass destruction. Heads of state and government also decided to strengthen NATO's defense against cyber attacks and initiate a missile defense feasibility study.

U.S.-European Union cooperation should be continuously based on

the March 17, 2003, Berlin Plus agreement, which was designed to definitively resolve questions of compatibility between the EU and NATO. Berlin Plus has four elements:

EU access to NATO operational planning, NATO capabilities and common assets available to the EU, The Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (always a European) as designated commander of any EU-led operations, and Adaptation of the NATO defense planning system to allow for EU-run operations.

In the 2004 Istanbul Declaration, members decided to address NATO's Mediterranean and Greater Middle East dimensions. Specifically they agreed to:

Enhance Operation Active Endeavor, the maritime operation in the Mediterranean, to fight against terrorism; Offer assistance to the government of Iraq with the training of its security forces; Enhance individual and collective contributions to the international community's fight against terrorism; Further the transformation of military capabilities to make them more modern, usable, and deployable to carry out the full range of Alliance missions; Reaffirm that NATO's door remains open to new members and encourage Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to continue the reforms necessary to progress toward NATO membership; Focus the Euro-Atlantic Partnership on engaging with NATO partners in the strategically important regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia; and Enhance the Mediterranean Dialogue and offer cooperation to the broader Middle East region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

This ambitious agenda cannot be implemented with today's level of military and security expenditure. NATO countries which dedicate only 1.1 percent-1.5 percent of their GDP to the overall effort are not pulling their weight. The current allocations are not sufficient to fully fund the Prague and Berlin Plus commitments, the war on terrorism, and out-of-area deployments, including peace-keeping missions. To survive, NATO needs to find financial resources to fund its vital missions. Otherwise, as Ben Franklin said, "Those who would sacrifice liberty for security deserve neither."

Fighting Terrorism

Since 9/11, the NATO leaders have reaffirmed many times that terrorism and proliferation are the current threats to the Euro-Atlantic community. Fighting in and rebuilding Afghanistan, as well as training Iraqi forces, are principal commitments that NATO is pursuing in that realm. However, even after the attacks in Madrid and London, one gets the impression that NATO does not have sufficient capabilities to fight the global war on terrorism.

While engagements in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Darfur are contributing to providing security and training the forces, NATO can play a greater role in fighting terrorism and building new relationships and alliances in the Mediterranean, the Greater Middle East, and Eurasia-alliances that are vital to success in the new war.

The national interest in opposing the 21st century networked, borderless, jihadi movements with their terrorist organizations is not clearly articulated. Often, notions of political correctness cloud the threat assessment, the rhetoric, and the judgment of what is really at stake, which is, simply put, the survival of Western civilization.

Western institutions need to evolve to respond to jihadi threats.

Today's national armies, courts, law enforcement, security services, legal systems, and international organizations were designed in the 19th and 20th centuries to fight a different enemy: other nation-states or coalitions thereof. These were times of conventional, colonial, or ideological warfare, not terrorism empowered by weapons of mass destruction.

Those institutions were created in a different time to address different challenges. Police pursued known local criminals, who grew up in local communities. Courts applied laws and evidence rules drafted in the quaint times of the 19th century. Spies penetrated each other's organizations, deciphered aerial or satellite photography, or collected information in diplomatic cocktail parties.

Industrial-era militaries consist of units which fight along massive front lines. They include ballistic missile regiments, fleets, tank divisions, and air armies. All this is often of little use in fighting globally networked terrorist cells.

Western societies and NATO need to evolve to answer these new challenges. The new enemy requires a new knowledge base and new skill sets. Languages, history, religion, and geography about which we once knew very little all need to be a part of the modern decision-maker's and officer's discourse and at the fingertips of contemporary law enforcement and intelligence officials. While millions of Arabic, Farsi, and Pashtu speakers live in Europe and the U.S., there is a shortage of operatives and translators who are fully conversant in these languages and cultures. We have not begun fighting a war of ideas. We have a hard time integrating immigrants. National court systems, especially in Europe, are slow and cumbersome in response to agile terrorist threats, as tragedies in Madrid and London demonstrated.

This evolution to adjust and win the new conflict is the greatest challenge the West is facing, and NATO, as its pre-eminent military alliance, is facing it as well.

Reaching Out to the Greater Middle East

Part of the new orientation of NATO is the Mediterranean Initiative and the Istanbul commitment to the Greater Middle East. In engaging Arab and Muslim decision-makers and militaries, using the experience of the Partnership for Peace is necessary but will be more difficult than in the former Soviet Bloc. Chris Donnelly, godfather of the Partnership for Peace, has pointed out that the cultural gap between NATO and Greater Middle East politics today is much wider than between Western and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s.

However, we cannot lose time. We are living today in an era when Arab nationalism, most of all symbolized by the military regimes of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, has collapsed. Liberalism, unfortunately, is still weak. Radical Islam, from its Muslim Brotherhood brand to the al-Qaeda variety, is a dangerous ideology which threatens the well-being of Muslim societies from Marrakesh to Bangladesh. And it is surely capable of deadly attacks against the West.

The Southern Mediterranean political systems are desperately in need of fresh air. Decision-makers need to be exposed to new ideas in the realms of security. Militaries need to come under stricter civilian control and assume a role in fighting terrorism. Bringing missions from the Greater Middle East to Brussels, exposing them to NATO's ways, expanding dialogue and cooperation will go a long way toward familiarizing these future allies with NATO's norms and

Western culture. This is likely to be a long-haul fight-much longer and slower than the European expansion and Partnership for Peace.

However, there is a threat of "mainstreaming" Islamist movements and terrorist organizations. Just as we would not suggest legalizing al-Qaeda or the Taliban, we should rule out legalization and inclusion of Hizballah, Islamic Jihad, Hizb ut-Tahr-ir al-Islami, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood. These are totalitarian movements which advocate genocidal violence and the subjugation of women, deny full rights to people of different religions and ethnic groups, and are completely intolerant of practices of Islam different from their own. They should not be embraced. Those who embrace them do so at their own peril.

The War of Ideas

Another vital dimension of fighting the war on terrorism is the battle of ideas. Only if the West and moderate Muslims offer the masses in the Greater Middle East a future which is more attractive and realizable than the "glorious sacrifice" of jihad do we have a chance to win this war.

So far, we have failed to mobilize for a war of ideas the way we did in the Cold War against communism. Partially, this is because many still think that radical Islam is a religion rather than a hateful political ideology. Partially, it is because we have lost the touch, the institutional memory and tools we used to keep in the toolbox.

Those who remember the United States Information Agency, who have known Radio Liberty-Radio Free Europe at its prime, and who know how the West supported Soviet and Eastern European dissidents know exactly what I am talking about. Just as we helped Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, Vaclav Havel, and Lech Walesa to become the alternative leadership for their societies, we need to do it again for the Muslim world.

And just as we developed political warfare tools which made rock music, modern art, and consumer goods hip and desirable for the socialist camp to the point of bankrupting Marxism-Leninism, we need to look for ideas, symbols, and people who can marginalize radical Islam. Half of the Muslim population is women. Well, this is a good place to start. There are repressed ethnic and religious minorities, the exploited business community, just sane people who understand that jihad is destructive for them and for us, who want compatibility and coexistence with the West. There, too, are good places to start.

No doubt, Muslims themselves can and need to fight this battle for themselves, but we need to help them to ensure our own survival. NATO needs to think how to make political warfare part of its doctrine and operations.

Russia and Eurasia

One area where secular Muslim societies and moderate Islam coexist and thrive with Christians and Jews is in the former Soviet areas.

NATO should maintain and expand the Partnership for Peace with the Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan.

However, the recent developments in Uzbekistan cause concern. Russia to a large degree has been behind the hard line undertaken by Islam Karimov's regime after the tragedy in Andizhan. Russian dezinformatsiya operations may be behind the paranoid belief in Tashkent that the U.S. was behind the Andizhan riots, and even that there are contacts

between the U.S. and Tahir Yuldash, the head of the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, an al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group.

Russia wants to be an autonomous player in Eur-asia. Its post-communist unreformed security and foreign policy elites feel more comfortable with Chinese communists and Iranian mullahs than with Western politicians and security planners. The Soviet-era mistrust of NATO and the U.S. is run-ning high-and that mistrust is being encouraged in high places.

Stratospheric oil prices may allow Russia to con-tinue this policy for a while. However, the difficult demographic, health, and social conditions at home sooner or later will force Moscow to recon-sider its approach. For now, Russia fans the fears of "orange revolutions" in Central Asia and the Cauca-sus, calling for regimes there to use force against their own people.

After its departure from Uzbekistan, the U.S. needs to rely on the forward operations base (FOB) at the Manas airport in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and negotiate for another one in Tajikistan. Russia is con-cerned that the U.S. may establish bases in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and even Turkmenistan (despite the fact that the latter is most likely impossible as long as Turkmenbashi rules the country with an iron fist). As NATO bases in Romania and Bulgaria are coming on-line, the chain of bases from the Black Sea through the Caspian and into Central Asia will be a great priority for the U.S. global military posture.

Russia has many other concerns. It is worried about Poland's participation in the American mis-sile defense program. In the latest meeting between the Ukrainian Defense Minister, Anatoliy Hrytsen-ko, and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Ivanov, the Russian side threatened to stop military industrial cooperation with Ukraine if Ukraine joins NATO.

Russia is also apprehensive about withdrawal of its military bases from Georgia and opposes deployment of NATO peacekeepers along the Azeri-Armenian line if and when the two countries sign a peace agreement. Of course, such a deploy-ment would be predicated on the willingness of NATO members to deploy peacekeepers.

With that, it is important for NATO to continue to engage Russia.

Thus, the Active Endeavor counter-proliferation naval exercises, in which Rus-sia takes part, are important. So is Russia's ability to take part in peacekeeping operations using its Fif-teenth Brigade, along the lines of a successful Rus-sian deployment in Bosnia in 1996-1999.

Most important, NATO should entice Russia to train its officers and civilian decision-makers to facilitate military reforms and bring the military under more enhanced civilian control. Recent hos-tilities in the Northern Caucasus demonstrate that today's Russian Army and security forces do not possess the training, fortitude, and esprit de corps needed to stem the Islamist insurgency in the region. In view of this, expanding Russian commit-ments in Central Asia seem foolhardy at best.

Ukraine. The debate on Ukraine's membership in NATO will depend on a number of factors, espe-cially political development in Ukraine, such as the March 2006 parliamentary elections. Moscow, no doubt, will react with vitriol should Ukraine be invited to join. It tripled the prices of natural gas it supplies to Ukraine.

So far, according to public opinion polls, a minority of Ukrainians

support their country joining NATO. Kyiv saw its first anti-NATO demonstration, reportedly 30,000 strong. Supporters and opponents of membership may push for a national referendum-this is what President Victor Yushchenko has promised. A victory for the pro-Russian forces who oppose Ukraine's membership in the parliamentary elections could delay that issue for years to come.

Finally, it is membership in the European Union, with its attendant economic reforms and subsidies, which most Ukrainians covet. However, this is hardly in the cards after the failure of this year's European Constitution referendum in France and the Netherlands.

The Caucasus. NATO so far has not deployed any meaningful contingent in the Caucasus. However, the "unfreezing" of conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and, most important, in Nagorno-Karabakh may put new requirements on the Alliance.

Romualdas Razuks, NATO's representative in the Caucasus, said that if both parties so request, NATO may deploy peacekeepers to the Azerbaijan-Armenia border. However, many members' forces are under pressure, and it will not be easy to find sufficient troops. The same goes for Abkhazia.

Only when Russia is convinced by NATO to stop supporting separatists can the situation really change. Thus, encouraging members of the Partnership for Peace to follow their Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPs), which Georgia and Azerbaijan submitted in 2004 and Armenia submitted in the summer of 2005, is the best way to arrive upon regional cooperation by the three South Caucasus states under the NATO umbrella.

A similar situation applies to the Trans-Dniester conflict in Moldova. Russia is not interested in ending the conflict, believing that a pro-Moscow, communist exclave in the vicinity of the South-eastern NATO flank is to Russia's strategic advantage. Thus, Western pressure to "unfreeze" the conflicts and find common ground with Russia must continue.

Conclusion

NATO has reached a new watershed in which it needs to seriously evaluate both its geographic scope and the spectrum of threats it is willing to address. The Alliance's leaders need to view its capabilities with clarity and sobriety. NATO needs to approach future missions with realism, both military and economic.

The first order of the day is triage-agreeing on threat assessments and defining which missions are vital for NATO members' interests.

Clearly, integrating the Balkans and expanding ties with Ukraine are missions most members agree on. Beyond that, NATO needs to balance ambition and funding. It is difficult to have an ambitious deployment policy or far-reaching and expensive partnerships while budgets stagnate or decline.

Some experts caution that NATO should not attempt to grab every mission, thus dispersing and dissipating its strength. It needs to hold Article V sacrosanct, build strength from within, and remain a "political clubhouse" while following the path articulated in Berlin and Prague. Indeed, post-expansion integration and interoperability, combined with improving the doctrine, building airlift and high-tech capabilities, and evolving NATO's personnel skill set to fit 21st century threats, are vital for the Alliance's survival and war-fighting

ability.

There are also visionary leaders, like former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who believe that NATO needs to focus on fighting terrorism at home and limit deployment in faraway lands. He calls for building global alliances with like-minded democracies, such as Israel, Australia, and Japan. As far as security in Central Asia is concerned, I would also suggest expanding cooperation with Turkey, a veteran NATO member; with India; and, in certain cases, with Pakistan.

One thing is clear: NATO members need to share their threat assessments and agree upon the best ways to fight these threats.

Workable strategies in the Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East, including Iran, Iraq, and the war on terrorism, need to be developed.

NATO also may play a role in the future sanctions against Iran's nuclear weapons program. This may be a serious challenge for which NATO needs to be ready.

NATO needs to build on the Istanbul Declaration, expand the Mediterranean Dialogue, and examine expansion of ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council. Having Arabs and Israelis under the same neutral roof of military cooperation may create an environment of building trust and understanding. Disseminating the Western notion of civilian control over the military and security forces may go a long way in modernizing Middle Eastern military and security establishments and spreading initial notions of democratic civil-military relations.

In Eurasia, NATO needs to develop ties with the three South Caucasus states and expand, to the degree possible, training and cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. NATO should be ready to resume ties with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan when feasible.

Finally, the Alliance should expand ties with Russia beyond the NATO-Russia Council, to include peacekeeping exercises, officer training exchanges, and selective joint maneuvers. Above all, NATO has to assist Russia in enhancing civilian control over the military and enacting a military reform which makes Russia's forces modern, compact, and defensive.

To conclude, NATO members need to provide leadership, develop policies, and find means—both financial and personnel—to deal adequately with the increasingly unstable environment along the Alliance's frontiers. The stakes are too high: survival of our civilization. Failure is not an option.

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