

**The Scouting Report: 60th Anniversary NATO Summit**  
**Steven Pifer and Fred Barbash**  
**April 1, 2009**

**12:32 Fred Barbash-Moderator:** Good afternoon all. Our guest today is Steven Pifer. A former ambassador to Ukraine, Steven Pifer's career as a Foreign Service officer centered on Europe, the former Soviet Union and arms control. In addition to Kyiv, he had postings in London, Moscow, Geneva and Warsaw as well as on the National Security Council. He is focusing on Ukraine and Russia issues at Brookings.

He's here today to answer your questions about the NATO summit.

Welcome Steven and welcome guests.

**12:32 [Comment From Laurie]** What topics do you expect the upcoming Summit to cover?

**12:33 Steven Pifer:** The NATO summit will be part celebration -- the 60th anniversary of the Alliance and France's full return to NATO's military wing. The leaders will also discuss NATO strategy and operations in Afghanistan, NATO-Russia relations, and a strategic concept to guide the Alliance in the future.

**12:33 [Comment From Ron]** This is the organization's 60th Anniversary. Looking back over the organization's history, what are some of the key lessons learned?

**12:34 Steven Pifer:** The key lesson would be the value of close consultations. The U.S. has generally had better success in getting Allied support when it talks -- and listens.

**12:34 [Comment From Adrianna]** What are the prospects for rebuilding a trans-Atlantic alliance?

**12:36 Steven Pifer:** It's not really a question of rebuilding the Alliance. Just rebuilding better communications. Many Europeans felt that the Bush administration, particularly during the first term, did not listen much and was too unilateral. President Obama has talked about listening and designing multilateral approaches.

**12:36 [Comment From Ken]** Do you think that Obama will have more success rallying NATO around Afghanistan than Bush did?

**12:38 Steven Pifer:** We'll see. He completed his strategy review last week. If Allied leaders find it persuasive, that increases the chances of getting Allied help. Washington seems to be pretty modest in expectations for more troops from Allies; it's made clear it would also welcome reconstruction assistance, police training, etc for Afghanistan.

**12:38 [Comment From Jess]** Do you think Russia will cooperate with Obama to contain nuclear proliferation in Iran?

**12:39 Steven Pifer:** Russia does not want a nuclear-armed Iran. But Moscow doesn't see the problem with the same degree of urgency as Washington. So President Obama

may get some more help from the Russians, but probably not as much as he would like.

**12:39 [Comment From Mike]** since Rome meeting in 2002 discussions on decision making process in the framework of NRC have been held. In particular Russia supporting the idea of discussion between 29, not 28+1. This is clear attempt to separate the position of NATO members on some particular issues. What is your assumption of the decision making in NRC in foreseeable future?

**12:41 Steven Pifer:** NATO has agreed that some questions could be discussed with Russia "at 29" -- that is, without a previously agreed NATO position. This will continue, though it will take greater confidence between NATO and Russia to get more questions put into the "at 29" format.

**12:41 [Comment From Doug]** If any big decisions come out of the NATO summit, how are these decisions put into practice and enforced?

**12:42 Steven Pifer:** NATO is a consensus organization. Once it reaches a decision, it's then up to individual members to make their contributions. Sometimes that happens, sometimes it does not. But we have a better chance of getting contributions (e.g., in Afghanistan) if there is a NATO decision.

**12:42 [Comment From Joan]** Do you think NATO is getting too big? Obama is backing Ukraine and Georgia's bids to join. What do you think about this?

**12:44 Steven Pifer:** NATO has an open door policy -- European countries that want to join, reflect NATO values and meet NATO standards can ask to join. I think the Obama administration will continue to support this. That will be one of the tricky issues for NATO: "resetting" relations with Russia while maintaining active relationships with Ukraine and Georgia. It can be done, but will be tricky.

**12:44 [Comment From John S.]** If Georgia had been a NATO member last year, after Russia attacked, would the alliance have been obligated to go to war against Russia, including U.S. troops? How scary is that, over Georgia!?

**12:45 Steven Pifer:** Had Georgia been a member of NATO, the Alliance would have had an obligation to come to its assistance. So taking new members in is a serious decision.

**12:45 [Comment From Dsve]** Is NATO even necessary anymore? Should it dissolve?

**12:47 Steven Pifer:** After the Cold War, people asked what would be NATO's role. But the organization had a unique capability -- to manage multinational military operations in which German, Italian, Dutch, British and U.S. troops could work effectively together. That was worth keeping. And NATO now is running a major multinational operation in Afghanistan.

**12:47 [Comment From Mike]** How could you comment the provision of Joint Statement of Presidents Obama and Medvedev regarding new European security architect. In particular the statement stated: comprehensive dialog on strengthening Euro-Atlantic and European security, including existing commitments and President Medvedev's 2008

proposal". We can see some kind of discrepancy because the main goal of Russian to reevaluate current architecture and existing instruments. Could you elaborate on that?

**12:49 Steven Pifer:** The language is the result of a drafting exercise. The Russians clearly wanted reference to the Medvedev proposals. The Americans wanted reference to existing commitments such as the Helsinki Final Act. What it means is that both can be discussed ... without prejudice to what might later be agreed.

**12:49 [Comment From Joey D.]** What should NATO be doing in Afghanistan? How can it be most effective there?

**12:51 Steven Pifer:** NATO has about 32,000 (non-U.S.) troops in Afghanistan. They are conducting important security operations. Were they not there, it would mean a greater burden for the U.S. military. Washington would like to regularize the rules by which NATO forces operate, but is grateful for their presence.

**12:51 [Comment From Dave]** There's been some discussion about the validity of NATO's role. With Cold War threats no longer an issue, what should NATO be focusing on and how does it stay relevant?

**12:52 Steven Pifer:** This will be a question for the strategic concept: how much attention should NATO devote to "out of area" operations, such as Afghanistan, as opposed to traditional collective defense? Some allies in Central Europe, concerned about recent Russian behavior, want NATO to focus more on collective defense.

**12:53 [Comment From Dan (Washington, DC)]** Of all the meetings Obama is attending this week in Europe, which do you think is the most important and why?

**12:54 Steven Pifer:** Most would probably say that the G-20 is the most critical meeting, given the severity of the global financial/economic crisis. That's probably right, though the NATO and EU summits will also be important for U.S. interaction with Europe.

**12:54 [Comment From Megan]** I read that there were some riots or demonstrations by anti-NATO protesters last night in Strasburg. What do you think about this - should this be of major concern to the Obama camp?

**12:55 Steven Pifer:** Big summits always seem to attract demonstrators -- look at the large crowds on the streets of London today. But I don't think the demonstrations will be a major concern.

**12:55 [Comment From Mike]** After Decision on resumption on NRC Dialog Head of Russian Mission to NATO Mr. Rogozin stated that this decision should be considered as a kind of excuse over the position of NATO during the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008. Any comment on this statement?

**12:57 Steven Pifer:** It's not entirely clear what Amb Rogozin meant. The Russians were unhappy that NATO suspended the NATO-Russia channel after the August Russia-Georgia conflict. I partially agree. It would have been appropriate to suspend NATO-Russian military contacts, but one purpose of the NATO-Russia Council was to be discussing security crises -- NATO should have talked to the Russians about the Georgia conflict.

**12:58 [Comment From Mike]** Cyber attacks on Estonia - Should NATO implement Article 5?

**12:58 Steven Pifer:** NATO is taking a hard look at the cyber attacks. It certainly is a new area of security.

**12:59 [Comment From Daniel]** Obama speech in Prague should be, as announced, about nuclear nonproliferation. However, do you think he will touch as well on the 20th anniversary of fall of communism?

**1:00 Steven Pifer:** I don't think he will spend much time on it -- most in Washington see that anniversary coming in the autumn (it tends to be tied most closely to the fall of the Berlin Wall).

**1:00 [Comment From Jared]** Some NATO members have pledged troops to Afghanistan but limited the regions where they will fight. What do you think about this? Should countries send troops with no strings attached?

**1:01 Steven Pifer:** It would be better for the Alliance if troops were deployed with no strings attached regarding where they operate or their rules of engagement. But my sense is that the U.S. military is still happy to have them -- if the German military were not in the north, for example, that would be an additional burden for the U.S.

**1:02 [Comment From Tina]** A lot of church councils are urging NATO to "reinforce the vision of a world without nuclear weapons." DO you think NATO has a responsibility to uphold that vision? Or is it completely unrealistic.

**1:04 Steven Pifer:** Very interesting question. NATO for a long time depended on nuclear weapons to offset the large advantages in manpower, tanks, artillery and aircraft that the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact had. But the Russian military today is very different and, given demographics, is going to be a shrinking force. NATO may not adopt the idea of a nuclear-free world in the near term, but it might consider what role nuclear weapons should play in Alliance security.

**1:04 [Comment From Mike]** Russia's veto power on NATO decisions, like Georgia, Missile Defense, European architecture - what is the next? What is the particular goal of Russians in this regard!

**1:06 Steven Pifer:** Moscow is unhappy that the Alliance continues to exist ... after the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union collapsed. The Russians still see NATO in Cold War terms, even though both its military structure and missions have changed radically over the past 20 years.

**1:06 [Comment From Gary]** NATO announced that it will be publishing a series of video ads on YouTube aimed at getting young people interested in NATO. Isn't this kind of like selling war to kids? Do you have any thoughts on this?

**1:07 Steven Pifer:** I don't think the ads are aimed at selling war, just at explaining what NATO is today, what it does and why it still has relevance.

**1:08 [Comment From Erin]**

Do you have any thoughts on NATO-Ukraine relations?

**1:10 Steven Pifer:** Complex question. The Ukrainian government wants to join NATO, but there is not yet consensus on this among the Ukrainian elite, and the Ukrainian population so far does not support joining NATO. It makes sense for NATO to keep the door open to Ukraine and continue to develop close relations. But any question of membership will first require that Ukrainians decide that is what they want.

**1:10 [Comment From mark]** Do Hilary Clinton or Joe Biden have anything to do with the NATO summit? Or is Obama flying solo?

**1:11 Steven Pifer:** Secretary Clinton is with the president, and she met with NATO foreign ministers in early March to prepare the way for the summit on Friday and Saturday. The Vice President met with NATO officials a couple of weeks ago to sound out their ideas on Afghanistan policy. So both have been involved.

**1:11 [Comment From Ken]** What could NATO do to prevent a nuclear Iran?

**1:12 Steven Pifer:** This is not really a NATO issue. The U.S. is working with Britain, France and Germany, along with Russia and China, to address the problem of a nuclear Iran.

**1:13 [Comment From Mike]** What is your view on assumption that US approach toward NATO based on the interest to keep this organization like it is, just for case, because no other single institution can be used to have "Americans in".

**1:14 Steven Pifer:** They used to say that NATO had three goals: to keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in. NATO remains the most important channel we have to Europe on security issues, but both sides of the Atlantic support that. And the U.S.-EU channel is evolving in parallel as another means for trans-Atlantic cooperation.

**1:15 [Comment From andrea]** Are there any problems within the NATO organization itself?

**1:16 Steven Pifer:** The strategic concept, which will be launched at the summit, will look at NATO's organization, among other questions. It may make recommendations as to how the organization might adapt to be more effective. We'll see in about a year, when the concept is finished.

**1:16 [Comment From Daniel]** On missile defense in Europe. Is it in fact a bit counterproductive that Russia is pushing so hard on canceling this project? I mean, president Obama would have plenty of other reasons to delay or drop it (poor testing, budget etc.). But now he must not look like yielding to Russia...

**1:18 Steven Pifer:** You're right. The Russian threats last November to target nuclear missiles on Poland were counterproductive, given that President Obama appeared prepared to take a fresh look at the Bush plans to deploy missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic. Moscow seemed to recognize that, and toned down its rhetoric.

**1:18 [Comment From PJT]** What do you think about NATO's anti-piracy missions?

**1:19 Steven Pifer:** Seems to me that this would be a great project for NATO-Russia cooperation. Over the last six months, you've had U.S., Russian and other NATO warships operating off Somalia. They should look at making this a cooperative NATO-Russia operation.

**1:19 Steven Pifer:** Looks like we have time for just a few more questions.....

**1:19 [Comment From Jason]** It seems like lots of countries favor Fogh Rasmussen, the Danish premier, to become the next NATO secretary general . But Turkey opposes this strongly. What's the reason for the disagreement?

**1:20 Steven Pifer:** Many Allies appear to favor Rasmussen as the next Secretary General, but the rumor is that the Turks are not yet on board. This is a decision that requires consensus (albeit, perhaps after some gentle arm-twisting).

**1:21 [Comment From Stacy]** Hi, thanks for taking my question. I've noticed over the last few years that these bigwig pow-wows have become more and more media "things." Like that meeting in Switzerland, or the G-whatever, summits here and there. Why so much attention lately to confabs that have been going on for decades? Are these people the new rock stars?? Thanks

**1:23 Steven Pifer:** Summits tend to get attention because that's when big developments are announced. Given the overseas interest in Barack Obama and the fact that this is his first presidential trip to Europe (and first overseas trip other than a short visit to Canada), these events are getting even more attention.

**1:23 [Comment From Susan]** The President is making a stop in Turkey – his first visit to a Muslim nation. What do you expect to come from this meeting?

**1:25 Steven Pifer:** The president is going to Turkey to reaffirm strong U.S.-Turkish relations. The Turks can be important to Washington on a number of questions -- Iraq, Iran for example. Interestingly, Washington has not billed this "THE" visit to a Muslim nation -- that may still be coming.

**1:25 Fred Barbash-Moderator:** Steve: This has been fascinating. Thanks so much. And thank you to all of our guests today. These were smart questions.

**1:26 Fred Barbash - Moderator:** Please join us next week at the same time for a chat with Mauricio Cardenas - he'll preview the Latin America Summit. Read here for more details: [http://www.brookings.edu/events/2009/0408\\_latin\\_america\\_chat.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2009/0408_latin_america_chat.aspx)

So long for now.