A Brookings Press Briefing

The NATO Summit in Prague: Challenges to Bush and the Alliance

Falk Auditorium
The Brookings Institution
November 13, 2002

Moderator:

STROBE TALBOTT
President, The Brookings Institution

IVO H. DAALDER
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, and The Sydney Stein, Jr. Chair, The Brookings Institution

JAMES B. STEINBERG
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution

PHILIP H. GORDON
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies and Director, Center on the United States and France, The Brookings Institution

MR. RON NESSEN: Good morning and welcome to The Brookings Institution. My name is Ron Nessen and I want to welcome you to this briefing prior to the forthcoming NATO meeting in Prague on November 21st and 22nd to be attended by President Bush and other heads of state.

This is because of the agenda one of the most important meetings in the history of NATO and our briefing this morning will be conducted by Strobe Talbott as Moderator. He is the President of The Brookings Institution. He will be joined here by Jim Steinberg who is the Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Studies Program; Ivo Daalder, a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program and the Sydney Stein, Jr. Chair here at Brookings; and Phil Gordon, Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies program and Director of the Center on the United States and France.

The format this morning will be that Strobe and the panelists will discuss the issues likely to arise at NATO and then there will be time for questions from the audience.

I'd like to request as a courtesy to your fellow attendees that you turn off your cellular phones and anything else that might beep or ring during this morning's briefing.

With that, I'll turn it over to your Moderator, Strobe Talbott.

MR. STROBE TALBOTT: Thanks, Ron. Thank you all for coming out this morning to join us in our own curtain-raiser on the Prague Summit.

What I thought we might do by way of getting the discussion started and in due course I hope as many of you as possible will participate is test the proposition that Ron just put before you which is that the Prague Summit is the most important Summit or one of the most important Summits in the history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

For that to be true, of course, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization needs to be proved to be among the more important and useful international institutions on the face of the earth.

President Bush when he went to the United Nations on September 12th challenged the United Nations to prove its relevance. Of course we've seen some evidence in the past week that the United Nations has at least passed that test preliminarily. I think you'll find among my colleagues here some skepticism about the extent to which NATO is living up to that same test.

As I think about the upcoming Prague meeting I'm struck by a contrast between this and the previous NATO Summit in Madrid five years ago. That was a truly super-charged event. The attention of the world was riveted on the issues, on what was going to happen. There was a lot of suspense not just on which of the applicant countries were going to be tapped for entrance, but also whether the

U.S.-Russian relationship and the NATO-Russian relationship was going to withstand the trauma of former allies of the Soviet Union coming into NATO. There was of course also acute interest in and controversy about the role that the Alliance was going to play in the use of force in the Balkans and had already played in the context of Bosnia.

Once the Summit was over and there were some disappointed countries, Rumania in particular, there was a lot of concern about whether they were going to remain on a reformist track, whether they stood any chance of getting into NATO in due course. The anxiety and apprehension among the Baltic states was very intense indeed.

When you think back to that only five years ago and you look at what's shaping up to occur in Prague, in a way that perhaps could be interpreted as good news, there's something almost anticlimactic it seems about this meeting. There's not a great deal of suspense about which countries are going to be coming in. The Russian factor does not seem to be terribly controversial. Even on the Moscow end. In some ways I suppose the issue around which there's the most suspense is whether President Bush and Chancellor Schroeder are going to smile at each other and shake hands at some point during the meeting.

In any event, against that backdrop, maybe Jim we could start with you and perhaps get the conversation rolling with your own answer to the question of whether NATO still matters.

MR. JAMES B. STEINBERG: I think it does, and I have three major reasons why I think it's still enormously important. The challenge at the Prague Summit will be to try to vindicate each of these three reasons.

The first reason I think NATO still matters is that the consolidation of peace and democracy in Europe is well under way but it isn't over. We've seen enormous strides in Central and Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War, but we still have an enormously fragile situation in the Balkans which one could hardly say is a done deal. NATO plays an extremely important role in its security function now -- in the continued peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, but also in the broader sense, the pole of attraction for all of these countries to continue to try to deal with their ethnic differences, their political problems, their economic problems to become part of that community.

It's also true in the Eastern part of Europe. We don't talk as much these days about Ukraine, but the situation in Ukraine remains an extremely fragile one. The political developments there are not encouraging. Yet it's I think very important to the long-term future of Europe that that go well.

And of course finally the integration of Russia.

NATO plays a role in all of these by giving reassurance to countries that there's a framework in which they can develop their political and economic reforms without having to worry about security

conflicts with each other, without having to worry about the exacerbation of irredentist tendencies among old ethnic rivalries and the like. And it's something that obviously takes place to some degree through the EU and I don't think we should diminish the fact that the EU plays a role in that consolidation. But it's also important to each of these countries to have a link with the United States and that link is through NATO.

I think the second reason that NATO is important is that the partnership between the United States and Europe still remains the central partnership in dealing with a broad range of political and security challenges that we face outside the European context. The broader transnational issues that we have to face beginning with terrorism, organized crime and the like, our common interest in dealing with consolidating democracies around the world. The United States and Europe have a unique partnership in their ability to do that. It's a political dimension of NATO.

There's been an evolution over the years in trying to do some of that work through an U.S.-EU channel, but it's still not entirely satisfactory because NATO is the one place in which we all sit together as individual countries. It's not the EU as a collectivity against the United States. And while some of these issues will be issues that the EU deals with commonly through EU institutions, many of them are things that are still going to be done nationally. So I think that partnership and the fact that we still are the two sets of countries that have these shared values and interests needs a forum through which it can be expressed.

But the final thing which shouldn't be neglected, in some ways ought to come first, is the fact that occasionally it's not just the political concertation that we need to do together but sometimes the military concertation. NATO provides the only framework in which we can continue to work together on tactics on how we work our militaries, how we get the interoperability of our forces, that will allow us to take on common military challenges. And it's a self-reinforcing thing.

To the extent that we're able to do it, we're more likely to do it, and conversely, to the extent that we become less and less able to do it we'll find more and more reasons not to. I think about the willingness to use force to deal with challenges like we may be facing in Iraq. So maintaining the effectiveness of the military structures as well as that political link seems to me to be quite important for the future.

All three of these things are in play at Prague.

Enlargement is a part of the broader consolidation of the democratic space in Europe as is the deepening of the NATO-Russia relationship plus not just to the new members, but also the way forward for the countries that will not get in this time.

On the shared interest front we're going to be dealing with how does NATO play a role in dealing with problems like terrorism and redefining its mission.

Then on the military component, questions like the rapid reaction force as a way of trying to enhance the military capabilities of our European allies and the integration of our forces.

MR. TALBOTT: Jim if we could just maybe zero in on the German question for a sec. The four of us were in Berlin not too long ago. The fundamental issue that we heard so much about from our German counterparts and that we've heard since back here is still very much on the table.

Do you see that as having major disruptive potential for the Summit?

MR. STEINBERG: I would be surprised if it did. I think that one of the lessons that we learn is that when it comes to meetings of leaders, whatever differences they have, that they recognize that the personal interactions are important. The President, although I'm sure still feels concerned by and perhaps personally offended by some of the remarks in the German election, knows that the relationship between the United States and Germany is critical to the overall success of NATO and that the President will want this meeting to be a success. It isn't going to be a success if the centerpiece of the meeting is a continued frosty, non-communicative relationship between the United States and Germany.

MR. TALBOTT: Phil, obviously there are plenty of topics on the table already and please respond to any of them, but you might in the course of that say something about what you see as the implications of the Summit for U.S.-French relations. The United States and France did at the end of the day, I gather there was some suspense about it, come together in the Security Council on the Iraq Resolution. How do you see that factor playing in Prague?

MR. PHILIP H. GORDON: I think you're right to raise the U.S.-France question because in many ways NATO's future is in their hands. By that let me tell you what I mean.

I agree with what Jim said about NATO's continued relevance. Even if it's not central to our security preoccupations of the day for all the reasons he said, it's relevant.

The question though is whether leaders on both sides, and on that I mean more than anything Washington and Paris, will find the logic of NATO compelling enough to invest in it and do the things necessary to transform it to be able to be useful for the challenges that we face now.

If you think about the challenges that NATO faces, aside from the fact that the main mission, the Cold War is over and unlikely to come back, the Balkans which for ten years saved NATO and became the most compelling reason to keep it alive, is winding down as a product of our success. And you have this huge gap between American military capabilities and European military capabilities with the U.S. raising its defense budget by $48 billion in a year which is more than any single European country spends, and then and this brings me to the French and the Americans, attitudes on both sides.

In the U.S. you have an attitude that seems to suggest that the political constraints of doing something in an alliance are not worth the trouble. We have the military capability to do things largely alone, and why should we then do wars by committee and have to bog ourselves down with 19 and soon 26 or more other countries? That attitude in Washington would have to be overcome if NATO was going to actually do things in the future.

The parallel to that on the other side is the European attitude, felt more strongly in Paris than elsewhere, why should we submit ourselves to the leadership and even dictates of Washington so long as that attitude is prevalent in the United States?

And you see what I'm getting at here is, and it's a particular U.S.-France dynamic, is a sort of chicken and egg problem. The Europeans don't want to invest in what they would need to do to make NATO relevant and useful, perhaps the reaction force that has been proposed, their own defense capabilities, NATO in Afghanistan, NATO in Iraq. They don't want to do those things so long as they see an American attitude which says we lead this Alliance, we're going to do it our way or we don't need you. That spills over onto the American attitude which is if you're not going to do all of those things in NATO, why should we invest in NATO and why should we use NATO?

So it seems to me that NATO does play a very important role and can play an important role, but I think it's still an open question whether people on both sides are going to see it that way.

MR. TALBOTT: Ivo, among other things Phil just touched on what is often called the capabilities gap. For many critics, skeptics and pessimists about NATO on both sides of the Atlantic, that is really the wedge issue. It's more than just a disparity in military capability between the United States on the one hand and all the other allies on the other. It really goes to a question of diverging strategic culture. What's your own view on that?

MR. IVO H. DAALDER: One of the reasons why I think I'm a little more pessimistic about the nature and future of the Alliance and its relevance for the U.S.-European partnership than particularly Jim is, and to some extent even perhaps Phil, maybe it's a glass half full, half empty situation here – is because the capabilities gap is supplemented and in fact worsened by what I think is a strategy gap.

The capabilities gap is big. The U.S. is spending and continues to spend at a rate of increase in terms of defense forces, that far out-paces anything that Europe is going to do for many many years, if ever. Which means that not only is the gap large, which we saw in Kosovo, it is getting larger every single day as more and more defense dollars are being poured into new technology and incorporated into the militaries of the United States, and not being incorporated in most of the European militaries, with some exceptions for Britain and France. But even there the rates of change are dramatically different. We all know that part of the story. That means that as a result the ability for countries to cooperate and operate with the United States in joint operations is going down. At least that is the

perception in the United States.

I would add that there is a second and perhaps more important reason why joint operations are becoming less and less likely, which is that we look at the world in very different ways. We look at the role of military force in that world in very different ways. And we look at how we use those military forces that we have in very different ways.

First, how we look on the world. Europeans in the main are busy completing the very mission that Jim laid out as the first mission, which is to make Europe whole and free, peaceful, undivided and democratic, and to expand the European space. Their instrument for ten years was NATO but for the next ten years it's the European Union. And it is the expansion of the European Union, the fact that ten new members are going to come in starting in 2004, which is going to preoccupy every single European government for the bulk of its time. This is a massive undertaking that will take an extraordinary amount of effort and political capital on the part of every single European leader, and they're going to be spending their time on Europe.

The United States in the mean time is allowed, and because of this success in Europe, to spend less time on Europe and to spend more time worrying about the other threats and challenges and opportunities outside of Europe.

So we have that basic geographic and geostrategic divergence between the United States and Europe.

The second one is about the role of military force. The European view, as we saw in the Iraq debate, remains that force is fundamentally a last resort. It is only something that you engage in when diplomacy has absolutely failed. And then only when everybody agrees that this is the right thing to do.

Increasingly over the past ten years we have seen that that's not the way the United States, views the use of force. There are many problems out there that cannot be dealt with mostly or even mainly through diplomatic means. Whether it is ethnic cleansing in Kosovo or the acquisition of nuclear weapons in Iraq. Those kinds of threats require not just force as a last resort but force as a first resort or at least as an early resort.

So we have a divergence about when to use force.

Finally, there's a divergence about how to use force. Increasingly in the United States in part because of the technology, in part because of historical reasons and preferences, there is a reliance on high technology, on strategic bombing from 15,000 feet, on going after critical strategic targets. What Mike Short, the general who led the air war in Kosovo called the head of the snake, the strategic center of gravity. And in Europe, in part because it doesn't have the capability, but in part because they don't think it's the most effective way to use military force, there is still a view that you go after the people who do the killing. That you have to have forces on the ground, you have to be engaged with those

forces on the ground at the moment of impact, and that the center of strategic gravity is the military as opposed to the political and command centers.

Finally, European militaries are increasingly thinking about fighting wars in ways that are influenced by how you bring about the peace afterwards. And that you have to start thinking about how you conduct your military operations in a way that makes peacebuilding after the war is over easier.

For example, take Afghanistan. One of the fundamental problems we have in Afghanistan is we relied on warlords who are now in power to do most of the fighting. The European perspective would have said maybe we should have done this by ourselves, in fact regarding the warlords as part of the problem, not part of the solution in the military strategy.

The same can be the case in Iraq. How you fight the Iraq war is in part, or ought to be in part determined by what it is that you want to do afterwards, and because European militaries are more inclined to think that peacebuilding and nationbuilding and peacekeeping and peace support operations are sort of fundamental to what they do in the world, they will look at how to use force in different ways.

These growing divergences which have been going on for ten years and are being magnified by the new world in which we live lead me to say it becomes very difficult to see how we get back to the kind of partnership and joint operations and joint planning we had for 50 years but that seems to be increasingly disappearing.

MR. TALBOTT: Ivo, from what you know of the organization that is NATO and the Summit, do you think these fundamental issues you're raising are going to in any visible sense be on the agenda in Prague? Or are they going to be just part of the deep, deep subtext covered over by protocol and politesse and the desire to preserve an appearance of solidarity?

MR. DAALDER: I think we're going to have wonderful statements that are going to announce that the NATO Alliance is ready to go into the 21st century as a major institution, that it will transform itself by whatever means necessary to get to that point, but in the end it will be stuck with its agenda. Important, but nevertheless not necessarily the 21st century agenda of completing Europe by bringing more members in, by bringing Russia in, but a debate about who pays for what capabilities, which is the debate we've had for 50 years.

MR. TALBOTT: Let me pick up on that and actually turn the question back to Jim. When Lord Robertson, the Secretary General of NATO was on this platform a couple of weeks ago he delivered a speech which was extremely polite, very upbeat, very optimistic, but nonetheless conveyed a message that was I think more than subliminal, and that is the importance of doing things together; multilateral approaches to problems. He knew, of course, and everybody here knew that that fit into the context of a debate that is sometimes oversimplified as unilateralism versus multilateralism.

Jim, do you anticipate that that theme or that debate is going to be detectable in Prague?

MR. STEINBERG: I think it's going to be very subtle and I think the place that you may see it most obviously is about this idea of the rapid reaction force. I think there are two potentially different conceptions about it that have a huge implication for the kinds of issues that both Phil and Ivo touched on.

I think for many Americans the reason that, particularly for the Administration, the reason they want to see this enhanced capability of European forces is not to enhance NATO as an institution, but rather to enhance NATO as the tool kit. That is essentially a set of capabilities that can be then divorced from the political institutions around NATO and taken to go off and fight elsewhere.

The advantage of that from the United States means that we get the ability to draw on additional capabilities but we don't have to deal with this problem of politically consulting others. We get to run the mission. We get to decide what to do. It's a mission, an ad hoc coalition where the United States leads, but it draws on capabilities that come out of NATO so we get the military benefit of that.

For the Europeans, if there's going to be an interest in this rapid reaction force it's to give them more of a political voice in how force is used and to try to bring it back into a NATO framework where they have at least nominally some say about it.

So where we draw the lesson, or at least some in the Administration draw the lesson from Kosovo that says well you don't want to fight as NATO, you want to fight in an ad-hoc coalition in which willing and capable European allies join us. I think the Europeans say we want more of a situation where we have some say in deciding both what the political objectives are for the use of force and even some of the military operations.

So to the extent that we get a debate about what this rapid reaction force is for and how it's going to be used, I think we could get some of that flavor.

I think what's important here is if you listen to the U.S. discussion of this it's about developing capabilities. But as Phil has suggested, the Europeans aren't going to be willing to invest in capabilities unless they have some sense that they're going to have a voice in how those capabilities are deployed. The motivation for investing and developing the capabilities will be because it gives them more influence over the United States. I think they will need to hear from the United States that that's part of the deal that's offered.

MR. TALBOTT: Ivo?

MR. DAALDER: I just want to emphasize something that Jim said because I think it is crucially important to understand how big the change is that has occurred over the past two years. In fact since September 12th when it really became known.

Until this moment the United States has traditionally thought about using military force within an alliance structure. Particularly when it came to big wars. Sure, there have been wars whether it is Vietnam or the Gulf War -- in which NATO or others didn't participate. But the whole notion was that you channel the use of force through an alliance structure.

Now we have a situation where the whole purpose is to make sure that that absolutely never happens again. Where the whole purpose of NATO is no longer to be able to conduct joint military operations which is what, after all, it was founded for; but the purpose is to provide the military capabilities for the United States to pick and choose from, to cherrypick really -- the Czechs have good CBW capabilities, let's grab those; the Brits have good special forces, let's grab those -- in order to conduct a mission as the United States wants to conduct it. That's what Afghanistan was about. It was conducted in Tampa by Tampa. People could contribute and sent their generals, two, three star, whatever, to contribute to that, but that's how we fight wars. The United States determines the mission, it then builds the coalition for that particular mission. It sees no value in having it built within an alliance structure because that is constraining, even though it may also give you political and other benefits. And that's the future that this Administration, particularly in the Pentagon, sees for NATO. And that's a sea-change. It's a fundamental change in the way we have conducted foreign policy and particularly political/military policy for 50 years. And somehow it has gone virtually unremarked that that's what really this is all about.

MR. TALBOTT: Would you make a distinction when you refer to the Pentagon between the senior political civilian leadership and the uniformed military?

MR. DAALDER: Sure. I think this is a reflection of what in the parlance is called 'the Office of the Secretary of Defense.' The civilian leadership. Not necessarily the military leadership. But even there it is starting to come in. The notion that -- the lesson even among senior military of Kosovo, so-called, is that when you fight wars in an Alliance context you have 18 vetoes on the trigger button. We all know that that wasn't the case, but nevertheless that is the myth that has now emerged as fact. And increasingly you will find people saying, we can do it by ourselves, so why bother doing it with others?

MR. STEINBERG: I guess I would take slight issue only in the sense that the vast majority of the American military is not connected to NATO. Something like eight to ten percent of U.S. military forces have some relationship to NATO. I think for a lot of military officers, many of whom never served in Europe, many of whom have missions that are very unconnected to the NATO structure, that they don't want to see it either. They haven't seen the positive side of the tradeoff. They've watched from afar. They are the ones who have drawn the negative lesson from Kosovo.

It's ironic that the U.S. military commanders who are in theater are not the ones who are saying Kosovo was a disaster, it was too constraining. The people who actually ran the war tend to be fairly positive about the benefits that had been gotten from the coalition. But the generals who were in Central Command, or standing back in the new FORSCOM, they're the ones who are seeing this and saying I

don't quite get this. I'm not sure why there's any advantage to us.

So I think even within the military itself there's a lot of skepticism about the political value of the NATO institution.

MR. TALBOTT: Phil, did you want to come in on that?

MR. GORDON: I think Ivo put his finger on a very important point in the context of the relevance debate which is that one of the reasons everyone is struggling with this and there's anxiety at NATO and so on is the reality that we're very unlikely in the future to use NATO as we envisaged it in the past which is as an Alliance where the North Atlantic Council runs an operation.

In that sense the Balkans were probably NATO's first mission as NATO and last. Because of the new way the United States sees the Alliance as a tool box and a place where you develop interoperability, you can pick and choose among the best sources.

But the point I want to make about that is it's not necessarily a bad thing. We shouldn't, as we're judging whether NATO can be useful, it's not will the NAC run an operation at 19 or 26 or whatever. If that's your standard, NATO is not going to be useful.

The question though is can we still use it so that United States forces and European forces, which frankly are the ones we're most likely to operate with around the world, and we keep doing it whether it's humanitarian missions in Africa or peacekeeping in Afghanistan or soon to be peacekeeping in Iraq. Can we use NATO as a place so that these forces know how to work together, so that they have common operational doctrine, so that their fuel nozzles fit into each other, so that the military officers know each other, and I think the answer to that is yes, and I think we're seeing it in Afghanistan where you have a French Carrier Group in the Indian Ocean cooperating with U.S. naval forces and stopping ships. Where you have German Special Forces and British Special Forces clearing caves with the United States. We have intel sharing. You have in-air refuelers from one country in another NATO country.

So that is a reminder, it seems to me, that NATO can still be useful even when it's not used as NATO. And that, if I may, it ties into the reaction force challenge because this is a way of the United States challenging the European countries to develop the types of forces that we think will be necessary for potential future missions together.

MR. TALBOTT: Even the most dewy-eyed optimists, none of whom are represented here or perhaps anywhere in the room, would predict that we're going to have a rapid reaction force within a matter of weeks, which is the timeframe that we're looking at for Iraq.

So what I would like to do is go from the general that we've been discussing to the specific and ask each of you to address both predictively and prescriptively -- maybe your prediction will be the

same as your prescription but we'll see -- the question of what you think the outcome will be and should be in
Prague vis-à-vis the role of NATO-quo-NATO or NATO member states plus NATO partners in the war in Iraq. Maybe taking kind of the Afghanistan model as a baseline.

I realize, of course, that the answer to that in fact will depend in no small measure on where Saddam is in his part of the cat and mouse game when we actually get there. But take a shot at that if you would, Jim.

MR. STEINBERG: On the predictive side I think this is teed up very nicely and I think the Administration was not unmindful of this in terms of the overall timing which is, I believe Saddam is going to agree on Friday to the inspections so I don't think we're going to have a crisis this week.

MR. TALBOTT: Defying his Parliament?

MR. STEINBERG: No, just accepting the confidence that Parliament has resided in him to make a wise decision about. [Laughter]

What will happen in Prague is that NATO will solemnly avow that the Security Council Resolutions must be fully, thoroughly implemented or else there will be serious consequences. So I think it's -- I don't think it's a bad thing. The posture will be such that it will be very easy for NATO to be very united and very clear about the need for Saddam to comply and will be very unspecific about what will happen if he doesn't, other than to say serious consequences, or something to that effect.

I think that the deeper issue and my prescriptive part is going to this question we have about whether and in what way NATO will play a role in helping to either assemble and/or conduct the military operations. And it seems to me that we are at a critical moment and an appropriate moment now with passage of the Security Council Resolution, that there ought to be some pretty serious planning being done at SHAPE to look at the question of how NATO military forces could contribute to the war plan. That means there needs to be a willingness in the Pentagon to involve SHAPE in that, whether or not there is a formal involvement of the North Atlantic Council, if we're going to get the kinds of benefits that Phil has described which we ought to want if there is a conflict with Iraq. Then you need to bring the mechanisms together. There are mechanisms that can help identify forces.

Think about who has the capabilities. Think about what NATO's own infrastructure can do to facilitate particularly logistic and deployment side of this operation and to give some sense that these mechanisms that have been created for the Cold War are still going to be turned to and be made operational in the post Cold War.

I think there is a real opportunity there, to give the allies some sense that it is not going to be once again trooping down to Tampa to stand outside in the cold, and maybe not so cold, and waiting for them to be invited in one by one.

MR. TALBOTT: Phil?

MR. GORDON: My prescription is somewhat different from my prediction. My prescription is similar to Jim's. I think it would be useful for the political cohesion benefits to use NATO. Not in the, if there's a war in the wartime operation, we're not going to use NATO for that. SHAPE could be useful in delivering and coordinating European forces for a post-peacekeeping mission. So prescriptively I would be sympathetic to that. I don't think we're going to do it.

I think the attitude of the Administration is going to be, in particular the military, if they want to come along, they can come along. They're going to come along for their own interests and we're going to decide who goes where and we're going to run this operation. And if they don't want to do it under our leadership, because what Jim is getting at in the advantage of using NATO is that it gives them some greater incentive to be involved because it gives them some greater say over the operation.

But in reality I think, just as in the early phases of Afghanistan, that's not going to be persuasive to this Administration which is just going to do it in the U.S. leadership mode and expect the others to follow along.

MR. TALBOTT: Ivo?

MR. DAALDER: I agree with both the prescription and the prediction. I'd add one other prediction which is if the United States goes alone on this, it depends a little bit on the political circumstances under which it decides to go to war, but if we assume that it gains either a formal or at least an informal consensus, from the Security Council, that this is the right thing to do, that is Saddam has truly breached the resolution, I would predict that the vast majority of NATO countries will in fact contribute active military forces to such an operation. Even if it's not part of NATO. That is, whether we like it or not, the Pentagon's calculations that countries will join in the operation no matter whether it's done within NATO or not is probably correct. I think most of these countries will in fact want to contribute forces to help enforce the UN Security Council Resolution. That's how they will justify it to their own public.

The one country that will be absent, and even there, there's a question of whether it will be absent, is going to be Germany.

MR. TALBOTT: I think in a moment it would be good to open the discussion up to include our guests, but first let me ask the three of you to address two questions which five years ago we were all teased of and which now seem to either be self-evident in their answers or not interesting questions.

That is what about the new members? In your discussions around town and on the other side of the Atlantic did you hear any echoes of the concern about the dilution of the military effectiveness, and for that matter the political cohesion of the Alliance? Bringing in these states which not that long ago

were either part of the Soviet Union or part of the Soviet Empire?

And second, what about Russia? Is there any interesting suspense or controversy about what the enlargement of the Alliance will do to the burgeoning partnership between the U.S. and Russia and between NATO and Russia?

Jim?

MR. STEINBERG: I think on the dilution issue, it's ironic that the evolution of U.S. thinking, particularly the Administration's thinking on this, makes the fact that there is going to be some military dilution a plus. That is to say that by bringing in countries that will be prepared to work with the United States and accept the United States vision of how these things should go in the future, that what happens is you make NATO less wieldy as an organization itself and therefore more likely to play this role as a tool kit providing niche capabilities and that that's perfectly fine from the United States point of view. If you're not looking to this to be an integrated military, then the fact that a lot of these militaries are very weak and have very limited things to contribute doesn't matter very much because it really doesn't detract from the tool kit.

The one remaining anxiety that's out there is the fact that at least in the case of Romania and Bulgaria, that though things are going okay, these are countries that are still very very fragile in their political and economic transformation, and there is some anxiety about what happens in NATO if a country should genuinely fail. Fail in its democracy, revert either back to some kind of authoritarian government or a situation where there's serious internal divisions within the country -- have we really got a contingency to deal with that, is that going to be a problem for us?

But on the whole, once Russia decided that it was not going to object to this I think there was a sense of let's just get it over with and then we won't have to worry about this any more in case there's a Russian government which later changes its mind.

On Russia, the transformation of the U.S.-Russian relationship I think has overwhelmed any of the issues that would otherwise have mattered. For Putin, NATO-Russia is not terribly important compared to U.S.-Russia. And with the increased focus now post the attacks in Moscow and the Chechnya situation, I think that's the only thing that's really front and center. Putin wants to make sure that he has the President's full support for what he's doing in what is obviously an intensification of the campaign there, and is happy to see the NATO-Russia thing move forward but it is not the dominant concern.

MR. TALBOTT: Just to tease that out a little further, Jim, would this be a correct next step inference, that here again President Bush and President Putin's strategy and agendas overlap and reinforce each other, which is to say insofar as President Bush and his Administration are downgrading the importance of NATO strategically and militarily, that suits President Putin fine.

MR. STEINBERG: Absolutely.

MR. TALBOTT: Phil?

MR. GORDON: I've never been overly persuaded by the dilution argument. I think for two reasons. One is to the extent that NATO is willing to be used as a tool kit from which to draw, then it doesn't really matter how many boxes, I don't know what the analogy is, but are in that tool kit, and the number doesn't really influence that. As I said, since you're unlikely to be doing many operations as the NAC, I don't think that is a serious concern.

But furthermore, even if you are going to be doing an operation as the NAC, NATO has never been an alliance of perfect equals where the greater the number the more difficult it becomes to get decisions. It's always been U.S.-led, it always will be U.S.-led, and I just have difficulty imagining that somehow one of these new members is going to block a consensus. If NATO wants to do an operation in some place and the U.S. is ready to do it and they're ready to lead the Alliance, that Slovenia or Rumania is going to stand up and prevent NATO from doing it.

NATO might think about mechanisms on a sort of different issue for suspending a membership if there was to be some political reversal in one of these countries so that that couldn't happen, but I just don't think -- I think what you gain from enlargement is much greater than the tiny risk. Those of us who are involved in Kosovo in trying to keep NATO together for that and no one more than you two knows this, knows that yes, it was hard and you had to work on allies to get them on board, but once you were able to do it and the fact that you had the Alliance and the political cohesion together was very important.

So I think what you gain from adding the numbers is greater than the very small risk that one of them is going to dilute its cohesion.

MR. TALBOTT: My recollection of what Lord Robertson said when he was asked this question about an Alliance member, new world going bad, was that he left the question open and suggested that it should probably be dealt with in real life if it ever occurs rather than having a policy in advance. He didn't want to get drawn into the idea of taking what the Commonwealth does, for example, that kind of sanction, and putting it in place just in case.

MR. GORDON: I think he's right for two reasons. There's a substantive one and a practical one.

The substantive one is you would create more, you can do this informally. Just as in the past when different NATO members, whether you had colonels in Greece or Euro-communists in Portugal or on the verge in other countries, you were able to do this and just stop sharing intelligence with these countries. You didn't have to have a formal NAC decision which would have been hard because one of those countries would have been in and so on. You found practical ways of getting it done without

having to have a new treaty line that says you can kick someone out. So for that reason I think it's better.

And secondly, the practical point is, even if one thought it was a good idea to add it to the treaty, good luck persuading all of these countries to sign onto something that could later be used to kick their country out of the Alliance or suspend it. So even if you thought it was a good idea I don't think you could get it done.

That's why I agree with Lord Robertson. We need to be thinking about it so that nobody has to worry that when you take somebody in they're going to be able to block things, but that can be done with an informal consensus, that you just won't let it happen.

MR. TALBOTT: Ivo, on the new guys and the bear?

MR. DAALDER: One of the problems I have with the enlargement debate is how we in fact haven't had a debate for the past year plus. Here we are taking seven countries into the Alliance. The ostensible purpose being to complete and extend the European zone of peace, and quite frankly we're getting people into this Alliance who don't belong in this Alliance yet.

We have Slovakia which just happened to have one election, but what happens when the next election goes wrong? We have as Jim said, Bulgaria and Romania which have done wonderful things if you go back to where they were in' 89 but have a long road to go when you want to compare them to Poland or to the Czech Republic.

The problem with the big bang theory, the notion that we get them all in, has always been that you lose the incentive structure which is the prospect of membership as opposed to the actual membership. That's what leads to reform. That's lost the moment they become part of this Alliance.

And since enlargement now is fundamentally and only about completing Europe, about building this new Europe -- and I would argue that the fundamental function of NATO is doing this -- we might have thought a little harder about whether it was wise to take in seven members. If someone had said two years ago, and in fact when some people proposed seven members, they'd have thought they were off their rockers. The notion that you take in seven members two years ago was just not on the agenda. It then came on the agenda and I think we ought to ask why.

I think one of the fundamental reasons is, as Jim said, having seven more members means it becomes more of a political talking shop, less of a military alliance, and that's perfectly fine for this Administration. But having done so, it becomes more and more difficult if we ever would like to resuscitate this Alliance for other purposes.

So I think more has to be thought about it. It's too late now. We've made -- well actually we haven't formally made a decision yet. Nobody in Europe is willing to oppose the United States on this,

though there is disquiet in Europe which has never particularly liked enlargement other than particular countries for particular reasons, but they're not going to take the U.S. on this issue. And I think it is a problem.

As regards to Russia, I think you, Strobe put your finger on it. The NATO-Russia Council was important and critically important when we had an Administration in Washington which believed that NATO still was a fundamental, central instrument of its foreign policy. The relationship with Russia can indeed be transforming in the way that we all tried to do this.

Now because NATO is less important, it is easy for Russia to become part of this council and in fact the real business is being done on a bilateral level between the United States and Russia, and have the council be the talking shop.

MR. TALBOTT: Would all of you think it's safe to predict that there will be virtually no debate when this comes to the Senate? Ratification of the enlargement?

MR. DAALDER: I think it's very safe that at this point in time. Virtually anything will be safe in the Senate if the President proposes it. [Laughter]

MR. TALBOTT: Okay. If you have a question for one of the three panelists, direct it to him.

QUESTION: Nicole Zemin, Russian Weekly [Torge].

Does anybody from panelists expect that during this Summit any of the Baltic states will be invited to join NATO?

MR. TALBOTT: All three. Does anybody in the room doubt that? Anybody want to -- Maybe you would have other preferences, but I'd be interested if anybody sees any reason to question that all three Baltic states will get in. It seems like as close to a done deal as something that's not officially a done deal can be.

MR. TALBOTT: George Condon, Copley News Service.

Could you talk about the President's goals on this trip. What does he want out of Prague? What does he want to accomplish on the other stops in Vilnya, St. Petersburg, and Bucharest? And is there a temptation do you think to treat this as sort of a victory lap for him in a continent that viewed him as sort of a cowboy and he got the UN vote now?

MR. STEINBERG: He's certainly going to the places that makes that the most likely. You can imagine what it will be like to be in Vilnius when they finally get into NATO. This is going to be an extraordinary moment, and well deserved. I think the President will be lionized there.

With St. Petersburg, I think the only question is whether we have a chance to see President Putin repeat what he apparently said the other day when journalists tried to ask him a question about Chechnya. But this will be an extraordinarily positive moment, and the same in Bucharest. The aspirations have been achieved.

If you'll recall, President Clinton got a heroic welcome there when we didn't invite them to join NATO. Imagine what it's going to be like when they have.

And all the places where this would be very problematic for the President to go, other than the fact that the Summit's in Prague too, where they obviously have nothing to complain about, he isn't going to Western Europe which is where he would meet a lot of anxiety. The level of concern about Iraq even with the Security Council Resolution is enormously high in Europe and there would be significant protests in the streets. But for the President this will be I think quite a triumphant visit. He will get a strong statement on Iraq. Strong enough for his purposes that he can say he's achieved what he wants. And I think whatever happens on the capability issue, we'll probably get some on background, off-the-record Pentagon people complaining about how ineffective and useless the Europeans are. But on the whole, the public face will be very positive.

MR. GORDON: It really is a victory lap.

If you think about how this Summit could have been, the debate over enlargement, the bust-up with the Russians, most importantly the debate over Iraq. Now instead of all of that he's doing the victory lap on transforming Europe which people doubted that the Republicans and this Administration were interested in; and the Iraq thing, I'm not saying they dragged this out for eight weeks in order to have the timing such that the debate over Iraq is going to come later than sooner, but it certainly is a nice side benefit from their point of view.

We've put off, he's able to arrive saying I went to the UN, that's what you asked me to do. We got a consensus. I think the White House must be delighted with the timing of this.

MR. TALBOTT: Whatever President Putin says in Petersburg, I'm sure he will not repeat his advertisement for the special skills of Russian surgeons. [Laughter]

QUESTION: Pete Schoettle, Brookings.

This question follows up Ivo's point, and it's a simple one that hasn't gotten a lot of attention. It's the old mother test. If Bulgaria and Rumania joint NATO, under Article 5 if they're attacked, U.S. troops have to go defend them. How are you going to explain to some mother that their husband or son is fighting to defend Rumania and Bulgaria? That issue just hasn't come up.

I'd like to see some answers from the panelists, how they would answer that question.

MR. STEINBERG: -- whether you think Moldova is going to attack Rumania.

I think that issue has become moot. That was an issue when we were first worrying about the Baltics, but I think it is largely moot.

The only country that's in a position where one can imagine getting dragged into a conflict is Turkey, and they're already in. But I think the notion that Article 5 is going to be an issue vis-a-vis these new members is very very small.

MR. DAALDER: Let me add also, Article 5 ain't what it used to be. Because we had Article 5 invoked on September 12, 2001, and it did not lead to the automatic dispatch of 18 militaries being sent to Afghanistan. Part of it did, but it's just not the same as it used to be.

MR. TALBOTT: I think the theme that's emerging from this discussion is that NATO ain't what it used to be and the question is whether that's good, bad, ambiguous, and whether it's relevant to the new world.

QUESTION: Petrosaro from the Finnish Broadcasting Company.

MR. DAALDER: Yes, you can join too. [Laughter]

QUESTION: I am not the guy who is asking that question.

It's very interesting what you said, Ivo, about NATO becoming more and more a political talking shop and less a military alliance, and that that would suit President Bush's Administration perfectly fine, in order for them to go solo wherever they want and use that tool box, etc., etc.

We have on the stage some insight from the Kosovo operation. I think it would be very useful to know how much the arguments that I think have been on the forefront for making this case about how in Kosovo it was just a total mess with the French and the British, that you had to have the bombing plan approved by every one, every time, every day. This has been a very visible and loud argument for this road that we have seen taken the past couple of years, that in the future when NATO is doing something like this they should have very clear command of, structural command.

How much was this a real argument ever? Was that a mess? And I think this is very useful to know because what we are witnessing today, like Ivo said, is the very fact that what we saw in Afghanistan and what the French in Paris and other people, and the Germans in Berlin don't like about it.

MR. STEINBERG: It's a very powerful argument if it were true, but it just isn't true. I think if you read Wes Clark's book and if you talk to the people who were involved, and for those of us who

were involved, were there complications? Of course there were complications. Did every country have to review the plan? No. Were there constant disputes about targets? No. There were some big questions about at what point did the infrastructure become a legitimate target. How did you deal with the way in which broadcast communications were being used by the Serbs? But these were important, big issues and they had to do with the political cohesion of the Alliance, not the tactical, what things should be on the list. They were worked through. They were worked through reasonably quickly. And the benefit of conducting this war as an Alliance so outweighed any of these minor disputes. We didn't win because we picked the right targets; we didn't delay the outcome because we failed to pick a target. We won the war because of the political solidarity of the Alliance and the recognition by Milosevic that this was not going to end until he acceded to the political demands of the Alliance.

When NATO came together here in Washington in April at the Washington Summit and reinforced and reiterated the war aims that had begun the war, that to my mind was the beginning of the end of the war and it didn't have anything to do with whether we hit a downtown target in Serbia or the like.

So I think unfortunately the lesson that has been learned has nothing to do with the reality of the conflict. And I think we're going to pay some very negative price over the long term for having mis-read that.

MR. GORDON: I think in a military operation the degree to which you have to consult politically is a function not of whether the Alliance as a whole is conducting an operation, but of what the others are contributing to the operation.

In other words, even if Kosovo was not a NATO operation but you were using a large number of French and British aircraft, you would have had to consult with the French and the British on what you targeted. You always would have the option of dispensing with that and just doing it entirely alone and then you wouldn't have to consult with anybody. That may be appealing to certain people.

But it's not that it was a NATO operation because as Jim points out, it wasn't with the entirety of the Alliance that Washington was having to consult about targets. It was with those that were involved, and that function I think is going to be relevant in the future whether we're using NATO or not.

MR. DAALDER: One small thing. There is this myth somehow that one fights wars by having generals make all the decisions. In the societies that we live, we have a civilian leadership that has to be involved in those decision-making processes. So even if you were fighting the war alone you will have a conflict potentially, or a debate, a complication between military and political leaders, and this notion that somehow if you involve political leaders wars go the wrong is not true. Across the street, Eliot Cohen has written a wonderful book showing that usually the opposite is the case.

QUESTION: Randy Mikelson with Reuters.

I wanted to go back to the question of U.S.-German relations and the Bush-Schroeder flap. What role are they likely to play in this Summit? What roles does the UN Security Council vote have in maybe bridging some of those differences or giving them a common ground to work forward? And what's at stake for NATO if they're unable to unpoison the relations at this Summit?

MR. GORDON: We're all focused on handshakes and smiles and all of that, but I actually think the issue is much deeper than that. It's not whether Bush and Schroeder shake hands. Rumsfeld announced the other day that the relationship was not unpoisoned. The German Defense Minister came here, it was unpoisoned, Schroeder and Bush spoke on the telephone. The personal stuff we can forget, even though it's interesting to talk about.

The substantive part though, is very important which is that the position of the Federal Republic of Germany remains that even if there is a UN Security Council authorization for a war in Iraq, they're not participating in it. That I think is the relevant question for U.S.-European relations, for NATO, and for the EU because the whole principle is one of political support among allies with common interests and goals and whatever. And even if Bush and Schroeder start talking to each other again, so long as that issue is there, then I think we have a real problem and a problem for NATO and it makes the United States -- It fuels the attitude here, to the extent there's a debate here, to what degree should we actually do things as an Alliance because that might constrain us. So long as you have attitudes in Europe that say even if you get UN legitimacy for the operation we're not going to be with you, I think it fuels those who hear what to say, I told you. They don't have much to contribute and they're unwilling to contribute politically even when they have. So seems to me to remain a real problem.

MR. DAALDER: It's in fact going to be a real operational problem because Germany is joining the Security Council and that very council will in fact have to debate, discuss, assess, --whatever the operative verb is in the resolution -- the potential material breach by Iraq and the consequences that flow from that. And Germany is now in the position where on the one hand it can say we won't participate even if the UN decides this is the right thing to do, but it now has to decide as Germany whether the UN -- or at least it has a one of 15 votes -- whether the UN ought to do anything. Germany will therefore possibly face the problem that it will vote for a resolution to authorize the use of force while itself nationally is saying that it won't participate. That's a really uncomfortable position to be.

But the alternative is to vote against the resolution because not only is Germany not participating, it thinks that the use of force by definition is wrong. In fact when the Germans are confronted with this dilemma it's not clear that they have resolved how they're going to get out of it.

As many of you know I have long thought that the way we handled this particular spat was not the most adult way, to put it mildly, in which to have done so. But now that we're talking, shaking hands and have unpoisoned relationships, the Germans have to start thinking about how they're going to get off the position which they are in, which in fact, having gone to the UN, having done all the things that the Germans want to do, becomes more difficult to sustain.

Remember, this was a position that was taken in the heat of a campaign, but more importantly in the aftermath of Dick Cheney's speech on August 26th in which the message was we don't believe in the UN, we don't believe in inspections, we believe in regime change by using force if necessary, in fact, preferable, alone. That was the context in which this position was created.

Germany now needs to start thinking about the context as different and perhaps start saying as a member of the UN Security Council, we're going to take this question anew.

MR. TALBOTT: But Ivo, Chancellor Schroeder has not left any wiggle room whatsoever as far as German troops actually participating in a war. But has Foreign Minister Fischer left open the possibility of Germany participating in some sort of after-action?

MR. DAALDER: Yes.

MR. TALBOTT: Would that possibly be the way they would get themselves out of the --

MR. DAALDER: It's one way. Foreign Minister Fischer has consistently asked a number of very pertinent questions about what will happen after the war. What is the context within which this is taking place? If I were the Administration I would start that discussion with the Germans in order to find a way to get them back into the game. Because ultimately it serves absolutely no one to have one of the most if not the most important bilateral relationship to the United States and the European countries being spoiled over this issue at a particular point in time.

QUESTION: Pat Towell, Congressional Quarterly.

I'm having trouble with this idea that there's a step-jump function in this tool kit thing with the new Administration and the lessons mislearned from Kosovo. We had the experience of Desert Storm. It seems to me that for an interminable period in the early and mid '90s as only European political scientists and diplomats can, time went down the rat hole of the Combined Joint Task Force. We could fill half this room with the paper that was burned away on that. My recollection is that that was to construct within the Alliance a framework for coalitions of the willing. Was it not?

MR. STEINBERG: But within the NATO framework. That's very different --

The Combined Joint Task Force and the Berlin Plus Model basically said that you were going to have a political framework within which these were going to be done. Now it allowed for this to be done just under the EU. One of the advantages of the CJTF was to give it an EU dimension, but there was certainly no discussion in the '80s of this being a framework in which the United States would be the political master for NATO forces to operate.

There wasn't a flip side. There was a one-way escape hatch into the EU, but not one of saying that we're going to build these things so they can become a division, a Joint Task Force of the U.S.

military. This is a very different kind of model.

MR. DAALDER: And the escape hatch for the EU was because there may have been circumstances in which the Europeans wanted to use force and we didn't. Whereas there was always the presumption that if we wanted to use force we'd do it within the NATO framework and didn't have to deal with that problem.

QUESTION: My name is Yuri Ribey. I work for the Finnish newspaper called [inaudible]. I have a Finnish question.

What does the enlargement, how does it change the role of the few outsiders that still remain outside the NATO enlargement which probably are Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland?

MR. DAALDER: I was flippant in my answer to your Finnish colleague earlier, but I think as the Alliance evolves the reason for not being part of it just disappears. I think this is true for Finland, it's true for Sweden, it's true for Austria. You'll have to make your own decisions. It's true for Switzerland. But if this is becoming an organization for and about Europe, and undergirding the economic and political transformations that have taken place, why shouldn't Finland be part of it? Even though there may be this fictitious Article 5 issue hanging out there that nobody really believes in any more.

So as the Alliance evolves, the non-members, particularly the ones that -- we left out the Irish. So those five that we're talking about. The reasons for staying out become less and less, I think, pertinent even in your own political debate.

MR. TALBOTT: I would think in the case of Finland, specifically with Estonia coming in, I would expect if this were a panel with 120 of us up here, I'd put the question back to you whether the arguments that [Mack Jacobons] has been making for quite a number of years wouldn't have new saliency. And if Finland came in, how in God's name does Sweden stay out?

QUESTION: [inaudible], Embassy of Slovakia.

Concerning new members. A little bit over two year ago when Foreign Ministers have met in Vilnius they laid the groundwork for what turned out to be their mutual cooperation inspiration and a little bit more impulse share in their own strengthening of their own institutions, reform of the military and other reforms.

At several occasions they have made themselves clear that for them NATO is relevant because it's a community of shared values and because it has a very strong transAtlantic link.

What do you think with the potential invitations being issued to seven countries with three other countries being already in NATO? Could these ten new members play in the area of strengthening the transAtlantic link?

MR. GORDON: I think most of the recent new members and expected future ones seem to be and indeed are among the greatest proponents of transAtlantic cooperation. They may be behind in certain other categories, particularly military technical, but in terms of -- And that's another reason some of us have pointed to maybe somewhat cynically, a Pentagon interest in having them in to make sure that NATO wasn't used as a cohesive unit but rather a tool box. But another aspect of it and argument here is that they're very Atlanticist. They may also be pro-European, but they're not, they have no interest at all in having some separate EU defense and getting the United States out of their business. So to the degree that we're thinking about this in terms of strengthening the transAtlantic link, I think enlargement is seen as and indeed is a major contribution to that. We're adding seven quite Atlanticist countries to the Alliance.

MR. TALBOTT: Mr. Ambassador, as one representing one of those seven?

QUESTION: First of all I wish to thank all panelists for your support of Baltic [inaudible].

MR. TALBOTT: Which was critical in getting it done, I'm sure. [Laughter]

QUESTION: And welcome to join Baltic celebrations in Vilnya this month.

But my question was very much in follow of the previous exchange of views about where NATO goes after Prague in terms of its membership and possible future applications as well as the NATO's key role in security, especially assuming a greater political role.

How would you describe, in the words of Strobe Talbott, the relationship in the future between NATO and OSCE, another organization which at the moment has been more of a political nature, and do you envisage any kind of change especially when NATO enlarges and other applicant countries wish to join NATO and new relationships evolve?

MR. TALBOTT: If I can just tag on to the Ambassador's question one other word which has virtually not come up here, and that's Ukraine. There's one relationship that is at least being downgraded if not deteriorating, and that is the NATO-Ukraine relationship. So if any of the three of you want to tackle that in the course of answering the Ambassador's question.

MR. STEINBERG: I think Karl Marx was right about the OSCE. It's going to wither away. I don't see any role, frankly, for the OSCE. I think just as the remarks of the Finnish participants here indicated, the extent that NATO becomes a pan-European organization, it's always hard for organizations just to disappear, but I less and less can see a functioning role for the OSCE. It's another place, another meeting, people have a lot of meetings to go to. You're certainly not going to see a lot of appearances by U.S. Presidents at OSCE meetings any more.

So I think it was an important transitional institution when there was uncertainty about how in

particular Russia was going to relate, but I think the more that Russia becomes comfortably connected to the NATO machinery and the less and less it becomes a problem for the neutrals to be associated with NATO, it just seems to me that there's not much role.

I think Ukraine, as I mentioned in the opening, is one of the key remaining questions about the stability of the European space, and I think that there's a limit to what can be done by any of these organizations, but I think it needs to have the two dimensions of one, keeping a life line open to Ukraine, but also making clear that it's not going to support the government of Ukraine at any cost. And I think that's the one slight danger that Ivo alluded to about some of the accessions here. Is that if Ukraine thinks that it doesn't really matter what it does because NATO is forced to have to have a close relationship with it, that it somewhat undermines the pressure to see change. It's very hard to feel terribly optimistic in the short term.

So I think there needs to be a connection, but I don't think we need to feel for the sake of Ukrainian pride that we need to somehow give them more than the government deserves. I think it needs to be clear that if the government is not prepared to meet the basic standards of rule of law, of democracy and the like, that it's going to have a very limited relationship.

MR. TALBOTT: And when would you guess there would be another tranche of actual new members?

MR. STEINBERG: I think we're quite a long way away from it. In part because the next question will be the Balkans. Certainly Croatia has done better, but I think to open up the door to Croatian membership absent some resolution of the situation in Serbia would be to exacerbate the problem, and I think that unfortunately Croatia will become a big hostage to the overall improvement of the situation in the Balkans. So I find it hard to imagine that Croatia will be admitted before there's at least a reasonable prospect of at least Serbia if not Bosnia and the others being able to come in. But others may have a different view.

MR. DAALDER: On that, it depends on whether the Finns and Swedes apply for membership. It in fact could go quickly.

I have long been a proponent of separating the Balkan countries as much as we can. There's an important message that Slovenia, which I think should have gone in in '99, that there's a difference. When you behave one way you get NATO bombs. When you behave another way you become a NATO member. I think that is a message you want to continue to emphasize. And to the extent that Croatia solves its problems, outstanding problems, with Serbia and it moves along the road that we all want it to move, I think that ought to be reason enough for membership. If the Bulgarians and Rumanians can become members, Croatia ought to be able to in the not too distant future.

One point on the OSCE because I think Jim's right. It ought to wither away. Whether it will is a different matter because institutions don't. But let's not forget what this institution did because it is an

institution that I think proves more than any other single institution I can think of, of the value of this kind of organization.

Go back to when it was formed more than 25 years ago and what it has done in the mean time. We're meeting in Prague. The very place in which Charta 77 was formed in part in response to what happened in the then CSCE. What we did in terms of arms control and stabilization and confidence-building measures that some of us broke our teeth on 20 and 15 years ago. What it has done in terms of minority and political rights, and continues in some senses to do in certain areas is remarkable. That's what the basis is for NATO enlargement, for EU enlargement. Because without that basis, without that dogged persistence, it wouldn't have succeeded.

And if you want to have proof that in fact it was important, none other than Henry Kissinger now claims that he was indeed the visionary of this institution and had seen all along that this is how it will be resolved.

QUESTION: I'm Arthur Lunsberg, German Public Radio, ARD.

The European Union is already building up a rapid response force, a project the United States never really liked. Now Donald Rumsfeld came up with the idea of a NATO response force. Will this be jeopardizing the European project? Will it be the second class funeral for the European project?

MR. GORDON: There's no reason it should be. Europeans have seen in this proposal all sorts of things as a way for the U.S. to undermine the European project or for a way for the Americans to put up a challenge to the Europeans so they'll fail so that we can walk away from NATO. There are all sorts of bogeymen ideas here running around about this project. And maybe it is a cynical idea, but I don't think it should be seen that way.

There's no reason it should undermine the European force. On the contrary, you could even have the same forces involved in both. One of the reasons -- The Europeans announced the force with great fanfare three years ago but haven't done much to give it the capability to actually be used. This is a way of saying, -- Strobe made the analogy to President Bush going to the UN and challenging the UN to be relevant, and I think this is somewhat similar vis-à-vis NATO. The Americans are saying the only way we can logically use force together is if you have the types of capabilities that can be used with ours.

And here's a challenge. Wouldn't it be useful if NATO had a force -- maybe you'll want to use the EU force, and if you do that's great and if it can do things, fine. But maybe there will be a scenario in which we'd want to do things together. If we want to do things together we have to be able to do things together. And here's a challenge. You can meet it or you can not meet it. But in no way should it undermine the EU force and I actually think it could be a very relevant thing. Not necessarily because we'll use it as the NATO response force on the given day when whoever is in it happens to be in it. But as a way of inspiring those countries to get their forces ready so they could if the political background is

there do something together with NATO.

If we ever have to go in the context of the war on terrorism to Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, places where we might not be keen to do alone, I think it might be quite useful to be able to do this as a collection of NATO countries.

MR. DAALDER: Also to emphasize, small point, but the European force has a different purpose than the NATO force. The European force is above all designed for low-end operations, or so-called Petersburg tasks. It's when there's the high end of peacekeeping, and nobody's ever said, but it's certainly the low end of peacekeeping, and this is supposed to be for high intensity combat. In that sense the nature of the forces are different and the challenge here is not only for the Europeans to do what they said they would do themselves, but in this case to do what they have long promised in the past 50 years to do as part of NATO.

QUESTION: Good morning. I'm Ed Chan at the Los Angeles Times.

I wonder when the President goes on this trip we all seem to think it will be a victory lap. To what extent might he be motivated to seek some NATO involvement if not only for geopolitical reasons but as a as a way to defray what may be a huge financial cost of an Iraq undertaking?

MR. STEINBERG: I just think that on the military side the Pentagon is just absolutely opposed to it. I think that there's an expectation that the European countries will want to play a role in the aftermath because they have a big economic stake in the aftermath, and that it won't take building NATO into it.

Now it will take building the individual forces into it. I can't remember if it was Phil or Ivo who said it, but virtually every European country will participate in this operation, but they will participate on the terms that Tampa wants it to participate in and not through the mechanisms of NATO.

So I don't think, even though in my prescriptive part I thought it would be a good idea to get SHAPE involved now, I would be very surprised if the President's going to offer any of that. I think there will be a belief that they can pick the forces that they need to pick under the terms that they want and that the failure to do any more won't affect the willingness of the Europeans to participate in the reconstruction side.

MR. TALBOTT: The ever popular, ever treacherous last question.

QUESTION: Barry Jacobs, the American Jewish Committee.

You all have touched on this but I'm going to ask it directly. NATO is a military alliance that at the moment not only doesn't have the military capabilities to really assist the United States out of area, but doesn't seem to have the political will. Even if they were to vote for it or to politically decide on the

rapid reaction force, do you all see anything at the political level that the actual tax funds and the monies that are needed to make this a reality would be appropriated?

MR. DAALDER: I'll go back to where Phil started. If the Europeans were convinced that the United States was interested in conducting joint operations, they may well invest in it. But if they're convinced as they are now that that's not the case, if they're going to invest in it they're going to invest in it for their own sakes. Which is exactly what's happening. The French are increasing their defense budgets not to build some NATO rapid reaction force, but to build up their own capabilities. The British have been doing that for the past five or six years now. If the Germans do it they will do it for economic reasons. They will reconfigure the force for economic reasons. But until they are convinced that the United States is committed to the Alliance as an Alliance institution and is willing to think about military operations within an Alliance context, I don't think they're going to be making the investment in military forces for the Alliance's sake.

MR. TALBOTT: This has been a very good session thanks largely to the vigorous participation by all of you. Please join me in thanking my three colleagues, and thanks to all of you for coming.

# # #