

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FOREIGN POLICY AT BROOKINGS  
REPORTER ROUNDTABLE

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, August 27, 2014

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. TRENKNER: Shall we begin?

SPEAKER: Sure.

MS. TRENKNER: All right. Thank you all for coming today to our reporter roundtable previewing the NATO Summit. My name is Tina Trenkner. I'm with the communications team with the foreign policy program at Brookings. Today, we have three of our experts to give us a little bit of a preview of what to expect from next week's summit.

To my left is Steven Pifer. He's the director of the Brookings Arms Control and Non--Proliferation Initiative and a senior fellow with the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security and Intelligence and the Center on the U.S. and Europe in the foreign policy program.

SPEAKER: And he definitely needs a shorter title (Laughter).

MS. TRENKNER: He was a former ambassador to Ukraine, and his career includes foreign service centered on Europe, the former Soviet Union and arms

control. He focuses on arms control, Ukraine and Russia issues at Brookings.

To his left, Jeremy Shapiro. He's a fellow with the Project on International Order and Strategy and the Center on the U.S. and Europe in the foreign policy program. Prior to rejoining Brookings, he was a member of the USD Department of Policy Planning staff where he applied to the Secretary of State on U.S. policy in North Africa and the Levant.

And to his left is Thomas Wright, a fellow at the Project on International Order and Strategy. Previously, he was the Executive Director of Studies at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, a lecturer at the Harrisburg public policy at the University of Chicago, and senior researcher for the Princeton Project on National Security.

A little preview of how this hour will go. Each of the experts will have three or four minutes to give some general remarks. Then, we'll open it up to any sort of questions you all have. We are being recorded. We are on the record. If any of the

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experts want to go off record, I just have to say -- ask first, and everyone just kind of nod in agreement, and they'll say again -- and we'll go back on the record again. We'll say when. Jeremy will begin first. Then, Tom. Then, Steve. Jeremy, take it away.

MR. SHAPIRO: Thanks. I definitely don't have anything interesting enough for it to be off the record, I'm afraid (Laughter). But I'll do a little sort of general background on the summit and talk about how the Americans are approaching it, and then Tom's going to talk a little bit about how the Europeans are looking at this summit, particularly, the east-west divides. And then, Steve is going to focus on the Russia-Ukraine mission and how the summit will affect that, and how the summit has been affected by it.

I think the background to all of this, I guess is that you know, NATO summits are usually pretty boring fare, we have to admit. The bulk of the stories are usually about the sort of outlandish

security arrangements. President Obama has supposedly said that he finds these things dull, and Secretary of Defense -- former Secretary of Defense Gates, reportedly wouldn't go to NATO meetings unless his staff supplied him with a sufficient number of crossword puzzles (Laughter). So, this gives you some sense of the usual atmospherics of this thing.

And a lot of the reason for this is kind of inherent to alliances that bear these sort of same arguments over and over again for in -- in NATO, this is -- you know, this sort of burden sharing argument that they have been having since 1949. Arguments over the core mission that they have essentially been having since the end of the Cold War.

And so, the NATO summit agendas, for at least the last 10 years have essentially been the same. Afghanistan, partnership, capabilities. Plus, a relatively fruitless and perennial debate about whether NATO, i.e., what NATO's core mission should be after the Cold War.

So, the Russia Ukraine has, I think, much to

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your benefit, shaken this up a bit. It has at the very least, added an agenda item and it's sharpened the debate. And even partially settled the whether -- NATO debates, which is perhaps the only salutary effect of the Russia Ukraine crisis.

And I think in part, because this crisis is Russia Ukraine, the issue coincides with NATO's final year in Afghanistan. There is really a strong sense within the alliance that NATO needs to come home; needs to refocus on territorial defense and needs to move away from the out of area counter insurgency stabilization missions that have characterized this last 10 or 15 years.

This is a relief to most everyone, but it is somewhat of a defeat for the American vision of an expeditionary NATO that they've been pushing for the last -- I guess about 15 years. Certainly, since 9/11.

This vision was fading even before Russia Ukraine, though, so I don't think that the Americans have been very interested in pushing against this

tide. I think they had largely given up on an expeditionary NATO that would be terribly helpful for U.S. missions. There wasn't a thought that it would be -- that it would be more Afghanistan's. And so, when the Russia Ukraine crisis came along, I think that they sort of slowly shelved this -- they just quietly shelved this.

The Afghanistan partnership capabilities agenda will certainly persist, though, in this summit. It was originally supposed to be the summit in Afghanistan where the terms of the withdrawal, the sort of strategic inflection point for NATO, as the U.S. ambassador of NATO, Doug Lute, referred to it, where the plan for the out together part of the in together out together, would be announced.

And although clearly from a press standpoint, most of the attention will be focused on Russia Ukraine issues, there may -- Afghanistan still may be where the action is in the summit, as this is the project that is very immediate. It's very up in the air because of the Afghan presidential election



mass and the failure to secure a bilateral security agreement with Afghanistan.

Then Karzai is not coming to the summit because of his problems with the U.S. and NATO. Originally, they were going to send the president-elect, but they don't have one. There are a lot of hard decisions that need to be made very, very shortly about how to proceed in the absence of an Afghan discussion, and I think that that's actually going to be something they're going to have talk about behind closed doors.

Partnerships. This is, at this point, sort of code for enlargement. I don't think there's going to be much happening on this agenda item. There's not much appetite with either the U.S. or the western Europeans for any further enlargement. The sole exception is Macedonia, which is too small to really explain.

But some allies do want to lay a marker that the principle that Russia doesn't have a veto over enlargement, and that any state can join when it's

ready -- when it meets the criteria is -- they're going to want to lay a market if that's still the case. And so, they're going to want to put in place statements like that in the communiqué.

And this is particularly relevant, not so much to Ukraine, but to Georgia, which has made a lot of progress in the last few years, and which is definitely going to be knocking on the door increasingly in the coming years. And Vice President Biden did just -- I think yesterday or the day before, re-emphasize that it continue to be U.S. policy that Georgia can join NATO.

Capabilities. This is all about defense spending. It's the sort of key debate, really, about getting all countries to adhere to this 2 percent spending benchmark. Currently, only four countries do: The U.S., the U.K., Greece and Estonia. European defense spending has really fallen off the cliff since the financial crisis began in 2008.

You know, even Greek spending is really aimed at Turkey, which is another NATO member, and it

seems as if to maintain the 2 percent threshold, the U.K. had to sort of reduce its GDP. So that's not exactly what people were looking for.

So, the U.S. is going to be looking for a recommitment to the 2 percent benchmark as a measure of a response to the wake up call of Russian intervention, and to preserve NATO as an interoperable fighting force. And as the president said, kind of laying down a marker for this in Brussels in June, the NATO summit is going to be an opportunity for every ally to make sure they're carrying their share.

I think it remains to be seen whether this is an opportunity that they have been waiting for, and I think it's going to be -- this is going to be a very hard sell. And actually, I think that this is the way that the success of the summit should be assessed, really, is the degree to which they get a commitment to that type of thing in real measures, moving toward it.

In terms of Russia Ukraine, the United States has articulated a three part strategy to

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respond to the crisis. Punishment of Russia, aid to Ukraine and reassurance of allies. NATO has no real role in the punishment part, which is basically about sanctions. It has very little role in the aid to Ukraine part, but I think Steve may address some of the possibilities.

But NATO is actually the main instrument for reassurance, and I think that the summit is going to very strongly reflect that. There's two basic elements to this reassurance from a U.S. perspective. First is the messaging part, and this is going to be about the U.S. commitment to NATO and to Europe, as the president has said many times.

The cornerstone of America's engagement with the world, the absolute commitment to Article 5 -- and this is, of course, the reason for the pre-summit trip to Estonia, which is a sort of perfect venue to make those statements. And I think you will hear these messages about the commitment to Article 5 and the U.S. commitment to Europe repeatedly from the president and other officials on this trip.

The second, more tangible part is about basing -- about the possibility of stationing or rotating NATO forces in Eastern Europe as Secretary General Rasmussen and General Breedlove mentioned just the other day. Steve, I think, is going to cover this in greater detail, but I just emphasize that although this is a very controversial issue, it's not, I don't think as much of a U.S. western European divide as it's often betrayed.

It's not a sort of case where (Inaudible) in Germany don't want this, and the U.S. does. The U.S., I think, is wary of this, as well. In the first instance, they have a fear that it's a Cold War response to a problem, which isn't the Cold War. Its problem is not the same as the problem. And then, it's not really responsive to the little green men problem that Russia presents; the idea that they're doing covert warfare as opposed to sort of traditional, conventional warfare.

But I think in any case, the arguments over the strategic implications of this basing question

hide the real issue, which is, who will pay for it -- get back to the capability arguments. If you could sort of wrap your mind around it, it wouldn't be hard to get allied acquiescence -- French, German, Italian acquiescence to NATO basing in Eastern Europe, if the U.S. wanted it and was willing to pay for it.

It would be hard to get allied contributions to that. And the U.S., given its own mixed feelings, is sort of unwilling to make this another area of outsized U.S. contributions. So, this is a sort of simultaneous debate over burden sharing and over the strategy. So, it's a little bit more complicated than the U.S. moving forward. So, I'll just end there and hand it over to Tom.

MR. WRIGHT: Great. Thanks, Jeremy. I'll be relatively brief, because I think Jeremy covered a lot of the ground. I just want to focus in part on the division -- the perception from Europe, and also, the divisions within Europe, and then, between parts of Europe and the U.S., and I think particularly on the reassurance side.

Because I think as Jeremy said, you know, it's important to remember that NATO basically has no role in the sanctions debate; that most of the action so far in how to respond to Russia or the Ukraine at the EU and US-EU level, or sort of bilateral negotiation or diplomacy. And it hasn't been -- you know, with NATO, we've seen this a little bit with sort of Rasmussen's comments when he's sort of looking for a role for NATO -- when NATO very much sees this -- you know, out there -- problems as something they need to deal with.

But you know, thus far, sort of the punishment side has been largely, you know, outside of NATO as an institution. And I think here, it's easy to sort of conflate the two and to say you know, NATO and the EU sort of work hand in hand. But in reality, they don't. It's not as seamless as the others should be.

This is a -- I think a stand alone summit where members will be looking for a way in which you know, they can address it. And I think the basic, you

know, divide is between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, and then, between Western Europe and the U.S. The U.S. has sort of sided up with Eastern Europe and the Baltic's.

And on this, I think the basic sort of division is that there is a perception in Eastern Europe and in the Baltic's that Putin poses not just a threat to Ukraine, but he does actually pose a long-term threat to NATO, because his long-term strategic goal in this view is to undermine the U.S. alliance system in Europe, or to show that it's hollow.

And how would he do that? The best way of doing that is to show that Article 5 is hollow; that it doesn't mean what it says it means. And if he can prove that in one instance, he basically discredits Article 5 for NATO for as a whole, and he would discredit NATO as a whole.

So, it is sort of an existential challenge. And in that sense -- and the threat is quite focused. It's not immediate, but looking over a few years, it will be to one of the Baltic countries, and it would



be, as Jeremy said, not as through a conventional invasion, but some version of the (Inaudible) warfare, little green men, to be seen in Crimea and thus far, a few months ago.

And that, I think here in the U.S., is very much seen as an Article 5 issue. I mean, there's no doubt Obama is going to Estonia and before the summit next week, and there will be lots and lots of statements about how Article 5 is sacrosanct in any incursion or any invasion, whether covert or otherwise will be a violation of Article 5, and will trigger the security commitments within that.

But that is not the view in several Western European countries. They don't believe that this is mainly a military problem. There are domestic concerns about whether or not reassurance with you know, contributions faces in the Baltic's, or at least in Europe would be politically acceptable or popular. And they very much want to try to downplay you know, that side of it.

So, the reassurance element is controversial

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in parts of Western Europe, mainly because they don't want to sort of militarize this in their perception -- militarize the problem with Russia. And there's also sort of a -- I think a -- this isn't at the leaders' level, but in the domestic debate, there is the sense of you know, is Article 5 -- you know, would we really come to the defense of the Baltic's in Article 5?

And so that's sort of, I think, you know, below one of the sort of concerns sort of below the leaders that will -- of the debate. And that's partly why those countries are trying to get these commitments, because they're trying to make it automatic, because in order for the terms to be credible, it has to be -- it can't just be sort of words. It has to be operational.

And that's what (Inaudible) said yesterday, I think with the basis, which they won't call permanent, but which they're looking for other words to describe, so that if there was any incursion by Russia into those countries, that they would be NATO troops, and not just troops from that country. And

that's really sort of the bottom line.

So, I think a lot of the discussions will be on that, but you'll have the U.S. and Eastern Europe on the one hand, trying to make that as credible as possible. And I think a little bit of foot dragging on Western Europe. And it won't be you know, as explicit as it will be in the form of the domestic debates in those countries, because I think very much, the leaders will want to go there, will want to open the -- you know, question Article 5 or anything like that. So, they will go along with a lot of it, but I think you'll see a difference -- I think you will see a difference in emphasis.

On the defense spending and the -- and burden sharing, I think it's important to remember that the U.S. has been beating this firm for a while, and there's been no response really --

(Simultaneous discussion)

MR. WRIGHT: -- as per -- yeah, but and Europe -- you know, the European economy has basically flat lined. I mean, the existential face of the Euro

crisis is over. But all of the growth numbers basically show almost zero growth. It's harboring dangerously close to deflation. So, there's serious pressure on European budgets, still, and there is no domestic consistency in Western Europe for increasing defense spending relative to healthcare or education or any of those other things.

So, the leaders will come under pressure of the summit to increase it, but that pressure is nothing compared to the domestic political pressure, you know, that they have. So anyone who paints, I think, that countries outside of those that perceive a direct threat from Russia will increase defense spending -- I think need to look for the domestic context in those countries.

So, that is not, I think, going to happen, although there may be some general statements about you know, burden sharing and all of that. But in terms of concrete outcomes, I don't think there will be a huge change there or a sort of cast iron commitment.

Just a couple of other very brief points. The EU Summit is this weekend, and they're probably going to choose a new EU policy chief -- foreign policy chief. That is not obviously going to come up at the NATO Summit, but I think it will provide part of the general sort of political climate, mainly because the lead candidate is the Italian foreign minister, Federica Mogherini, who has a kind of very strong opposition from Baltic countries from Eastern Europe, and because she's perceived as being salt on Russia.

It looks like they're going to put through her nomination on a majority vote, which is not sort of typical in (Inaudible) summits. So, there may be some bad feeling within Europe coming out of this weekend where there's a sort of exacerbated sense of you know, divide between the east and the west. I'm not quite sure how that will play you know, at the summit, but I think some of the -- some of the body language and some of the interactions within the Europeans may be detrimentally impacted.

And just very finally then on enlargement, I just completely agree with what Jeremy said. And enlargement has generally been -- I think had a lot of resistance in Western Europe. You may see some sort of push back or some change in that in terms of the principle, but certainly, there is no appetite for enlargement you know, to Georgia or others, mainly, I think because of the Article 5 concern, because there's no -- you know, if Article 5 was sort of triggered by a new member, what would that mean? What would that mean for the commitments that everyone has made?

That's not really been a question in previous rants, though. How come it's something people are focused on? But the Russia Ukraine crisis, I think, means that that will be up front and central in any future discussions. So, I'll hand it over to Steve.

MR. PIFER: Okay. I want to cover maybe two or three points. First of all, as Jeremy said, I think Russia has given NATO a new sense of purpose,

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which is basically renewed focus on Article 5 in (Inaudible) defense, and that certainly is the push that you hear coming out of Central Europe and out of the Baltic states.

And the backdrop here is, you know, maybe if we had something of a holiday in terms of thinking seriously about Russia, in the 1990s, regardless of Russian intentions, you had a situation where just the collapse of the Russian economy after the end of the Soviet Union really drove Russian defense spending down to the point where NATO didn't have to worry about the Russian military.

And even in 2008, when the Russians quite handily beat the Georgians, you saw a lot of concerns about the performance of the Russian military. And had the Georgians switched off their cell phone powers, the Russian military may not have been able to coordinate its operations.

But since about 2007, 2008, there has been a lot more money going into the Russian military. The ambitious goal that the Russians have set is that by

2020, 70 percent of the arms and equipment will be modern. My guess is they won't reach that objective, but they are trying to put money into developing a much more capable military than they have had in the past 20 years.

Other things that I think give rise to concern is Russia or Putin's demonstrated willingness to use force both in Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine coupled with rhetoric. I mean, the justification for what he's done in Ukraine has been this idea that Russia has a right to protect ethnic Russians and Russia speakers, regardless of their nationalities. And that's a concern particularly to two NATO members, Estonia and Latvia. Each of those countries has about 25 percent of the populations that are ethnic Russian.

A third point of concern is if you look at what Putin said a couple of times in the last four or five months -- his annexation speech in March, and then at a press conference he had in May, is that there really is a deeply held sense of grievance on his part against NATO; that NATO took advantage of



Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse; that NATO is impinged on Russian national security interests.

So, I think comes together where people now see, in Moscow, a threat, a concern that wasn't there a year ago. And I think that will be one of the organizing points for the summit. There is, I think, also concern about this new Russian emphasis on asymmetric warfare. The term that the Ukrainians came up with was little green men; soldiers -- clearly professional soldiers in Russian style combat uniforms in Crimea, and then in eastern Ukraine without any identifying insignia, which allowed the Russians to say they aren't ours.

Now, ultimately, the Russians did admit that the little green men in Crimea were, in fact, Russian troops. But it does raise a question which I think NATO needs to consider. What happens if little green men were to take over a radio station in Eastern Estonia? Is that a NATO issue, or is that an issue for the Estonians themselves? And I hope NATO is

beginning to talk about that.

A second point I think that comes out is what does NATO do with regards to forced deployments, particularly in Central Europe and the Baltic's? And it goes back to 1997. As part of by the alliance to reassure Russia that enlargement would not present a military threat, NATO made a couple of statements. One was referred to the nos. No intention, plan or requirement to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members. That's nothing going to change.

But on conventional forces, NATO made a statement along the lines of, in the current and foreseeable security environment, there is no requirement for permanent station or substantial combat forces on the territory of new members. And there had been some allies from Central Europe who said, is it time to revisit that question?

I think that's -- that debate has happened. There are others who argue that in fact, they should not touch the 1997 language. But you are now seeing in the last four or five months, a change in terms of

how NATO forces deploy in that part of the world. You know, before this year, really, the only substantial military presence -- and it dates back to 2002, 2003, was the Baltic air police admission.

The three Baltic states have no Air Force, so beginning in about 2003, NATO countries would take turns -- each Air Force supplying four planes that would be the Air Force for the three Baltic states. That's changed now. Now, instead of one country, it's three countries providing. And instead of four planes, it's up to 12.

You're now seeing also, four American airborne companies in each of the three Baltic states and Poland. The Pentagon describes that not as a permanent deployment, but a persistent deployment. I'm not sure there's much difference in those terms. My guess is that for the foreseeable future, you're going to see an American ground presence in those countries.

You've also seen in the Black Sea, which I think from between 2009 and 2013 was something of a

back water for the U.S. Navy, given the demands on its ships elsewhere. You've seen a much more vigorous presence in the last five months. They just announced yesterday that an American that destroyed (Inaudible) the Black Sea.

And again the purposes of this are really two-fold. One is to assure allies in Central Europe and the Baltic states that there is a NATO defense commitment. But it's also, I think, to underscore to Moscow that red line -- that its aggression against these states really is an Article 5 issue.

Now, I think the presence -- so far, it's been good in a way that -- not alone large numbers and not substantial offensive capability, but particularly with the airborne companies that the U.S. has deployed in the Baltic states, you do have a triple -- you have 150 American soldiers there, which I think is a tangible sign of U.S. commitment.

I personally would like to see those commitments matched more by also European ground presence. It would be nice to see, for example, a

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German company paired with an American company in Lithuania, a British company with the American company in Poland, which I think would be both reassuring to those countries, but also, signal to the Russians that this is an alliance commitment. But so far, I don't think the alliance has come to that point, and I'm not sure really, how hard the U.S. government is prepped on that issue.

The third point, I just need just a couple of questions on NATO enlargement -- I think both Jeremy and Tom made the point. There really is no appetite in Europe for further steps on enlargement now with regards to Ukraine or Georgia. No appetite for a membership action plan. And in the case of Ukraine, it really isn't an issue, because the Ukrainian government has said repeatedly since Petro Poroshenko became president it's not interested in deepening its relationship with NATO.

And I think that's driven by a couple of factors. One is, they understand that it would be usually proactive with Russia. But more importantly

to Poroshenko, is he understands that that would be probably the most controversial foreign policy issue he could adopt. And if he's trying to find a way to pull Eastern Ukraine back towards the key, talking about drawing closer to NATO is not going to help him to achieve that.

Georgia is a different situation. I think the Georgians would like to come, get a membership action plan. The Georgians' population is supportive of that. But I actually am sort of sympathetic with the European (Inaudible). It doesn't make sense to perceive down the road, and particularly until the alliance has a good question, which is, what happens if you give Georgia a membership action plan, and two months later, the Russians, under some pretext, invade Georgia and spend three or four days trashing the Georgian military?

You know? My guess is, the answer would be not much different from 2008 where NATO basically did nothing. And that's not a good answer, either for Georgia or for NATO's credibility.

But you know, the last question in terms of what NATO might do militarily for Ukraine, you know, my guess is, the alliance will not adopt any provision per se, but you may have individual countries, as doing what the United States is now doing, is providing some assistance.

And the U.S., so far, has restricted it to non lethal military systems. I personally would like to see that changed. But you may see allies doing it on a national level as providing some assistance to the Ukraine military. But my guess is that the alliance will not take a position on that as an institution. Maybe I'll stop at that point and open it up to questions.

MS. TRENKNER: Let me see. Is anyone on the phone line right now?

(No response heard)

MS. TRENKNER: Okay. I gave them a chance (Inaudible) (Laughter). If I can just ask you if, before I call on you, speak up a little bit so we can get it on the recording, and also, so we know who you

are. Introduce yourselves and proceed. George, do you want to begin?

MR. CONDON: Sure. George Condon with National Journal. At the last NATO summit in Chicago, President Obama was riding high both domestically and (Inaudible) in charge. Can you talk a little bit about his leadership challenge at this summit with so many problems with so many fronts? Are the Europeans looking for something specifically from him? What is his challenge?

SPEAKER: Well, look, I mean, NATO is always the leadership challenge for the United States. I think that the sort of discussion that we tend to have here about whether the president is weak or whether he's seen as weak doesn't echo too much within NATO.

I mean, they're certainly aware of it, but it doesn't echo too much within NATO. The U.S. is clearly the leader of NATO, whether it wants to be or not, frankly. And actually, the struggle is -- the struggle in NATO for a long time has been to sort of not relinquish that leadership in any sense, but to



get more burden sharing, which means stepping back a little bit.

And so, that means that the U.S. president at this summit, at every NATO summit very much sets the tone for the thing, very much organizes the debate. It's the U.S. which sets the agenda which will bring up most of the issues. And nothing can get -- you know, nothing really happens without U.S. support. Nothing really gets discussed without U.S. support. That doesn't mean that just because the U.S. support just happens that -- but really, the U.S. is the sort of motivating force, and NATO spends 75 percent of the money. So that's not too surprising.

I don't think that the president's standing is affecting that very much. Tom may disagree. He usually does on these things, but (Laughter) --

(Simultaneous discussion)

MR. WRIGHT: No. See, I would just add -- I don't disagree, but I would add that the perception in Europe is not that Obama has been weak on the Ukraine crisis -- right, and that they want him to do more.

The view has been, if anything, the opposite, that he's been very forward leaning, maybe doing a little bit too much you know, in certain -- for certain European capitals. That's of course, not true of the Baltic's and Eastern Europe, but they see him as responsive. And maybe they would like NATO to do a little bit more on the military deterrent side. That may come through the reassurance mechanisms.

But in general, the U.S. has been very much to the forefront of pushing a strong response and trying to drag Europe along. So I think that's -- you know, if anything, that will be the sort of context rather than you know, people may say in the Middle East that he's -- you know, he has not been as strong for the alliance as he should be.

SPEAKER: Yeah, and also, it's a vision. I would go back, I guess, to the 2008 summit in Bucharest where President Bush really wanted something, which was membership action plans for the Ukraine in Georgia. And despite a lot of personal (Inaudible), at the end of the day, was unable to

deliver that.

You don't have that kind of defining issue, I think, for this particular summit. So, I think there's less of an issue of you know, the president said domestic standing at the moment.

MS. TRENKNER: Go ahead, Angela.

SPEAKER: Okay. I'm Angela (Inaudible) with Bloomberg. You talked about the dated agenda of Afghanistan, the -- likely the actual agenda with Ukraine and Russia. What about Iraq and Syria?

Obviously, that will overshadow everything going on in several days between now and when the summit starts, and things could change more. But do you think that will be discussed either officially or on the sidelines?

SPEAKER: Well look, I mean, leaders, when they get together, they always discuss the issue that's in the headlines. So, it for sure, will be a big topic of conversation. They're sort of off line, individual, bilateral conversations, I'm sure. It may well even dominate them, although it's unclear from

day-to-day which is the bigger crisis, this one or (Inaudible).

But as a NATO issue, as a summit issue, I don't think it's going to be present. There is broad agreement, really broad and deep agreement (Laughter) with everybody that NATO doesn't have -- is unlikely to have a role in that crisis. And from an American standpoint, you know, this might be a sort of -- if you take the long view, this might be sort of an admission of defeat about what NATO could be.

But they don't want to pay the price of alliance management for reacting to that crisis. They've never even considered it, I don't think. And the Europeans, similarly, don't want to get involved and don't want to be pressured to get involved through the NATO vehicle, which is what happened in Afghanistan. So, I don't think it's going to be a summit issue at all.

SPEAKER: No, I think there -- I mean, from what I've seen in the reporting, there are some American (Inaudible) that's operating against -- tied

to Iraq out of (Inaudible) Turkey, but I think that's been on a bilateral basis, so the Turks had -- was not at all put into a native context.

MS. CLARKE: You've said that -- excuse me. Leslie Clarke with McCutcheon (Inaudible). You mentioned that the -- it could be seen as a bit of a setback for the U.S. has wanted NATO to be a little bit more -- I don't remember what you said.

SPEAKER: Expeditionary.

MS. CLARKE: Yeah, expeditionary. And you said -- could the administration sort of acknowledge that that's not going to work, or it changed it or is that on hold?

SPEAKER: I've never seen any sort of admission of defeat. This was a sort of long-term plan for NATO, that dates back to really, right after 9/11. And I think it's been fading from the agenda before the Russia Ukraine crisis started. It's been fading as there's been some disillusionment with NATO among the American military in Afghanistan. And it's been fading because of the defense spending crisis in

Europe in the last five years. And so, I think that the Russia Ukraine crisis is a sort of nail in that coffin, because it -- now it also provides another rationale to keep NATO alive and another mission for NATO. And so, I think there is tacitly an admission of defeat on this expeditionary concept. It wasn't, I think, alive enough to actually need to bury it.

SPEAKER: Right (Laughter).

SPEAKER: But you just don't hear it in the conversation anymore. I don't think -- it's the type of thing that they would have struggled over in NATO summits in years past, where the Americans would have been like, you know, we need to create capability to go abroad. We need to think about partners out of area. We need to think about our partnerships with Australia and Japan.

And none of that is really on the agenda anymore. And this -- the Iraq Syria thing is another you know, sort of straw in the window (Inaudible). It's just that nobody has even bothered to think about a NATO role for that. And you know, NATO does border

Iraq and Syria.

MS. TRENKNER: Colleen?

MS. NELSON: Colleen Nelson, the "Wall Street Journal." I wondered if you could talk a little bit about what the stop in Estonia on the way to NATO might accomplish, if anything -- whether that will lay the groundwork for anything to come at NATO or whether you can (Inaudible portion).

SPEAKER: The main point is the stop itself. I mean, the president comes there. You know, my guess is -- you know, I haven't seen the schedule. But my guess is, though, he meets and greets, you know, the airborne company. He'll give a speech or talk about NATO's commitment. But it's basically the stop there.

And it's basically just reinforcing the signal that the forces provide that Estonia -- which I think it feels itself among the most exposed of NATO allies -- you know, is entitled to the same Article 5 protection as say, Britain or France.

SPEAKER: I would just add, I think it is an important trip --

SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: -- even though it is sort of mainly about the (Inaudible). I mean, it's really important to underscore the Article 5 commitment that is taken very sort of seriously and literally by the member states, particularly those you know, that are exposed.

And if he did not go -- this is a matter of time frame to go. If he did not go during you know, this crisis -- I think it's not that it would be sort of exposed as hollow, but it wouldn't be particularly helpful. I just want to go back to one thing, too, which is unrelated, because this question of sort of an expeditionary process versus sort of a traditional mission, I think sometimes implies that the traditional mission is known and familiar, and you can just go back and sort of slide into that.

I think it's important to say that this is a very different type of threat than the threat that the member states would have faced during the Cold War.

It isn't a proper strategy for how to deter or defeat



the type of sort of hybrid warfare, you know, that Steve was describing. You know?

And there are various contingencies involving Latvia and Estonia that there really, you know, is no sort of strategy for how to respond at the moment. And so, I think that is a substantively large you know, problem that needs to be addressed.

So, there is a reason when NATO moves away from the expeditionary side of why it needs to invest sort of the time to try to figure that out, like it's not just you know, go back, just to a field plan -- you know, implement that and it's actually going to work, because it's a very different sort of challenge, even though it's the same challenger.

SPEAKER: Jerome (Inaudible) with (Inaudible portion) agency. Just to pull up on that one -- would this sudden (Inaudible portion) initiative (Inaudible portion) really (Inaudible) the relationship with Vladimir Putin? It seems he's tried pretty much everything. Not much has worked (Inaudible). Could that be a way to catalog actually where he stands

towards Putin?

SPEAKER: My guess is, it's going to more focused on reassurance of Estonia and the Article 5 than Putin. I mean, I think it's pretty clear that the relationship between President Obama and President Putin is a difficult one. They've had a number of phone conversations, but at least the White House (Inaudible) don't suggest these conversations are particularly productive.

So you know, my guess is that he'll focus really on assurance to Estonia. Certainly, Russia is going to come up, because that's why you're assuring the Estonians. But I don't think you're going to see a huge new pronouncement with regards to administration policy towards the Russians.

SPEAKER: I mean, you know, it would be remarkable unwise, I think so sort of use Estonia as a platform to re-launch his relationship with Putin. And I think actually, the reassurance -- the very act of going to Estonia is a shot across Putin's style.

And the other side of reassurance, if you

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think about it, is a sort of deterrent, threat toward the Russians. Essentially, what he's saying by going to Estonia and by emphasizing Article 5 messages in Estonia, as he certainly will do, he's saying I have put my credibility on the line, my personal prestige on the defense of this country.

I am associated with it in the way that, you know, Ronald Reagan associated himself with the Berlin Wall. And so, that means that if you do something, if -- I'm going to have no choice but to respond. I am committing myself and the United States of America to a forceful response. I don't know exactly what that will be, but this is the political context that I'm creating by this action.

And that is supposed to enhance the deterrents, and that's definitely a message to the Russians and to Vladimir Putin.

SPEAKER: Mm-hmm. And I think his presence there also enhances the deterrents present of 150 lightly armed American infantry.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

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SPEAKER: In the same way -- I mean, Tom is (Inaudible) -- in the '60s, what can the Berlin brigade do to defend West Berlin against you know, all the Soviet and East German (Inaudible). Basically, they can die. They can die heroically, but they die in a way that assures that the full might of American military comes to avenge them. And so, part of that is basically to bolster that 150 troops are -- as a troop war.

SPEAKER: That's probably not the message he's going to give.

(Laughter)

(Simultaneous discussion)

SPEAKER: Yeah, probably not in those terms, but --

SPEAKER: In terms of strategy, that is what --

SPEAKER: Basically, yeah. Commitment that if Putin was to attack Estonia, he would be running a very high risk of war with the United States.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

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SPEAKER: And that's what Article 5 means. So I think that yeah, it is a -- but I mean, I think it's designed so that he won't ever do that -- as if there was ambiguity. If there was serious ambiguity about whether or not the United States would come to the defense of Estonia, I would feel it would be a bit more attractive for Putin to (Inaudible).

SPEAKER: Exactly.

SPEAKER: And so, by making it clear, hopefully, it's a contingency that will never arrive.

SPEAKER: Yeah. And really, about affecting Putin's calculation -- you don't want Putin to this, you know, I can try the little green men gambit in Estonia at little risk, and perhaps you know, achieve what the Russians would consider a great victory of discrediting the Article 5 commitment. You know?

Part of this is making clear to them that you're not going to get away with that; that there would be a response, and that there would be serious risk of trying (Inaudible).

SPEAKER: (Inaudible portion). Do you have

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a little bit more about the 2 percent issue?

Obviously, (Inaudible portion) the United States has been pushing for a very -- very, very long time (Laughter).

(Simultaneous discussion)

SPEAKER: And now, as you said, we obviously have this issue with -- in terms of the east -- in Eastern European countries (Inaudible ) more of a western European (Inaudible). I mean, what can we (Inaudible portion) -- you know, is this going to be another -- you know, another instance where they are pushing very forcefully and nothing happens again?

(Simultaneous discussion)

SPEAKER: Yeah, I don't know.

(Laughter)

SPEAKER: I mean, I think that's certainly the context, and I think you know, that's the most likely result. I mean, I think that there is a sense that you know -- there is a sense, even in Western Europe that the defense cuts have gone too far, particularly in light of the Russia Ukraine crisis and

the new Russian threat.

And there is -- I won't contradict Tom in saying that the domestic politics of this are very, very bad in Western Europe. They always have been. But I do think that there is a small opportunity here. It is better than it was last year. And you know, the fact of the matter is that from a sort of economic perspective, these are rich countries.

They can afford to spend 2 percent. They don't want to. They have other pressures on the budget, as Tom pointed out, but it's actually not an economic capacity issue. And so it's -- you know, it's going to be a perennial push. We will always be -- my number one prediction about next year's NATO summit and the NATO summit 10 years from now is we'll still be talking about this. I feel really confident of that. I don't know anything else that's going to happen in the world.

But there is some possibility, even likelihood, that you will see some improvement on this issue. You might see a few countries, let's say

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France, get back to 2 percent. You might see a greater effort to spend money on the things that the U.S. thinks money should be spent on -- some pool of NATO capabilities, but also, the types of niche capabilities that -- or niche is the wrong word -- the type of capabilities that complement each other as opposed to just duplicating each other, so that you can spend the money a little as with -- what NATO likes to call smart defense, which is just you know, don't spend stupidly.

So, I think you could see some progress on this issue, but in no sense it would ever be resolved, and in no sense would the United States ever be happy.

MS. TRENKNER: I'm going to check on the phone really quick. Anyone on the phone?

(No response heard)

MS. TRENKNER: Okay.

SPEAKER: I'd like to say that I mean, some of these reassurance steps, though, are not usually costly. I mean, to deploy, you know, a company of 150 people, even for a year when you have a host country



that's likely prepared (Inaudible) barracks and so you know -- that could be done -- steps could be taken that are not going to break the bank.

SPEAKER: Mike (Inaudible), PBS Online News Hour. Do the NATO and EU summits -- do they compartmentalize? Because you were talking earlier about -- I mean, the Poles and the Balks had vetoed this Italian before. And now, if she ends up getting the nod because of internal EU politics -- and the Italians have to get some good jobs, so, well let them be the Foreign Minister.

How do you -- you have these divisions within the EU. I mean, are they getting -- are they diminishing, or do they end up just getting papered over at a NATO summit? Or does NATO have its business and the EU has its business, and they manage to sort of compartmentalize these things?

SPEAKER: I mean, it's a mixture of both. They do cop -- they are compartmentalized. Sorry. But they do -- but they are the same people -- you know, sort of the same leaders, same foreign

ministers, same defense ministers. So I think it isn't -- you can't -- you know, you can't segment it completely.

So I think that that is -- you know, it will impact it. But I think the bottom line really is that you know, Eastern Europe sees the Russian Ukraine crisis as a serious and direct sort of national security threat to their own interests, and Western Europe does not see it that way. And that's why this weekend, you know, we're lucky to have Margaret Meade and (Inaudible) as a candidate, unless -- I mean, the Baltic's and Eastern Europe don't have a veto, but there's sort of a practice of not insisting on a majority vote.

And that's -- in the July summit, that's why she wasn't agreed to then. And Venti has made some progress in getting additional supporters, you know, since, largely for reasons that have nothing to do with Russia or Ukraine. And so, he may insist on that this time, but I think it will underpin and maybe exacerbate the division, and it may increase the

desire for sort of reassurance and for Article 5 reassurance of the kind that we were talking about.

SPEAKER: Do you see the French internal political situation having kind of effect on this meeting? I mean, basically, the (Inaudible) government is in a shambles now.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I'm not sure how -- I mean, Hollande has backed Renzi early on, because they shared a same party affiliation, and I guess because Renzi is sort of popular, and his star is on the up and up.

You know, there was a desire to try to -- you know, for political reasons -- and since he wanted this so much, to get him to support that he requested it. And I think that has been -- you know, the French support has been decisive. I mean, if Hollande did not support the nomination, then I don't think it would happen. But he -- you know, but he has.

So I think it has -- it won't -- it won't affect -- I don't think it will affect this aspect of the summit -- of this weekend's summit and directly,

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but it will impact, of course, the other issues in economics and recovered as --

SPEAKER: When you go into the NATO summit, you have Cameron facing the possible splitting up of his country, Hollande before very weak. And the only strong leader is Merkel. How does that affect the European dynamics of the NATO summit?

SPEAKER: Yeah, it makes is (Inaudible) --  
(Simultaneous discussion)

SPEAKER: No, go on.

SPEAKER: It makes it a little easier, especially from a U.S. perspective. I mean, a weak French government is -- has many ills associated with it, but it's certainly a blessing for a NATO summit (Laughter), because a weak French government is not going to be a problem, and particular a government that's weak for these reasons -- for domestic reasons.

You've seen the French government both of Sarkozy and of Hollande become increasing close to the -- to the U.S. on foreign policy as its domestic situation has worsened. And that's because it just

provides it with a -- an opportunity to be more forceful in the world. And this resonates with the French public, and it's the only part of both Sarkozy and Hollande's policy which gave the any resonance, actually (Laughter).

Everything else is -- all (Inaudible) coliseum, but interestingly for both presidents, it was sort of a disaster. And so I -- I think that the -- from a U.S. perspective, especially the -- the weakness of the French, and even to agree the weakness of the British at least uncomplicated the negotiations.

The Germans have, I think contrary to a lot of expectations, turned out to be a very useful and effective partner on the Russia Ukraine issue. The president and Merkel have worked together. They've broadly seen eye to eye, but maybe more importantly, Merkel can deliver Europe. Right? And she has both the credibility and the position to do so, because she's seen as -- she and Germany in general are seen as a country which is not reflexively anti Russian,

and so which can bring along -- it's the sort of swing state in Europe in terms of Russia.

So, when the Germans stands up and especially when Merkel stands up and says the Russians have gone too far, we need to do something, that is a position in which pretty much everyone in Europe can accept, whereas if the French leader or the British leader does it, it doesn't matter anywhere near as much.

And that has something to do both with the power of those leaders, but also to do with the traditional position of the, vis-à-vis Russia.

MS. TRENKNER: Any other questions?

SPEAKER: Actually, one more. Has everybody moved beyond the NSA disclosure or is that (Laughter) -- is that still something that will be the object of hallway conversations?

MR. WRIGHT: That's a huge issue, still. I think I was in Germany, and you may have been there more recently. But I was there a couple of months ago, and I was -- I knew it was a big issue, but I was

surprised by how big it was. That it basically has not -- has not diluted, you know, over time.

So, it's a major domestic issue. I think at the leaders and government level, you know, there's a certain sort of going -- you know, moving on and trying to work together constructively on these problems -- you know, putting it over and having discussions on it that have been going with the recent Macdonough visit to Berlin over the summer, but trying to not let it affect other things.

But as a matter of domestic politics, it's very much set to the overall you know, context, especially in Germany. So, I don't know if it will come up in bilateral conversations, but it will definitely you know, be a part of the debate and discussion in Germany on -- you know, on Obama's visit to Europe.

SPEAKER: Yeah, but I think to be clear, Tom's referring really, to Germany here --

MR. WRIGHT: Yeah.

SPEAKER: -- more than to Europe as a whole.

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MR. WRIGHT: Yes. Yeah.

SPEAKER: It's interesting, the way in which this has been a German issue rather than a European issue. And I think it remains an important German domestic issue. But from my observations, it's never really affected U.S. German relations policy on other issues, particularly on Russia Ukraine.

They've compartmentalized it fairly well, and so when it comes to issues that might have to do with privacy or data sharing or intelligence, I think you're going to see this stuff continue to be important. But I don't think it's going to affect the issues that they're going to discuss at the NATO summit.

They've been very, very good at compartmentalizing it. And personally, to me, this reflects a little bit of the -- of the sort of German cynicism I guess on this issue, is an important domestic issue. But I don't really believe that the leaders on the political lead in Germany really hold thought deep in their heart. They're responding to



their public demands, but you know, as the sort of revelations of the last couple of weeks have shown --

SPEAKER: Yeah, they're spying on it --

SPEAKER: They're spying on everybody, too.

(Simultaneous discussion)

SPEAKER: And you know, the Americans already knew that (Laughter), for reasons which I think are obvious (Laughter). So, this has been -- this has been, I think, in the sort of public sphere, a sort of cynical gang. And you know, leaders are really used to that. It doesn't really bother them in their interactions.

So, I don't -- this is the type of thing I can remember from meetings that I would attend, not on this specific issue, but on other issues, where they would sort of get up and say, my talking point says I must raise the issue of this. We are very concerned and angry about this.

And the (Inaudible) says great. Good you raised it. Good. Do you want a beer (Laughter)? And then, they would go off and -- so, I think it is that

type of issue nearly, but Tom is certainly right that it's super important in the German domestic politics, and that does constrain the German leaders in important ways.

SPEAKER: And it would be very good if there was none (Inaudible portion) in the course of the next week (Laughter) --

SPEAKER: It takes the Russian to come out, but they (Laughter) --

SPEAKER: Well, if you're Vladimir Putin and you want to (Laughter) you know, cause some mischief.

SPEAKER: Well, there is -- one of the Estonian revelations was of the U.S./U.K. practice of spying on allies at summits. So, hopefully, they won't, you know, get wrapped up in actually doing that.

MS. TRENKNER: That brings up my follow up question for me. What sort of Russian presence as of (Inaudible) do you expect there to be at the summit?

SPEAKER: Zero.

MS. TRENKNER: None.

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SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Yeah, that -- yeah.

SPEAKER: Yeah, as an invitation -- I mean Poroshenko's been invited. There will be a native Ukraine element, but they specifically -- I mean, Russia will be there in spirit.

MS. TRENKNER: (Laughter) Right.

SPEAKER: And will certainly be an object for discussion, but there's no official participation.

SPEAKER: They did it electronically (Laughter).

(Simultaneous discussion)

SPEAKER: That is an important difference, I would say, that when Russia was excluded from the G8 and basically Putin was there anyway for the D-Day you know, celebrations and commemoration and there was a whole bunch of meetings with -- you know, between each individual member of the G7 and Putin.

And so, it basically made a mockery of you know, isolating -- stealing Putin from the meeting. I mean, this is -- this is obviously completely you know

different that not coming there at all, and it will largely be -- you know, Russia will be the main problem being you know, discussed.

So, I think it's a much clearer you know, illustration of Russia's isolation from the you know, the west and the G8.

SPEAKER: Yeah, but Russia also has a very different relationship with NATO than it does with the G8.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I know.

SPEAKER: And so actually, it's -- NATO has not commented on whether it invited Russia or not. The Russians came out and claimed that they had been not invited, and said that they weren't going to go. And expressed a lot of anger. But NATO won't comment on this -- won't even comment on Russia's comment.

SPEAKER: No.

SPEAKER: But this is the first time since the 1997 NATO Russia found (Inaudible ) where there has not been an invitation of the Russian president. Now in the past, in Chicago, he didn't come. But he

had an invitation to come. So the -- it is notable in that sense.

Usually, NATO has made an effort to reach out and invite the Russians to attend.

MS. TRENKNER: Any other questions?

(No response heard)

MS. TRENKNER: Any other questions on the line?

(No response heard)

MS. TRENKNER: All right. Well, we're going to wrap it up today. Thank you for coming today. I will follow up with you by email with the transcript which will be ready tomorrow morning.

(Discussion off the record)

MS. TRENKNER: If you want to have any follow ups with any of the experts here, please do it after I shut down the phone line. And thank you for coming today.

\* \* \* \* \*

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