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Key issues on the Summit agenda

The NATO Summit in Bucharest was the 23rd since the establishment of the Alliance. It was the most eagerly anticipated international gathering of 2008, since it was expected to bring solutions to some crucial issues to the future of the Alliance and to world peace and security.

The Bucharest Summit was part of a three-summit strategy that started with NATO's Riga Summit in 2006 and will conclude with NATO's 60th Anniversary Summit next year.

The 26 Heads of the State and Government addressed the enlargement issue and most notably the issue of inviting Albania, Croatia and Macedonia to the Alliance. They also discussed the issue of extending invitations to the Membership Action Plan (MAP) to two former Soviet republics of Georgia and Ukraine.

The NATO-Russia Council meeting addressed issues concerning divisions between Russia and the Alliance from its enlargement towards the ex-Soviet countries, to the Kosovo precedent, to the defense shield that the U.S. intends to set up in Poland and the Czech Republic, and to the urgent matter of energy security. Russia's outgoing president Vladimir Putin attended the summit; it was the first time for a Russian leader to be at a NATO summit since the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council. For President Putin, it was also the first and the last summit as in early May the newly elected president Dmitry Medvedev will officially be sworn in.

Operations sustainability and the ability to confront security threats in an effective and unified way also constituted major items on the summit agenda. Leaders of the Alliance reviewed NATO's capacity to provide forces for operations and examined ways and means of preparing for future security challenges.

The Bucharest Summit also featured a Young Atlanticist Summit that gathered over 120 students and young professionals from NATO member and partner countries.

Full text of the NATO Bucharest Summit declaration can be found [here](#).

Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan was one of the key issues on the agenda of the NATO Summit. Despite NATO's involvement through the 47,000 strong troops, Afghanistan is still ravaged by violence, being an important insecurity factor in the region. For almost a year now, NATO's top military commanders expressed worries over the success of the Afghanistan mission calling for additional troops and logistics. More and more voices within the Alliance said that the viability of NATO depends on the success of its mission in Afghanistan.

Canada and the U.S. have called on member states numerous times to increase their efforts and support for Afghanistan, but most of the European allies are still reluctant in getting further involved in the troubled country.

Ahead of the Summit, one of the big questions was whether U.S. President George Bush and Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper would succeed in convincing the member states to increase their military presence in Afghan battlefields.

During a recent official visit to London, French President Nicolas Sarkozy made a much expected announcement about France's intention to send additional troops on the ground. Later at the Summit in Bucharest he confirmed that his country will be sending 700 troops to the east of Afghanistan to bolster the Alliance's peacekeeping force.

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai said that Afghanistan will continue to need the support of the international community for a long time to come. "We would like an effective continuation of the two missions that we have here." "One is the fight against terrorism. The other is the rebuilding of Afghanistan and especially the rebuilding of the security institutions, the army. As it is a gradual improvement on our side, it is also a gradual reduction of responsibility on the shoulders of the international community."

NATO and Russia reached a deal on April 4 to allow the alliance to transport important non-lethal supplies across Russian territory into Afghanistan. However, the agreement will not cover movements of troops or air transit arrangements as initially sought by the Alliance. Non-lethal supplies cover everything from food to certain military equipment. NATO is also hoping for more cooperation from Russia on tackling the Afghan narcotics trade. Russian and NATO spokespeople officially heralded the deal as a sign of good cooperation between the two sides.

Enlargement

Georgia and Ukraine: Alliance leaders failed to agree to offer Ukraine and Georgia a Membership Action Plan (MAP), a gateway to eventual membership, but decided to review their progress in December. They agreed that the former Soviet republics would join NATO one day despite opposition from Russia. They believe that Moscow should have no influence on decisions on who is invited to join the alliance. Some European countries, including France and Germany, have expressed reservations, in part because of Russia's opposition. Other countries that have signaled their opposition include Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. U.S. and Canada have favored the Membership Action Plan for these two countries.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that the granting of Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine would have to await further dialogue. "Today, we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP," he said. "Therefore, we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications. We have asked NATO foreign ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting."

Macedonia: For 17 years, Greece has quarreled with its northern neighbor about the name it chose after winning independence from the collapsing Yugoslavia. But now this dispute has erupted into an international incident as Greece single-handedly blocked NATO membership for the country it refuses to call Macedonia. Because the Alliance operates on consensus, embarrassed NATO leaders had no choice but to bow to Greek objections and cross Macedonia off the list. Greece blocked Macedonia's invitation arguing that the country's name implies a territorial claim to a northern Greek province called Macedonia. Athens says it cannot allow Macedonia to join until the issue is resolved. However, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that as soon as the name dispute is resolved, NATO would automatically activate Macedonia's membership process.

In a letter sent after the Summit to 25 NATO members excluding Greece, Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki asked to exclude the name issue from entry condition. He said that his country had made numerous concessions in the course of the 17-year dispute with its southern neighbor, including constitutional amendments and changing its national flag as a sign of goodwill aimed at addressing Greek concerns. He accused Athens of denying Macedonia its national identity, language and cultural heritage.

Albania and Croatia: For these two Western Balkan countries the story in Bucharest has been quite different. Both countries received their invitations for the NATO membership. Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha said "With your decision you have placed great confidence in us. I would like to take a solemn oath before you ... that we value this trust, above all, as a great responsibility of my nation." Albanian President Bamir Topi described it as one of the most important acts in the history of his country and vowed to help other hopefuls in the region. "Albania will support the integration of the Republic of Kosovo, and will also be willing to offer its individual contributions within the politics of NATO and the EU for the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia," he said.

"This invitation represents the accomplishment of one of the two most important strategic goals of Croatian foreign policy," Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said. The other goal is EU membership. "Our path to NATO was not easy but our experience shows that the efforts are worth it." "Membership in NATO represents the crown of one generation's efforts to bring back Croatia to the western democratic family."

All three countries, Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, were backed by Washington and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said they had worked hard on political and military reforms.

European anti-missile shield

NATO leaders endorsed the U.S. missile shield for Europe saying in its final statement that they "recognized the substantive contribution to the protection of the allies" from the missile defense system to be deployed in the Czech Republic and Poland. Moscow opposes the move because of the threat it poses to their strategic interests in the region. But NATO

leaders said they "are committed to maximum transparency and reciprocal confidence-building measures to allay any concerns." In their [summit declaration](#) NATO leaders urged Russia to consider linking up its missile defenses to the U.S. anti-missile shield and the one the alliance plans to develop to provide cover to some allies that would otherwise be left out. "We are ready to explore the potential for linking United States, NATO and Russian missile defense systems at an appropriate time."

Following the Bucharest Summit, the discussions continued between Vladimir Putin and George Bush at their meeting in Sochi on April 5-6. Washington maintains the shield is needed to protect the United States from missile strikes by "rogue" states, first of all Iran. Moscow argues that anti-missile system at its borders weakens Russia's ability for a retaliatory nuclear attack in case of nuclear aggression, thus tipping the strategic nuclear balance in favor of the United States.

The leaders failed to find compromises on the main issues that divide them including NATO expansion and U.S. plans for a missile defense system in Europe. But analysts say the meeting was a success in that the leaders outlined paths for future cooperation between their countries. Bush announced a "breakthrough" after persuading his Russian counterpart to soften his opposition. A joint statement issued after the talks at Putin's residence in Sochi reiterated that Russia "does not agree" with the deployment of the anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. However, proposals made by the U.S. for strengthening trust would be "important and useful" if implemented, the statement said, adding that Moscow has an "interest in creating a system for responding" to potential missile threats. "Both sides expressed their interest in creating a system for responding to potential missile threats in which Russia and the United States and Europe will participate as equal partners," the statement said. Putin's acknowledgement that Washington has taken steps to defuse the bitter row marked an important step in softening the long-running dispute.

Young Atlanticist Summit (YAS)

Over 120 university students and young professionals from the Alliance and Partner countries gathered in Bucharest on April 1-5 for a Young Atlanticist Summit held in conjunction with the NATO Summit. Young participants from 36 countries had a chance to share their experiences and reflect upon current and future security challenges. They met with Alliance and national leaders and discussed issues related to the NATO Summit agenda.

Among the featured speakers were NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, U.S. President George W. Bush, President of Romania Traian Băsescu, President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai and some other Heads of the State and Government.

All speakers stressed that they count on the young Atlanticists to bring fresh ideas and prospects to the NATO vision and to the strategic security thinking. "The Alliance needs to move to the next level in projecting the reinforced message and significance of its responsibility as the core defender of our values. This is where your role as future leaders of the Atlantic community lies: you will be the ones to foster new solutions, new visions and an always renewed trust in the historic mission of NATO", the Romanian Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu said.

The event was organized by the Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS) and the Euro-Atlantic Council of Romania in cooperation with the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA) and the Youth Atlantic Treaty Association and hosted by the Romanian Intelligence Service.

Comprehensive YAS coverage will follow in the regular ACC Newsletter.

Recommended Readings

Redrawing the MAP in Europe

The Economist, April 10, 2008

THE job of NATO used to be straightforward: keep the Americans in, the Germans down and the Russians out. These days things are less certain. A week after the alliance's acrimonious summit in Bucharest, and an inconclusive follow-up meeting between presidents George Bush and Vladimir Putin to discuss anti-missile defences, NATO's future role in Europe's security seems particularly unclear. *Read more [here](#).*

Wider Black Sea: Concept and Reality

By Haroutiun Khachatrian in Armenia for ISN Security Watch, February 27, 2008

While the concept of the "Wider Black Sea" geopolitical region looks promising given the support of external powers such as the US and the EU, who see the region as an important buffer between Europe and the Middle East, upon initial examination, the concept seems hardly viable, for the states that comprise it have little in common. *Read more [here](#).*

How to Start Your Own Country in Four Easy Steps

By Joshua Keating, Foreign Policy, February 2008, Web Exclusive

With Kosovo unilaterally declaring independence and a host of wannabe states looking to follow its lead, you might be thinking it's about time to set up your own country. You've picked out a flag, written a national anthem, even printed up money with your face on it. But what's the next step? Creating a new country isn't as easy as you think. *Read more [here](#).*

The List: The World's Top Spy Agencies

Foreign Policy Magazine, January 2008, Web Exclusive

With the Cold War long over, the CIA no longer faces any real competition, right? Wrong. The world's top espionage agencies are as busy as ever. *Read more [here](#).*

Sources: www.france24.com, www.defensenews.com, Agence France Press, russatoday.ru, Reuters, Voice of America, National Post, Washington Post, BBC News, Xinhua, Southeast European Times, www.sofiaecho.com, CBC.

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