



NATO Is Not What It Once Was

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For decades, the Atlantic Alliance was the backbone of Western security and peace. In part, it dissolved with the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the Eastern block, as its main purpose for existence had been the formation a collective defence against these military threats. In the 90s, NATO adjusted its role to focus on bringing peace to the Balkans. However, the time and the carelessness of its members have created a situation in which the capacity to reach agreements and successfully put them into practice has become substantially diminished.

Years ago, the Alliance created summits when the national bureaucracies were incapable of destroying a blockade and in need of the volition and motivation from the most responsible politicians in order to progress. With the passage of time, meeting every two years, the summits became a place for official propaganda. In these meetings, they sang their own praises for past achievements and assured themselves that the future promised even more.

We now approach the Bucharest summit, which will take place in a few days, with much fear that it will not be like those of the past. It will undoubtedly be held because to cancel it would be perceived as a great failure. Unfortunately, there is not much hope for its success. The divergences among its members regarding how to solve the NATO crisis in Afghanistan will not be resolved, no matter how much Sarkozy promises 600 more French soldiers. Leaders such as Zapatero are defending exactly the opposite. Even though there is a significant numbers problem, even worse is the existence of such drastically conflicting views.

NATO, however, will leave Bucharest being discussed with complete satisfaction in the press. Albania will most likely be invited to become a new member. But is this really enough? Is Albanian membership the best way to measure the Alliance's success? Especially with the mess that has resulted regarding the role of allied troops in Kosovo, where they have instituted an

obligatory coexistence of Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians in order to guarantee unilateral independence for Kosovo?

What NATO really needs to do is face its own internal problems of relatively careless Americans and extremely im-

potent European military power. These strengths and weaknesses produce two very distinct images for the world to see. If the great powers of NATO do not deal with this paradox, it will soon become a meaningless alliance, with or without Bucharest and the coming summit.

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