

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

**RAND**

## *NATO's New Strategic Concept and Peripheral Contingencies: The Middle East*

*Shahram Chubin*

*Jerrold D. Green*

*F. Stephen Larrabee (Rapporteur)*

*Center for Middle East Public Policy  
Geneva Center for Security Policy*

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## **RAND/GCSP WORKSHOP ON "NATO'S NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT AND PERIPHERAL CONTINGENCIES: THE MIDDLE EAST"**

On July 15-16, 1999, the Center for Middle East Public Policy (CMEPP) at RAND and the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) held a joint workshop on "NATO's New Strategic Concept and Peripheral Contingencies: The Middle East." The workshop was attended by some 25 government and non-government specialists from the United States and Europe and focused on U.S. and European attitudes and policy beyond Europe, especially in the Middle East and Gulf. In particular, the workshop sought to explore four critical issues:

- What are the implications of NATO's Strategic Concept for operations beyond Europe?
- What capabilities are the U.S. and Europe developing to deal with new risks and contingencies beyond NATO's borders?
- To what extent are American and European policies and approaches to the use of force beyond NATO's borders convergent? To what extent are they divergent?
- What are the implications of these divergencies for U.S.-European relations? How can the divergencies be reduced?

This report summarizes key issues discussed at the conference. It is organized around several broad themes that emerged in the conference discussions: (1) NATO's Role in Operations Beyond its Borders; (2) European Capabilities; and (3) Western Policy toward the Middle East and Gulf.

### **NATO'S ROLE IN OPERATIONS BEYOND ITS BORDERS**

One of the central themes at the workshop was what NATO's role should be in contingencies beyond its borders and what type of military capabilities NATO needed to carry out its missions. The majority of participants agreed that NATO had evolved considerably since the end of the Cold War. The debate about whether NATO should go "out of area" was clearly over. NATO's involvement in the Bosnia conflict had made clear that developments beyond NATO's borders could significantly affect the

security interests of NATO members even if they did not involve a direct attack on any NATO member. With the demise of the Soviet Union there was now no serious direct threat to NATO territory (with the possible exception of Turkey).<sup>1</sup> As a result, NATO was increasingly focused on crisis management and so-called "non-Article V threats"--that is, threats that did not involve a direct attack on NATO territory. These new threats--or "risks"--were officially recognized in the new Strategic Concept adopted at the Washington Summit in April 1999. Most of these threats were beyond NATO's borders. Yet there was no clear consensus within NATO on how far NATO's geographic scope should extend. Most European participants at the workshop felt that NATO should remain focused on Europe and its periphery and argued against any effort to develop a "global NATO." For most, Europe included the Balkans and parts of the Mediterranean. But it did not include the Middle East or Gulf (though most participants accepted that Europe certainly had important interests in both regions).

American participants tended to take a more expansive view of NATO's role, pointing in particular to the threats from beyond Europe's borders, especially the potential threat from weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Several noted that it made little sense for NATO to have forces that were configured to protect territory that was no longer threatened. NATO, they argued, needed to develop better capabilities for power projection. This, rather than defense of national territory, should be NATO's main priority in the decade ahead.

Several Americans pointed to the growing gap between the U.S. and Europe in terms of capabilities to project power. In the last decade, the U.S. had made advances in several important areas:

- Incorporating modern technologies, especially information technologies, into its forces.
- Developing the operational doctrine to exploit the advantages technology provides on the battlefield.

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<sup>1</sup>Turkey's role was a subject of considerable discussion and emerged as a key theme at the workshop. See Section III.

- Recruiting, training, and retaining personnel with a mix of technical skills needed to prosecute a campaign that includes a sophisticated application of technology.

There was a danger, one American participant argued, that the U.S. might draw the wrong conclusions from these developments. The attitude in some parts of the U.S. military was: "If the Europeans want to keep up with the U.S., fine, but the U.S. should not slow down its advances in these critical areas to accommodate the Europeans." This was not, he stressed, the attitude of the U.S. government. Key leaders in the White House and the Pentagon recognize that the political imperatives for operating in a coalition will overwhelm the concerns of military efficiency. (Kosovo provided a good example.) However, they are concerned about the growing gap in U.S. and allied capabilities, which could inhibit the ability of the U.S. and its allies to conduct joint operations, especially in areas beyond NATO's borders.

This concern about the growing "capabilities gap" between the U.S. and its European allies was one of the prime drivers behind the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), adopted at the Washington Summit. The DCI was designed to bring about qualitative improvements in key areas such as mobility, sustainability, C<sup>3</sup>I. It puts emphasis on improving the ability to deploy and sustain forces beyond NATO's borders. In Washington's view, the European militaries are still focused on defending borders that are no longer threatened. As a result, much of allied defense investment is wasted or misplaced. Some allies, particularly Britain and France (and to a lesser extent Italy and the Netherlands), have begun to restructure their forces to put greater emphasis on power projection. But most allies, especially Germany, have not yet really made the transition.

Among the most critical areas where improvements in European forces are needed are:

- **Lift, especially sealift.** Most attention is on airlift but prompt access to sealift is also important.
- **Support.** Most European units are badly configured to support power projection.
- **Air Force equipment and training.** Most emphasis is on air

defense aircraft but what is needed is more attention to air-to-ground attack.

- **Munitions.** More emphasis needs to be put on precision-guided munitions.
- **Information technologies.** The U.S. is incorporating advanced information technologies into its weapons systems. The pace at which U.S. forces will soon be able to execute military operations could so outstrip that of the allies that integrated operations could soon become impossible.
- **Secure communications.** As communications equipment shifts from analog to digital, the problem of secure, interoperable communications becomes more solvable. The Alliance needs to ensure that the European allies procure such communications.
- **Fire power.** While some allied forces are acquiring the capability to project power, many of their forces don't have sufficient fire power to conduct serious warfare.

In the discussion, several Europeans cautioned against putting too much emphasis on the military dimension while ignoring the important political contribution that Europe was making to security. The Europeans, one suggested, tended to put more emphasis on political rather than military instruments. Concern was also expressed that the U.S. seemed to be increasingly inclined to unilateralism at the expense of reliance on multilateral institutions. Washington favored international law, one European participant noted, as long as it supported U.S. interests. But the U.S. tended to ignore international law when it ran counter to its national interests. Defending territory, he noted, was still important. It would be hard for the new members of NATO to get public support for NATO if NATO were seen to be an alliance only for power projection and did not concern itself with defending the territory of its members. Thus NATO had to find a balance between territorial defense and power projection.

Several Americans called attention to the impact of the capabilities gap in the American debate. Discontent, they argued, was

growing within the U.S. Congress with the manpower-intensive European forces and the recent emphasis on peacekeeping. The expanded peacekeeping commitments were creating difficulties at a time when U.S. forces were being reduced. American forces were overstretched and this was having a strong impact on the readiness and military effectiveness of U.S. forces. As a result, burden-sharing was likely to become an increasingly important issue in the U.S. Congress in the coming years. Europe would have to contribute more forces not only for peacekeeping actions in Europe but also for contingencies beyond Europe's borders where common allied interests could be threatened, they argued. Otherwise there was a danger that support for NATO could gradually decline in the U.S.

At the same time, there was a danger of a new division of labor in which Europe looked after European security and the U.S. took care of the rest of the world. This view, one American argued, was superficially attractive, but dangerous. It could lead to growing unilateralism on the part of the U.S. It would also result in a gradual decrease in U.S. interest in Europe--Europe would be left more or less to fend for itself in strategic terms. Finally, and perhaps most important, it would inhibit the development of a broader and more balanced U.S.-European partnership, which was necessary to address the new challenges facing the U.S. and its allies in the coming decade.

Considerable attention was also devoted to the impact and implications of the Kosovo experience. The French experience was particularly interesting in this regard. According to one French participant, Kosovo had taught the French some important lessons. The French had always assumed that the Americans dominated the Alliance and that their view would prevail in any conflict in which NATO participated. However, in Kosovo, the U.S. was not always able to have its way. In a number of instances, the Europeans were able to influence important decisions about targets as well as strategy. Overall, there had proven to be far more checks and balances on the U.S. than the French had expected.

Some Europeans worried that the U.S. was being driven by technology to adopt a doctrine that might not be suitable for the type of conflicts

NATO was likely to confront in the future. These conflicts were more likely to resemble those in Bosnia and Kosovo than the Gulf war. Thus there was a danger, as one participant put it, that NATO might develop the "wrong kit and doctrine."

Others suggested that the fact that it took NATO 78 days to defeat Serbia showed that NATO did not have the right forces and that it was incapable of making decisions in a timely fashion. There was a danger that the emphasis on air power and the unwillingness to take casualties, especially on the part of the United States, could lead some nations to conclude that the best defense was to develop weapons of mass destruction. It was noted, however, that this emphasis on "no casualties" was not just an American predisposition. Most European allies--Britain and France excepted--had also strongly opposed the use of ground troops.

Several participants warned against turning the effort to enhance Alliance military capabilities into a "beauty contest" in which European allies were ranked and their performance constantly compared with that of other members. This would be counterproductive. Individual allies had certain strengths. These strengths were often complementary. Thus all allies should not be expected to achieve the same capabilities at the same time.

Germany's transformation, it was generally agreed, was very important. Germany lagged behind Britain and France in reorienting its forces toward power projection. While efforts had been made to create a 50,000 man Rapid Reaction Force, the German forces were still primarily oriented toward the defense of national territory. In addition, there was a strong reluctance to abandon conscription. This strongly inhibited Germany's transformation.

Several participants, however, argued that Germany's record was better than many Americans suggested. The Germans had made considerable progress in recent years in participating in operations beyond NATO's borders--far more than one might expect. Germany, they contended, was on its way to becoming a "normal country." Moreover, it had initiated a new strategic review intended to reshape the Bundeswehr and bring it more in line with the defense establishments in France and Britain.

There was a danger that the restructuring process would be primarily driven by budgetary concerns rather than strategic considerations. The projected budget cuts, one participant argued, would make rational defense planning in the coming years very difficult.

While participants disagreed about exactly what contingencies NATO should prepare for, there was general consensus that if military action were to be required in the Gulf or Middle East, this would most likely be carried out by a "coalition of the willing" of NATO members rather than NATO "as an institution." Nevertheless, NATO could serve as a forum for discussing these issues and trying to build an Alliance consensus even if NATO as an institution was unlikely to undertake military action in the Gulf or Middle East.

#### **EUROPEAN CAPABILITIES**

A second major theme at the workshop centered around European capabilities for power projection. European participants generally agreed that for Europe, the Kosovo conflict was a sobering experience. It underscored American quantitative and qualitative superiority in key areas of military power. Seventy-five percent of the aircraft and more than 4/5 of the ordnance released against Serbian targets were American. Under such circumstances, it was hardly surprising that U.S. influence on the strategic and operational aspects of the war was overwhelming. The lesson for the Europeans, one European participant emphasized, was clear: "No capability, no responsibility."

The gap between the U.S. and Europe is particularly glaring in several areas:

- Modern aircraft.
- Transport aircraft.
- Smart weapons.

At the same time, the Kosovo conflict demonstrated major discrepancies in the performance of individual European nations, with some clearly doing better than others. France, with around 9 percent of NATO's defense spending, generated 12.8 percent of strike sorties and 10.8 percent of all sorties.



These disparities, one European noted, are likely to increase. The European "Haves" will become increasingly proficient, while the "Have Nots" will become increasingly less capable. Moreover, the weaknesses demonstrated in Kosovo--especially in transport aircraft--would have been more glaring had the European allies had to conduct combat operations in the Gulf.

Several reasons for the European weaknesses were noted. First, despite considerable progress toward economic and political unity, in the defense area, Europe remains a collection of disparate and distinct national establishments. As a result, European nations still have different defense policies. This makes a coherent, unified "European" defense policy difficult.

However, the single most important cause of the massive discrepancy between the U.S. and European capabilities flows from European force structure policies and associated spending priorities. As one European put it, "The Europeans reign supreme in one area: that of unusable and ultimately unaffordable manpower." The European Union fields 1.9 million men in uniform while the U.S., which has global responsibilities, has 1.4 million men under arms. Because Europe spends so much on manpower, there is little money left for R & D, acquisition, and O & M. For instance, Germany, Greece, and Italy, which together field 800,000 military personnel (close to 60 percent of the U.S. total), spend 12 percent of what the U.S. does on procurement.

History also plays a role. The U.S. has always seen power projection as integral to defending its national interests. The oil shocks and the fall of the Shah of Iran at the end of the 1970s gave added impetus to the U.S. predisposition to invest heavily in power projection forces. As a result, the U.S. was in a relatively advantageous position to make the necessary adjustments at the end of the Cold War, whereas Europe was not. Moreover, several participants pointed out, Europe (Britain and France excepted) does not have a culture of force projection. Defense essentially means defense of national territory. Thus the restructuring of European forces for power projection requires an important political-psychological leap that many Europeans find difficult to make.

The key problem is the fact that most European armies (Britain and Luxembourg excepted) rely on conscription. Conscription produces more manpower than is currently needed for the missions that NATO must carry out in today's--let alone tomorrow's--security environment. Consequently, Europe will have to move toward professional armies. France and Spain have already made the decision to professionalize their armies; pressure for the rest of NATO to do the same is likely to increase. However, developing a professional army is costly, especially in the initial phase. Hence, the movement to abolish conscription has been slow. As one European participant pointed out, at the rhetorical level, force projection is today generally recognized as a new priority but the practical consequences have yet to be drawn by many European countries.

In addition, in the initial phase after 1989, Europe tended to focus on "institutions rather than capabilities." However, this has recently begun to change. The French and British declaration at Saint Malo (December 1998) contained two important innovations:

- An emphasis on capabilities not identities or institutions.
- A stress on developing the defense capabilities of the European Union, including the absorption of the WEU.

These changes were endorsed at the Summit in Cologne on June 3-4.

The new emphasis on developing a European defense capability was sparked, an American participant suggested, by three developments in particular. First, the experience in Bosnia (and later in Kosovo), which underscored European military weakness. Second, the ambiguity of the American commitment to commit ground troops, first in Bosnia and later in Kosovo, which raised questions about how much longer Europe could depend on the United States. Third, Britain's strengthened commitment under Prime Minister Tony Blair to create a strong European identity, including in the defense field.

Developing these European capabilities, however, will not be easy. It will require three important changes:

- First, European nations must align their procurement systems and coordinate their defense spending.
- Second, they must re-examine current procurement plans

and direct funds toward shortfalls revealed by the war in Kosovo.

- Third, they must consolidate their defense industries.

One way in which the Europeans could improve their defense capability, one European participant suggested, would be for the Europeans to establish "convergence criteria" in the defense field. This approach worked well in the case of the Euro and could be applied to the defense area. Such a European-wide initiative, he argued, would make it possible for individual states to undertake domestic reforms that would be politically difficult in a national context. France, Italy, or Germany could not have cleaned up their budgetary act by 1997 if it had not been for a European discipline leading to the Euro.

In the defense area, such criteria, it was suggested, could focus on two areas over a five- to ten-year period.

- First, aligning military manpower as a share of overall population.
- Second, a commitment to restructure defense spending so that the aggregate of R & D, acquisition, and O & M would reach the level of the British benchmark.

Such criteria would have two advantages. First, they would not force the EU to resolve theological issues about Article V (collective defense), since the force structures they would help generate would be compatible with the (WEU) Petersburg Tasks, to which the former neutrals (Sweden, Finland, Austria) have subscribed; second, they do not cover the same ground as NATO-style force planning and Defense Planning Questionnaires (DPQs).

There was general agreement that Europe also needs to rationalize and consolidate its defense industry. European protection of national industries reinforces an inherently inefficient industrial structure. In the end, one participant suggested, there should be four or five big European defense firms of about the same size as American prime defense contractors. In addition, a Euro-American negotiation would help to open up defense markets.

Some participants questioned the will of the Europeans to create these new capabilities at a time of declining European defense budgets.

This decline, many agreed, had to be halted if Europe was going to enhance its capabilities and make the needed transformation. The impact of projected budget cuts on the German Bundeswehr was particularly worrying. The projected cuts could lead to a reduction in the Bundeswehr's acquisition budget by one-third, one participant pointed out.

Some participants questioned why convergence criteria had to be undertaken within the framework of the EU. Would it not make sense, they asked, to establish a long-term defense program within NATO. The answer put forward by several Europeans was that convergence criteria were about reducing sovereignty. This could only be done within the framework of the EU, they argued.

Finally, in thinking about future force improvements, NATO members had to ask themselves, "Improvements to do what?" The capabilities needed to conduct an operation like Kosovo were quite different from those needed to conduct operations in the Gulf. The Tornado, one European participant pointed out, would not be very effective in the Gulf because it needs a large support package. Thus in considering what improvements they should invest in, NATO members had to consider what type of contingencies NATO was likely to face in the future.

Major differences between the U.S. and the European members of NATO about the use of force beyond Europe's borders emerged during the discussions. While many European countries have experience in participating in peacekeeping missions on a global scale, only Britain and France, one European participant argued, consider the projection of force beyond Europe a core task for their military. Clearly no European state could match the global reach of the U.S. European participation in operations beyond Europe would thus largely depend on the nature of the crisis. The main driving force for participation in such operations, he contended, was likely to be a desire to maintain Alliance cohesion and influence.

There was also a widespread feeling, especially among European participants, that in most cases NATO would need a UN mandate to operate beyond its borders. Kosovo had not, many argued, set a precedent. As one European participant put it, the notion that NATO or any group of

democratic states could self-mandate intervention belonged "in the realm of propaganda, not international law."

#### **WESTERN POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST AND GULF**

A third major theme in the discussions centered around Western policy toward the Middle East. On the European side, there were renewed calls--by now familiar--for a larger European role in the Middle East Peace Process. Europe, European participants argued, had important interests in the Middle East and it should be a "player not just a payer." Moreover, its policy was "more balanced" than U.S. policy, which was widely viewed by European participants as being one-sided and pro-Israeli. Few thought, however, that U.S. policy was likely to change in this regard. The U.S. saw the Middle East Peace Process largely as its "baby" and Washington would be reluctant to share significant influence with the Europeans.

Several participants noted, however, that it was not always clear what "European" policy in the Middle East was. A number of European countries had strong economic, political, and security interests in the region. When their leaders traveled to the Middle East, they represented national interests more than European interests. Thus if Europe was going to play a larger role in the Middle East, it would have to develop a more coherent "European" policy. Only then would it be able to exercise real influence and act as a counterweight to the United States.

The nature of the risks and threats to Western interests in the Middle East was the subject of considerable debate. One participant suggested that the threats to Western interests in the region were not military. The main threats, he argued, stemmed from demography and terrorism. Another participant contended, however, that the real threat was not terrorism but organized crime.

Several participants warned against concentrating too heavily on "soft security" issues. There were serious hard security issues in the region, most notably the nuclear issue. If the Europeans really wanted to help stabilize the Middle East they would have to address the proliferation issue.

At the same time, there was a strong sense, especially among European participants, that the resolution of the issues in the Middle East required a "global approach." The issues could not be resolved in isolation. As one European participant noted, it would not be possible to resolve the proliferation problem without a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus a global approach was necessary.

The issue of NATO's role in the Mediterranean provoked considerable controversy. But here, too, there was little consensus. One American argued that the concept of the Mediterranean as a distinct geo-political region made little sense; the Mediterranean was simply too diverse and the problems in the region were quite different. Other Europeans, however, argued that the Mediterranean did have an organic unity and that it should be approached on a global basis.

Many participants also expressed skepticism about the utility of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative, arguing that it was too selective and had little to offer the countries of the region. The EU, they suggested, was better placed to deal with the problems of the region since it had adopted a global approach and its initiative was more inclusive.

There was a general consensus that the situation in the Gulf was quite different from that in the Middle East. The West, one participant argued, had been involved in the Gulf for a long time. However, the prerequisites for stability in the Gulf did not exist. As a result, the demand for Western involvement, he argued, will persist for quite a while. NATO was involved in the region through Turkey. However, in contrast to the Middle East, where the U.S. was reluctant to see European involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the Gulf the U.S. welcomed European participation.

At the same time, doubt was expressed whether the U.S. presence in the Gulf could be sustained indefinitely. The "minimalist approach," one participant argued, did not really work. The U.S. presence bought time but it did not really address the problems of the region. The West needed some political initiative to complement military pressure. Arms sales and the U.S. military presence were not sufficient to provide stability.

Others were less convinced that Western involvement could solve the region's security problems. One participant argued that if the historical record demonstrated anything, it was the limitations on what outside powers could achieve in the region. Moreover, there were important differences between the U.S. and European approaches. The U.S. seemed to believe that stability in the region was possible, whereas the Europeans believed the region would remain volatile and that the best that could be done was to contain the conflicts, not end them.

The U.S. and Europe also perceived their interests differently. In the case of clear-cut aggression involving a threat to the supply of oil, the U.S. and *some* European countries might be willing to use force, as they had in the Gulf War in 1990-1991. However, as several participants noted, the problem was that most scenarios were likely to be far more ambiguous than was the case during the Gulf War. In such instances, it would be difficult to achieve a consensus to undertake joint action. Indeed, the type of clear-cut aggression that occurred during the Gulf War was probably the least likely scenario, several participants contended.

While there was considerable disagreement whether--and under what circumstances--the U.S. could expect help from Europe in any Gulf contingency, most participants agreed that NATO "as an institution" was unlikely to get involved in the Gulf. If joint action were undertaken, it would most likely be taken by a "coalition of the willing." As one participant put it, it was important "to distinguish between NATO and *forces* of NATO." Forces of NATO members might be used in the Gulf but any multilateral operation was unlikely to be a NATO-led operation.

A number of participants expressed skepticism about the prospects for regional arms control. As one participant noted, little arms control was actually taking place in the Gulf. What was occurring was not arms control but disarmament compelled by the international community. Others argued, however, that outside powers could play a role in nurturing arms control in the region.

Considerable attention was focused on Turkey's role. There was no clear consensus, however, whether Turkey's involvement in the Middle East was an asset or a liability. On the one hand, Turkey served as a

potential bridge to the Muslim countries of the Middle East (though, one participant cautioned, there were clear limits to this role because as a former imperial power Turkey was mistrusted by many Arab countries). On the other hand, Turkey's growing involvement and exposure in the Middle East could involve NATO in potential conflicts in the Middle East in which it had little direct interest.

Several participants expressed concern that NATO might get dragged into a conflict in the Middle East if Turkey got into a "dust-up" with one of its Middle Eastern neighbors. Under such circumstances, Ankara might invoke Article V of the Washington Treaty (collective defense). While Article V was clearly conceived with the Soviet Union in mind not an attack by Syria or Iraq, the language in the treaty is rather general and does not specifically single out any particular aggressor. Thus Turkey could invoke Article V if it were attacked by one of its Middle Eastern neighbors.

Article V was a sensitive issue for Turkey, one participant noted. Turkey was unenthusiastic about NATO's recent emphasis on crisis management and non-Article V contingencies. It feared that the recent emphasis on "new missions" in the Strategic Concept could lead to a weakening of Article V and collective defense. These sensitivities had been evident during the Gulf War when some European countries, especially Germany, had initially hesitated to send reinforcements to defend Turkey against a possible attack from Iraq. This initial hesitancy had greatly angered Turkey and provoked some Turkish commentators to question the utility of Turkey's membership in NATO and the meaning of NATO's commitment under Article V. While these concerns had eventually been defused, the incident had left a bad aftertaste and had made Turkey highly sensitive regarding efforts to restrict the meaning of Article V.

Turkey's relations with Russia were another complicating factor. Russia, as a Russian participant emphasized, was increasingly concerned with the "threat from the South." By the threat from the South, Moscow had in mind a possible conflict with Turkey. This rivalry with Turkey had deep historical roots and had intensified since the end of the Cold War. Today Russia felt Turkey was seeking to expand its influence in



the Caucasus and Central Asia. NATO involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, he noted, would be regarded as provocative by Russia since Turkey had openly sided with one of the parties in the conflict (Azerbaijan).

An American participant suggested that Russia's concerns about Turkey appeared to be highly exaggerated and reflected outdated 19th century geo-political thinking. Turkish policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, he argued, was much less of a threat than Russian analysts and officials maintained. In the initial period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there had been a certain euphoria in Turkey about the prospects for an expansion of Turkish influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, this euphoria had considerably dissipated. Today there was a much more realistic and sober appreciation of the prospects for--and the limitations to--Turkish influence in these regions, though Turkey still maintained a strong interest in the development of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Moreover, Turkey's ambitions were constrained, he noted, by Ankara's membership in NATO. Without membership in NATO Turkey might be less inhibited in pursuing its ambitions in the Caucasus and Central Asia. But its membership in NATO helped to keep these ambitions in check.