



A Conversation on NATO

Robert Hunter , David C. Speedie , Joanne J. Myers

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Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Public Affairs Programs. On behalf of the Carnegie Council, I'd like to thank you all for joining us this afternoon as we listen to David Speedie engage Ambassador Robert Hunter in a conversation about NATO.



[David C. Speedie](#)

Today is our second program in our ongoing project on global engagement. Carnegie Council Senior Fellow David Speedie is the director of this new initiative, which will consist of a series of critical case studies in which he will examine the way America does business with the world.

David says that much has been made of restoring U.S. moral leadership, and so he asks what constructive engagement might entail. To answer this question, the U.S. Global Engagement Program, under his capable leadership, and with funding from the **Alfred and Jane Ross Foundation** and the [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#), will look at issues through the lens of a series of critical bilateral and multilateral relationships with allies such as NATO countries and questionable or non-allies, like Pakistan, Russia, and Iran.

In case you missed the first discussion, it was a conversation held on October 28 in which [David and Oksana Antonenko discussed the Russia-Georgia conflict](#) of this past summer.

Additional interviews with David and other luminaries, such as [Ted Sorensen](#), [Jack Matlock](#), [Susan Eisenhower](#), and [Gary Sick](#), can also be found on the [Carnegie Council website](#).



[Joanne J. Myers](#)

David comes to us from an illustrious career in international relations. Most recently, he worked at the Carnegie Corporation in New York, where he was Program Chair for the Cooperative Security Program, as well as director of the corporation's project on Islam. In

2007 and 2008, David was also a Senior Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Now I would like to turn the floor over to my dear friend and colleague, David, who will introduce his friend, Ambassador Robert Hunter. Thank you for joining us.

ROBERT HUNTER: And I'll introduce somebody else.

DAVID SPEEDIE: And we'll spend the whole time introducing.

It's a great pleasure to introduce Robert Hunter, both as an esteemed colleague and old friend and a fellow Scot. Robert is Senior Adviser at RAND Corporation in Washington, D.C., President of the Atlantic Treaty Association, Chairman of the Council for a Community of Democracies, Senior Concept Developer for NATO's Allied Command Transformation, and Senior International Consultant to Lockheed Martin Overseas Corporation.

Most tellingly, perhaps, for this conversation, he was, from 1993 to 1998, U.S. Ambassador to NATO and also represented the United States to the Western European Union.

He is the author of more than 800 publications. (I didn't check that figure, but I'll take their word for it.) His

awards include the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service and the French Legion of Honor.

The format here is that we will indulge, as the billing said, in a conversation for about half of the session. One thing I have found in having been at this Council for some time is that I have never known an audience to run out of questions. So we will leave, I hope, plenty of time for audience questions.

Robert, since the title here is "The Current and Future State of NATO," let's jump in at the deep end. The BBC's NATO profile talks of NATO, founded in 1949 with 12 member-states "to counter the threat of postwar communist expansion as the Soviet Union sought to extend its influence in Europe."

Now, almost 60 years on, it's NATO that is expanding and extending its influence—26 members, two more in the wings, reaching to Russia's borders. Yet [Ron Asmus](#), Executive Director of the Transatlantic Center of the German Marshall Fund, a veteran NATO watcher and a former colleague of yours at RAND, wrote this in a paper around the time of the Bucharest NATO summit earlier this year:

"Alliance members today are unsure and divided over a future common purpose and strategy for NATO. The alliance is again at a strategic crossroads. Having reinvented itself in the 1990s to address the challenge of building a new post-Cold War Europe, it now faces the need to reinvent itself into a security actor capable of defending its members' values and interests on a more global stage."

Now, there are various items in this quote, it seems to me, but first of all, NATO at a crossroads and unsure, perhaps, which fork to take—we could take [Yogi Berra's](#) advice: When you come to a fork in the road, take it—unsure of which direction to go in.

Secondly, "defending its members' values"—this implies something beyond the military alliance.

What is NATO, 60 years on?

Remarks

ROBERT HUNTER: First, David, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here.

I want to say to everyone here that it's an honor to be with David, who is an old friend, a distinguished colleague, who himself has achieved so much. I'm delighted that he is here at the Carnegie Council.

I had a friend many, many years ago named Fred Wyle, who worked in the Pentagon, who got so tired of people saying that NATO was in crisis that he had a rubber stamp and he would put that on the top of memoranda, and it would say, "At this perilous moment in the history of the NATO alliance," and then he would write the rest of the memo. That was in 1967. He gave me a copy when I went to NATO as ambassador.

I think it's appropriate to talk about NATO here at the Carnegie Council because it has been fundamentally, from the beginning, about values, about democratic values, about freedom and independence. If you look at the [NATO Treaty](#), there is nothing in there about any particular country it's directed against, as opposed to the [Brussels Treaty](#), which came earlier, which named Germany as a threat. You read it today and the NATO Treaty applies just as effectively now as it did then. In fact, Article 2 is about the common aspirations that we have.

This is by way of leading into, what NATO is trying to do today is not only to preserve the best of the past, but to open a door to the future, along the lines of a basic slogan—I'll call it that—put forward by [the first George Bush](#) back in 1991, when he said, "We want to try to create a Europe whole and free and at peace." What is that, eight words? One of the most fundamental departures in American foreign policy ever, one of the most ambitious things we have ever entered upon, which is to try to create a new security system in Europe in which everybody can participate, in which nobody is going to be excluded.

It was based upon, in addition to the ethical issues, four basic propositions:

- One, to keep America engaged as a European power. Everybody wants us there. Despite all these problems we had with Iraq, I don't know any European who said, "America, go home," something they used to say back in Vietnam, when they knew there wasn't a chance of it happening.
- The second thing was to preserve the best of the past, including Allied Command Operations, the world's first and only fully integrated military command structure—all 26 countries, plus the two more you are talking about, plus Macedonia (if the Greeks will ever decide that Macedonia can call itself Macedonia) making 29—in which all of these countries work together militarily—it has never happened before—to try to make sure that we will never again see the proximate cause of the two great wars of the 20th century, which slaughtered more than half the people who ever died in human combat—namely, the future of Germany.

That's a dead issue now. But there is an insurance policy to try to make sure that we never have to worry about it again. In fact, when it came to NATO enlargement and European Union enlargement, the Germans, under Chancellor [Kohl](#), worked to surround Germany with NATO in the EU. That's why they gave up the deutschemark for the euro.

- The third purpose: To take Central Europe off the geopolitical chessboard—a proximate cause of two great world wars, plus the Cold War—to lock them down so that they will never again be playthings for others.
- The fourth great mission was to bring Russia out of its exile, if you want to call it that, from human and certainly European developments and try to reach out to include it as well, along the lines of doing the opposite of what was done to Germany in 1919. When it was kicked when it was down, it helped produce [Hitler](#). West Germany was treated exactly the opposite in 1945, and look what we got. So the idea was to reach out to Russia, and along the way, to stop conflict in Europe, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo.

That's the fundament of NATO. It is, if nothing else, about an agreement of the soon-to-be 26 countries, what I call "the Three Musketeers agreement"—one for all and all for one. If any country is attacked, everybody will, in one way or another, come to its aid. In fact, the provision of the treaty, Article 5, that states that has only been invoked once on 9/12, by the allies, without our asking, because we were attacked. It was written because we would come and help European countries if they were attacked. The irony was, it happened exactly the opposite.

In recent years, beyond the basics that I have been talking about, strategic interests have moved farther east, not just with terrorism, so that at the moment NATO is engaged in Afghanistan. Who would have believed years ago that it would go to Afghanistan?

Why is the alliance there? Not just because of the concerns over sources of terrorism, over things that could hit individual countries, about the ramifications, but also very much because the United States was attacked. Allies are involved in Afghanistan, as much as anything, one, because they won't do Iraq, for reasons we could talk about, but secondly, because the United States is engaged and because the solidarity of these countries doing security together is so important.

It's also why it's so important that NATO not default on its commitment, having made it, in Afghanistan. One of the great strengths of this alliance is that it has never defaulted on a commitment once it has made it—never. Nobody ever wants to see it in the first place.

We in this country are clearly very much concerned now with what happens beyond Europe. We consider Europe very much stabilized. Now we are looking beyond it, certainly to the Middle East. The new president coming in is going to face Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Pakistan. It's not going to face crises in Europe, except about the relationship with Russia after what happened with Georgia and the horrendous historic question about whether Russia is prepared to live in the 21st century rather than the 19th century.

But the future of NATO is to take these basic concepts and ideas and commitments and then see how much else around the world it's necessary for us to do in common to meet our individual and common interests. With luck, we are going to do it one careful step at a time, so that if and when NATO becomes more engaged, it's still with a strong alliance, with common purpose, and with everybody in the alliance saying, "Yes, that matters to us." So one step at a time.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Let me pick up the question of Russia, since clearly it's something of the 800-pound gorilla in much of the discussion at this point—

ROBERT HUNTER: No, it's not. It's a 40-pound gorilla that thinks it's an 800-pound gorilla.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Well, whatever. The price of gas, I guess, has diminished from the 800-pound level, that's true.

But let me quote some recent writing you have done in an article, "[Georgia: Breakdown of Vision the West Had for a New Europe](#)." You make some key points.

First of all, in the matter of courting Georgia and Ukraine as members over inevitable Russian neuralgia, you say that efforts "to increase any one nation's security must also at least consider the potential impact on the security, real or perceived, of other nations."

Around here we like to quote [Hans Morgenthau](#), whom we discussed earlier today—his famous dictum in his principles of diplomacy of seeing things from the other side as being an essential element of diplomacy.

Second, you make the point that NATO, and the West in general, over the post-Cold War period has acted, perhaps, in somewhat bad faith toward Russia, embracing Georgia, which, as you say, has no great strategic interest to NATO; more generally, treating Russia as a defeated power rather than as a potential partner to engage after the Cold War—

ROBERT HUNTER: I don't think I said that.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Well—

ROBERT HUNTER: That's a paraphrase, but I didn't say that.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Barriers to Russia entering the WTO?

ROBERT HUNTER: That I did say.

DAVID SPEEDIE: The drifting pattern of NATO expansion; even in terms of the [NATO-Russia Founding Act](#) in 1997, "no additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces on Russia's borders."

On the other hand, you do speak of Russia isolating itself.

Then you conclude, perhaps bravely, "The Western allies flanked by the European Union need to return to the basic premises of transformation they embraced following the Cold War: engagement, not isolation; inclusion, not exclusion; understanding of the legitimate political, economic, and security requirements of all countries in the region," et cetera, et cetera, "and positive reciprocity to positive actions by Russia. When the time is right, the U.S., NATO, and the EU should each select a few areas of potential cooperation with Russia and test whether Moscow is prepared to follow suit."

ROBERT HUNTER: That's pretty well-stated. I wish I had written that.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Well, you did. How sanguine are you?

ROBERT HUNTER: I have been involved in Arab-Israeli peacemaking for 41 years now, so I'm always sanguine. You always have to work forward and try to get things done.

The basic proposition goes back to George H.W. Bush, "a Europe whole and free and at peace." We are not going to succeed—we Americans and we West Europeans or even Central Europeans—in building a new security structure unless we make a really good college try to see if Russia is prepared to play a constructive rather than destructive role within it. Maybe they won't. Maybe Mr. [Putin](#) and his Russia are so benighted that we will have no choice but to move in a direction that would lead to something we don't want to see, when it moves in the direction of confrontation. I hope that doesn't happen. Frankly, I don't think it's in Russia's interests.

My judgment, after what happened last summer, was that Russia was the big loser. It did something in the Caucasus where it thought this would be a way of asserting that it was back and standing tall, and that nobody really cared, that this was a way of getting everybody's attention—sphere of influence and all this sort of thing. They discovered that even though nobody in NATO was prepared to send troops to help Georgia—a very important point when it comes to thinking about whether you want to bring somebody into an alliance. If you are not prepared to defend a country, don't bring them in to the NATO alliance. Just don't, unless and until you are prepared to do it.

But the Russians now have to pay a price for this. Who would trust them? [Ronald Reagan's](#) phrase, "Trust but verify"—let's verify, but we are not even going to trust.

Who is going to want to put investment into Russia unless it's ironclad? Who is going to want to look at Russian investments coming west unless you are quite confident of it? Countries that have been happily— if that's the right word—becoming dependent upon Russian hydrocarbons are now going to try, even though it's going to take years, to find alternatives to that. Frankly, the idea of taking a "wooden ruble"—people are going to think twice about it.

I think the Russians badly miscalculated.

One of the most important things we have to do, on this negative side, even though nobody was prepared to go fight for Georgia, is to make it clear to the Russians that if they were to move against Ukraine, that's not some out-of-the-way place.

Incidentally, the United States can do things for Georgia. A handful of countries can do things for Georgia. You

don't bring the whole alliance into it.

With regard to Ukraine, if the Russians don't understand that that would be crossing some very deadly red lines, then we could have a real problem.

If—the other way around—they can realize they made a mistake and they can realize something which I believe to be fundamentally true—this is not 1921, when [Lenin](#) could withdraw the Soviet Union from the outside world. It's not 1948, when [Stalin](#) could do the same and keep all the Eastern European countries from joining the [Marshall Plan](#). Russia needs the outside world.

I have been quoted as saying something, so I may as well repeat it here, which I said after the thing with Georgia. Russia really hasn't done a lot with the money it has earned. It hasn't done a lot of reinvestment. It's essentially a rentier state, meaning it has an exportable commodity. The line I have used is, "Russia is Saudi Arabia with trees." I don't mean it as a harsh thing. But they really need us. They need us a lot more than we need them—

DAVID SPEEDIE: I don't believe they conduct public executions.

ROBERT HUNTER: Maybe not that at St. Basil's.

Yes, we would like to have a world in which we can deal effectively with the Russians for arms control, for continued stabilization in Europe, for dealing with Iran; yes, dealing in Afghanistan, transit routes into Afghanistan; in terms of Central Asia and the Caucasus, in terms of energy, in terms of global warming. There is a whole series of things where having Russia productively engage with the outside world is very much in our interests. But as I said earlier, for that to happen, Russia has to decide that they are going to live in the 21st century and not try to rebuild something that is back in the 19th century. We are all losers, but they are the big loser if that happens.

DAVID SPEEDIE: It's funny that you mentioned the 19th century. Our mutual friend [Michael Mandelbaum](#) wrote a wonderful monograph in the mid-1990s called, "[NATO Expansion: A Bridge to the 19th Century](#)." So the question of who is turning the clock back is an interesting one.

You are pretty tough on Russia. Again, let me invoke—

ROBERT HUNTER: I thought I was setting a standard for them to meet.

DAVID SPEEDIE: But let me invoke Morgenthau. Who is isolating whom? Again, the notion of seeing things from their point of view.

Let's say we are sitting in Moscow having this conversation, and we think of a period where NATO is expanding. I was not present at the moment, as many claim to have been, whether that commitment was made or not made. But let's get over that for a minute. We have missile defense deployment in Central Europe now. We have the Kosovo engagement. We have all these things that Russia should not worry about. But let's put it this way: We are sitting in Moscow.

How does this play out in terms of how Moscow ought to be—what I guess I'm saying is, haven't we put Moscow constantly on the point of playing defensive ball over the past almost 20-year period, and they have been reacting rather than—we don't have time to go into Georgia, whether [Saakashvili](#)'s somewhat reckless adventurism provoked the way Russia reacted—

ROBERT HUNTER: You mean that Columbia law student, Saakashvili?

DAVID SPEEDIE: Yes.

ROBERT HUNTER: Look, I think we started off the right way, with what I told you about George Bush the Elder's proposition, followed up by [Bill Clinton](#). When we put together what we were going to do in Europe, it involved the [Partnership for Peace](#), which was open to everybody and is the great civilizing mission, you might say, with the militaries in democratization and getting people past the old Cold War proposition, to look to the future. It still may be one of the most important things NATO has ever done. Enlargement for some countries, beginning with the ones that surround Germany, and on the classic invasion route in both directions—I used to say to my Russian friends, "You were invaded by Charles XII, by Napoleon, by the Kaiser, and by Hitler. We have now stabilized your western frontier. We have. It's really true—free, for nothing. We've given you permanent stability there."

How much farther in NATO enlargement? What has happened has been only to those areas which will continue to ratify this stabilization. That's one reason I am against admitting Georgia to NATO, not just because nobody is

really willing to defend Georgia. We saw that happen. NATO made this incredibly, I thought, reckless pledge at Bucharest—I was there and I just went nuts when it happened—saying Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO. That's the moment of commitment. That says, "Strategically, we are willing to defend you."

Then, when Saakashvili did what he did, thinking we were going to defend him, Putin got upset because he thought it was going to happen. Saakashvili provoked, the Russians overreacted, just laying a trap for him, and then nobody was prepared to defend Georgia. Worse than useless.

That's why I also say it's important for Russia not to miscalculate over Ukraine.

Now, we did a number of things and we failed to do some things.

One, I think the geopolitical—in the 1990s, we did a pretty good job.

We did not let Russia into the World Trade Organization, which was the more important thing. For many of these Central European countries, being involved in the European Union was more important than being involved in NATO. In fact, I used to say the man from Mars, looking down, would say, what do they need from NATO? Partnership for Peace, transformative. Do they need NATO membership? No. What they need is the European Union.

They saw it the other way around: Unless we can have our security perspective solid, we're not going to be able to get on with democratization, get on with market economies, and the like.

Somebody asked, about a decade ago—they had the three Baltic presidents. They said, "If you had to choose between joining NATO and the European Union, what would you choose?"

Instant unanimous answer: NATO. They knew they would also get the European Union, but they also had to have that assurance to get on with it.

We should have brought Russia into WTO right away, the hell with whether they met the criteria or not. This is just nickel-and-dime stuff.

DAVID SPEEDIE: There was some debate within Russia, of course, on the benefits of WTO membership.

ROBERT HUNTER: Sure, but I doubt, if it had been offered, they would have turned it down.

What did we do that was questionable? You quoted the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. If we are going to have some countries coming into NATO, Central Europe, the Partnership for Peace, which Russia joined, relations with the European Union, doing things in Bosnia—but to grapple with Russia and give it an engagement with NATO, which is now a thing called the NATO-Russia Council.

In fact, after the dust-up over Georgia, the NATO-Russia Council was suspended. NATO stopped it. I thought that was a big mistake. I'm a great believer in "hold your friends close and your enemies closer." We are, incidentally, the only country in the world that doesn't talk to its enemies, that you have to pass a test for us to talk to—the only country in the world. I dare anybody to come up with another country on that list. I don't think you will be able to.

Last week, NATO decided to reopen this dialogue with the Russians. Good idea.

Incidentally, you quoted the NATO-Russia Founding Act, in which NATO said, "Look, we're going to take these countries in, but we're not going to move the NATO military frontier further east." We followed the letter of that commitment; we broke the spirit of it by putting bases in Romania and Bulgaria. Go and look at it.

Incidentally, it was a unilateral statement drafted by [Sandy Vershbow](#) at a dining room table in Brussels, stated unilaterally by the West that you quoted earlier, stuck into the NATO-Russia Founding Act. We weren't going to negotiate it with the Russians. But then we broke it.

The idea of these antimissile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic—the Russians know they aren't directed against them, but they see that as another encroachment. In fact, it's an anti-Iranian thing. I personally believe it's seven, eight, nine years early, anyway. We have gone through a lot [inaudible] over this particular thing.

The independence of Kosovo, why we made them independent, we can debate that. The Russians turned around and said, "If you're going to do it for Kosovo, what about South Ossetia and what about Abkhazia?" The Russians aren't wrong. We said, "This is different," blah, blah, blah, all this kind of stuff, a lot of words.

These were, I think, misplays. We took some advantage there. The Russians misplayed it over Georgia. Pull back. Grown-ups take over. Let's recognize that they need us, we need them. Let's find a way to build forward. But it does have to be based on Putin's and [Medvedev](#)'s perception that Russia has to live in the 21st century. The door is open to them.

DAVID SPEEDIE: I will open it up to the floor, with one last thought on that score of what Putin and Medvedev are saying.

ROBERT HUNTER: You say it better than I do. That's another Russian ploy, to have a president whose name I can't pronounce. The Georgians, too.

DAVID SPEEDIE: We'll have a seminar later.

The Russians may, as you say, be inclined to enter the 21st century. The question is, in what guise? [Lavrov](#), the foreign minister—there's an easy name—has spoken about the inertia of bloc approaches. I would imagine that he may have NATO in mind. Medvedev, a little more positively, has spoken about new security architecture for Europe.

Aren't the Russians looking, at this point, beyond NATO? The question of the 1990s was, when will Russia be offered membership in NATO? Don't you think they are perhaps thinking a little more transformationally at this point?

ROBERT HUNTER: I think nobody is fooled by the proposals that have been made by the Russians to dismantle the existing architecture and have something which is much broader, in which they will play a much greater role than they have any right to play. But also that's going to lead to dismantling of things that work.

Having said that, I think it continues to be important that we do whatever is necessary to indicate that we are not running a bloc approach. Some people in Central Europe see it that way. You can understand, coming out of the situation they had during the Cold War, being under Soviet tutelage with communist regimes, that they tend to look at it in zero-sum terms. Our effort, through Partnership for Peace and otherwise, is to say education has to be there, as well as with the Russians.

These countries now have the commitment of NATO and the commitment of the United States, which is a very potent thing—we sometimes minimize the extent to which that is seen as potent in other parts of the world—to move beyond the sphere-of-influence approach, to move beyond the bloc approach, which is what we have been trying to do under the first George Bush, under Bill Clinton, and through just about all the time of the current [Bush](#), and it will continue, I'm confident, under the new president who is going to be inaugurated.

To go back to balance of power, to go back to sphere of influence, means we all lose. We lose this first promise, maybe in all of European history, to move beyond that, which so far in Central Europe has had a miraculous success. If we get back to saying we'll just go back to blocs, think of how much we all lose. I think that is just negative naysaying. There is no particular reason to go in that direction. Frankly, we would just be shooting ourselves in the foot if we did that.

DAVID SPEEDIE: One final, final point. I can't let this go without some thought of the intra-NATO situation at this point. You mentioned Afghanistan and the notion that we are in this together with allies. Yet you talk about in another recent article, "[Getting it Right with Europe—From Day One](#)." This is in *American Foreign Policy Interests*. It's a terrific article.

ROBERT HUNTER: I knew I shouldn't have sent you this stuff.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Looking ahead to the 2009 summit that will be the third of these sorts of transformation-of-NATO, the new NATO, taking place next year in France and Germany, two points seem to occur.

First of all, the United States will continue—the president-elect has asked for two additional combat brigades for Afghanistan. That will come with a request for the allies to step up also in Afghanistan, a commitment they seemed reluctant to make when economic times were a lot better than they currently are.

Secondly, you make the point—and I hope this isn't a paraphrase—that the United States must see NATO as a primary forum—in other words, a place where there is genuine consultation, and not just an agreeably cozy clubhouse where allies are informed of U.S. intentions after the fact.

There are stresses within NATO at this point, are there not?

ROBERT HUNTER: There are always stresses with NATO.

One of the great strengths of the NATO alliance is that every decision—every decision—is taken by consensus, never a vote. When I was the NATO ambassador a decade ago, I was supposedly the 800-pound gorilla. If I couldn't convince the other 15 sitting in the room, nothing happened. In fact, every single ally has the capacity to say no.

Right now NATO has a problem of trying to work constructively with the European Union, especially in Afghanistan. Turkey is blocking that, on the grounds that Cyprus was let into the European Union and Turkey is not having its negotiation with the European Union move forward. So every time, it vetoes this constructive effort. We are all paying a heavy price in Afghanistan for it. In fact, it goes so far as that when there are efforts to cooperate on the ground in Afghanistan, the Turks stand up and say, "You can't do it."

That's one thing that has to be sorted out, I think, in the future.

To look at the Afghan situation, every single military commander out there—I stress the word "military"—says that success in Afghanistan is only partly military. The military, to use an old NATO image, is the shield. The sword is good governance, reconstruction, and development. It's expensive. It requires people on the ground. There are things called provincial reconstruction teams—lots of folks there, led by Afghans, in terms of what Afghans want to do in their lives. These are things we learned in the West, after the Second World War. It's what people want in their own lives.

During Vietnam, we used to talk about "hearts and minds." It was kind of an ancillary thing. In Afghanistan, that's the key thing. As the last but one NATO commander, General Sir [David Richards](#), a Brit, said, 70 percent of the Afghans haven't decided yet whether they are going to prevail—that is, the Taliban and al Qaeda—or whether the government in Kabul, with its friends from abroad, is going to prevail. He got in trouble for it with some people. The only problem was, he was probably underestimating the number.

The real issue is not so much how many more troops NATO will put in there. It is, what other things can one have? I have been pushing this for quite some time. We need, I think, a European Union supremo on this side. We need an awful lot more resources, whether it's alternatives to poppies, training police, training the military, building things, helping local councils get on with their lives, on and on and on and on. That's the real answer. It's a human matter, of which the military is actually the relatively small part.

A similar thing we are finding in Iraq. We learned this, in the first place, in Bosnia after the fighting stopped, and in Kosovo. NATO and now the European Union have been in Bosnia for 13 years. We're still not there yet, but nobody has died. In Kosovo, since 1999. We're still not there yet, but nobody has died. It takes a while. But at least it offers hope and promise in people's lives.

This is a major thing that NATO, working with the European Union and other institutions—with the United Nations, with the [Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe](#), with the [Council of Europe](#), with the private sector, and with a host of nongovernmental organizations. The U.S. military, the NATO military in Afghanistan know that if they are going to succeed, they have to have a ton of NGOs succeeding and doing these incredibly useful things. This is a whole transformation of the culture of what we mean by "security."

DAVID SPEEDIE: Yes. In asking Joanne to invite the audience, I have to just reflect that this notion of the military working with NGOs and so on—we did a major report at the Carnegie Corporation in the 1990s on preventing deadly conflict, and this whole clarion call for the military and regional and international organizations to engage with NGOs. Would that it will happen.

ROBERT HUNTER: Some will and some won't. With some you want them to do their thing, and stay away from them. They want nothing to do with the military. In fact, if the military deals with them, they make them targets. Others, like Save the Children, welcome this engagement. So you have to do it as you find it.

PARTICIPANT: And Rotary.

ROBERT HUNTER: Yes, there you go.

JOANNE MYERS: At this time we are going to open the floor to questions.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: How far is NATO prepared to go beyond military to nation building? That's question number one.

Number two, to what extent could we consider NATO as a kind of fallback for the UN Security Council when the Security Council is paralyzed?

ROBERT HUNTER: On the first one, I think it's striking that you are a Canadian, because the Canadian government has a thing called [CANADEM](#), which is civilians in a reserve corps. When Canadian forces deploy, CANADEM also deploys, as in Afghanistan and elsewhere, to do those things that the Canadian forces aren't equipped to do and wouldn't do very well, perhaps, anyway.

It's my hope that NATO itself won't get into nation building, because they are not equipped for it. We have all these other institutions that can do it, the NGOs, some private-sector. You have the European Union, et cetera, et cetera. So I hope NATO doesn't try to get into an area—except in the sense of working together, with the shots being called by people who are engaged, and not by Uncle Sugar or anybody else.

Incidentally, NATO is not about the United States going over and telling people what to do. Those days ended with the Cold War. If you can't persuade the allies to do things, you can't go anywhere with it. I think that's something we learned decisively over Iraq. It has already shifted under this President Bush and I have no doubt that under the next president—as it would be if [John McCain](#) had won—this idea of working with rather than against.

On the role of NATO if the UN Security Council can't act, that's a dilemma within NATO itself. We have had one circumstance in which the NATO countries did not have a UN Security Council resolution. In fact, there is another source of legitimacy that NATO is prepared to draw upon, which is a decision of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe. But there it's unanimity minus one country. That's even harder to get than the UN Security Council.

The exception was Kosovo. In 1999, there was a common understanding that people wanted to do something against [Milosevic](#) and his ethnic cleansing, but you couldn't get a UN Security Council resolution because the Russians would veto it and maybe the Chinese would veto it. The allies were very uncomfortable with it. In fact, we Americans are about the only ally that says NATO can act without a UN resolution. Most of the Canadians are also along with the Europeans, in part because the Europeans have an experience with Nazism and with communism in which the rule of law didn't count for anything. So for them to have the legitimacy of the rule of law is very important.

But if indeed we get to the point that you are talking about, my personal view is that we are going to have to do some updating of international law. What do you do if there's a [Mugabe](#), for example? What do you do if somebody is terrorizing his population? What about in Myanmar? Is this something outside countries need to walk by, on the other side of the street?

This began to change with [Eleanor Roosevelt](#) and the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), then with the [Helsinki Final Act](#), then what happened in Kosovo. It is, step after step, the upgrading of international law to get away from the idea that the [Westphalian system of 1648](#)—it has been superannuated. But you have to do that extremely carefully, as we saw with the preventive-war doctrine of the administration that is just leaving office in the United States.

QUESTION: You used the word "consensus" in relation to action. Then you also implied that there is a veto power. What is the actual language of the treaty in relation to NATO action? Does it require unanimity?

ROBERT HUNTER: There's nothing in the treaty in regard to it, but it has been a practice adopted ever since NATO began.

The fact of requiring consensus means that, as difficult as it might be to reach a decision, once it is reached, nobody ever departs from it. I remember back when NATO was using military force to stop what Milosevic was doing in Kosovo. I was in a meeting with the Greek foreign minister, Mr. [Papandreou](#). NATO's actions in Kosovo were extremely unpopular in Greece because of their connection with Serbia and the Orthodox Church and all that. You have to understand, Papandreou was born in Berkeley. It's where his father was teaching, in exile.

Somebody said, "Foreign Minister, surely you're having a lot of trouble with your public opinion by following along with this NATO decision."

He said, "Oh, I'm not having any trouble with my public opinion. Everybody's against it."

They stuck with it.

NATO never votes. In fact, in a discussion, the secretary-general says, "Is everybody in agreement," and if nobody pipes up, it happens. But if one person from any country puts his hand up, then you have to go back and start over. That means that you are working towards things that are based upon the ethical issues that underpin the values of our system and our societies.

QUESTIONER: So the treaty doesn't say anything about how you reach decisions?

ROBERT HUNTER: No, it says nothing about it. But it does say, in Article 5, which is the thing that says if a country is attacked from another one, you are at war—but it goes on to say that each country will decide what to do about it on its own, using its own constitutional processes. There's no commitment.

Incidentally, that limitation was written in by the United States of America, 1949, because we didn't want anything automatic.

But it is a very potent political commitment—potent. And nobody has ever broken it, has ever gone against it, the idea that if we all agree and if somebody is attacked, we will indeed do what is required. We have never failed on that.

I remember when Marshal [Akhromeev](#), the last head of the [Warsaw Pact](#) forces, who later killed himself after the abortive coup against [Gorbachev](#), came over here and met with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of State, Admiral [Bill Crowe](#), who was a wonderful man. I don't know whether you ever met him. Crowe was a very direct Oklahoman, and he said, "Marshal, how come you never invaded NATO?" He said, "Because, Admiral, we knew if we attacked one country, we were going to be at war with 16."

Very important, the consensus principle. It is a matter of great strength, because it's based upon the fundamental self-interest, common interest, and the fundamental values of free and democratic societies.

QUESTION: You said several times that you would like to know if Russia is going to come to the 21st century. It seems to me that Russia, since Putin—so for quite a few years now—has been going in a new direction that I would associate, maybe, with China, clearly not in the democratic camp. Could you elaborate on what you mean by Russia coming into the 21st century?

That's the first question.

The second question would be related to another topic. Do you think that what happened in India lately with those [terrorist attacks in Mumbai](#) is not going to totally off-balance what's going on in Afghanistan, with Pakistan getting in a different position, even more off-balance?

ROBERT HUNTER: I think we would all like to see Russia become a truly democratic country, and I think we should do what we can to help them move in that direction. But, as I have already indicated, when it comes to overall relations with Russia, they really need us more than we need them. Yes, we would like to have engagement with Russia, absolutely. But they are the ones who have to understand that they have, in my judgment—and I think this is fairly common judgment of people who have analyzed this—they have a lot more to lose than the rest of us.

Now, they have to get over some of their nightmares. They have picked and chosen some of these things that have been done. We have to be careful that we don't give them these arguments or excuses, or even reasons. But they have to come to the understanding, as everyone else has that has been involved in this particular Euro-Asian North Atlantic region, that this is not a zero-sum game, that everybody has a chance to gain in security and well-being by playing according to these rules that move beyond blocs and move beyond spheres of influence.

If the Russians can understand that and get over this historic matter, I think they will prosper within that environment. If they can't, we will have to wait until they get to that point.

You have to remember, a major reason that the Soviet Union broke up was precisely because it needed to be engaged in the outside world. Gorbachev understood that. The breakup of the Soviet Union validated this proposition that trying to be autarkic and trying to be isolationist was valueless for whichever kind of society they had and for the Russian people. For them to choose that direction again would be an act of astounding folly.

Now, you don't rub their nose in it. For example, the French are very likely to rejoin [Allied Command Operations](#). The important thing is not to say, "Here come the French rejoining," rubbing their nose in it. We love rubbing the French nose in it, just as they do with us. You have to give a country like Russia an opportunity to do it, if they will follow what other countries are doing and recognize that playing by the 21st-century rules is also in their self-interest.

QUESTIONER: [Not at microphone]

ROBERT HUNTER: Possibly, possibly. I don't know.

If you remember, the night in which the invasion of Georgia took place, what happened with Saakashvili and then

the Russians responding, was the opening night of the Olympics. Remember we all saw it on television? Here is China, which has more innovation in a week than the Russians have in a year, and Russia, which is the only Northern Hemisphere country—leaving aside countries in the Southern Hemisphere, being decimated by malaria and AIDS and that sort of thing—the only Northern Hemisphere country that is losing population at a rapid clip, which has vast spaces of Siberia that are becoming emptied of people, with the Chinese sitting on the frontier—for Russia to say, "We can happily try to be autarkic," the way Lenin and Stalin did, would be utter folly.

I wonder how long a Russian administration could prevail, if they couldn't even prevail with a police state under Gorbachev trying to find that aspiration.

I'm trying to get beyond, not just here but generally, thinking in these old terms about "us versus them," to say there is an opportunity that George Bush I started that has been carried forward, in order to transform the way in which at least this space in international politics can be taken into a set of practices and attitudes and beliefs that will make up not just for the astounding, unprecedented tragedy of the first half of the 20th century, with all the slaughter, but for the tragedy of the European civil war that began in 1914 and came at least to a provisional conclusion in 1989.

DAVID SPEEDIE: I would only add to that, I don't think there is any sensible observer who thinks that Russia has the capacity or the inclination at this point to return to the autarkic, pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union. It just isn't in the cards.

I would also say—and I don't want to prolong the debate here—that if there has been one consistent thing since the end of the Cold War, if there has been one consistent message, Russia has been consistently told, "You need us more than we need you."

ROBERT HUNTER: But the door is open. The door is open.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Yes, with reservations.

ROBERT HUNTER: I think we did some things that stigmatized Russia—but they were minor-league compared to the things that we did that opened the opportunities for Russia to be engaged in the outside world.

QUESTION: What do you feel would have been the ideal response by Russia to Saakashvili's move in Abkhazia?

ROBERT HUNTER: The ideal response?

QUESTIONER: Yes, a response that we all could have accepted with very little animosity.

ROBERT HUNTER: To go to the UN Security Council, one.

Two, to pick up the phone and call Washington and say, "What the hell is going on here? Can't you stop this guy?"

Third, to say, "We want to work out something with regard to both Abkhazia and South Ossetia that's going to make sense for all around."

Fourth, say, "We do recognize the sovereignty and integrity of Georgia, but, quite obviously, people in these particular enclaves see something that they would like to do differently. Maybe we can start thinking about some autonomy questions, whatever it is, based upon some things that have already been set up."

These are the things they could have done and didn't.

I think everybody learned some lessons out of this. What you have to do—and this was a lemon—is to make lemonade. Thank goodness it happened in a part of the world that was not as consequential for everybody as if it had happened in the Ukraine. And thank goodness more people didn't die than did die.

But if we don't draw lessons from this, we and the Russians—with them having to learn more than we do—then I think people haven't been paying attention, and we may see more of it.

International politics is not a game that reaches the end of history. That was always nonsense. It's a question of trying to make things better with the tools you have, learning lessons.

If you think about how far we have come since the Cold War, it has been astounding. Everybody talks each time about, "This is the worst time ever." It's not. We live in—begging your pardon—a much safer world today than we lived in during the Cold War. I lived through it. I was trained as a nuclear strategist. We were in a circumstance in the Cold War where a misstep could have led to the end of life on this planet. We're not talking about that today.

We're talking about lots of problems, but it's not that we don't have things that we can at least try to do.

You raised the question about Mumbai. The issue of terrorism is very much with us. It's going to be a continuing problem that we have to deal with. But we have to see these things all of a piece. For example, I think it was a big mistake for us to enter into nuclear cooperation with India. We did it because of India versus China, without paying attention to the fact that that was going to lead Pakistan to have to be far more concerned with India, because of Kashmir and because of that confrontation, than with the North-West Province and the FATA areas of Pakistan, which harbor people to kill Americans.

Pakistan right now, in my judgment, is the most dangerous place in the world, and why the next president, President Obama, is going to have to spend an awful lot of attention on that, a lot of effort and attention on Afghanistan and Pakistan. That was underscored by what happened in Mumbai. But, obviously, what the terrorists were doing was to try to catch the world's attention.

It also shows something. It's called asymmetrical warfare. The number of people who were involved in Mumbai was a finite number—ten people actually doing the killing, 100 more people, maybe 200 more people. Yet people say that has fundamentally changed our world. That's nonsense. It hasn't fundamentally changed our world. It has drawn us back to attention there. But one thing we have to realize ourselves is not to allow the people who wish us ill to hijack the media and hijack us as we try to cope with things that are happening.

That's one reason, in my judgment—we were talking about NATO; it's also the European Union—I think one of the most important things for this country to do is to create what I call a strategic partnership with the European Union, "strategic" in the broadest sense, not military—health, education, job creation, democracy promotion that makes sense, a whole series of things that will help shape societies and help dry up, where it can be possible, the swamp within which the terrorists swim, the recruiting sergeants and that sort of thing.

We have this tremendous capacity in the Western world—democratic governments, well-educated populations, people who care about things, NGOs. The American health-care system, which may or may not work well; the American health care system, which, if it were a country, would be the seventh-largest economy in the world—just the health-care system. Think of what we can do.

So it's not just what we do at NATO. It's what we in the Western world, particularly the Europeans—what are the challenges out there? What needs to be done about them? Then, which institutions should do it? Some, NATO; some, the European Union; a lot of it, the United Nations. NATO has now worked out a brand-new relationship with the United Nations. In fact, if anything, we should be, in this town and elsewhere, elevating the role for the United Nations. This nonsense about not liking the United Nations in this country, which, incidentally, is a misnomer—all the polls say 70 percent of the American people want the United Nations to be effective.

We have an opportunity in this generation to do more things of a constructive nature—not, "America, we're going to tell people how to run things"—to do things of a constructive nature than has ever been true in history. If you look at the payoff we have had in Central Europe since 1989, to take those countries that were behind the Iron Curtain, under communism—now you go to these countries and it's just stunning, the transformation. You go to Tallinn, Estonia, one of the most modern cities in the world. Twenty years ago, it was the back of beyond. They don't even use money anymore, practically. You pay for the parking meter with your cell phone, that sort of thing.

Stunning developments in these countries, by unleashing this human potential. That's going to happen in Russia, too, given half a chance.

So our challenge today—and this is a major ethical challenge, as well as a self-interest challenge—is to mobilize these capacities to help do those things that can be done.

JOANNE MYERS: The time has come to an end. I would like to invite you all to continue the conversation. I know Ambassador Hunter is available, as is David Speedie.

Thank you all for joining us.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Thank you very much.

ROBERT HUNTER: Thank you.

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