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NATO's Relations with New Members and Partners

Contributions to Peacekeeping, Counterterrorism, and Humanitarian Missions

Ivan Dinev Ivanov¹

Introduction

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a profound transformation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): the introduction of new missions designed to meet the new demands in international security, the development of allied capabilities to execute these missions, and the incorporation of a dozen new allies from Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, NATO's increased role in international security led to enhanced cooperation not only with its former adversaries, but also with other nations around the globe that were interested in expanding cooperation with the organization. In the course of the last two decades, NATO developed a number of partnerships with nations from the Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and even the Pacific Rim. The 2010 Strategic Concept recognized that the wide network of partner relationships with countries and organizations around the globe is intended to "further promote Euro-Atlantic security" as these partnerships make a "concrete and valued contribution to the success of NATO's fundamental tasks."²

How do NATO's relationships with its new members and partners affect these nations' decisions to participate in peacekeeping, counterterrorism and humanitarian operations? This study surveys the involvement of NATO's Euro-Atlantic partners (EAPs) and new members in various international operations; it argues that the alliance's success in drawing new participants into international operations is largely determined by three different groups of variables: (1) the prospects for membership; (2) the presence of unresolved disputes with neighboring countries and; (3) the degree of internal political divisions in these transitional societies. This article will examine these three variables. First, it will show that when NATO upgraded its relationship with prospective members and signaled high chances for membership, these nations significantly increased their participation in international operations. Second, it will discuss how the presence of unresolved conflicts could effectively paralyze integration into NATO as was the case of Macedonia and Georgia thus constraining these countries' involvement in Afghanistan. Finally, it will illustrate how deep political divisions in Ukraine led to a plummeting public approval for membership and subsequent withdrawal of support for NATO-led operations. The three variables together point to the conclusion that the alliance was overall fairly effective in persuading the new members to participate more actively in peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarian missions. At the same time, it has had a mixed record in engaging its Euro-Atlantic partners (EAP) to become involved in various international efforts. Although NATO's incentives have facilitated EAPs' contributions to peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarian missions, these incentives have not always proven sufficient to overcome neighbors' opposition or domestic resistance to membership.

¹ The author wishes to thank Dinshaw Mistry, Michael Schoeder, Carrie-Jo Coaplen, Richard Harknett and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this article. He is also grateful to the graduate students at the University of Cincinnati for their assistance with this research and insightful feedback.

² "Active Engagement, Modern Defence," Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 19 November 2010, Lisbon, Portugal. <http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf> (accessed May 30, 2011).

Explaining the Impact of NATO Membership and Partnerships

In the course of the past two decades, NATO managed to develop an advanced web of partnerships in the Euro-Atlantic area, including the now defunct North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) that was created in 1991 and replaced in 1997 by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). The latter provided the framework for the oldest and largest partnership program—Partnership for Peace (PfP)—and served as a foundation for several additional partner relationships with selected PfP nations. These included the Individual Partnership Action Plan Program (IPAP), the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), and the NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership (NUCDP). For those nations interested in expanding their relations with NATO and possibly seeking membership, the organization offered *Intensified Dialogue* and even a Membership Action Plan. New partnerships also emerged outside of the Euro-Atlantic area in the Greater Middle East (the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative) and with such countries as Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, which have partnered successfully with NATO in the war in Afghanistan.³

The introduction of Euro-Atlantic partnerships underwent several major stages of adaptation. The Brussels Summit of 1994 officially approved the program, which at that time constituted a novel, cooperative framework and “a diplomatic invention of first order.”⁴ Nonetheless, this flexible format of cooperation was hardly able to meet the expectations of most leaders in Eastern Europe who sought NATO membership as their ultimate foreign policy goal. Similarly, PfP extended no formal guarantees or clear promises for membership as Brussels tried to insure itself against possible accusations from Moscow that these partnerships were intended to entice the former Soviet satellites into the Western camp. First step toward expansion was taken at the Madrid Summit in 1997 when three countries from the Visegrad group (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) were invited to join NATO. Since then, two additional rounds of expansion occurred in 2004 and 2009 with a total of nine new members joining the organization.

Scholars of international alliances do not hold uniform understanding as to the reasons that NATO needs these new members and partners, and how these nations benefit from their enhanced cooperation with the alliance. Institutionalists argue that alliances expand beyond mere aggregation of military capabilities; they serve as security coalitions differing in their purposes and “degree of their institutionalization.” Alliances also engage smaller nations to participate in their decision-making process, thus providing for transparency, consultation, and incentives for cooperative strategies.⁵ NATO membership offered unprecedented security guarantees to the new members under Article Five. In contrast, the EAPs do not extend any formal security commitments to their participants; they only provide an opportunity for these nations to participate in an enhanced security dialogue, to exchange ideas about military transformation and adaptation, to discuss their possible contributions to global military operations, and occasionally seek advice on how to handle terrorist challenges.⁶

³ For further details about NATO partnerships see Håkan Edström, Janne Haaland Matlary, and Magnus Petersson (eds.) *The Power of Partnerships* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York; London, 2011).

⁴ Rob De Wijk, *NATO on the Brink of the New Millennium: the battle for consensus* (Brassey's Atlantic Commentaries, Herndon, Virginia, 1997), p. 83.

⁵ Celeste Wallander and Robert Keohane, “Risk, Threat and Security Institutions” in *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World* (Routledge-Taylor and Francis Group, New York, 2002), p. 97.

⁶ Ryan Hendrickson, “Potential NATO Partners – Political and Military Utility for NATO” in *NATO: The Power of Partnerships*, eds. Håkan Edström, Janne Haaland Matlary, and Magnus Petersson (Palgrave Macmillan, New York; London: 2011), pp. 163-80.

Democratic peace theorists justify the extension of new membership or partnership invitations as a strategy of reinforcement used by NATO to bring about and stabilize political changes inside these new countries, such as the consolidation of the rule of law, democracy, the promotion of human rights, and the modernization of civil-military relations in these nations.⁷ This strategy, known as political conditionality, is strictly rewards-based, i.e., it means that if the new members or partners comply with the expectations, they will be rewarded for their behavior by the international organization. NATO has used both invitations for membership and the extension of various partnerships as such rewards.

Previous studies have shown that the transformation of the military establishment, the modernization of civil-military relations, and effective contribution to NATO's overseas operations have been an integral part of NATO's conditionality. As a result, new members were required to undergo significant restructuring and adaptation of their armed forces prior to their admission into the organization.⁸ However, existing literature does not provide much insight into how specifically the admission of new members and the introduction of new partnerships affects these nations' decisions to participate more actively in international peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and stabilization efforts. The following section will focus on how political conditionality, specifically the prospects of membership, has contributed to an effective engagement of new participants in peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarianism.

Membership Prospects as Political Conditionality for Participation in International Operations

When the Partnership for Peace framework was developed in the mid-1990s, every country that joined the program signed an individual Peace Framework Document and was required to submit a Presentation Document. This requirement exemplified NATO's early conditionality for participation in PfP and, as ethnic violence spiked out of control in the 1990s, multinational peacekeeping was recognized as a key area where cooperation was most needed. The scope of these operations remained relatively limited—it primarily included humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, and search and rescue. The first PfP exercise—Cooperative Bridge— took place in Poland in 1994 and included 600 soldiers from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Ukraine, UK and the U.S.⁹ Gradually, all parties understood the need for diversification and specialization in the forms of cooperation among individual partners as the number of these exercises soared in mid- and late-1990s.

Toward the end of the 1990s, NATO leadership realized that the PfP framework was insufficient to accommodate the aspirations of all participants. In order to distinguish between potential entrants and the rest of the partners, NATO leaders officially introduced the Membership Action Plan (MAP), designed to help aspirant nations prepare for the burdens of membership, review the

⁷ Frank Schimmelfennig, "European Regional Organizations, Political Conditionality, and Democratic Transformation in Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 21 (April 2007), p. 126.

⁸ Frank Schimmelfennig, *The EU, NATO, and the Integration of Europe: Rules and Rhetoric*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 3.

⁹ "Exercise *Cooperative Bridge 94*," 12 September 1994, *NATO Handbook/ NATO e-Library*. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-8BD9D109-6EB228F2/natolive/news_24256.htm (accessed December 9, 2011).

progress of every individual applicant, and provide candid feedback.¹⁰ East European states like the three Baltic Republics, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia used PfP as a stepping stone to join MAP and, thus, upgrade their relationship with NATO in order to receive much desired membership invitations.

Therefore, MAP represented a more sophisticated mechanism of political conditionality introduced by NATO officials to improve the aspirants' transformation and adaptation, but also to stimulate their further commitment toward international peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarianism. It also indirectly influenced the decision of the potential entrants to participate in international missions due to their expectations to enjoy membership benefits in the future.

Overall, the plan was considered a success as it led to the 2002 Prague Summit (2004) which decided to extend membership invitations to seven countries from Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹ In the aftermath of the Summit, an interagency team led by Nicholas Burns, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO, found that all of them were making efforts to reform and modernize their defense establishments as outlined in their individual plans. To ensure that all new allies would remain on track with the military reforms, they were asked to submit individual *Timetables for the Completion of Reforms* prior to the signing of Accession Protocols.

The timetables constituted important mechanisms to enforce NATO's political conditionality; they also represented commitments undertaken by the invitees to guide them through the accession process and beyond. These documents also helped inform NATO and the allied parliaments about the status of the applicants' preparedness to meet the responsibilities of membership. Indicators for such preparedness included a commitment to spend a minimum of 2% budget appropriations on defense. Furthermore, NATO explicitly asked the new members to identify the steps that they had undertaken or planned to undertake to reach full interoperability in order to fully participate in overseas operations. These included a number of specific measures by the seven invitees to ensure that connectivity of air space, the availability of secure communications (voice and data), adequate military education, effective training, and national defense planning systems were set in place at the time of accession. These technical measures were clearly geared toward more effective participation in NATO-led peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and stabilization missions.

Therefore, key events such as the introduction of PfP and MAP, and the extension membership invitations led to these nations' higher contributions in the subsequent years. For example, PfP mobilized additional support for peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia between 1995 and 1997. Nonetheless, after 1998 NATO partners became fairly inactive on the international arena. The decisions of the Washington Summit (1999) and the Prague Summit (2002) once again catalyzed additional overseas troop deployments by these countries in 2000 and 2003 as shown in Figure 1 below.

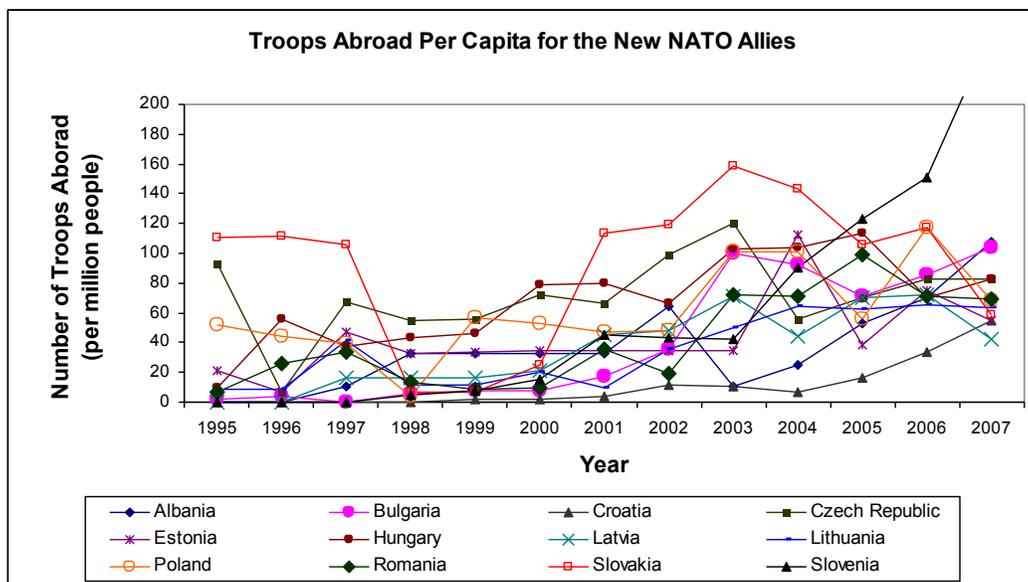
NATO Heads of State and Government agreed at the Prague Summit that three of the MAP participants (Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia) were not prepared to meet the responsibilities of membership. Nonetheless, they were encouraged to continue with reforms geared toward transformation of their civil and military institutions, the implementation of the rule of law, and the improvement of their cooperation with international institutions as required by NATO's

¹⁰ "An Alliance for the 21st Century," Washington Summit Communiqué, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. on 24th April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm>. (accessed June 5, 2007).

¹¹ The seven invitees in 2002 were Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

conditionality for membership. Albanians, Croatians and Macedonians remained active in the international arena and their contributions for NATO-led efforts in Afghanistan surged. As a result, Albania and Croatia's efforts were rewarded with membership invitations at the subsequent NATO Summit in Bucharest (2008), while Macedonia was the only holdout, due to a Greek veto related to an outstanding dispute over the country's name.

Figure 1: Deployment of Troops Overseas for Twelve Nations That Were Admitted to NATO in 1999, 2004 and 2009 (per million citizens)



Source: *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), 1995/96 through 2006/07.

Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, which included all NATO members and PfP partners, was designed to serve as a security forum for dialogue and consultation about political and security-related issues. This multilateral body dealt with cooperation in the areas of peacekeeping operations, arms control and proliferation, defense planning, and policy implementations in the context of regional conflicts, terrorism, emergency planning, and civil-military cooperation.¹² Gradually, new tiers of partnerships surfaced within EAPC allowing for a flexible framework of cooperation. Thus, the new Council effectively comprised of four distinct categories of partners: (1) Russia and Ukraine who upgraded their relations within the framework of the new bilateral Councils; (2) seven EAPs whose interest in cooperating with NATO varied substantially and who would be offered Individual Partnership Action Plans¹³; (3) six “advanced” West European NATO partners (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden and Switzerland); and (4) six relatively inactive PfP nations with practically

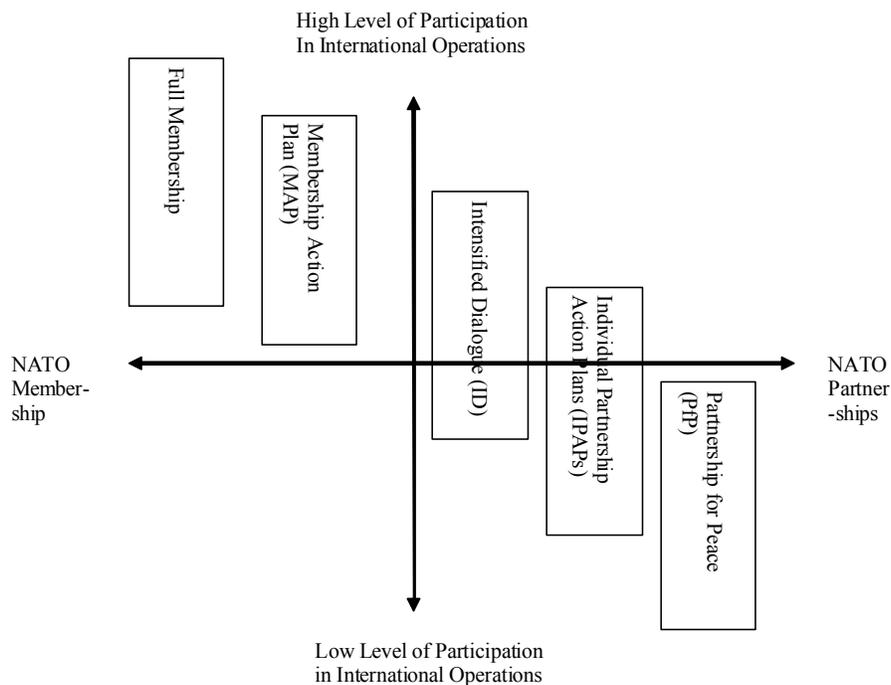
¹² Jeffrey Simon, “Partnership for Peace: Charting a Course for a New Era,” *Strategic Forum* 206 (March 2004), p. 1.

¹³ The seven IPAP nations joined during different periods of time and included Armenia (December 2005), Azerbaijan (May 2005), Bosnia (January 2008), Georgia (October 2004), Kazakhstan (January 2006), Moldova (May 2006), and Montenegro (January 2008).

no intention in developing individual partnerships (Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).¹⁴

The Prague Summit fundamentally revamped NATO’s partnerships in several ways: First, the partnerships with Russia and Ukraine were upgraded. The new permanent NATO-Russia Council built on the goals and principles of the 1997 Founding Act. In July that same year, the alliance signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine. The dialog with Russia on the issues of counterterrorism was regarded especially promising, while for Kiev the partnership presented an opportunity to deepen ties with the alliance. Second, the new format of the partnerships with Russia and Ukraine was followed by the introduction of the Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPs). IPAPs were geared toward nations that had intent to deepen their relationship with NATO but ultimately were unfit to pass the membership conditionalities any time soon. Georgia was the first partner to join the new program in 2004, followed by Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova.¹⁵ In 2008, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro decided to pursue participation in IPAPs. Additionally, the new individual plans introduced an explicit expectation that the partners would participate more actively in the allied efforts in Afghanistan. NATO encouraged these countries to identify their own specific areas of contributions and provided guidance for military reforms as needed.¹⁶

Figure 2: Types of Euro-Atlantic Partnerships and Participation in Peacekeeping, Counterterrorism and Humanitarianism



¹⁴ Jeffrey Simon had offered previous classifications of the PfP participants. For further details see Simon, “Partnership,” p. 3.

¹⁵ Georgia is probably the only notable difference in this respect as Tbilisi joined IPAP with clear intention to pursue NATO membership. The alliance, on the other hand, remained cognizant of the fact that Georgia was locked into the unresolved conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia and offered Tbilisi IPAP as an alternative to MAP.

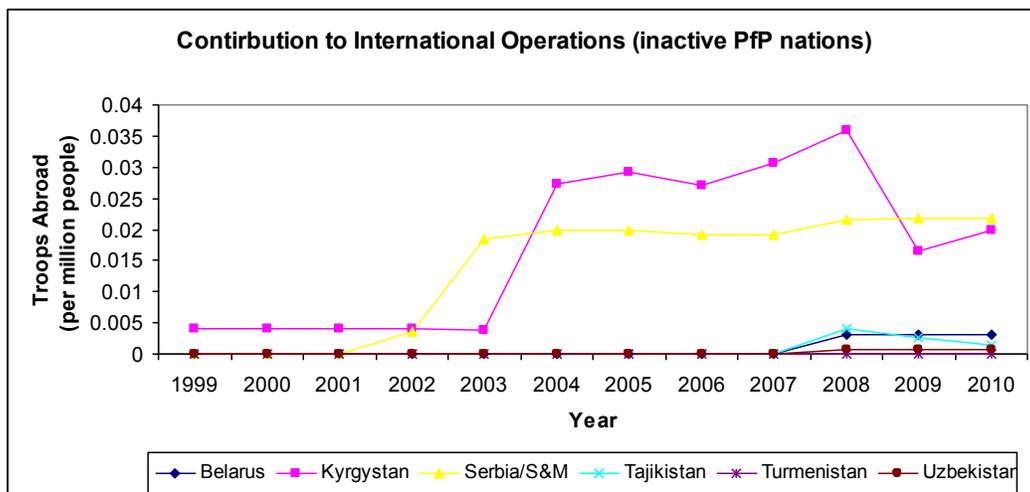
¹⁶ “Individual Partnership Action Plans,” *NATO Handbook*. <http://www.nato.int/issues/ipap/index.html>. (accessed June 1, 2011).

Finally, a new partnership called *Intensified Dialogue* that included Bosnia, Georgia, and Montenegro, was introduced in 2005 an intermediate step toward Euro-Atlantic integration. The *Dialogue* also facilitated joint planning, improved interoperability between allies and their partners, and ensured higher partners' participation in joint operations. Nonetheless, this form of partnership was cautious about offering any immediate prospects for membership and, therefore, has had a more limited impact on the partners' decisions to deploy troops overseas.

The overwhelming evidence suggests that participation of NATO's Euro-Atlantic partners in international peacekeeping, counterterrorism and humanitarian operations is linked to the level of institutionalized cooperation between these nations and the alliance as summarized in Figure 2. For example, full members and MAP nations that await membership invitation are the most likely contributors to NATO's overseas missions. Furthermore, participants in *Intensified Dialogue* like Georgia, Montenegro and Ukraine are somewhat likely to participate in international operations. Alternatively, IPAP nations and other PfP participants (with the exception of the "advanced" West European NATO partners) are somewhat unlikely to join NATO-led international operations. Therefore, partners' willingness to maintain enhanced relations with the alliance, determines their varying degree of contributions to international operations.

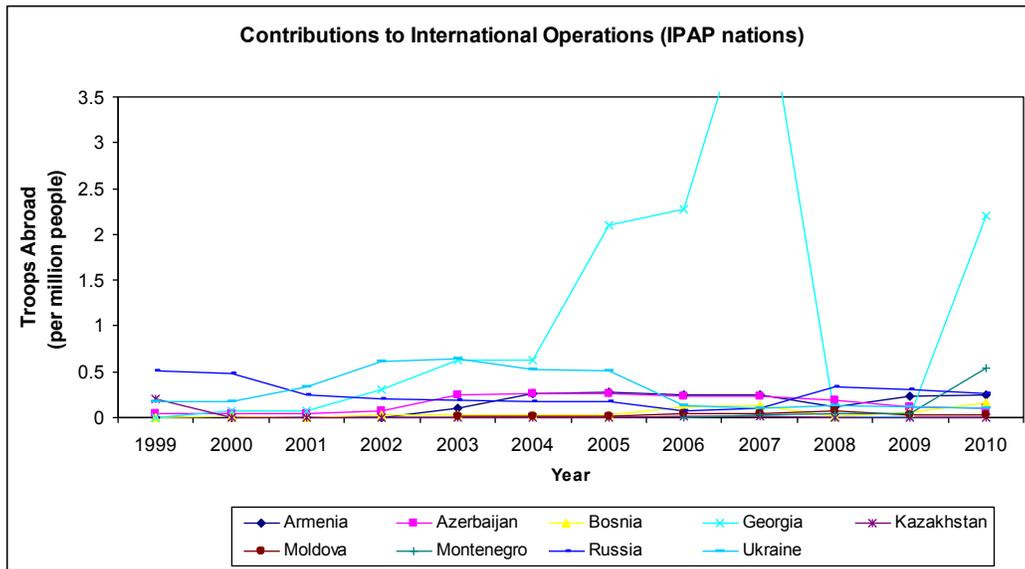
Nations that participate in PfP but have not upgraded their relationship with the alliance are less likely to participate in international peacekeeping, counterterrorism and humanitarianism, as shown in the cases of Belarus, Serbia and the Central Asian republics (Figure 3). Kyrgyzstan and Serbia's decisions to deploy troops under a UN mandate in Burundi, Liberia and Sudan (a total of 15-20 civilian observers) is unrelated to their participation in MAP and has minimal effect on international peacekeeping. Alternatively, individualized partnerships (e.g., *Intensified Dialogue* or MAP) are much more likely to contribute to international efforts. This tendency is illustrated by the cases of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine, whose participation in Afghanistan and Iraq peaked between 2004 and 2009 following the introduction of the IPAPs and *Intensified Dialogue* (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Deployment of Troops Overseas by NATO's PfP Nations (per million citizens)



Source: *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), 1999/2000 through 2009/10.

Figure 4: Deployment of Troops Overseas by NATO's IPAP Participants (per million citizens)



Source: *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), 1999/2000 through 2009/10.

Furthermore, the Individual Partnership Action Plans constitute a transitional category that offered a substantial degree of flexibility to the participants but lacked unity of objectives. For example, Georgia's entry into the program in 2004 was regarded a waiting room preceding Tbilisi's admission into MAP and an opportunity to enhance the country's membership bid. As a result, the country participation in Iraq and Afghanistan increased exponentially between 2005 and 2008 as shown in Figure 4. For Azerbaijan, IPAP presented an alternative to MAP because Baku was considered ineligible for membership in the foreseeable future due to its substantial democratic deficit. Armenia, which joined the program shortly after Azerbaijan, had not declared any expressed intentions to pursue NATO membership in the near future, and have decided to maintain low overseas troop deployments. Azerbaijan and Armenia have no realistic chances of entering MAP any time as long as both nations remain locked in the frozen conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Albeit for different reasons, the same observation applies to the cases of Bosnia, Kazakhstan and Moldova. Ukraine's fluctuating performance can be attributed the unstable domestic environment and will be discussed separately.

Unresolved Disputes with Neighboring Countries as a Restraint for Membership and a Disincentive for Participation in International Operations

The cases of Macedonia and Georgia illustrate that while enhanced cooperation tends to stimulate the partners' involvement in international operations, this process is further complicated by the presence of unresolved ethnic, political or territorial disputes with neighboring countries. For example, the dispute between Greece and Macedonia dates back to the early 1990s when Athens refused to recognize this newly independent nation under its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia. The argument behind Greece's staunch opposition to Macedonia's constitutional name

is that the name “Macedonia” is historically inseparable from Greek culture, ever since the ancient Kingdom of Macedonia which gave rise to Alexander the Great. Despite the fact that the two neighboring nations concluded an Interim Agreement in 1995, no permanent settlement has been reached since then. As a result, Greece used its veto power in 2008 to block Macedonia’s admission into NATO and to halt any further negotiations with the EU. The North Atlantic Council reluctantly accepted Greece’s veto despite vehement protests by the United States and other allies. In response, Macedonia filed a lawsuit in the International Court of Justice arguing that Greece’s decision is illegal because it fails to comply with previous agreements between the two neighbors. This decision to postpone Macedonia’s invitation into the alliance once again indicates the complexity of membership conditionality. The recent judgment of the International Court of Justice which found that, by using its veto power, Greece essentially failed to comply with its obligations under international law, does not alter significantly the bargaining dynamics.¹⁷ U.S. Ambassador in Skopje Paul Wohlers signaled once again that the Macedonia’s admission to NATO must be preceded by the settlement of its outstanding dispute with Greece in a non-coercive manner.¹⁸

Similar to Macedonia, Georgia’s further integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures is practically paralyzed by its outstanding dispute with neighboring Russia over the break-away republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia was among the first to join PfP in March 1994, but it indicated no membership aspirations in the 1990s when governments in Tbilisi attempted to carefully balance between a pro-Russian and pro-Western foreign policy. The Rose Revolution brought a profound change of Tbilisi’s foreign policy orientation. The reformist government led by President Mikhael Saakashvili took a course that pursued fundamental institutional reforms, improved transparency, reduced corruption, and sought closer integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Recognizing Russia’s concerns, NATO acted cautiously and offered Tbilisi an Individual Partnership Action Plan in 2004.

The introduction of the IPAP was followed by large-scale military cooperation between Georgia and the United States. By and large the extensive training programs of the Georgian military were funded and supervised by Washington and the accomplishments of this cooperation were significant. Prior to 2002, the state of Georgia’s armed forces was deplorable—they were a collection of loosely organized, poorly disciplined units with corrupt leadership and limited modern combat skills.¹⁹ With the help of U.S. military aid, Georgia’s participation in international operations increased dramatically—within five years Tbilisi had 2,000 troops deployed in the cities of Tikrit, Baghdad and Al Kut in Iraq. Furthermore, after 2006 this former Soviet Republic became the largest contributing nation among all IPAP nations to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and second largest per capita contributor (after the U.S.) in international operations among all NATO allies and partners.²⁰ Georgia’s forces in Afghanistan were not merely conducting stationary

¹⁷ Application of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995 (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia v. Greece), *The International Court of Justice*, 5 December 2011, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/142/16827.pdf>. (accessed December 5, 2011).

¹⁸ “Wohlers: First the Name; NATO Membership will Follow Then” (Волерс: Прво името, па членство на Македонија во НАТО), *Denunik Daily*, Skopje, 5 December 2011.

¹⁹ Robert E. Hamilton, “Georgian Military Reform—An Alternative View,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 3 February 2009. http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090203_hamilton_militaryreform.pdf. (accessed June 17, 2011).

²⁰ Georgia deployed on average about 280 soldiers per million in overseas operations between 2006 and 2008. During the same period the United States maintained about 650 military personnel per million, Britain and Slovenia had approximately 220-250 soldiers; and NATO’s average contribution was 175 soldiers per million people. It is also worth noting that more than half of the allies contributed with less than 100 military personnel per million. For detail see *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), 2006/07 through 2009/10.

peacekeeping, but also patrolled high-risk areas in Kabul and participated in full-scale combat operations in the Helmand Province, often with significant U.S. assistance. Tbilisi introduced very few caveats for its troops, which is why U.S. commanders preferred to operate with Georgian units over those from other partners.²¹ U.S. military assistance was geared mostly toward the acquisition of capabilities to participate in overseas operations and was specifically intended not to enhance any Georgian capabilities to fight with Russia or other neighboring countries.

As a result, Georgia became a preferred partner and potentially a very strong applicant for future NATO expansion as the country was admitted to *Intensified Dialogue* in September 2006. This new cooperative framework represented recognition of the headway made by this former Soviet Republic. To strengthen its case in favor of NATO membership, Georgia held a referendum on January 5, 2008, in which the voters backed its membership bid with overwhelming approval of 72.5%.²² Georgia drastically increased defense spending to more than five percent of the nation's total budget as a part of its efforts to restructure and improve its armed forces.²³ The new resources tremendously helped modernize the army with training and equipment that meet NATO standards.

Nonetheless, the status of the two break-away republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia once again became a major obstacle for its future Euro-Atlantic integration.²⁴ After the break up of the Soviet Union, the majority of the population in these autonomous regions remained loyal to Moscow and wanted to eventually join the Russian Federation. Multiple diplomatic attempts by President Saakashvili to reach a comprehensive agreement reached a stalemate. In the summer of 2008 Georgia began a military operation in South Ossetia, aimed at repelling the Russian tanks approaching the conflict zone in the break-away republic. Russia responded immediately with a full scale military invasion in Georgia by air and land, and even launched a cyber attack against online media starting August 8, 2008.²⁵ Independent reports have pointed out that both the Russian and Georgian sides had contributed to the reciprocal escalation of tension prior to the outbreak of the conflict.²⁶ The Russian assault was short-lived, and peace was brokered within a week with the mediation of France and the United States.

The Georgian-Russian conflict of August 2008 had a major impact on Tbilisi's relations with NATO and its future integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. First, the war substantially decreased Georgia's chances for NATO membership prior to a final settlement of the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The West expressed sympathy with Georgia's position regarding the status of Abkhazia and Ossetia, but Washington and Brussels recognized that Tbilisi's progress toward Euro-Atlantic integration would be contingent upon improved relations with Moscow. In fact, the settlement of all territorial disputes with aspirants' neighbors has always been a core principle that guided NATO's expansion in 1999, 2004 and 2009. Second, the Russians, who have always disapproved Georgia's aspirations to join NATO, were quite pleased with this outcome as it provided Moscow with a *de facto* veto power to block Georgia's further Euro-Atlantic integration.

²¹ Hamilton, "Georgian," 3 February 2009.

²² "Georgia Referendum to Include NATO Membership Question," *Agence France-Presse*, Tbilisi, 26 November 2007 and "Russia's NATO Ambassador: Georgia Unqualified to Join NATO," *Agence France-Presse*, Moscow, 18 January 2008.

²³ "Georgia to Raise 2007 Defense Spending by \$200 mln to \$600 mln," *Global Security Online*, 29 August 2007.

²⁴ Abkhazia and South Ossetia are located in Georgia's North and Northwest close to the border with Russia. Both entities broke away from Tbilisi in 1992 and sought protection for independence from Russia.

²⁵ Johanna Popjanevski, "From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali: the Path to War in Georgia," in *The Guns of August 2008* eds. Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr (M. E. Sharpe, New York, 2009), pp. 150-2.

²⁶ Alima Bissenova, "Foes Say Saakashvili Distorted War Report," *Central Asia-Caucuses Institute Analyst*, 14 October 2009.

More importantly, the 2008 war had a major impact on the reforms of Georgia's armed forces. The loss of the war to Russia appears to have been a catalyst for re-armament, but also for significant doctrinal and personnel reorganization within the Georgian armed forces. As a result, the government in Tbilisi focused on completing military reforms at home and decided to minimize its overseas deployments following the withdrawal of the 3rd Infantry Brigade from Iraq. The war with Russia inadvertently undercut Georgia's commitment to international peacekeeping as most of the military resources were re-directed toward territorial defense. The country once again returned to international operations in April 2010 when the 3rd Infantry Brigade was deployed in Afghanistan, where the Georgian contingent carried out a full spectrum of security operations side by side with the U.S. military.²⁷ As long as NATO membership remains distant, Georgian leadership feels that current status quo creates disincentives for Tbilisi to deploy larger contingents overseas in support of NATO- or UN-led missions.

Weak Domestic Support as a Restraint on Participation in International Operations

Finally, strong public support at home may be a decisive factor for partners' future Euro-Atlantic integration. The level of public support for membership varied among the twelve new allies. Nonetheless, a wide consensus emerged among their political elites who were able to persuade the general public about the utility of NATO membership and the long-term benefits from active participation in international operations. Ukraine, however, presents a specific case of cooperation with NATO that departs from the general patterns of Euro-Atlantic integration in Central and Eastern Europe. This country's foreign and security policy has been complicated, in part, by the heavy divisions between the pro-Western and pro-Russian camps that reflect geographical, political, social, and ethnic boundaries. These divisions contributed to highly polarized political elites on key issues, such as national security policy and alliance orientation, and effectively paralyzed the nation's Euro-Atlantic integration and also led to a significant drop of Ukrainian participation in international operations.

Ukraine enjoyed a special relationship with NATO in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As previously discussed, Kiev was a founding member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), as well as an active participant in the Partnership for Peace (PfP). In 1997 Ukraine and NATO signed a Charter on a Distinctive Partnership and five years later a NATO-Ukraine Action Plan was introduced at the Prague Summit. Its purpose was "to identify clearly Ukraine's strategic objectives and priorities in pursuit of its aspirations towards full integration into the Euro-Atlantic security structures."²⁸

The Orange Revolution of 2004 changed this dynamic when the new pro-Western President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the Parliament sent a letter to Brussels officially asking NATO to accept the country into the Membership Action Plan as a first step on the path to full membership. However, this step was met with disapproval and skepticism at home by the pro-Russian opposition and a majority of the Ukrainian public. Officials in Kiev and Brussels agreed that the country needed a thorough public debate before its entry into the alliance.²⁹ The political change in 2004 also

²⁷ "Participation in International Missions," Webpage of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia. <http://www.mod.gov.ge/index.php?page=-10&Id=34&lang=1> (accessed June 17, 2011).

²⁸ "Introduction to the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan," NATO Handbook, Brussels, Belgium.

²⁹ Sabina Zawadzki And Yuri Kulikov, "Ukraine Says Ready for NATO Membership Steps," *Reuters*, 16 January 2008, <http://www.defensenews.com/>. (accessed January 21, 2008).

brought new momentum to Ukraine's preparedness to participate in international peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarian operations. The Yushchenko government adopted a New Strategic Defense Doctrine and a New Military Doctrine, in which interoperability with NATO forces and command structures was identified as a key area of defense reform so that Kiev could meet adequately the needs of the UN and other international organizations.³⁰ Upon the advice of its Euro-Atlantic partners, Kiev began to explore its comparative advantages in certain niche capabilities such as Joint Rapid Reaction Forces (JRRF), Main Defense Force, and Strategic Reserves.³¹

Unlike the other East European societies, the Ukrainian political elite was never able to forge a consensus on its future NATO membership. As a result, the public opposition to NATO membership steadily increased in the years following the Orange Revolution as the ratio between opponents and supporters of NATO membership reached 2:1 in 2009. This high level of disapproval for NATO membership stands in sharp contrast to the rest of Eastern Europe, where improved integration with the Euro-Atlantic structures led to increased public support for NATO membership.³² As a result, Ukrainian political leadership felt compelled to draw down its military contributions to international operations. The presidential elections in February 2010 brought to power the pro-Russian and anti-NATO candidate Victor Yanukovich from the Party of the Regions, who withdrew Kiev's application for accession into the MAP. This wavering relationship between Ukraine and NATO, coupled with the lack of consensus at home and indecisiveness to move forward with the issue of membership, adversely affected military reforms and constrained the nation's future participation in international peacekeeping, crisis response, and humanitarian operations.

Conclusion

The cases of Georgia and Ukraine illustrate how NATO's individual partnerships could effectively engage the partner countries to increase their international deployments in support of various missions led by international organizations or multinational coalitions. NATO persuaded Kiev to invest significant efforts into "strategic" peacekeeping, thus boosting the nation's international deployments between 2000 and 2006. Georgia, on the other hand, took advantage of U.S. military assistance after 2005 to improve its peacekeeping capabilities, thus becoming a major contributor in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, sources of domestic opposition or unsettled disputes with neighbors can effectively paralyze the improvement of relations between the alliance and its partners, which ultimately reduces the partners' participation in various NATO and UN-led overseas missions. In the case of Ukraine, the unpopularity of NATO membership dissuaded the Yanukovich government from further engagement in NATO-led international operations. Similarly, Georgia's active involvement in international peacekeeping surged after the United States started providing military aid and mentorship. However, the conflict with Moscow in 2008 convinced the military and political

³⁰ Deborah Sanders, "Ukraine after the Orange Revolution: Can It Complete Military Transformation and Join the U.S.-led War on Terrorism?" *Strategic Studies Institute* (U.S. Army War College, October 2006), p. 14.

³¹ Green Book on Ukrainian Defense Policy (Зелена книга з Питань Оборонної Політики України), Kiev 2010, p. 24.

³² Upon the accession of the new allies from Eastern Europe the ratio between NATO supporters and opponents in these nations was usually 2:1 and sometimes even 3:1. The consensus among political parties certainly contributed to the increased public support for membership and military reforms.

leadership in Tbilisi that traditional territorial defense should once again remain a core priority in the Caucasus.

These observations bear several theoretical and policy implications. First, the security guarantees extended by NATO membership represent the highest reward for prospective members. Thus, membership prospects present robust stimuli for partner nations to adapt their armed forces by the organization's standards and participate actively in its overseas operations. Second, partnerships with international security organizations can be effective tools in engaging new partners, persuading nations to participate in international military and political efforts and, ultimately, building broader international coalitions for military and civilian campaigns. At the same time, however, NATO partnerships have limited mechanisms at hand to influence the participation of non-members, especially countries with divided societies and political elites, competing allegiances at home, and stubborn neighbors. Third, applying a one-size-fits-all approach to all NATO partnerships, nonetheless, would be inappropriate and impractical. While EAPC and PfP present a viable framework for cooperation, only individual partnerships customized to meet each country's needs for cooperation can successfully persuade partners to cooperate more actively with international organizations. Finally, on the policy side, NATO's regional or global partnerships can be useful and effective tools for engaging new partners in a meaningful "intensified" dialogue. Scholars and policy makers should be cognizant of the limitations emanating from this form of security cooperation and, therefore, have realistic expectations about its success in the future.