

**NATO MUST EMBRACE UKRAINE AND GEORGIA**  
**The Financial Times, 30.03.2008**

In 1999, three central European states that had been behind the "iron curtain" for half a century were accepted into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. That decision implied the beginning of the end of the cold war division of Europe. That enlargement and the next one in 2004 have significantly contributed to the creation of a zone of stability, peace and security in Europe. Enlarged by the inclusion of new member states, adapted to the challenges of the 21st century, Nato strengthens democracy in Europe. For many new members it is also a bridge to the European Union.

An open-door policy is the condition for the effective functioning of Nato and the EU. The goal of democratic countries in Europe must be to continue to enlarge the area of freedom. This task is particularly significant for Nato in the context of the Balkan countries, as well as Ukraine and Georgia. Peace and democratic stabilisation of these regions is in the interest of all European countries, not only of the members of the alliance. Nato has also, regardless of strategic reasons, a moral obligation to eliminate the relics of post-Yalta division of Europe.

Ukraine and Georgia, having regained their independence, have undertaken the huge effort of reform, the objective of which is for their nations to rejoin the European family. Of course, the implementation of reforms does not proceed without problems. The costs of systemic transformation cannot be avoided. The Polish people know this well – we remember the way, full of sacrifices and hardships, that led us to Nato and the EU. We are grateful for the support we received from our partners. Such support is needed today by Georgia and Ukraine. Nato cannot ignore the request of the leaders of both these countries to tighten their co-operation with the alliance beyond the existing forms of co-operation. These states want to become part of Nato's membership action plan. It is the obligation of Nato member states to provide a positive response. We should not delay.

Sceptics say joining the action plan creates an obligation to grant membership of Nato. This is a misleading over-simplification. The action plan is a process with an indefinite time perspective and it does not oblige the alliance or the country concerned to conclude the process with membership. The action plan creates a new category of relations, which does not impose any automatic progression to any higher level of co-operation, but gives a chance to reinvigorate positive political and economic transformations. Such transformations offer a chance for stabilisation in the region and, in consequence, for the enhancement of security and stability in Europe. Today Ukraine and Georgia are still not ready enough to join the circle of Nato members, but they co-operate extensively with the alliance, including in operational terms. Making them part of the action plan will enable further implementation of the process of political and military reform of their states.

European leaders must be aware that the process of integration with Nato runs in parallel with enlargement of the EU. Failure at this week's Nato Bucharest summit to bring Ukraine and Georgia into the membership action plan would be bad news not only for Nato, but also for the EU and might put at risk the construction of a stable European security system. If Nato fails to settle the issue of membership of the next three states (Albania, Croatia, Macedonia), fails to open up co-operation with Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, and refrains from extending the membership action plan to Ukraine and Georgia, the political mission of the alliance will suffer painful defeat. It would signal the loss of Nato's political purpose and

significance on the security map of Europe and the world. It would irreversibly lose its stabilising role.

I have written to the leaders of Nato member states, stressing that the moral obligation and historical duty to bring back to Europe the states that were separated from it still remains unfulfilled. The summit is the most appropriate moment to decide to extend the membership action plan to Ukraine and Georgia. We cannot refuse these states their right to Euro-Atlantic integration. We cannot leave them in solitude in the face of enormous internal and external pressures. We have the chance for April 2-4 2008 to be positively recorded in the history of the alliance and of Europe. I believe that the right decisions will be made in Bucharest, serving the enlargement of the area of freedom and stability.

**BUSH BACKS UKRAINE AND GEORGIA FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP**  
**The Guardian, 01.04.2008**

George Bush this morning said he "strongly supported" Ukraine's attempt to join Nato, and warned he would not allow Russia to veto its membership bid. Speaking in Kiev after a meeting with Ukraine's president, Viktor Yushchenko, the US president said both post-Soviet Ukraine and Georgia should be allowed to join the alliance – despite vehement objections from Russia. In remarks likely to infuriate the Kremlin, Bush said Ukraine should be invited during this week's Nato summit in Bucharest to join Nato's membership action programme, a prelude to full membership. He also said that there could be no deal with Moscow over the US administration's contentious plans to locate elements of its controversial missile defence system in eastern Europe. "This is a misperception," Bush said after talks with in Kiev. "I strongly believe that Ukraine and Georgia should be given MAP [Membership Action Plans], and there are no tradeoffs - period."

Bush's comments came ahead of this week's Nato summit in Bucharest and talks between the US president and Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, on Sunday in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi. The encounter is likely to be the last between the two leaders before Putin leaves office on May 7. Putin is also attending tomorrow's Nato summit, and will address a closed meeting on Friday. The event is likely to be stormy.

Russia has made its opposition to Ukrainian and Georgian membership abundantly clear. In a briefing last night, the Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said any attempt by Nato to expand further towards Russia's borders would upset the region's 'strategic stability'. He also pointed out that most Ukrainians opposed Nato membership. "We don't believe that this policy of expanding Nato eastwards is playing a positive role in creating stability and strengthening democracy in the heart of Europe," he said.

Peskov hinted that Putin would not repeat his infamous speech in Munich last year, an outspoken attack on US power. "He is coming to Bucharest with a constructive approach, hoping for reciprocity," Peskov said. This morning, Yushchenko expressed his gratitude to the US administration. "We have received full support from the United States," he said after a news conference with Bush, who is in Kiev for two days. It is not clear whether Ukraine and Georgia will win approval for their membership bids this week. Germany and France are leading opposition from within the EU to such a move, arguing that it would needlessly antagonise Russia and provoke a new crisis between Russia and the west.

The Ukraine government's aspirations to secure a MAP face scepticism at home as well as resistance in Russia and from parts of western Europe. In central Kiev, several hundred protesters defied a court ban and shouted anti-Nato slogans in Independence Square, the focal point of the 2004 pro-western "orange revolution" protests, which swept Yushchenko to power. A few thousand protesters were massed in the square today ahead of Bush's arrival. For many Ukrainians, joining Nato is not a priority. Only 30% of respondents in the former Soviet state support the move.

Stephen Hadley, adviser to the National Security Council, told reporters on Air Force One en route to Kiev it was important to help both states to join Nato. But the French prime minister, François Fillon, interviewed on a radio programme, said: "France will not give its green light to the entry of Ukraine and Georgia."

### **US AND UKRAINE CHALLENGE RUSSIA ON NATO EXPANSION** **The Independent, 02.04.2008**

President Bush has thrown down the gauntlet to Russia and set the stage for a showdown with Europe by expressing public support for Ukraine and Georgia to become members of Nato, Mr Bush said after talks with Ukraine's President, Viktor Yushchenko, that America "strongly supports" the former Soviet republic's bid for membership. "In Bucharest this week, I will continue to make America's position clear: we support Map for Ukraine and Georgia." Map refers to Nato's membership action plan for future members. Nato itself is divided over whether to offer the two former Soviet republics a path towards Nato membership. France and Germany want to avoid antagonising Russia, which is opposed to Ukrainian and Georgian membership, and the 26-member military alliance operates on the basis of political consensus.

Mr Bush said the outcome of the Nato meeting should not be prejudged, but the French Prime Minister said yesterday: "France will not give its green light to the entry of Ukraine and Georgia. We think that it is not the correct response to the balance of power in Europe, and between Europe and Russia." Other states, however, are concerned about Russia – which is not a Nato member – having what amounts to a veto over Nato membership. Mr Bush said he had been assured by other Nato leaders "Russia will not have a veto over what happens in Bucharest. I take their word for it."

President Vladimir Putin, attending his last major international summit before he becomes prime minister next month, will hold talks in Bucharest with Nato leaders. Nine former members of the Soviet bloc are already Nato members. Mr Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, warned Ukraine and Georgia that membership would "lead to additional tension". In a telephone briefing from the Kremlin with foreign reporters, he did not respond directly when asked about possible linkage between the membership issue and a dispute with America over plans to locate parts of a US missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Mr Bush, who is expected to discuss the missile shield with Mr Putin at their final summit in the Russian resort of Sochi next weekend, has rejected any trade-off. Mr Peskov said Russia would prefer the US to shelve its deployment plans, but added: "We appreciate the effort from our American partners, and we are ready to continue our mutual search for the way out of this very complicated situation" which he said affected Russia's strategic and national security interests.

The Nato summit is expected to extend invitations to at least two countries – Albania and Croatia – to join the alliance. A third invitation had been expected for Macedonia. However, Greece repeated yesterday that it would veto Macedonia joining unless there was an agreement with Athens on the country's name. There has been a dispute for 15 years over Macedonia which has the same name as a northern Greek province over which it is accused of having territorial claims. It has UN membership under the provisional name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

**NATO ALLIES OPPOSE BUSH ON GEORGIA AND UKRAINE**  
**The New York Times, 03.04.2008**

President Bush threw the NATO summit meeting here off-script on Wednesday by lobbying hard to extend membership to Ukraine and Georgia, but he failed to rally support for the move among key allies. President George W. Bush and President Traian Basescu of Romania in the city of Neptun on Wednesday. Mr. Bush's position — that Ukraine and Georgia should be welcomed into a Membership Action Plan, or MAP, that prepares nations for NATO membership — directly contradicted German and French government positions stated earlier this week. It also risked upsetting efforts to get Russia to soften its opposition to positioning a missile defense array in Eastern Europe. Mr. Bush failed to win over a consensus of NATO members in a debate at a dinner of NATO leaders, a senior German official said Wednesday night, with at least seven countries lined up against him.

A senior American official, briefing reporters, said that no final decisions had been made at the dinner, and that all parties agreed on the importance of keeping the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's door open to Ukraine and Georgia. Mr. Bush, entering his last NATO summit meeting as president, was described by the official as wanting to "lay down a marker" for his legacy and not wanting to "lose faith" with the Ukrainian and Georgian peoples and the other former Soviet republics. As Mr. Bush did more often early in his presidency, he expressed his views candidly despite warnings from allies that he was complicating efforts to find diplomatic solutions. Normally, summit meetings like this are prescribed, but Mr. Bush's comments added some extra interest while annoying Germany and France, which had said they would block the invitation to Ukraine and Georgia.

At the dinner on Wednesday, the German and French position was supported by Italy, Hungary and the Benelux countries, a senior German official said. Mr. Bush was said to have accepted that his position was not going to prevail, and officials were asked to find some construction overnight that would encourage Ukraine and Georgia without asking them to enter a membership plan now. The dinner meeting ran two hours over schedule. An hour and a half after it was supposed to end, Laura Bush, the first lady, left on her own, as did other spouses. "The debate was mostly among Europeans," the senior administration official said, acknowledging that several allies had balked at President Bush's stance. "It was quite split, but it was split in a good way."

NATO members did appear to make progress on other issues on their agenda. They are set on inviting Croatia and Albania to join the alliance, while working to overcome Greek objections to extending membership to Macedonia, European and American officials said. France also offered to send a battalion of troops to eastern Afghanistan, a move that could free American forces to move south, where NATO troops are struggling to suppress the Taliban-led insurgency. On Wednesday morning, Mr. Bush gave a rousing speech in which he stated his positions and declared that "the terrorist threat is real, it is deadly and defeating this enemy is

the top priority of NATO," which is not the defined goal of every member of this collective security alliance.

Referring to democratic revolutions in both Ukraine and Georgia, he said: "Welcoming them into the Membership Action Plan would send a signal to their citizens that if they continue on the path to democracy and reform they will be welcomed into the institutions of Europe. It would send a signal throughout the region" — read Russia — "that these two nations are, and will remain, sovereign and independent states." Some German officials described the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, as upset and even angry on Wednesday. She and Mr. Bush have talked repeatedly about the issue in the past two months. Mrs. Merkel had thought that a compromise was in the works, the officials said, with Washington supporting a warm statement welcoming the interest of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO and encouraging them to work toward entering the membership plan program.

Germany and France have said they believe that since neither Ukraine nor Georgia is stable enough to enter the program now, a membership plan would be an unnecessary offense to Russia, which firmly opposes the move. In fact, senior diplomats here said, the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, has threatened to cancel his planned first-ever visit to the NATO meeting on Friday if the two former Soviet states enter the program for eventual membership. Mrs. Merkel visited Moscow on March 8 and met Mr. Putin and his successor, Dmitri A. Medvedev. She told them that Russia would not be allowed a veto over NATO membership. But a senior German diplomat, Wolfgang Ischinger, said that offering membership to a divided Ukraine could destabilize the new government there, and that not enough diplomacy had taken place beforehand with Russia. Mr. Ischinger, Germany's ambassador to London, noted that after the NATO summit meeting Mr. Bush and the two Russians would meet in Sochi, a Russian resort on the Black Sea. He said, "It's the absence of this discussion that makes me wonder if NATO has done enough of its homework at this point on this front."

The newer members of NATO from the old Eastern Europe support the American position. Romanian, Estonian and Latvian leaders emphasized that the Membership Action Plan program involved difficult requirements for NATO membership, including internal political and military reforms and guarantees of civil liberties, and could take a decade to fulfill. "MAP is more of a big stick than a big carrot," said the Estonian president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at a conference here of the German Marshall Fund. "It forces nations to reform even when they don't want to do it."

The Latvian president, Valdis Zatlers, warned that postponing entry to the Membership Action Plan program delayed crucial internal debates. "No action plan, no action," he said. "If we delay, we postpone the inevitable. We have to give MAP." Ronald D. Asmus, who was a crucial figure in the Clinton administration's enlargement of NATO and now runs the German Marshall Fund's Brussels office, said, "Bush's speech set up a dramatic battle that will be fought out over the next two days and whose outcome will be important in shaping his legacy, and America's diplomatic standing in the alliance."

Derek Chollet, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security in Washington, said Mr. Bush's speech was "a combination of valedictory and marker-laying." Mr. Bush will probably lose the argument on Ukraine and Georgia, Mr. Chollet said. "But he doesn't care so much, and he believes he's on the right side of the issue." Getting NATO support for more troops in Afghanistan and for a limited European missile-defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic is probably more important to Mr. Bush before the meeting with Mr. Putin,

Dr. Asmus and Mr. Chollet said. In his speech, Mr. Bush urged the alliance to "maintain its resolve and finish the fight" in Afghanistan and to deploy more troops there to combat the Taliban, Al Qaeda and other threats around the world.

With the war in Afghanistan now in its seventh year, and 47,000 NATO troops already there, Mr. Bush stressed the continuing threat of terrorism to the entire West. In addition to France's commitment announced Wednesday, Poland and Romania will also send more troops, and Washington is sending 3,200 more marines. But a full accounting of any additional forces will not be clear until Thursday; Canada had said it would consider pulling its troops out of the dangerous southern region of Afghanistan unless other countries provided 1,000 more soldiers.

### **OTAN: LA GÉORGIE ET L'UKRAINE DEVRONT ATTENDRE** **Le Figaro, 03.04.2008**

Les deux pays n'ont pas obtenu le statut de candidat à l'entrée au sein de l'Alliance atlantique, qui accueille en revanche l'Albanie et la Croatie. C'est une décision sans surprise et qui consacre, provisoirement, l'opinion d'une dizaine des 26 pays membres de l'Alliance atlantique, France et Allemagne en tête. Les dirigeants de l'Otan réunis à Bucarest ont décidé jeudi de différer l'octroi du statut de candidat à l'adhésion pour l'Ukraine et la Géorgie. Le secrétaire général de l'Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, a précisé que l'Alliance s'engageait cependant à recevoir ces deux pays à une date ultérieure. La situation sera revue en décembre.

La France et l'Allemagne s'étaient opposées à l'ouverture immédiate du processus d'adhésion de ces deux pays, estimant qu'elle aggraverait les relations déjà tendues avec la Russie. D'ailleurs, le vice-ministre russe des Affaires étrangères Alexandre Grouchko, a rapidement réagi estimant que l'entrée de la Géorgie et de l'Ukraine dans l'Otan constituerait «une erreur stratégique» aux «conséquences les plus sérieuses» pour la sécurité en Europe. En dépit de ce report, le ministre géorgien à l'Intégration européenne, Giorgi Baramidze, a qualifié cette décision de «succès historique». «C'est une victoire» a pour sa part estimé le président ukrainien Viktor Iouchtchenko.

En revanche, les membres de l'Otan ont proposé à l'Albanie et à la Croatie de rejoindre l'Organisation, mais pas à la Macédoine, qui doit régler un différend avec la Grèce qui porte sur son nom. Athènes bloque depuis 1991 la reconnaissance internationale de l'ancienne république yougoslave. En signe de protestation, le ministre macédonien des Affaires étrangères a annoncé que la délégation de son pays quittait le sommet. «Je suis heureux que l'Alliance se soit entendue pour inviter l'Albanie et la Croatie», a simplement commenté George W. Bush, tout en regrettant l'absence de consensus sur la Macédoine. Il n'a pas cité la Géorgie ni l'Ukraine, mais «la porte de l'Otan doit rester ouverte», a précisé celui qui s'était opposé à leur entrée dans l'Organisation.

#### **Accord sur le bouclier anti-missile**

En marge du sommet, les Etats-Unis et la République tchèque ont conclu un accord sur l'implantation sur le sol tchèque d'éléments du bouclier anti-missile américain. Accord qui sera signé «dans un avenir proche», indique la déclaration, sans doute début mai. L'accord prévoit l'implantation en République tchèque d'une station radar pour détecter le lancement de missiles balistiques. La mise en fonctionnement du dispositif reste toutefois suspendue à un

autre accord avec la Pologne. Selon un haut responsable américain, les dirigeants de l'Otan ont accepté de soutenir le projet américain.

L'Otan a aussi tendu la main à la Serbie en l'invitant à passer du Partenariat pour la Paix au «dialogue intensifié», le deuxième stade de rapprochement avec l'alliance. C'est le président roumain Traian Basescu qui l'a annoncé jeudi. Cette invitation concerne aussi la Bosnie-Herzégovine et le Monténégro. A la différence de ces derniers, la Serbie n'avait pas fait de demande en ce sens.

### **Des renforts en Afghanistan**

Dans la foulée de la décision française, les dirigeants de l'Otan se sont engagés à accroître leurs effectifs en Afghanistan pour combattre les talibans, à partager le fardeau des opérations militaires et à limiter les restrictions à l'utilisation de leurs troupes, dans une déclaration commune.

Enfin, il a été décidé que le prochain sommet serait co-organisé par la France et l'Allemagne et aurait lieu en avril 2009 à Strasbourg et à Kehl, à la frontière franco-allemande. Les deux pays s'étaient mis d'accord pour proposer ensemble que le sommet, qui marquera le 60ème anniversaire de l'alliance, se tienne de part et d'autre du Rhin. Ce sera la première fois dans l'histoire de l'Otan que deux pays membres organisent conjointement un sommet et la première fois depuis le milieu des années 1950 que la France organise un sommet de l'Otan. A Moscou, une trentaine de membres d'organisations de jeunesse pro-Kremlin ont été arrêtés alors qu'ils manifestaient contre les projets d'élargissement de l'Otan, devant la représentation de l'Alliance atlantique.

### **NATO TO ENLARGE TO TWO BALKAN COUNTRIES EU Observer, 03.04.2008**

NATO leaders gathered in Bucharest on Wednesday (2 April) agreed to admit two Balkan countries – Croatia and Albania – to the organisation, but an unsolved dispute between Skopje and Athens has delayed Macedonia's invitation. During a dinner on Wednesday evening, all 26 NATO members agreed Zagreb and Tirana should be invited to join the Alliance, NATO spokesman James Appathurai said at a press briefing after the meal.

But the Greek delegation "made it very clear that until the name issue is resolved," offering NATO membership to Macedonia would "not be possible," he added according to German news agency DPA. "No solution [of the Macedonia name issue] means no invitation," Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis had told reporters when leaving for Bucharest. Greece and Macedonia have been deadlocked in a fight over the former Yugoslav country's name for 17 years now. Greece refuses to recognise its constitutional name - Republic of Macedonia - because a northern Greek region is also called Macedonia and it fears possible territorial claims.

### **EU implications?**

Meanwhile, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa, whose country currently holds the rotating EU presidency, said before the dinner that if Macedonia did not get an invitation to join NATO, it would be a bad sign for EU enlargement as well, according to Macedonian news agency Makfax. Croatia and Albania also link NATO membership to their EU integration.

"Membership in NATO will be a stimulus to our partners on the other side of the table to accept Croatia as a full member of the European Union", Croatian premier Ivo Sanader was quoted as saying by daily Javno on Thursday (3 April).

For his part, Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha told the Associated Press that joining NATO would represent for his country "the most important development since independence." According to Mr Berisha, admitting Albania into NATO will also offer "credentials for fast integration into the European Union." But he also stressed the importance of Macedonia being invited as well: "I am afraid that radicals from all ethnic groups could be encouraged" by a delay. A final decision on the enlargement of the Alliance is to be taken today (3 April).

### **Ukraine and Georgia**

Ukraine and Georgia's ambitions to join the military alliance have been thwarted by a camp of EU states including Germany and France who are afraid of antagonising Russia, who is strongly against their membership. "We are convinced that it is too early to grant both states the [pre-membership] status," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said at her arrival in Bucharest, BBC reported.

French Prime Minister Francois Fillon also expressed his country's opposition to Georgia and Ukraine's NATO entry at this stage, "because we think that it is not a good answer to the balance of power within Europe and between Europe and Russia". NATO leaders did however agree that both Kiev and Tbilisi were entitled to apply to join the organisation and that it was "not a matter of whether but of when," Mr Appathurai said. "But for the moment I do not expect membership action plans for Georgia or Ukraine here," he added.

### **NATO ENDORSES EUROPE MISSILE SHIELD The New York Times, 04.04.2008**

NATO leaders agreed Thursday to endorse a United States missile defense system based in Europe and to provide more troops for Afghanistan, but they refused to back President Bush's proposal to bring Ukraine and Georgia closer to NATO membership. Washington's failure to win over Germany, France, Italy, Spain and other crucial European countries to its view on Ukraine and Georgia was considered by some countries of Central and Eastern Europe to have sent a message of alliance weakness to Moscow, a day before the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, makes his first visit to a NATO summit meeting.

But Mr. Bush could claim success in persuading NATO to endorse his missile-defense plan in the face of Russian objections, and on Thursday signed an agreement with the Czech Republic to build radar for the system. "There has been, over 10 years, a real debate as to whether there is a ballistic missile threat, " said Mr. Bush's national security adviser, Stephen J. Hadley. "And I think that debate ended today." Mr. Bush also succeeded in getting NATO to agree to increase troop numbers in Afghanistan, a Washington priority.

Mr. Putin has objected strongly to building parts of the missile defense system in former Soviet bloc states, despite Washington's assurances that the system is a response to threats from Iran, not from Russia. Mr. Putin, saying the system would fuel a new arms race, has even threatened to aim Russian missiles at the system, while also offering the use of a



substitute system in Azerbaijan. NATO's final statement invited Russia to cooperate with the United States and Europe on developing defenses jointly.

Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the international affairs committee of the Russian Parliament, said that missile defense would be high on the agenda for the meeting between Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin in Sochi, a Russian resort, scheduled after the NATO conference, which Mr. Putin is to attend Friday. Mr. Kosachev said Russia doubted Washington's motives. "We still do not have a proper explanation of this project," he said. "It is not about the number of interceptors. It's about undermining mutual confidence and trust."

The main contributor to more troops in Afghanistan was France. President Nicolas Sarkozy said Paris would send another battalion — some 700 troops — to eastern Afghanistan, freeing up more American soldiers to deploy in support of Canadian forces in the south, where the fighting against the Taliban is heaviest. Mr. Sarkozy, in a joint press conference with the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, repeated that France intended to reintegrate fully into NATO once a separate European defense pillar became a reality. "Let Europe's defense pole advance, and we will continue to advance toward NATO," he said. "I repeat, these are two things that go together, not one or the other, so let's wait for the summit" in 2009, he said. He praised Mr. Bush for comments "on the need for European defenses that would complement the alliance, which was, in my opinion, a historic turning point in U.S. policy," Mr. Sarkozy said. "It was a gesture we have been waiting for, that has been noticed. It's a gesture that shows understanding for what is happening in Europe."

A senior American official said Mr. Bush praised Mr. Sarkozy, too, saying his trip to the United States last fall had an impact "like the latest incarnation of Elvis." Mr. Bush traveled to Ukraine on the eve of the summit meeting here and strongly endorsed its eventual membership. But the alliance decided not to offer Ukraine and Georgia entry into its Membership Action Plan, or MAP, a set of requirements and reforms necessary to achieving full alliance membership. It was a remarkable rejection of American policy in an alliance normally dominated by Washington, and it sent a confusing signal to Russia, one that some countries considered close to appeasement of Moscow.

American officials focused on NATO's agreement that the alliance's foreign ministers would reconsider Ukraine and Georgia when they met again in December, before President Bush left office, though few Europeans expected a different result. The Europeans suggested that invitations to the MAP might come in a year, at the next summit meeting, to be jointly held by Germany and France, or in 2010. Mr. Hadley, the national security adviser, said that most of the former Communist states that had joined NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union had supported the American position. He and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized NATO's final statement declaring that Georgia and Ukraine would become members someday, as would any other aspiring democracy in Europe.

German and British officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, criticized the Bush administration for not coming to grips soon enough with the Ukraine and Georgia problem. They suggested that Mr. Bush's failure to try to work through the issue with Russia in advance created doubts among crucial allies like Germany and France, who also felt that Georgia's leadership was unstable and that Ukraine, with a divided population and a new government, was not yet ready to enter the MAP. Boris I. Tarasyuk, a former Ukrainian foreign minister and close ally of President Viktor A. Yushchenko on NATO membership, said in an interview: "Moscow will be very satisfied

with the outcome. But I'd like to say to them that this is not the end of the story. Sooner or later it will happen." Georgia's foreign minister, David Bakradze, said a "no" for Georgia would validate "those people in the Kremlin who think that by a policy of blackmail, by arrogance and aggression" they can influence NATO's decisions.

NATO did extend full invitations to join the alliance to two significant countries of the Western Balkans, Croatia and Albania. But in an embarrassment for NATO, which runs by consensus, Greece insisted on vetoing the membership invitation of tiny Macedonia. Athens insists that the country must have a name different from Greece's northern province to avoid any sense of territorial claim and "instability," objections that NATO officials regard as ludicrous. "This is a huge disappointment," said the Macedonian government's negotiator, Nikola Dimitrov. "It goes against the values that stand behind NATO. It's very much against stability in the Balkans." Mr. Bush, addressing his NATO colleagues, praised changes that Macedonia had put in place and said that the "name issue needs to be resolved quickly, so that Macedonia can be welcomed into NATO as soon as possible." He did not mention Greece. Nor did Mr. Bush mention Ukraine and Georgia.

### **OTAN: POUTINE RESTE INFLEXIBLE** **Le Figaro, 04.04.2008**

Même si les débats se sont déroulés dans une «atmosphère constructive», le président russe a réaffirmé que l'expansion à l'est de l'Otan constituait pour lui «une menace directe» sur ses frontières occidentales. Le soulagement était de mise, vendredi à Bucarest, à l'issue de la rencontre entre Vladimir Poutine et les dirigeants de l'Otan. Malgré les tensions apparues la veille, l'hôte, pour peu de temps encore, du Kremlin a tenu à afficher un certain calme, jugeant cette rencontre «constructive». Il a également affirmé qu'une nouvelle Guerre froide était exclue, car «ce n'est dans l'intérêt de personne.»

Même volonté d'apaisement affiché du côté d'Angela Merkel. «Je n'ai noté aucune agressivité dans les débats», a assuré la chancelière allemande. «M. Poutine est venu avec un esprit de dialogue», a également affirmé le ministre espagnol des Affaires étrangères, Miguel Angel Moratinos. Le matin même pourtant, un haut responsable russe avait exprimé l'irritation de Moscou sur les conclusions adoptées jeudi soir par le sommet de l'Otan, laissant redouter une crise. Jeudi, l'Alliance atlantique a en effet refusé d'octroyer dans l'immédiat à l'Ukraine et à la Géorgie le statut de candidats officiels, tout en promettant qu'elles pourraient la rejoindre un jour. Une option à laquelle Moscou est fermement opposée.

### **Compromis sur le FCE**

Même s'il n'y a eu effectivement aucun éclat de voix, le président russe a tout de même campé sur ses principales positions, en accusant notamment l'Otan de s'étendre sans respecter les intérêts de son pays. «Il a parlé de la politique d'élargissement de l'Otan et il a dit que malheureusement on demande au fond à la Russie de regarder ce processus sans que les intérêts de la Russie soient pris en compte», a indiqué un haut responsable russe, qui a refusé d'être identifié. «L'Otan ne peut pas garantir sa sécurité aux dépenses de la sécurité des autres», a insisté Poutine.

Celui qui devrait devenir le premier ministre de Dmitri Medvedev a également accusé certains pays de l'alliance militaire occidentale d'avoir diabolisé la Russie, sans égard pour sa contribution à la fin de la Guerre froide. «Certains sont allés jusqu'à une totale diabolisation

de la Russie et ne peuvent toujours pas s'en empêcher. Certains ont commencé à parler d'ambitions impériales», a-t-il poursuivi.

Seul compromis en vue : Vladimir Poutine s'est dit prêt à revenir au traité de désarmement sur les forces conventionnelles en Europe (FCE), moyennant des concessions occidentales. Son pays avait cessé le 12 décembre d'appliquer le traité FCE, une des clés de voûte de la sécurité sur le Vieux continent depuis la fin de la Guerre froide, et qui a limité en 1990 les armements de l'Atlantique à l'Oural. Le leader russe a choisi les dernières semaines de sa présidence pour assister personnellement et pour la première fois à ce Conseil Otan-Russie, bien que ce forum existe déjà depuis 2002. Il rencontrera samedi le président américain George W. Bush, pour une réunion bilatérale dans la ville russe de Sotchi, sous les rives de la mer Noire.

### **PUTIN SCORES MAJOR DIPLOMATIC VICTORY BY BLOCKING NATO'S EXPANSION PLAN**

**International Herald Tribune, 04.04.2008**

By scuttling the NATO membership bids of two of Russia's westward-looking neighbors, Vladimir Putin won what is arguably his biggest diplomatic victory even before he arrived at an alliance summit. NATO's plan to expand further into former Soviet turf collapsed Thursday when leaders — anxious to avoid angering Moscow — opted not to put the strategically important ex-Soviet nations of Ukraine and Georgia on track for membership.

The Russian president has strongly warned the military alliance against moving to bring Ukraine and Georgia aboard. He even threatened that Russia could point its nuclear missiles at Ukraine if it joins NATO and hosts part of a U.S. missile defense system. Putin has succeeded in driving a wedge in the alliance. The United States, Canada and Central and Eastern European nations strongly backed the bids of Ukraine and Georgia. But Germany, France and some others resisted it, fearing that the move would damage ties with Russia, a key energy supplier to the continent.

NATO pledged Thursday to embrace Ukraine and Georgia some day, but the failure to grant them a specific roadmap was a major foreign policy success for Putin just over a month before he steps down as president. Russia has been unable to prevent Western recognition of Kosovo independence or block U.S. missile defense plans. The collapse of NATO's expansion plan marks the first time since the Soviet collapse that Russia actually got the upper hand in a dispute with the West. "Clearly Putin is victorious," said Sergei Karaganov, a Russian political analyst with close ties to the Kremlin. "He has changed the tone of relations between Russia and the West." Putin's coup comes after the Kremlin closed a series of crucial pipeline deals, dashing Western hopes of easing EU dependence on Russian energy.

Last year, Russia signed an agreement with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan for a pipeline that will carry Central Asian gas via Russia, draining the main source for the U.S.-backed Nabucco natural gas pipeline. It has also struck deals with Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary and Serbia. Konstantin Kosachev, head of the foreign affairs committee at the lower house of Russian parliament, said NATO's failure to grant membership action plans to Ukraine and Georgia show Germany, France and some others bear a "responsible attitude."

The expansion plan can succeed only if all 26 bloc members approve it. Strong support from U.S. President George W. Bush, who stopped in Ukraine on his way to Bucharest, failed to persuade the reluctant NATO members to drop their objections. "It was a victory for those

who didn't want destabilization in Europe, and it was a defeat for those outside of Europe who were seeking to destabilize it," Karaganov said. Looking upset, Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko said Thursday that his nation's membership bid was a test for the alliance. He tried to put a brave face to the defeat, declaring: "I'm convinced that Ukraine will be in NATO." He voiced hope that a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in December could advance Ukraine's bid.

Andriy Parubiy, a lawmaker from Yushchenko's faction in parliament, criticized Germany and France. "Their decision was based on economic blackmail by Russia," he said. Georgia's U.S.-allied President Mikhail Saakashvili warned that snubbing his nation would be a "bad sign." "It would not help our reform process," he said in an interview published in the German daily *Handelsblatt*. "But either way, we will stick to the Atlantic perspective." "If NATO starts to compromise with any third party, however important that party might be, then it will not be NATO, it will not be the most successful and attractive alliance," said Saakashvili's foreign minister, David Bakradze.

Putin will dine with NATO leaders and summit guests Thursday evening, and is set to attend a meeting of the Russia-NATO Council on Friday. But the Russian leader won't be able to use the occasion to celebrate his victory. His speech at the meeting will be out of the public eye in line with the meeting's ground rules: Russia is a member of the council and Putin isn't entitled to any special privileges. Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, protested the restrictions, saying the alliance's refusal to give Putin a chance to speak publicly was an attempt to stifle Russia's voice. A Kremlin official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue said Moscow persistently tried to persuade NATO to change the format to make Putin's comments open to the media, but failed.

Russia and NATO signed a partnership agreement in 2002 envisaging cooperation in combating terrorism, curbing proliferation of mass destruction weapons and other issues. But Russia's ties with the West worsened quickly after amid numerous disputes, and Putin grew increasingly critical of NATO. Russia has strongly opposed U.S. plans to deploy missile defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic. Last year, it suspended its participation in a key Cold War-era arms control treaty limiting the deployment of conventional weapons on the continent. But NATO's plans to incorporate Ukraine and Georgia have been by far the strongest irritant for Moscow. The two nations were part of the Russian Empire for centuries before becoming Soviet republics, and their strategic importance is underlined by key westbound energy pipelines.

Now that NATO has shelved accession plans for Georgia and Ukraine, a happy Russia may offer the alliance some favors in return. The Kremlin has been negotiating with NATO on the transit of supplies for its mission in Afghanistan through Russian territory, and a deal could be reached Friday.