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Secretary Clinton's European Tour: A NATO-First Agenda

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As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton embarks on an extensive international tour—which will include visits to Egypt, the Palestinian territories, Israel, Brussels, Geneva, and Ankara—she will be confronted with fierce competition for her time and attention. However, her agenda in Europe will likely be dominated by three interwoven issues: Afghanistan, Russia, and NATO's upcoming Strasbourg–Kehl summit.

Clinton must set the stage for what the Administration wants to achieve at NATO's next summit, including greater European military commitments to the alliance's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. She must also be careful not to alienate Central and Eastern European countries who have been unsettled by Vice President Joe Biden's call to "hit the reset button" on U.S.–Russian relations. Most of all, the secretary must pay careful attention to the issue of France's potential reintegration into NATO's military command structures, a change that would reshape the alliance for years to come.

NATO First. The European leg of Secretary Clinton's trip will provide the U.S. Administration with a significant opportunity to outline its plans for NATO's historic 60th anniversary summit, which will take place in Strasbourg and Kehl April 3–4. Secretary Clinton will meet with NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels a day before she meets with EU leaders representing the European Council, the European Commission, and the EU presidency.

Secretary Clinton must concentrate on top-line agenda items such as Afghanistan and NATO reform and address the long-term implications of French reintegration into NATO's military command structures. President Nicolas Sarkozy has stated his intention to fully rejoin NATO at the Strasbourg summit and, in return, has reportedly received assurances of two senior NATO command positions, as well as American support for an independent European defense identity.¹

In his speech to the Munich Security Conference on February 7, Vice President Biden welcomed both France's potential reintegration and a "fundamentally stronger NATO–EU partnership."² However, the reshaping of NATO–EU relations will have far-reaching ramifications, including serious consequences for the transatlantic relationship. Hearings should be held on the issue and the full implications considered by both the Administration and Congress.

NATO reform and revitalization will also be high on the summit's agenda. This summit is likely to produce a Declaration on Allied Security outlining NATO's *raison d'être* and paving the way for a new strategic concept for the alliance. A new threat per-

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ception that meaningfully addresses security challenges such as cyberterrorism, ballistic missile attack, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would be a very positive start in revitalizing NATO as the alliance enters its seventh decade.

The replacement of Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer should also be on Secretary Clinton's agenda to be discussed on the sidelines of the conference. As the political lobbying heats up to replace the Dutch diplomat, the U.S. Administration must liaise with its closest NATO allies, including the United Kingdom, to discuss a preferred candidate. Significantly, Britain at present holds neither a supreme NATO command nor a joint command position within the military command structures.

Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the Obama Administration's top foreign policy priority, and Secretary Clinton must call for additional European commitments to the ISAF mission in military, civilian, and economic terms. Although the Administration's long-term strategy for Afghanistan is yet to be finalized, President Obama's 60-day review will be completed before the April summit. Regardless of the long-term political strategies currently being calculated in Washington, security and stability will surely be the main focus in the short term. That will mean more combat troops, with fewer national caveats and more effective deployment of current resources. A short-term strategy focused on stability is also likely to involve a request for more police trainers, especially specialist law enforcement train-

ers such as gendarmerie who can fill in where German efforts have failed.

Washington has already announced the deployment of an additional 17,000 troops.³ It is important that NATO's Continental European members take steps to show a similar level of commitment.

Russia. Standing alongside her Czech counterpart, Karel Schwarzenberg, in Washington last month, Secretary Clinton stated that the U.S. could delay its plans for a U.S. missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic in exchange for Iranian disarmament.⁴ In a letter to Russian President Dmitri Medvedev last month, President Obama secretly offered such a deal to Moscow.⁵ Although the Obama Administration has still not formally withdrawn plans for the U.S.'s "third site" deployment, all indications point to Washington's intention to enter into a grand bargain with Moscow to secure Russia's cooperation in dealing with Tehran.⁶

Secretary Clinton must not trade away U.S. missile defenses for vague promises from Moscow of future cooperation on Iran, especially following Admiral Mike Mullen's recent comments that Iran already has enough nuclear material to build a bomb.⁷ Moscow would rightly interpret any such deal as weakness on Washington's part and continue to pursue its "zone of privileged interests" policy.⁸

NATO enlargement provides Secretary Clinton with a key test case for Russian-American relations. Unable to overcome German and French hostility,

1. Ben Hall and James Blitz, "Command Accord Presages French Return to NATO," *Financial Times*, February 5, 2009, at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fbc2122a-f323-11dd-abe6-0000779fd2ac.html> (March 2, 2009).
2. Vice President Joseph R. Biden, speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference, February 7, 2009, at http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2009=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=238& (March 2, 2009).
3. Tim Reid and Tom Coghlan, "Barack Obama Will Send 17,000 Extra Troops to Fight in Afghanistan," *The Times*, February 18, 2009, at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5756279.ece (March 2, 2009).
4. David Gollust, "Clinton Says US Could 'Reconsider' European Missile Defense Plan," VOA News.com, February 10, 2009, at <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-02-10-voa54.cfm> (March 2, 2009).
5. Tony Halpin, "Barack Obama 'Offers to Abandon Missile Defence Shield,'" *The Times*, March 3, 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article5838160.ece> (March 3, 2009).
6. James Kilner and Christian Lowe, "U.S. Offers Moscow Concession on Missile Shield," Reuters, February 13, 2009, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/joeBiden/idUSTRE51C28G20090213> (March 2, 2009).
7. Thom Shanker, "U.S. Says Iran Has Material for an Atomic Bomb," *The New York Times*, March 1, 2009, at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/02/washington/02military.html?_r=1&ref=world (March 2, 2009).
8. Douglas Birch, "Russia's Medvedev Adopts Tough Tone, Echoing Putin," *USA Today*, September 4, 2008, at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-09-04-1981123384_x.htm (March 2, 2009).

President Bush failed to garner the alliance's support for granting NATO Membership Action Plans (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine at the Bucharest summit last year. The Obama Administration should restate the case for NATO's open-door policy and specifically find a way forward for Georgian and Ukrainian accession to MAP without fear of Russian retribution. NATO enlargement will stand as a major test of whether Moscow is genuinely interested in resetting U.S.–Russian relations on a positive footing, or if it is merely interested in pocketing policy gains from Washington.

Defending American Interests. Secretary Clinton must be proactive on this European trip, requesting European military support in Afghanistan as well as confronting Russian opposition to

key U.S. policies such as NATO enlargement and missile defense. She must take the lead on issues of NATO reform and approach the French reintegration issue with much more caution. Secretary Clinton must realize that the creation of a separate EU defense identity will cause lasting damage to the transatlantic security alliance and will give France an unprecedented opportunity to pursue an agenda that will be inimical to American interests.

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