

Posted on *TFF's* homepage on May 14, 2009

Please find below Al Burke's letter as well as the response from the Institute's director, Tomas Ries.

At the bottom the author's notes from the recent seminar.

[Open Letter:](#)
[The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, UI, and USA/NATO](#)

By Al Burke

21 April 2009

[Öppet brev til Utrikespolitiska Institutets styrelse](#)

[Open letter to the Swedish Institute of International Affairs](#)

Board of Directors (*Styrelse*)
Swedish Institute of International Affairs
Drottning Kristinas väg 37
Box 27035
SE-102 51 Stockholm

Re: The Institute and USA/NATO

The institution for which it is your task to provide direction and supervision is generally regarded as the most prestigious and influential of its kind in Sweden. It is therefore in a position to perform a useful role in the exploration and public discussion of important foreign policy issues.

That special status, and the fact that some 40 per cent of the Institute's income consists of public funding, clearly impose an obligation to explore and discuss all significant aspects of such issues. The self-description on your website indicates an awareness of that obligation:

“The Swedish Institute of International Affairs [“UI”] ... is an ideologically and politically independent institution for information and research on matters of international politics. The target audience for UI’s information activities is the Swedish public.... An important function of UI is to provide a forum for public debate on current international issues.”

Unfortunately, UI is failing to fulfil that function with regard to one issue of crucial importance for the future of Sweden and the world at large. That issue is the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, NATO, hereinafter referred to as USA/NATO in order to highlight the frequently obscured U.S. dominance over the organization and its role as an instrument of the United States’ openly declared policy of world domination [*see References: Nordic News Network*]. Intentionally or otherwise, UI in this matter appears to be serving not so much as an agency of enlightenment and open debate, but rather of obfuscation and indoctrination.

That is a serious allegation; but sadly, it is one that is not very difficult to document.

One might begin with the seminar arranged by UI on April 15th under the heading of “NATO’s Anniversary — Life begins at 60?” The problem was evident from the outset, in the announcement of the event which *stated* that the military alliance was founded “to defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union” and has now “expanded its mission to include humanitarian and peacekeeping roles.”

That is the standard propaganda line, of course. But there is a great deal of information and well-substantiated analysis to refute such a benevolent portrayal of military alliance. Since for some reason(s) no one at UI appears to be familiar with that material, I include below a small selection of references to it.

The following excerpts may serve to illustrate the range of alternative views. Regarding the motivation for USA/NATO’s establishment, for example:

One of the deceptive clichés of Western accounts of post-World War II history is that NATO was constructed as a defensive arrangement to block the threat of a Soviet attack on Western Europe. This is false. It is true that Western propaganda played up the Soviet menace, but many key U.S. and Western European statesmen recognized that a Soviet invasion was not a real threat....

Even hardliner John Foster Dulles [U.S. foreign minister] stated back in 1949 that “I do not know of any responsible high official, military or civilian... in this government or any other government, who believes that the Soviet now plans conquest by open military aggression.”

... From its inception NATO showed itself to be offensively, not defensively, oriented, antagonistic to diplomacy and peace, and intertwined with widespread terrorist operations and other forms of political intervention that were undemocratic and actual threats to democracy. [*References: Herman*]

Tending to support that analysis is the fact that the (much weaker) Warsaw Pact alliance was not formed until six years after the founding of USA/NATO, and only then after the rearmament of West Germany had commenced. There is also this to consider:

France had a policy, initiated by de Gaulle, of trying to turn Europe

into what was then called a “third force,” independent of the two superpowers; so Europe should pursue an independent course. He spoke of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. That was a great fear of the United States since the Second World War — that Europe would strike out on its own after reconstructing, which it could.... It could have been a move towards a peaceful Europe, independent of the superpowers. In fact, a large part of the purpose of NATO was to prevent that from happening, to ensure that Europe would stay within the U.S. umbrella under U.S. control. [Goodman]

As for the self-professed “humanitarian and peacekeeping roles” of USA/NATO, there is much to suggest that they serve largely as a smokescreen to obscure geopolitical aims and aggressive policies that have nothing to do with peace, defence or humanitarian service. Among other things, USA/NATO is playing a key role in the ongoing encirclement of Russia, in violation of a commitment made by the U.S. to Mikhail Gorbachev in exchange for Soviet consent to German reunification:

In February 1990, after talks with West Germany's foreign minister, Secretary of State James Baker had assured Mikhail Gorbachev and [then Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard] Shevardnadze that “NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position.” The [first] Bush administration began backing away from that pledge almost immediately. The Clinton administration reneged on that commitment altogether when it decided to expand NATO to Eastern Europe....

“The issue is not just whether Czechs, Hungarians and Poles join NATO. The problem is more serious: the rejection of the strategy for a new, common European system agreed to by myself and all the Western leaders when we ended the Cold War,” wrote Mikhail Gorbachev in March 1999. “I feel betrayed by the West. The opportunity we seized on behalf of peace has been lost. The whole idea of a new world order has been completely abandoned.” [Sigal]

That clearly provocative betrayal has been condemned even by the likes of Patrick J. Buchanan, a bellicose anti-communist and foreign policy advisor to Pres. Richard Nixon:

NATO has been irrelevant for two decades, since its *raison d’etre* — to keep the Red Army from driving to the Rhine — disappeared....

What did we do? In a spirit of “triumphalism,” NATO “nearly doubled its size and rolled itself right up to Russia's door,” writes Richard Betts in *The National Interest*. Breaking our word to Mikhail Gorbachev, we invited into NATO six former member states of the Warsaw Pact and three former republics of the Soviet Union....

“Washington... succumbed to victory disease and kept kicking Russia while it was down,” writes Richard Betts. “Two decades of humiliation were a potent incentive for Russia to push back. Indeed this is why many realists opposed NATO expansion in the first place.” [Buchanan]

That deceitful and aggressive expansion has led to what many have characterized as the start of a new cold war. One worried observer is former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who has warned: “Such a policy must seem to Russia like encirclement,” Schroeder said. “We find ourselves in a spiral of confrontation that we need to get out of as quickly as possible.” [Associated Press]

Concerning the current ISAF [i.e. USA/NATO] “peacekeeping mission” in Afghanistan, in which Swedish troops are now embroiled, a retired military historian had this to say at a recent public meeting in the Stockholm suburb of Solna:

“The way in which Swedish troops got involved in ISAF is a shady business. The decision was made behind closed doors, and it was pushed by a couple of officers from Swedish defence headquarters. Today’s officer corps is to a large extent NATO-oriented, because it means better career opportunities, etc. But is there any reason to believe that NATO would selflessly defend Sweden if push ever came to shove? No. NATO exists to promote the imperial interests of the United States.” [Lindgren]

Also referring to Afghanistan, six prominent Swedes (including a former minister of defence) have pointed out that, “What was originally presented as a peacekeeping operation is becoming a full-scale war with devastating consequences for the civilian population.” [Alfredsson et al.]

This is just a small sample of views that contradict the projected self-image of USA/NATO. Some or all of them may be subject to further discussion, but the problems they address are well documented and widely known. Thus, in order to present USA/NATO propaganda as established fact — as UI has done — it is necessary to ignore a large and readily available body of knowledge.

How can that be justified by a publicly subsidized, “ideologically and politically independent institution” which professes to “provide a forum for public debate on current international issues”?

So much for the announcement of the seminar on April 15th. The thing itself was not much different, as indicated by the notes accompanying this letter. Among the impressions conveyed by the speaker and the two commentators were that:

- USA/NATO is a benevolent institution that has done nothing but spread peace and security throughout the world, including Eastern Europe and Afghanistan.
- USA/NATO is “we” and Russia is “them”.
- Russia is not being threatened and encircled. Rather, independent nations that happen to be located along its borders are being given “an opportunity to choose their own destinies”.
- Misled by Putin the political opportunist, paranoid Russia does not understand its own situation or best interests. Those are matters that are more properly understood by academics from the National Defense University in Washington and representatives of the Conservative Party in Sweden.
- The growing co-operation between USA/NATO and the European Union is a purely positive development.
- The Nordic and Arctic regions are of only marginal interest to USA/NATO and, by implication, there is no particular reason for Sweden or Finland to be concerned about the likely consequences of joining the alliance. [For a very different view, see Rozoff, 10 April 2009.]

Omitted from the discussion were such concerns as:

- The potential significance of Sweden and Finland as final links in the chain of USA/NATO member-states being constructed along the northern, western southern flanks of Russia.
- The potentially significant roles of Sweden and Finland in the emerging competition for Arctic resources.
- Gross violations of international law by USA/NATO, including wars of aggression — the “supreme international crime” according to the Nuremberg Principles contrived and imposed on others by the United States and its allies.
- The geopolitical significance of Afghanistan and the widespread death, misery and destruction inflicted upon its civilian population as a result of the USA/NATO war to gain control of that strategically valuable real estate.
- USA/NATO’s betrayal of the promise made to Soviet leader Gorbachev in exchange for the reunification of Germany, and the inevitable consequences of that betrayal.
- The central role of USA/NATO in the ongoing effort to secure control of enormous fossil-fuel resources and key transport routes along the southern border of Russia.

... And much more. It might be possible to excuse such a lopsided and blinkered event if it were an isolated exception to an otherwise open and comprehensive approach to these crucial issues. But that does not appear to be the case.

Today, for example, there was yet another UI event in the same spirit, to judge from the announcement of the seminar entitled, “A Common European Security Strategy — EU and NATO?”

The strong development of the EU’s European Security and Defense Policy, France’s recent decision to rejoin NATO’s military structure, and a new U.S. Administration open the possibility of a dramatic improvement in EU-NATO cooperation. In this highly topical seminar, Professor Sven Biscop will discuss the current state of ESDP and the future prospects of improved EU-NATO relations.

Dr. Sven Biscop is Director of the Security & Global Governance Programme at Egmont — the Royal Institute for International Relations, in Brussels. He is a Visiting Professor for European security at the College of Europe in Bruges and is a member of the Executive Academic Board of the EU’s European Security and Defence College (ESDC). His recent research and publications have focused *inter alia* on the European Security Strategy, on which he has published *The European Security Strategy — A Global Agenda for Positive Power* (Ashgate, 2005) and *The EU and the European Security Strategy — Forging a Global Europe* (Routledge, 2008, co-edited with Jan Joel Andersson).

The seminar will be introduced and chaired by Dr. Jan Joel Andersson, Program Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

It must be reassuring to address a seminar moderated by one’s co-editor, although it might have been more appropriate for the two scholars to serve as co-speakers and co-moderators. The reference to “Positive Power” certainly sounds, well... positive. And given the dreadful history of colonialism, one naturally wonders how the rest of the world responds to the idea of “forging a global Europe”.

A search of UI's website with the key word "NATO" has failed to disclose any indication that the Institute has adopted a less skewed approach to these issues in the past, or is likely to do so in the future. Apparently due to a technical malfunction, the relevant documents were not accessible; but some of the listed titles and invited speakers were indicative, for example:

"A conversation about NATO"
Seminar with Olle Koivinen and Allan Widman*

"NATO in the new international security architecture"
Lecture by David S. Yost, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School
and NATO Defence College

I was unable to find anything on your website that reflected the sorts of knowledge and expertise represented in the References below or the excerpts above. If such resources are generally available at the Institute, I would be glad to learn of them. (Please note, however, that I have in mind the overall treatment of the subject, *not* to occasional exceptions which merely prove the rule.)

In the meantime, it is necessary to rely on the information available, and the general impression that it conveys is quite clear: The Swedish Institute of International Affairs

*Allan Widman is perhaps Sweden's most rabid advocate of NATO membership; certainly no one has demonstrated less wisdom or more fervour and disregard for the facts than the member of parliament for the devoutly USA-loyal Liberal Party. Concerning Olle Koivinen, whose name is of Finnish origin, I have not been able to learn anything; a telephone enquiry to UI failed to yield any information about his background or qualifications. Searches of the Internet specifying no domain suffix, and those for both Finland and Sweden (.fi and .se), also produced no result. By comparison, a search under "Allan Widman.se" yielded 24,300 hits. Some of these apparently referred to other individuals with the same name, but those involving the Liberal MP ranked at the top in terms of frequency.

has adopted the rationale and perspective of USA/NATO, serves as a channel for the alliance's propaganda, and is unwilling or unable to provide a broader range of information and analysis to its professed target audience, the Swedish public.

That impression was strengthened by the following exchange with the moderator of last week's seminar (taken from accompanying notes; *my words in italics*):

Does the Institute have any plans for a seminar featuring a critic of NATO?

Looking surprised, the moderator gestured toward the departing audience:
"But you heard for yourself."

*I did not hear any criticism, and in any event I was referring to the main speaker.
Do you plan to invite a NATO critic to speak under the same conditions as Prof. Moss?*

"But there are so many of them!"

Just as there are many who are favourable toward NATO.

Gesturing toward Prof. Moss: "I didn't think that he was so favourable."

I would hardly describe the good professor as a NATO critic.

"Well...." (apparently unsure how to respond).

Never mind. You have answered my question. It is as I suspected.

Without further information, it is difficult to divine the basis of such a peculiar response. A cynical interpretation is that the moderator, who is also UI's programme director, was fully cognizant of the obvious bias and was merely trying to deflect a troublesome questioner. A somewhat more generous interpretation is that he truly did not grasp the nature and extent of the bias, and was not accustomed to dealing with such questions. I fear and suspect that the latter alternative is the more likely.

Whatever the case in that regard, it is clear that UI as presently constituted is not willing or able to serve the needs and interests of its target audience in this vitally important matter. As you are surely aware, the question of whether or not Sweden should join USA/NATO is one of the most crucial policy issues confronting the nation today. On the evidence, UI must be regarded as one of the institutions being used to manipulate Swedish opinion in favour of membership in USA/NATO.

Nor is this an isolated issue: The problem of USA/NATO is entwined with other matters of great import, including the future direction of the European Union, the power and global ambitions of the United States, nuclear war, the stability of the Caucasus region and the Middle East, relations with Russia, the rapidly growing threat of a new cold war, etc. The same bias, distortion and neglect that is so evident in UI's approach to USA/NATO must inevitably affect its treatment of such inter-related issues, as well.

In short, it is painfully evident that the Swedish Institute of International Affairs is in a highly dysfunctional state (assuming that its public declaration of purpose is sincerely intended). But when presented with evidence of such a condition, it is not uncommon for institutions such as yours to respond by denying the obvious, attacking the messenger, citing an exception as though it were the norm, changing the subject, and other diversionary tactics.

I do hope that we can skip over that embarrassing phase and proceed directly to the unavoidable question of whether you are willing to acknowledge the problem and are prepared to do something about it.

In considering that option, it would no doubt be useful to conduct a simple reality check by comparing the well-documented information and analyses contained in the References provided below with the sort of thing that the Institute has been doing with the USA/NATO issue. If you do so with an open mind, you cannot fail to perceive the inadequacy of the Institute's current approach (to indulge in understatement).

If you should decide to confront and deal with the problem, I would be glad to recommend others more competent than myself to assist in developing a solution.

Yours sincerely,

Al Burke
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Reply from the Institute's Director

Dear Al Burke,

The Chairman of the Board has instructed me to thank you for your letter. It is correct that the Swedish Institute of International Affairs is an ideologically and politically independent institution for information and research on matters of international politics. The Institute therefore provides all parties the opportunity to present their viewpoints. The seminar in question fits well within that framework.

Yours sincerely,

Tomas Ries
Director, Swedish Institute of International Affairs
24 April 2009

* * * * *

Dear Tomas Ries,

Thanks for your reply, even though its content is as expected and thus pathetic. Your response is an example of the tactic referred to in my letter as "denying the obvious"; by way of substantiation, I include below a sample of the uniformly positive reactions I have received from others.

Yours sincerely,

Al Burke
26 April 2009

Sample of comments on open letter to Swedish Institute of International Affairs

Superb, Al! A condensed version should be published in a prominent debate forum.
-- *Professor of history at leading Swedish university*

Brilliant, Al!!
-- *Leading Danish scholar of international politics*

An exceptionally good letter. Well-formulated and extremely important. Thanks!
-- *Swedish Balkan expert*

This is a masterful work: Terse and to the point, yet comprehensive and penetrating. This is the level on which the debate needs to be conducted.
-- *U.S. expert on NATO*

I cannot adequately express my appreciation.... Illuminating and important information on NATO's history and true nature. I have forwarded your letter to the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, which arranged the important recent meeting in Seoul. The Network has representatives throughout the world. With great appreciation and respect,
-- *Leading figure in Swedish peace movement*

The letter is brilliant.... Do you mind if I forward this on to friends here in the U.K.?
-- *Chairman of British peace & solidarity organization*

Very ugly and dangerous. Good letter. Only one comment: Recently released documents make it clear that the "not one inch to the East" statement referred to East Germany, which was to be provided with a "special status," not fully part of NATO. Expansion further to the Warsaw Pact countries was not even discussed. Furthermore, James Baker assured Shevardnadze that NATO would become a "more political organization." So the expansion to the East is even more cynical than was thought (though of course the documentation is being interpreted to show the opposite).
-- *World-renowned U.S. expert on United States' foreign policy*

Many thanks for the excellent, well-grounded information on the NATO seminar. It is bewildering to me that so much pertaining to defence and security policy has lately been handled so negligently and sloppily in this country.
-- *Former regional commander of Swedish defence forces, currently member of Royal Swedish Academy of Military Science*

Etc, etc....

Note: The foregoing section includes translations of Swedish texts, including the messages from and to Tomas Ries.

* * * * *

Notes on seminar at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs 14 April 2009

(Announcement)

NATO's Anniversary — Life begins at 60?

**Prof. Kenneth Moss
National Defense University
Washington, D.C.**

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Founded to defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union, the alliance has since the end of the Cold War expanded its mission to include humanitarian and peacekeeping roles. Today, the alliance consists of 28 member states. The topics on this year's agenda are focused on NATO's future roles and missions, long-term relations with Russia, the role of NATO in Afghanistan and the return of France as a full NATO member.

Professor Kenneth Moss is Chairman of the National Security Studies Department at the National Defense University in Washington DC. Professor Moss is an expert on NATO, the history of U.S. foreign policy, relations between government and industry, and has a unique perspective on the American Congressional role in foreign policy, having worked on Capitol Hill and in private and public sector roles on transatlantic security issues.

Comments will be provided by Dr. Pål Jonson, Foreign Policy Advisor, Moderate [Conservative] Party group in Parliament *[and as it turned out, also by Göran Lennmark, Conservative MP specializing in foreign policy. — A.B.]*.

The seminar will be moderated by Dr. Jan Joel Andersson, Program Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and followed by a Q & A session.

N.B. The following is not a complete transcript of the seminar — merely a summary of the highlights insofar as I correctly understood and managed to record them — A.B.

In response to the moderator's introductory question as to whether or not there is any plausible reason for USA/NATO's* continued existence, Prof. Moss (hereinafter "KM") expressed his belief that the organization has played a positive role during the post-Cold War period, especially during the 1990s, by:

- creating a "climate of stability" in European affairs
- incorporating new members
- imposing discipline on former Soviet states which might otherwise have provoked Russia to some sort of disagreeable reaction.

Regarding the last of these points, MR noted that the NATO Agreement's

Article V — which obligates all members to come to the aid of any other member in distress— also carries a responsibility to avoid needless conflicts and provocations. This has had a disciplining effect on, for example, the Baltic States which, if left to

**USA/NATO is a more appropriate acronym for an organization that is dominated by the United States and which serves as an instrument of that country's foreign policy.*

their own devices, might have indulged in rash behaviour that might have provoked a response from Russia which in turn could pose a danger to both the provocative little state and to world peace in general.

The implication of KM's analysis was that the incorporation of such potentially wayward states into NATO has also been good for Russia, in that the likelihood of threatening behaviour from the likes of Estonia, Latvia, etc. has been reduced or eliminated.

USA/NATO also has a dampening effect on latent conflicts between member-states, argued KM, citing the case of Turkey and Greece as an example.

Regarding USA/NATO's "enlargement" eastward following the collapse of the Soviet Union, KM stated that he supported the process. True, it had raised "questions and doubts" in Russia (no other source of concern was mentioned). But all things considered, the "enlargement" policy is correct.

Unfortunately, Putin has cited USA/NATO intrusions into Russia's sphere of influence as "an excuse to increase military spending, partly for political reasons at home. Governments do that sometimes."

The "Russian invasion of Georgia was surely not justified." But information that has emerged during the past few months has raised questions about exactly what happened there.

In general, threatening Russia undercuts the purpose of USA/NATO, although the organization "has not found a clear purpose thus far".

KM has found it difficult to persuade his students at the National Defense University, most of whom are U.S. government employees, "that U.S. interests are important enough in the case of Georgia" to justify going to war over it. "The classic question is: Would we risk Chicago for Berlin?" *[Note: Here, as at several other points during his presentation, KM unwittingly or otherwise made it clear that it is U.S. risks and interests that are decisive for USA/NATO. This should be obvious to anyone familiar with the subject; but there are USA/NATO enthusiasts in Sweden and elsewhere who maintain that it is an association of equals that is by no means dominated by the United States.]*

Regarding the new occupant of the White House, KM employed diplomatically neutral language to suggest that the Obama administration has abandoned the unilateralism of the Bush II years in favour of "institutions, law and transparency". Among other things, Obama will probably avoid using USA/NATO as a "global cop". *[The unstated corollary is that Obama's successor(s) may well choose to do so.]*

The current economic crisis will inevitably place limitations on military spending— certainly in Europe, and even in the United States "as indicated by recently announced cuts (sic) in U.S. defence spending". There are, of course, forces in Congress and in the "foreign policy community" that will continue to push for a more aggressive policy, but KM seemed to believe that they will have little influence during the reign of Obama.

As for Sweden and Finland, there would of course be strategic advantages to membership in USA/NATO. But “enlargement is not necessarily a sign of health”—the implication being that both countries should probably think twice before joining.

One key issue is the likely development of a Northwest Passage due to climate change, which will be of great significance for trade between Europe and Asia. *[No mention of petroleum or other Arctic resources.]*

In any event, the current policy discussion in Washington is not very much concerned with “the North” (a term apparently meant by KM to include both the Nordic and the Arctic regions). The Middle East and Afghanistan are the primary focus of attention.

Although Afghanistan is very important for USA/NATO, it is not a do-or-die issue. Even if the “mission” there fails, the organization will survive and there will still be a USA/NATO in ten years.

* * * *

Comments by Dr. Pål Jonson, Conservative Party

Dr. Jonson’s remarks were devoted primarily to the recent USA/NATO summit/ anniversary meeting in Strasbourg, which he regarded as highly successful because:

- It demonstrated that Trans-Atlantic relations have improved under President Obama.
- There was little evident internal conflict, which is also good because that sort of thing undermines credibility and engenders negative public opinion of the organization.
- There was a greater emphasis than previously on collective defence, which is fortunate because Swedes’ opinion of USA/NATO is likely to improve if it is perceived as useful for Swedish national security. (However, “Sweden does not sense any immediate threat from Russia.”)

Other positive developments: Sarkozy’s return of France to USA/NATO’s military planning structure; and a more comprehensive and diversified (i.e. not only military) approach to the problem of Afghanistan. “I don’t see that we (sic) will fail in Afghanistan. But failure there would weaken NATO, so it is vitally important to succeed. *[Neither “failure” nor “success” was defined.]*

Another positive sign is that Obama is placing more emphasis on good relations with Russia, and Europe can help with that. Russia has perceived USA/NATO’s “enlargement” as a threat, but it is wrong to do so. USA/NATO is not any kind of threat to Russia, but is merely providing “an opportunity for independent nations to choose their own destinies”. It is good that Obama has clearly stated that “we” (sic) will continue to have an “open-door policy” in that regard, Ukraine and Georgia included.

Obama’s entire European tour was a public relations triumph that will have positive consequences. *[The implication seeming to be that the presence of a popular president in the White House will render European/Swedish public opinion more amenable to deeper involvement with USA/NATO.]*

Sweden has very good and constantly expanding relations with USA/NATO, but of course it would be even better if it were a full member. To the moderator’s leading question as to whether Sweden will become a member in ten years, Jonson replied: “Yes, Sweden will be a member in ten years.”

Comments by Göran Lennmark, Conservative Member of Swedish Parliament

It has been suggested that Europe has ascribed greater significance to USA/NATO than the U.S. has. That is true, and quite reasonable: USA/NATO has played a key role in suppressing conflicts and promoting stability in Europe, with Turkey-Greece once again the prime example. Thus, USA/NATO has been more important to Europe than to the U.S.

In the past there has been some concern that the European Union and USA/NATO were pulling in different directions on key issues. But that is no longer the case. It is now clear that they are entirely compatible and co-operating institutions.

Concerning Afghanistan, there has been too much of a focus on the problems of the South where the Taliban are strong. They will never take the North; but if they try, the result will be a civil war or something very like. Therefore, it is vitally important for USA/NATO and Europe to do whatever it can to strengthen the North, for example by repairing the crucial but heavily damaged irrigation system.

Questions & answers

There was time for only three questions, all of them on relatively minor or tangential matters. One of the latter sort, on the likely trend of Obama's policy toward Israel, was asked by Wilhelm Wachtmeister who noted that he had served as Sweden's ambassador in Washington during the reigns of five presidents. In reference to Prof. Moss's presentation he said, "I agree with everything you said." (KM's response to the question was that U.S. policy toward Israel is unlikely to change under Obama.)

Critic-free zone

As I did not have an opportunity to pose the question during the seminar, I asked the moderator afterward if the Institute had any plans to arrange a less one-sided event in the future. Our exchange was as follows, with *my questions/observations in italics*.

Does the Institute have any plans for a seminar featuring a critic of NATO?

Looking surprised, the moderator gestured toward the departing audience: "But you heard for yourself."

I did not hear any criticism, and in any event I was referring to the main speaker. Do you plan to invite a NATO critic to speak under the same conditions as Prof. Moss?

"But there are so many of them!"

Just as there are many who are favourable toward NATO.

Gesturing toward Prof. Moss: "I didn't think that he was so favourable."

I would hardly describe the good professor as a NATO critic.

"Well..." (apparently unsure how to respond).

Never mind. You have answered my question. It is as I suspected.

* * * * *

General observations

Prof. Moss prefaced his remarks by emphasizing that he was speaking only for himself, not as a representative of the U.S. government, USA/NATO, the National Defense University or any other institution. He also expressed the hope that he would avoid saying anything that might require the U.S. embassy in Stockholm to “break out the shovels” and clean up the mess.

He need not have worried. The professor said more or less exactly what someone in his position could be expected to say, which— given the implications of my post-seminar exchange with the moderator (see “Critic-free zone”) — was presumably why he was invited.

Anyone with only this seminar as a source of information about USA/NATO would have come away with the impression that it is a benevolent institution that has done nothing but spread peace and security throughout the world, including Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. It certainly does not pose any sort of problem for the people of Sweden; on the contrary.

What else might one expect of an organization which, according to the seminar announcement’s recitation of the standard PR language, was founded “to defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union” and has now “expanded its mission to include humanitarian and peacekeeping roles”?

Unfortunately, USA/NATO has been misunderstood and unfairly maligned by Russia which is using it as a politically motivated excuse to increase military spending. Apparently, there are no other critics (although “there are so many of them” when it comes to arranging seminars).

Afghanistan is a serious problem— for USA/NATO. Apart from the Taliban, the people who happen to live there were not mentioned during the seminar, even though one could for example read the following in *Svenska Dagbladet*, the conservative Swedish daily, on the same day:

“NATO again blamed for civilian deaths... The tendency of the foreign forces to repeatedly miss their targets and kill civilians has undermined trust in the troops that have been sent to stabilize the country. Spokesmen for the United States and ISAF [USA/NATO] have several times denied reports of civilian deaths, but have later been forced to admit the mistakes and apologize.”

Likewise, nothing was said about USA/NATO’s gross violations of international law, its function as an instrument of the United States’ openly declared policy of world domination, or any of the other important reasons that it has been the subject of bitter and widespread criticism in Europe and elsewhere.

Presumably to provide “balance”, two commentators were invited to present their views. Both were from the Conservative Party, which is in favour of Swedish membership in USA/NATO.

The seminar was held at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, which professes to be “an ideologically and politically independent institution for information and research on issues of international politics.... An important function of the Institute is to provide a forum for debate on current international issues.” Forty per cent of its annual income consists of public funds via the Foreign Ministry.

The Institute was formerly the sole occupant of a building in Stockholm's Old Town, but now shares quarters with the National Defence College, adjacent to the Royal Institute of Technology which has close ties with Swedish industry.

On the evidence of this seminar, it is an apt location.

Al Burke
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