

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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THESIS

**PROSPECTS FOR NATO ENLARGEMENT:
EXAMINING THE "BIG BANG" APPROACH**

by

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December 2000

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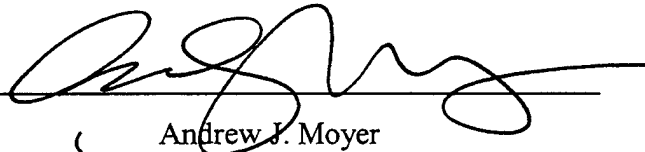
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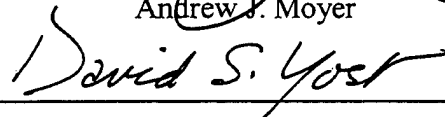
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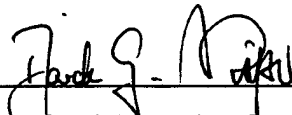
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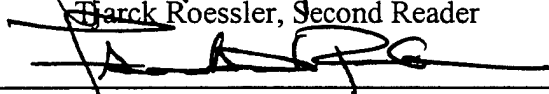
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ABSTRACT

In March 1999, NATO admitted the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland as its first new members since the collapse of the Soviet empire. As the 2002 NATO summit approaches, nine countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) aspire to membership. Led by the Baltic states, these nine countries have signed the May 2000 Vilnius Declaration, advocating the admission of all nine aspirants simultaneously, a so-called "big bang" approach to the next round of NATO enlargement. This thesis examines the "big bang" approach to NATO enlargement as well as the prospects for the current candidate countries. Allied and aspirant arguments in the enlargement debate are discussed as well as key issues concerning NATO-Russian relations. The thesis concludes that, while NATO is well advised to remain open to further enlargement, the Alliance is unlikely to pursue the "big bang" approach, owing to the political, financial, and strategic implications that enlargement would entail. Indeed, the Allies may conclude at their 2002 summit that it would be premature to undertake further near-term enlargement.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the end of the Cold War, the security environment in Europe has changed dramatically. The possibility of a major war in Europe currently seems remote, but the threat posed by the monolithic Soviet Union has been replaced by new contingencies. NATO now faces evolving security challenges, including ethnic conflict, terrorism, organized crime, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, NATO's roles in European security have been transformed. Though founded on the basis of collective defense, the Alliance now faces multiple roles in support of collective security. Additionally, the European Union is currently undertaking the formation of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and a common European security and defense policy (CESDP). It is incumbent upon NATO and the EU to align their enlargement agendas to promote prosperity and peace on the continent.

In March 1999, NATO admitted the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to the Alliance. This was the first round of NATO enlargement subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet empire. When the invitations were extended to these three countries in 1997, no framework existed for aspiring members to help them meet the basic requirements for membership. In 1999, NATO published a new Strategic Concept, outlining new roles and missions for the Alliance and reiterating its commitment to the "open door" policy, and a Membership Action Plan as a framework for aspiring members to make the necessary preparations for admittance to the Alliance.

The next NATO summit is scheduled for 2002. At that time, the next round of Alliance enlargement may be a premier topic of discussion among the 19 Allies. Nine countries currently aspire to NATO membership: Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia,

Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Led by the Baltic states, these nine countries have signed the May 2000 Vilnius Declaration, advocating the admission of all nine aspirants simultaneously, a so-called "big bang" approach to the next round of NATO enlargement.

In addition to discussing the nine "candidate" countries in the context of the "big bang" approach, this thesis also considers the five non-aligned countries (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and Switzerland) as potential NATO members. For a variety of reasons, four of these five countries appear unlikely to seek NATO membership in current conditions. A remote possibility exists for Austria to join the Alliance and that has immediate ramifications for the "Vilnius nine." As with any contentious issue, there are solid arguments on both sides of the enlargement debate. Proponents of expanding the Alliance contend that this will enhance stability in Europe and maintain the leadership role of the United States on the continent. Opponents cite the extensive costs and the creation of new dividing lines.

Despite the positive intentions expressed in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, Russia still considers the enlargement of NATO to be a threat to its national security. Russia is opposed in general to any NATO expansion, but the possibility of the Baltic states being included in the Alliance has evoked vehement objections from President Vladimir Putin as well as top military officials in Russia. Even though NATO officials have repeatedly stated that only NATO members will decide about enlargement, the possibility of provoking an unstable Russia by including the Baltic states is a risk the Alliance, or at least some of its members, appear to be unwilling to take.

Several relevant political, military, and economic factors concerning enlargement of the Alliance will be discussed during the 2002 summit: stability in Europe, the integration efforts of the three newest members, the cost of expansion, complementary agendas with the EU, and relations with Russia. Before enlargement of the Alliance can proceed, the Allies will have to reach a consensus not only concerning the next potential members, but also on the general utility of any further enlargement.

The thesis concludes that, while NATO is well advised to remain open to further enlargement, the Alliance is unlikely to pursue the “big bang” approach, owing to the political, financial, and strategic implications that enlargement would entail. Indeed, the Allies may go so far as to conclude at the 2002 summit that it would be premature to undertake further near-term enlargement.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. THE "BIG BANG" APPROACH TO NATO ENLARGEMENT

The debate over the next round of NATO expansion continues, albeit with a distinctly new twist. Led by the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), the nine countries applying for inclusion in NATO are advocating a so-called "big bang" approach. This approach would entail inviting all nine applicants to join the Alliance simultaneously at the next NATO summit in 2002. According to Paul Goble, Lithuanian Deputy Foreign Minister Vygaudas Usackas is credited with coining the term "Big Bang" and is using this idea to reenergize the debate concerning future expansion of the alliance.¹

In addition to the Baltic states, Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania all seek to join the alliance. By applying as a group, these states seek to avoid the problems associated with individual candidacy. These problems include political disagreements within the alliance, favoritism by some NATO allies toward certain aspirant countries, competition among aspirant countries for such support, distortion of the enlargement agenda under the impact of domestic politics in key NATO countries, as well as complacency and unimaginative bureaucratic attitudes toward the basic issue of enlarging NATO and its missions.²

¹ Paul Goble, "A Big Bang Outside A Closely Guarded Door," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (RFE/RL), News and Current Affairs (NCA) analysis, dateline Washington, 19 May 2000.

² "Balts List Merits of "Big Bang" Approach to NATO's Enlargement," *The Jamestown Foundation, Monitor*, 25 May 2000.

Addressing the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., on June 15, 2000, Estonian president Lennart Meri presented the desires of the so-called "Vilnius Nine." A more gradual approach, he said, would be "long and laborious." He noted that all nine candidates have been stressing internal stability and good relations with their neighbors. He further stressed his belief that "the smaller countries of Europe unequivocally support the rapid enlargement of NATO." He also stated that resistance to this idea seems to come primarily from France, Germany, and Great Britain.³

The origins of the "big bang" approach to NATO enlargement are not entirely clear. Since a ranking member of the Lithuanian government is credited with the term, the idea may have originated in that country. This "all for one" approach may date back to the last round of NATO enlargement. The current aspirant countries must have asked, "Why those three (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) and not us?" In June 1997, at the conclusion of a meeting of the defense ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, all three called for clear and concrete entry criteria to be developed for countries seeking entry into NATO. Ceslavas Stankevicius, the Lithuanian Defense Minister, declared his desire that NATO enlargement not be a lottery, but rather that NATO clearly "explain the conditions and possibilities of NATO expansion and the accession of new members." NATO has yet to clearly delineate concrete criteria or timelines, although it has established a Membership Action Plan and has repeatedly confirmed that the door remains open for future enlargement. The "big bang" approach may be the aspirant countries' answer to the perceived NATO lottery.

³ Andrew F. Tully, "Estonian President Presses for "Big Bang NATO Expansion," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (RFE/RL), End Note, dateline Washington, 19 June 2000.

Several key issues demand attention in analyzing the prospects for this proposal, as well as the arguments both for and against. Though not definitive as the single most important issue, concerns about Russia stand at the forefront of the debate. Among the considerations NATO members must take into account are the following: Russia-NATO relations, Russian relations with each current NATO member and aspirant country, and other foreign policy and security concerns associated with the Russian Federation. In particular, Germany is anxious to avoid any confrontation with Russia over the admission of the Baltic states. The Russian government has refused to recognize the illegitimacy of the USSR's occupation of the Baltic states, claiming that they were legally part of the Soviet Union. Admitting one or more of the Baltic states into NATO would raise Russian objections for this reason and others. Additionally, about one-third of the total Russian foreign debt is owed to Germany, approximately \$42 billion in outstanding loans.⁴ It is clear that Germany has no desire to add increased security responsibilities on the eastern edge of NATO, while attempting to foster greater integration in the European Union.

The most recent round of NATO expansion in March 1999 admitted Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. NATO expanded thereby its strategic commitments to new allies that are having significant difficulty in their modernization and integration efforts. The Czech Republic is one of the more advanced of the new members, yet it has failed to significantly close the military capability gap with western European members. Its defense budget is 2.2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and is expected to be

⁴ "Sharpening Trying to Dampen Russian-NATO Rift," *Global Intelligence Update*. Available [online] <<http://www.stratfor.com/giu/20000302.htm>>. 2 March 2000.

about \$1 billion in 2001. The economic pressures of rising inflation and unemployment will continue to cap defense spending at 2.2 percent, a level that is criticized by some of NATO's core members.⁵ Domestic political considerations and the high price of upgrading questionable Soviet legacy systems will continue to present serious problems to alliance integration. Poland and Hungary face similar problems. The leading NATO powers will no doubt consider the performance of the newest allies in deciding whether to pursue the "big bang" approach to the next round of NATO enlargement.

Other issues that will have to be addressed by the allies include how such an enlargement would affect the interests of NATO's dominant member, the United States; how the inclusion of nine new members would affect the aforementioned issues of integration and military effectiveness; whether NATO would be able to maintain a credible security guarantee for all members; whether enlargement would change Alliance nuclear policies in any way; what the costs to current member countries both in economic and political capital would be; how enlarging NATO membership would affect the European Union; and how the admission of the nine central and eastern European states might be affected by the membership aspirations of Austria and perhaps Sweden and Finland.

B. KEY QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

This thesis proposes to analyze the issues associated with the "big bang" approach to the next round of NATO enlargement. It seeks answers to the following questions:

⁵"Prague: Defense Modernization Checked," *Global Intelligence Update*. Available [online] <<http://www.stratfor.com/giu/20000810.htm>>. 10 August 2000.

- What are the origins of the “big bang” approach?
- Is this approach politically feasible in terms of the interests, attitudes, and policy-making dynamics in the Alliance?
- Would this approach be prudent?
- What are the prospects for the next round of NATO enlargement?

C. METHODOLOGY

The thesis methodology is a qualitative analysis of scholarly works, government and independent policy statements and position papers, personal interviews, and electronic and print media. This thesis focuses on the political, military and economic factors involved in NATO enlargement.

Chapter two examines the current security environment in Europe. Specific threats to the security and stability of Europe are discussed in detail, as is the role of NATO in providing for European security in the 21st century. The final section of the second chapter addresses the expanding and sometimes contradictory role of the European Union, and how both NATO and the EU are addressing the issues of enlargement.

Chapter three begins with an analysis of NATO’s Membership Action Plan. It continues with a discussion of the “May 2000 Vilnius Declaration” and then examines the countries that now seek, or might soon seek, to become NATO members. This discussion includes an analysis of the “Vilnius nine” as well as traditionally neutral European countries.

Chapter four examines the first post-Cold War enlargement of the Alliance, specifically addressing the key issues and obstacles faced by the newest members, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Pro and con arguments in the enlargement debate are presented, as are various Allied views. The implications of the "big bang" enlargement approach are also examined. In the latter portion of the chapter, NATO-Russia relations are examined, with particular attention to the enlargement issues. The final chapter presents conclusions, including judgments about prospects for the next round of NATO enlargement.

II. NATO'S ROLES IN EUROPEAN SECURITY

A. THE CURRENT EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Since the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War, Central and Eastern Europe has, in one decade, undergone some of the most dramatic changes in modern history. In fact, the changes have been so rapid and unpredictable that international leaders and key international institutions have had difficulty adapting to the contingencies of the new security environment and to new threats and risks as they have emerged. Many observers consider the likelihood of a major war in Europe to be at its lowest point in over a century. The relative stability provided by the head-to-head confrontation between two superpowers and rival alliances has been replaced by a number of new challenges and threats, not only in Europe, but also in peripheral areas where vital political and economic interests may be threatened by instability and violence.

Several complex threats and security issues must be dealt with to maintain a stable, secure, and prosperous Europe. Ethnic conflict has emerged as a key security issue in Europe, and will remain a critical security issue for at least the next decade. Additionally, a wide range of emerging security challenges and risks to stability currently face the Alliance: uncertainty and instability in the Euro-Atlantic area, religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, the dissolution of states, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated technologies and delivery means, terrorism, organized crime, sabotage, mass migration,

and the disruption of the flow of vital resources.⁶ While all of these security issues need to be addressed by NATO, terrorism, organized crime, and ethnic conflict are sources of acute concern.

1. Terrorism

Terrorism is the use, or threat, of unconventional violence by a group or individual to attain a politically motivated goal or objective. Traditionally, terrorists have relied on tactics such as kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations to pressure the targeted government to take a desired action, or in some cases to prevent the targeted government from taking a specific action or any action at all. While progress has been made in resolving the key issues between the British government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), it is unlikely that the IRA will soon lay down its arms completely. The same can be said of the Basque separatists in Spain. Over the past twenty years in Greece, bombings of NATO infrastructure by the Revolutionary Organization 17 November have apparently been intended to pressure Greece to leave NATO and, as such, have been politically motivated acts of terrorism.⁷

Terrorism falls into two basic categories, domestic and international. Domestic terrorism occurs when the targets of the violence are the citizens of the country and influencing the leadership of the country is the objective of the terrorists. When the terrorists target foreign citizens, the terrorist act or objective is described as international,

⁶ North Atlantic Council, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, paragraphs 20-24, 24 April 1999.

⁷ Todd Sandler and Keith Hartley, *The Political Economy of NATO: Past, Present, and into the 21st Century*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 170.

or transnational. Terrorism has become a significant security concern for NATO for three reasons. First, terrorist groups may acquire and use weapons of mass destruction.⁸ Second, terrorism can be a cheap and effective tool to destabilize a new democratic government, and some of the new governments of “big bang” aspirants may be especially vulnerable.⁹ Third, terrorist threats pose significant costs. As defense budgets shrink, terrorism becomes an affordable way to influence governments.¹⁰ Terrorism will continue to be a threat to security and stability in Europe and should remain a top security concern of NATO.

2. Organized Crime

Organized crime, especially that involving Russians, presents a unique security problem for Europe and NATO for two key reasons. First, the links between organized crime and the military in Russia could lead to dangerous weapons transfers. Second, these links could exacerbate the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups and “states of concern” that might employ them in ways affecting European or NATO interests.

Europe has witnessed a marked increase in the spread of criminal activities based in Russia since 1991. This is a confounding security problem for policy makers and national security advisors in NATO and non-NATO European countries. Indeed, the threats posed by a criminalized Russian military and the proliferation of weapons of mass

⁸ Ibid., p. 172

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

destruction (nuclear, biological, and chemical) are cause for serious concern not only in Europe but elsewhere.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the degree of criminal activity in the armed forces of Russia has steadily risen. In the Baltic area, a former district commander was involved in the large-scale illegal sale of fuel, equipment, metals, arms, and explosives. Even prior to their withdrawal, then-Estonian Prime Minister Andres Tarand had called the Russian forces there a "bedrock of crime, first and foremost organized crime."¹¹

The earliest concerns about Russia's nuclear weapons centered on the accountability of tactical nuclear weapons as the Russian forces began to withdraw from bases abroad. That fear has been displaced by concerns about the diversion and uncontrolled distribution of fissile materials and other weapon components, as well as the technological means to assemble and employ a nuclear device.¹²

The most widely publicized instance, indicative of the over-arching potential threat, concerns the 1993 theft of three "live fuel assemblies" from nuclear submarines in the Murmansk area. While the total theft involved only 4.3 kilograms of nuclear material (larger cases have been reported), the investigation revealed that three Russian naval officers were directly responsible for the theft. More alarming was the fact that the three officers intended to sell the nuclear material to an organized crime figure.¹³

¹¹ Graham Turbiville, "Mafia in Uniform: The Criminalization of the Russian Armed Forces." Available [on-line] <<http://call.army.mil/call/fmso/fmsopubs/issues/mafia.htm>>. 1995.

¹² Graham Turbiville, "Weapons Proliferation and Organized Crime: The Russian Military and Security Force Dimension." Available [on-line] <<http://www.usafa.af.mil/inss/ocp10.htm>>. June 1996.

¹³ Ibid.

Russia inherited the largest stockpile of chemical and biological weapons in the world when the Soviet Union collapsed. Official documents account for 40,000 metric tons of chemical weapons, though some unofficial estimates place the total closer to 100,000 metric tons.¹⁴ While no catastrophic events involving the operational use of chemical or biological weaponry can be directly linked to Russia, the potential for such events remains. Negligent security practices in Russia have been well documented, as have the links between organized crime and the military. According to Graham Turbiville,

[T]he avowed security of Russian nuclear and chemical weapons is subject to substantial doubt. . . . Military vectors for WMD proliferation are far more likely than previously thought. Overall, the Russian military's role in weapons proliferation — and the roles of militaries in other Soviet successor states — will be a substantial consideration in the establishment of stability and peace in Central Eurasia and beyond. Of special importance, these developing military-criminal linkages may represent one of the greatest WMD proliferation dangers.¹⁵

Organized crime in Europe is a pervasive problem that needs to be addressed, because security and stability in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the process of democratization are imperiled by its widespread influence. While traditional criminal activity is best handled by domestic security and police forces, the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, especially through organized crime groups with ties to the Russian military, presents a real security concern for NATO countries and aspiring members alike, including the "Vilnius nine." The threat of a catastrophic event related to WMD proliferation remains high, and NATO must take all feasible precautions.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

3. Ethnic Conflict

Possibly the most significant European security issue is ethnic conflict. As most of the conflicts in the last 15 years have been within states, the safety of individuals – “human security” – is increasingly rising to the forefront of peace and security discussions.¹⁶ Of course, this issue of human security is not new.

The bi-polar system of the Cold War engendered a security environment in which the strength and cohesiveness of a bloc of states superseded the interests of the individual nation-state. Superpower leadership made the territorial integrity of states a sacrosanct doctrine and ruled out major armed conflicts in Europe.¹⁷ At the end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia was no longer united by fear of Soviet intervention and by the Communist regime established by Tito. Several Yugoslav republics sought independence, often on ethnic grounds; and this led to ethnic violence in Bosnia and Kosovo.

These crises illustrate how civil wars can spill over into neighboring states, with significant effects in Albania and Macedonia, among other countries. In the Bosnian conflict, Resolution 816, approved by the UN Security Council on 31 March 1993, established a no-fly zone over Bosnia.¹⁸ NATO aircraft deployed for Operation Deny Flight beginning 12 April 1993. On 28 February 1994, NATO patrol aircraft enforcing

¹⁶ Lloyd Axworthy, “NATO’s New Security Vocation,” *NATO Review*, p. 8, Winter 1999.

¹⁷ Andras Balogh, “The Atlantic Dimensions of Central European Security,” in Charles-Philippe David and Jacques Levesque, *The Future of NATO: Enlargement, Russia, and European Security*, (McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), p. 188.

¹⁸ Sandler and Hartley, p. 167.

the no-fly zone shot down 4 aircraft that were violating the airspace over Bosnia.¹⁹ NATO's Operation Deliberate Force in August-September 1995 was a major factor in convincing Belgrade to accept negotiations. The Dayton peace accords were signed on 14 December 1995, and NATO played a crucial role in persuading the sides to accept and implement the agreement.²⁰

NATO's role in the 1999 Kosovo conflict was even more significant. According to Alexander Vershbow, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO:

Kosovo is a metaphor for many aspects of the 21st Century Alliance launched at the Washington Summit. Kosovo highlights: the vital role of the Alliance in managing crises in Europe and on its periphery; the need to equip NATO forces with the military capabilities to project power and deal decisively with any adversary; the importance of partnership and cooperation with other European democracies to prevent the spread of instability and to facilitate joint action in crisis management; and the value of NATO's commitment to enlargement as an incentive for good behavior and cooperation with the Alliance. As Secretary Albright has said many times, Kosovo shows that, if we didn't have NATO to deal with major crises like Kosovo, we would have had to invent it.²¹

The missions currently performed by NATO forces in Bosnia and Kosovo are crucial in preventing further ethnic conflict in the Balkans. These missions are as much about fostering improved relations and rebuilding communities as they are about ending violence, and this concept of human security will continue to play a key role in defining NATO's policies in the future. NATO has already integrated the fundamental principles of this concept in both theory and practice.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 168.

²¹ Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, speech "U.S. View of NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States," Bonn, Germany. Available [online] <<http://usinfo.state.gov>>. 11 May 1999.

Security, for the new NATO, is a continuum, comprising both state and individual human security concerns. Only through a wider and deeper recognition of the importance of human security to peace and stability will NATO retain its relevance and effectiveness in facing the diverse challenges of the coming century.²²

B. NATO'S ROLE: COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND COLLECTIVE DEFENSE

The central purpose of the North Atlantic Alliance is clearly outlined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and it is collective defense.²³ NATO's continued commitment to collective defense was reiterated in paragraph 4 of the April 1999 Strategic Concept: "It must safeguard common security interests . . . It must maintain collective defense."²⁴ Collective defense includes traditional military alliances such as NATO. Members of the alliance agree to aid each other in the event of an armed attack by an external aggressor. The original Alliance members, as well as those who joined later, formed NATO to protect themselves against external threats. All of the member nations of NATO hold this as one of their most important reasons for joining the alliance.

Currently, there are several definitions and concepts of collective security. However, collective security can be broadly interpreted as an arrangement involving multilateral intervention by a group of nations directed against international aggression or internal conflict that threatens the general peace and stability of a state or region.²⁵

²² Axworthy, p. 11.

²³ See "The North Atlantic Treaty" on line <<http://www.nato.int>>.

²⁴ North Atlantic Council, The Alliance's Strategic Concept, paragraph 4, 24 April 1999.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion on the concepts of collective security, see David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), pp. 17-20.

Actions in support of collective security can take many forms, such as peace enforcement, peacekeeping, crisis management, economic sanctions, and mediation, and may or may not involve the deployment of military forces to achieve a desired result.

Policy makers have begun to interchange these two terms, “collective defense” and “collective security,” more and more frequently. As a result, the distinction between the two has been blurred, often deliberately.²⁶ The fundamental misunderstanding that arises may erode the effectiveness of the Alliance in some circumstances. In the next decade, it is likely that most of the threats to the security and stability of Europe will involve situations like Bosnia and Kosovo rather than confrontation with a resurgent Russia. The necessity for NATO to take action in the future will remain, but its missions will often concern collective security instead of collective defense. It must nonetheless be clearly understood that NATO remains primarily a collective defense organization, and that it is capable of undertaking operations in support of collective security on a selective basis.

NATO’s essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members by political and military means. It accomplishes this by following the guiding principle of common commitment and mutual co-operation among sovereign states in support of the indivisibility of security for all of its members.²⁷ To achieve this essential purpose NATO has listed several broad tasks in the 1999 Strategic Concept:

²⁶ David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p. 8.

²⁷ North Atlantic Council, *The Alliance’s Strategic Concept*, paragraphs 6-8, 24 April 1999.

security, consultation, deterrence and defense, crisis management, and partnership.²⁸ "NATO has transformed itself. . . . We have gone beyond collective defense to develop new tools for helping our partners build their own stability and help us defend our common values."²⁹ In order to promote security and stability in Europe, NATO provides the security foundation, but the European Union and other international institutions are now assuming several of the roles that the Marshall Plan fulfilled in the aftermath of the Second World War.³⁰

C. NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. NATO and ESDI

In December 2000, the European Union is expected to take its first steps toward creating autonomous military capabilities, a rapid reaction force of up to 60,000 troops that will enable the EU to conduct autonomous military operations.³¹ At the EU summit in Helsinki, Finland, in December 1999, the members announced their decision to create the rapid reaction force and supporting institutions. NATO supports the development of this concept, which is known in the Alliance as the European Security and Defense Identity. As stated in the 1999 Strategic Concept, the EU has "made distinctive

²⁸ Ibid., paragraph 10.

²⁹ Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, speech on NATO in Southeast Europe at Wilton Park Conference, Drdo Castle, Slovenia. Available [online] <<http://usinfo.state.gov>>. 11 May 2000.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Philip H. Gordon, "Their Own Army?" *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 79, Number 4, p. 12, July/August 2000.

contributions to Euro-Atlantic security and stability. Mutually reinforcing organizations have become a central feature of the security environment.”³² As the North Atlantic Council “stated in the 1994 Summit declaration and reaffirmed in Berlin in 1996, the Alliance fully supports the development of the European Security and Defense Identity within the Alliance. . . . The increase of the responsibilities and capacities of the European Allies with respect to security and defense enhances the security environment of the Alliance.”³³

The United States supports the EU developing a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and a common European security and defense policy (CESDP). Greater European military capabilities will make the Alliance stronger, lift some of the burden currently shouldered by the United States, and make the trans-Atlantic bond even stronger.³⁴ At the December 1999 Helsinki summit, the EU committed itself to achieve progress in three areas the U.S. government calls “the 3 I’s”: improvement of capabilities, inclusiveness of all Allies, and indivisibility of security structures.³⁵

The conflict in Kosovo clearly demonstrated that a capabilities gap exists between the United States and its European Allies. The gap limits interoperability and entails operational shortcomings, including insecure tactical communications. Most European Allies lack quantity and quality in long range precision-guided munitions as well. This

³² North Atlantic Council, *The Alliance’s Strategic Concept*, paragraph 14, 24 April 1999.

³³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 18.

³⁴ Madeline K. Albright and William S. Cohen, “Get ESDI Right,” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 24 March 2000.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

issue was addressed at the NATO summit in April 1999, when the NATO leaders endorsed the Defense Capabilities Initiative. A genuine increase in capabilities is, however, going to require expanded resources. While reprioritization may achieve a portion of this goal, the creation of a capable, credible, and effective force will require an increase in defense spending for most European Allies.³⁶ While many of the more prosperous Allies could afford to allot more resources to defense spending, this requirement may limit the prospects of the aspiring member states, especially the "Vilnius nine."

On the principle of including all Allies, Albright and Cohen stated that "Our NATO allies who are not members of the EU should have a voice in shaping the EU's security and defense deliberations . . . While final EU decisions are for the EU, we encourage it to include the non-EU allies in its efforts."³⁷ The willingness of the non-European Allies to contribute to future operations offers the EU a significant advantage. Just as NATO has found the inclusion of Partnership for Peace nations to be beneficial in crisis management operations, it is the U.S. view that the EU approach to participation should take into account these experiences in including non-EU nations in the EU's CESDP.³⁸

Addressing the issue of indivisibility of security structures, US Secretary of State Albright and US Secretary of Defense Cohen stated that NATO and the EU must be able

³⁶ Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, speech at Waterloo, Belgium. Available [online] <<http://usinfo.state.gov>>. 19 October 2000.

³⁷ Albright and Cohen.

³⁸ Vershbow, speech at Waterloo, Belgium, 19 October 2000.

to work together; in fact, the closest possible links are necessary for NATO to be able to support an EU-led action in which the Alliance is not engaged.³⁹ Ambassador Richard Morningstar, the U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, reiterated the support expressed by Albright and Cohen on 13 October 2000. Speaking at the Harvard Center for European Studies he stated that the new partnership the United States is developing with the European Union will strengthen, not end, the NATO Alliance.⁴⁰

However, not all of the European Allies are happy about the EU's CESDP. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland and Turkey are members of NATO, but not the EU. Turkey in particular is unhappy about the progress of the CESDP because the EU would only "consult" with representatives of Turkey, the other non-EU European NATO members, and other countries that are candidates for accession to the EU for the implementation of CESDP decisions. The EU plans to hold at least two meetings, described as "exchanges," with the six non-EU European NATO members every six months.⁴¹ Turkish officials have noted that the EU cannot "automatically" commit NATO resources. The Alliance's assets can only be committed with the concurrence of all the Allies, including the six European Allies that are not EU members. The Turkish foreign minister has repeatedly noted that his country could use its veto power in NATO at any time, as could the other countries in this group. Poland, Hungary,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ambassador Richard Morningstar's address at the Harvard Center of European Studies. Available [online] <<http://usinfo.state.gov>>. 13 October 2000.

⁴¹ For further detail on the consultation and participation between EU and non-EU members, see Appendix 1 of the Santa Maria de Feira, Presidency Conclusions. Available [online] <<http://ue.eu.int>>. 19-20 June 2000.

and the Czech Republic have been relatively silent on this issue because they wish to avoid creating a toxic atmosphere while they continue negotiations for their strongly desired EU membership.⁴²

2. EU Expansion vs. NATO Enlargement

Of the nine "big bang" countries that aspire to join NATO, seven have also applied to join the European Union. In 1995, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Romania applied, followed by Slovenia in 1996. Albania and Macedonia have yet to apply. On 23 October 2000, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder told the Slovak daily *Pravda* that the EU might accept new members by the end of 2002, but EU officials have regularly declared that the earliest possible date would be 2005.⁴³ Given the steady decline in the value of the euro against the U.S. dollar in 2000, it is possible that Chancellor Schroeder was trying to promote popular support and enthusiasm for EU expansion in the candidate countries and in the EU itself. Support for joining the EU in some countries, especially Poland, has been waning in the latter half of 2000.

The European Commission is the EU's executive branch, and it is managing the accession talks on behalf of the 15 member nations. Within that body, three options are being discussed. The first option would be to specify dates for invitations to individual countries that have met the criteria for entry into the EU. That is unlikely in December

⁴² Pierre Bocev, "The Fifteen and the 'Furious Six,'" *Le Figaro*, p. 5. FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000622000165. 22 June 2000.

⁴³ "Schroeder Tells Slovak Daily that EU Expansion Possible by 2002," *Radio Free Europ/Radio Liberty* Newswire. Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2000/10/23-not/not-231000.html>>. 23 October 2000

2000, because France currently holds the Union's presidency⁴⁴ and thinks it is too early to be discussing specific dates. The second option would be to publish a single date for admission for any country that has met the entry criteria. Currently, the EU Commission has not expressed itself as "willing" to accept new members, only as "ready" to accept them, and not until 2003 at the soonest. There is still a great deal of debate among EU officials concerning the "earliest possible date." The *Economist* reports 2003 as the earliest date, referring to sources only as "EU officials," while *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* reports 2005, also referring to sources as "EU officials."⁴⁵ The third option would be to announce specific dates when the organization anticipates the conclusion of negotiations with each individual country.

Of the three options presented, the third is the most likely to be adopted. Estonia and Slovenia (along with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) all began detailed negotiations in 1998 and are considered to be the frontrunners. These six countries are hoping for a target date to be announced in 2001. Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia (along with Malta) are currently making significant gains in negotiating entry into the EU and hope to join at the start of 2004. Bulgaria and Romania lag far behind in accession negotiations and aim for entry in 2007.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The Presidency of the EU rotates every six months.

⁴⁵ "Who Will Join Europe's Club – and When," *The Economist*, 8 April 2000, pp. 53-54; and Ahto Lobjakas, "EU: Second-Wave Eastern Candidates Caught In 'Date Fever,'" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/10/25102000112654.asp>>. 25 October 2000.

⁴⁶ "Knocking on the Union's Door," *The Economist*, 13 May 2000, p. 49; "Who Will Join Europe's Club – and When," *The Economist*, 8 April 2000, pp. 53-54; and Ahto Lobjakas, "EU: Second-Wave Eastern Candidates Caught In 'Date Fever,'" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/10/25102000112654.asp>>. 25 October 2000. Turkey has "candidate status" but has not yet entered into accession discussions.

The hopes of these countries aspiring to be EU members, especially those furthest along in the negotiation process, may not come to fruition. The 15 current members of the EU may not be able to agree on the institutional reforms necessary to ensure progress and stability in the enlargement process. This may be the most important issue addressed at the EU summit in Nice in December 2000. Among the issues that need to be agreed upon are new rules (a) to limit the size of the commission and (b) to increase the number of topics that would no longer require the consensus of all members. A more pertinent risk for the EU might be succumbing to peripheral pressure for speedy accession of at least some candidate countries, without having effectively reformed its institutions. This could make the EU more dysfunctional when enlargement occurs.⁴⁷ Given the political and bureaucratic nature of the EU, there is no guarantee that any of the candidate countries will be invited to join in the next two or three years, even though the EU Enlargement Commissioner, Guenter Verheugen, said in October 2000 that "2003 was a realistic date for the admission of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia – two years earlier than EU officials had previously indicated."⁴⁸

Because the EU and NATO have disparate primary functions, few in Central and Eastern Europe accept the notion that the expansion of one organization is the equivalent of expansion of the other. Unlike the EU, NATO has not required fundamental changes in candidate countries as conditions for entry, although some basic requirements do have to be met for membership. The EU has asked candidate countries to transform basic structures and institutions. As Paul Goble has put it, EU applicants must

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Verhuegen cited in indirect discourse in Lobjakas.

be willing to impose tighter border controls vis-à-vis their neighbors who can't or won't join. In that way, the EU not only draws precisely the kind of lines in post-Cold War Europe that NATO has sought to avoid, but because the accession process takes so long, this EU approach has the potential to dramatically expand the size of the gray zone of political and economic uncertainty between East and West. And that in turn undercuts NATO's approach. Not surprisingly, these differences between NATO and the EU have had a serious impact on countries interested in joining.⁴⁹

The result of these two different approaches is that the EU and NATO, each pursuing its own agenda, could undermine each other's effectiveness. This in turn could have a destabilizing effect on the countries that aspire to membership in one or both organizations, and ultimately, might even destabilize the overall security of Europe. This outcome would be the polar opposite of the secure and stable Europe that both the EU and NATO strongly want to foster. Security is the foundation necessary for strong economic growth as well as peace in Europe. It is highly unlikely that further NATO expansion will occur during a time of conflict in Europe. It is therefore essential to the "Vilnius nine" that wish to join NATO that peace and security be ensured.

⁴⁹ Paul Goble, "Analysis From Washington – Contradictory Expansions", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/06/F.RU.000626131138.html>>. 26 June 2000.

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III. EXAMINING CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

A. NATO'S MEMBERSHIP ACTION PLAN

Lord Robertson became the NATO Secretary General and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council on 14 October 1999, succeeding Javier Solana in that position. Shortly after assuming office, Lord Robertson declared, "One of my key responsibilities will be to prepare NATO for the next round of enlargement. NATO's Heads of State and Government are committed to considering further enlargement by no later than 2002."⁵⁰ Over the next two years, NATO will use the recently developed Membership Action Plan to give all the aspiring members as much help as possible in reaching the goal of joining the Alliance. The Secretary General and other NATO officials have repeatedly and emphatically stated that, "The door to NATO will remain open."⁵¹

Along with the new Strategic Concept, NATO also published the Membership Action Plan at the Washington Summit on 24 April 1999. This framework for enlargement builds on Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states in part that "The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty."⁵²

⁵⁰ Lord George Robertson, "NATO in the New Millennium," *NATO Review*, p. 7, Winter 1999.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² North Atlantic Council, The North Atlantic Treaty, 4 April 1949. Available [online] <<http://www.nato.int>>.

The Membership Action Plan serves two key purposes. First, it provides a structured approach to enlarging the Alliance. The Allies have realized that one of the key elements in providing European security in the future will be to avoid creating new dividing lines in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Membership Action Plan is one tool the Alliance has at its disposal to ensure that does not happen. Additionally, for the enlargement process to be successful, the aspirant countries need to meet basic, minimum requirements in military capabilities. The MAP provides a mechanism by which aspirant countries can systematically address those requirements.

Five key areas are addressed in the Membership Action Plan: political and economic issues, defense and military issues, resource issues, security issues, and legal issues.⁵³ The MAP covers a broad range of topics that aspirant countries are invited to discuss with the Alliance as they pursue membership. It is important to remember, however, that the items listed in the Membership Action Plan do not constitute a “checklist” of membership criteria. Each aspiring member formulates its own annual program, setting goals that stipulate gains to be made in specific areas in which that country is deficient. Each aspiring country then meets with the appropriate NATO committees to discuss deficiencies in detail. These meetings are conducted in the 19+1 format, which includes a representative of each current NATO member country plus the representative from the aspirant country. Each year the Alliance will review the annual plans and provide focused feedback on the specific areas outlined.⁵⁴

⁵³ North Atlantic Council, “Membership Action Plan.” Available [online] <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-066e.htm>>. 24 April 1999.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Aspirant countries must demonstrate their willingness and ability to conform to the fundamental principles of the Washington Treaty, including support for democracy and individual liberty. Prior to being considered for accession, all aspirant countries are expected to: settle their international disputes by peaceful means; demonstrate their commitment to uphold basic human rights and their adherence to the rule of law; settle ethnic and territorial disputes; establish democratic and civilian control of the military; refrain from the threat or use of force, except as authorized by the UN Charter; continue to participate in the Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council; and show a commitment to promoting economic liberty and environmental responsibility. Upon accession, aspirants must be capable of, and would be expected to: unite their efforts for collective defense; pay their fair portion of expenses; and fully participate in Alliance decision-making on security and political issues.⁵⁵

One of the key factors for the aspirant countries is their ability to contribute to Alliance missions. Full participation in the Partnership for Peace is a crucial element for all aspirant countries, as it greatly assists them in preparing to co-operate with current NATO forces, but such participation does not ensure that future membership in the Alliance will be granted. Additionally, countries hoping to join NATO must be prepared to share in the risks as well as the benefits of membership. Upon accession, aspirants are expected to: accept the security approach outlined in the Strategic Concept; provide forces for collective defense and other NATO missions as agreed upon by the Alliance

⁵⁵ Ibid.

members; participate in NATO's agencies, military structure, and collective defense planning; and continue to improve interoperability.⁵⁶

Aspirants must understand that achieving a minimum interoperability standard to receive an invitation to join is not the top rung on the ladder, nor is it the end of increases in defense spending. The third of the five key areas is allocation of resources, which need to be sufficient to allow effective participation in Alliance structures and in commonly funded activities. In addition to allocating funds for defense, nations must also have stable national structures to handle budget responsibilities.

The two remaining issues, but by no means any less important, concern information security and the legal status of forces. Applicant countries must be able to handle and safeguard classified and sensitive information as prescribed by the Alliance. The last key element addressed in the Membership Action Plan is the legal status of forces. For countries to be considered viable candidates for NATO membership, they need to ensure that their domestic law is compatible with NATO rules and regulations and accede to the Status of Forces Agreement.⁵⁷

Because each country is considered on a case-by-case basis, the basic elements described in the Membership Action Plan do not constitute an exhaustive list of requirements or potential pitfalls. The plan should be seen as a primer for mid-level and high-level working groups to examine a wide range of issues that aspirant countries need to work through in order to be considered for membership in the Alliance. Two key points about the Membership Action Plan should be kept in mind. First, all aspirant

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

countries are considered on an individual basis for NATO membership. A common commitment among aspirant countries to achieve that goal is certainly a positive development, but it in no way links them together for the purposes of accession. Second, as the Alliance has underscored, "Participation in the Membership Action Plan, which would be on the basis of self-differentiation, does not imply any timeframe for any such decision nor any guarantee of eventual membership. The programme cannot be considered as a list of criteria for membership."⁵⁸

B. THE VILNIUS DECLARATION

Nine senior representatives from the "big bang" countries gathered for a conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 18-19 May 2000. The title of the conference was "NATO's Role in the Changing Security Environment in Europe" and the result was a document, the "Vilnius Declaration." In this declaration, the senior national representatives reiterated "Our desire to integrate into the institutions of the 'Euro-Atlantic' community emanates from our readiness to assume our fair share of responsibility for the common defense and to add our voice to the debate on our common future."⁵⁹

Each of the nine countries recognizes the potential benefits to be gained in joining the alliance, and the nine also recognize that solidarity and speaking with a unified voice constitute a better way to be "heard." Each of the "Vilnius nine" recognizes too that one

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Vilnius Statement." Available [online] <<http://www.fas.org/man/nato/national/000519-statem.htm>>. 19 May 2000.

of the keys to maintaining stability in Europe is the continuation of the links between Europe and the United States. Realizing that America is the strongest ally and that it assumes a significant leadership role in NATO, the nine countries reiterated in the joint statement their commitment to maintaining the strong trans-Atlantic bond in NATO.

Though the current NATO members do not agree on the varying states of readiness of the nine "big bang" countries, each member of the "Vilnius nine" has expressed its belief that they are in fact ready.

We are not only prepared for the responsibilities and burdens of NATO membership today, but we are already coordinating our defense structures and policies with the Alliance and contributing to NATO political and military undertakings. Furthermore, we remain committed to practical and political efforts to further improve the specific qualifications of our countries, including implementation of the Membership Action Plan. While each country should be considered on its own merits, we believe that the integration of each democracy will be a success for us all and the integration of all our countries will be a success for Europe and NATO.⁶⁰

Though the overall tone of the statement is one of unity, the phrase "while each country should be considered on its own merits" diplomatically recognizes the inherent limitations associated with the "big bang" approach. Just eleven days after the conference and the signing of the Vilnius Declaration, Estonian President Lennart Meri said on 30 May 2000 that his country was ready to join NATO without the other two Baltic states. Meri stated that "The Baltic States should not look to each other, they should join the alliance in accordance with the level of their individual readiness."⁶¹ On 15 June 2000, however, Meri reiterated his support for the "big bang" approach while in Washington

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Igor Shamshin, "Meri: Estonia Ready to Join NATO Without Latvia, Lithuania," ITAR-TASS, FBIS translated text, document ID: CEP20000530000213. 30 May 2000.

D.C., stating that a more gradual approach would be “long and laborious” and that the “big bang” approach would be good for Russia by “quickly pushing it through the painful process of seeing its former satellites join the Western alliance.”⁶²

In the same address, Meri said that the “big bang” approach to enlargement applies only to NATO and that the “Vilnius nine” do not endorse the same all-at-one-time approach to EU membership. Meri said that EU enlargement and NATO enlargement are “organically linked” and “different sides of the same coin,” but explained that membership in the EU requires much more precise standards. “Together, he said, the two enlargements would lead to what he called a ‘new, unified, and completed Europe.’”⁶³

Meri and the other foreign ministers participating in the Vilnius conference “welcomed the commitment of the European Union to build a common European Security and Defense Policy that fulfills Europe’s aspirations and strengthens the transatlantic link.”⁶⁴ The representatives also acknowledged that “NATO and the European Union are the two central foundations of the Euro-Atlantic community and that we must pursue accession in both institutions if we are to fully re-integrate our democracies into the community we share.” According to the concluding paragraph of the Vilnius Declaration,

We are firmly convinced that the integration of our democracies into NATO and the EU will facilitate the creation of a free, prosperous and undivided Europe. Today, we reiterate our common commitment to work together cooperatively to achieve this goal. Our goal will not be reached until each of us, as well as other European democracies sharing the values

⁶² Meri quoted in Tully.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Vilnius Statement.

of the Euro- Atlantic community and able to bear its common responsibilities, has been fully integrated into these institutions. We call upon the member states of NATO to fulfill the promise of the Washington Summit to build a Europe whole and free. We call upon the member states at the next NATO Summit in 2002 to invite our democracies to join NATO.⁶⁵

Three facts are abundantly clear in reading the Vilnius Declaration. First, all nine of the “big bang” countries want to join “Western Europe” and hold that membership in NATO and the EU is the means to that end. Second, all the countries think that they are “ready” to be extended an invitation to join NATO. Third, and most importantly, solidarity only goes so far. The phrase “each country should be considered on its own merits” indicates that each of these countries would be willing to join NATO without the other members of the “Vilnius nine.”

C. THE BALTIC STATES

Even though Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania must pursue consultations on a national basis to join NATO, the three are often addressed as a group. It is widely assumed that they will formally be invited to enter NATO as a group or not at all. The motives of the three Baltic states are clear. In the words of Jonathan Dean, “they are seeking at any cost to ensure their own security in the face of Russian political opinion that barely concedes their independent existence.”⁶⁶

Despite the similarities shared by the three Baltic states, two of the essential differences among them need to be pointed out, because they directly relate to the issue of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jonathan Dean, “NATO Enlargement: Coping with Act II”, in *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality*, (Washington DC: CATO Institute, 1998). p. 122.

NATO enlargement. The first significant differences concern the ethnic mix of the populations in the three countries. In Estonia, 65 percent of the population is Estonian and 28 percent is Russian. The numbers in Latvia are close to those in Estonia, with roughly 57 percent Latvian and 30 percent Russian. However, in Lithuania, approximately 81 percent of the population is native Lithuanian while only 9 percent of the population is Russian. This is one of the many reasons why Russian “feelings” about NATO expansion into the Baltic states are so strong.⁶⁷

Economics constitute the second key factor differentiating the three countries. In 1999 Estonia experienced its poorest economic performance since 1991, when it became independent. After 4.7 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 1998, the 1999 performance fell into negative territory at -0.5 percent. This was largely due to the Russian economic meltdown in August 1998. Estonia’s GDP is forecast to grow by 4 percent in the year 2000. Estonia’s GDP, estimated in U.S. dollars, is \$7.9 billion. Of that, \$70 million, or about 1.2 percent, is allocated for defense spending. Estonia is the only Baltic country that is still on the projected track to meet the 2 percent NATO benchmark by 2002.⁶⁸

In 1999, Latvia had zero GDP growth, because it was also affected by the Russian financial situation. For the year 2000, Latvia projects a growth rate of 3.5 percent. Latvia’s GDP, estimated in U.S. dollars, is \$9.8 billion. Of that, \$60 million, or about 0.9 percent, is allocated for defense spending. This falls well short of the projected track to

⁶⁷ Population data is taken from the 2000 CIA World Factbook. Available [online] <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook.html>>.

⁶⁸ Economic data is taken from the 2000 CIA World Factbook and the World Bank web site. Available [online] <<http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>>.

reach the 2 percent NATO benchmark by 2002.⁶⁹ The situation in Latvia is complicated by an internal political battle between the Defense Ministry and the Finance Ministry over the size of the defense budget. Officially, Latvia, like Estonia and Lithuania, remains committed to achieving the 2 percent benchmark for defense expenditures. But the Finance Ministry wants to add other expenditures to the defense budget, including resources for the Constitutional Protection Office and other internal security organizations whose primary functions are distinct from national defense. The Defense Ministry contends that the accounting practices should reflect actual military expenditures and that a “paper-shuffle” would be unproductive as well as “an attempt at deceiving the Alliance.”⁷⁰

Lithuania was hit the hardest of the three Baltic states during the 1998 Russian financial crisis. Its growth rate for 1999 was about -3 percent. The 2000 budget for Lithuania, which is the most conservative of the three states, estimates a 2 percent growth in GDP. Lithuania’s GDP, estimated in U.S. dollars, is \$17.3 billion. Of that, \$181 million, or about 1.5 percent, is allocated for defense spending. While Lithuania allocates the greatest absolute amount of resources, as well as the highest percentage of resources to defense, it too falls short of the projected track to reach the 2 percent NATO benchmark by 2002.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Military Exercises Test Progress Toward Meeting NATO Criteria,” *The Jamestown Foundation, Monitor*, 9 August 2000.

⁷¹ Economic data is taken from the 2000 CIA World Factbook and the World Bank. Available [online] <<http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>>.

Despite the budget difficulties faced by the Baltic states, their military capabilities, especially in command, control and communications, have greatly improved. Joint efforts by the three countries have brought about significant achievements in four key areas outlined by the Baltic Council of Ministers on 26 May 2000. The participants agreed to improve joint procurement efforts of military equipment, to share classified information (in many cases a prerequisite for joint procurement), and to focus their efforts on four existing trilateral programs – 1) Baltbat, the joint peacekeeping battalion, 2) Baltnet, the joint airspace command and control system, 3) Baltron, the joint naval squadron, and 4) Baltdefcol, a joint professional military education school for mid-level and senior-level officers.⁷²

On 6 June 2000, the integrated air surveillance system known as Baltnet entered service. For the Baltic states, this functioning system represents a milestone in their quest to become members of NATO. In addition to using only English as the working language, Baltnet uses standard NATO procedures and protocols, ensuring interoperability with the preexisting Alliance systems in Europe. Baltnet is primarily funded by the U.S. Congress, which enacted legislation authorizing the program in 1997. NATO ally Norway serves as the lead country supporting the effort, chairing both the Baltnet Steering Group and the Technical Subgroup. Baltnet consists of a series of air surveillance systems placed throughout the Baltic region. It is a dual-use system employed for both military and civilian purposes. Each of the national nodes feeds into a central command center in Karmelava, Lithuania, known as the Regional Airspace

⁷² "NATO Meetings, Baltic Forum Highlight Baltic Commitment to Alliance," *The Jamestown Foundation, Monitor*, 30 May 2000.

Surveillance Coordination Center (RASCC). Once the individual nodes receive data, the RASCC processes the information and then transmits it simultaneously to national stations that then have an integrated regional picture, NATO headquarters, and other designated parties.⁷³

The Baltic Defense College graduated its first class of thirty-two military officers in June 2000; twenty-six of those students were from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Two of the graduating officers were from Denmark, while Germany, Hungary, Sweden, and the United States each graduated one officer.⁷⁴ The purpose of the college is to train military officers who can function at the staff level with NATO, and who are capable of preparing the Baltic states' military forces for full integration in NATO. The college is truly a unique institution, in that it brings together three national military establishments and links them to NATO countries. Functionally, it links the Baltic states with NATO allies, because Denmark, Norway and Iceland all participate in the college and are founding members of the Alliance. Sweden and Finland, also Nordic countries but not members of the Alliance, also participate. Sweden serves as the lead nation among the thirteen nations that provide direct support to the Baltdefcol. As with Baltnet, English is the only language used at the school.⁷⁵

In addition to the achievements signified by Baltnet and the defense college, the Baltic states and many of the NATO allies have recently participated in a number of joint

⁷³ "Baltnet Online," The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, 15 June 2000.

⁷⁴ Composition of the first graduating class, Class 99/00. Available [online] <<http://www.bdcol.ee>>.

⁷⁵ "Baltdefcol—Helping Prepare Baltic States for NATO Membership," The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, 15 June 2000.

exercises. Four of the five exercises in August-September 2000 occurred with the active participation of NATO military forces:

- Baltic Hope-2000 (7-13 August): Using English as the sole language of command among Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian units, some 350 military engineers from the three countries operated as a single unit.
- Open Spirit-2000 (11-17 September): Held off the Latvian coast, the joint Baltic squadron, Baltron—composed of two ships from each of the three Baltic states—operated with twelve ships from eight NATO and Nordic countries. During this exercise, Denmark announced that it was handing over a frigate to Estonia. It is now the largest ship in the Baltic fleet. This was the second mine sweeping exercise for Baltron in the Gulf of Riga. The first occurred at the end of July 2000.
- Baltico-2000 (15 September-6 October): This joint exercise involved the Italian army's elite Giulia Brigade and Lithuania's Panevezys battalion. Italy paid all of the costs of this exercise. Simultaneously, elements of Lithuania's Zemaitija brigade were sent to Kosovo, under NATO command, to perform peacekeeping duties.
- British Bulldog (18-28 September): In this infantry exercise under the Partnership for Peace framework, British instructors trained Latvian troops in tactical combat methods, defending against an armored attack.
- Passex-2000 (21-22 September): The Baltron squadron practiced convoy maneuvers with the combined forces of seven of the NATO countries that participate in the Alliance's Atlantic naval force.⁷⁶

The Baltic states have clearly made significant progress towards the goal of full NATO membership. They have increased their defense budgets, and taken great strides on interoperability, both with each other and with NATO. They are conducting joint exercises and cultivating military contacts with NATO member nations as well as contributing to peacekeeping missions in the Balkans. The Baltic states clearly want to

⁷⁶ "NATO Exercises in Full Swing in the Baltic States", The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, 26 September 2000.

join NATO and are doing all that they can to ensure that they are viable candidates for membership invitations.

D. THE OTHER SIX

Research on this topic has established that most of the information available about the "big bang" approach concerns the Baltic states. Almost no information appears to have been published regarding the rest of the "Vilnius nine," Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania, in conjunction with the "big bang" approach to NATO enlargement. References to these countries have appeared in speeches, press releases, and other documents concerning central and southeastern Europe, as well as the OSCE, the EAPC, and PfP, but even these references have been somewhat limited.

Nevertheless, each of these six countries has submitted individual Membership Action Plans that outline the reforms necessary to be viable candidates for NATO membership. All of these countries need to modernize their military forces and improve their ability to operate with NATO forces, and they are all taking steps to do so. All of the aspirant countries currently cooperate with NATO forces in a variety of venues. These activities will continue to prepare these countries for possible membership. The scarcity of current information available on the "big bang" approach to NATO enlargement suggests, however, that none of the key decision makers (that is, the leading powers in the Alliance) deems this approach a viable enlargement option.

E. THE FORMER NEUTRALS

The end of the Cold War and the ensuing changes to the security environment in Europe have brought about debates in Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and Switzerland concerning new roles and possible NATO membership, though Switzerland's neutrality long precedes the Cold War. In some cases, established concepts of neutrality, emanating from a need for smaller countries to ensure their survival in a conflict between superpowers, no longer apply; and this has given birth to the expression "the *former* neutrals." According to Stanley Sloan, "Most experts and observers now refer to their country's posture as 'non-aligned' rather than neutral."⁷⁷ Of the five countries discussed, four are members of the European Union (Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden). All five countries have joined the Partnership for Peace, and all five are members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).⁷⁸

1. Austria

It is entirely possible that, after the second post-Cold War round of NATO enlargement, NATO member countries will surround Austria. Since the election of the right-wing Freedom Party in Austria, NATO membership has become a more prominent issue in Austria, because the party supports Austrian membership in the Alliance. While its neutrality during the Cold War was assured by the 1955 Austrian State Treaty, Austria joined the Partnership for Peace in 1995, shortly after joining the European Union. This

⁷⁷ Stanley R. Sloan, "NATO Enlargement and the Former European Neutrals," (Washington/D.C., CRS Report for Congress, 8 April 1998). p. 2.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

brought Vienna new forms of active involvement in European security affairs.⁷⁹ In January 2000, Austria expressed a desire to become a member of NATO,⁸⁰ but it has not yet entered into detailed talks with the Alliance.

2. Finland

Finland's long border with Russia sets it apart from the rest of the neutrals. Not surprisingly, statements by Finnish officials suggest that Finnish security and defense policy is strongly influenced by NATO's relationship with Russia and the Baltic states. Given the close proximity, Finland must take Russian intentions as well as capabilities into account. Though Russian power and influence has been diminished in the past decade, Finland still worries about its security. According to Rauno Merio, the former Chief of the Finnish Air Force, "Officially, its [Russia's] top fear is the expansion of NATO to its own borders. . . . If Finland joins NATO, Russia will be confronted across that border with a whole lot more iron. The border would stiffen up to be unconditionally rigid, communication avenues would decrease and start to go through London, and tensions would increase."⁸¹

Like Austria, Finland joined the European Union in 1995. Finland was the first of the former neutrals to request observer status in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) – then known as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). While

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Defense News Briefing, 5 February 2000.

⁸¹ Rauno Merio, quoted in "Finland Has Several Alternatives in Its NATO Decision," *Sotilasaikakauslehti*, pp. 20-23. FBIS translated text, document ID: FTS20000211000230. January 2000.

Finnish officials discuss the possibility of NATO membership, it is unlikely that they will actively pursue membership until the Alliance is ready to admit the Baltic states. "Some Finnish officials believe that a move by Helsinki to join NATO would leave the Baltic states feeling even more isolated and abandoned. ...If and when NATO is prepared to invite the Baltics, it seems likely that Finland will want to come along as well."⁸² Another alternative that Finland might consider is a military alliance with Sweden, outside of the NATO framework. According to Rauno Merio, "there are possibilities for this, even though it would demand a great paradigm shift for Sweden."⁸³

3. Ireland

NATO membership for Ireland is probably not feasible in the foreseeable future, the main reason being Irish internal politics. Joining NATO would place Irish military forces under multinational command, possibly even British command, and that is not a tenable position for the Irish government. In 1997, Ireland dispatched forces to the Balkans as part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission in Bosnia. A detachment of 49 military police officers deployed to Bosnia to assist in the stabilization effort in the region. The Irish leadership also posted a senior army officer to act as a liaison at the NATO headquarters in Belgium. On 1 December 1999, Ireland became a member of the Partnership for Peace program. David Andrews, the Irish Foreign Minister, signed the framework document at a ceremony in Brussels. However, Andrews "emphasized that Ireland's decision to join PfP was 'in full accordance with Ireland's policy of neutrality'

⁸² Sloan, p. 4.

⁸³ Merio.

and that Ireland had no intention of joining the North Atlantic Alliance, or any other alliance."⁸⁴ The key issue for Ireland relating to possible NATO membership, should that ever be a desire, is the unresolved peace process in Northern Ireland. Until that conflict is concluded, it is highly unlikely that Ireland would seek NATO membership, and a resolution to that conflict does not appear on the horizon.⁸⁵

4. Sweden

Though not a member of NATO during the Cold War, Sweden did maintain a high level of defense spending and military capability. Like Austria and Finland, Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, having already become a member of Partnership for Peace the previous year. Swedish military forces have also participated in the IFOR, SFOR, and Kosovo Force (KFOR) missions in Bosnia. Sweden shares many of Finland's concerns about NATO membership vis-à-vis the Baltic states. In 1997, Carl Bildt, then the Moderate Party leader, proposed a Nordic Partnership for Peace. Sweden, Finland and the Baltic states rejected this idea. Government and military officials in Finland and Sweden were concerned that the Baltic states might rely excessively on their Nordic neighbors. The Baltic leaders rejected the idea because they feared that other European countries might perceive it as an alternative to NATO membership. It is increasingly probable that Sweden, like Finland, will wait until a clearer picture of Baltic membership in NATO comes into focus before submitting a request to join the Alliance.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ "Ireland Joins Partnership for Peace," *NATO Review*, p. 6, Winter 1999.

⁸⁵ Sloan, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Sloan, pp. 4-5.

5. Switzerland

Dramatic changes in the European security environment have led the Swiss to modify their traditional position on security. The Partnership for Peace program made it possible for Switzerland to further develop close and important ties with NATO as well as with the NATO member states. Domestic legislation in Switzerland prevents the government from deploying *armed* military units, not military forces, abroad. In support of the KFOR mission, Switzerland has provided an unarmed contingent to support a battalion of Austrian forces assigned to the region. "In the mean time, a public debate has started in Switzerland as to whether this prohibition against sending armed troops abroad should be lifted, as well as other legal obstacles hampering international cooperation."⁸⁷

The Swiss have made additional contributions to European security in recent years. The Geneva Center for Security Policy, one of the first certified Partnership for Peace training centers, is funded by the Swiss government. Additionally, the Swiss have assisted NATO on many occasions through their most traditional foreign policy tool, financial aid. While the Swiss have increased the scope of their participation in European security affairs in the past decade, "Switzerland does not intend either to join the Alliance or abandon its status of neutrality."⁸⁸

Of the five countries discussed, Ireland and Switzerland have stated with great clarity that they have no intention of joining the Alliance at this time or anytime soon. Finland and Sweden are potential candidates at some point in the future, but will probably

⁸⁷ Martin Dahinden, "Swiss Security Policy and Partnership with NATO," *NATO Review*, p. 25, Winter 1999.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

not apply for full membership in 2002. It is unlikely that either of these two countries will join the alliance until NATO has clearly articulated a position regarding the inclusion of the Baltic states. Austria is the most likely of the five neutrals to participate in the next enlargement of the Alliance. If NATO continues to enlarge on a case-by-case basis, Austria might precede one of the nine current "big bang" applicants, thereby creating a degree of discord among allies and aspirants. Even the perception, should Vienna decide to pursue an eleventh-hour bid, that Austria took "someone else's spot" could cause some significant problems for the Alliance. This is true even though a cursory review of any European map reveals that the accession of Austria, at least geographically and strategically, would make a lot of sense because the non-contiguity of borders could eventually be resolved. The outcome remains to be seen.

IV. ANALYZING NATO ENLARGEMENT

A. THE FIRST POST-COLD WAR ENLARGEMENT

The accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic began, it might be argued, on December 10, 1996. This was the date on which the North Atlantic Council (NAC) convened in Brussels and related the following conclusion on Alliance enlargement:

We are now in a position to recommend to our Heads of State and Government to invite at next year's Summit meeting one or more countries which have participated in the intensified dialogue process, to start accession negotiations with the Alliance. Our goal is to welcome the new members(s) by the time of NATO's 50th anniversary in 1999. We pledge that the Alliance will remain open to the accession of further members in accordance with Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. We will remain ready to pursue consultations with nations seeking NATO membership, as we have done in the past.⁸⁹

Some observers have stated, however, that "NATO expansion first become in issue in the 1992 [United States] election campaign when both presidential candidates Bush and Clinton wooed Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and other European ethnic communities in the U. S. by announcing support for a revitalized and expanded NATO

⁸⁹ North Atlantic Council, "Final Communiqué Issued at the Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council," paragraph 6. Available [online] <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1996/p96-165e.htm>>. 10 December 1996.

alliance.”⁹⁰ By 1996, one of the core elements of President Clinton’s foreign policy agenda had become the expansion of NATO.⁹¹

Concluding the 1996 NAC meeting in Brussels, the Allies agreed that the next summit would be held in Madrid, Spain on 8-9 July 1997. In a unified statement, the NATO ministers pledged to accept new members, but mentioned none by name. However, in the United States Senate, four countries were identified in a Concurrent Resolution. They were the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia.⁹²

Romania soon joined the list of countries to be considered in the first post-Cold War wave of enlargement. France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey sponsored Romania, partly because they wished to include one of the major countries in southeastern Europe in the first round of post-Cold War invitees. Then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher supported the inclusion of Romania, and eventually the Republican leadership in Congress supported this position as well. Romania had made significant reforms in its government and had concluded treaties over territorial disputes and ethnic conflicts with neighbors Hungary and Ukraine. Additionally, Romania was the first of the Central European nations to adopt major allied weapons systems into its military structure.⁹³

For geographic and strategic reasons, Slovakia should have been included on the list of candidates for an early invitation to join the Alliance, but it was not. According to

⁹⁰ William Hartung and Richard Kaufman, “NATO Expands East,” *The Progressive Response*, Volume 3, Number 27. Available [online] <<http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/nato/Hartung073099.html>>. 30 July 1999.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Solomon, Gerald B., *The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990-1997: Blessings of Liberty*, (Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 1998). p. 102.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 103.

the Human Rights Report by the U.S. State Department, Slovakia had turned away from the necessary "democratic principles" required of new states to be considered for Alliance membership.

The 1996 U. S. Department of State Human Rights Report found "disturbing trends" away from democratic principles, and on April 29 [1997], [Slovakian Prime Minister] Meciar was informed by congressional leaders of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe . . . that Slovakia's human rights record "most probably" took it out, in their view, of the first wave of new alliance members. Domestic political turmoil even caused a referendum, held May 23-24 on the issue of NATO membership, to fail because of insufficient participation. . . . On May 28 Italian defense minister Beniamino Andreatta affirmed, however, that geostrategic interests favored Slovakia's membership in NATO, but not, he stated, until a second round.⁹⁴

On June 12, 1997, President Clinton formally presented the position of the United States, which supported the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. He stated publicly that these three countries had made the greatest strides in military capability and political and economic reform. At the same time, he emphasized that the United States and other NATO countries would continue to work with other aspiring members, such as Slovenia and Romania. Five days later, on 17 June, Mike McCurry, the White House spokesman, indicated that Slovenia had not been supported because it still had to make progress in meeting military requirements and that Romania had not been supported because prerequisite political and economic reforms had not yet been achieved.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 103-4.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

While Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States supported the admission of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in the initial round of enlargement, several allies contested this approach, most notably France and Italy. "There was resentment over what some allies saw as a late-in-the-day U.S. effort to impose its view on the alliance."⁹⁶ The different and sometimes opposing views of the Allied states concerning membership involve political and security issues. In addition to considering the interests of the Alliance as a whole, each country within the Alliance makes proposals and decisions predicated on furthering its own national interests. Obviously, these do not always coincide with the interests of NATO.

NATO formally invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to begin accession talks with the Alliance at the Madrid Summit, 8-9 July 1997. In the Summit Declaration, NATO left the door open to new members under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The key provision is that the accession of new member states would serve the overall political and strategic interests of the Alliance and that the inclusion would enhance overall European security and stability.⁹⁷ New members must be invited by a consensus of the members of the Alliance and decisions to invite other countries to become new members must be ratified by the constitutional processes internal to each member state.

The next issue that must be discussed is the question: Is the Alliance better off after the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland? As with most issues,

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ "Fact Sheet: Minimum Requirements for NATO Membership," US State Department Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs. Available [online] <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/fs_970815members.html>. 15 August 1997.

there are two sides to consider in this analysis. One position is “yes, the Alliance is better off,” and the other position may be described as, “it’s still too early to tell” rather than an outright “no.”

The argument that NATO is better off with the three newest members has several components. First, proponents aver that the inclusion of these former Warsaw Pact countries in NATO has ensured the stability of democratic reforms, including civilian control of the military. Sweeping economic reforms have also promoted stability in Central Europe and have greatly accelerated the prospects for membership in the European Union of Central and Eastern European countries.

Second, proponents note the contributions that the three newest members are able to make to the Alliance. Together, these countries have an active armed force strength of nearly 350,000 troops that are able to contribute to peacekeeping missions and other tasks as directed by the North Atlantic Council. Additionally, all of the countries have large training facilities that can now be utilized by NATO forces. Hungary and Poland have facilities designed to train troops for peacekeeping missions. Advocates also note the large military-industrial capacity, especially that of Poland.

A recent report issued by the U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has concluded that “Poland has made the greatest progress of the three new allies toward integrating its military into NATO.”⁹⁸ The report also noted that Hungary has hosted NATO forces preparing for deployments to Bosnia and has committed troops to the missions in both Kosovo and Bosnia. The CBO document recognized the contributions

⁹⁸ Ann Roosevelt, “Poland Strongest Contributor Of New NATO Allies – CBO,” *Defense Week*, p. 2, 20 November 2000.

of the Czech Republic as well, citing a larger defense budget than Hungary's and a superior communications system.⁹⁹

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland contribute to promoting stability in the region and can offer assistance to countries invited to join the Alliance in the next round of enlargement.

On the security side of matters, they have achieved their long-awaited goal. Economically and politically, they have achieved recognition as stable countries, satisfying the requirements of "market democracy." But they, too, had to start practically from scratch after several decades of Communist rule. It is this shared past with other states in the region that leaves the newest members best placed to assist prospective members to move towards closer integration with the Alliance, since they have first-hand insight into the necessary reform process. So, it is clear that the new members can contribute significantly to the security of the Euro-Atlantic region in both political and military terms.¹⁰⁰

Those that believe it is still too soon to determine the full impact of the last round of expansion offer recent analysis of the integration effort by the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland as evidence. According to Ron Asmus, the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, "When we admitted them, we did not know how long it would take them to develop from Warsaw Pact countries into effective NATO nations. Many people expected that it would take 2 to 5 years. Today we have a different view. It will take at least a decade."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Sebestyen L. v. Gorka, "NATO After Enlargement: Is the Alliance Better Off?," *NATO Review*, p. 35, Autumn 1999.

¹⁰¹ Ron Asmus quoted in "Denmark Seen Disappointed in NATO Expansion Pace," *Jyllands-Posten*, FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000420000355. 20 April 2000.

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were considered to be the strongest nations aspiring to NATO membership when the Allies extended invitations in 1997. Currently, they are being criticized in several respects, including the lack of progress by military and civilian officials in learning English, a degree of unwillingness to adopt NATO's internal work procedures, and a general lack of solidarity with the Alliance.¹⁰²

In July 1999, for example, Poland was able to fill only 15 of the 100 NATO posts slated for Polish military personnel. According to the statistics from the Polish Ministry of Defense, only 20 warrant officers were able to speak fluent English by July 1999, and the number of non-commissioned officers that could speak English was unknown.¹⁰³ The language barrier has also been a problem for the Czech and Hungarian militaries. On 15 July 1999, General Sedivy, the Czech Chief of Staff, noted that the lack of English proficiency in the Czech military was a concern, and told his officers that they "had to learn English or lose their bonuses."¹⁰⁴

The translation and implementation of the NATO Standardized Agreements (STANAGs) have proved virtually overwhelming to the new members as well. Poland initially had 3 people to translate and implement the 50 initial NATO STANAGs. Warsaw had to increase that number to over 600 as the number of NATO STANAGs

¹⁰² "Denmark Seen Disappointed in NATO Expansion Pace," *Jyllands-Posten*, FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000420000355. 20 April 2000.

¹⁰³ "NATO's Newest Members Learn Difference Between Membership and Integration," *Global Intelligence Update*. Available [online] <<http://www.stratfor.com/giu/19990719.htm>>. 19 July 1999.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

grew to 700 by the 1997 Madrid Summit, and to 1,500 by accession in 1999.¹⁰⁵ This is a considerable workload for all of the aspirant countries to manage, and it may extend the timeline by years before some of the "Vilnius nine" are considered viable candidates for membership.

The language barrier, significant though it is, remains only one of the difficult integration issues. The same principle applies to military equipment, munitions, weapons systems, and communications systems, which need to reach NATO interoperability standards. Much of the equipment still in the inventory of the three newest members is old Soviet-bloc equipment and not compatible with NATO equipment. Since all three countries were extended an invitation in 1997, and they are still experiencing significant challenges in the integration process, the relevance of the Membership Action Plan is apparent. "Fail" grades have been given to the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary by some Americans, who are voicing doubts about their political determination and capacity to become fully integrated NATO members.¹⁰⁶ Given the difficulties of these three countries, considered at the time to be the "best" candidates, the next round of enlargement will involve much greater scrutiny of aspirant countries before invitations are sent out. This could significantly affect the prospects of the "Vilnius nine" in 2002.

¹⁰⁵ Jeffrey Simon, "Partnership For Peace (PFP): After the Washington Summit and Kosovo," *National Defense University Strategic Forum*, Number 167. Available [online] <<http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/nato/NDU0899.html>>. August 1999.

¹⁰⁶ "Denmark Seen Disappointed in NATO Expansion Pace," *Jyllands-Posten*, FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000420000355. 20 April 2000.

B. ARGUMENTS IN THE NATO ENLARGEMENT DEBATE

As with any contentious issue, the first and follow-on debates concerning NATO enlargement have included supporters as well as opponents. Many of the arguments in the 1993-1997 enlargement debate are still relevant in the discussion of the "big bang" approach to the next round of inclusion of new members in the Alliance. Paul Gallis of the Congressional Research Service has summarized these arguments as follows:

Arguments FOR Enlargement

- Enlargement will promote stability in Europe and gradually end Cold-War divisions in Europe by bringing new members into an integrated Euro-Atlantic community,
- Collective defense remains the core of the alliance,
- Enlargement will sustain U.S. leadership in Europe,
- As NATO is a defensive alliance, enlargement should not threaten Russia,
- The NATO-Russia Founding Act of May 1997 provides Moscow with consultation on the key security issues outside NATO territory,
- Enlargement will prevent the "renationalization" of defense in Central and Eastern Europe,
- The costs of enlargement will be modest, and
- U.S. and Western defense industries will benefit by securing new markets.

Arguments AGAINST Enlargement

- There is no threat to any current ally or candidate state, and enlargement will create new dividing lines in Europe,
- The key U.S. interest in Europe is ensuring Russia's continued democratization and enlargement might create a "Weimar Russia,"
- European stability is best left to political institutions, such as the EU and OSCE,
- NATO enlargement will be expensive; estimates range from \$27- \$125 billion,
- The American people are unwilling to assume the unnecessary costs and risks,
- Enlargement will dilute the efficiency and effectiveness of the Alliance,
- The candidates are too small to contribute to Alliance missions, particularly the mission of collective defense and thereby weaken the Alliance, and
- Bosnia and Kosovo demonstrate that the Europeans are not willing to bear the burden for ensuring security in their own back yard. If instability develops in

central Europe, the United States will have to shoulder the financial and military costs of bringing peace.¹⁰⁷

Supporters and opponents both have valid arguments in the enlargement debate. Not all of these arguments, however, are equally weighted. The challenge for each NATO member is to analyze the potential benefits of Alliance enlargement against both the costs and the risks to that Alliance, and with respect to its own national interests.

C. ALLIED VIEWS ON ENLARGEMENT

Support for the potential candidate countries varied among the Allies in 1997, and support continues to be varied in 2000. Britain, France, Germany, and the United States are often referred to as the "Quad" countries. Since they have the largest economies and the strongest and most capable militaries, they have a significant voice in NATO's internal deliberations. It is clear that all of the NATO Allies endorsed, or at least accepted, the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1997 or they would not currently be members of the Alliance.

The United States and the other Allies have stated repeatedly that "the door remains open" with respect to NATO enlargement to all qualified aspirants. The current U.S. administration has not mentioned any country by name for candidacy at the 2002 NATO summit. In July 1999, the United States reiterated its position that no potential member would be excluded from consideration for either historical or geographical reasons. These comments were directed as much to the Baltic states as they were to Russia. In 1998, the United States and the Baltic states formed the Baltic Charter of

¹⁰⁷ Paul E. Gallis, *NATO Enlargement: Pro and Con Arguments* (Washington/D.C., CRS Report for Congress, 1997). Available [online] <<http://www.fas.org/man/crs/poppro.htm>>.

Partnership Commission, which was established to help expedite the integration of the Baltic states into Western institutions.¹⁰⁸ At the U.S.-Baltic Partnership Commission meeting in Tallinn on 7 June 2000, Strobe Talbott, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, commended the Baltic partners for their progress towards integration and lauded their cooperative efforts (outlined in the previous chapter of this thesis); but Talbott did not explicitly mention or support "candidacy" for the Baltic states.¹⁰⁹ The United States has, however, been publicly supportive of the NATO candidacy efforts by Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In fact, it has been reported that "high-ranking U.S. military officials are telling Slovakia it is all but guaranteed to become a member in 2002."¹¹⁰ Britain supported the candidacy of Slovenia in 1997, but it has made no public statements of support for any country since the last round of enlargement.

In June 1997, Germany publicly reaffirmed its commitment to the open door policy with respect to Slovenia and Romania, but stopped short of providing an endorsement for a future round of enlargement. Given the exceptional costs that Germany has incurred as a result of reunification, it is likely that the German government will assess the potential costs of another round of enlargement prior to endorsing any potential candidates. It is possible that Germany may press for aspirants on a dual-track basis – that is, NATO and EU membership in the same year. French President Jacques

¹⁰⁸ K.P. Foley, "NATO: U.S. Says No Geographic Exclusions," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/nca/1999/07/F.RU.990719122314.html>>. 19 July 1999.

¹⁰⁹ "U.S.-Baltic Partnership Commission Communiqué." Available [online] <<http://usinfo.state.gov>>. 7 June 2000.

¹¹⁰ "NATO's Next Move: In Line with the EU," *Global Intelligence Update*. Available [online] <<http://www.stratfor.com/cis/commentary/0002190125.htm>>. 19 February 2000.

Chirac endorsed the candidacy of both Romania and Slovenia in 1997, while Lionel Jospin, the French Prime Minister, supported Romania. It is likely that French officials will debate the next round of NATO enlargement in the context of EU expansion as well.¹¹¹

Of the three newest members of the Alliance, Hungary supports the accession of Slovakia. Viktor Organ, the Hungarian Prime Minister, has even stated that “without Slovakia, there won’t be a second expansion round.”¹¹² The Czech Republic has openly supported the aspirations of Lithuania to join both the EU and NATO. On 31 March 2000, Czech Premier Milos Zeman said, “The Czech Republic fully supports Lithuania’s effort to join NATO and the EU.”¹¹³

Support for the Baltic states candidacy has come primarily from Denmark and Iceland. Denmark has declared that the rapid admission of the Baltic countries to NATO is a primary foreign policy goal, and currently fears that “the appetite to further expand NATO has fallen to zero in Washington only a year after Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were admitted to the alliance.”¹¹⁴ Those fears, which were first voiced in April 2000, have been fueled by other events. On 19 June 2000, Walter Kolbow, Parliamentary

¹¹¹ For a complete discussion and analysis of the Allied positions on enlargement in 1997, see Paul Gallis’ report, *NATO Enlargement: The Process and Allied Views*, (Washington/D.C., CRS Report for Congress, 1 July 1997).

¹¹² Paul Goble, “Analysis From Washington – A Big Bang Outside a Closely Guarded Door,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/06/F.RU.000519122113.html>>. 26 June 2000.

¹¹³ Zeman quoted in “Zeman, Lithuania’s Kubilius Discuss EU, NATO Bids,” *Prague CTK*, FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000331000174, 31 March 2000.

¹¹⁴ “Denmark Seen Disappointed in NATO Expansion Pace,” *Jyllands-Posten*, FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000420000355. 20 April 2000.

State Secretary with the German Minister of Defense, was visiting Estonia. During a press conference, he said that Russian objections to NATO's continued eastward expansion must be overcome before any new countries are admitted.¹¹⁵ Two days later, the German Defense Ministry offered a clarification, reiterating that Russia does not have a veto,¹¹⁶ but it was clear that the "damage" had already been done. Concern still exists among the Baltic states, moreover, that German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder seems intent on building German-Russian relations, even at the expense of the security of the Baltic states.¹¹⁷

In July 2000, the Baltic states received what may prove to be a telling message about NATO expansion in general, and for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in particular. During a July 2000 visit to London, Vytautas Landsbergis, the Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament, was presented a list of "reservations" about Baltic membership by British officials:

As summed up by those officials, the counterarguments to Baltic membership of NATO run as follows. 1) An alliance made up of many countries is unwieldy. The Kosovo crisis has demonstrated the difficulty of coordinating the positions of all member countries. 2) Prior to any decision on the Baltic states, NATO must be persuaded that the accession of its new members—Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary—"has been successful and productive." 3) The Baltic states might be too small to be deemed useful to the alliance. 4) Russia, though not holding a veto on allied decision, is an influential country opposing the admission of the Baltic states to NATO. The West, while "aware of the small nations'

¹¹⁵ Askold Krushelnysky, "Baltics: German Comment Heightens Concern Over NATO Entry," *RadioFree Europe/RadioLiberty*. Available [online] <<http://www.rferl.org/nca/2000/06/F.RU.000622132550.html>>. 22 June 2000.

¹¹⁶ "BNS: German Defense Ministry Says Russia Cannot Veto NATO Expansion," *Tallin BNS*, FBIS translated text, document ID: CEP20000621000316. 21 June 2000.

¹¹⁷ Krushelnysky.

concern about their security,” must at the same time take Russia’s views into account, and the Balts themselves should take a balanced view of Western and Russian interests. 5) Unlike the Central European member and candidate countries, the Baltic states were “part of the Soviet Union.”¹¹⁸

It remains unclear whether this is solely the position of the British government, or if the British were echoing the position and concerns of the Alliance. Given Britain’s status as one of the “Quad” Allies, it is certainly possible that admission of the Baltic states is, at least unofficially, “off the table” for the next round of enlargement. If that is in fact the case, the Baltic states have to persuade the Allies to adopt more forthcoming policies before the 2002 summit.

D. NATO AND RUSSIA

On May 27, 1997, the heads of state and government of the NATO countries, along with then-President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, and then-NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act (The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation). This document is designed to provide the basis for an enduring and robust partnership, and it may make important contributions to European security in the 21st Century. The Founding Act declares that:

NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries. They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation. The present Act reaffirms the determination of NATO and Russia to give concrete substance to their shared commitment to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples.

¹¹⁸ “Misconceptions on the Baltic States’ NATO Membership,” The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 138, 17 July 2000.

Making this commitment at the highest political level marks the beginning of a fundamentally new relationship between NATO and Russia. They intend to develop, on the basis of common interest, reciprocity and transparency a strong, stable and enduring partnership.¹¹⁹

The Founding Act also established the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as the mechanism for cooperation and consultation. The Founding Act and the PJC reflect the NATO principle "a voice, but not a veto" regarding Russia's relations with the North Atlantic Council. According to the Founding Act, the PJC is to meet twice annually at the Ministerial level, and monthly at the Ambassadorial level. As a result of NATO's campaign in the Kosovo conflict, Russia suspended its participation in the PJC from March 1999 until July 1999. From July 1999 to March 2000, Russia limited the agenda to peacekeeping in Bosnia and Kosovo.¹²⁰

The resumption of the PJC meetings has not lessened the tension between Moscow and the West, as the topic of NATO expansion continues to bring vehement objection from Russian officials. Russia considers NATO's expansion to the East to be a definite security threat, and views NATO as an organization controlled by Washington. Russians interpret the Alliance's intervention in the Kosovo conflict as proof of a supposed U.S.-driven propensity to use force. According to Russian General Leonid Ivashov, "NATO's Eastern expansion is a strategic threat that will negatively affect

¹¹⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russia Federation. Available [online] <<http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/fndact-a.htm>>. 27 May 1997.

¹²⁰ "NATO-Russian Council Meeting in Brussels," The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 56. Available [online] <http://www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/nom/006/056_001.htm>. 20 March 2000.

relations with Russia.”¹²¹ Ivashov also explained that NATO’s expansion to the east creates a line-up in Central and Eastern Europe that hurts Russia’s political, economic, and military interests and that efforts by aspiring countries to join NATO only serve to increase tension and create a new strategic battlefield between NATO and Russia.¹²²

Russia is opposed to NATO expansion in general. However, the issue of the Baltic states joining NATO is particularly contentious for three key reasons. First, Estonia and Latvia share a common land border with Russia. Moreover, connected to the Russian “geography” argument is the status of the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, which is isolated from the rest of Russia, and located between Lithuania and Poland. While the border is certainly an issue of strategic importance for Russia, it is not the crux of the argument. The second and third reasons given by Moscow for complete Russian rejection of NATO expansion to include the Baltic states are (a) the large Russian diaspora in the Baltic states, and (b) the fact that the Baltic states were once under de facto Soviet control. In March 2000, for example, Russian officials sought to portray the Baltic states as a scene of “fascist revanchism,” purporting that a small number of court cases based on lustration laws are indicative of a widespread persecution of ethnic Russians.¹²³ On 7 June 2000, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott rejected Moscow’s claims about the abuse of ethnic Russians in the Baltic states. Specifically, Talbott “termed the

¹²¹ Pekka Ervasti, “Russian General Warns About Flirting with NATO,” *Helsinki Ilta Sanomat*, FBIS translated text, document ID: EUP20000705000206. 21 June 2000.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Putin Presidency Signals Harder Line Toward Baltic States,” The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 59. Available [online] <http://www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/nom/006/059_004.htm>. 20 March 2000.

accusations 'unwarranted by the facts, to put it mildly'—an extremely serious statement in diplomatic terms. He urged Moscow to desist from 'name-calling, stop the unilateral war of words, and seek a genuine dialogue' with the three Baltic States."¹²⁴

In a diplomatic sense, Talbott's comments could be read not only as a rebuke to Russia, but also as a position of support for the Baltic states. The issue of including the Baltic states in the Alliance is a difficult one indeed. According to David Yost:

Particularly in the United States and Germany, some observers foresee admitting the Baltic states to NATO and believe this could be done without a risky confrontation with Russia. Other observers contend that admitting the Baltic states would cause feeling of humiliation and outrage in Russia, become a stimulus for Russian nationalism and revanchism....¹²⁵

In June 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin "described NATO's possible enlargement into the Baltic region as 'hostile to Russia and adverse to Russia's security. Regarding the talk about NATO integration of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, I would like to stress once more: NATO's crossing the borders of the former Soviet Union would be fraught with extremely serious consequences for the security situation on the entire continent.'"¹²⁶ For at least as long as Vladimir Putin is the President of Russia, and probably for years to come, the official hard line attitude of the Russian Federation toward including the Baltic states in NATO is unlikely to change. At the same time, the prospects for the Baltic states to join NATO remain clouded in a mist of uncertainty.

¹²⁴ "Moscow Invocation of 'Red Line' Getting Pretty Thin," The Jamestown Foundation, *Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 115. Available [online] <http://www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/nom/006/115_004.htm>. 13 June 2000.

¹²⁵ Yost, p. 138.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

The first round of NATO enlargement in post-Cold War Europe was more a political decision than a military one. Though military and economic factors were certainly considered in the enlargement deliberations, the calculus of the end result presents a political bottom line. The "big bang" approach to the next round of NATO enlargement, and the great publicity associated with it, have suggested to some observers that it amounts to a political lobbying tool used by the Baltic states to promote their agenda for NATO enlargement. Most of the information associated with the "big bang" approach is focused on the preparatory steps the Baltic states have taken to prepare for membership. While some, albeit limited, relevant information on the prospects and progress of the other six candidates has been published, the only document discovered that includes the "Vilnius nine" as a group is the May 2000 Vilnius Declaration.

The geopolitical reality for the Baltic states presents a difficult situation for them and for NATO. The Alliance has emphatically stated that the "door remains open" to any and all qualified candidates. NATO has published the Membership Action Plan, which serves as a "road map" to accession for aspirant countries. To their credit, the Baltic states have undertaken a significant program of military reform to prepare for NATO membership. Politically, the Baltic states have publicly supported all the recent initiatives of the North Atlantic Council, including some relatively unpopular decisions relating to Kosovo.

The countervailing considerations affecting the Baltic states, however, are heavy ones. The military realities of geography as well as the logistics involved in ensuring a

credible collective defense do not lend the Baltic states an optimal position for inclusion in the next round of enlargement. The reservations reportedly voiced by the British government in July 2000 do not bode well for the Baltic states, especially in view of Britain's status and influence within the Alliance. Finally, the vehement objections of the Russian Federation need to be taken into consideration. Even though the Alliance has repeatedly asserted that only the NATO members make decisions concerning the future of the Alliance, including enlargement, Russian concerns remain a factor in the process, because NATO-Russian relations are a crucial element in ensuring the overall security of Europe.

Several other factors cast doubt on the probability of any NATO expansion decision at the 2002 summit. The significant problems faced by the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in their efforts to integrate into the military structure will force the Alliance to consider the "readiness" of each candidate country carefully. Each aspirant will have to demonstrate a solid ability to work within the NATO command structure, and will have to develop a large pool of military and civilian defense officials who have mastery of the English language.

Another key issue that the Allies must consider is the cost of expanding the Alliance at a time when economic growth in Europe is no longer on a vertical trajectory. The 1997 NATO cost estimate for the inclusion of the first three members was approximately \$1.5 billion (U.S. dollars) over a 10-year period. Other calculations done by the RAND Corporation and the Pentagon, also concluded in 1997, estimated that the costs would be between \$27 billion and \$42 billion over 10-15 years. The Congressional Budget Office, using a threat-based approach, estimated the total maximum cost could be

as high as \$127 billion over a 15-year period.¹²⁷ Regardless of the approach used to calculate costs, NATO expansion is expensive. Even the lowest estimate for enlarging by three new members is significant. It is highly unlikely that the Alliance could afford or would be willing to incur the costs of the “big bang” approach to NATO enlargement.

Several of the countries aspiring to be NATO members are looking for credible security guarantees against a Russia that is perceived to have an uncertain future.” Indeed, some European security experts have commented that “Russia is still considered a ‘risk’ if not an adversary by NATO, indirectly identified in the NATO Strategic Concept by way of the Alliance having to take into account ‘powerful nuclear forces outside the Alliance.’”¹²⁸ At the same time, the Alliance is working toward improving relations with Russia to promote security and stability in Europe. In the case of several aspirant countries, especially the Baltic states, these two opposing positions create an impasse. Members of the Alliance will have to weigh political, military, and economic costs against the potential benefits as another round of expansion is contemplated.

Security and stability in Europe are predicated on the foundation of two key institutions, the EU and NATO. Increasingly, these two organizations are going to have to work in concert with each other to avoid creating a disparate situation of the “haves” and the “have-nots” in Europe. In the future, both NATO and the EU are only going to extend invitations to countries that have something to contribute. In general, the same countries that offer benefits to one organization also offer benefits to the other.

¹²⁷ Cost estimates compiled by the U.S. Department of State. Available [online] <http://www.state.gov/regions/eur/fs_980919_natoqanda.html>. 19 February 1998.

¹²⁸ John Borawski, “NATO Beyond 2000: A New Flashpoint for European Security,” *European Security*, Volume 9, Number 2, Summer 2000.

The potential enlargement of NATO involves many complex and critical issues with which the Alliance must contend. A significant reason for the continued enlargement of NATO is the effectiveness of the organization itself. This is especially true as the Alliance undertakes "collective security" or "cooperative security" missions in order to maintain peace and stability in Europe. The United States has a real interest in the continued effectiveness, even predominance, of NATO in European security affairs because the Alliance is the surest guarantee of peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic region. It is in the best interests of the United States, its NATO allies, and all of Europe for the Alliance to remain open to further enlargement, but it may be premature to expect a decision in this regard at the Alliance's Summit in 2002.

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