

# **NATO ENLARGEMENT**

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# NATO ENLARGEMENT

## WORKING PAPER No. 3 OF THE EUROPEAN SECURITY FORUM

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## FOREWORD

FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG \*

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The third meeting of the European Security Forum on 9 July 2001, centred on *NATO Enlargement*, prepared, as has become the custom, by papers written respectively from a US, a European and a Russian perspective.

Tomas Ries, while underlining the need to avoid gratuitously damaging relations with Russia, emphasised that the number-one objective for the Europeans was the reinforcement of Europe's stable liberal base and this called for NATO enlargement including the Baltics. Furthermore, he noted that Russia was going to go its own way whatever occurred in terms of NATO enlargement.

Vladimir Baranovsky underscored the hawkish attitude of Russian public opinion (as evinced in opinion polls) against NATO enlargement, particularly vis-à-vis extension to the Baltics. The Kosovo air war was a turning point in terms of this hardening. However, he also stated that such a trend need not preclude practical engagement between Russia and NATO. A 'post-Kursk' discussion on maritime security; theatre missile defence; an update of the '3 Nos'; the joint handling of Macedonia-style crisis situations - such were some of the issues that could, if they were addressed in a cooperative manner, improve the Russia-NATO climate.

Steven Larrabee, in presenting his paper, drew the group's attention more particularly to three points: (a) The US dynamic was increasingly pointing to the entry of all three Baltic States, even if the case could be made for letting in Lithuania ahead of the others given its good relations with Russia and given the absence of a serious Russian minority issue; (b) The first enlargement had demonstrated that Russian-Polish relations had actually improved to what they had been previously; (c) The EU and NATO enlargement processes should be coordinated.

In addition to these presentations, remarks by a well-placed commentator of Alliance affairs paved the way for the ensuing debate. First, he noted that the new enlargement would be politically easier to handle than the first, precisely because of what didn't happen after that initial round: there had been no 'new Cold war', no 'new fault line' and no 'bankrupting' of NATO. In a sense, the effects of the first enlargement had been overstated by its adversaries as by some of its supporters. Secondly, there were several material differences between the

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second and the first enlargement. There was more technical preparation this time with the membership action plans; but there would also be new implications in terms of political cohesion, with the growth in the number of members. As well, Article-V considerations could be of growing importance. In this regard, V. Baranovsky suggested that enlarging to the Baltics could create a new ‘Berlin vulnerability’ problem for NATO, to which others responded that this comparison could be applied in a reverse mode, with the transformation of Kaliningrad into a Russian enclave within NATO. Finally, the commentator picked up Steve Larrabee’s mention of a staggered approach to the next round of enlargement, while pointing out the consequences of enlargement for the security policies of the neutral members of the European Union.

At the behest of the Chairman, several issues were singled out for discussion.

First of all, what would be the effect of enlargement on the nature of NATO? As one participant queried, would a NATO of 27 or 28 still be *funktionsfähig*, let alone *entscheidungsfähig*, capable of making decisions? Others disputed the notion that the growth in numbers would significantly hamper NATO’s effectiveness: ‘Parkinson’s law did not necessarily lead to Parkinson’s disease’. However, doubt was expressed about NATO’s future direction. The remark was made that NATO hadn’t terribly changed since 1991, that new tasks such as peacekeeping/peace enforcement had simply been added to the old; would this situation last with enlargement – or as another participant put it: Will NATO simply become an OSCE with teeth?

These queries naturally gained salience as the Forum broached the issue of Russian membership of NATO. President Putin has repeatedly raised this prospect during the course of the summer, confirming the view of those who considered that ‘virtual membership’ of Russia should be discussed earlier rather than later. What kind of NATO will we have if the road is opened for Russia membership (if this NATO still had an Article V, what would that mean vis-à-vis China? And if Article V were dropped, would we still have NATO?), and what kind of Russian reaction will we have if NATO spurns Moscow’s overtures?

Then we had the issue of the interaction between the EU and NATO enlargements. The topic was launched with a remark from a prominent analyst of EU affairs that there was no CFSP on NATO enlargement, that this was a process on which the EU as such had no common view, only policies by individual states. As one US participant indicated, the Baltics will play better in the US than Bulgaria and Romania; but a number of EU members have precisely the

opposite view. The net result is that pressure to enlarge to the North will be complemented by pressure to enlarge to the South – thus leading to something closer to a Big Bang than to staggered entries. A brief but heated discussion arose concerning the entry criteria for NATO membership, with one American participant giving great prominence to the economic dimension, to the surprise of some Europeans who could see this as a new obstacle directed against early Bulgarian or Romanian entry. Certainly, economic criteria had not played a prominent role when Greece and Turkey entered NATO half a century ago. However, there was little dispute about the contention that Romania's prospects had not improved since the 1997 discussions at the Madrid summit. Indeed this sense of Romanian lack of progress was reinforced by a question about 'sweeteners' for those would not be part of the first pick at the NATO summit in Prague next year.

As for the ultimate extent of NATO enlargement, the question was raised of what could the West's options be if the Kuchma government were replaced in the Ukraine, and if the democratically elected successor regime requested NATO candidacy status. The analogy was made here with the replacement of the Tudjman regime in Croatia and Zagreb's current call for NATO membership.

Further afield, the Forum discussed the interaction between possible Caucasian aspirations to NATO membership (Georgia and Azerbaijan notably) and Turkey's strategic interests. Here the remark was made by a well-placed regional observer that the rapidly expanding Russian-Turkish ties in the field of energy (e.g. the 'Blue Stream' gas pipeline) would make Turkey increasingly adverse to confrontation with Russia in the Caucasian area.

Returning to the preparation of the 2002 NATO Summit, Forum participants noted that Russia's leaders were no longer talking in terms of 'red lines', or of 'no former Soviet territory in NATO'; they were raising the theme of 'no NATO infrastructure', along the lines of V. Baranovsky's statements on the '3 Nos'. However, one East European participant invited us not to forget that 'red lines' could be replaced by 'pipelines', i.e. that Russia could manifest its negativism towards NATO expansion by seeking greater control of the CIS area, notably through its policy vis-à-vis energy infrastructure connecting Russia to the outside world via the CIS countries.

Kaliningrad would be a key point for NATO-EU-Russia cooperation. Here, we were invited to ponder a recent statement by Admiral Yegorov, Kaliningrad's governor, suggesting that

Lithuania's entry into NATO would not pose unprecedented problems for the oblast since Poland was already a member of NATO.

Finally, as one Western participant indicated, it would be wrong to continue saying that no new lines would be drawn: After all, the EU was not going to include Russia. Thus, a clear and presumably long-lasting line would be drawn between the EU and Russia, once the enlargement to the Baltics had been completed. Thus it is imperative that we get EU-Russia cooperation on the right track; hence also the call of several participants for establishing a new type of institutional relationship between Russia and NATO, whether this would be in the form of an associateship (to use the expression of one Russian participant) or the prospect of membership.

# NATO ENLARGEMENT: A EUROPEAN VIEW

TOMAS RIES\*

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Politically, further NATO enlargement in some form is probably unavoidable. On the deepest level, because NATO at its core is an expression of the Atlantic community of liberal democratic values. Refusing entry to new applicants who fulfil the criteria and knock strongly enough and long enough is not only politically embarrassing but undermines the foundation on which NATO rests.

Secondly, from a more immediate perspective, it will be difficult not to follow-up the tacit invitations involved in the MAP and the expectations linked to 2002. Finally pressures for selective enlargement to specific candidates will no doubt arise again from individual NATO members, driven by various peripheral interests.

Whether or not enlargement is desirable is another issue. This is a function of its impact on vital European security interests, which is the focus of this discussion paper. This includes three issues: Firstly, what are Europe's vital Grand Strategy objectives? Secondly, how could NATO enlargement affect these? Thirdly, how can enlargement be modulated to minimise costs?

## **Grand strategy objectives for European security**

Five objectives might be considered fundamental for European stability:<sup>1</sup>

1. Preserve the North American - European partnership
2. Prevent a new division of Europe with an alienated hostile Russia
3. Support and enlarge Europe's stable liberal base
4. Manage violent instability affecting Europe
5. Maintain an insurance against revived military threats

These are outlined on the following pages, with some thoughts on how enlargement could affect them.

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\*National Defence College, Finland – this paper reflects the author's views only, and not Finland's official policy.

<sup>1</sup> Excluding the need for steady global economic growth, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

## **1. Preserve the North American - European partnership**

Historically the North American-European partnership is young. It emerged during the Cold War, based on joint economic development and the Soviet threat. The collapse of the USSR removed one key pillar, but the partnership remains important nevertheless. Firstly, because both continue to share the same economic and political base, with transnational economic links generating deeper interdependence than ever before. Secondly, because the same economic links - which fuse the entire OECD community but in which North America, the EU and parts of East Asia are the main players - create shared global security interests, even if the EU's nascent CFSP as yet has difficulty dealing with this. Thirdly, because Europe remains dependent upon US security guarantees and military capability in the event of a revived direct military threat from outside. Fourthly, because North America and the EU are two of today's most powerful global actors, whose relationship affects the world.

NATO remains vital for this partnership even without the Soviet threat. Primarily because it is the only formal political link across the Atlantic, and secondly because of its continued military role. Politically the official ties, along with the intimate and extensive institutional framework, provide a unique forum for a deep and continuous security-political dialogue. This provides essential support for the political relationship as well as a unique capability for joint multinational security-political decision-making and military action. (Europe's military dependency on the US and NATO's military role are dealt with in sections 4. and 5. below.)

From this political perspective NATO enlargement includes two major drawbacks. Firstly, weakened decision-making resulting from a greater number and diversity of members. Secondly, possible strains on the US commitment if frictions from additional members led to US perceptions of a more problematic 'entangling' engagement. Positive consequences include adapting the alliance to Europe's evolving political map, and consolidation of the enlarged Atlantic liberal community.

## **2. Avoid a new division of Europe with an alienated hostile Russia**

This remains a vital strategic objective. Maintaining cooperative relations with Russia is essential for European security, while the consequences of an alienated and hostile Russia could be unpleasant for both Europe and the world.

NATO enlargement will almost certainly have negative consequences on this relationship. The question is not whether Russia would react, but how strongly and how deeply. NATO is



perceived with suspicion and hostility by Russia's military and parts of the establishment around Putin. At the very least enlargement would lead to strong protests, a chill in relations and probably the rattling of military sabres.

This per se is not unmanageable. The question is whether Russia would go further. This is unlikely for two reasons. Firstly, because there is in fact very little Russia could do. Beyond protesting, freezing diplomatic relations, shaking an already shaky military and rattling her nuclear arsenal there is little she can do. Some of these are bad enough, but they have little real impact. This leaves escalating to the use of various forms of force. However this would raise the crisis to a level almost certainly perceived as too high by the Russian leadership.

Secondly, extreme Russian protests would be curtailed by her economic dependency on the west. Firstly for export revenue, as oil and gas exports are her only serious source of income. Secondly for investment, as the key part of Putin's plan to build a functioning industrial base. Russian resort to violence in Europe would freeze relations with the west, including exports and investment plans. The cost to Russia would thus be inordinately high.

In the short term it is thus unlikely that Russian reactions would go beyond posturing. More serious is the longer-term damage to Russian attitudes towards the west. In the near-term enlargement would almost certainly increase the influence of the Russian military over foreign policy, with a more militarised and hostile stance towards the outside world. Domestically it could boost support for xenophobic nationalist trends within Russia and weaken the liberal, western oriented factions even further.

The long-term consequences of such a development are disturbing. On the other hand this trend is already underway, regardless of western policies. Looking back over the last ten years it is clear that Russia has largely failed to make the much hoped-for transition to a free-market economy, democracy and the rule of law. Instead the economy was captured by a handful of oligarchs, social hardship increased, and domestic politics are steadily growing more authoritarian. While unpleasant to contemplate, events indicate that a deep 'Huntington Gap' does indeed separate Russia from liberal Europe.

As a result the political gap between Russia and the west has also steadily grown. The initial mutually enthusiastic hopes of the early 1990's rapidly faded, and by the mid-90's both sides had lost faith in the economic relationship, gradually leading to western political indifference and rising Russian frustration. By the end of the decade serious crises in the relationship emerged with increasing frequency: in 1996-1997 over NATO enlargement; in April 1999

over Operation Allied Force; in September 1999 after Russia's second attack on Chechnya, provoking pressure within the EU for sanctions; and most recently on a lower level in the summer of 2000, following indications of new Russian tactical nuclear warheads being moved to Kaliningrad. All of these were virtually unthinkable ten years ago.

Russia is clearly going her own way, and all current indications are that the gap between her and the liberal world will continue to grow. The trend is deep has been underway for some time, and while NATO enlargement may accelerate it, abstaining from enlargement is unlikely to reverse it.

### **3. Support and enlarge Europe's stable liberal base**

The deepest source of peace and stability in Europe is the community of liberal states based on democracy, market economics, the rule of law and social stability. Supporting those states striving to join this community, and accepting them into it when they comply with its standards, enlarges and consolidates this stable base.

NATO and the EU are the two institutions at the heart of the European liberal community. While NATO has a specific security-political role and the EU shoulders a broader responsibility for embracing the emerging liberal states, opening the alliance between them has two advantages. Firstly, it consolidates the enlarged zone of stability and peace in Europe, both within new members and towards outside powers. This is particularly important in security-political 'grey zones' where crises of misunderstanding can arise. These consist of areas in which emerging liberal states - identified by the western public as belonging to the liberal community - are exposed to potential threat. This is the case for the three Baltic states, which parts of the Russian establishment - notably the military - perceive as essential for Russia. Should they be subjected to pressure the combination of domestic opinion and international credibility would make it impossible for the western community to remain indifferent, even without formal commitments. While currently remote, such crises could arise out of misunderstanding which prior NATO membership would pre-empt. It can be argued that Russia's growing alienation noted above is increasing this need.

Secondly, NATO membership may in certain cases need to be synchronised with EU enlargement, which involves a tacit but growing security commitment that the EU is unable to back up for some time. Finally the negative impact of not enlarging must be taken into account. It weakens our liberal credo - this could generate disillusion among aspirants, and may send undesirable signals to the outside world.

#### **4. Manage violent instability affecting Europe**

Policing violent instability along Europe's fringe has emerged as one of NATO's most visible tasks since the end of the Cold War. And since 1995 it has managed the actual enforcement task surprisingly effectively, even if subsequent peace building - in which NATO plays a supporting peacekeeping role - has proved more elusive.

This policing capability remains vital for European stability. On the one hand directly, by enforcing order in unstable fringe areas, partly by containing regional violence and partly - though this ultimately remains beyond the reach of pure enforcement - by contributing towards resolving conflicts. On a deeper political level it is equally essential as a means of reaffirming the power and authority of the liberal community, both at home and abroad.

Here NATO is the key instrument, for which no substitute yet exists. Firstly for political crisis management, since its extensive, intimate and tested institutions make it the only multinational organisation capable of hard analysis, decision-making and action. Secondly for large scale military operations, since it alone possesses the integrated military command structure capable of conducting complex large-scale multinational military operations. Thirdly for war fighting, because it alone provides the political and operational link to the US - which is the only power in the Atlantic community capable of serious power projection and advanced high-intensity warfare.

NATO is thus essential for European crisis management, peacekeeping and peace enforcement (i.e. war). While the EU is now endeavouring to develop capabilities in these fields, they will remain very weak for a long time. Strongest are the mechanisms for political crisis management, but they still face considerable teething problems. Operationally the EU is even more limited. At the lowest end of the Petersberg tasks - 'Humanitarian Operations' involving humanitarian support, hostage rescue and evacuation - the EU has the most autonomous capability. One step up - peacekeeping missions based on local consent - the EU can deploy smaller contingents, but would need to rely on NATO's integrated military command and US logistic and transport assets for any larger troop presence. EU efforts to fill this gap will still take many years. Finally at the uppermost end of the scale - peace enforcement - the EU fully depends on both NATO infrastructure and US war fighting assets.

NATO thus remains essential for hard crisis management, peacekeeping and peace enforcement. For these missions enlargement could have two positive consequences. Firstly by increasing the international legitimacy of a given operation, since more states would be

backing it and taking part. Nevertheless this would not significantly reduce the need for more basic international mandates for action. Secondly by increasing the pool of assets for peacekeeping missions, though this is already covered by the current partnership arrangements. On the other hand enlargement would have the major drawback of weakening NATO decision-making.

## **5. Maintain insurance against military threats**

The danger of direct military attack against the European liberal community crumbled with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and it remains remote today. Coupled with its inflammatory nature this has placed it far from the political agenda. Nevertheless the return of such a threat cannot be excluded, and while remote, its serious consequences make it prudent - read necessary - to maintain an insurance policy against such an eventuality.

For Europe such a revived direct military threat could take two forms. Firstly, from rogue states with missiles. Secondly, in the event of deep Russian regression, with an alienated and hostile régime under weak and tense domestic conditions, resorting to military and especially nuclear pressure as its only remaining means of influence and respect.

In both cases NATO is vital and has no substitute. Firstly for hard crisis management, as the only organisation capable of joint multinational analysis, decision and military action. Secondly for deterrence, through Article 5. links with the US, which remains the only credible deterrent against conventional and nuclear threats and - perhaps - against rogue states. Thirdly for defence, again through the links to the US, which remains the only state capable of large-scale high-intensity warfare, and is the only member developing TMD.

Under such dark scenarios Europe thus remains deeply dependent on the US, and hence on the NATO link. Consequences of NATO enlargement here are largely negative. A greater number of members would weaken decision-making, extended defensive responsibilities and more 'entangling' obligations could weaken US support, extended defence commitments could exceed NATO capabilities and last but not least, stretching US deterrence to cover a larger, remoter and more diverse set of states could weaken its credibility. On the other hand enlargement advantages include greater depth, notably for existing European members (shades of Germany and Poland), and greater reach.

## **Which agenda for NATO?**

From a realpolitik perspective NATO enlargement depends upon which security political agenda one prioritises. If emphasis is placed on consolidating and supporting Europe's growing community of liberal states - which is the deepest foundation for stability and peace in Europe - then NATO must remain open to new candidates. This is especially the case for those small states that have confirmed their liberal transition but remain in an exposed security-political situation. The three Baltic states are a case in point. Two further arguments along this vein are that by removing such security political 'grey areas' the danger of crises of misunderstanding is reduced. Secondly there is in some cases a need to synchronise EU enlargement with the security support which only NATO provides.

At the same time the drawbacks of enlargement are clear. Internally, greater diversity and larger numbers of members may strain NATO's political cohesion, which in turn will weaken decision-making and may hurt operational efficiency. Externally by further straining the relationship with Russia, since it will inevitably displease key parts of the Russian leadership, at least accelerating the further alienation and isolation of Russia and at worst contributing to deep long-term hostility. Thirdly it may affect the US commitment to Europe, should new members lead to new problems increasing US domestic perceptions of an 'Entangling Alliance'. Fourthly it could overextend NATO defence capabilities and US deterrence credibility.

Thus if emphasis is placed on maintaining a powerful military alliance, both for policing the fringes (crisis prevention, peacekeeping and peace enforcement) and as an insurance policy against a revived direct military threat (deterrence or defence against Russia or TMD threats), then such enlargement that would weaken cohesion and military capability is inadvisable. Similarly, if emphasis is placed on not offending Russia, then enlargement should be limited or avoided. However here it is worth reiterating that Russia is in fact gradually alienating herself, regardless of what we do.

However, modulating the way in which enlargement is carried out can reduce some of these costs. This depends on the agenda one assigns to NATO, and is a key issue for discussion. Possibilities to safeguard alliance cohesion and efficiency include the obvious, such as ensuring that membership criteria (democracy, rule of law, market economy) are fully met. More controversial options would be to preserve full Article 5 guarantees to all new members but envisage limits to their decision-making rights, and/or to establish a new 'inner core' of

major NATO powers for key issues. However this could in itself also weaken alliance functioning and the credibility of Article 5.

To reassure Russia it is possible to envisage restraint as to the depth and width of enlargement. Depth can be limited by further 'Base and Ban' provisions, similar to those of Denmark, Norway, Germany and others. Width can be restrained by excluding geopolitically sensitive applicants even though they meet membership criteria. This is paradoxical however, as it is precisely these countries which most need NATO security guarantees. In northern Europe this includes all three Baltic states.

If we assume that enlargement in some form is politically inevitable the key issue becomes what form it should take. From a realpolitik perspective this is a function of which of NATO's Grand Strategy roles we give priority. This is the fundamental issue that needs to be resolved before 2002.

## NATO ENLARGEMENT: RUSSIA'S ATTITUDES

VLADIMIR BARANOVSKY \*

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In comparison to the previous phase of NATO enlargement, there may be a difference in Russia's attitude towards a subsequent phase. In particular, there will most likely be strong sensitivity on the issue of expansion onto post-Soviet territories. An emotional reaction might further be reinforced by strategic and security considerations, more concrete and specific than in the case of Central and Eastern Europe. However, this paper does not consider these differences as crucial; instead, it is based on the supposition that Russia's attitude towards NATO enlargement, be it the previous or a subsequent one, forms only part of Russia's attitude towards, and Russia's perception of NATO as such.

Two factors seem essential in this respect. First, the alliance is still very often perceived as a challenge to Russia's security interests, even if only a potential one. Second, Moscow wants to prevent the central security role in Europe from being played by a structure to which Russia does not and will not have direct access.

In the aftermath of the cold war, there seemed to be two main scenarios concerning the future of NATO, both of which were basically acceptable to Russia. The first scenario proceeded from the inevitable disappearance of the Alliance, which having lost its *raison d'être*, represented a kind of memorial inherited from the previous epoch that could only continue for some time due to political and bureaucratic inertia. The second scenario, on the other hand, described NATO as the core of the future pan-European security system, with the Alliance to be radically transformed to include Russia as *sine qua non*.

In actuality, neither of the two scenarios was implemented. The developments in and around NATO followed a 'third way' and contained several components that were (and still are) regarded by Russia with considerable consternation. First, this on-going scenario envisages the consolidation and the growing role of NATO rather than its gradual erosion. Second, new military and political tasks are being ascribed to the Alliance *in addition to* the 'old' ones rather than *instead of* them. Third, the Alliance, far from getting a lower profile, is carrying out a kind of a triple expansion: it is extending its functions, its membership and its zone of responsibility. Fourth, instead of making the international law and the UN-based system the

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core elements of the post-bipolar world, NATO is perceived as disregarding them both and pretending to have an exclusive *droit de regard* with respect to what is going on in the world.

None of these characteristics encourage enthusiasm in Russia about the new dynamism of NATO. Instead, when considered together, they create a critical mass of negative attitudes and a pervasive feeling of depression. Such political and even psychological frustrations represent the source of Russia's vigorous (although not always coherent) opposition to this trend. Noteworthy, however, is that this opposition has endured throughout almost the entire decade of the 1990s and has combined the logic of rational arguments with an acute emotional reaction.

The first wave of Russia's negativism towards NATO was provoked by the discussions on NATO's eventual expansion into Central and Eastern Europe. Russia's official negativism was accompanied by a massive campaign against the enlargement of NATO, the scale of which was unprecedented for the whole of Russia's post-Soviet history. It is alleged that in this campaign, Russia saw the emergence of its first foreign policy consensus bringing together representatives of all major political forces – from communists to democrats and from liberally oriented enthusiasts of market reform to proponents of 'Russia's specific (i.e., 'not-like the-others') identity'. In terms of Russia's fragmented political life, this phenomenon is rare indeed – although it should be mentioned that the 'consensus' was formed by those who had different (sometimes mutually exclusive) explanations of, and motives for their opposition to NATO enlargement. This, in turn, explained the internal weakness of Russia's opposition and the lack of coherence therein.

In addition, some arguments raised at the time were not particularly convincing nor were they consistent with other elements of internationally oriented thought. This was, for instance, the case of the 'security argument' developed by many military and civilian strategists; indeed, insisting that the enlargement of NATO would inevitably threaten Russia's security seemed both artificial and reminiscent of the logic of cold war period. Criticism of NATO's enlargement plans was also held as inappropriate in light of the generally recognised right of states to join any international structures (or to refrain from doing so).

The practical results of Russia's 'anti-enlargement' campaign also looked rather ambivalent. In Central and Eastern Europe, it was clearly perceived as a manifestation of Russia's 'Big Brother' syndrome and brought about increasing domestic support with respect to the policy line of joining NATO. It is not excluded that the voice of critics would have been better heard



if Russia had followed a kind of ‘do-as-you-wish’ formula. In the West, some opponents to NATO enlargement also found themselves in an ambivalent position: while objecting to this prospect in principle, they remained opposed to providing Russia with a veto right in this regard.

At the same time, Moscow's vehement opposition to the enlargement increased the importance of the ‘Russian question’ in Western debates on NATO's future. They highlighted a number of themes that soon became ritual: that the enlargement of NATO is not aimed at, and should not result in, the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe; that in parallel with the extension its membership, NATO should offer a new partnership to Russia; and that the latter should be actively involved in building a new European security architecture.

Whether Moscow was somehow disoriented by such developments or just decided, very pragmatically, to build upon these new themes remains an open question. In any case, Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement went in parallel with attempts to build a relationship with the Alliance as a major pillar of the evolving European security architecture. This line proceeded from the idea of constructing a ‘special relationship’ with NATO that would be deeper and more substantive than the Alliance's relations with any of its other partners. A dialogue between Russia and NATO has developed since the mid-1990s, although its political weight has turned out to be rather limited. In fact, both sides were cautious with respect to an option of increasing its salience, albeit for different reasons: NATO did not want to make relations with Russia excessively ‘privileged’, whereas Moscow was reluctant to be regarded as accepting NATO enlargement by the very fact of flirting with the Alliance.

When the inevitability of the expansion of NATO membership became clear, the Russian government was actually faced with a very realistic danger of becoming the hostage of its own anti-NATO rhetoric and wide anti-enlargement campaign. Indeed, the enthusiasts of the latter were arguing in favour of reacting in the most energetic way, even at the expense of rational considerations on Russia's own security and political interests. For instance, among the proposed ‘counter-measures’ were the following: building a CIS-based military alliance; re-deploying armed forces in the western areas of Russia; targeting East Central Europe with nuclear weapons; developing strategic partnership with anti-Western regimes and so on.

Moscow opted for another logic: disagreement over NATO enlargement should not be aggravated by other confrontational words and deeds; on the contrary, the enlargement might make a breakthrough towards constructive interaction even more imperative and urgent. This

was confirmed by the decision to sign the NATO-Russia Founding Act in May 1997 – the decision pushed through by then Foreign Minister Primakov against considerable domestic opposition.

Some analysts were (and still are) of highly negative opinion in this respect: Moscow should have refrained from undermining the coherence of its opposition, legitimising the enlargement of NATO and providing this obsolete structure with new rationales for its continuation. Others believe that the result was the creation of the pre-conditions for turning relations between Russia and NATO into one of the central elements of the European system, or even *the* central one.

Testing this optimistic scenario, however, turned out to be impossible. This option was seriously undermined: first, by the failure to provide the established Permanent Russia-NATO Joint Council with a notable role; second (and most dramatically), by NATO's actions in Yugoslavia; and third, by the adoption of a new strategic concept by NATO at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit in Washington.

The military operation of NATO against Yugoslavia in the context of developments in and around Kosovo produced the most traumatic impact on Russia's official and unofficial attitudes towards the Alliance. Indeed, it was the Kosovo phenomenon that has contributed to the consolidation of Russia's anti-NATO stand more than the whole vociferous anti-enlargement campaign. The air strikes against Yugoslavia became the most convincing justification for Russia's negativism with respect to the prospect of establishing a NATO-centred Europe.

Moreover, some elements of Russia's attitude towards NATO in the context of the Kosovo crisis were striking because of the apparent lack of coherence. Russia strongly condemned the NATO military operation – but in June 1999, Moscow endorsed the NATO-promoted logic of resolving the crisis in Kosovo. Moscow contributed to the imposition on Belgrade of the settlement designed by NATO – but came very close to a serious conflict with NATO because of the famous ‘march’ of 200 Russian peacekeepers from Bosnia to Pristina (on 12 June 1999). The policy of NATO with respect to Kosovo caused the ‘freezing’ of Russia's relations with NATO – but for some time afterwards Kosovo was the only field of cooperative interaction of the two sides, with all other activities being effectively interrupted and chances of re-launching them looking close to nil.

In an alternative interpretation, all of this testified to a well balanced combination of energetically articulated hostile rhetoric and careful preservation of channels for constructive interaction. Indeed, the 1999 NATO military campaign in the Balkans and Russia's aggressive reaction to it seemed to set a new long-term 'cold-war' type of agenda for their future relations. There were serious grounds for apprehending the aggravating erosion that would occur if the Kosovo factor became a constant irritant. Contrary to such expectations, the Kosovo syndrome in Russia's negativism towards NATO was surprisingly short – much shorter than the scope of campaign against NATO aggression, and the overall indignation that both Russian politics and the public opinion at large would have allowed to anticipate.

To a considerable extent this is due to domestic political changes in Russia and the possibility of a 'new start' for Russia's new leadership. Indeed, the decision (supposedly, taken against considerable domestic resistance) to 'defreeze' relations with NATO is especially impressive after all that was said about this Alliance in the aftermath of Kosovo.

A number of facts deserve mentioning in this regard. First, the pace of positive changes appears to be extremely dynamic. In fact, by mid-2001, the NATO-Russia dialogue has practically resumed in full, and both sides have re-launched the programme of developing the relationship that was stopped in connection with Kosovo. Second, the tone of Russia's comments on NATO have significantly changed; what was predominantly condemning and denouncing just two years ago is becoming more informative and unbiased nowadays; and even the most convinced anti-NATO activists prefer to remain noiseless rather than making a show. Third, the level of officials and representatives meeting on behalf of the two sides has become considerably higher. Finally, the prospect of further rapprochement is no longer excluded, although schemes arguing in favour of developing a kind of 'Russia-NATO axis' are not officially endorsed. It is noteworthy that some analysts have started to raise the issue of possible Russian membership in NATO – which would have been absolutely inconceivable just a very short time ago.

What is behind such developments? Three main interpretations can be offered in this context.

First of all, it is a manifestation of pragmatism that has become a key word of the new Russian administration under President Putin. Russia would certainly prefer some alternatives to NATO, but if there are no political, financial and military means for promoting them and for downgrading NATO, it is better to accommodate to this situation than to re-enter into an exhausting confrontation with minimal chances for success. It is not a green light indicating

acceptance of anything that NATO would like to do, but a deliberate decision not to get adversely over-excited over what seems inevitable. At the same time, to the extent that promoting bilateral relations with Western countries and cooperative interaction with the West as a whole is considered to be in Russia's interests, this line should not be damaged by maintaining the spirit of confrontation towards the structure of which most of these countries are members.

Second, there is a need to put Russia's attitude towards NATO into an appropriate context, without making it the central issue of the international agenda. Russia faces numerous challenges and has to deal with them seriously – without being diverted all the time by the issue of NATO. On the contrary, one might even think about using it as a leverage for promoting Russia's interests in other areas. Thus, it was noted by some observers that during the formative period of the new US administration, when its future policy towards Russia raised a lot of concerns in Moscow, the latter seemed to engage in considerably more intense dialogue with NATO officials than with those from Washington. Indeed, this could be viewed as a paradoxical pattern, when the erosion and the degradation of relations with the US were counterbalanced by Moscow via rapprochement with the structure that was traditionally considered as created, inspired and controlled by the Americans.

Third, the most serious test for the future relations between Russia and NATO will be connected with the next phase of the Alliance's enlargement. One might expect that Russia's negativism on eventual involvement of the three Baltic states in NATO will be much stronger than in the case of Central and Eastern Europe. In contrast to the latter, Russia's eventual arguments on security implications of such a development could be considerably more coherent and substantive. Also, Moscow might expect that its reservations would more likely to be taken into account—although Russia's right to draw a 'red line' will by no means be recognised by other international actors. In addition, the issue might turn out to be an extremely sensitive one in terms of Russia's domestic politics. In a worst-case scenario, a extremely acute situation could emerge, more dangerous than the one that developed in the previous wave of NATO enlargement.

One way of preventing such crisis-prone development would be to change its context in a substantive, if not a radical way. Indeed, Russia's membership in NATO could be a fundamental solution, but it does not look a realistic prospect – at least for the time being. Another approach along the same line would be to ensure high-level relations between Russia and NATO. If achieved, or at least realistically designed, prior to the Baltic phase of

enlargement, this would make Russian concerns on the latter irrelevant. From this point of view, Russia's current rapprochement with NATO will broaden Moscow's future options if and when the issue of membership of the Baltic states in the Alliance is put on the agenda.

It is also important to refrain from over-dramatising the issue in order to avoid becoming hostage to one's own propaganda. Interestingly enough, on the eve of NATO's expansion into the Baltic area, Russia's mass media pay considerably less attention to this prospect than they did with respect to the case of Central and Eastern Europe just several years ago.

By no means, however, is any of this a guarantee against destabilising developments. Failure to ensure a qualitative breakthrough might easily bring about the erosion of relations and even a new crisis in the case of the forthcoming incorporation of the three Baltic states into NATO. Russia still oscillates between instinctive residual hostility towards NATO and pragmatic considerations pushing towards developing positive interaction with the Alliance. Building a consistently cooperative pattern in Russia-NATO relations remains a formidable and challenging task. It is imperative that enlargement does not put this prospect at risk.

## NATO ENLARGEMENT: PRAGUE AND BEYOND

F. STEPHEN LARRABEE \*

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NATO enlargement has not been a major issue in transatlantic relations in the last few years. However, President Vaclav Havel's address in Bratislava in May and President Bush's speech in Warsaw in June have changed the dynamics of the enlargement debate and given it new momentum. NATO enlargement is now back on the transatlantic agenda and is likely to stay there for the next 18 months. However, while the debate on NATO enlargement is heating up, a number of ambiguities and unresolved dilemmas remain.

First, the strategic rationale for the next round is not clear. The rationale for the first round - to stabilise Central Europe - was widely accepted within the Alliance as a strategic imperative. But there is no shared consensus about the rationale for the second round. Some Alliance members think it should be to stabilise Southeastern Europe while others feel it should be to complete the stabilisation of Central Europe. Others feel the Baltics should be included.

Second, which candidate will be invited to join still is undecided. With the possible exception of Slovenia, none of the candidates are unequivocally ready to assume the responsibilities of membership, especially in the military sphere. And while Slovenia qualifies on economic and political grounds, adding Slovenia alone does not do much to enhance NATO's military capabilities.

Third, in contrast to the first round, there is no strong European leader on whom the U.S. can rely to do the heavy lifting. In the first round, Germany played a critical role in shaping the NATO debate in Europe. Indeed, NATO enlargement was largely a U.S.-German endeavour. Germany, however, has largely achieved its strategic agenda - the integration of Central Europe. It does not have the same strong strategic interest in further enlargement that it had in the first round. While it will probably support the admission of Slovakia and Slovenia - this would extend the Central European periphery of NATO - the U.S. cannot rely on Berlin to play the role of the "European locomotive" that it played in the first round.

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Nor can the U.S. expect leadership from other members of the Alliance. Britain has strong reservations about further enlargement. France is more interested in strengthening the EU's defence role than in NATO enlargement; it may push Romania's candidacy - at least pro forma - but NATO enlargement is not likely to be an issue high on its foreign policy agenda. Italy favours a southern opening, especially the admission of Slovenia, as do Greece and Turkey. But none of these countries have enough political weight to gain support for their position unless other Alliance members agree.

#### **The changing enlargement landscape**

Moreover, the political landscape in Eastern Europe has changed significantly since the Madrid summit. In the period after Madrid, the prevailing view was that the next round would probably include Slovenia and Romania. Slovenia remains a strong candidate. However, Romania's chances have slipped since Madrid, due in large part to the continued infighting within the ruling coalition and a slowdown in economic reform.

Bulgaria's chances have improved somewhat as a result of its strong economic and political performance since the May 1997 elections, which resulted in the emergence of a more democratically oriented reformist government in Sofia. However, Bulgaria still has a long way to go before it is ready for membership, especially on the military side. Moreover, admitting Romania without Bulgaria could leave Bulgaria isolated and could have a very negative impact on the prospects for Bulgaria's democratic evolution.

Slovakia's prospects have also improved. As long as former Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar was in power, Slovakia's chances of NATO (or EU) membership were virtually nil. But the election of a democratic government in Bratislava in September 1998 has cast Slovakia's candidacy in a new light. The current government, headed by Mikulas Dzurinda, has embarked on a significant reform path and made membership in NATO and the EU a top priority. As a result, Slovakia has become a strong candidate for NATO membership in the second round.

Finally, the prospects for at least one Baltic state being invited to join the Alliance at the Prague summit have significantly improved. Indeed, the possibility that all three might be invited to join at the summit cannot be excluded. This idea was literally unthinkable at Madrid, where the Baltic

states had to fight hard just to be considered eligible for membership at all. Now, however, the Baltic issue is clearly on the table.

#### **U.S. Policy and Objectives**

As in the first round, U.S. leadership will be critical. This is especially true because, as noted earlier, there is no European locomotive to pull the European enlargement train the way Germany did in the first round. Thus it will be up to Washington to shape the Alliance debate and provide the political leadership on the enlargement issue.

What position the Bush administration will adopt toward enlargement is not entirely clear. However, in his speech in Warsaw, Bush spelled out an expansive vision of NATO 'from the Baltic to the Black Sea' and made clear that the 'zero option' was not an option. His speech strongly suggested that the U.S. is thinking in broad geo-strategic terms, even if Washington has not yet formally decided on which specific candidates should be admitted. Moreover, by specifically mentioning the Baltic region and opposing 'false-lines,' Bush explicitly rejected the Russian thesis that there was some 'red line' which NATO should not cross.

The speech was clearly designed to lay down a marker - that the administration sees an expanded NATO as the cornerstone of European security. His speech suggested that, from the U.S. point of view, the issue now is not whether NATO will expand again but how far and how soon. The administration clearly sees this process of enlargement beginning at Prague, but not ending there. The timing and modalities of expansion still need to be worked out. But the broad outlines of the administration's vision have now been spelled out. Thus Bush's Warsaw speech is likely to give new momentum to the enlargement debate, forcing members to focus more concretely on the 'who' and 'when.'

#### **The Baltic Issue**

The most contentious issue is likely to be the question of the admission of the Baltic states. Here there is the possibility of a fault line between the U.S. and some of its key European allies, especially Germany. While there is no clear consensus on the admission of the Baltic states in the U.S. - either in the administration or the Congress - support for Baltic membership has grown significantly over the last two years, and especially in the last six months. Two years ago the idea of Baltic membership in the next round was largely taboo. Today it has increasing support.



Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina), the former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, has openly called for admitting the Baltic states and some former officials such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor under President Carter, support admitting at least one Baltic state in the next round.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, many European members of NATO, especially Germany, oppose or have strong reservations about admitting the Baltic states in the next round, fearing that this could lead to a serious deterioration of NATO's relations with Russia. Thus the Baltic issue could become a bone of contention between the U.S. and many members of the Alliance.

In this debate, Germany's role will be important - perhaps critical. Germany currently favours admission of the Baltic states into the EU, but it is far more hesitant about Baltic membership in NATO. German attitudes, however, are evolving. Recently, two members of the SPD – Peter Zumkley and Markus Meckel openly called for admitting the Baltic states in the next round.<sup>3</sup> Friedbert Pflüger<sup>4</sup>, a leading member of the opposition CDU, has also argued for bringing in at least one Baltic state in the next round. While the official German attitude remains hesitant regarding admission of the Baltic states - above all due to fear of the Russian reaction - German reservations could soften if the United States comes out strongly in favour of admitting one or more Baltic states.

#### **The Russian Factor**

Russia will be an important factor in the enlargement debate. But it is not likely to play as prominent a role as it did in the first round of NATO enlargement, especially in the United States. The 'Russia first' lobby in the U.S. is far weaker today than five years ago. Moreover, the Bush administration has signalled its intention to take a tougher, more 'realistic' approach to relations with Russia. Thus Russia's leverage is considerably less than it was in the first round.

Russia continues to oppose enlargement in principle. However, Russia's response is likely to be heavily influenced by which countries are included in the next round. If the next round is limited

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<sup>1</sup> See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion," *The National Interest*, No. 53, Fall 1998, pp. 13-17. See also, Anthony J. Blinken, "NATO Must Grow," *New York Times*, April 2, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> SPD-Politiker für NATO-Beitritt der baltischen Staaten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 17, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Friedbert Pflüger, "Who's Afraid of Round Two?" *The Washington Times*, March 19, 2001.

to Slovenia and Slovakia, enlargement is not likely to have a major impact on NATO-Russian relations. However, the inclusion of one or more Baltic countries would be more problematic - since it would cross an important 'red line' which Moscow has sought to impose regarding the admission of former member states of the Soviet Union and open up the possibility of Ukraine's admission at a later date.

While Russian security concerns should be taken into consideration, Russia should not be given a veto over NATO enlargement. Nor should any country, or group of countries, be excluded because of their geographic location or because they once were part of the Soviet Union. Indeed, a strong case can be made for including at least one Baltic country in the next round of enlargement. Doing so would make clear that there are no 'red lines' and that Russia has no veto over the security orientation of any state, even if that state was once part of the Soviet Union. Conversely, excluding the Baltic states could encourage Russia to believe that the West tacitly accepts that the Baltic states are part of a Russian sphere of influence and encourage Moscow to step up pressure on the Baltic states.

#### **Enlargement options**

Conceptually, there are several possible options for the next round.

- *Limited Enlargement.* In this option NATO would enlarge to only 2 to 3 countries in the next round - Slovenia, Slovakia and perhaps Lithuania. This would show that the Open Door was 'real'. It would be modest enough to be able to achieve an internal NATO consensus. It would also expand NATO in all three geographic directions - Southeastern Europe, Central Europe and Northern Europe - thus ensuring a balanced enlargement. Finally, including Lithuania would underscore that there are no 'red lines' and pave the way for the inclusion of the other two Baltic states at a later date.
- *The 'Big Bang.'* Some observers have suggested that NATO should admit as many as possible of the nine candidates at once. The advantage of this approach is four-fold:
  1. It would avoid an unseemly 'beauty contest' among candidates, with some trying to get ahead and elbowing others aside.
  2. It would also avoid a prolonged, acrimonious battle with Russia over enlargement. Having brought in as many of the nine candidates as possible at once, NATO would then be able

to move on with its relations with Russia rather than having to fight the same battle over again every few years.

3. It would avoid having to engage in the time-consuming effort to obtain Senate and parliamentary ratification every few years.
4. It would help defuse the Baltic issue and make it more difficult for Russia to oppose inclusion of the Baltic states.

However, many members of the Alliance are likely to oppose such a radical expansion because it would weaken NATO's coherence and military effectiveness. In addition, it is questionable whether the Alliance could 'digest' so many new members at once, without risking political and institutional paralysis. Finally, such a large expansion would make any further enlargement unlikely for a long time and could have negative consequences for countries not included in the second round such as Ukraine or Croatia.

- *A Pause.* A third option would be to explicitly or implicitly declare a 'pause' in enlargement. This would give aspirants more time to prepare themselves for membership. It would also give NATO more time to digest the first round and sort out its priorities. Finally, it would give NATO time to try to develop a more stable relationship with Russia. Once this had been achieved, Russia might be more willing to accept another round of enlargement. The disadvantage of this approach is that it would undermine the credibility of the 'open door' and could lead to a retreat from reform in some of the candidate countries. Moreover, it now seems highly unlikely, in light of Bush's visit to Brussels and his speech in Warsaw.
- *EU Enlargement First.* In this option, NATO would wait until after the EU had enlarged before expanding again. Like the pause, this would buy time for NATO to sort out its priorities and reengage Russia. It would also make it easier, at least in theory, for NATO and the EU to harmonise their membership. However, it would allow the EU to determine NATO's priorities and policies, which many U.S. Senators would find unacceptable.

**Staggered Membership: a possible solution?**

The best option might be a combination of the Big Bang and Limited Enlargement. In effect, the Alliance would announce that it intends to enlarge to include all the countries 'from the Baltic to the Black Sea' as soon as they are ready to assume the responsibilities of membership. NATO

would begin this process at Prague by inviting a limited number of countries - perhaps, Slovenia, Slovakia and Lithuania - and announce that further invitations would be issued at the next summit in 2005. In the meantime, the Alliance would begin membership discussions with the other aspirants, setting target goals that needed to be met by the time of the next summit. Such a strategy would have a number of advantages:

- It would make the 'open door' serious and credible.
- It would end much of the uncertainty about NATO's future and who's in and who's out.
- It would not overburden the decision-making process.
- It would give aspirants more time to prepare and an incentive to do so.
- It would make clear that there are no 'red lines.'
- It would leave open the prospect that countries such as Ukraine - and perhaps even Russia - could still join some day.
- It would make it easier to coordinate EU and NATO enlargement. While the two processes have different dynamics and requirements, they are part of the same broader process and should be harmonised as closely as possible.

Admittedly, such a process would change the character of NATO over time, making it more of a 'political' entity. But NATO is moving in that direction anyway. The main impetus for the creation of NATO - the Soviet threat - has disappeared and a similar existential threat is not likely to emerge in the foreseeable future. Article V will remain an important Alliance mission. However, increasingly the key military requirement for Alliance forces will be deployability and the ability to contribute to crisis management, not collective defense.

## ABOUT THE EUROPEAN SECURITY FORUM

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The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) joined forces late in the year 2000, to launch a new forum on European security policy in Brussels. The objective of this *European Security Forum* is to bring together senior officials and experts from EU and Euro-Atlantic Partnership countries, including the United States and Russia, to discuss security issues of strategic importance to Europe. The Forum is jointly directed by CEPS and the IISS and is hosted by CEPS in Brussels.

The Forum brings together a select group of personalities from the Brussels institutions (EU, NATO and diplomatic missions), national governments, parliaments, business, media and independent experts. The informal and confidential character of the Forum enables participants to exchange ideas freely.

The aim of the initiative is to think ahead about the strategic security agenda for Europe, treating both its European and transatlantic implications. The topics to be addressed are selected from an open list that includes crisis management, defence capabilities, security concepts, defence industries and institutional developments (including enlargement) of the EU and NATO.

The Forum has about 60 members, who are invited to all meetings and receive current information on the activities of the Forum. This group meets every other month in a closed session to discuss a pre-arranged topic under Chatham House rules. The Forum meetings are presided over by François Heisbourg, Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. As a general rule, three short issue papers are commissioned from independent experts for each session presenting EU, US and Russian viewpoints on the topic.

**The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)** is an independent policy research institute founded in Brussels in 1983, with the aim of producing sound policy research leading to constructive solutions to the challenges facing Europe.

**The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)**, founded in London in 1958, is the leading international and independent organisation for the study of military strategy, arms control, regional security and conflict resolution.