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## **NATO ENLARGEMENT IN THE BEGINNING: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE**

The process that led to the enlargement of NATO following the end of the Cold War was relatively transparent and well documented, particularly the decision-making process in the United States. It was covered in detail by news reports as well as official documents, including administration speeches, congressionally-mandated reports and hearings. Most of these are readily available on line. Following the initial stage of enlargement in the 1990s, participants in the process produced detailed accounts of the interactions among US officials.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Jeffrey Simon, a government analyst working at the National Defense University, produced a series of studies and reports in the 1990s and into the 2000s assessing the qualifications of prospective candidates and the performance of new members. The presidential papers of George H.W. Bush and William Clinton provide yet more insights into the environment in which enlargement moved ahead. This article is based in part on the author's participation in the process of Congressional oversight and decision-making. In retrospect, there seem to be very few stones from the period that have been left unturned concerning US participation in the NATO enlargement process, and thus the main research questions here instead relate to how the greatly expanded membership might affect the long-term future of the alliance.

### **The setting for NATO enlargement**

For many Americans, inviting new democracies to join the Western alliance seemed a natural step when the revolutions of 1989 led to the end of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This was especially the case for those countries that had been less-than-willing members of the Warsaw Pact. However, at the same time, for others it seemed counterintuitive. After all, the framework for international relations had been dominated and, indeed, stabilized by the two-alliance standoff in Europe. For some observers, that stability seemed more important than the opportunities for independence and democratization to which the revolutions had given birth. As a consequence, the years between 1989

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<sup>1</sup> Two of the most notable among these are James Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), and Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

and the first phase of NATO enlargement saw a political struggle within the United States as well as conflicts in the broader alliance concerning how best to approach the new opportunities and challenges.

In the early 1990s, the new democracies in Eastern and Central Europe began lobbying for NATO membership. Reactions in the alliance were mixed. The United Kingdom worried that adding these newly liberated states might water down the alliance. France was reluctant because it feared enlargement would give NATO too prominent a role in the future composition of Europe. Germany, however, saw enlargement increasingly as a way of moving away from the front lines in Europe, since enlargement would provide a buffer zone between it and Russia. These mixed emotions were matched by divided opinion in the United States. This initially led to an intricate ballet, in which the would-be members stepped anxiously toward NATO's door, while on the other side of the slightly ajar opening, the NATO members tried to postpone difficult decisions by offering cooperation with all aspirants, as well as with the great skeptic, Russia.<sup>2</sup>

As with any transformative historical development, the process of NATO enlargement had an important "pre-history." Particularly after adopting the Harmel Report in 1967 which advocated embarking on *détente*, NATO governments actively sought to promote dialogue and cooperation with the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. The goal was to try to overcome the East–West division in Europe and reduce the risk of war. This commitment to *détente* led the allies in 1972 to join with the Warsaw Pact and other European countries to begin preparations for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and to open East–West talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in 1973. It also provided the underlying political rationale for negotiations with Moscow on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF), which opened in 1985.

The CSCE, originally proposed by the Soviet Union primarily to win recognition of the European status quo, was used by the West to promote human rights and other fundamental principles that should govern the behavior of states, both in relation with their own peoples and with other states. The Helsinki Process, as the CSCE forum was called, was widely credited with legitimizing human rights groups in Eastern Europe and weakening the hold of communist regimes on those countries. The CSCE process also included negotiations on confidence-building and stabilizing measures. In 1986, these talks resulted in an agreement signed in Stockholm, Sweden, on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament.

The MBFR talks, after many years of stalemate, were converted into negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe, which yielded an agreement limiting conventional armaments and forces in Europe just as the Cold War was ending in 1990. And the INF negotiations resulted in an agreement to eliminate Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces from Europe in 1987.

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley R. Sloan, *Permanent Alliance? NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 130–34.

NATO's active pursuit of *détente* through arms control negotiations and security cooperation initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrated that the allies were prepared to take diplomatic steps to reduce the chance of war, even if Warsaw Pact military strength required NATO to maintain a credible defense and deterrence posture. Some political conservatives in the United States doubted the relevance or utility of NATO's *détente* role, seeing its usefulness mainly as a palliative for the European left. At the same time, some on the left in Europe saw this role as a political sham, designed for show but not likely to help overcome Europe's division.

Seen at some distance more than twenty years after the end of the Cold War, it appears that a combination of allied *détente*, deterrence, and defense policies contributed to the events that culminated in the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. During this time, public opinion in Europe and in the United States considered the Harmel formula to provide a sufficiently broad rationale for NATO to sustain its alliance, even if the formula was not highly valued by those on the political extremes on either side of the Atlantic.

In the first years of the post-Cold War period, it was therefore not a desperate or illogical step for the NATO allies to adapt a new version of the Harmel concept to address the radically new circumstances that had emerged in just a matter of months. In so doing, the NATO allies began a process of engineering another fundamental adjustment to the transatlantic bargain: extending the bargain's reach to include potentially all of democratic Europe.

One of the first needs was to adapt the CSCE, shaped as it was by Cold War conditions, to the new circumstances in Europe. The CSCE had played an important role in the Cold War, helping regulate relations among European states and also keeping up a human rights critique of Soviet and East European communist regimes. The Helsinki Final Act, signed by 35 European states including the United States, Canada, the USSR, and most communist regimes of Eastern Europe in 1975, was not legally binding on the participants. But the Final Act provided the "rules of the road" for interstate relations in Europe and constructive guidelines for the development of democracy in all European countries.

At a summit meeting in London on 6 July 1990, NATO leaders agreed that the CSCE should be strengthened as one of the critical supports for European peace and stability. NATO reasserted this opinion at its summit in Rome on 7 and 8 November 1991. As an important token of NATO's intentions, a North Atlantic Council meeting on 4 June 1992 in Oslo, Norway, agreed that, on a case-by-case basis, NATO would support peacekeeping operations initiated by the CSCE. Subsequently, NATO called for strengthening the CSCE's ability to prevent conflicts, manage crises, and settle disputes peacefully.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, NATO's 1994 Brussels Summit Declaration, 11 January 1994, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-73364D74-3144351F/natolive/official\\_texts\\_24470.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-73364D74-3144351F/natolive/official_texts_24470.htm?mode=pressrelease) (accessed 30 April 2013).

The key to the CSCE's ability to take on an expanded operational mandate was resources. As a "process," the CSCE had only an ad hoc structure that was not capable of supporting a more ambitious role. On 5 and 6 December 1994, a CSCE summit meeting in Budapest, Hungary, agreed to turn this process into an organization, with the result that the name was changed to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The decision was made to provide staff and financial resources so that the OSCE could send missions into European nations to mediate disputes, monitor elections, and conduct other activities designed to prevent conflict.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of the 1990s, NATO and the OSCE were working hand in hand to deal with potential threats to peace. In Bosnia, the OSCE played a critical role in helping to establish a process of free elections and respect for human rights. NATO provided the military backing that was required to give such efforts a chance to succeed. OSCE monitors and mediators played important roles in helping resolve conflicts and build democracy from Abkhazia and Tajikistan to South Ossetia and Ukraine. The relationship between NATO and the OSCE became one of the key ingredients in an evolving cooperative European security system.

In 1990, negotiations aimed at cutting non-nuclear forces in Europe, which had begun as the MBFR talks in 1973, concluded with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). This landmark agreement produced reductions and controls on non-nuclear military forces, from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Ural Mountains in the Soviet Union. The CFE Treaty of 19 November 1990 is the most comprehensive, legally binding agreement on conventional arms control ever produced. Its goal was to reduce imbalances in the numbers of major conventional weapon systems in Europe in order to eliminate the potential for surprise attacks or large-scale offensive operations.

Perhaps the CFE Treaty's most important accomplishment is its contribution to transparency, as it makes military establishments and forces more visible to other states. The treaty's required declarations of information and inspection procedures help reduce concern about the intentions and capabilities of neighboring states. In this new system, it has become much more difficult to hide military capabilities.

### **Emerging candidates for NATO membership**

As democratic governments stepped out from the shadow of communism in Eastern and Central Europe, many of the new democracies sought membership in NATO as one of their main national goals. The NATO countries approached them carefully, offering the new democracies friendship and cooperation but not, initially, membership.

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<sup>4</sup> CSCE Budapest Summit Document 1994, 5–6 December 1994, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39554?download=true> (accessed 30 April 2013).

In July 1991, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, leaving NATO standing but still in need of greater clarity concerning its future relationship with former members of the Pact. NATO took the first formal step in the Rome Declaration of November 1991, which invited former Warsaw Pact members to join in a more structured relationship of “consultation and cooperation on political and security issues.”<sup>5</sup> They created the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and invited the foreign ministers of the former Pact countries to the first meeting of the new council on 20 December 1991. When the Soviet Union was dissolved in the same month, the NATO countries immediately invited Russia to join the NACC, and Russia became one of its founding members.

The main goal of the NACC was to serve as a forum for dialogue between NATO members and non-member states on a wide range of security topics.<sup>6</sup> Sixteen NATO members, twenty-two former Warsaw Pact members, and former Soviet republics participated in the new body. The NACC represented a major statement of intent by the allies. They were asserting, in effect, that NATO was not going to remain an exclusive club. Although at that point the allies were reluctant to envision offering NATO membership to former Warsaw Pact members, the creation of the NACC opened the door to that prospect later. East European leaders who wanted their countries to join NATO saw the NACC as totally inadequate for their needs, but they accepted the first move and immediately began working for more.<sup>7</sup>

The NACC was essentially the brainchild of US president George H. W. Bush’s administration. President Bush and his foreign policy team had played a major role in the process of negotiating German reunification and ensuring that a united Germany would remain a member of NATO.<sup>8</sup> German reunification in effect

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<sup>5</sup> NATO Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation, 8 November 1991, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c911108a.htm> (accessed 30 April 2013).

<sup>6</sup> David Yost has documented the fact that France was the only NATO ally to have serious reservations about the NACC. According to Yost, “The French had two preoccupations in this regard: resisting the tendency to give more substantial content to NACC activities, which might increasingly compete with those of the CSCE and maintaining coherence with the Alliance participation policy they had pursued since 1966.” It is also evident that France’s socialist president François Mitterrand did not want to strengthen NATO’s position in post-Cold War Europe at a time when other options might better suit French preferences. See David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 95–96.

<sup>7</sup> In the fall of 1990, on the occasion of one my lectures at the NATO College in Rome, I served on a panel with a West European security expert and a Polish professor to discuss the future of NATO. The Polish panelist urged that the NATO countries take Polish pleas seriously, while the West European judged that the question of membership in NATO was many years away from serious consideration. Sympathetic to the Polish case, the best I could do was to suggest that Poland be patient and that the logic of their case would bring them through.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the chapter by Philip Zelikow, “US Strategic Planning in 1989–90,” in this volume, 283–306.

represented the first expansion of NATO in the post-Cold War era, as well as the first since Spain had been admitted in 1982. In addition, President Bush made a major contribution to the process of winding down the Cold War by declaring substantial unilateral US reductions in its short-range nuclear forces. At the same time, Bush developed and maintained a sympathetic working relationship with Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian president Boris Yeltsin, helping support the transition to a post-communist political system in the USSR and Russia after the Soviet Union was dissolved.

In 1990, neither the Bush administration nor any of the European allies were prepared to signal public acceptance of the possibility that countries that had just left the Warsaw Pact might soon become members of NATO. After all, in 1990 the question was whether NATO was still necessary, not whether its membership should be expanded. Moreover, most European governments, as well as President Bush, were focused primarily on how to ensure that the transition in the Soviet Union, and then in Russia, would confirm the end of the Cold War and not lead to a new one.

Toward the end of the Bush presidency, senior administration officials nevertheless began acknowledging that the desires of East European governments to join NATO were indeed legitimate. Late in 1992, after Bill Clinton had beaten George Bush in the presidential elections, both Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger suggested that the process of opening up NATO that had begun with the NACC could lead toward NATO membership for some NACC partners.<sup>9</sup>

The Clinton administration was to bring new and dramatic developments to the process of NATO outreach. While the Bush administration had put the process on track, it had not had time to move beyond the relatively limited and “easy” NACC initiative.

### **From partnership toward membership**

When President Bill Clinton came to office in January 1993, the administration did not have a clear line on the issue of NATO enlargement. Its top priority was the economy, following the political rhetoric (“It’s the economy, stupid!”) that had helped pave Clinton’s way to the presidency. In the administration’s first year, Europe was seen mainly as a problem: the source of economic competition for the United States and the locale for a bloody conflict in Bosnia that would not go away. However, one of the important rituals for any new US president is the first NATO summit. Officials in charge of preparations for President Clinton’s

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<sup>9</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, 18. Goldgeier’s account of the enlargement decision-making process in the Clinton administration is an insightful look at the US decisions that led to the entry of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland into the alliance.

inaugural NATO summit, scheduled for 10–11 January 1994, were not of one mind on NATO's future in general, nor on enlargement in particular.

One high-level National Security Council staffer, Jenonne Walker, had written in 1990 that the United States should pull all its troops out of Europe as an incentive for the Soviet Union to withdraw from Eastern Europe.<sup>10</sup> This official was skeptical that the Clinton administration should promote NATO enlargement, and she had the task of chairing the initial inter-departmental review of the issue. Strobe Talbott, a close personal friend of the president and leading Russian expert at the Department of State, was concerned that moving too quickly on enlargement would sour prospects for reform in Russia.

At the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin and his top officials, including Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Kruzel, were skeptical that the United States and NATO should take on the potential burdens of preparing countries that were far from meeting NATO military standards for NATO membership. However, as James M. Goldgeier has documented, two key officials leaned in favor of enlargement: National Security Adviser Tony Lake and President Clinton himself.<sup>11</sup>

Bill Clinton had not spent much time or energy on foreign policy issues in his campaign, but one of his campaign themes had emphasized that US foreign policy should be focused on “enlarging” the democratic and free-market area in the post-Cold War world. Both he and Lake apparently came to believe that NATO enlargement would directly serve this end. This approach made Clinton ripe for the message from the new democracies in central Europe. It was a message that he heard loud and clear when he met with several Central European leaders, including Poland's Lech Wałęsa and the Czech Republic's Vaclav Havel, at the opening of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., on 21 April 1993. Clinton subsequently reflected on the meeting, saying, “When they came here a few weeks ago for the Holocaust dedication, every one of those presidents said that their number one priority was to get into NATO. They know it will provide a security umbrella for the people who are members.”<sup>12</sup>

From the Holocaust Memorial meetings on, Clinton had an emotional as well as philosophical predisposition toward enlarging NATO.<sup>13</sup> Even if other administration officials favoring enlargement had geostrategic rationales for the move, such as hedging against future Russian power and ensuring continued US prom-

<sup>10</sup> Jenonne Walker, “U.S., Soviet Troops: Pull Them All Out,” *New York Times*, 18 March 1990, E19.

<sup>11</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, 23–24. Goldgeier reports that at the first meeting of the inter-agency working group formed to prepare for Clinton's first NATO summit in January 1994, “Walker announced that there were two people in the White House who thought NATO expansion was a good idea—Bill Clinton and Tony Lake.”

<sup>12</sup> William J. Clinton, “Press Conference,” 17 June 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=46708> (accessed 24 April 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, 20.

inence in European security affairs, it was the value-based rationale that would tip the balance in convincing the public and members of the US Congress that NATO enlargement was in US interests.

Even while official policy largely favored deferring a decision on enlargement at the January 1994 summit, some administration officials and others outside the administration were putting together a case for moving ahead. In an assessment for Congress at the end of 1992, I noted the logic of the case for enlargement, writing,

How can the existing members of Western institutions, who have throughout the Cold War touted the Western system, now deny participation in the system to countries that choose democracy, to convert to free market economic systems, respect human rights, and pursue peaceful relations with their neighbors? This suggests the need for creative and flexible attitudes toward countries making credible efforts to meet the criteria for membership.<sup>14</sup>

And in a statement to a special committee of the North Atlantic Assembly in January 1993, I further added that “Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic deserve serious consideration for NATO membership in the near future.”<sup>15</sup>

In Europe, German Minister of Defense Volker R  he became the official most outspoken as a proponent of enlargement.<sup>16</sup> Early in 1993, he organized a small conference of US and European experts to provide ammunition in support of his position on Europe’s future. (At the time, R  he was considered not only a leading official expert on defense, but also a potential candidate for the chancellorship.)

<sup>14</sup> Late in 1992, within constraints imposed by the Congressional Research Service mandate to produce “objective and non-partisan” analyses, I anticipated the issue facing the new administration: “The goals of supporting democracy, the development of free market economies, and the observance of human rights probably will be served best by an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach to participation in components of a new European security system. In spite of the complications involved, inclusion may have to be the rule; exclusion the exception.” Stanley R. Sloan, “The Future of US-European Security Cooperation” (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress 92-901, Washington, D.C., 4 December 1992), 2–3.

<sup>15</sup> In a statement to the North Atlantic Assembly Presidential Task Force on America and Europe, on 21 January 1993, I carried the point to its logical conclusion, arguing at that early date for an approach that eventually became US policy: “Full membership in specific institutions, such as NATO, should be based on the desire and demonstrated ability of countries to adopt the norms and obligations of membership. Not all former members of the Warsaw Pact may be able to meet such standards in the near future. But can the allies in good conscience deny participation in their security system to countries that have overthrown communist dictatorships and committed themselves to a democratic future? This suggests, in practical terms, that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic deserve serious consideration for NATO membership in the near future. Clearly, taking such a step would require that the NATO countries reassure Russia and other non-NATO European states that growing membership in the alliance will help create conditions of stability and peace that will support their own attempts to become constructive participants in the international community.” Stanley R. Sloan, “Trends and Transitions in U.S.-European Security Cooperation” (Statement before the North Atlantic Assembly Presidential Task Force on America and Europe, Washington, D.C., 21 January 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Gebhard Schweigler, “A Wider Atlantic?,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 126 (2001): 88.

The conference (in which this author participated) was held outside Bonn, Germany. It provided some of the foundations for Rühle's enlargement position.<sup>17</sup>

To augment his resources, Rühle contracted the services of a team from the well-respected US think tank Rand. The Rand analysts—Ronald Asmus, Richard Kugler, and F. Stephen Larrabee—had been developing an advocacy of enlargement based on work they were doing under a contract with the US Army and Air Force. In June 1993, Rühle and the Rand analysts were joined by Republican Senator Richard Lugar (Indiana), who became the most forceful of US official proponents of enlargement, arguing for early consideration of the membership desires of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

The Rand team published a major statement of the case for enlargement in the fall of 1993, providing a key reference point for the coming enlargement debate.<sup>18</sup> Senator Lugar remained a strong supporter of NATO and of enlargement, even though his cool relationship with Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms prevented Lugar from playing a formal role in the process.

These proponents of enlargement were in a minority in Europe as well as in the United States, but they were not alone. While most of the US foreign policy bureaucracy was working on finessing the enlargement issue at the January 1994 summit, others, including Lynn Davis, undersecretary for arms control and international security affairs, and two key staffers on the Department of State policy planning staff—Stephen Flanagan and Hans Binnendijk—were developing the case for moving enlargement ahead. Both Flanagan and Binnendijk had leaned forward on enlargement in the early 1990s, and Davis had close ties to the work of the Rand team.

However, the ship of state changes directions slowly. While US policy generally supported developing ties to the new democracies, the more difficult and demanding enlargement issue continued to be deferred.

As the administration prepared for President Clinton's first NATO summit meeting, a cautious approach dominated. Secretary of State Warren Christopher observed that NATO enlargement, while possible at a later date, was currently "not on the agenda." Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, with his focus on facilitating Russia's transition to democracy and free markets, reinforced the secretary's cautious inclinations. Meanwhile, US civilian and military officials were searching for a concept to serve as the centerpiece for NATO outreach activities. The concept that developed in collaboration between General John Shalikashvili (the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe), his staff, and senior Pentagon officials (particularly Deputy Secretary of Defense Joseph Kruzal),<sup>19</sup> was

<sup>17</sup> The invitation to me and others suggested that the session was designed as an off-the-record opportunity to think and talk prospectively about transatlantic security issues.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, and F. Stephen Larrabee, "Building a New NATO," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 4 (1993): 28–40.

<sup>19</sup> Kruzal, a central and creative participant in NATO policy formulation in the early Clinton years, Col. Nelson Drew, the main architect of the Combined Joint Task Force concept, and respected career diplomat Robert Frasure, who played a key role in the process leading to the peace accord

premised on the need for aspiring members to meet certain political and military criteria before being considered for membership. The second assumption was that NATO should help such countries become producers, not just consumers, of security. The end result of this thinking was the proposal for the Partnership for Peace (PfP).

### **Cooperation prepares ground for enlargement**

The PfP concept was a policymaker's dream. It signaled to those who aspired to NATO membership that they had been heard. It made no commitment, however, concerning the future. Perhaps its most crucial benefit was that it bought time. It avoided destabilizing relations with Russia at a perilous moment in that country's post-Soviet development. It (temporarily) bridged differences between those in the US administration who favored enlargement and those who were skeptical. The PfP initiative also served some practical needs. Countries that wanted to join NATO could not expect to do so until they had begun to scrap old Warsaw Pact military systems and habits, while adapting to those of NATO. Partnership would provide a channel for US and other NATO assistance to aspiring members. The PfP would also serve as a vehicle for aspirants to make contributions to NATO's new role as a regional peacekeeping instrument, potentially spreading the burden among NATO and non-NATO countries.

On the negative side, the PfP was clearly not the end of the story. The Central European democracies recognized that, although active engagement in the PfP was essential to their longer-term goal of NATO membership, it could also serve as a long-term excuse for NATO to postpone serious consideration of their membership objective (hence the occasionally heard derogatory references to the PfP as the "Policy for Postponement"). In addition, experience would come to show that under PfP scrutiny of a nation's defense reforms and modernization, shortcomings could not be as easily hidden from their publics, nor from NATO members.

In any case, at the NATO summit meeting in Brussels from 10 to 11 January 1994, allied leaders endorsed the PfP program, giving countries that wished to develop a detailed cooperative relationship with NATO the opportunity to do so.<sup>20</sup> The program would provide the possibility for non-member military leaders and forces to interact with and learn from NATO militaries. This created a formal framework for the development of NATO military outreach activities and, concurrently, began to shape a new mission for NATO military forces.

The PfP was destined to become a successful program in its own right, helping reform regimes in Central and Eastern Europe to accelerate the process of

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in Bosnia, all lost their lives when the vehicle in which they were riding plunged off a dirt road outside Sarajevo.

<sup>20</sup> NATO 1994 Brussels Summit Declaration, 11 January 1994.

democratization, as well as to become NATO compatible. Because these countries were at a variety of stages of political, economic, and military evolution, US and allied officials knew that a program of association with NATO would have to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate such diversity. The NACC already had provided a forum in which such countries could discuss military security issues with NATO allies. The PFP added a way for individual countries to tailor their relationship with NATO to meet their national needs and circumstances.

The PFP sought initially to promote greater transparency in national defense planning and budgeting as a way of building confidence in the peaceful intentions of all participants. It also aimed to encourage effective democratic control of defense forces: to help develop each partner as a potential contributor to NATO-led peacekeeping, search-and-rescue, or humanitarian missions, and to enhance the ability of partners' military forces to operate together with NATO units. Each partner was invited to identify the extent and intensity of cooperation it wished to develop, within the broader agenda of the program.

In mid-1997, the allies decided to add some new and important elements to the PFP agenda to "enhance" the program. When the Clinton administration proposed the PFP, it had been unable to decide what to do with the NACC, even though logically it could have served as a communal consultative forum to complement the more individualized partnership program. NATO officials observed that the Clinton administration, perhaps due to a "not invented here" attitude, wanted to ensure that the focus was on the PFP, not on the NACC, which Clinton officials saw as a Bush administration initiative.<sup>21</sup> The PFP and the NACC existed in parallel but mostly separate worlds until the Clinton administration proposed replacing the NACC with the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). The EAPC was formally established by the foreign ministers of NATO and partner nations at a meeting in Sintra, Portugal, held in May 1997.

Also at Sintra, the allies gave their partners a much stronger role in developing and deciding on PFP programs. They created the concept of partnership "cells," or units made up of partner military and civilian officials working hand-in-hand with NATO international and member-state officials. A special Partnership Coordination Cell was established in Mons, Belgium, where NATO's top European command is located, to coordinate activities directly with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and his staff. Through the new Planning and Review Process, partner countries that were making contributions to NATO operations, such as those in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, could participate more actively in planning and overseeing the carrying out of such operations. As a result of these changes, the PFP became an important part of the evolving cooperative European security system, even if it was seen as a transitional device by many of its participants.

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<sup>21</sup> Off-the-record interviews with the author.

Both allies and partners alike came to regard the EAPC as an important token of NATO's commitment to openness and cooperation, as well as to extending the benefits of peace and stability to all European nations. However, given the large EAPC membership, formal meetings consisted largely of set-piece statements by participating governments. This provided an opportunity for participants to put their national positions on the record, but hardly a chance for discussion and dialogue. As with many other international organizations, opportunities for discussion and dialogue became part of "corridor" conversations and informal meetings on the margins of the scheduled EAPC sessions.

In recognition of their special significance and unique circumstances, two countries—Russia and Ukraine—were given additional opportunities for partnership and dialogue with NATO. As noted above, when the Soviet Union was dissolved in December 1991, the NATO countries set the goal of developing a partnership with Russia, the primary successor state to the former Soviet Union. Russia became a founding member of the NACC, and the partnership became more formal when Russia and NATO agreed in June 1994 to develop a "broad, enhanced dialogue and cooperation."<sup>22</sup>

Despite the generally positive development of Russia-NATO cooperation in the 1990s, the issue of NATO enlargement seriously troubled the relationship. In response to the strong desires of new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe to join NATO, the allies agreed in December 1994 to study the "why and how" of NATO enlargement. Most Russians viewed this and subsequent steps toward enlargement as a threat to Russian prestige, or at least as NATO rubbing salt, so to speak, in Russia's open wounds.

Russia's negative attitude toward NATO enlargement reflected feelings about the alliance that had been reinforced by four decades of Soviet propaganda. Even many sophisticated Russians found it difficult to understand the fundamental differences between NATO, a voluntary alliance among independent countries, and the Warsaw Pact, where membership was imposed by the Soviet Union. Expansion of NATO's role and membership meant that US power and influence would stretch ever closer to Russia's borders, displacing what had been Soviet/Russian zones of influence in Central and Eastern Europe. Some Russian officials believed that when Moscow agreed to facilitate German reunification, the Soviet Union had been promised that NATO would not expand up to its borders—a claim rejected by Bush administration officials who represented the United States in the negotiations.<sup>23</sup> The Russian perception may help explain Moscow's strong reaction to NATO's enlargement plans. The bottom line, of course, was that even if

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<sup>22</sup> NATO produced the Partnership for Peace Framework Document (available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_24469.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24469.htm?mode=pressrelease)) in January 1994. Russia signed the document on 22 June 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Yost, *NATO Transformed*, 133–34. Cf. the chapter by Wolfgang Mueller, "The USSR and the Reunification of Germany," in this volume, 321–53.

the negotiations had led the Russians to such a conclusion, no such commitment had ever been formally made.

In the mid-1990s, the NATO allies decided that it was important to respond to the enthusiastic desire of the new democracies to join NATO while at the same time trying to overcome Russian opposition with a cooperative embrace. NATO's attempt to reassure the Russians took several forms. The NATO allies pledged that they had "no intention, no plan, and no reason" to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members. They also said that they planned no permanent, substantial deployments of NATO soldiers in any new member states. Perhaps most importantly, the allies authorized NATO Secretary General Javier Solana to act on behalf of the member states to negotiate a more permanent cooperative relationship with Russia. These negotiations, guided by Strobe Talbott and other US officials, resulted in the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. This document was signed in Paris in May 1997, just before NATO announced its decision to invite three former Warsaw Pact nations to join NATO.

The Founding Act set a large agenda of topics on which NATO and Russia would attempt to collaborate.<sup>24</sup> It created a Permanent Joint Council (NATO nations plus Russia) as a framework for continuing consultations. Creating this channel for communications was an important step, but there were limits on its effectiveness. From the beginning, there was a tension between the Russian desire to use the forum to "participate" in NATO decision making, while the NATO allies sought to ensure that the Permanent Joint Council remained a place for consultations rather than co-decision making. This would change in 2001, when, following the terrorist attacks on the United States and evident Russian support for the war on terrorism, NATO and Russia moved toward a new relationship that was to give Russia a "vote" on those issues that NATO decided to handle jointly with Moscow.

NATO's relationship with Ukraine began and has continued in an entirely different manner than that with Russia. As the next most significant independent country that had formerly been a Soviet republic, Ukraine gave up the nuclear weapons deployed on its territory by the Soviet Union in return for Western financial assistance and the tacit promise of acceptance into the Western community of nations. By the mid-1990s, many in the Ukraine elite quietly aspired to eventual membership in both NATO and the European Union (EU). However, political divisions in the country called for a cautious approach. Ukraine did not ask to be considered for NATO membership, but strongly supported the process of NATO enlargement. The NATO allies responded to Ukraine's aspirations at their summit meeting in Madrid on 8 July 1997, agreeing with Ukraine on a

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<sup>24</sup> See the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, 27 May 1997, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm) (accessed 30 April 2013).

Ukraine-NATO Charter on Distinctive Partnership. This established an intensified consultative and cooperative relationship between NATO and Ukraine.<sup>25</sup>

In subsequent years, Russia has worked hard to ensure its future political and economic influence in Ukraine, leaving Ukraine's future orientation and role in Europe open to question.

### The enlargement process

NATO has expended considerable time and energy developing or supporting a variety of cooperative security arrangements in its relations with non-members. It is, however, the membership track of NATO's outreach program that has generated the greatest controversy. Although the January 1994 Brussels summit deferred decisions on enlargement and put the PfP forward as an outreach vehicle, the allies did agree to keep the membership door open.

The drafters in 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty anticipated that other European states might subsequently wish to join the alliance. The Treaty's Article 10 says that the allies may, "by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty."<sup>26</sup> The original twelve members were, over the years, joined by Greece and Turkey, Germany, and then Spain.

At the NATO summit meeting held in Brussels on 10–11 January 1994, allied leaders said that the commitment in Article 10 would be honored, and that NATO's door would be opened to qualified candidates. The allies began a study in December 1994 of the "why and how" of NATO enlargement. More importantly, President Clinton left the Brussels summit apparently ready to move on to the next step, even as those who favored a go-slow approach were reassured that the PfP would buy time and defer tough decisions on enlargement.

On a visit to Warsaw in July 1994, in an interview with Polish television, Clinton pushed the issue further down the road, saying,

I want to make it clear that, in my view, NATO will be expanded, that it should be expanded, and that it should be expanded as a way of strengthening security and not conditioned on events in any other country or some new threat arising to NATO. [...] I think that a timetable should be developed, but I can't do that alone.<sup>27</sup>

Clinton's comments affirmed that NATO should be enlarged because it was the right thing to do. The Warsaw remarks were taken by pro-enlargement officials in Washington as a green light to move ahead. According to Goldgeier, a

<sup>25</sup> For an excellent collection of analyses of Ukraine's role in European security, see David E. Albright and Semyen J. Appatov, *Ukraine and European Security* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> See [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm) (accessed 24 April 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, 68.

number of factors combined to get enlargement on track inside the US administration. These included the appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian affairs of Richard Holbrooke, who had become an enlargement believer during his time as US ambassador to Germany, the shift of Strobe Talbott from enlargement skeptic to enlargement supporter, and the appointment of several enlargement enthusiasts to key positions on the National Security Council staff. Alexander (Sandy) Vershbow, for example, was to direct European affairs, and Daniel Fried began to cover Central and Eastern European policy. While the Pentagon remained largely skeptical, administration policy began moving slowly but surely toward an active enlargement approach.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the oppositional Republicans took control of the US House of Representatives in the fall 1994 mid-term elections. The new leaders of the House brought with them a “Contract with America,” which listed their policy priorities. Perhaps the only priority on which Clinton and the Republicans could agree was the Contract’s advocacy of NATO enlargement. The Contract’s enlargement position suggested that despite disparate motives, NATO enlargement might enjoy a fairly wide bipartisan base of support in Congress.

In Brussels, the necessary NATO work on enlargement moved ahead. In September 1995, the allies released the “Study on NATO Enlargement,” which explained why enlargement was warranted.<sup>29</sup> It also drew up a road map that was to be followed by countries seeking membership on their way to the open door. The report said that enlargement would support NATO’s broader goal of enhancing security and extending stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area, and would support the process of democratization and the establishment of market economic systems in candidate countries. The report also proposed that enlargement would threaten no one, because NATO would remain a defensive alliance whose fundamental purpose was to preserve peace and provide security to its members.

With regard to the “how” of enlargement, the allies established a framework of principles to follow, which included the requirement that new members assume all the rights and responsibilities of current members and accept the policies and procedures in effect at the time of their entry. No country was to enter with the goal of closing the door behind it, that is, using its vote as a member to block other candidates. Countries were to resolve ethnic disputes or external territorial disputes before joining NATO, and candidates were to be able to contribute to the missions of the alliance. Additionally, no country outside the alliance (e.g., Russia) would have the right to interfere with the process. In this area, the report drew on a set of principles that had been articulated earlier in 1995 by Secretary of Defense William Perry (which had become known as the “Perry Principles”),

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–70.

<sup>29</sup> NATO, “Study on NATO Enlargement” (Brussels: NATO, 1995).

and on further enlargement analyses by the Rand team of Asmus, Kugler, and Larrabee under their contract with the German Ministry of Defense.<sup>30</sup>

The NATO allies made clear that one of the key factors influencing readiness for membership would be an applicant country's ability to work within NATO's Integrated Command Structure. NATO military leaders were expected to help applicant countries prepare themselves to become effective military contributors to the alliance, adding another important task to NATO's military mission profile. During 1996–97, NATO officials conducted intensified dialogues with twelve countries that had expressed an active interest in NATO membership. The candidacies of all countries were thoroughly examined from a wide range of perspectives. It was clear, however, that the United States would play the decisive role in the question of whom to invite for the first round of enlargement.

Bringing new members into the alliance constitutes an "amendment" to the North Atlantic Treaty and, as such, must be ratified by all NATO members. All in all, NATO enlargement had not been a major issue in Congress, but to the extent that there was interest, there was sustained bipartisan support for NATO and for bringing in new members.<sup>31</sup> This support included the passage of the NATO Participation Act of 1994 (Title II of P.L. 103-447),<sup>32</sup> which backed NATO enlargement as a way to encourage the development of democratic institutions and free-market structures in the new democracies. The low-intensity but fairly consistent support was a good foundation for collaboration between the White House and the Senate, a collaboration that was to be critical for eventually ratifying any enlargement decision.

In 1996, the private, nonprofit Committee to Expand NATO was established to support the enlargement cause. This group, which involved an impressive collection of corporate leaders, former civilian officials, and retired senior military officers, largely from the ranks of the Republican Party, actively courted congressional support for enlargement and played a major role in the lobbying effort on behalf of the initiative over the next two years. As well, 1996 was a presidential election year in the United States, but once again, foreign policy was not a big issue in the campaign.

On the issue of NATO enlargement, President Clinton and his Republican opponent, Senator Robert Dole, mainly competed to be seen as the strongest supporter of enlargement. Dole criticized the president for being too attentive to

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<sup>30</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, 94–95.

<sup>31</sup> At the time, I was the leading NATO expert at the Congressional Research Service and a source for Congress of objective and nonpartisan analysis on NATO issues. When the NATO Observer Group was established in the Senate to manage the process of NATO enlargement, I was asked to serve as an adviser to this group, as well as to be the Congressional Research Service liaison on NATO enlargement issues to both the Senate Observer Group and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

<sup>32</sup> See the NATO Participation Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-447), [http://www.fas.org/man/nato/congress/1997/csce\\_nato/part09.htm](http://www.fas.org/man/nato/congress/1997/csce_nato/part09.htm) (accessed 30 April 2013).

Russia's views: Clinton had worked hard to reassure Russian president Boris Yeltsin that legitimate Russian interests would not be threatened, despite keeping the process of enlargement moving ahead. Dole's criticism, however, had almost no political impact, and most observers saw very little difference between the Republican and Democratic positions on the issue. It was yet another sign of the bipartisan nature of support for bringing new members into NATO, although it certainly did not guarantee that the approach taken by the president and the alliance would win the necessary two-thirds majority in the Senate.

The election campaign provided an opportunity for the administration to move ahead decisively. President Yeltsin had survived his reelection campaign in July 1996 and was no longer in imminent danger of being destabilized by the US position on enlargement. In September 1996, Clinton called for a NATO summit in 1997 to name the first post-Cold War candidates for NATO membership. In October 1996, Clinton told an audience in Detroit that "by 1999, NATO's fiftieth anniversary and ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the first group of countries we invite to join should be full-fledged members of NATO."<sup>33</sup>

The prominent use of the enlargement issue during Clinton's campaign visits to the Midwest—home to many Central European immigrant communities—was subsequently cited by opponents of enlargement in the United States and by skeptics in Europe as evidence that the US position was driven primarily by domestic politics. The history of administration policy, as documented by Goldgeier and observed personally by me, suggests a different conclusion. The president's commitment to enlargement grew much more fundamentally out of his acceptance of, and belief in, fairly basic Wilsonian principles of international relations: promoting peace and stability through inclusive and cooperative relations among democratic states. Ethnic communities in the United States provided important support for both the president and the issue. Had enlargement not made sense in terms of basic US values and interests, it would have withered on the vine, despite the enthusiasm of Polish and other Central European lobby groups.

By the end of 1996 and Clinton's successful reelection effort, collaboration between the White House and Congress had become more serious. The White House was fully aware that if the Senate felt it had not participated directly in the enlargement process, the issue could fail to gain the required two-thirds majority. This could occur even if two-thirds of the Senate leaned toward enlargement, as appeared to be the case. The administration was sensitive to the fact that President Woodrow Wilson had failed to win US involvement in the League of Nations because he had not made an effort to get Senate support. The Clinton administration therefore followed President Harry Truman's strategy for Senate consideration of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1948–49, a strategy that

<sup>33</sup> William J. Clinton, "Remarks by the President to the People of Detroit," 22 October 1996, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1996/s961022a.htm> (accessed 23 April 2013).

brought key senators into the process early enough to win their commitment but not too early to complicate the policymaking process prematurely.

As the White House began developing working relationships with critical Capitol Hill staff, a related but more immediate question arose: To decide which countries should be invited when the NATO “enlargement” summit convened in Madrid, Spain, on 8 July 1997. There was virtually unanimous agreement in the administration and among the European allies that the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland would be invited. Only Poland would add significantly to the military strength of the alliance. These three probably could, however, be sold to the Senate as strategically important and politically acceptable.

From Germany’s point of view, these three countries satisfied its desire to move away from the “front lines” in Central Europe. Being surrounded by NATO members would give Germany a political and military buffer between it and Russia. The United Kingdom preferred to keep the package as small as possible, not being a big fan of the process of enlargement in any case, and concerned that too rapid or large an increase in membership would weaken the alliance. However, France, Italy, and some other allies wanted to give enlargement a southern focus as well, and they thus favored including Slovenia and Romania in the first tranche.

Several members of the Senate, led by Senator Joseph Biden (Democrat, Delaware), ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator William V. Roth Jr. (Republican, Delaware), favored the inclusion of Slovenia—a small former Yugoslav republic—to create a land bridge between existing NATO territory (Italy) and Hungary. The Clinton administration decided that, despite the senatorial sentiments for Slovenia, the core package of three candidates would be a sufficient challenge for the process of ratification in the United States, as well as for absorption by the alliance.

Romania, with an important geostrategic position in Southeastern Europe and with substantial military forces, lagged far behind the three core candidates in political and economic development. Slovenia could be kept as a given for the next round. The administration came to an internal consensus on putting just three candidates forward. Even though intensive discussions had been held at NATO and among NATO allies in preparation for the Madrid meeting, the US choice of three and only three was publicly revealed in a Pentagon press briefing by Secretary of Defense William Cohen in mid-June. Cohen’s suggestion that, as far as the US government was concerned, the case was closed by the White House, implied that a NATO decision had been made before NATO consultations had in fact been completed.<sup>34</sup>

The way the United States appeared to close the door to further discussion stunned the allies and was instantly interpreted by the French and others as just

<sup>34</sup> Philip Shenon, “U.S., Defying NATO Allies, Insists NATO Limit Expansion to 3,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1997, A6.

one more sign of hegemonic US behavior. The United States had always been “first among equals” in NATO, where decisions are taken by consensus but where US preferences almost always carried the day. Nonetheless, the allies resented the cavalier US approach to the consultation process. The challenge for the Clinton administration and for administrations before and after was how to be a hegemon without acting like one. The administration had now made the mistake of acting like one.

The Madrid meeting endorsed the US preference, but not without significant grumbling by French president Jacques Chirac and others. The allies found much to complain about, including the fact that the United States wanted seats in the session for US senators who had been brought along with the US summit delegation to help ensure a favorable ratification process. At Madrid, to help smooth the many feathers ruffled by US actions, other candidate states were encouraged to continue to work toward eventual membership by following the guidelines laid out in the “Study on NATO Enlargement,” and to develop bilateral cooperation with NATO through the PfP program.<sup>35</sup>

The allies reaffirmed their commitment to the open-door policy, in which all European countries meeting the conditions of Article 10 and the guidelines of the study could be considered for eventual membership. The next task for NATO was to negotiate the terms of entry with the candidate states. The Clinton administration, however, had its own challenging task: to convince at least two-thirds of the members of the Senate that NATO enlargement was in US interests.

The administration had already begun preparing the ground. A respected former Clinton White House aide and expert on congressional–executive relations, Jeremy Rosner, was brought back to serve as coordinator of the ratification process with both a State Department position and staff, as well as the status of special adviser to the president. The administration had been wise to include senators in the Madrid delegation, but now the serious lobbying work would begin.

In the Senate, the Committee on Foreign Relations, chaired by a politically conservative Jesse Helms, would have primary jurisdiction over the legislation, with the Senate Committee on Armed Services also playing an important advisory role. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (Republican, Missouri) had already created the Senate NATO Observer Group, chaired by Senators Biden and Roth, designed to help manage the process in support of the Senate’s advice and consent role.

In the summer of 1997, even though it appeared that Rosner and his administration team were starting with a good core of support in the Senate, it became clear that they would need a strong lobbying effort to ensure final victory. In the course of a luncheon meeting in August hosted by a Scandinavian embassy offi-

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<sup>35</sup> Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation, 8 July 1997, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm> (accessed 30 April 2013).

cer, Rosner and I had a few moments to discuss his challenge. I said that I presumed that President Clinton would be personally involved in the lobbying effort. Rosner assured me that, in the coming months, the president would invite senators to the White House for dinners and private meetings that were focused on lining up the required votes.

However, despite the fact that Clinton had played an important part in getting NATO enlargement on the US and NATO agenda, the fall of 1997 and spring of 1998 found him increasingly caught up in impeachment proceedings against him in Congress. He never conducted the lobbying dinners and meetings Rosner had reasonably expected. At the numerous official events marking various stages of the ratification process, the president was present and involved, but one had to wonder whether his mind was not on other problems.

Opponents of enlargement in the United States, indeed until the Senate vote on 30 April 1998, complained that the issue had not been given the kind of serious attention that was warranted by such an important national commitment. It is true that the issue was not particularly exciting for the public at large. Public opinion polls showed broad, but somewhat shallow support for enlargement. The positive numbers seemed to reflect the public's positive image of NATO and of the idea that the US approach to international cooperation should be inclusive. However, a large percentage of those queried in polls showed a lack of basic knowledge about what was going on. For example, a large number of respondents in some polls believed that Russia was already a NATO member.<sup>36</sup>

The debate that raged on opinion and editorial pages of major American newspapers was largely conducted among the academic and policy elite and was not of great interest to the American public. Indeed, most foreign policy issues, such as NATO enlargement, are debated and decided largely by the elite public. The public at large is moved to action and involvement only by more headline-making events, particularly those with imminent life-or-death consequences.

In the deliberative body that had to debate and decide the issue, however, there was a thorough and serious process of consideration<sup>37</sup> in keeping with the Senate's role as a "partner" to the transatlantic bargain. Despite the president's "absence"

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the results of polls conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, which found that support for enlargement, ran more than three to one in favor (63 percent for, 18 percent opposed); however, only 10 percent of the public could identify even one of the potential new members. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *America's Place in the World II*, 19 October 1997, <http://people-press.org/report/102/americas-place-in-the-world-ii> (accessed 24 April 2013).

<sup>37</sup> A partial record of Senate activities related to NATO enlargement, along with the Foreign Relations Committee's Resolution of Ratification and the separate views of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence can be found in US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on Accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic" (105th Congress, 2nd session, Exec. Report 105-14, 6 March 1998).

from the process,<sup>38</sup> the work of the NATO Observer Group moved into high gear, in close collaboration with the administration. The process relied heavily on teamwork between Rosner and key Senate staffers, particularly Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer Steve Biegen, Ian Brzezinski, who worked for Senator Roth, and Michael Haltzel, who worked for Senator Biden. Other staffers, including Ken Myers of Senator Lugar's staff and David Stevens, who worked for Senator Jon Kyl (Republican, Arizona), played key roles in the period leading up to the Senate debate.

The Senate NATO Observer Group, almost completely out of public view, organized a steady stream of classified and unclassified briefings and meetings in the course of 1997–98. Some of these sessions were intended largely for administration officials to communicate information to Senate staff. Others provided opportunities for members to meet with senior NATO-nation military officials. One critical session of the NATO Observer Group brought senators together with the foreign ministers of the candidate countries. The meeting appeared to be a turning point for at least one senator who had been skeptical about enlargement. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (Republican, Texas) had profound concerns about the plan and examined the issue carefully, asking her staff, with the help of the Congressional Research Service, to research a number of enlargement issues. At the session with the candidate country foreign ministers, however, it became clear to this observer that Senator Hutchison's feeling of respect and admiration for the accomplishments of the three new democracies would likely bring her into the "yea" column. It did.

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations held a series of public hearings in October and November 1997 in which both supporters and opponents of enlargement were invited to address the committee.<sup>39</sup> Proponents and critics of enlargement in the Senate had their staffs investigate the major issues, whereby a wide range of outside experts were called in to brief senators and staff, and Congressional Research Service analysts were engaged in hundreds of hours of support. One of the most sensitive challenges for Jeremy Rosner and other administration officials was to hold together a coalition of Senate supporters and potential supporters who were motivated by substantially different assumptions and objectives.

Supporters ranged from conservative Republicans to liberal Democrats. Senator Helms and a few other conservative Republican senators saw NATO enlargement first and foremost as an insurance policy against a resurgent Russia once again laying claim to the sovereignty of Central and East European states. Helms was particularly interested in how the administration saw the future of NATO-Russia

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<sup>38</sup> This aspect of the ratification process went completely unnoted in Goldgeier's otherwise excellent account of NATO enlargement decision making.

<sup>39</sup> US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "The Debate on NATO Enlargement" (105th Congress, 1st session, 7, 9, 22, 28, and 30 Oct. and 5 Nov. 1997, S. Hrg. 105-285).

relations. In the process of introducing Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the committee's first enlargement hearing, Helms cautioned, "NATO's relations with Russia must be restrained by the reality that Russia's future commitment to peace and democracy, as of this date, is far from certain. In fact, I confess a fear that the United States' overture toward Russia may have already gone a bit far."<sup>40</sup>

In addition, many senators had not agreed to the "new NATO" (in which members cooperated to deal with new security challenges, including peace operations in the Balkans), and still believed that the "old NATO" (focused primarily on Article 5, the commitment to assist a fellow member that has come under attack) was what was still needed. On the other hand, some senators found the old NATO to be of decreasing relevance and were more interested in the idea of increasing the number of democratic states that could help deal with new security challenges in and beyond Europe. Others (e.g., Senator Barbara Mikulski, Democrat, Maryland) were motivated most strongly by the fact that Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary had thrown off communism and committed themselves to a democratic path. How, such proponents asked, could they be denied membership in the Western system, of which NATO was a core part?

The Senate opponents of enlargement were also very diverse, both politically and philosophically. Senator John Warner (Republican, Virginia) became one of the most severe critics of enlargement. He believed that too many members would make it impossible to manage the alliance, dooming it to future irrelevance since timely consensual decisions with nineteen-plus members would be very difficult to make. Senator Warner's attempt to impose a formal pause on the enlargement process was rejected, but a number of senators who had voted for enlargement voted with Warner in favor of a pause. Some forty-one senators voted for the Warner amendment, enough to block a two-thirds majority of the Senate for the next candidate(s) if they were all to vote against.

The most strongly committed enlargement opponent, Senator John Ashcroft (Republican, Missouri), simply believed that the United States was already overburdened and that NATO enlargement would perpetuate a responsibility that had long ago outlived its utility. Among the opponents, Ashcroft's position came closest to representing a neo-isolationist stance. His perspective related in part to concerns about the potential cost of NATO enlargement. At one point, it seemed that the question of cost would become the most difficult issue in the Senate debate. However, conflicting and confusing estimates of the cost blurred the issue and made it a virtual non-factor in the final debate. Ashcroft's attempt to amend the resolution of ratification to mandate a narrow interpretation of NATO's future mission was defeated through deft parliamentary procedures on the Senate floor. Instead, the Senate passed an amendment offered by Senator Jon Kyl (Republican, Arizona) that affirmed the continuing importance of NATO's collective defense role, allowing that NATO was now useful in non-Article 5 missions as well.

<sup>40</sup> US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "The Debate on NATO Enlargement," 2.

The other main school of thought motivating opponents of enlargement was concern about its impact on relations with Russia. From the other side of the political spectrum, George Kennan, the highly respected Russia expert who played a major role in developing the US containment strategy toward the Soviet Union, opined<sup>41</sup> that NATO enlargement would be a disaster for U.S.-Russian relations. Some members, including Senators Paul Wellstone (Democrat, Minnesota) and Patrick Leahy (Democrat, Vermont), were to cast their votes against enlargement largely on the basis of Kennan's warning.<sup>42</sup> Another opponent, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Democrat, New York), argued that the European Union, not NATO, should take the lead in including the new democracies in Western institutions. After several abortive attempts to organize a debate and final vote in the Senate, Senator Lott devoted the entire day of 30 April to the enlargement issue. The opponents, led by Senators Warner, Robert Smith (Republican, New Hampshire), Moynihan, Ashcroft, and Wellstone, put on a strong show of their concerns. As Senator Helms was not well, Senator Biden managed the bill for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with single-minded energy and enthusiasm that left some of his democratic colleagues standing impatiently, waiting to be given the floor. Several senators made impressive contributions to the advocate's side, including Mikulski, Joseph Lieberman (Democrat, Connecticut), and Gordon Smith (Republican, Oregon). The decisive vote was taken late that evening. At the urging of Senator Robert Byrd (Democrat, West Virginia), in his role as the unofficial guardian of the procedures and practices of the Senate, all senators took their seats and then rose when called to deliver their vote. Byrd suggested that the

Senate would make a much better impression [... if senators would] learn to sit in their seats to answer the rollcall [... rather than] what we have been accustomed to seeing down here in the well, which looks like the floor of a stock market.<sup>43</sup>

The Senate, seated with the decorum requested by Senator Byrd, voted eighty to nineteen to give the Senate's advice and consent to ratification of the membership of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary in NATO. The missing vote was that of Senator Kyl, an enlargement supporter who had left Washington on an official overseas trip a few hours before the vote was taken, reassured that his side would win by a clear margin.

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<sup>41</sup> George F. Kennan, "A Fateful Error," *New York Times*, 5 February 1997, A23.

<sup>42</sup> Following one Senate NATO Observer Group session in the weeks before the Senate vote, Wellstone engaged me in a discussion about the Russia issue. I attempted to provide a balanced perspective, but suggested that Kennan's prediction was probably exaggerated. It was clear from that discussion, however, that Wellstone's vote probably would be with the enlargement opponents.

<sup>43</sup> Even though the Standing Order of the Senate says that "votes shall be cast from assigned desk," roll-call votes are routinely taken with senators walking into the chamber and milling about the clerk's desk until their names are called. Byrd's comments can be found in *Congressional Record* (105th Cong., 2nd sess., 30 April 1998), S3906.

Although enlargement supporters managed to beat back all potential “killer” amendments, the number of votes garnered by Senator Warner’s proposed “pause” in the enlargement process reflected an important sentiment. Few enlargement advocates were anxious to take on a new round in the near future. Even Jeremy Rosner, who had dedicated so much time and energy to NATO enlargement, judged that the system would not be able to support another round until the first candidates had demonstrated their successful entry into the NATO system.<sup>44</sup>

Some enlargement proponents, however, thought it important to keep the process moving ahead. The first package had left aside Slovenia, a small but relatively attractive candidate. Senator William V. Roth Jr., one of the leading forces behind the enlargement process, argued that the process should “be carefully paced, not paused.” In a special report for the North Atlantic Assembly (now the NATO Parliamentary Assembly) in September 1998, for which the present author was rapporteur, Roth proposed that when the allies met in Washington in 1999 to celebrate NATO’s fiftieth anniversary, “Slovenia should be invited to begin negotiations aimed at accession to the North Atlantic Treaty. In addition to reflecting Slovenia’s preparedness for membership, the invitation would demonstrate that the enlargement door remained open without overloading the enlargement process.”<sup>45</sup> Senator Roth’s advocacy was considered by and had some supporters in the Clinton administration. But the administration ultimately decided that it was too early to move ahead with new candidates. That step was left for the next US administration to handle.

The European allies were relieved that the United States did not want to push ahead immediately with another round of enlargement. The strongest European proponent of enlargement, Germany, had accomplished its main objectives with the accession of the first three candidates. As it no longer stood on NATO’s front lines looking east, it no longer displayed such great enthusiasm for the enlargement process. Most of the other allies did not look forward to negotiating the next round, in which the potential candidates would likely include one or more of the three Baltic states: former Soviet republics whose NATO membership was strongly opposed by Moscow.

At the fiftieth-anniversary NATO summit in Washington from 23 to 25 April 1999, all aspiring candidates for NATO membership were given some cause for hope, even though Slovenia was left standing outside the door. The leaders pledged that “NATO will continue to welcome new members in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and contribute to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.”<sup>46</sup> The allies created the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which promised cooperation beyond the possibilities in the PfP and, perhaps more

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<sup>44</sup> Discussion with the author, May 1998.

<sup>45</sup> William V. Roth Jr., *NATO in the 21st Century* (Brussels: North Atlantic Assembly, 1998), 53.

<sup>46</sup> Washington Summit Communique, “An Alliance for the 21st Century,” 24 April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm> (accessed 30 April 2013).

important, feedback from NATO concerning their progress toward membership. Nine aspirants—Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia—initially signed up for the program. These nine were promised that NATO would formally review the enlargement process again no later than 2002.

According to NATO, “The MAP gives substance to NATO’s commitment to keep its door open. However, participation in the MAP does not guarantee future membership, nor does the Plan consist simply of a checklist for aspiring countries to fulfill.”<sup>47</sup> What MAP did do, however, was to provide “concrete feedback and advice from NATO to aspiring countries on their own preparations directed at achieving future membership.” The MAP did not substitute for full participation in NATO’s PfP Planning and Review Process, which, in NATO’s view, was “essential because it allows aspirant countries to develop interoperability with NATO forces and to prepare their force structures and capabilities for possible future membership.”<sup>48</sup>

In 2000, with the United States preparing to elect its next president, the man who would make the next critical decisions on enlargement, the nine candidate states joined together in support of a “big bang” approach to enlargement. Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 18–19 May 2000, the nine foreign ministers pledged that their countries would work for entry into NATO in 2002 as a group, rather than compete against each other for a favored position. Both major presidential candidates in the United States, Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush, sent letters of support to the session.<sup>49</sup>

With his close victory in the November 2000 election, it was Bush who would take on the challenge of leading the alliance toward its enlargement decision. In a speech in Warsaw on 15 June 2001, President George W. Bush outlined his vision of a Europe “whole, free, and at peace,” and said that all new European democracies, “from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between,” should be able to join European institutions, especially NATO.<sup>50</sup> Bush’s declaration opened the way for a large second enlargement round, one that might have been expected to be controversial, but which turned out to be far less contentious than the first one.

Prior to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, political interest in and support for NATO’s second enlargement round could not be compared to that for the first round. President Bush said that his administration was a strong supporter of

<sup>47</sup> See for example, NATO Office of Information and Press, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO 2001), 65. Cf. <http://www.opsroom.org/documents/handbook.pdf> (accessed 30 April 2013).

<sup>48</sup> NATO, “NATO’s Membership Action Plan,” NATO on-line-library fact sheet (Brussels: NATO, 2000), <http://www.fas.org/man/nato/natodocs/99042451.htm> (accessed 30 April 2013).

<sup>49</sup> William Drozdiak, “9 NATO Candidates Pledge to Join in a ‘Big Bang’ Bid,” *International Herald Tribune*, 20–21 May 2000, 1.

<sup>50</sup> President Bush Speech in Warsaw, CNN.com./World, 15 June 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/06/15/bush.warsaw.trans/index.html> (accessed 30 April 2013).

enlargement, but the administration had no eager European partner on this issue. Germany, the key European architect of the first round, had less of a strategic stake in the next stages and, until late in 2001, had been reluctant to upset Moscow. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States, some observers questioned the wisdom of moving ahead with NATO enlargement. However, within a few months of the attacks it appeared that a consensus was growing in favor of a major enlargement initiative, when allied leaders meet in the Czech Republic in November 2002.

In Prague, a “big bang” enlargement process was initiated. During the Bush administration’s two terms, seven additional countries joined NATO. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia became members. In 2009, Albania and Croatia joined the alliance, while Macedonia was left invited but standing outside the door, pending a resolution of its differences with Greece over the country’s legal name.

With these states coming on board, the enlargement process seemed to be nearing its end. Ukraine and Georgia were waiting in the wings, Serbia remained somewhat defiant, and other states remained “partners” of various sorts. The question of NATO membership for Europe’s former neutrals who are already members of the European Union (Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden) remains open, and is probably dependent on the quality of future US leadership and Russian tendencies toward old Soviet behavior.

### **Postlude and consequences**

The NATO enlargement process has been “successful” in helping bring new European democracies into the Euro-Atlantic community. It has become a normal, but not guaranteed, step for the countries that have joined NATO subsequently to become members of the European Union, completing their integration into the community. However, the process has left unanswered a number of questions concerning the future of European security, and concerning NATO in that future.

One question is whether shortcomings in military reform and defense improvements of the new members suggest that leverage on candidate states disappears when they become members.

If countries that do not fully meet the military guidelines for membership laid out in the NATO enlargement study<sup>51</sup> are nonetheless invited to join, does this

<sup>51</sup> In 2001, a Rand Corporation study evaluated the qualifications of potential candidates and produced the following conclusions: “Of the MAP states, Slovenia and Slovakia largely meet the criteria outlined by NATO [in the 1995 “Study on NATO Enlargement”] and their accession poses no major strategic problems for NATO. Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia are advanced in terms of meeting NATO’s preconditions, but the strategic ramifications of their accession [vis-à-vis Russia] loom large. Bulgaria and Romania have the opposite problem of being unable to meet NATO’s preconditions, even though the strategic implications of their accession are not prob-

imply that NATO is becoming “more political,” making military capabilities of potential members less relevant?

Has the increase in members had any discernible effect on NATO’s decision-making ability? Is there a magic number beyond which NATO’s consensus-based deliberative process will become unworkable? Has that number already been surpassed?

To what extent can the tendencies toward authoritarian rule in Russia be blamed on NATO enlargement? Russian officials have used NATO’s expanding membership as justification for its foreign and domestic policies, but to what extent are those policies driven by other factors, primarily related to the perceived need to hold Russia together? What are the likely consequences for relations with Russia of various possible enlargement scenarios?

How will further enlargement interact with other policy initiatives; for example, attempts by the United States and NATO to develop a collaborative approach with Moscow on nuclear missile reductions and ballistic missile defenses?

Will enlargement be linked in any way to the process of further reforms within NATO to make it more relevant in the struggle against international terrorism?

In spite of such questions, the consequences of the decisions taken in the 1990s concerning NATO enlargement, from an American perspective, appear largely positive so far. The dual NATO/EU enlargement process has stimulated reform and democratization in former Soviet bloc states and republics. As former members of the Warsaw Pact have joined NATO, they have become strong supporters of the transatlantic link, and have moved toward and become members of the European Union.

The leadership in Moscow, seeking to solidify control and keep Russia from coming apart at the seams, has complained about NATO enlargement and its consequences loudly and frequently. The bottom line in the analysis of the NATO–Russia relationship is that enlargement has troubled but not destroyed a cooperative relationship between the alliance and Russia: it did not lead to a “new cold war.” Political developments in Russia—unconnected to NATO’s enlargement process—have turned out to be far more important to the relationship than the addition of former Warsaw Pact allies and the Baltic republics to the alliance.

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lematic. Macedonia and Albania are least advanced in meeting NATO’s preconditions and their prospects for membership are distinctly long term. Of the European Union members currently not in NATO, Austria is in a good position to join if it chooses to do so. To a lesser extent, so is Sweden. Finnish membership, however, would entail some difficulties because of the strategic cost it would impose on NATO [also with regard to relations with Russia]. Thomas S. Szayna, “NATO Enlargement 2000–2015: Implications for Defense Planning,” Rand Research Brief 62 (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 2001). The brief summarizes the analysis completed by Szayna in *NATO Enlargement 2000–2015: Determinants and Implications for Defense Planning and Shaping* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 2001). See also Jeffrey Simon, *Roadmap to NATO Accession: Preparing for Membership* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2001).

Russia's future nonetheless remains critically important to the NATO allies. Neither the United States nor any European ally wishes to see Russia re-emerge as a challenge to Europe's peace and stability. NATO policies have therefore for the most part been designed to invite Russia's constructive involvement in European and global security affairs, while at the same time critiquing Moscow's recent tendencies to reverse the process of democratization and liberalization that began under Gorbachev.

Moreover, NATO has not been brought down by the process of enlargement and can still function as a framework for coordinating responses to the security needs of its members. This will remain true as long as the allies—individually and collectively, and most importantly the United States—continue to believe that such cooperation is in their best interests. The biggest challenge to alliance members, old and new, is therefore not Russia, nor even terrorism, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran or the Middle East more generally, but rather that of maintaining sufficient transatlantic cohesion to deal with these and other issues effectively.