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EXERCICE/EXERCISE NEW HORIZONS

NATO ENLARGEMENT – A PANACEA FOR EUROPE?

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ABSTRACT

With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, experts predicted NATO would disappear in the absence of its traditional threat. To the surprise of many, however, NATO transformed and rejuvenated itself in the 1990s. As part of this transformation, NATO embarked on a path of enlargement, beginning with decisions made at the Madrid Summit in July 1997 to invite Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to join, followed by decisions made at the Prague Summit in October 2002, to invite seven new countries to begin accession negotiations. Much has been written debating the effect of NATO expansion on the stability of Europe. The essay assesses the argument for and against NATO enlargement, and proposes several alternatives to NATO expansion as the policy of choice for promoting European peace and security. The essay concludes that any further expansion of the alliance could undermine security and stability in Europe.

Introduction

After World War II, Western European countries and their North American allies became increasingly concerned over the expansionist policies of the USSR. An extraordinary series of political events transpired between 1947 and 1949 that intensified these concerns. These included threats to the sovereignty of Norway, Greece and Turkey, the illegal blockade of Berlin, and a coup in Czechoslovakia.¹ Soon afterwards, various combinations of countries began to enter into exploratory talks on collective security. Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom signed the Brussels Treaty on 17 March 1948 to strengthen their military and political ties in direct response to the Soviet threat. Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, and Portugal were quickly invited to participate in the process. These nine countries then joined with Canada, the United States (US), and Norway in signing the North Atlantic Treaty (otherwise known as the Washington Treaty). The North Atlantic Treaty of April 1949 is the legal and contractual basis for the North Atlantic Alliance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as an intergovernmental organization, provides the structure that enables the goals of the Alliance to be implemented. In 1952, the Alliance grew to include Greece and Turkey, and in 1955 the Federal Republic of Germany also joined. The Alliance stood at fifteen until 1982 when Spain joined.

The specific impetus for the formation of NATO was clearly the expansionist policies of the USSR and the lure of collective defence of its members to counter this threat. Collective defence is embodied in Article V of the Treaty.² When the need for

¹ NATO, *NATO Handbook*, Brussels: Office of Information and Press, 2001, p 29.

² Article V states, "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and . . . [they] will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking action . . . to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area".

collective defence was all but removed with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, experts predicted NATO would disappear in the absence of its traditional threat. To the surprise of many, however, NATO transformed and rejuvenated itself in the 1990s. It expanded its mission to include conflict prevention and conflict management throughout Europe, and it committed itself to gradual enlargement to remain relevant in Europe's post-Cold War security environment.³

The seeds for transformation of the alliance were planted in July 1990, when the North Atlantic Council (NAC)⁴ issued the *London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance* that embedded a commitment to build new partnerships with all nations in Europe. Similarly, in November 1991, a new strategic concept recognized that risks to the security of NATO members would come from conflicts and crises on NATO's periphery. As a complement to the new strategic concept, the Alliance began to focus on improving relationships with many countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In this regard, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)⁵ was formed in December 1991. On 10 January 1994, at a Summit meeting in Brussels, NATO reaffirmed the notion that Alliance membership should be open to new members. To this end, an initiative called

³ Thomas S. Szayna, *NATO Enlargement 2000-2015 – Determinants and Implications for Defense Planning and Shaping*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2001, p xiii

⁴ The NAC has effective political authority and powers of decision, and consists of Permanent Representatives of all member countries. The Council also meets at higher levels involving Foreign Ministers, Defence Ministers or Heads of Government. The Council has an important public profile and issues declarations and communiqués explaining the Alliance's policies and decisions to the general public and to governments of countries that are not members of NATO.

⁵ The NACC was initially comprised of NATO, Russia, the six former Warsaw Pact countries, and the three Baltic States, but grew to include 44 countries from the Euro-Atlantic region within five years. It provided for consultation and cooperation between the involved states and it focused primarily on advancing democratic reforms in defence establishments, easing remaining east-west suspicions, as well as stabilization and integration of post communist countries into Western institutions.

Partnership for Peace⁶ (PfP) was developed. As stated in the associated ministerial communiqué released at the Summit meeting in 1994:

NATO will consult with any active participant in the [PfP Program] if that partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security. We will work in concrete ways towards transparency in defence budgeting, promoting democratic control of defence ministries, joint planning, joint military exercises, and creating an ability to operate with NATO forces in such fields as peacekeeping, search and rescue and humanitarian operations, and others as may be agreed.⁷

The communiqué also stated, “active participation in the Partnership for Peace Program will play an important role in the evolutionary process of the expansion of NATO”.⁸

Although there was no guarantee of entry into NATO, it was understood that PfP participation would be the best way to prepare for NATO membership. As a result, the PfP initiative grew rapidly to 26 participants by November 1995.

Enlargement is a concept that was embraced from the very beginnings of NATO. Article X of the North Atlantic Treaty states, “the parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area”.⁹ With heightened expectations for enlargement created by the PfP program, NATO released a *Study on NATO Enlargement* in 1995. It identified what the Alliance and possible new members would need to do to prepare for the eventual accession of additional states to the Washington Treaty.¹⁰ Then,

⁶ PfP is the basis for practical security cooperation between NATO and individual Partner countries. Activities include defence planning and budgeting, military exercises and civil emergency operations. There are now 27 members of PfP.

⁷ NATO, *Communiqué: Ministerial Meeting Of The North Atlantic Council/North Atlantic Cooperation Council, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 10-11 January 1994*. <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm.htm>

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Chris Scheurweghs, *NATO Enlargement – Presentation by SecGen to Partner*, Hellenic Resource Network, p 2. http://www.hri.org/news/misc/misc-news/95-09-28_1.misc.html

at the Madrid Summit in July 1997, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic were invited to begin accession negotiations, and were subsequently acceded to the Alliance in March 1999.¹¹ Following this, at the Prague Summit in October 2002, NATO invited seven new countries to begin accession negotiations¹².

Thesis

Much has been written debating the effect of NATO enlargement on the security and stability of Europe. Arguments for and against enlargement, however, are largely made in the context of the 1994-1997 timeframe. At that time, the alliance was cognizant of the need for democratic governance, market reform, and civilian control of the military of Central and East European nations. Given these objectives, it is difficult to condemn the decision to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in the alliance. This notwithstanding, European security architecture has changed; as has the geopolitical climate in these enlargement decisions were made. Accordingly, this essay will demonstrate that any further enlargement of NATO may serve to undermine security and stability in Europe.

To do this, the argument for and against NATO enlargement will be reviewed in a cursory manner to provide a foundation for further discussion. These arguments will, in turn, be assessed, reflecting on the results of recent enlargement decisions where practical. Finally, the debate will be expanded to include possible alternatives to enlarging the alliance.

¹¹ The accession of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic underlines the three nations' dramatic transformation from Soviet allies to free-market oriented and Western-style democracies. Their accession was a watershed event in the Alliance's efforts to prevent the resurgence of totalitarianism, and effectively marked the end of the bi-polar world.

¹² The seven countries were Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The Argument for Enlargement

Of the many arguments presented in favour of NATO enlargement, four stand out. First, proponents believe that NATO enlargement provides a mechanism for the US to remain engaged in European affairs and to provide leadership to the European integration process. Second, advocates of expansion contend that enlargement promotes democratic forces, both in new member states and in those states aspiring to become members. The inclusive nature of the enlargement process leads to a melting of barriers between armies, greater interoperability, and transparency and cooperation between enemy forces.¹³ The third argument is that enlarging NATO will result in a stronger collective defence capability for the alliance. New members are required to contribute militarily to NATO, which increases NATO's ability to respond to new security challenges. The fourth argument centers on cost. Proponents of enlargement suggest that integration is a much more cost-effective process in the long run and that a historic opportunity now exists to integrate and stabilize Europe. If NATO fails to capitalize on the opportunity to promote cooperation in Europe, it risks being faced with much higher costs in the future.

Assessment

Europe is historically a contentious region of the world. To support this statement, one only has to look to the two World Wars in the twentieth century, both of which originated in Europe. The US invariably finds itself engaged in European conflicts, incurring tremendous costs.

To help maintain stability most policy professionals agree that it is a good idea for the United States to remain engaged in European security affairs. Remaining engaged will ensure that the US is not

¹³ Mattox, *NATO Enlargement: A Step in the Process of Alliance Reform*, p 110.

powerless to influence events if it finds its interests threatened sometime in the future.¹⁴

The US has identified vital political and security interests in Europe being undivided, stable and prosperous, open to trade and investment opportunities, and supportive of political, economic, and military cooperation with the US.¹⁵ The US military presence in Europe extends the European security umbrella, and it allows the US to intervene in the continent's unruly peripheries.¹⁶ Moreover, US leadership on European security issues facilitates cooperation on major defense issues and gives the US leverage in other important forums.¹⁷ The European failure to act in the crisis in Bosnia underscores the requirement for US leadership in Europe. Advocates of US leadership in Europe offer:

“Among Europeans, it is not acceptable that the lead nation be European. A European power broker is a hegemonic power. We can agree on US leadership, but not on one of our own.”¹⁸

Proponents, therefore, believe that the US must play a leadership role in the reordering of European affairs and that NATO enlargement is an ideal mechanism to accomplish this.

There are, however, flaws with this position. Many believe that European integration is a European affair and demands European leadership. This claim is supported by recent successes enjoyed by the EU in advancing European integration without US involvement, and by the inability of the US to sway key European leaders to agree on military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many have also voiced doubts about

¹⁴ Brigadier General Robert T. Osterthaler, “NATO Enlargement into Eastern Europe”, in *NATO Expansion*, ed by Kenneth W. Thompson, Lanham Michigan: University Press of America, 1998, p 5.

¹⁵ US Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, *The Europe Strategy Report - United States Security Strategy for Europe and NATO*, p 1 of 4
http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/europe/chapter_1.html

¹⁶ Christopher Layne, “Why Die for Gdansk? Enlargement and American Security Interests”, in *NATO Enlargement, Illusions and Reality*, ed by Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, Washington: The CATO Institute, 1998, p 54.

¹⁷ US Department of Defense, *The Europe Strategy*, p 1 of 4.

NATO's importance to American security interests, and see Europeans as freeloaders who let Washington fund their security while they build protectionist walls.¹⁹ The US security agenda is related to problems of defense, while the European security agenda is related to problems of integration.²⁰ Moreover, US foreign and security policy in the 21st century is more pre-emptive in nature, indicating a shift away from multilateralism and transatlantic cooperation. Although the US went to great lengths to garner international support for recent campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US would have almost certainly conducted these operations in isolation should support not have been forthcoming. With regard to US leadership in managing European security matters, it is apparent European nations are cognizant of the need to become more self-reliant in this area. This stance is reflected in initiatives such as the Common European Security and Defense Policy (CESDP) within the European Union (EU).²¹

In this clear expression for a more independent posture, 15 EU member states aim to create a standing force of 60,000 men by 2003 that is available and ready to deploy in support of European security. This may become a vehicle that could conceivably create a framework that diminishes the role of NATO and makes it less relevant.²²

¹⁸ Eugene J. Carroll Jr, "Expansion of NATO: To What End?", in *NATO Expansion*, ed by Kenneth W. Thompson, Lanham Michigan: University Press of America, 1998, p 167.

¹⁹ Clay Clemens, "The Strategic and Political Consequences of NATO Enlargement", in *Europe in Change – Two Tiers or Two Speeds*, ed by James Sperling, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999, p 140.

²⁰ Bo Huldt, "Introduction: The Transatlantic Link", in *The Transatlantic Link*, ed by Bo Huldt, Sven Rudberg, and Elisabeth Davidson, Stockholm: The Swedish National Defense College, 2001, p 16.

²¹ The headline goal of CESDP is to be able to deploy within 60 days a rapid reaction force, for a total duration of at least one year. This force may be equivalent to an Army corps, with some 50 to 60 thousand troops in the ground component. This force shall be autonomous, that is to say possess its own intelligence, command, control and logistic means. The global objective is to have naval and air elements fitting with ground forces. Common objectives include developing command, control, intelligence and strategic transport capabilities, providing the Union with the autonomy to evaluate, to decide and to act within a whole range of tasks.

²² Jan Hallenberg, "The Changing Domestic Scenery in the United States", in *The Transatlantic Link*, ed by Bo Huldt, Sven Rudberg, and Elisabeth Davidson, Stockholm: The Swedish National Defense College, 2001, p 52.

All of this points to substantial ambiguity in the argument that NATO enlargement allows the US to remain engaged, and to provide leadership in European security affairs.

There is also little evidence to support the position that NATO has a decisive influence on the democratic development of its members. In fact, the experience of Greece and Turkey offers evidence to the contrary.

“NATO membership did not prevent the rise of the junta in Greece in the 1970s – a significant lapse from even the shaky democratic system it had enjoyed when Athens was admitted to NATO. Nor has NATO had any apparent impact on Turkey’s erratic democratic progress. There is little reason to believe that the alliance will fare better with its new members . . . it has at its disposal no means of influencing the internal politics of its members.”²³

The related stance that enlargement provides a beacon for democracy for those countries seeking membership is equally anemic. In the 1990s, most Central and East European states made significant progress in implementing democratic reforms. These include free elections, advances in free market economies, the rule of law, and civilian oversight of their militaries. Proponents of enlargement claim that this progress is largely attributable to these states moving toward the norms and values of the alliance as part of the enlargement process. This infers, however, that without the potential for NATO membership, there would have been very little stimulus for these emerging countries to reform. This is clearly not the case. If NATO membership were a precondition for democratic reform, one would expect more Central and East European countries to be vying for NATO membership. Also, using the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the

²³ James Chace, “A Strategy to Unite Rather Than Divide Europe”, in *NATO Enlargement, Illusions and Reality*, ed by Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, Washington: The CATO Institute, 1998, p 180.

Czech Republic as an example, it appears as though those nations least in need of an incentive to reform were looked upon most favorably for membership.

The argument that a larger NATO will equate to a more capable NATO is predicated on new members being required to contribute to NATO's collective defence capability, and that this enhanced capability allows NATO to better respond to new security threats such as the proliferation of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. But critics respond by accentuating that the end of the Cold War has resulted in a security environment without threat to Central and European nations. If there is no direct attack threat against NATO as Europe's collective defense organization, why is there a need to expand and to become more capable?

“Is it protection against Russia? Some people say that, but the [US] administration itself says both yes and no. It says NATO is a hedge against a future threat, but it also says explicitly that there is no existing threat.”²⁴

There are also inconsistencies with the logic that enlargement will result in enhanced capabilities in that defense spending by NATO members was significantly reduced in the 1990s. This position suggests less capability for the alliance overall. As an example, “since 1988, Hungary and Poland have cut their military spending on defence by 60 and 44 percent respectively”.²⁵ There is also the question of how enlargement will affect alliance interoperability. New members will be required to upgrade their equipment and infrastructure so that interoperability can be achieved. If they fail to do so, NATO will have to accept a level of degradation to its military capability.

²⁴ Jack Mendelson, “NATO Expansion: The Policy and the Problem”, in *NATO Expansion*, ed by Kenneth W. Thompson, Lanham Michigan: University Press of America, 1998, p 145.

²⁵ David M. Law and S. McNeil MacFarlane, “NATO Expansion and European Regional Security” in *Will NATO Go East – The Debate Over Enlarging the Atlantic Alliance*, ed by David G Haglund, Kingston: Centre for International Relations, Queen's University, 2000, p 51.

The debate on capability is intrinsically linked to the discussion on the costs of expansion. If expansion is intended to provide meaningful security to new member states, it is certain to be expensive. Costs of integrating Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have been estimated in the range of \$30 to \$125 billion over 15 years.²⁶

“There are three categories of enlargement-related costs: the costs to new members to continue to restructure their militaries, the costs of force improvements already being pursued by existing members and those costs related directly to enlargement (i.e., for ensuring interoperability between the forces of current and new members)”.²⁷ These costs will impose a significant burden on member states at a time when military budgets are shrinking and new members are desperate for resources to support a host of other democratic reforms. Expansionists argue whatever the costs are of expanding the alliance eastward; they pale in comparison to the costs and risks of another European war. On the other hand:

Policies and decisions should not be based on the need to prevent such a highly improbable event. There is no European power today or in the foreseeable future that has the intention or ability to replicate the campaigns for continental hegemony that occurred in both World Wars.²⁸

In the absence of a direct threat, and with seven more countries invited to accede and even more on the horizon, extending the Article V guarantee eastward has the potential to levy a financial bu

of expansion and the equitable distribution of those costs will continue to be a source of tension within the alliance in the future.

The Argument Against Enlargement

Opponents to enlargement suggest that expanding the alliance is a grave mistake. Again, there are four key arguments associated with this position. First and foremost, opponents argue that there is no logical stopping place for enlargement West of Russia.²⁹ The long-term consequences of NATO enlargement may motivate Russian countermeasures against NATO pressures.³⁰ Second, they argue that enlargement draws new lines of division in Europe.³¹ The construct wherein some Central and East European countries are included while some are not is a divisive force and leads to instability. Moreover, these dividing lines could denote new areas of influence and could cause democratization to degenerate. Third, NATO expansion appears to be a policy without a strategy. Specifically, there is little understanding “of what NATO’s mission is to be in the future and what the expanded alliance will do to further that mission”.³² Finally, critics argue, “The larger the number of members, the greater the number of interests to be served and the more varied the views that have to be accommodated”.³³ Because decisions within the alliance are reached by consensus, many believe that expansion will diminish its coherency, focus, and effectiveness.

Assessment

²⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, “NATO Expansion: A Realist’s View”, in *Explaining NATO Enlargement*, ed by Robert W. Rauchhaus, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001, p 30.

³⁰ Eugene J. Carroll Jr, “Expansion of NATO: To What End?”, in *NATO Expansion*, ed by Kenneth W. Thompson, Lanham Michigan: University Press of America, 1998, p 167.

³¹ Waltz, *NATO Expansion: A Realist’s View*, p 30.

³² Mendelson, *NATO Expansion: The Policy and the Problem*, p 146.

Proponents of enlargement argue that Russia needs an enlarged NATO because it brings a stabilizing effect to Europe, which Russia needs to advance its own reforms.³⁴ Proponents also believe that enlargement will prevent the rise of a new Russian threat in the long term. This thesis argues that the expansion process should be undertaken quickly to take advantage of Russia's current military weakness and to prevent Russia from reclaiming its former sphere of influence.³⁵ The problem with this view is that Russians also see enlargement as a containment policy aimed at marginalizing Russia. This could be interpreted as a hostile act aimed at Russia, which could have a destabilizing effect. In particular:

Enlargement could herald the return to power of a radical nationalist regime in Moscow in opposition to NATO. Furthermore, enlarging the alliance could result in Russia being less inclined to honour disarmament treaties and maintain a climate of trust thereby undermining the progress of common security in favour of a concept of defense rendered obsolete.³⁶

NATO enlargement has not been well received in Russia. From Russia's perspective, it has made many concessions and attempts to cooperate with the West including acquiescence in Germany's unification, disassembling the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and embracing the PfP initiative.³⁷ NATO's expansion is seen by Russia as an act of betrayal and NATO taking advantage of Russia during a difficult transition period. This could cause Russia to revisit its cooperation with the West. Even worse, it

³³ *Ibid*, p 32.

³⁴ David Law, "Why Spain Should Have Been NATO's Last Member", in *The Future of NATO – Enlargement, Russia, and European Security*, ed by Charles-Philippe David and Jacques Levesque, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999, p 40.

³⁵ Charles-Philippe David, "Fountain of Youth or Cure Worse Than Disease? NATO Enlargement: A Conceptual Deadlock", in *The Future of NATO – Enlargement, Russia, and European Security*, ed by Charles-Philippe David and Jacques Levesque, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999, p 16.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Susan Eisenhower, "Russian Perspectives on the Expansion of NATO", in *NATO and the Quest for Post Cold War Security*, ed by Clay Clemens, New York: St Martin's Press, 1997, p 138.

could compel Russia to adopt a defense policy based on nuclear weaponry. Specifically, the Russian military is “incapable of protecting Russia’s sprawling borders and would be forced ever closer to the nuclear first-strike option as its best defense”.³⁸ In addition, the fear that Russia would look to China in response to NATO enlargement is now being realized. “Russia’s inability to impede the eastward expansion of NATO . . . has forced Moscow to seek closer strategic understanding with China and India.”³⁹ Should this relationship continue to evolve, it will certainly have a profound effect on the state of security and stability in Europe. Indeed the strategic partnership between Russia and China would shift the balance of power in Asia, and be a blue print for the next Cold War.⁴⁰

Russia is particularly opposed to NATO expansion into the Baltic republics. Russia has had longstanding interests and influence in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Prior to the Prague Summit, Russian leaders made it clear to the US that they view Baltic membership in NATO as a direct threat to Russian security interests and as a red line that should not be crossed.⁴¹ Russia is clearly not in a position to militarily oppose NATO’s expansion into the Baltics, but it may not be wise for the West to take the Kremlin for granted indefinitely. Should President Putin lose power, Russia could pose a serious threat to European security and stability.

“On the surface, Putin seems to be managing the problem as practically as possible. He has supported the U.S. led anti-terror coalition, cooperated with Bush in the hunt for Osama bin Laden,

³⁸ Andrei Kortunov, “NATO Enlargement and Russia: In Search of an Adequate Response,” in *Will NATO Go East – The Debate Over Enlarging the Atlantic Alliance*, ed by David G Haglund, Kingston: Centre for International Relations, Queen’s University, 2000, p 73-74.

³⁹ Julie M. Rahm, “Russia, China, India: A New Strategic Triangle for a New Cold War?,” *Parameters*, Winter 2001-02, p 87.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Kent R. Meyer, “US Support for Baltic Membership in NATO: What Ends, What Risks?,” *Parameters*, Winter 2000-02, p 71.

tried to forge a direct relationship with NATO and dropped the earlier Russian stance of hostility to the new relationship between the Baltic States and NATO. However, Moscow-based experts opine that there is growing unease in the Kremlin on this expansion into former Soviet turf. A visible sign of this discomfort was the fact that Putin did not attend the Prague summit. This was aimed to signal Russia's disapproval of NATO's expansion into Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.”⁴²

Of note, NATO's expansion into the Baltics may also exacerbate growing tensions between Russia and the EU over Kaliningrad. Specifically, the EU is insisting that Russian citizens obtain visas to pass through future EU member states when traveling to the Russian enclave. The combined effect of EU and NATO expansion could prove too exhaustive for Russia to bear and serve to further alienate Russia from the West.

The debate regarding Russia is closely linked to the argument that enlargement is a divisive force that could create new spheres of influence in Europe. “An alliance stretching to Russia's borders will create a new dividing line in Europe . . . making first class citizens of those who are in and second class citizens of those who are out.”⁴³ “Once some countries are brought in, how can others be left out?”⁴⁴ The answer lies in the lack of objective criteria used to select new members. For example, during the first expansion round, Slovenia and Romania came close, winning support from nine members of the alliance, only to be put off by the US. This indicates membership decisions are largely politically based, and may serve to isolate those nations who are left out. Seven new countries were subsequently invited to begin accession negotiations at the Prague Summit, but there are still others that aspire to join. “Countries that have worked diligently to meet the criteria for membership may conclude that they have been

⁴² Singh, Charu, “Russia's Worries”, *Frontline*, Volume 19 – Issue 25, December 7-20, 2002, p 1 of 6. <http://www.flonnet.com/fl1925/stories/20021220002105400.htm>

⁴³ Eisenhower, *Russian Perspectives on the Expansion of NATO*, p 143.

abandoned by NATO and consequently reevaluate not only the wisdom of integration with the West but also the value of democratic reform.”⁴⁵ This could quite conceivably result in new areas of influence being established.

Russia is sure to be involved in any development of new spheres of influence in Europe. To embark on a policy such as NATO enlargement, whose perceived aim is to deny Russian influence in East and Central Europe, is a policy fraught with danger. As Russia recovers, NATO expansion will become a risk laden and destabilizing policy because Russia will again assert its prerogative as a great power.⁴⁶ “In short . . . a fresh dividing line is being drawn across Europe . . . a line that will almost surely result in uncertainty and resentment on the part of those on the wrong side.”⁴⁷

In addition to the potential risks associated with the Russian reaction to enlargement and the creation of new spheres of influence, there is also a case to be made that enlargement is a policy without a strategy. “A decision was made to do something without knowing how we were going to carry it off and where it was we were ultimately bound to go.”⁴⁸ Many believe Russian imperialism was the driving force behind enlargement. But if the objective of NATO enlargement is to enhance the Alliance’s mission to defend the territory of its members against Russia, then additional enlargement is unnecessary because NATO already possesses sufficient strategic depth.⁴⁹ Many argue that NATO needs to retain its character as a military alliance as it enlarges, while others

⁴⁴ Waltz, *NATO Expansion: A Realist’s View*, p 31.

⁴⁵ Hugh De Santis, “NATO’s Manifest Destiny: The Risks of Expansion”, in *NATO Enlargement, Illusions and Reality*, ed by Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, Washington: The CATO Institute, 1998, p 160.

⁴⁶ Owen Harries, “The Errors of Expansive Realism”, in *NATO Enlargement, Illusions and Reality*, ed by Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, Washington: The CATO Institute, 1998, p 194.

⁴⁷ Chace, *A Strategy to Unite Rather Than Divide Europe*, p 179

⁴⁸ Mendelson, *NATO Expansion: The Policy and the Problem*, p 145.

⁴⁹ Meyer, *US Support for Baltic Membership in NATO: What Ends, What Risks*, p 69.

emphasize the nonmilitary roles for the alliance such as being a democracy promoter.⁵⁰

But by emphasizing a role of building, rather than NATO's traditional role of safeguarding, it is easy to confuse the benefits of NATO with its purpose.⁵¹ Others claim that the enlargement process fell out of political agendas in the US:

The Clinton administration was faced with a determined pro-enlargement Polish-American lobby, strong moral and political pressure from West and East European leaders, an enormous vested interested in the NATO establishment, and growing doubts about democracy's prospects in Russia. But the political rationale for expansion was shallow, and had little to do with America's national interests.⁵²

In any case, there is no "consensus and coherent case for NATO expansion on which all of its principal supporters agree".⁵³ The lack of clarity regarding NATO's mission exists even today. For example, NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson has said that tackling terror is NATO's new mission, however, at the Prague Summit, NATO officials made it clear that Iraq was not a topic for NATO.⁵⁴

Another argument against NATO enlargement that holds up well to scrutiny is that the alliance's effectiveness will be diluted as it continues to grow. Skeptics warn that more members will result in more difficulty agreeing on common security interests, and dissipating its cohesion by absorbing responsibilities beyond prudent limits.⁵⁵ This belief is underpinned by the reality that decisions within NATO are reached by consensus and by a growing geopolitical divergence within the alliance. The wide spread criticism of the US position on Iraq by France and Germany hints at future problems within NATO.

⁵⁰ Harries, *The Errors of Expansive Realism*, p 190.

⁵¹ Meyer, *US Support for Baltic Membership in NATO: What Ends, What Risks*, p 69.

⁵² Harries, *The Errors of Expansive Realism*, p 190-191.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p 189.

⁵⁴ Editorial, "Envisioning a new NATO", *The Washington Times*, November 21, 2002.

⁵⁵ Clemens, *The Strategic and Political Consequences of NATO Enlargement*, p 145.

Should these problems translate into an inability to agree on matters of security and stability, the entire enlargement process would be undermined. New and potential member states want tangible guarantees of protection, not just membership in a political club.

Possible Alternatives

The preceding discussion provides evidence that the potential costs and risks related to expanding NATO may outweigh the associated benefits. Expansionists acknowledge this but claim the assumption of risk is prudent in the absence of any real alternative for enhancing regional stability in Europe. Some readings, however, suggest that there are other options. In proposing alternatives to NATO enlargement, it is important to point out that NATO's role in the post-Cold War era is primarily one of cooperative security rather than of collective defense. Any proposal should then focus on what organizational structure is best qualified to carry out these new collective security missions. Alternative European security design should also incorporate the following principles:

First, The US must retain the capability to resist any potential European hegemon. The new security structure must be inclusive, and it must not draw new dividing lines in Europe. The new structure must also develop an alternative security doctrine to deal with smaller regional problems. Lastly, regional responsibility and responsiveness should be given a high priority.⁵⁶

Given these principles, three potential alternatives to NATO enlargement stand out: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)⁵⁷, the EU,⁵⁸ and

⁵⁶ Jonathan G. Clarke, "A Strong OSCE for a Secure Europe", in *NATO Enlargement, Illusions and Reality*, ed by Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, Washington: The CATO Institute, 1998, p 225-226.

⁵⁷ The OSCE approach to security is comprehensive and co-operative: comprehensive in dealing with a wide range of security-related issues including arms control, preventive diplomacy, confidence- and

an expanded PfP Program. The OSCE is the largest regional security organization in the world with 55 participating states from Europe, Central Asia, and North America. Its role includes early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE has structural strengths that if developed could result in it being a key organization for tackling the root causes of European security problems.⁵⁹ “It precisely matches the institutionalists’ profile of a security community that can reinforce cooperation – especially since the OSCE has carried out its tasks more effectively since the end of the Cold War and, in contrast to NATO, includes the former Soviet adversary as well as all the Central and Eastern European states”.⁶⁰

For example, the OSCE’s record in managing the Cold War endgame and in interbloc reconciliation was excellent. It has enjoyed success in mediation disagreements between the Baltic nations and Russia, played a role in defusing tensions between Serbian and Albanian authorities in Kosovo, and performed useful work in the Caucasus mediating the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the latter’s breakaway Armenian-dominated enclave of Ngorno-Karabakh.⁶¹

The OSCE also rates well in relation to previously stated European security design principles. Admittedly, with 55 members, consensus decision-making is difficult, but the OSCE is much more finely calibrated to respond to regional European problems

security-building measures, human rights, democratization, election monitoring and economic and environmental security; co-operative in the sense that all OSCE participating States have equal status, and decisions are based on consensus.

⁵⁸ The EU has 15 Member States and is preparing for the accession of 13 eastern and southern European countries. All decisions and procedures are derived from the basic treaties ratified by the Member States. Principal objectives of the Union are: *Establish European citizenship* (Fundamental rights; Freedom of movement; Civil and political rights); *Ensure freedom, security and justice* (Cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs); *Promote economic and social progress* (Single market; Euro, the common currency; Job creation; Regional development; Environmental protection); and *Assert Europe’s role in the world* (Common foreign and security; The European Union in the world).

⁵⁹ Clarke, *A Strong OSCE for a Secure Europe*, p 227.

⁶⁰ David, *A Conceptual Deadlock*, p 18.

⁶¹ Clarke, *A Strong OSCE for a Secure Europe*, p 227.

and is better suited than NATO to assume cooperative security responsibilities.⁶² Its expansive membership is inclusive in nature, and US participation should help preclude the rise of a potential European hegemon. It does lack dedicated military resources to back up OSCE resolutions; however, this capability could be generated in much the same manner as the EU is developing the CESDP.

Although the OSCE has received a lot of attention in the institutional discussion of alternatives to NATO enlargement, the EU is also a frontrunner in the debate. This is due to European integration being primarily a political and economic process, and the EU's success in promoting political and economic integration within Europe. EU membership is not as exhaustive as in the OSCE. It has, however, embarked on an aggressive enlargement program. The EU considered the end of the Cold War an opportunity to build a pan-European identity, whereas NATO had been established out of European divisions and disunity and was threatened by the fall of the Soviet Union.⁶³ Thus, the EU and NATO enlargement programs found themselves at different intellectual starting points in the early 1990s.⁶⁴ At the EU Summit meeting in Helsinki in 1999, the European Council took a number of decisions marking a new stage in the enlargement process for the EU as well as steps to ensure that the Union itself would have a strengthened common security and defence policy. The enlargement of the EU bodes well for the economic security of the Union as well as members states. Decisions at the Helsinki Summit aimed at developing military and civilian crisis management

⁶² *Ibid*, p 230.

⁶³ Martin A. Smith and Graham Timmins, *Building a Bigger Europe – EU and NATO Enlargement in Comparative Perspective*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000, p 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

capabilities, with particular emphasis on launching and conducting EU-led military operations in response to international crises, will also strengthen stability in the region.

The evolution of the EU from a trade and economic union to one with strong political and military ties is a landmark development for European integration. There are problems, however, when the EU option is measured against our principles for alternative European security design. Notably, US is not part of the EU; therefore, the US's ability to thwart the emergence of a European hegemon may be crippled if the EU were to assume leadership in promoting European security at the expense of NATO. This is not to say that EU membership should include the US, but the US would be required to find an alternate venue to exert its influence in European security matters should the EU assume this leadership role. Furthermore, it appears as though EU members are reluctant to have Turkey join the Union. If Turkey is excluded, new dividing lines could surface as a result.

Perhaps a more palatable alternative to NATO enlargement resides within the NATO organizational structure itself. The PfP program enjoyed tremendous early success largely because it was designed to be inclusive, and there is a strong argument for building on this success. All members of the NACC and the OSCE were invited to participate, including Russia. The PfP promoted cooperation and a commitment to democratic principles including democratic control of military forces, openness in defence planning, as well as participation in NATO operations. These benefits all contributed to regional security in Europe. By strengthening the program to address other security concerns such as terrorism and other issues such as arms control, regional

security would be enhanced. An enhanced PfP initiative, known as PfP Plus, was developed at NATO Headquarters in the late 1990s.

Most of what NATO membership entails would have been offered through "PfP plus". The significant omission was the Article 5 guarantee. Since there is no threat of military action against candidate members it would seem sensible that NATO should not offer more than "PfP plus" to allow Central and East European countries more time to stabilize economically. Stopping short of full NATO membership would have sent a signal to those who would be otherwise excluded, particularly to Russia, that they are not seen as a threat or threatened themselves.⁶⁵

Although the article V guarantee would not be extended, security concerns could be addressed by extending guarantees to participants to protect their geographical and political integrity. This would represent a commitment for NATO to act in response to a security threat, not an affirmative duty to act.⁶⁶ Accordingly, the enhanced PfP initiative would promote cooperative security, with a collective defense guarantee. The initiative also complies with the other desired principles of alternative European security design. It does not exclude Russia or the US, it does not draw new dividing lines in Europe, and it encourages regional responsiveness and responsibility.

Despite wide scale acknowledgment that the policy of NATO enlargement is flawed, the majority of Central and East European countries continue to pursue NATO membership. This is largely due to NATO's achievement in maintaining peace for more than 45 years, and the security associated with NATO's Article 5 guarantee. Aspiring states see NATO membership as the best way to achieve security and stability and to

⁶⁵ A Special Report by the British American Security Information Council and the Centre for European Security and Disarmament, *NATO Expansion: Time to Reconsider*, Basic Publications, 25 November 1996, p 9. <http://www.basicint.org/pubs/Research/1996NATOexpansion.htm>

⁶⁶ Davis L. Brown, "European Collective Security in the Next Millennium", *Air Force Law Review*, 1997, Vol 42, p 201.

prevent interference by a potential European hegemon. In response to the identification of possible alternatives to NATO enlargement, proponents contend that it is too late to turn back. They argue that stopping the enlargement process now would result in major embarrassment.⁶⁷ But Jack Mendelson, a recognized authority on NATO expansion, reminds us that embarrassment was the impetus for the US's continued engagement in Vietnam. With regard to NATO, he states:

“I think embarrassment is a terrible basis for foreign policy decisions. Decisions are made on merit . . . I do not believe we have to do a dumb thing that will get even worse because it will be too embarrassing to stop it. But that is the bottom line for NATO expansion advocates.”⁶⁸

Right or wrong, until an organizational construct such as the OSCE, EU, or an enhanced PfP program emerges as a credible alternative to NATO enlargement, NATO will continue to be the organization of choice to promote security and stability in Europe.

Conclusion

The decision to enlarge NATO after the end of the Cold War has been the subject of much controversy. Proponents contend that eastward expansion is necessary for the US to stay engaged in European affairs, to advance democratic reforms in east and central European countries, to enhance the collective defence capability of the alliance, and to avoid costs associated with potential future European conflicts by promoting stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. Opponents of NATO enlargement argue it is a policy without a strategy. They also point to eastward expansion as isolating Russia and

⁶⁷ Mendelson, *NATO Expansion: The Policy and the Problem*, p 153

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

creating new dividing lines in Europe. In addition, they claim that expansion diminishes the alliance's coherency, focus, and effectiveness.

Upon further examination of the debate, it is the opinion of this author that arguments in favour of NATO expansion are unconvincing. There is little offered by the expansionist position that would lead to an enhanced security environment in Europe. On the other hand, the arguments against enlargement are quite compelling in that the risks associated with NATO expanding east present significant challenges to maintaining peace and stability. Most alarmingly, Russia's negative reaction to NATO enlargement could have a destabilizing effect on the region. Moreover, new dividing lines in Europe could be drawn, and new spheres of influence created.

The argument against expansion is further supported by the existence of potential alternatives to NATO enlargement to advance Euro-Atlantic security. Three such alternatives were reviewed: the OSCE, EU, and an enhanced PfP option. This analysis demonstrated that these alternatives are indeed viable, and suggests that disregarding the potential negative effects of enlargement on European stability without first exploring these options would be irresponsible and ill-advised. Knowing this, one can conclude that any further expansion of NATO could undermine European security and stability, and should not be considered by the alliance in the immediate future.

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