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**NUMBER 67**

**THE POLITICS OF EUROPEAN ENLARGEMENT:  
NATO, THE EU AND THE NEW U.S.-EUROPEAN  
RELATIONSHIP**

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February 2002

# EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

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## THE POLITICS OF EUROPEAN ENLARGEMENT: NATO, THE EU AND THE NEW U.S.-EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP \*

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Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, the main issues in Eastern and Central Europe, and in U.S. and European policy toward the area, have focused on achieving peace and stability, building democracy, accomplishing economic and institutional reform, accelerating growth and modernization, and anchoring and integrating the countries of the area into Europe and its two great “clubs”: the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>1</sup> It could be said that the last three goals listed—democracy, economic and institutional reform, and European integration—were all means to the end of achieving peace and stability in this critical area, not known historically for its stable, peaceful politics, as well as to the end of securing a buffer zone on Europe’s eastern frontiers that would also function as a means to hem in and limit any future Russian resurgence. What may have begun in strategic planners’ eyes as a means to an end, however, has since then taken on a life of its own.

The formal technical and general criteria for the accession of new aspirant countries to NATO and the EU are quite clear and have been set forth in numerous official documents.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the EU requires applicant states to conform to the extensive legal, regulatory, and financial stipulations of the *acquis communautaire*, while NATO also has a variety of technical requirements that include the restructuring of civil-military relations according to the Western model, reform of defense ministries and of equipment, armaments, and military systems to achieve interoperability, and the ability to be a net contributor to, not a drain on, NATO forces and functions, including,

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\* A more detailed and with greater background materials version of this study entitled “Where Does Europe End? The Politics of NATO and EU Enlargement” was published in Vienna, Austria by the Austrian Institute of International Affairs and in Washington, DC by HELDREF Publications in *World Affairs*.

importantly, peacekeeping in Southeast Europe and, now, cooperation on counter-terrorism.

In the early 1990s, it was often thought by analysts and policy-makers alike that the processes of EU and NATO enlargement would go forward in tandem, on parallel tracks, mutually reinforcing each other.<sup>3</sup> This has not quite happened. In addition, and a key argument of this analysis, is that while early on the technical criteria largely defined the enlargement process, now, as we get close to decision time, it is political criteria that are proving decisive. At least at the formal and institutional level, almost all the applicant countries now are at the stage, or close to it, of qualifying for EU and NATO admission. Almost all the countries are now democracies, have undertaken economic and institutional reform, observe human rights criteria more or less, have carried out at least some military reforms, and have adapted their laws to the requirements of the *acquis*. Part of this is charade, of course, since both Easterners and Westerners understand that full implementation of these changes will take three to four decades if not generations, not just a few years. But as the applicant countries now reach the end of this qualifying process, the question—and it is a political one—becomes, now what? Once they all qualify or come near to it, then how is it possible to discriminate further among them, to allow some in, while keeping others out? The answer is, increasingly, by the use of political criteria. In other words, what began as a process employing largely technical and formal criteria is ending now that these conditions have been largely met, by using preeminently political criteria.<sup>4</sup>

This paper focuses on the nature of these political criteria, what may be termed the politics of the “end game” of EU and NATO expansion. Now that the technical criteria have been, for the most part satisfied, what comes next? Who decides who gets admitted, when, and on what basis? Four major actors or sets of actors are discussed: the Eastern/Central European applicant countries, the EU and the European allies, Russia, and the United States. In each case the interests and the politics involved are examined and an attempt is made to reach some tentative conclusions as to how the process of enlargement will now proceed. A final substantive section, building on the earlier analysis, weighs both the technical and, increasingly, the political considerations operative as the enlargement process nears its decisive moment.

### **The Interests of the Applicant Countries**

The interests of the applicant countries are perhaps the easiest to discuss: they want in, in almost all cases to both NATO and the EU. They identify membership in these two “clubs” as essential to their aspirations of becoming developed, democratic, European states, tied to “the West” in all its dimensions, rather than pointing backward, in their view, to the east and what they identify as the past.<sup>5</sup>

In all of Eastern and Central Europe, the EU is viewed more favorably by the public than NATO. Public support for the EU in most CEE countries is in the 50-70 percent range, while that for NATO is in the 30-40 percent range. The difference is

largely due to the fact that for most East/Central Europeans, the EU means affluence, prosperity, rights, and opportunity, while NATO stands for obligations and expenditures, a formula certain to produce disparate popularity among the two organizations. In addition, NATO's bombing campaign in the former Yugoslavia frightened many East/Central Europeans, reminding them of past wars and instability in their own countries. But the leadership and informed public opinion in CEE recognize that they cannot have the benefits of the EU without also taking on the obligations of NATO. Moreover, they believe that, as in Spain in the early 1980s, once their governments explain and present the case for NATO, they can succeed in bringing support up to over 50 percent. In no country of CEE is there much doubt that they need and want to join both NATO and the EU.

In the early 1990s, and now again recently as Russia puts pressure on members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and others to conform to its policies, protection from Russia was, and remains, one of the primary reasons for the CEE countries to join NATO and the EU. But in this respect one must discriminate between countries. First, while all of the CEE nations are wary of Russia, those countries that physically border on "the Bear," with no buffer states in between—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are the ones who fear Russia the most. Second, those states who were once members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—again the three Baltic states, who also have sizable Russian populations within their borders—as distinct from those countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania) that were part of the Warsaw Pact but had at least some nominal independence from the USSR—feel more threatened by Russia. In addition, Russia made it very clear that, while it objects strongly to all eastward expansion of NATO, it particularly objected to NATO's expansion into those countries of the former USSR.

NATO means something different to the various countries of the region. The CEE countries tend to see it as a collective security agreement which guarantees that the other European NATO members and the United States will come to their defense if they are ever attacked by their neighbors, especially, Russia. Meanwhile, in seeking not to awaken and invite a drastic reaction from the slumbering, sorely wounded, and greatly diminished Russian Bear, the U.S. sought for a time (prior to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack) to make the case to the Russians that NATO was no longer a collective security agreement aimed at them but more like a political club that even they could eventually join—a sales pitch that the Russians never bought. Meanwhile, the debate goes on in academic as well as policy circles as to whether NATO's Article 5 really is a collective security agreement calling for an automatic response by allies if one country is attacked, or if it allows for any discretion. Naturally, the CEE countries, fearing Russia, emphasize the language that seems to support an automatic response, while the U.S. and the Western countries tend to stress the language implying discretion.

A second, major CEE reason for wanting "in" is economic. The EU and NATO, especially the former, stand for affluence, prosperity, and the good life of which the CEE countries wish to become a part. Recall that Eastern/Central Europe, like Southern Europe earlier on, has always been on the poor, underdeveloped, "semi-feudal" periphery

of Europe. Joining the EU is seen as a way of overcoming past underdevelopment and entering the rich man's club, indeed what may be the world's richest, most affluent area. Entering "Europe," writ large, makes them eligible for aid, transfers, loans, investment, and subsidies on a grand scale. Just as Greece, Portugal, and Spain benefitted enormously in the 1980s and 1990s from joining the (then) European Economic Community (EEC) and receiving massive infusions of investment and aid, Eastern/Central Europe views joining the EU as giving them an opportunity to leapfrog into the world of the developed or First World nations. Unfortunately for them, there is far less assistance money available for the CEE than there was for Southern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s.

Third, the CEE countries see membership in the EU and NATO as securing, anchoring, and guaranteeing their still fragile democracies. These are countries that have had democratic elections, often several of them, thus qualifying them as "democracies" at least formally. But in terms of becoming solid, liberal, pluralistic, human-rights-observing democracies, most of the countries still have a considerable way to go. Only a few of them (the Baltic countries, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, now joined by Slovakia) have begun the "second generation" reforms (judicial reform, tax reform, budgetary and policy-making transparency, etc.) necessary to complete and consolidate their democratic transitions. They also need time to change their political cultures—their beliefs and ways of behaving—to conform to democratic understandings and practices. Because their transitions to democracy are still incomplete, the CEE countries see joining the EU and NATO as both a "Good Housekeeping" badge of approval for accomplishments made so far and as an incentive, inducement, and even requirement to complete the process.

These are all pragmatic reasons to join the EU and NATO that Americans can understand; the fourth reason is harder. It may be called "civilizational" in the sense that, for the Eastern and Central Europeans, joining Europe is about more than butter quotas and military hardware. Historically, underdeveloped and on the fringes of Western civilization, CEE was the butt of endless cruel, ethnic jokes that portrayed it not just as backward but as barbaric and stupid. For a thousand years, CEE was viewed as inferior, racially tinged (because of Hun, Tatar, Mongol, and Ottoman invasions), and incapable of European achievement. These patronizing, condescending attitudes bred resentment in the east and gigantic national inferiority complexes. So "joining Europe" is not just about wheat and military modernization, it is also a symbol that CEE has joined "Western civilization," that it is no longer backward and barbaric but as good as the rest, that after centuries of isolation and underdevelopment its ties to the West have been cemented. Indeed, above and beyond all the practical reasons for joining NATO and the EU, I would submit that this socio-psychological motive may be the most important of all.<sup>6</sup>

This consideration also helps explain the ups and downs in the CEE public opinion polls regarding joining the EU and NATO. The fact is, as we see in the next section, that Western Europe's enthusiasm, and that of the U.S. and NATO as well, for bringing more states in has waxed and waned over the years. Currently, while political leaders strongly support enlargement, public support is waning, although one should not



overstate this, and both EU officials as well as officials of the major European governments believe that, when the time comes, they can turn European public opinion in positive directions. In the CEE countries, however, Western Europe's negative vibes produce a reaction where they proclaim publicly that they didn't want to join Europe's "old" clubs anyhow. This is just a matter of saving face: when the formal invitation actually is issued, we can be sure CEE will be eager to accept.

Meanwhile, there are still some political uncertainties. While most of CEE applicant states will soon be in conformity with EU and NATO requirements, some are lagging—especially Bulgaria and Romania—and there is not great expectation that they will catch up soon; neither is there enthusiasm for admitting them quickly even if they do turn around. Cyprus's candidacy, which once seemed assured, is hung up and may remain there on the seemingly intractable issue of still-bitter Greek-Turkish relations. And in recently reformist Slovakia, an election is likely to occur between now and the EU or NATO accession decisions, which could bring authoritarian-populist and anti-free market Vladimir Meciar back to power. Meciar's return would almost certainly torpedo Slovakia's chances, although present Slovak officials are betting that they can so envelop the country in EU and NATO reform processes before the election that, no matter its outcome, membership will be all but a *fait accompli*.

## **Russian Interests**

Russian interests in EU and NATO expansion have been almost entirely negative, or at best cautious, though it is obvious Russia is far more opposed to NATO expansion than to the EU.

It is not fully appreciated in the United States, perhaps because U.S. officials and reporters mainly visit Westernized and relatively developed Moscow and St. Petersburg, how far Russia has disintegrated since the collapse of the superpower Soviet Union in 1989-91. Instead of being the leader of the so-called Second World of developed communist states, Russia has sunk to near-Third World levels. Virtually everything has disintegrated: the economy, the armed forces, the educational system, health care, institutional infrastructure, transportation, social welfare, housing, public services, everything.<sup>7</sup> At this stage, therefore, Russia is not in a position to be a threat to any serious power, although it does have a nuclear arsenal (also rusting and disintegrating) that policy-makers need to keep under control. It sometimes blusters and threatens in ways that frighten Europeans and remind them of the Cold War. Currently, with its economy recovering somewhat due to higher oil prices, Russia is also able to put pressure on its smaller neighbors, mainly those in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) that have historically been a part of Greater Russia, but also those of the "near abroad," which includes the Central and East European states.

Russia's interest in Europe and the EU is in the prosperity, affluence, and aid that it would like to have access to and acquire. Russia also desires acceptance by the West, though for political and nationalistic reasons it cannot say this publicly. But both Europe

and Russia know that it cannot possibly qualify for EU admission anytime soon, or maybe ever. In the early 1990s the vision of a Europe “whole and free,” stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals or perhaps all the way to Vladivostok, had some resonance both in Western Europe and in Russia and may still have some future possibilities. However, Europe has its hands full with its present, limited, eastern enlargement, and Russia often has been ambivalent about “joining Europe.” That, of course, is a centuries-long and hotly contested issue in internal Russian politics and it remains divisive today. Russia wants to be known as a “civilized” country and, to some extent, that means becoming “Western,” but what precisely that means and how far to go are questions that powerfully impact Russian pride, nationalism, and sense of uniqueness or distinctiveness. Understandingly, Russia is divided over these issues. Meanwhile, as Russia has stuttered, declined, and proved enormously corrupt, Europe’s aid, investment, and enthusiasm for assisting Russia have also dried up. Europe is still casting about for some “half-way house” or “associated” status for Russia (not an EU member but offering some hope for future possibilities), but even that limited relationship is greeted with ambivalence and considerable opposition on both sides.

Russia has been vigorously opposed to NATO expansion eastward but it also knows that it is all but powerless to prevent the enlargement.<sup>8</sup> During its decade of disintegration in the 1990s, Russia saw its borders and, hence, power progressively reduced and is at this stage surrounded and hemmed in by American influence. First, it lost its Warsaw Pact allies in Eastern Europe; then, it saw U.S. influence expand in the CIS states of Belarus, Ukraine, and Georgia; now there is a Black Sea Cooperative Council, as well as expanded U.S. and Turkish presence in Central Asia; and finally, there are U.S. efforts to influence what is left (“rump”) of Russia by inviting it to join the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and NATO itself through the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) signed in 1997 as a way of deepening Russia-NATO cooperation. While Central and Eastern Europe continued to view NATO as a collective security agreement, the U.S. tried to convince Russia that it was now more like a peaceful political association for cooperation and democracy, a line Russia never quite bought into.\* Nor have the U.S.-sponsored efforts to seduce and civilize Russia by luring it into these joint military cooperative arrangements been very successful; in fact, they have so far been fraught with tension, Russian absenteeism, misunderstanding, and the absence of Russian cooperation, though under President Vladimir Putin this situation may be changing.

While Russia is a weak, decimated power, but now somewhat rejuvenated by new, vigorous leadership in the person of President Putin as well as a suddenly (thanks to swelling oil revenues) more expansive economy, it has been able to bully, intimidate, and

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\*The author was once asked by the U.S. government to tour Russia to present this viewpoint in a series of lectures. Naturally, I accepted the invitation to tour Russia, actually gave the Russians a more honest assessment than the USG wanted, but nevertheless had the experience of being shoved aside, my lecture interrupted, the microphone seized, and even roughed up by Russian (mostly older, Communist Party, secret police, and military) officials who objected vigorously and at times violently to even a balanced, even-handed discussion of NATO.

expand its leverage against its neighbors. The CIS countries in Central Asia as well as Belarus, Ukraine, and Georgia have been the main recipients of this pressure, which chiefly takes the form of threats to restrict energy supplies and seeks to draw them closer into Moscow's orbit both economically and strategically. The U.S. has sought, not very vigorously or vociferously, to counter these Russian pressures; Europe has been largely silent. In part, it already has a full plate with the currently ongoing EU enlargement, in part it prefers not to get involved in what seem to most Europeans to be distant squabbles bearing on internal Russian affairs, and in part, despite the Soviet Union's disintegration and Russia's decline, it remains fearful of Russia. Russia has played on these ancient fears by sounding bullish and tough (despite its weaknesses), by trying to divide the U.S. from its European allies on various issues, and by threatening to introduce nuclear weapons into Kaliningrad—that odd, unsupportable, potentially unstable, bit of Russian territory in the Baltics (and thus “within” Europe in ways that Russia is not) which is separated from the main Russian territory by Belarus and Lithuania.

The main issue is Russia's reaction to the possibility of NATO expansion to include the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. While Russia is opposed to all NATO expansion eastward, it has been especially opposed to a NATO enlargement that would include these three countries. First, because alone among the NATO candidate countries, the Baltic states were part of the USSR, not independent countries, and so far, Russia, even in its weakened condition, has not been willing to concede any part of the former Soviet Union to the West. Second, there are significant Russian minorities in each of the Baltic countries (30 percent in Estonia, 34 percent in Latvia, 8.5 percent in Lithuania), and even though the Balts have moved to regularize the legal status of these citizens, Russia continues to raise the issue of minority rights as a way of inhibiting the Baltics' EU and NATO candidacies. Third, Russia as well as those Russians living in the Baltic republics, still often harbor visions of a restored “Greater Russia” that would include the Baltics and perhaps serve again as an Eastern alternative to the West. While the Baltic states themselves continue to lobby Washington and European capitals strenuously on behalf of both “club” memberships, the Europeans, still worried about the dormant Russian bear and unwilling to risk arousing its wrath, have often been negative toward the Baltics' NATO membership. The Americans, at the same time, continue to debate whether one Baltic country (probably Lithuania or maybe Estonia) should be invited to join, on the logic that one country alone would not antagonize the Russians overly, versus admitting all three at once, following the logic that having Russia react vociferously once is preferable to its objecting on each of three separate admissions. A possible U.S.-European compromise that would accommodate Russian interests would be to admit the Baltic countries to the EU but not to NATO, while at the same time giving the Balts some quasi-NATO security through the OSCE, enhanced PfP, and/or the Council of Baltic Sea States.

## **EU/European Interests**

The European Union and the European member states (whose interests do not always exactly correspond) also have a strong stake—cultural, social, political, economic, strategic—in the enlargement of the EU and NATO.<sup>9</sup>

First is the idealism and glowing vision of the early 1990s of a Europe “whole and free,” stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond. This implies that after the two terribly destructive World Wars of this century, Nazism and Stalinism, the Cold War, the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing, a Europe at peace, stable, prosperous, and democratic could finally have a possibility. In many quarters this vision still holds sway, although more recently it has been tempered by the realization of the time and costs involved. Central/Eastern Europe, and especially Russia and the CIS, are increasingly seen as a two- or three-generation project, not an undertaking that would take one or two or three years. It is especially significant that the EU’s plans and criteria for expansion were drawn up during this earlier and hopeful stage rather than the more tempered and realistic one that followed. The EU agencies in Brussels still believe that their expansionist plans can be carried out through their own and member governments’ positive publicity programs, despite declining support in European public opinion. Moreover, the EU as a central bureaucracy remains committed to the enlargement process, argues that the entire, decade-long process is nearing completion and can’t be stopped now that the wheels are constantly turning and that positive closure needs to be reached on this issue. Others are skeptical that a Europe that proved so indecisive on Yugoslavia can ever get its act together sufficiently to carry out and complete the enlargement process.

Second and related, European enlargement, economically through the EU and strategically through NATO, is driven by a desire to achieve peace and security in Central/Eastern Europe. At the end of the Cold War, two major problems were seen: what to do about Russia and what to do about CEE, that area in the heart of the Eurasian land mass lying between historic Germany and Russia that had for centuries been a source of instability and conflict. One solution was to think of this area as a buffer between Europe and Russia, another was to integrate it into the West. And we now know from former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft’s statements that a conscious decision was made to opt for solution two, to solve the historic problem of CEE’s instability by integrating it into Europe through the expansion of the EU and NATO eastward, knowing that enlargement would necessarily come at the expense of antagonizing and isolating Russia.<sup>10</sup> Russia correctly saw European enlargement, particularly NATO, as a hostile act, exacerbated by the near-neuralgic rejection of Russia by the CEE countries. Attempts to ease Russian fears through the PfP, assurances that NATO is non-threatening, and the creation of a Permanent Joint Council within NATO for Russia had not achieved the desired end and may have increased Russia’s sense of isolation. However, under President Putin, Russia began to warm to its role in NATO, and the Alliance moved to open its arms wider to Russia. Russia at this stage cannot hope to join either the EU or NATO anytime soon, and they see this negativity as perhaps permanently closing the door on their integration into Europe. Meanwhile, as much as CEE seems poised on the verge of not just joining the EU and NATO but of being

integrated into Europe in a “civilizational” sense, the buffer talked of earlier has moved farther east to encompass all or parts of the CIS states: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, maybe even (in the security sense) Armenia, Azerbaijan, and parts of Central Asia.

Europe wants protection from the Russian “bear” but at the same time it sees the bear as dormant and hibernating, and, given its size, resources, and nuclear weapons, does not want to arouse the bear to hostility. Because of its proximity to Russia and the experience of the Cold War divide, Europe feels this issue more intensely than the United States does and, therefore, is more sensitive about which countries to include in NATO. The U.S. does not want to resume the Cold War but it has also been more aggressive about hemming Russia in through a variety of new eastward-oriented alliance and cooperative programs (i.e., PfP, OSCE, Council of Europe, the Black Sea Cooperation Pact, GUUAM, others) than has Europe. Both of these views may overstate Russia’s current or future threat potential, for if the country is viewed from a comparative politics perspective rather than an international relations one, it is a fractured state that, apart from the careless use of its nuclear weapons or their fear potential, is not a major threat at present.

Europe is also, third, in favor of expanding democracy, human rights, and, in some of the more ideologically driven countries, social democracy to Central/Eastern Europe. Quite a number of the Western European countries sought to assist Russia as well as the CEE countries in their transitions to democracy. Aid, investment, and much political advice (not all of it wanted), therefore, followed. But afterward Russia and much of the CIS proved to be a “black hole” into which aid and investment go, never to be seen again. On this score, hence, the Europeans have largely come around to the American view, although without acknowledging this evolution publicly. Like the Americans, the Europeans now view democracy in CEE both as a good in itself and as a means to an end: peace and stability in a contiguous territory not well-known historically for these traits. Russia and the CIS countries are viewed as less hopeful and, in any case, too large and too poor for Europe to take on at this stage.

Fourth and continuing in this positive vein, Central/Eastern Europe has begun to prove profitable for West European investments. That was not always the case. In the early 1990s, for instance, when Western investment was going into Russia for the first time and Lufthansa Airlines was opening up regular service to Russia’s interior cities assuming that its businessmen would soon follow, the expectations of quick, or at least, eventual profits were high. But, for the most part, Russia and the CIS have not proved very profitable, with the result that Western investments have been quietly redirected toward CEE, Europe’s “near abroad.” The result is that Scandinavian investments in the Baltics, German investment in Poland and the Czech Republic, Austrian investments in Hungary, and Italian investment in Slovenia have turned around and started to show a profit—in some cases, a considerable profit. These investments plus, of course, ties of culture and history also help explain why some West European states are more interested in some CEE states’ accession to NATO and the EU than others. Meanwhile, the

redirection of investment to the CEE means that Russia and the CIS have largely been left holding the bag.

But there are strong negatives as well, especially at the popular level, to Europe's expansion to the east.<sup>11</sup> First and foremost, West Europeans fear the loss of jobs, security, and lower wages that eastward expansion implies—comparable to fears in the U.S. over competition from cheap Mexican labor. Simply put, Western Europe fears it will be overrun by East European immigrants willing to work for less and, therefore, taking West European jobs. Under the EU's Schengen rules, labor as well as capital is free to move about within the EU borders once a nation joins, but immigration from outside the EU borders will be tightly controlled. Austria, for example, which is literally surrounded by potential new EU members, is particularly worried because a number of CEE urban/industrial centers, such as Slovakia's capital of Bratislava, are located right on its border; Austria fears what it calls "commuter immigration" from these centers, which will cost Austrian jobs. While there is abundant sociological evidence showing that most Central and East Europeans prefer to stay put in their own communities even if given a chance to move,<sup>12</sup> nevertheless West European popular opinion fears a large influx. Moreover, this finding of likely lower-than-expected immigration does not help Austria's "commuter immigration" problem. Hence, Austria, with strong German backing, has proposed a "seven-year transition" period before the free movement of labor is allowed. Actually, under a provision of a "white paper" on immigration that is presently being circulated among EU members, there is a two-year EU restriction on the free movement of labor (so individual members can let in as many immigrants as they want), followed by a three-year period in which the free movement of labor is provided for but not necessarily in the whole of EU territory, followed by another couple of years of "exceptions." In this way Austria (and Germany) can claim for domestic political reasons that there is a "seven-year" transition, while the EU can say it stands for the "free movement of labor," and those prosperous countries who actually want more immigrant labor can also claim victory.

Immigration is the key issue but West Europeans also harbor other fears about eastern enlargement. Among the most important is taxes, which West Europeans see as inevitably going up if the requirement is, through aid, grants, and subsidies, to bring the eastern economies up to EU levels. Particularly if you're already paying 40-60 percent of your income in taxes, the last thing you want is to see those skyrocket to 50-70 percent. In addition, West Europeans worry greatly about assimilating the Easterners whom they often refer to indiscriminately as "they" or "the other," and whom they think of as different, less developed, and often less "civilized." The result is some quite clear new dividing lines across Europe: to simplify only a little, "Christian" and "Western" countries are acceptable, Eastern Orthodox may be considered, while Islamic countries are out. In practical terms that means the Baltics, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, and probably Croatia (eventually) are "in" Europe; Romania and Bulgaria are marginal; and Albania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Russia, and Turkey are out.

In addition to immigration and higher taxes, Western Europe also sees the East as a source of potential “problems.” Such problems are often vague and undifferentiated in the popular mind, evoking images of national and cultural stereotypes and even racism. Eastern Europe is thus often perceived as a source of crime, violence, instability, racketeering, prostitution, drugs, abused children, and more. And of course, since the Easterners “don’t work very hard” (a contradiction, if one of the arguments against enlargement is that they take Westerners’ jobs), they will be a drag on Western Europe’s already financially strained welfare and pension systems. It is certainly convenient and comfortable, however inaccurate on cultural and nationalistic grounds, to believe that one’s own fellow citizens are entirely faultless in causing all the problems above and that all the blame should be attributed completely to eastern immigrants—a position which demagogic politicians such as Jorg Haider of Austria (which really does have a rising crime problem that is linked to immigration) have been able to exploit. And even though the racism and culturalism involved in such stereotyping is misplaced and off the mark, such ideas do have a powerful popular appeal; it is an unfortunate fact that it is what people believe more than what is objectively true which often counts politically.

These are the main overall European worries but there are also concerns that are specific to individual countries. First, there are what we might call “Front-Line states” (Germany, Austria, and Italy): those countries that are closest to Eastern Europe and, therefore, most strongly impacted by its problems—immigration, refugees, and crime. Second, are the Human-Rights Sensitives (The Netherlands, Belgium, Scandinavia): countries that while far from Eastern Europe are nevertheless especially vigilant about human rights abuses there particularly with regard to treatment of the Roma (Gypsies). Third are those countries called “Net EU Recipients” (Greece, Portugal, Spain): countries that have been receiving EU grants, loans, and subsidies since joining the organization in the 1980s and are now faced with the prospect of seeing many of those subsidies redirected to Central and Eastern Europe. Finally, it needs to be said that support for enlargement to the east is not uniform across Europe, with opposition strongest in Austria, Germany, Ireland, France, and Great Britain. Hence, the politics of dealing with the issue of enlargement, itself preeminently political, will vary from country to country as well.

The polls indicate that there is declining interest in EU and NATO enlargement, both in the West among member states and in the East among aspirants. The Western countries tend to see CEE as less potentially explosive than a decade ago, with greater stability and more viable economies than expected, and with Russia more disintegrated and less of a near-term danger than earlier thought. They also see expansion as very expensive and as a threat to their jobs, cultures, and ways of life. Therefore, there has been declining interest in enlargement in Western Europe, with the favorable ratings going roughly (depending on the country) from 60-70 percent to 40-50 percent. Both the Brussels bureaucracy and the Western governments believe they can turn this negative trend around with a large-scale publicity and educational campaign.

In the East, sentiment is more favorable because the Eastern countries will be the chief beneficiaries of enlargement. But they also recognize that small, mom-n-pop

businesses and agriculture will go under as a result of enlargement; patronage and opportunities for graft will be reduced; budgets must be kept under control; and that the capitalistic world out there is often mean and unforgiving. Hence, East European sentiment favoring enlargement has dipped from 80 to 50 or 60 percent. Polls favoring NATO membership tend to be twenty points or so below those favoring EU membership, in part because of the NATO bombing campaigns in the former Yugoslavia seen as excessively militaristic, in part because it makes little sense to Eastern politicians to expand military budgets when there is no threat and when popular social programs are threatened by austerity, and in part because the Easterners, naturally enough, would rather focus on the advantages of EU membership rather than the costs (in terms of new military training, equipment, etc.) of NATO. When the chips are down, however, all the Eastern countries can be expected to opt for both the EU and NATO because for them this is a matter of joining Western civilization, not just an economic or military affiliation.

One final point needs to be made in this section, and that concerns the differences between the EU and NATO enlargement processes. Contrary to earlier expectations, these are not entirely congruent processes on parallel tracks proceeding hand in hand. First, the EU has extended formal invitations to the aspirant countries to apply for membership (implying that once they meet the requirement, the EU will have no further reason to turn them away); NATO has only asked aspirants to improve their military situation, meaning that an invitation may come later on. Second, with NATO's Partnership for Peace, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and other programs, the Western countries have developed a flexible system of half-way houses for aspiring members; the EU has little such flexibility or part-way solutions. Third, the criteria for NATO, because they are highly subjective, can be relatively easily fudged or glossed over; with the EU, since we're talking real money, the requirements are much harder to fudge. And fourth, there is a political/financial tradeoff operating here: the U.S. would much prefer to see the EU expand as quickly as possible so as to modernize the CEE societies overall and thus assist them in preparing for NATO membership, whereas the EU would like to see NATO expand first to the east to provide a kind of "training ground" for EU enlargement.

## **U.S. Interests**

U.S. interests in Central and Eastern Europe are long-standing, having to do with the Cold War, NATO, the sense for many years that Eastern Europe was likely to be the Cold War's main venue and the potential invasion route into Western Europe for Warsaw Pact armies, repeated U.S. assurances over the years of support for Eastern European freedom and democracy, more recently Bosnia, Kosovo, the problems of the former Yugoslavia, and also terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

As the Wall fell, Eastern Europe asserted its independence, the Soviet Union disintegrated, and the Cold War ended in 1989-91, the U.S. perceived two key problems in this critical strategic area. The first was what to do about Russia; the second was what



to do about those historically unstable states of Eastern Europe lying between Russia and Western Europe. The decision could have been that Eastern/Central Europe would continue to serve as a buffer between East and West. Instead, the decision was made by the administration of George H. W. Bush, pushed along by its NATO allies, to solve the CEE problem by incorporating these countries into NATO and the EU, which could only come at the expense of Russia.<sup>14</sup> Russia would be hemmed in at one level through an expanded NATO, and at others through the Partnership for Peace extended to CIS members as well as Russia itself, plus a range of new U.S. aid and cooperation measures with Central Asia, the Caucasuses, and the Black Sea area. Meanwhile, the U.S. would seek to manage and control internal Russian political developments through its democratization program, aid and investment efforts, market reforms, programs to control nuclear weapons, IMF and World Bank assistance, etc. The U.S., in short, sought not just to democratize Russia but also to surround it, shrink it, limit its options, maintain its dormancy, and prevent a new Russian threat from arising. EU and NATO expansion into CEE was one of the primary means of accomplishing these goals.

A second goal of American policy was and is to democratize Russia. The issue can be looked at in one of two ways: either the United States values democracy in itself (which is useful for rhetorical purposes; in addition, most Americans subscribe to that view), or democracy can be seen as a means to an end, i.e., a stabler, less bellicose Russia (note the literature demonstrating that democracies do not go to war with each other). In the long run, however, it doesn't matter which motive is predominant; and the fact is, both are undoubtedly operating at the same time. That is, democracy is advanced whether we value it as a good in itself or as the best available means to ensure stability in Russia. In addition, by promoting the democracy agenda, the U.S. can stand for high moral purpose, rally congressional, media, and domestic support, and serve U.S. national interests at the same time.

Much the same arguments apply to economic development. The United States clearly prefers an economically developed, modernized Russia integrated into the EU, U.S., and world markets, seeing that as preferable to a poor, underdeveloped, unintegrated, isolated Russia. But once again the questions can be raised: Why do we prefer that solution? Do we value economic development for its own sake or because we wish to expand investment and trade with Russia? Or is it because we see economic development, trade, and European integration as a means to stabilize Russia, help it build a stable middle class, bring peace and security to the area, reduce nationalistic and jingoistic sentiment by diverting popular preoccupations to economic self-advancement, defuse a potentially bellicose Russia by channeling its energies to peaceful economic goals, and "civilize" it by incorporating it into the main European agencies—the EU and NATO? The obvious answer is that both of these sets of goals may happily be served at one and the same time. And again, like democracy, the goal of economic development/trade/integration serves a combination of purposes at the same time: high moral purpose, domestic agreement, and the national interest.

A third goal of U.S. policy, at least initially after the end of the Cold War, contemplated a string of buffer states across Central and Eastern Europe, from the Baltics

in the north to Yugoslavia and the Mediterranean in the south. The aim, once again, was to deprive Russia of its former Warsaw Pact allies, or satellites, and to shrink its size, power, potential, and forward presence. Many CEE politicians and intellectuals, such as Vaclav Havel, contemplated the same vision of an independent and culturally distinctive Central or “Middle” Europe, lying between Russia and Germany-Austria, a bridge between East and West but no longer a pawn in Cold War machinations, a vision that stretched back a thousand years into the area’s misty (and idealized) past. But many Central and East Europeans reacted emotionally against further ties with Russia, failed to see any advantages in serving as a “bridge” to the east, and, especially as Russia’s debility and impoverishment were realized, wanted little to do with it. Instead, it was the West that was attractive: its affluence, its freedom, and its “civilizational” influences in an area that was long considered, and considered itself, on the margins of Western civilization. Recognizing these pent-up aspirations, and in some cases anticipating them, U.S. and Western European policy also shifted, away from the notion of CEE as a buffer area and towards integrating them into the EU and NATO, with the consequences for Russia already noted. Hence, rather than a separate and independent Central Europe, we now have a group of CEE states clamoring for admission to “EUROPE,” writ large. Meanwhile, the “buffer” has moved east, encompassing Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Central Asia, and the Trans Caucuses.

Not only did the CEE states wish to be included within NATO, the EU, and “Western Civilization,” but their application to join NATO became, after the Cold War ended and the organization’s purposes were openly questioned, a way to resurrect and even save that potentially irrelevant organization. NATO’s purpose in Europe had long been, in the popular expression, “to keep the Russians out, Americans in, and Germany divided.” But the first objective had been accomplished with the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Russia is part of but not really “in” NATO), the third had become moot with Germany’s reunification, which left only the second purpose. Clearly, however, America’s continuing military-strategic presence in Europe—absent the Soviets—required a new rationale. NATO (and EU) enlargement provided a part of that rationale, and then came Bosnia and Kosovo—justified not so much by hard-headed American national interests in Southeast Europe (recall Secretary of State James Baker’s dismissive comment early in the Yugoslav conflict, “We don’t have a dog in that fight”) as, after the intervention had already begun, that the credibility of NATO was at stake. Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Southeastern Europe, in a sense, thus gave NATO something to do, a new mission and objective, at a time when the organization’s continued usefulness and even existence were being questioned.

Over the years, however, as Russia more-or-less democratized (even while continuing to slide downhill economically) and most of Central/Eastern Europe (even parts of the former Yugoslavia) continued on the democratic, economically reformist path, the CEE as well as European (NATO and EU) enlargement garnered fewer headlines and, therefore, less official attention or public interest. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary entered NATO in 1998 but, other than the celebratory headlines and pictures (of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright dancing for joy), there was almost no public debate about the merits (and lack of) of these three cases and the implications

of the decision for U.S. policy. The decision, as even NATO and Department of Defense officials readily acknowledge, was made exclusively on political grounds: the U.S. administration decided that it wanted these countries in NATO.

Today, however, the conditions are different: Central and Eastern Europe has stabilized, attention has waned, there appear to be no large or immediate crises in the area, and they are lower on the list of American priorities. In addition, the political conditions are quite different: whereas Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic all had sizable constituencies in the United States and in critical swing states that could be mobilized for political action (recall, in the heat of the 1996 election campaign both Bill Clinton and Bob Dole called for these countries' admission to NATO), that is not so true of the present applicant countries. There are sizable and activist communities of Slovaks, Slovenes, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and others in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois (all swing states) and their ambassadors in Washington, just like other ambassadors with important U.S. constituencies, have been busily mobilizing their communities for the showdown vote; but it will be a close call and there are many uncertainties as to whether Congress, in its treaty-ratifying as well as power-of-the-purse roles, will go along.

Interviews at NATO headquarters in Brussels, at the Department of Defense office of European affairs in the Pentagon, and with political officers, ambassadors, and military attachés in U.S. embassies in the capitals of the applicant countries are revealing. First, they show a quite sharp split between the civilian officials, who almost to a person favor NATO enlargement as a desirable political goal, and military officials who see applicant countries skeptically as “not yet ready” or as “recipients but not contributors” to NATO. The latter are laying the groundwork to blame civilian officials (the mantra is well-nigh universal that it will be a “political” and not a “military” decision) if anything goes wrong or enlargement proves more expensive (almost certain) than presently contemplated.

Secondly, and this applies mainly to DOD officials who must testify on Capitol Hill and make the case for enlargement, they see themselves as having three main constituencies: Russia, the European allies, and Congress. With regard to Russia, these officials say the bear is presently dormant and in hibernation, and we do not want to do anything to rouse its ire or provoke a bellicose attitude, let alone a renewal of the Cold War. But that ignores both how much Russia has changed and how far it has disintegrated and that it is not in a position now or anytime soon to pose a major threat – although it can still sound bullying and threatening and cause some degree of problem. As far as the European allies are concerned, they are far closer to Russia than is the U.S., still worried about it, and even more inclined than DOD officials to let sleeping dogs (or bears) lie—once again ignoring or perhaps not fully apprized of Russia's weak and disintegrated state or not willing politically to risk even the slightest tremor out of Moscow. These worries about Russia, whether exaggerated or not, have major implications for some of the candidate countries, particularly the three Baltic states.

The biggest unknown, however, is the U.S. Congress, both House and Senate, which must approve new NATO enlargements. First, Congress has not yet focused sharply or specifically on the issue; second, neither Congress nor the public see NATO enlargement to CEE as the same critical issue it was a decade ago; third, Congress is not yet sure how the politics and political constituencies will play out on this issue. Fourth, Congress, knowing the costs involved and continuing problems of the three most recent expansion members, is very worried about the expenses involved in bringing the new NATO members up to even minimum levels of military interoperability; fifth, it is worried about whether the U.S., under NATO's collective security Article 5, will be called on to police every border skirmish, ethnic clash, or signs of instability in Eastern Europe; and sixth, Congress could well go along with NATO planners' and the Pentagon's assessment that none of the applicant countries is yet "ready" for NATO admission.

In addition, not only is isolationism—the sense that the U.S. should avoid foreign entanglements unless our interests are directly affected—a powerful force in the U.S. in the wake of the end of the Cold War, but so is unilateralism (mainly in the Republican Party but by no means exclusively there), the notion that the U.S. should avoid almost any treaty or alliance—including most importantly NATO—that constrains U.S. action or limits American sovereignty. We saw a manifestation of that sentiment in the abrupt, unilateral abandonment by the Bush Administration of the Kyoto Treaty on global warming, and, although NATO is much more favorably viewed by the Administration than the Kyoto Treaty, we may well see some of the same sentiments expressed in the debate over NATO enlargement. We will have to wait to see the effect of the anti-terrorism campaign on these sentiments and on the debate. However, these eight reasons and others still to be expressed may well be enough to kill or indefinitely postpone NATO's further enlargement; almost certainly it means there will be no "big bang" admission of all the new NATO applicants but rather a more selective and/or gradual process.

### **Enlargement Processes**

The criteria for admission to the EU and NATO are of two kinds, technical and political. In general terms, the criteria for both organizations are similar and parallel: what a country accomplishes in attempting to qualify for the EU will also help it get into NATO, and vice versa. But there are subtle and interesting differences that help explain why the enlargement processes in these two large Euro-Atlantic organizations have not run exactly parallel. In addition, while the technical criteria are important and must be met by an applicant country in order to qualify for admission, it is the political criteria that are more interesting and that ultimately will be determinative of who gets admitted and who will be left out. Hence, this paper devotes more attention to the political factors involved, an understanding of the technical processes is also necessary.

### *Technical Criteria*

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union were the triggers that unleashed the process of integrating Central and Eastern Europe into the EU and NATO. Fearing instability and/or chaos in the Central European area and wishing to prevent the countries of the area from falling back into the Russian orbit, the U.S. and the European Union sought ways to integrate these nations into the stable, affluent, democratic West. Enlargement of the EU and of NATO was seen as a key means to achieve that goal.

As early as 1991, the EU had signed European Association Agreements (EAA) with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland.<sup>15</sup> EAAs were signed with Bulgaria and Romania in 1993, the Baltic states in 1995, Slovenia in 1996, and Slovakia in 1998. Cyprus and Malta also signed EAA agreements, bringing the total to twelve. Turkey has been declared “eligible” for EU membership but is still viewed as problematic by the EU. The EAAs established a framework designed to support the gradual integration of these countries into the EU through harmonization of regulatory structures, technical standards, competition laws, opening of services, free trade, etc. Criteria for social, political, and cultural convergence with the EU were also adopted.

At its 1993 Copenhagen summit, the European Council, which was put in charge of managing enlargement, defined the political and economic criteria to be considered for EU accession. In 1994 in Essen, the Council requested the design of a strategy for the accession of new members. In 1995 at Cannes, the Council identified the key legislative, regulatory, and institutional aspects required for accession. Under the PHARE (originally, “Poland and Hungary: Assistance for the Reconstruction of the Economy,” but later extended to include twelve more countries) program, the EU designed a plan to bring EU members and applicant countries together to provide information on community matters, to assist the reform efforts, and to provide pre-accession assistance funds. In 1996 the Council meeting in Luxembourg required regular reports from its staff reviewing the progress of each applicant according to the Copenhagen criteria. In 1997, *Agenda 2000* provided a comprehensive statement of accession criteria, obligations of membership, and the strategy of enlargement. This document together with the EAAs constitute the core of the institutional requirements for enlargement. More recently, a meeting in Nice reopened what appeared to have become a stalled enlargement process.

The criteria for EU enlargement now include the following: at the political level applicant countries must establish democracy and the rule of law, must respect human rights, and must demonstrate respect for minorities. The economic criteria include the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to withstand competitive pressures and market forces within the Union. Other obligations of membership include acceptance of the aims of political, economic, and monetary union, adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, and the administrative and judicial capacity to apply the *acquis*. Each of these main categories is then broken down into further sub-criteria or “chapters” to which the applicant countries must also adhere.

To help promote as well as monitor the process of conforming to these criteria, the EU has by now established an office in each of the EU candidate countries. These offices are well staffed with professional technicians and observers whose role is to assist the applicant countries in meeting the requirements but also to oversee the process and issue some sharp and often quite critical periodic reports on progress so far.<sup>16</sup> The applicant country is then invited to respond to these reports, offer its own point of view, but also make corrections. Several conclusions emerge from a systematic examination of these offices: (1) they are staffed by highly competent EU officials who are independent of and objective toward the countries to which they are assigned; (2) their reports are detailed, exacting, perceptive, and surprisingly frank (for an international agency) about their specific country; (3) the criteria used and reports issued are more exacting and systematic than the parallel NATO reports on candidate countries (perhaps explainable by the fact these EU offices are largely staffed by lawyers, social scientists, and trained observers, whereas NATO reports are mainly done by military attachés whose analyses tend to be more impressionistic); and, (4) one cannot conceive that the EU would staff these offices with thirty or forty persons in each country unless the EU was dedicated to and convinced their candidacies would in the final analysis be successful.

In 1996, the so-called “first wave” countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia) were invited to begin negotiations for accession. These were the countries already considered by the EU to be “best prepared.” At the Helsinki Council meeting in 1999, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, and Romania were also invited to begin accession negotiations. Outside of CEE, Cyprus and Malta were similarly invited to begin negotiations. Among several of those in the second group, a race began to catch up with those in the first group since the EU has determined that merit and the meeting of the EU’s enlargement criteria are to be the measures used, not the order of the invitations issued to apply. Turkey was added to the EU “eligible” list mainly at the insistence of the U.S., thinking more in strategic than in economic terms.

There is a world of difference between the enactment of all this legislation and its actual implementation, which certainly will take two or three generations, not years. Herein enters a political problem, for the EU cannot hold the applicant countries at bay for that long, and the candidate countries are impatient and cannot wait that long. In addition, once a country meets all eighty thousand criteria and completes negotiations on all thirty-one chapters, what additional criteria could the EU use for keeping it out? The EU says the chapter negotiations are completed only “provisionally,” but denial of admission to an applicant country on the basis of that formality would constitute a lame excuse at such a late stage of the game and it would be almost impossible to sustain politically.

NATO’s criteria for admission were never so formally, elaborately, and mechanistically set out as were those for the EU, which gives NATO maximum flexibility in either accepting or rejecting new members. Additionally, NATO never issued formal invitations for countries to become candidates, thus avoiding the trap the EU fell into by specifying that once a country meets all the criteria the Union has no further basis for excluding them. NATO may eventually find itself in the same position

of “inevitability” (not “if” but “when”) as the EU but at least for now, NATO maintains the posture that through the Partnership for Peace and the Membership Action Plan (MAP) it is asking countries to bring themselves up to NATO standards, after which a membership invitation may or may not follow. In any case, in the meantime, the country will have vastly improved its economic, political, and security structures.

As with EU enlargement, the conception and criteria for NATO enlargement have evolved over time.<sup>17</sup> As early as July 1990, with Mikhail Gorbachev still in power and the Soviet Union still intact, NATO heads of state extended a “hand of friendship” to the east. Later that year, the first eastern “enlargement” took place through the unification of East and West Germany, the latter a NATO country. Then, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. and its NATO allies, not wanting to dilute the Alliance by expanding it, focused on strengthening the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe–OSCE in 1994), whose membership soon grew to fifty-three members. The OSCE included Russia and the new CIS countries as well as NATO members, but without an enforcement mechanism it was recognized as essentially toothless. Hence, in late 1991, the U.S. created the North Atlantic Cooperative Council (NACC), also including Russia and CIS, as a further institution for consultation and cooperation on security issues. But the NACC was similarly conceived as a consultative rather than decision-making body and thus, also lacked teeth.

As these early, partial steps indicate, initially, there was little support in the U.S. government or among the allies for NATO enlargement. A handful of U.S. strategic thinkers supported expansion of the organization to the east,<sup>18</sup> but it was really Germany’s initiative in early 1993, aimed at stabilizing its eastern border as well as the economies of the CEE countries, that triggered the NATO enlargement process. U.S. senior officials at the State Department and the National Security Council (not the Department of Defense) acknowledged that a U.S.-led NATO enlargement process could stabilize the eastern countries, demonstrate that the U.S. and not Germany was the key driving force, demonstrate the continuing relevance of NATO, and, not coincidentally, serve some politically important ethnic constituencies in the United States in the run-up to the 1996 election. But because there were still many reservations (costs, worries about Russia’s response, whether an enlarged NATO could still be an effective NATO, the preparedness of the potential new members), in 1994, the U.S. and its NATO allies produced a new compromise, the Partnership for Peace (PfP).

The PfP agreement stated that NATO would “expect and welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our east, as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe.” NATO invited CSCE and NACC countries to participate in PfP, defining their own role and scope in the program in negotiations with the sixteen (later nineteen when the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined) NATO members. NATO would establish sixteen-plus-one, later nineteen-plus-one, consultations with individual countries concerning reform of their military institutions through permanent partner offices at NATO headquarters in Brussels and at a military planning unit in Mons, Belgium. In

other words, countries (including Russia and CIS) were free to join PfP or not, and could participate more or less in accord with their own capabilities, wishes, and interests. At the same time, NATO was in a strong position to link partnership and eventual membership with specific reforms and norms to which the country had to agree if it aspired to membership. PfP was an inspired, even ingenious idea that has worked out—rare in policy-making—better than expected. MAP was a later, more detailed and more elaborate program to help applicant countries reform their military structures— in many ways, NATO’s counterpart to the EU’s *acquis communautaire*.

Although NATO still proclaims to be a collective security organization, and that is how the aspirant CEE countries seeking guarantees against Russia’s future or potential expansionist proclivities continue to see it, in fact the processes of the first enlargement to manifestly, militarily-unprepared countries tended to minimize the strategic purpose in favor of vague and less-strict political criteria. This posture in turn alienated U.S. military officials who want to maintain the strategic emphasis within NATO, who recognize the severe military limitations of the three new member states, and who emphasize that further enlargement will impose additional costs and immense organizational efforts, in a time of generally declining defense resources, personnel, and public support of the alliance. However, the CEE countries’ cooperation in the war against terrorism will boost their chances of NATO admission.

While NATO’s criteria for admission of new members are not as detailed and elaborate as the EU’s, there are criteria. Moreover, and parallel to the EU, these have been more clearly spelled out over the years, making it politically more difficult to deny an invitation to membership to a country once it meets the criteria. NATO must enlarge unless it is willing to risk the fall of the elected, democratic governments that worked hard to meet the criteria, and thus precipitate the very instability and conflict in Central and Eastern Europe that the Alliance wants to prevent. The basic criteria are:

- democracy (although not clearly defined);
- a market economy (again without clear definition);
- civilian control of the military (without degrees and gradations recognized);
- a responsible foreign policy toward its neighbors (i.e., no post-NATO membership claims on its neighbors’ territories);
- a credible PfP track record of upgrading and reforming the armed forces and the defense ministry;
- building NATO-compatible military forces and interoperability (which may mean only a single elite unit);
- a willingness to participate in NATO activities (such as assisting in Bosnia or Kosovo or in the war on terrorism);
- being a net contributor to NATO and not just a recipient of NATO assistance; and
- the strategic importance of the country.

These often vague standards were, as with the EU, soon supplemented by more detailed criteria. The first step in the PfP program was for the applicant countries to sign “framework agreements,” similar to EU Association Agreements. The country would



then prepare “presentation documents” that identified its objectives, particularly if it sought NATO membership or a more limited role. Each “partner” would next submit an Individual Partnership Program (IPP), identifying its assets and how it would work with NATO. The PfP countries were subsequently required to list steps taken toward meeting these goals, again similar to the EU’s closings of “chapters.” A Partnership Work Program (PWP) was also established to indicate NATO activities undertaken to meet their partnership goals, as well as a Planning and Review Process (PRP) to guide PfP states toward NATO compatibility. These and other steps through PfP and MAP indicate the NATO enlargement process has become approximately as formalistic and stylized as the EU accession process, leading, in addition, to elaborate bureaucratic procedures and mountains of paperwork as well as to a certain “inevitability” of expansion because once the great wheels of the process start turning, it becomes almost impossible politically and bureaucratically to reverse them given the negative consequences of instability and government failure.

At first, the countries that were serious about joining NATO saw the PfP as another strategy of postponement. NATO was forced to respond that participation in PfP and then MAP would indeed lead to NATO membership; if it did not, what would be the logic of a country going through all the reforms and expenditures of improving its military (including raising the defense budget at a time of both budgetary austerity and pressing social needs) only to be turned down in the end? These assurances to the eastern applicants in turn had the effect of further alienating the Russians, who subsequently reduced their PfP cooperation and all but stopped participating in the Joint Council at NATO headquarters that had been especially created for them. And as Russia’s uncooperative attitude, bellicose posturing, and blatant pressures on its CIS neighbors increased, the desire of the CEE countries to achieve protection under the NATO umbrella increased. Meanwhile, the technical and procedural wheels of their efforts to meet the NATO criteria kept turning, ultimately making it harder and harder either to turn them down or keep them on the string indefinitely. President Putin’s recent cooperation with the West in the anti-terrorism campaign reduced the tension over NATO and its enlargement to the east, though there still may be a cost to pay for Russian cooperation.

### *Political Considerations*

We are now nearing the finale of these processes—the end game. The string is running out; everyone recognizes that the day of reckoning is coming.<sup>19</sup> Decisions cannot be put on hold forever without it jeopardizing the very purposes of the twin EU and NATO enlargements: peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, reform, and security in Central and Eastern Europe. Although both the EU and NATO would prefer to draw out the process for a longer time and must sound hard-nosed about it—both because the applicant countries are, in fact, not yet fully prepared and because they know that once the admission signal is finally given, all incentive for prying further reform out of the applicants is lost—decision time is at hand. NATO has a summit scheduled in Prague for November 2002 at which it must decide something. The EU accession process will also be all but completed by the end of 2002, similarly calling forth decisions from this

institution. Although the final results of both processes are still unknown and unknowable, following are some political variables presented in summary form that will help shape the outcome:

1. Both EU and NATO enlargement have by now acquired a momentum of their own; once that momentum gains force, it is very hard to reverse it again. Moreover, the farther along the process moves, the possibility of turning countries down is further complicated. The events of September 11, 2001, may have accelerated the enlargement process since Russia now seems more cooperative, the terrorist threat has proven both real and close at hand, and the U.S. has emphasized its strategic and international interests.
2. Both the EU and NATO have a record of encouraging the new prospective members and of promising enlargement; given that record and the expectations raised, it would again be difficult to change course. In his June 2001 speech in Warsaw, President George W. Bush went on record as favoring NATO enlargement “from the Baltic to the Black seas,” thus encouraging a large number of potential new members.
3. There is a certain economic and security logic in enlargement to include the CEE countries in “completing Europe” up to the CIS/Russia (in the case of the Baltics) strategic border, or to the socio-cultural-economic-religious-political border of “Western civilization.” This seems to conform to what we most currently see as the “natural” border of Europe.
4. The applicant countries were invited to apply; once they then meet the criteria, by what additional reasoning could their admission be further postponed or denied? Recall, this logic applies more strongly to the EU than to NATO but it is not absent in the latter. Decisions could still be postponed but not indefinitely; and, once invited, it is hard to then turn someone down.
5. By the end of 2002, almost all the applicant countries are likely to have met the criteria for EU admission—at least formally. But once nearly all qualify in this way, how can the EU further discriminate among the qualifiers? It can’t, without severe damage being done to the organization and the applicant countries. Therefore, as regards EU enlargement, one might expect a “Big Bang” (the EU all but said as much in its November 2001 report on the progress of the candidate countries), in which nine or ten countries are admitted at once (among the twelve current candidate countries, Romania and Bulgaria probably will not qualify; Cyprus is a question mark because of lack of progress on the island’s internal divisions). NATO has more flexibility and can be expected to be more discriminating in selecting new members.
6. While the decision to enlarge is fraught with difficulties, the decision not to enlarge may be even worse. Most of the CEE countries’ governments have put enormous time and resources into their efforts to join NATO and the EU, making it their number-one priority. If they should now fail or be turned down after so much effort, several of these governments would undoubtedly fall, producing the very chaos,

instability, and threats to democracy that enlargement was designed to prevent. In other words, admitting countries that are still incompletely prepared may well be better than not admitting them and risking even worse consequences. NATO hard-liners retort by stating that if these countries are unstable, they shouldn't be in NATO in the first place. That is a macho answer which does not solve the dilemma posed.

7. While the logic of enlargement is compelling, there remain numerous large practical problem areas still to be settled: the common agricultural policy (CAP); the issue of regional development funds and whether current EU member access to these will be transferred to the new members; the question of immigration and borders; whether capital and labor can move freely; the internal organization and voting within the EU; the costs involved; the effectiveness of a significantly enlarged EU or NATO; whether the EU can actually reach consensus on a decision of this magnitude; etc. But enlargement advocates argue these problems need not all be finally settled before enlargement occurs.
8. Some of the EU applicant countries have already established bilateral or multilateral customs unions and other agreements among themselves. Admitting one part of an already-existing arrangement could not be done without admitting the other(s).
9. Slovakia is a key, pivotal country for both the EU and NATO. While its democracy is still uncertain and its preparedness for NATO remains incomplete, it brings other assets to the table that may enable it to enter both of the European clubs regardless:
  - a) For NATO, Slovakia provides a land bridge (around neutral Austria and Switzerland) linking the north and south of Europe; it completes the previously postponed Visegrad process (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia); it completes NATO's borders up to the CIS; and, it provides a logical defense perimeter, i.e., it is far easier to patrol a seventy-mile border with the Ukraine with Slovakia in NATO than a nine-hundred-mile border with Slovakia still outside NATO.
  - b) For the EU, much the same logic applies: having Slovakia in completes both the Visegrad Four and Europe's expansion to its easternmost limits; Slovakia is already strongly integrated culturally and economically into Europe; and, it is again far easier in terms of border patrols enforcing the Schengen immigration controls to have only a seventy-mile rather than a nine-hundred-mile border.
10. The terms of reference are changing—in the early 1990s several West European governments thought the Eastern countries would be economic “basket cases” that they would have to continuously bail out. Now, quite a number of countries are making large profits from their trade with CEE, and they anticipate even more.
11. The U.S. has long favored European enlargement to the east, both as a way of stabilizing the area and to keep Russia in check. Although there is less attention to the area now than in the previous decade, less sense of a crisis, and a growing

inclination not to be bound by treaty obligations, this is NATO—the foremost collective security agreement of the last fifty years and maybe of all times, still with impressive political support—and it is doubtful if the U.S. would at this stage go back on its commitments.

12. Currently, and for a considerable period now, there has been a little “dance” going on over enlargement between the U.S. and its European allies. The U.S. wants the EU to expand faster and first because the economic development, political democracy, and governmental reforms the EU insists on for admission also help prepare countries for NATO and ultimately make NATO enlargement cheaper for the U.S. to bear. At the same time, in this “after you, Alphonse” two-step, the EU wants NATO to expand first because the same conditions NATO insists on (democracy, economic and administrative reform) for enlargement are also the requirements for EU accession and, again importantly, make enlargement cheaper for the EU. While this dance has provided for an interesting political dynamic and rivalry between the U.S. and EU, now the ball is winding down, the orchestra is playing the last chords, and both organizations will have to come to terms with the fact that the reason they went to the dance in the first place was to integrate new partners.
13. The Baltic countries provide a special dilemma: they were part of the Soviet Union; Estonia and Latvia have large Russian ethnic minorities; and, Russia has in the past said it will draw the line to NATO expansion here—a threat that Europe often viewed more seriously than the U.S. But the Baltics are also predominantly Western; they want to join the EU and NATO and are among the most eligible candidates. The U.S. cannot allow Russia—particularly a weak, enfeebled Russia—to dictate the borders of Europe. The U.S. has a certain long-standing moral obligation to the Baltics to help preserve their independence, and the constituencies of the Baltic countries in the U.S. are influential. Various formulae are being discussed: one “Balt” at a time (so the Russians scream three times), all three at once (so the Russians scream once but loudly), and some kind of grand compromise in which the Baltic states withdraw their application to NATO in return for guaranteed admission to the EU. The latter is just the kind of compromise, however, that gives veto power to Russia, a development the West has always stated that it could not allow. Meanwhile, Russia’s “mellowing” toward NATO could result in all three Baltic countries coming in at once without major opposition, but that is still uncertain.
14. The rhetoric and mythology in this process suggests that, on these parallel paths to European integration, the U.S. can largely dictate NATO expansion while the European countries decide on EU enlargement. But that is a polite fiction: in fact, the U.S. is also extremely influential on EU enlargement and, while it has not so far put pressure on Europe to expand, its views in favor of enlargement are well known to European foreign ministries. That is why, at U.S. insistence and over European objections, NATO member Turkey became an EU candidate—although its accession may still be far off or never materialize. Nonetheless, the U.S. wanted Turkey listed as a potential member to help stabilize that divided nation and to offer it hope for the

future. Similarly, if the U.S. insists on some countries or all being admitted to either NATO or the EU, it is unlikely that Europe will be able to say no.

15. The result is as follows: as regards EU enlargement, the three Baltic states, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Malta are all likely to be admitted to the EU sooner rather than later, either in one Big Bang or more gradually as groups of countries; Cyprus may or may not come in depending on progress toward solving its internal divisions; and Romania and Bulgaria will likely have to wait for a new round. Croatia and Serbia will become candidates soon; Russia, the CIS states, Bosnia, Croatia, and Albania will stay out at least for the foreseeable future; Turkey's candidacy will be postponed but nevertheless encouraged at least rhetorically.

As regards NATO enlargement, there will probably not be a Big Bang (too expensive, too difficult administratively, too time-consuming for NATO's limited resources), but there will likely be two or three new admissions: Slovenia for sure (providing a land bridge to the former Yugoslavia that bypasses difficult Greece, already economically wealthy almost at EU levels and, therefore, not costly to NATO, cooperative on U.S. policy in Bosnia and Kosovo, and thoroughly "Western"); probably Slovakia (for the reasons cited in #9); and perhaps one or more Baltic countries. On security or geostrategic grounds, Romania and Bulgaria present strong cases but they (as well as Albania and other potential candidates) are so far behind on political and economic criteria that their candidacies are likely to be held up. Or, they may be invited to join but be given a later date for admission than the better-prepared countries. Other PfP countries will have an even longer wait.

16. Two quite distinct logics are operating here. As regards NATO, since it is primarily a defense alliance—a military collective security arrangement centered on Article 5—no unqualified or fully prepared candidate, or one that fails to contribute substantially to the collective defense, should be taken in. Much the same logic applies to EU enlargement, but substituting EU criteria for NATO's strategic criteria. The opposite logic suggests that the present moment provides a unique opportunity for enlargement to the east. There are no credible threats in that region at present and few risks, the potential gains are large, and the costs are modest. So we should seize this unique opportunity to expand both NATO and the EU, guarantee and monitor their development, and assist and envelop them in the Western European community, as a means of serving their interests and ours. The second logic appears to be the more compelling.

17. No final prediction is made here as to the precise order or timing of European enlargement. I have suggested here that it is likely we will see a Big Bang on EU enlargement and a slower, or partial, process for NATO. But at this moment, the precise order of admissions and the timing are still unknown and unknowable. In short, the enlargement of the EU and NATO to the borders indicated in #15 seems highly likely in the longer term, but the short term may still be subject to the vagaries of political processes.

## Conclusions

Quite a number of specific conclusions have already been presented about the candidate countries and their possibilities for EU/NATO accession. Below is a review of some of the more general conclusions.

First, it is striking how political the enlargement process is. Both the EU and NATO have quite specific technical criteria that they apply to candidate countries, but in the end it is preeminently political criteria and political decision-making that are and will be decisive.

Second, it is striking how the logic of EU/NATO enlargement has changed over the years. The fears—and rationale for enlargement—of the early 1990s, of a resurgent Russia and a destabilized Central and Eastern Europe requiring massive bailouts, have not materialized. The logic and justifications for enlargement now (consolidating democracy, profits on investments, immigration controls and, hence, border patrolling, drug and crime control, etc.) are quite different from what they were a decade ago.

Third, even though there is less of a sense of crisis about CEE and, hence, declining interest in the area in both Europe and the U.S., the wheels of the accession process continue to turn and it is hard to see how the process could now be halted, let alone reversed. At this stage, in following the “lesser evil doctrine,” the negative consequences of not moving ahead with enlargement are graver than the obvious problems of moving ahead with states who are still often weak in meeting all the criteria.

Fourth, one is repeatedly struck by how much EU/NATO enlargement is tied up with cultural and “civilizational” issues rather than strictly technical economic or political criteria. From the beginning the Europeans have had a quite clear definition of where Europe ends (at the borders of the CIS). Developments since the early 1990s have only confirmed and reinforced that CEE drew the dividing line almost precisely where European and Western “civilization” terminates. Significantly, in this research, these “softer” criteria of where Europe ends correspond almost exactly with the empirical and technical criteria reported here.

Fifth, while the enlargement process is often seen as a civilizational issue, there are now also good, pragmatic reasons for moving ahead with EU and NATO expansion. These two tracks run parallel but they are not the same in all cases, and different logics and rationales may apply. Some degree of declining enthusiasm, public and governmental scepticism and a sense of no impending crisis probably implies an incremental process of enlargement, especially in NATO’s case, and some compromises, rather than an all-at-once Big Bang.

Sixth, even with enlargement, Europe will not be “whole and free.” The political and economic situation (democracy, free markets) in the CEE is much better than before, but we must also recognize that new barriers, new “curtains” are going up in the east. Although change is in the air, Russia, CIS, parts of the former Yugoslavia, the Trans

Caucuses, Central Asia, and Turkey are still being excluded. But it is precisely because they are being excluded from Europe's—and the globe's—powerful economic engines and trends toward democracy, prosperity, and social justice that these countries are dangerous. There is a crying need to offer them (Ukraine may now be the crucial state in the area) hope, possibilities, aid, an opening, and future affluence, democracy, and security—lest they be drawn back into the pit of poverty, instability, authoritarianism, foreign domination, and even terrorism. For unless our attention is now drawn to this new eastern frontier, we and Europe will be inviting the very instability, chaos, and economic and political hopelessness that EU and NATO enlargement was designed to alleviate. We have seen with horrendous consequences what poverty combined with alienation, frustration, and hopelessness have led to in some Middle Eastern countries; let us ensure that we avoid the same or similar outcomes in Russia and the CIS.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The information and materials in this and subsequent sections were based in considerable part on interviewing of NATO and EU officials in Brussels and Washington and of government, foreign ministry, and U.S. embassy officials in Spain, Portugal, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> *Agenda 2000: For a Stronger and Wider Union* (Brussels: European Commission, 1997) is the key document spelling out the rationale and criteria for enlargement; see also the detailed and remarkably frank (for an international organization) reports by the EU assessing individual applicant country progress. For NATO, the best studies are edited or authored by Jeffrey Simon, *NATO: The Challenge of Change*, *NATO Enlargement: Opinions and Options*, and *NATO Enlargement and Central Europe* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1993, 1995, and 1996, respectively).

<sup>3</sup> Martin A. Smith and Graham Timmins, "The EU, NATO, and the Extension of Institutional Order in Europe," *World Affairs*, 163 (Fall, 2000): 80-9; Ronald Tiersky, "Europe Today: The Integration-Security Link," in Tiersky (ed.), *Europe Today* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 427-99; Sabina A. M. Crisen (ed.), *NATO and Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Roles for a Changing Partnership*, Conference Proceedings (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, April 2000); Sean Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> This conclusion, as becomes clear later in the paper, is based largely on the interviewing, as above.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer, *Trends in Democracies and Markets: New Democracies Barometer, 1991-98* (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, Center for the Study of Public Policy, 1998); Christian Haerpfer, Cezary Milosinski, and Claire Wallace, "Old and New Security Issues in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Results of an 11 Nation Study," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51(6), (1999): 989-1011.

<sup>6</sup> See especially Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Based on the author's field research in Russia in 1992 and 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Binnendijk and Richard L. Kugler, "NATO after the First Tranche: A Strategic Rationale for Enlargement," *Strategic Forum*, 149 (October 1998): 1-4; Sean Kay, "NATO's Open Door: Geostrategic Priorities and the Impact of the European Union," paper presented at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> The information and materials in this section are based on the interviews cited in note 1 as well as participant observation and living as a Fulbright scholar in Vienna and Budapest in 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Brent Scowcroft, "Whither the Atlantic Community," *Issue Brief*, (01-02), (Washington, DC: The Forum for International Policy, March 21, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> See the data presented in Rose and Haerpfer, *Trends*.

<sup>12</sup> See the results of the research carried out by Claire Wallace and her colleagues at the Institute for Advanced Study, Vienna.

<sup>13</sup> The author's Washington research institute, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), has had a long-time research and action agenda for EU and NATO enlargement. Some of the materials in this section are based on my involvement in these programs as well as interviews at the Department of Defense and with U.S. embassy officials and military attachés, and NATO and OSCE officials in the field.

<sup>14</sup> Scowcroft, "Whither."



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<sup>15</sup> The history is traced in the EU's *Agenda 2000*.

<sup>16</sup> Based on interviews with EU officials in these "field offices."

<sup>17</sup> One of the best studies is by Erich Reiter, *The Effects of NATO and EU Enlargement* (Vienna: Landesverteidigungsakademie/Militärwissenschaftliches Büro, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> See George Grayson, *Strange Bedfellows: NATO Marches East* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> The materials and analysis in this section rely heavily on the interviews described earlier.