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**THESIS**

**U.S. DECISION MAKING AND POST-COLD WAR NATO  
ENLARGEMENT**

by

Mark E. Conklin

March 2015

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

David Yost  
David L. Anderson

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**U.S. DECISION MAKING AND POST-COLD WAR NATO ENLARGEMENT**

Mark E. Conklin  
Captain, United States Army  
B.A., Rutgers University, 2005

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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March 2015**

Author: Mark E. Conklin

Approved by: Dr. David Yost  
Thesis Advisor

Dr. David L. Anderson  
Second Reader

Dr. Mohammed Hafez  
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates the major influences on U.S. decision-making regarding the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) following the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many questioned the need for the Alliance's continued existence. It was not obvious that NATO would survive, and indeed thrive in the twenty-first century. The United States has been the driving force behind NATO's surprising endurance and growth. This thesis identifies key factors that have motivated American decision-makers to support the expansion of the Alliance's membership since the end of the Cold War in 1989–1991. Time and again, evolving threats to transatlantic security have revealed the need to sustain the Alliance. Cold War fears of communist aggression were replaced by the dangers of instability created by ethnic and religious conflicts, as demonstrated in the Balkans. These dangers in turn gave way to menacing transnational terrorist organizations, including al Qaeda. As the threats changed, the importance of close political association at times trumped that of enhanced military capability. Cultivating the international community of free democracies by expanding NATO membership provided a framework to counter the emerging threats.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>A. IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>B. METHODS AND SOURCES.....</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>D. LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>E. MAIN ARGUMENT.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>F. THESIS OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>NATO ENLARGEMENT 1999 .....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>A. UNREST IN EUROPE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>B. POLITICS AND PREFERENCES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>C. BUILDING CONSENSUS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>D. ALLIED ATTITUDES ON ENLARGEMENT .....</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>E. THE NATO-RUSSIA FOUNDING ACT .....</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>F. EXTENDING INVITATIONS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>G. TREATY RATIFICATION.....</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>H. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>NATO ENLARGEMENT 2004 .....</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>A. PRESSURE TO KEEP THE DOOR OPEN .....</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>B. DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR ENLARGEMENT.....</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>C. ALLIED ATTITUDES ON SUBSEQUENT ENLARGEMENT .....</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>D. DEBATING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES .....</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>E. SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, AND ITS EFFECTS ON ENLARGEMENT .....</b>	<b>40</b>
	<b>F. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>NATO ENLARGEMENT 2009 .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>A. INTERNATIONAL EVENTS .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>B. PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES.....</b>	<b>46</b>
	<b>C. THE ALLIES' OUTLOOK .....</b>	<b>49</b>
	<b>D. RUSSIAN OPPOSITION.....</b>	<b>51</b>
	<b>E. EXECUTIVE DECISION .....</b>	<b>53</b>
	<b>F. CONGRESSIONAL DECISION.....</b>	<b>56</b>
	<b>G. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>A. NATO'S POST-COLD WAR ENLARGEMENT.....</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>B. PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ENLARGEMENT .....</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>79</b>

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

BALTBAT	Baltic Battalion
BATLNET	Baltic Air Surveillance Network
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DCI	Defense Capabilities Initiative
EU	European Union
GAO	Government Accountability Office
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
NUC	NATO-Ukraine Commission
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PJC	Permanent Joint Council
PfP	Partnership for Peace
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the major influences on U.S. decision-making regarding the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) following the end of the Cold War. NATO was formed in 1949 as a political-military bloc with the primary purpose of countering the threat of communist expansion posed by the numerically superior military forces of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> America's commitment to European security, demonstrated by the forward deployment of U.S. troops and equipment on European soil, was essential to NATO's defense of Western Europe, both from the east and from within. By 1990, Germany was reunified and completely integrated with the West, and in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed, eliminating NATO's principal adversary and the impetus behind the Alliance's creation. In this context, America's role in European security, and indeed NATO's very existence, was called into question.<sup>2</sup> Yet, by the end of the decade, the Alliance not only persevered, it grew! NATO welcomed three former members of the Warsaw Pact into its ranks in 1999. Five years later, seven more states were admitted, including three former Soviet republics. Five years after that, two additional states joined, raising the number of NATO Allies from sixteen at the end of the Cold War to the twenty-eight nations currently represented in Brussels. The enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance was largely an American-led initiative, which raises the question, why did American decision-makers support NATO enlargement?

### A. IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis topic is important because it gives insight into the American foreign policy decision-making process and sheds light on the factors that influenced U.S. decisions on NATO enlargement. This might enable one to identify the issues that will prove important in future enlargement debates. Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty affirms the Allies' commitment to hold the possibility of membership open to any

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<sup>1</sup> For a current and informative account of NATO's origins see Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO 1948: The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> For an examination of NATO's transition and transformation, see David Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014), 1–30.

European state that is able to further Allied principles and contribute to Alliance security.<sup>3</sup> Many European states wanted in after the fall of the Soviet Union, and still others are on a waiting list.<sup>4</sup> In light of the elevated threat posed by a more assertive and aggressive Russian Federation with its eyes looking west, the NATO aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine have become the topics of publicized debate.<sup>5</sup> Less well known are the NATO membership prospects for several smaller Eastern European hopefuls. Macedonia and Montenegro are currently participating in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP). The Allies have endorsed Bosnia and Herzegovina's participation in the MAP, pending the resolution of an immovable property issue.<sup>6</sup> Serbia, a NATO adversary during the 1998–1999 Kosovo Conflict, seeks attainment of NATO standards, and its prospects for membership have been discussed.<sup>7</sup> It is apparent that the Alliance will once again confront the subject of enlargement, and this thesis endeavors to identify the salient issues that will probably influence decision-making in the United States.

## **B. METHODS AND SOURCES**

The United States is not a monolithic decision-making entity. The president and his cabinet have the preeminent role in foreign policy decision-making, but many individuals and organizations are involved in the process, and they are influenced by their interactions with one another and by external events. Additionally, enlarging NATO entails modifying the North Atlantic Treaty, which, by constitutional mandate, requires approval of ratification by a two-thirds majority of the Senate. Thus, this thesis considers

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<sup>3</sup> Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty reads: "The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States of America. The Government of the United States of America will inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession."; The North Atlantic Treaty, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 4, 1949, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm).

<sup>4</sup> "NATO Enlargement," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Last updated June 12, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49212.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm).

<sup>5</sup> For an example, see John J. Mearsheimer, "Getting Ukraine Wrong," *The New York Times*, March 13, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/opinion/getting-ukraine-wrong.html>.

<sup>6</sup> "NATO's Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Last updated June 17, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49127.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49127.htm).

<sup>7</sup> "NATO's Relations with Serbia," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Last updated February 11, 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50100.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50100.htm).



the factors that influenced the judgment of not only the president and his chosen secretaries, but also the United States Congress, particularly the Senate.

Several things can affect a country's foreign policy decisions. Perhaps first and foremost are major international events. This thesis considers, for example, the influence that the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic violence in the Balkans, and the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001 had on American decision-makers. Additionally, a decision's effect on the international order and friendly relations with other nations is often an issue. In this case, the reaction of the Russian Federation, which saw NATO encroaching on its former sphere of influence, and the resultant effects on the hopeful states that were not extended membership invitations were important. Allied interests were also relevant, since modifying the North Atlantic Treaty required the unanimous consent of all members. Domestic concerns can influence foreign policy decisions as well, and this thesis discusses the roles that domestic elections, partisan politics, and bureaucratic differences within the U.S. administration played in NATO's enlargement. Likewise, public opinion and attempts to express and influence it through election campaigns, media outlets, and lobbying efforts are explored. Finally, policymakers' individual preferences and personal relationships among leaders factor into foreign policy decisions, and these are analyzed as well.

This thesis draws upon a wide array of resources to support its conclusions. The published works of experts in the academic community provide theoretical and historical analysis of the decision-making process. The personal accounts of participants in the actual deliberations give insight into the principal issues under consideration. Public speeches and statements, news conference transcripts, reports, and interviews of key officials help to reveal how various presidents and their cabinets came to support NATO enlargement. Testimony at hearings, committee meetings, and reports throw light on the major issues considered by the Congress. Together, these sources provide a good account of how the United States formulated its decisions to support enlarging the Alliance.

### C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Much has been written and said about NATO's post-Cold War enlargement, notably regarding its motivations, its purposes, and its effects. This thesis does not attempt to investigate claims regarding promises allegedly made to Soviet officials in 1990 that NATO would not expand eastward,<sup>8</sup> neither does it comment on arguments that NATO's enlargement provoked recent Russian aggression in Eastern Europe.<sup>9</sup> This thesis does not consider the merits of enlargement in general, or speculate about the impact of enlargement on NATO's internal decision-making processes. These matters have all been thoroughly addressed elsewhere.

This thesis explores how the United States of America came to be such an ardent supporter of a policy that expanded the scope of its international obligations—something many leaders dating back to President Washington have cautioned against.<sup>10</sup> Several hypotheses are considered. Official statements reflect each administration's desire to integrate the international community of liberal democracies to create a Europe whole and free. Such lofty statements are important expressions of U.S. aspirations, but other considerations also inform assessments of the national interests of the United States. Is it possible that the United States have sought to preserve and even enhance its influence across the Atlantic, based on its position as the undisputed leader of NATO? What about the possibility of Russia's resurgence? Though weakened, Russia's public hostility toward the West persisted, as did Moscow's desire to perpetuate and strengthen its influence over its adjacent territories. Is it plausible that the United States wanted to consolidate its gains made by winning the Cold War and incorporate the peripheral successor states of the Soviet Union into NATO to accrue a security advantage? This implies that the U.S. government pursued a deliberate and purposeful strategy in this

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<sup>8</sup> For more on this argument see Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No NATO Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (April 2009): 39–61.

<sup>9</sup> For more on this argument see John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September/October 2014), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-west-fault>.

<sup>10</sup> George Washington, "Farewell Address," The American Presidency Project, September 19, 1796, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65539>.

regard, when in fact there was a series of ad hoc decisions. Furthermore, in light of America's protracted and often unpopular military campaigns in various regions, one might contend that the United States attempted to use NATO's enlargement in order to recruit more supporters for its expeditionary military operations in order to enhance the legitimacy of these operations. Along similar lines, perhaps American policymakers believed that by inviting new European democracies to join NATO, Europe would be better able to provide for its own defense, thus alleviating America's military commitments to the region. Emotional factors also contributed to U.S. support for NATO's post-Cold War enlargement. For example, U.S. decision-makers sought to atone for abandoning Central and Eastern Europe to German and Soviet domination.<sup>11</sup> Scholars, pundits, and bloggers have drawn attention to such consideration, as well as many others. This thesis attempts to elucidate the essential motives behind America's support for enlarging the Alliance.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The most extensive body of literature regarding NATO's post-Cold War enlargement concerns the Allied decision to invite the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1997. Ronald D. Asmus, in his book *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, provides an insider's account of the Clinton Administration's efforts to extend the Alliance's membership to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. According to Asmus, American leadership was crucial to surmounting three problems associated with NATO enlargement: framing the enlargement decision so as not to incite an anti-Western backlash that might undermine Russian reformers, devising a scheme of enlargement that satisfied the concerns of the Allies as well as those of prospective members, and incorporating enlargement as a vital component of the revitalization and repurposing of the Alliance. By Asmus' account, NATO enlargement was a way to promote peace and stability in Europe, reach out to and encourage reform in Central and Eastern Europe, and reestablish NATO's preeminent role in European security. Asmus recounted the efforts of the Clinton Administration to

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<sup>11</sup> Madeleine Albright quoted in David Yost, *NATO Transformed* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 128.

promote democracy and spread peace and security in Europe eastward while modernizing NATO to meet the threats of a new epoch. The war in Bosnia and the failed coup attempt in the waning Soviet Union in August 1991 reminded the Central and Eastern European democracies of their vulnerability. While the decision to enlarge NATO was spurred by the desires of the prospective members, the Clinton Administration embraced the cause and managed the process with the goal of expanding the scope of the Euro-Atlantic partnership.<sup>12</sup>

In “The Transformation of NATO and U.S. Foreign Policy,” Svein Melby describes how transforming NATO through enlargement, “both of membership and mission,” serves permanent U.S. foreign policy goals in Europe.<sup>13</sup> With regard to Russia, a measured enlargement and repurposing both enhance the Alliance’s capability to address the threat of a resurgent and expansionist Russia and simultaneously serve Russia’s interests by redefining the organization’s purpose from that of adversarial opposition to one of cooperative engagement. Melby suggests that enlarging the Alliance will also help to resolve regional disputes involving members through the peaceful means of conflict resolution promoted by the organization, eliminating the possible need for intervention by outside powers and unnecessary escalation. NATO has the unique capability of combining military and political instruments to provide security guarantees to support new democratic regimes. Melby draws a parallel between post-Cold War NATO enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe and the post-World War II Marshall Plan in Western Europe.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, NATO transformation could increase the United States’ ability to address concerns out of the Euro-Atlantic region while handing much of the responsibility for European security back to NATO’s European members. By Melby’s account, NATO enlargement serves the enduring U.S. foreign policy goals of preventing the rise of a dominant oppositional force in Europe and promoting regional stability. However, an overly ambitious policy could provoke tensions; therefore, special

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Svein Melby, “The Transformation of NATO and U.S. Foreign Policy,” in *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years*, 1, ed. Gustav Schmidt (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 236.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

consideration must be taken to develop a conservative, predictable approach to enlargement and transformation.<sup>15</sup>

Lawrence Kaplan's paper, "NATO Enlargement: An Overview," draws out the enduring themes that governed NATO enlargement throughout the organization's history up through the addition of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999. The first such theme is the contribution to collective defense that each new member represented at the time of its accession. Underlying this theme is the recognition by European Allies of their dependence on American military support for regional security. The decision to increase NATO's initial population from the Brussels Treaty countries (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) and the United States to include Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, and Portugal was made, in part, based on the strategic link these nations provided between Europe and the United States.

The second theme present in each round of NATO enlargement is the desire to establish a unified democratic Europe in order, as Kaplan puts it, "to end once and for all the fratricidal wars which had wracked the continent since the rise of the nation-state."<sup>16</sup> The 1952 addition of Greece and Turkey represents, among other things, an attempt to surmount the historical animosity that existed between these two countries. The conditions of West Germany's admission to the alliance promised to allay fears of future German aggression and fully integrate the Federal Republic of Germany into Western institutions. Kaplan's account suggests that even during the Cold War, each decision to enlarge the Alliance dealt with considerations of strategic benefits for collective defense as well as political implications for the trans-Atlantic community. For Kaplan, enlargement decisions were influenced by European desires to preserve the U.S. commitment to transatlantic security, the United States' interest in sustaining its transatlantic influence, and a genuine determination by all to bring peace and stability to the European continent.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Melby, "Transformation of NATO," 235–250.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, "NATO Enlargement: An Overview," in *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years*, 1, ed. Gustav Schmidt (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 193.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 193–208.

Frank Schimmelfennig gave a constructivist explanation for NATO enlargement. He argued that “NATO is a specialized organization—the military branch—of the Euro-Atlantic or Western community of liberal-democratic and multilateralist values and norms,” and that these values and norms guide the decisions of community members.<sup>18</sup> Schimmelfennig contended that NATO membership was offered as a reward for the adoption of Western values and norms, and that the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were chosen because they had made the greatest progress toward adopting them. He offered the U.S.-crafted Partnership for Peace as evidence of the process of international socialization, whereby the Central and Eastern European states were introduced to Western values through cooperation and were encouraged to adopt these values through a system of measured progress. In Schimmelfennig’s view, the relative power of the United States and the reward of NATO membership being made contingent upon internalizing Western values greatly facilitated the socialization process. Schimmelfennig argued that NATO enlargement was pursued due to a desire to spread western values eastward and a moral obligation to extend membership to states that assimilated Western ideals. He contended that rationalist theories, such as realism, cannot account for these desires and this sense of obligation.<sup>19</sup>

Kenneth Waltz presented multiple explanations for NATO’s post-Cold War enlargement through a realist lens of international relations. He contended, “Realists, noticing that as an alliance NATO has lost its major function, see it simply as a means of maintaining and lengthening America’s grip on the foreign and military policies of European states.”<sup>20</sup> Waltz stated that the end of the Cold War confronted the world with a condition of unipolarity, in which the United States was free to promote its agenda unchecked. For Waltz, it was unsurprising that the United States, being a liberal democracy, sought to promote its values abroad, ignoring potentially adverse implications for its own security in the absence of a major threat. Waltz wrote that the

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<sup>18</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, “NATO Enlargement: A Constructivist Approach,” *Security Studies* 8, no. 2–3 (1998): 198.

<sup>19</sup> Schimmelfennig, “NATO Enlargement: A Constructivist Approach,” 198–234.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “NATO Expansion: A Realist’s View,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 21, no. 2 (2000): 29, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13523260008404253>.

Administration of George H. W. Bush went to great lengths to see that the efforts of European states to establish an independent security identity after the Cold War were done under the auspices of NATO and not outside of it, thus attempting to preserve and extend U.S. influence in Europe. Waltz held further that NATO's expansion was largely an effect of American domestic politics, namely President Clinton's efforts to win over key Midwestern states with heavy Central and Eastern European influences, as well as states with arms industries that stood to benefit from the new high-demand markets in Central and Eastern Europe. Waltz challenged liberal institutionalist theory, arguing that international institutions such as NATO serve only to further the purposes of their dominant members. In Waltz' words, "NATO survives and expands now not because of its institutions but mainly because the United States wants it to."<sup>21 22</sup>

John Lewis Gaddis described U.S. support for NATO enlargement as the product of America's second post-Cold War governing administration—that of William J. Clinton—having an excessively narrow world view, in light of its upbringing in the Cold War. According to Gaddis, the decision to champion NATO as the organization through which to seek European integration sprang from overconfidence in the Alliance after its Cold War success. Gaddis also wrote that the Clinton Administration was particularly moved by the plight suffered by the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, and that NATO enlargement was pursued out of an emotionally based obligation to do right by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>23</sup>

## **E. MAIN ARGUMENT**

This thesis recognizes that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. leaders acknowledged that threats to peace and security still existed in the Euro-Atlantic region, and NATO remained an apt institution for addressing these threats. Also, the nature of the threats elevated the importance of political reform above that of military capability, and NATO membership represented an incentive for implementing and

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<sup>21</sup> Waltz, "NATO Expansion," 35.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–38.

<sup>23</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "History, Grand Strategy and NATO Enlargement," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 40, no. 1 (1998): 145–51, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/survival/40.1.145>.

maintaining such reforms. International events were among the major influences on U.S. decision-making regarding NATO's post-Cold War enlargement, and that these events that underpinned arguments in support of NATO enlargement and provided the opportunity and motivation to promote American and Western ideals in an effort to enhance stability in Europe and improve security at home. The collapse of the Soviet Union increased NATO's freedom to act in Central and Eastern Europe, but it was the threat to European security posed by instability in the Balkans that restored NATO's purpose and convinced many Allied political leaders of the merits of enlarging the Alliance. Absent ethnic conflict and persistent nationalism in Europe's Balkan region, the United States and its Allies would have found little justification to expand their association with Central and Eastern Europe through military cooperation. The United States seized this opportunity to reaffirm its leadership on the European continent and expand the international community of free democracies through NATO. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 demonstrated America's vulnerability and elevated the importance of seeking like-minded partners to combat the growing ideological threat to the Western world. Consolidating European democracy and promoting interoperability and information-sharing became paramount objectives. In response to the terrorist challenge, the United States supported an ambitious enlargement agenda, including former Soviet republics. The protracted and unpopular war in Iraq divided the members of the United Nations and the Alliance. By promoting further enlargement, the United States was able to refocus the Alliance toward cooperative efforts and recruit more material and political support for its expeditionary military efforts. Supporters of U.S.-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan received unequivocal support from the United States for their aspirations for Western integration.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The introductory chapter to this thesis has framed the study's overall argument, stated the major research question, and discussed the importance of the research topic. The introduction then discussed the research methods used, presented the various hypotheses that were explored, and examined several arguments that have previously been put forth. The second, third, and fourth chapters all provide analysis of the United



States decision-making process as it relates to NATO's enlargement. Chapter II focuses on NATO's first post-Cold War enlargement round, when the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were admitted in 1999. Chapter III discusses NATO's second enlargement round, which welcomed Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia into the Alliance in 2004. Chapter IV covers NATO's most recent round of enlargement, whereby Albania and Croatia became Allies in 2009. Finally, Chapter V restates the overall argument of the thesis and summarizes the arguments made in the preceding chapters. It then discusses the prospects for American support for future enlargement rounds, given the findings of the research.

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## II. NATO ENLARGEMENT 1999

The demise of communism, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and, finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union generated the initial impulses to enlarge NATO. It was not obvious that the disappearance of NATO's chief opponent would lead to enlarging the Alliance; indeed, some questioned the necessity of NATO's very existence. The ensuing debate would span the better part of a decade, culminating in the addition of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in March 1999. According to David Yost, "The U.S. debate may be ultimately the most significant, because the credibility of Alliance commitments hinges, in the final analysis, on the United States above all."<sup>24</sup> This chapter investigates the factors that influenced American decision-making, finding that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the uncertainty about Russia's political future and its relationship with the West greatly influenced American decisions on enlarging NATO. Unstable domestic politics in Russia divided American policymakers on the enlargement issue, and Russia's opposition to NATO's growth affected the pace and scope of enlargement decisions. Numerous factors competed to shape America's stance on increasing NATO's membership, but deference to the goal of supporting Russia's democratic reform and establishing a cooperative strategic relationship with the West's principal former adversary guided America's NATO enlargement policies.

### A. UNREST IN EUROPE

As the fall of the Soviet Union progressed and the communist empire released its grip on its former satellites in Central and Eastern Europe, democratic institutions were established in the former Warsaw Pact countries and the newly independent former Soviet republics. These political developments boded well for overcoming the political antagonism that divided Europe throughout most of the twentieth century. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe's (CSCE) 1990 Charter of Paris, with over thirty signatories including Russia and the United States, charged states to "fully

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<sup>24</sup> David Yost, *NATO Transformed* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1998), 104.

respect each other's freedom of choice" in regard to security relationships.<sup>25</sup> As Central and Eastern European governments began to escape the control of the Soviet Empire, they sought closer integration with the West, and NATO was among the first organizations to reach out to them through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). The United States sought to promote the spread of democracy in these countries, and NATO provided an apt vehicle at a time when the Alliance's purpose and future were uncertain.

Democratic reformers in Central and Eastern Europe fought hard to make expanding the Alliance an item on the United States and NATO agendas. These leaders wanted strongly to integrate with Western institutions, and the Alliance became the target of choice for their lobbying efforts. The lengthy process entailed by the European Union (EU) was discouraging, as was the perceived inability of the CSCE/OSCE to provide real security guarantees.<sup>26</sup> The unsuccessful coup attempt in Russia in August 1991 and the seizure of the Russian White House in October 1993 highlighted Russian reformers' tenuous grasp on power and warned of the possibility of Russia reasserting its regional influence if hardliners returned to power. The leaders of states aspiring to NATO membership, most notably Czech President Vaclav Havel and Polish President Lech Walesa, personally implored President Clinton at the dedication of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, to enlist his support for their accession into NATO. President Clinton maintained that these individual appeals greatly influenced his own view on NATO enlargement.<sup>27</sup> Stanley Sloan, the founding director of the Atlantic Community Initiative, wrote, "From the Holocaust meetings on, President Clinton had an emotional as well as philosophical predisposition toward enlarging NATO."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) would later become the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); Charter of Paris for a New Europe, The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39516?download=true>.

<sup>26</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 11–12.

<sup>27</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley Sloan, *NATO, the European Union, and the Atlantic Community: The Transatlantic Bargain Challenged* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 150.

Instability in the Balkans supported arguments in favor of enlarging NATO. The war in Bosnia demonstrated that nationalism continued to threaten security and stability in Europe. NATO's failure to effectively address the conflict early on fueled skepticism about the Alliance's future and undermined its credibility as a European security institution. Many NATO advocates believed that the organization and its mission needed to be updated to remain relevant in the new strategic environment. Settling the dispute in Bosnia was one of President Clinton's primary foreign policy concerns, and NATO's inability to arrive at a consensus to act decisively helped to convince the President that the Alliance needed to adapt. The conflict's geographic location within Russia's traditional sphere of influence also caused tension between America's desire to stop the fighting and aspirations to solidify a partnership with Russia.<sup>29</sup>

The war in Bosnia helped to first distract public attention away from NATO enlargement and then reinforce its base of support. When the U.S. president was reluctant to make substantive progress toward enlargement, escalation of the war in Bosnia provided a suitable diversion. The capture of several hundred UN personnel, the mass slaughter in Srebrenica, and the accidental deaths of U.S. diplomats inspired the United States and NATO to step up their efforts to intervene. The Alliance ultimately achieved a cease-fire agreement and the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords; the effect was to revive NATO's image as a guarantor of European security and reinforce NATO aspirations in Central and Eastern Europe. Support for the merits of enlargement also grew among the Allies. The Alliance's efforts in Bosnia boded well for the establishment of a NATO-Russia partnership, as Russian forces were integrated into the follow-on NATO-led peacekeeping operations.

## **B. POLITICS AND PREFERENCES**

Enlarging the Atlantic Alliance was not a stated priority of the Clinton Administration early on, but it presented itself as an opportunity that conformed to the president's ideological interests. President Clinton ascended to the nation's highest office on a campaign platform focused largely on domestic revitalization, rather than ambitious

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<sup>29</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 20–23.

foreign policy. During the campaign, however, presidential candidate Clinton did demonstrate a desire to expand and lead the international community of free democracies. He accused President Bush of failing “to offer a compelling rationale for America's continued engagement in the world,” adding that, “the Administration has invited a new birth of isolationism on the left and the right,” thus suggesting the future president’s internationalist preferences.<sup>30</sup> Clinton also expressed his belief that the United States could lead “a global alliance for democracy as united and steadfast as the global alliance that defeated Communism,” hinting that he saw a future for NATO and envisioned a leadership role for the United States within the Alliance.<sup>31</sup> Enlarging NATO to Central and Eastern Europe offered the chance to remain engaged in world affairs, champion the spread of democracy, and assume a leadership role in modernizing the Alliance. This was not immediately recognized by the Clinton Administration upon assuming office, but came later as a result of international events.

In addition to conforming to the president’s ideological preferences, NATO enlargement was a politically attractive initiative. Gaining support from Central and Eastern European ethnic minorities across the Midwest facilitated President Clinton’s victory in the 1992 election. These ethnic groups traditionally supported Republican candidates, but were alienated by President Bush’s hesitation in recognizing the newly independent former Soviet republics.<sup>32</sup> Supporting NATO enlargement was a way for the Democratic Party to preserve the votes of Americans of Central and Eastern European heritage in future congressional and presidential elections. Though Clinton Administration officials maintain that domestic politics did not influence the decision-making process, James Goldgeier asserts that, “Political considerations are an inevitable part of crafting a major foreign policy initiative, particularly one that requires support

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “The 1992 Campaign: Foreign Policy; Turning His Sights Overseas, Clinton Sees a Problem at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/02/us/1992-campaign-foreign-policy-turning-his-sights-overseas-clinton-sees-problem.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When: The Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 61.

from two-thirds of the Senate.”<sup>33</sup> This sentiment was confirmed by Ron Asmus’ interview with Tony Lake, the National Security Adviser in 1993–1997. Lake commented, “The politics of NATO enlargement were like sex in the Victorian age: no one talked about it, but everyone thought about it.”<sup>34</sup>

The Republican Party strongly endorsed increasing NATO’s membership, but remained highly critical of the Administration’s efforts to do so. Republican opposition argued that the Clinton Administration was more concerned with Russian sensitivities than with American and European interests. They believed that the Clinton Administration’s steps toward enlargement were timid and inadequate.<sup>35</sup> Republican politicians repeatedly proposed legislation to force real progress toward enlargement, including setting a timetable, naming prospective candidates, and specifying criteria for new member selection. They did not share the Clinton Administration’s concern for Russian domestic politics and establishing a NATO-Russia partnership. Promoting NATO enlargement was one of the tenets of the Republican Party’s Contract with America campaign that won majorities in both Houses of Congress in 1994, threatening to steal the issue away from the Administration and further threaten negotiations with Russia. Republican pressure reinforced the Clinton Administration’s support for enlargement, and, in part, motivated the president to endorse enlargement explicitly. Shortly after the launch of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), President Clinton called upon the Alliance to formally examine the enlargement issue, which surprised the Allies and sparked outrage from Moscow, foreshadowing the difficulties the United States would have in reconciling its competing foreign policy goals.<sup>36</sup>

### **C. BUILDING CONSENSUS**

Key figures within the Clinton Administration itself did not initially agree with the president’s position supporting NATO enlargement. Many outright opposed enlarging

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<sup>33</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When*, 62.

<sup>36</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door*, 79.

the Alliance, fearing that it would empower political opposition in Moscow and threaten the more important goal of establishing a partnership with a new democratic Russia. Even some of those who agreed with enlargement in principle opposed it in practice on the grounds that it would damage U.S. relations with Russia and undermine reform efforts. The Department of Defense under Secretary Les Aspin argued that a unified Europe could be better achieved through military cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and especially Russia, under a new security framework. Secretary William Perry continued the Defense Department's opposition to enlargement, contending that further military cooperation was needed to overcome the persistent adversarial relationship between Russia and the West. Some in the State Department feared that enlargement would increase America's and NATO's obligations without adding any capabilities to facilitate meeting those new security requirements. The U.S. military, likewise, worried about extending commitments to Europe in light of shrinking forces and budgets coupled with competing strategic priorities elsewhere around the globe.<sup>37</sup>

The lack of consensus backing NATO's enlargement at the genesis of the debate restrained the United States from embracing it outright. Instead, the United States recommended the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative, which was a measure to increase cooperation between NATO and the former Soviet sphere beyond the efforts of the NACC. Indeed, PfP was and is open not only to "former adversaries" but to all non-NATO countries participating in the CSCE/OSCE. It was a compromise measure that was widely accepted among the Clinton Administration and the Allies because it was open to all CSCE/OSCE nations, including Russia, but extended no additional security guarantees. Even Russian President Boris Yeltsin was highly supportive of the PfP, though interpreting it as an alternative to NATO's expansion. Thus, the PfP furthered U.S. foreign policy goals by strengthening NATO's ties with the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe while leaving the door open for future Russian cooperation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 27–29, 96.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–54.



Domestic politics in Russia were perhaps the most powerful influence on decision-makers throughout the NATO enlargement debate. Supporting Russia's democratic reformers and establishing a favorable relationship between NATO and Russia were the top foreign policy priorities of President Clinton, most of his Administration, and many of the NATO Allies. Great emphasis was placed on building a strategic partnership with Russia and supporting Russian democracy. Though President Yeltsin's erratic declarations suggested questionable reliability to some, the Russian President's personal commitment to democratic reform made him an ally of the Clinton Administration. Enlargement decisions were made in consideration of their effects on President Yeltsin's government. The attempted coups in 1991 and 1993 threatened the reform regime and the future of Russia's rapprochement with the West. Russian parliamentary and presidential elections during the 1990s saw candidates attempt to outdo each other with anti-NATO and anti-Western rhetoric, which complicated efforts to negotiate a NATO-Russia partnership. Russian politicians put forth the now famous argument that the West was violating promises made to Soviet officials during negotiations for Germany's reunification that NATO would not expand its territory eastward. In their analysis of Russian anti-Western sentiment for the Heritage Foundation in 2010, Ariel Cohen and Helle Dale noted, "Russian public sentiment was largely pro-American as Communism collapsed, yet shame, blame, and nostalgia soon set in." They assert, furthermore, "From the Kremlin's perspective, anti-Americanism is a strategic tool for pursuing domestic and foreign policy goals. It has remained this way for almost the past 100 years."<sup>39</sup>

Though President Yeltsin was reelected in 1996, parliamentary elections saw nationalists and communists successively increase their power, and Russian politics coalesced around opposition to NATO's enlargement; even moderate officials vehemently opposed it. The adversarial relationship between Russia and NATO had not yet disappeared. Progress toward enlarging the Alliance continuously threatened

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<sup>39</sup> Ariel Cohen and Helle C. Dale, "Russian Anti-Americanism: A Priority Target for U.S. Public Diplomacy," The Heritage Foundation, February 24, 2010, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/02/russian-anti-americanism-a-priority-target-for-us-public-diplomacy>.

cooperation with Moscow; the two American policy initiatives were inexorably connected. David Yost summarized the challenge posed to American policymakers by its dual foreign policy goals, capturing the Russian point of view: “If NATO wants to build a relationship of partnership and cooperation with Russia, why are NATO governments extending collective defense commitments to nations that have expressed distrust and antagonism toward Russia?”<sup>40</sup> Strong Russian opposition motivated a conservative approach toward enlarging NATO throughout the Alliance for fear of upsetting the political balance.

Democratic reformers in Central and Eastern Europe persistently pressured the West to make progress toward enlarging NATO. They viewed the PfP as an insufficient step. They relentlessly engaged the American president, his Administration, Congress, and the American public. The fear of Russian expansionism remained in the former Soviet sphere. Inconsistent declarations by the Russian Administration and increasingly hostile rhetoric directed against the West exacerbated concerns. During talks with American officials, Polish President Lech Walesa conveyed his desire to “cage the bear” and worried that the West was squandering an historic opportunity; Czech President Vaclav Havel instead appealed to the perhaps nobler intentions of expanding democracy and reshaping the political identities of the Central and Eastern European region.<sup>41</sup> While the economic, military, and political reform efforts of these hopeful nations may have been lacking at times, their desire and determination to join the Alliance remained resolute. Their eager pursuit of NATO membership helped motivate the United States to move forward, but also worked against American efforts to control the pace of enlargement so as to make it as acceptable as possible to Russia.

Rounding out the debate were those that continued to oppose NATO’s enlargement. Many objections came from the Democratic Party, most notably Senator Sam Nunn. Senator Nunn questioned the feasibility of extending a credible security guarantee to Eastern Europe while simultaneously convincing Russians that enlarging

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<sup>40</sup> Yost, *NATO Transformed*, 133.

<sup>41</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door*, 24.

NATO was not directed against them.<sup>42</sup> Senator Nunn was most concerned with nuclear issues, particularly curtailing their spread and controlling nuclear stockpiles in the former Soviet republics. He worried that enlargement would make Russia less cooperative on nuclear issues. The Democratic Senator's objections, coupled with his clout within the party, threatened to undermine the chances for consensus within the Clinton Administration. Other arguments echoed the concerns among the Allies about diluting the Alliance, alienating and/or undermining Russian reformers, and extending commitments to countries that (critics maintained) represented instability and little national interest. While the Republican criticism reinforced the Clinton Administration's resolve, the political opponents of enlargement threatened to weaken it.

Advocates of enlarging NATO, among the minority originally, held influential positions within the Clinton Administration that provided them with leverage to guide policy. First and foremost, the president's support for enlargement was crucial to reaching agreement on the issue within the Administration. Operating with the knowledge that President Clinton backed NATO's enlargement, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, also an enlargement proponent, steered the National Security Council toward policies that favored expanding the Alliance. Secretary of State Warren Christopher came to support enlargement after reviewing the arguments made by enlargement supporters among his staff and the academic community. Richard Holbrooke's appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, with his support for enlargement, political experience, and reputation, helped rein in the rest of the Clinton Administration.<sup>43</sup>

The personal relationship between President Clinton and President Yeltsin also influenced the pace of enlargement. President Clinton believed that President Yeltsin was truly committed to democratic reform in Russia and attributed Yeltsin's public conflagrations to Russian domestic politics. Likewise, President Yeltsin trusted that President Clinton was a true supporter of his government and acknowledged Clinton's genuine interest in improving the security environment for all of Europe. President

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<sup>42</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–98.

Clinton corresponded and met with President Yeltsin regularly during the enlargement debate to help smooth out issues and reinforce his support for Yeltsin's government. The two presidents worked out an arrangement, known as the May for May deal, whereby each would do what he could to facilitate the other's reelection in 1996. President Clinton agreed to restrain efforts to expedite the enlargement process beyond the initiation of the enlargement study to ease some of the political pressure on Yeltsin. The Russian president, for his part, agreed to sign up for NATO's Partnership for Peace program, begin negotiations for a formal NATO-Russia partnership, and forego making statements to the effect that Russia was impeding NATO's enlargement.<sup>44</sup>

Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott tempered the Administration's pursuit of enlarging the Atlantic Alliance. His personal relationship with President Clinton and his Russian expertise helped guide the dual-track approach toward NATO enlargement in conjunction with Russian rapprochement. The Secretary of State's Chief of Staff, Tom Donilon, purportedly said of the Talbott-Clinton relationship, "There's only one person [Talbott] in this building the President calls Sunday night to see how he's doing."<sup>45</sup> Talbott's extensive experience as a Russia expert shaped his views on enlargement and the NATO-Russia partnership. Though originally viewed as an enlargement opponent, Deputy Secretary Talbott was instrumental in guiding parallel negotiations facilitating the achievement of both policy goals. Talbott lobbied to ensure that enlargement progress did not outpace or interfere with efforts to strengthen the relationship with Russia.

#### **D. ALLIED ATTITUDES ON ENLARGEMENT**

Early discussions of the topic revealed serious reservations among the most influential NATO Allies. France preferred to integrate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe slowly through European institutions, rather than through NATO, an organization led by the United States. This view was widely shared within the Alliance. The British feared that increasing membership would dilute the security guarantee and weaken America's commitment to the defense of Europe. The Brits questioned the will of

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<sup>44</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 114.

<sup>45</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When*, 25.

their own public to guarantee the security of new members in Central and Eastern Europe. While Volker R  he, the German Defense Minister in 1992–1998, expressed his personal support for enlargement publicly, the German government was not willing to support enlargement during initial deliberations. The lack of consensus supporting enlargement in the early stages of the debate argued against the United States recommending any concrete steps toward enlargement.<sup>46</sup>

The position of America’s Allies began to change once the United States demonstrated its firm commitment to enlarging NATO. The president’s call for NATO’s enlargement came as a surprise to many Allies that had assumed that the Partnership for Peace had forestalled a formal discussion on enlargement.<sup>47</sup> Several Allies shared the reservation that NATO enlargement should not proceed at the expense of NATO’s relations with Russia. If the goal of enlargement was to stabilize Europe, reigniting Cold War tensions between Russia and the West and undermining Russian democratic reformers would not serve that goal.

When Russia stepped up its opposition to NATO enlargement, support for enlarging the Alliance from some of the most influential European Allies began to waver. The British remained committed and warned of the consequences of backing down in the face of Russian antagonism. The German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, however, proposed a moratorium on enlargement discussions, recommending a period of two years. The French preferred to have an official NATO-Russia partnership negotiated prior to pursuing enlargement. Allied objections added to the arguments supporting a slow and gradual approach to expanding NATO’s membership, in order to seek a cooperative relationship with Russia either beforehand or in tandem.<sup>48</sup>

## **E. THE NATO-RUSSIA FOUNDING ACT**

Combined pressure from within the Administration and among the Allies made the successful negotiation of a NATO-Russia partnership of paramount importance for

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<sup>46</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door*, 46–47.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 90–92.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 182–85.

NATO's enlargement. Failing to reach terms with Russia threatened to further enflame Russian opposition and undermine Allied support for U.S. goals. In correspondence with President Clinton regarding enlargement, President Yeltsin wrote, "I trust that our justified concern will, as you said, not simply be noted, but will be taken into account in a clear and precise form. It would be best if this were done, as you yourself stated publicly, in the form of an official agreement between Russia and NATO."<sup>49</sup> Reaching an agreement would go a long way to calming Russian and therefore Allied anxieties. In his 1997 address to Congress on the State of the Union, President Clinton declared, "We must expand NATO by 1999, so that countries that were once our adversaries can become our Allies. At the special NATO summit this summer, that is what we will begin to do."<sup>50</sup> Professing his intent to proceed with enlargement at the Madrid summit left only a few months to resolve the differences between NATO and Russia and reach a formal agreement. America's displayed commitment to expanding the Alliance shifted Russian efforts away from preventing enlargement and toward controlling it.

The agreed language in the NATO-Russia Founding Act greatly acknowledged Russian concerns. Russia sought guarantees that NATO forces and infrastructure would not be stationed on the territory of any new members.<sup>51</sup> This demand had precedent, as NATO had agreed to similar terms during negotiations on Germany's reunification and incorporation into NATO, but it conflicted with Allied desires to extend credible security guarantees and full-fledged association to new members.<sup>52</sup> NATO's enlargement study laid the ground work for reaching agreement on these military dimensions. The Alliance concluded that it possessed the ability to defend Central and Eastern Europe without adjusting its nuclear posture or permanently deploying forces eastward onto the territory of prospective new members.<sup>53</sup> The enlargement study reflected these conclusions, but

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<sup>49</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 189.

<sup>50</sup> William J. Clinton, "Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," The American Presidency Project, February 4, 1997, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=53358>.

<sup>51</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 198.

<sup>52</sup> Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Germany, <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/2plusfour8994e.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door*, 103–04.

highlighted the necessity to preserve the right to reconsider such decisions as conditions warrant.<sup>54</sup> The text of the final agreement yielded to Russian concerns by including assurances that NATO members had, “no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members” and, “the Alliance will carry out its collective defense and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.”<sup>55</sup> The document spoke to Allied preferences by preceding those assertions with conditional language such as, “in the current and foreseeable security environment . . .,” which afforded the Allies with the option to reconsider those decisions in the future.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to addressing security concerns, the Founding Act established the Permanent Joint Council institutionalizing the NATO-Russia partnership. As part of the negotiations, Russia demanded a role in NATO’s decision-making process. NATO, for its part, wanted to increase cooperation with Russia while preserving Alliance integrity. The Permanent Joint Council embodied the agreed upon framework, which would serve as the “principal venue of consultation between NATO and Russia” and “provide a mechanism for consultations, coordination and, to the maximum extent possible, where appropriate, for joint decisions and joint action with respect to security issues of common concern.”<sup>57</sup> Russia therefore achieved for itself a venue through which it could attempt to influence NATO’s executive processes, but fell short of its goal of infiltrating NATO’s internal deliberations. The Allies were able to include that, “Provisions of this Act do not provide NATO or Russia, in any way, with a right of veto over the actions of the other nor do they infringe upon or restrict the rights of NATO or Russia to independent decision-making and action.” With a formalized partnership in place, the Alliance could forge ahead on its plans to increase its membership.

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<sup>54</sup> Study on NATO Enlargement, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated 5 November 2008, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_24733.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm?)

<sup>55</sup> Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated 12 Oct 2009, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## F. EXTENDING INVITATIONS

The NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed on May 27, 1997, six weeks before the NATO summit in Madrid where the Alliance extended invitations to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. During negotiations for the Founding Act, among other demands, the Russians sought to limit the scope of enlargement to as few nations as possible, particularly restricting former Soviet republics like the Baltic States. Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov stated, “If any countries of the former Soviet Union are admitted to NATO, we will have no relations with NATO whatsoever.”<sup>58</sup> Chief among American and Allied concerns, however, was leaving the door open for future expansion of the Alliance without specifically excluding any European nations. Part of what motivated American support for limiting new member invitations to three was the desire to avoid the issue of the Baltic States. Extending invitations to former Soviet republics would have immediately undermined cooperative efforts between NATO and Russia; so, from America’s point of view, states like Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were not yet suitable for consideration. These states, however, were arguably just as far along on the path to reform as were some of the leading candidates for membership, namely Romania, which was championed by France.<sup>59</sup> If the United States advocated membership for Romania and Slovenia, it might give the impression that Russian objections carried weight, discouraging the future pursuit of membership and emboldening Russian opposition. The United States wanted to keep demand high among potential new members to preserve the goal of creating a unified Europe without recreating any divisive lines. Inviting a small group of the most highly qualified candidates achieved this goal. It preserved hope among states that were continuing their reform efforts and avoided foreclosing opportunities to any particular country. It settled on the three contenders with the widest support, and avoided choosing between other Allied favorites or dealing with the Baltic issue. Formal meetings held by cabinet secretaries and their deputies arrived at the same conclusions, and President Clinton agreed with their recommendations.

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<sup>58</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door*, 192.

<sup>59</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When*, 118.



## G. TREATY RATIFICATION

By the U.S. Constitution, America's final endorsement of new NATO members required the approval of two-thirds of the Senate. A special NATO Observers Group was created to involve the Senate in the enlargement process early. Throughout the debate, the principle of NATO enlargement received bipartisan support, but its final implementation was open to subversion, whether by Senators who opposed enlargement outright or by those who disagreed with specific terms or candidates.

Organized efforts were instrumental in achieving the necessary ratification to expand NATO's membership. An active campaign, led by Administration official Jeremy Rosner, helped secure support for enlargement among any major group that might arise to oppose it; the media, local governments, veterans associations, and the like were all brought on board. Concerns about costs were eased by RAND analysts, who compared expanded membership's annual per capita cost to that of a candy bar, and by equally low cost projections from multiple government agencies.<sup>60</sup> Parallel efforts of business interests and ethnic lobbies all rallied to build overwhelming support for enlargement.

NATO enlargement did face opposition arguments. Republican Senator Jesse Helms led a vocal challenge to the Administration's enlargement policy by attacking the NATO-Russia partnership. Senator Helms argued that NATO was a military alliance aimed at preventing the emergence of a European hegemon, particularly Russia.<sup>61</sup> Newly appointed Secretary of State Madeleine Albright addressed the Senator's concerns, explaining that the NATO-Russia Founding Act preserved the integrity of NATO's decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and that issues of doctrine and strategy would not be subject to Russia's approval.<sup>62</sup> As Goldgeier also points out, many highly regarded former government officials, such as George Kennan, Charles Kupchan, Michael Mandelbaum, Paul Nitze, Sam Nunn, and Brent Scowcroft all voiced their opposition, but they were not part of an organized effort to stop NATO's enlargement.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When*, 131.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 140–42.

The little structured resistance that materialized was unable to overcome broad American support for enlargement.

## **H. CONCLUSION**

Whether attempting to formulate a consensus, determining the appropriate timetable, or selecting prospective candidates for new membership, America's decisions on enlarging the Atlantic Alliance competed with its goal of building a partnership with a new democratic Russia. Many factors interacted to influence American decision-makers, but it was the expected effects of enlargement decisions on the prospects for cooperation with Russia that guided America's stance on NATO's enlargement. The prospects for strategic cooperation with Russia were perhaps better in the 1990s than they are today in 2014, and the full effects of America's enlargement decisions may not yet have been felt. Objections that enlargement amounted to "kicking this former giant" went largely unheeded.<sup>64</sup> Russia's recent return to the expansionist policies of its past have reinvigorated the enlargement debate, prompting many to question whether NATO's enlargement contributed to the current crises as the Russians say it did. While mounting tensions between Russia and the West threaten future cooperation, America's decision to promote enlarging the Alliance may come to be viewed in a different light. At the time these decisions were made, however, enlarging the Alliance was consistent with American interests and goals, particularly of promoting the spread of democracy and the unification of the European continent.

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<sup>64</sup> Senator Robert Smith in Yost, *NATO Transformed*, 107.

### **III. NATO ENLARGEMENT 2004**

America's support for NATO's second, much larger round of post-Cold War enlargement proceeded on the momentum of the previous decision to take in new members and was greatly facilitated by changing Alliance dynamics and enhanced cooperation with Russia in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001. Allied declarations and new programs instituted at the NATO Summit in Washington, DC, in 1999 set in motion the process for the next round of enlargement. The debate was largely a matter of which countries would be invited, rather than whether or when the Alliance would take on new members. Applicants seized an opportunity to prove their worth to the United States and its Allies as Russia relaxed its opposition to NATO's expansion.

#### **A. PRESSURE TO KEEP THE DOOR OPEN**

As in the first round of NATO enlargement, the American administration was subjected to unrelenting pressure from Central and Eastern European democratic leaders and their domestic constituents. By early 1997, twelve partners had expressed an interest in joining the Alliance, and more were forthcoming. Three of those twelve—the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland—attained membership in 1999, and the Alliance sought to encourage further progress among the remaining aspirants by reiterating its commitment to NATO's open door policy.<sup>65</sup> In return, hopeful states not only repeated their previously stated desires to join the Alliance, they also united in their efforts to attain NATO membership, forming a coalition that became known as the Vilnius 9, comprised of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.<sup>66</sup> (This group became the Vilnius 10, after the addition of Croatia in 2001.) In May 2000, the group hosted a conference in Lithuania's capital on NATO's role in European security and issued a joint statement expressing their collective aspiration to accede to NATO membership as a group and called upon the Alliance to

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<sup>65</sup> NAC-S (99) 064, "Washington Summit Communiqué," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 24, 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm>.

<sup>66</sup> Official NATO documents reference the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM).

extend them invitations at the next NATO Summit, which was scheduled for 2002.<sup>67</sup> Aspiring to NATO membership as a group appealed to those supporters of NATO enlargement that sought to avoid periodically upsetting relations with Russia by incrementally adding new members. Subsequent appeals came regularly, both from the individual governments of applicant states and their domestic supporters in America, as well as from the group forum.<sup>68</sup> In most cases, contenders for membership made significant progress on their respective Membership Action Plans (MAP), and this strengthened their bids for membership.

Shortly after the March 1999 accessions of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, the Washington Summit in April 1999 marked the launch of the MAP. Like the Partnership for Peace (PfP) before it, the MAP was aimed at keeping the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe engaged with the West while reinforcing their dedication to democratic reform. Although instituting the MAP was a measure short of extending additional invitations to prospective members, it reinforced the Allies' commitment to NATO's open door policy under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty by expounding upon the guidelines for membership set forth in the Alliance's 1995 Enlargement Study. The MAP provided the Alliance with some time to analyze the effects of admitting new members before inviting more and gave prospective future members more specific guidance to improve their chances for attaining NATO membership. By setting forth clear goals for prospective members to attain, the Alliance arguably limited, to a degree, its freedom to make subsequent enlargement decisions.

The MAP measures a country's performance in five key areas: political and economic issues, defense and military issues, resource issues, security issues, and legal issues. Through coordination with the aspirant state, NATO members identify specific concerns within each area and work with their partners to find and develop ways to achieve reform. Through cooperation, annual programs for reform are produced for implementation by the partner state. Annual progress reports by the Alliance provide

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<sup>67</sup> "Vilnius Statement," Conference on NATO's Role in the Changing Security Environment in Europe, <http://fas.org/man/nato/national/000519-statem.htm>.

<sup>68</sup> Reference the following link for multiple official statements from Central and Eastern European administrations seeking admission to NATO, <http://www.eusec.org/20010709.htm>.

feedback and guidance for further progress. While the Allies have maintained that “participation in the MAP does not prejudice any decision by the Alliance on future membership,” successful completion of a country’s respective MAP serves as an important step in the process of preparing for accession.<sup>69</sup> Conversely, some have argued that the MAP radically changed the guidelines for NATO membership after the first round, making reform efforts and subsequent admission of new members more demanding.<sup>70</sup>

The MAP introduced a new dimension to enlargement decision-making within the Alliance. NATO members maintained that enlargement would not take place automatically on the basis of completing a checklist of tasks. Thus the MAP provided no guarantee of future membership.<sup>71</sup> The MAP did, however, make the process of measuring a state’s reform progress more objective; judging one state’s performance against that of the others arguably became easier. Consequently, it would have been difficult to deny membership to one state that had successfully made the recommended reforms according to the guidelines set forth by the Alliance, while extending membership to another, which had made less progress, without undermining NATO’s open door policy. As James Goldgeier pointed out in an examination of NATO’s second round of enlargement, “The Membership Action Plan and, more importantly, the announcement that NATO would review the progress of the nine formal aspirants for membership at its 2002 summit . . . locked NATO into a process by which turning new members away in 2002 would cast severe doubts on the Alliance's credibility.”<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, new member accession is a political decision made by consensus agreement among Alliance members, and factors in addition to political and military reform play

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<sup>69</sup> Press Release NAC-S(99) 066, “Membership Action Plan,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, issued on April 24, 1999, [http://www.nato.int/cps/de/natohq/official\\_texts\\_27444.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/de/natohq/official_texts_27444.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>70</sup> Margarita Assanova, “A Debate on NATO’s Evolution,” Report of the CSIS Eastern Europe Project, Center for Strategic and International Studies (March 2003), 22, [http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/NATO\\_Debate\\_guidebook.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/NATO_Debate_guidebook.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey Simon, “NATO’s Membership Action Plan (MAP) and Prospects for the Next Round of Enlargement,” East European Studies Essay no. 58, The Woodrow Wilson Center, November 2000, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACF45B.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> James Goldgeier, “Not When but Who,” Examining Enlargement, *NATO Review*, 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/Examining-Enlargement/Not-when-but-who/EN/index.htm>.

important roles, such as geostrategic location. But a failure to invite new member states that had made significant progress in accordance with the MAP would have called into question the Alliance's willingness to integrate those states, thus threatening their future dedication to democratic reform.

The inertia created by the Clinton Administration's support for NATO enlargement would have been difficult for the president elected in 2000 to overcome. The 1999 NATO Summit in Washington DC saw the Allies reaffirm their commitment to the Alliance's open door policy, announce the institution of the Membership Action Plan providing enhanced guidance for countries wishing to join, and pledge to reexamine NATO enlargement at the next summit meeting, to be held no later than 2002.<sup>73</sup> These actions likely raised the expectations of prospective new members—or at least maintained them—and ensured that the enlargement issue would be an item on the incoming president's foreign policy agenda.

## **B. DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR ENLARGEMENT**

In a report generated by the RAND Corporation in 2000 analyzing dozens of papers written by leaders in American politics aimed at supporting President-Elect George W. Bush in his assumption of the nation's highest office, the authors affirmed that American leadership would guide the enlargement debate within the Alliance and urged the incoming president to declare America's support for admitting new members, arguing that it should be among his top priorities for immediate action.<sup>74</sup> The report also warned that failing to back NATO enlargement would signal a significant policy change, which would diminish the credibility of both the Alliance and the United States in Europe.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the authors declared that upholding the perceptions that NATO's

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<sup>73</sup> NAC-S(99) 064, "Washington Summit Communiqué," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 24, 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Frank Carlucci, Robert E. Hunter, and Zalmay Khalilzad, *Taking Charge: A Bipartisan Report to the President-Elect on Foreign Policy and National Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000), 12, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph\\_reports/2006/MR1306.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2006/MR1306.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

door remained open and that neither Russia nor any other non-Ally had a vote in Alliance decision-making was of paramount importance.<sup>76</sup>

As the U.S. Senate would ultimately be called upon to ratify Alliance enlargement, the Senators were important decision-makers. Senator Richard Lugar, an influential legislator representing Indiana, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, and staunch enlargement supporter, sponsored a resolution declaring congressional support for America's endorsement of continued Alliance enlargement at the Washington Summit in 1999 and continued to be a strong and vocal advocate thereafter.<sup>77</sup> In June 2001, Senator Lugar called on America and the Alliance as a whole to "seize this unprecedented opportunity to expand the zone of peace and security to all of Europe."<sup>78</sup> Likewise, President Bush's principal opponent for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000, Arizona Senator John McCain, actively supported NATO enlargement, even advocating membership for the controversial Baltic states.<sup>79</sup> Other influential commentators, including Zbigniew Brzezinski, Patrick Buchanan, and Henry Kissinger, also expressed their support for enlargement.<sup>80</sup>

Like his predecessor President Clinton, President George W. Bush strongly supported expanding the Atlantic Alliance. Just a few months into his presidency, President Bush publicly declared his support for NATO enlargement while touring Europe. At a meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels, Belgium, President Bush declared, "We must extend our hands and open our hearts to new members to build security for all

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<sup>76</sup> Carlucci, Hunter, and Khalilzad, *Taking Charge*, 35.

<sup>77</sup> Senate Hearing on the Upcoming NATO Summit in Washington, Congressional Record, April 19, 1999, <http://fas.org/man/nato/congress/1999/s990419-nato01.htm>.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Lugar, "Why Europe Still Matters and Why NATO Should Enlarge Again," CSIS Roundtable Discussion on Capitol Hill, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 13, 2001, [http://csis.org/events/ev\\_010613lugar.htm](http://csis.org/events/ev_010613lugar.htm).

<sup>79</sup> J. Michael Lyons, "U.S. Senators Back Baltic NATO Membership," *The Baltic Times*, August 30, 2001, <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5376/>.

<sup>80</sup> Henry Kissinger, "Opinion: What to Do with the New Russia", *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2001; Patrick Buchanan, "Washington Shouldn't Be Antagonizing Moscow, A Natural Ally", *International Herald Tribune*, 12 April 2001.

of Europe.”<sup>81</sup> Two days later, in a news conference with Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, President Bush stated unequivocally, “My government believes NATO should expand.”<sup>82</sup> That same day, President Bush indicated support for a sizable enlargement, announcing to a group of students at Warsaw University, “As we plan the Prague summit, we should not calculate how little we can get away with but how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom. The expansion of NATO has fulfilled NATO's promise, and that promise now leads eastward and southward, northward and onward.”<sup>83</sup> The American president expressed his support for NATO enlargement during meetings with several European leaders, including Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin.<sup>84</sup> Of note, the Russian president expressed his concerns over the growth of the Western military alliance, but persuaded listeners to focus on the cooperative efforts between NATO and Russia rather than the dispute.<sup>85</sup>

Opponents of NATO's second round of enlargement revisited earlier arguments in a new context. The main arguments put forth against the first round of NATO enlargement were that the costs of admitting new members would be excessively high and the benefits would be small, that adding new members would complicate consensus-based Alliance decision-making, and that the threat to NATO-Russia relations outweighed the importance of consolidating European democracy. These arguments were overcome by 1997 because it came to be believed that the prospective members being considered at that time were economically competent enough to contribute to the Alliance, that the enlargement would be small enough to be manageable, and that

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<sup>81</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Opening of the NATO Meeting in Brussels, Belgium,” The American Presidency Project, June 13, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=45962&st=&st1=>.

<sup>82</sup> George W. Bush, “The President's News Conference with President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland in Warsaw, Poland,” The American Presidency Project, June 15, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=45971&st=&st1=>.

<sup>83</sup> George W. Bush, “Address at Warsaw University,” The American Presidency Project, June 15, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=45973&st=&st1=>.

<sup>84</sup> George W. Bush, “The President's News Conference with President Vladimir Putin of Russia in Kranj,” The American Presidency Project, June 16, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=45978&st=&st1=>.

<sup>85</sup> Vladimir Putin, “The President's News Conference with President Vladimir Putin of Russia in Kranj,” The American Presidency Project, June 16, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=45978&st=&st1=>.



sustained improvement in NATO-Russia relations was a demonstrated priority of both the American and Russian governments.

The performance of NATO's new members—along with many of their Western European counterparts—in attaining appropriate levels of defense spending proved to be lacking, however, which made the cost argument more salient. Also, the second round debate considered the inclusion of as many as nine new members, which threatened to have an exponentially greater complicating effect on Alliance decision-making. Additionally, none of the states being considered for membership possessed sufficiently competent and sizable military capabilities (in contrast with Poland, for example), which led many politicians to oppose enlargement on the grounds that the second round of enlargement would increase NATO's responsibilities without enhancing its capabilities. Some went as far as to argue that the states under consideration, particularly the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, were too difficult to defend or were perhaps even indefensible. Furthermore, Russia's adamant opposition to the accession of the Baltic states into NATO was well known.<sup>86</sup>

### C. ALLIED ATTITUDES ON SUBSEQUENT ENLARGEMENT

American enthusiasm for further NATO enlargement was not widely shared among NATO members. According to *The Economist*, "Europe is divided, though most countries would probably prefer no new members, since it is proving expensive enough to assimilate Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary."<sup>87</sup> Particularly divisive was the issue of whether or not to extend invitations to the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, since, as former Soviet republics, their admission was likely to provoke an adverse reaction from Russia. The British government had previously voiced its concern about the dilution of the Alliance by adding only a few new members; the "big bang" approach being advocated by many exacerbated those reservations.<sup>88</sup> In October 2000, NATO's Secretary General Lord George Robertson hinted at the Alliance's

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<sup>86</sup> Goldgeier, "Not When but Who."

<sup>87</sup> *The Economist*, "Doubts on Both Sides of the Atlantic: Europe is Worried about George Bush's America and Vice Versa," *The Economist*, March 29, 2001, <http://www.economist.com/node/555350>.

<sup>88</sup> Assanova, "A Debate on NATO's Evolution," 19.

dissatisfaction with the progress of the applicants: “The alliance will enlarge again when NATO is ready, when those nations aspiring to membership are ready, and when their membership will contribute to security and stability in Europe as a whole.”<sup>89</sup> Despite these assertions, the Alliance continued to declare its intent to uphold its open door policy.

#### **D. DEBATING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES**

The questions of whether America would support NATO’s second post-Cold War round of enlargement and when that enlargement might occur were largely answered by President Bush’s remarks in Warsaw and the scheduling of the NATO Summit in Prague for November 2002. The question of which candidacies America would support remained a matter for speculation. For many applicants, an equally strong case could be built both for and against their accession. The United States had failed to back the applications of Romania and Slovenia during deliberations for NATO’s previous round of enlargement despite their being championed by influential European Allies. Slovakia was also considered in early discussions for the first round of enlargement, but disqualified itself under the leadership of Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, largely due to his government’s tenuous support of liberal democracy.<sup>90</sup>

Several years later, many of the same factors that had denied these states American support continued to persist. Slovenia was perhaps the least controversial candidate, having never been a member of the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact. Moreover, Slovenia, along with Slovakia, provided a land bridge to Hungary; but Slovenia was a small country with minimal resources and capabilities, and its progress remained slow.<sup>91</sup> Slovakia had made great strides toward reform, but the possibility of the reelection of Mečiar meant that continued progress was not guaranteed. Additionally, public support for NATO membership in Slovakia had diminished greatly as a result of

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<sup>89</sup> Assanova, “A Debate on NATO’s Evolution,” 22.

<sup>90</sup> Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door*, 154–55.

<sup>91</sup> Simon, “NATO’s Membership Action Plan (MAP),” 14.

NATO's intervention in the Kosovo crisis.<sup>92</sup> Romania and Bulgaria represented the greatest potential additions in military capability and territory, but their reform progress lagged well behind the rest.<sup>93</sup> Domestic unrest in Macedonia hampered its application. While public support for NATO accession in Albania soared, this country also had a long way to go toward making the necessary reforms.<sup>94</sup>

The most contentious issue in the debate over NATO's second post-Cold War enlargement round was the admission of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These applicants were former Soviet republics, and Russian officials repeatedly expressed adamant opposition to the prospect of their accession to NATO. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Russian President Boris Yeltsin attempted to secure a guarantee from President Clinton, prior to NATO's first post-Cold War enlargement, that the Baltic states would not be considered for Alliance membership. Subsequent statements in the Russian media as well as from Russian leaders in the foreign ministry, the military, and elsewhere in the government continuously conveyed vehement hostility toward the notion of Baltic NATO membership, threatening retaliatory measures ranging from the severing of cooperative relations to aggressive military action.

The integration of the Baltic states was particularly contentious for Russia because it put Western Alliance members between itself and its isolated enclave in Kaliningrad, thus limiting Russia's ability to support its Baltic Sea Fleet elements located at Baltiysk. This unfortunate geographic reality presented a potential for crisis. To illustrate, the Baltic states could deny transit to Russian troops seeking only to resupply or reinforce installations in Kaliningrad. In turn, Russia might ignore the objections of the Baltic States and send troops onto the sovereign territory of Lithuania if Moscow deemed it necessary.<sup>95</sup> The potential for such a situation to escalate would be great, arguing against Baltic accession to NATO for fear that a local dispute could grow to encompass

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<sup>92</sup> Simon, "NATO's Membership Action Plan," 14.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>95</sup> For an extensive account of a potential Kaliningrad scenario, see Fred Coleman, "The Kaliningrad Scenario: Expanding NATO to the Baltics," *World Policy Journal* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1997), 71–75.

the entire Euro-Atlantic region. Additionally, Russia had only recently completed the withdrawal of its troops and military infrastructure from the territory of the Baltic states in 1999, and each of them continued to be home to large Russian populations, on whose behalf Russia often claimed mistreatment.<sup>96</sup>

Another aspect of the dispute over possible Baltic membership was that, as James Goldgeier put it, “these countries have limited resources, populations and capabilities.”<sup>97</sup> Incorporating the Baltic states would, at best, only marginally improve the collective defense capability of the Alliance. The largest of the Baltic states, Lithuania, had a total population of only 3.6 million people. Wilson Center Scholar Jeffrey Simon cited the Baltic states’ small size as the principal factor limiting their accession to the Alliance.<sup>98</sup> Their proximity to Saint Petersburg and Moscow made them particularly vulnerable to Russian aggression, leading enlargement detractors to question the Allies’ capability to guarantee Baltic security. Even by enlargement supporter Ron Asmus’ account, “as small states in a volatile region, the Baltic States . . . cannot fully guarantee their own security.”<sup>99</sup> This made them both ardent pursuers of NATO membership and also Alliance liabilities.

Though arguably lacking in significant strategic benefits for the Alliance, the Baltic states were among the leading candidates for NATO membership on the basis of their reform progress. In order to compensate for their diminutive stature, these states established joint military institutions, such as the Baltic Defense College, joint military capabilities, like the Joint Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET), and joint military organizations (for example, the Baltic Battalion, or BALTBAT) to augment their potential to contribute to NATO missions and European security. They reminded Alliance members that size and military contributions did not prevent Luxembourg or Iceland from joining NATO. They also made large strides in instituting democratic

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<sup>96</sup> Mark Kramer, “NATO, the Baltic States, and Russia,” *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (October 2002): 733–36.

<sup>97</sup> Goldgeier, “Not When but Who.”

<sup>98</sup> Simon, “NATO’s Membership Action Plan,” 13.

<sup>99</sup> Ronald D. Asmus and Robert C. Nurick, “NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 38, no. 2 (1996), 122.

reforms, and they settled most of their outstanding territorial and minority disputes, though Russia complicated some of their efforts in its attempt to thwart their accession to NATO.<sup>100</sup>

The Baltic states cited improved relations between Russia and Poland as proof that their admission to NATO would benefit all. They developed close relations with the United States, codified by the State Department's Baltic Action Plan in 1996 and followed by the Baltic Charter of Partnership in 1998. Moreover, several former U.S. officials openly declared their support for Baltic NATO membership, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former President Bill Clinton.<sup>101</sup> In this context, a subsequent denial of membership for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania would have threatened to undermine NATO's Article 10 commitment to remain open to any European nation that sought to further Alliance principles and contribute to European security and would have also suggested that Russian opposition had an influence on Allied decision-making.

Despite the progress made by the Baltic states and the implications of rejecting their requests to join, Baltic advancements did not guarantee American or Allied support for their accession to NATO. As late as March 2001, testifying before the House International Relations Committee, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed some skepticism and concern regarding their admission to the Alliance. Anthony Blinken, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., ventured that Allied support for Baltic accession was weak, adding that "Moscow will try to draw a red line around the Baltic states . . . and the European Allies will probably go along."<sup>102</sup> The accession of the Baltic states posed a challenging problem for officials seeking both to expand the Alliance and improve Allied relations with Russia.

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<sup>100</sup> Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States, and Russia," 742–43.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 740–41.

<sup>102</sup> Anthony J. Blinken, "NATO Needs to Grow," *The New York Times*, April 2, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/02/opinion/02BLIN.html>.

## E. SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, AND ITS EFFECTS ON ENLARGEMENT

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed the enlargement debate. As one author noted, “Without this catalytic . . . event, the debate right up to Prague would have remained the same as early 2001.”<sup>103</sup> At the NATO Summit in Washington in 1999, the Allies agreed to launch the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), calling upon NATO members to improve the mobility, deployability, and sustainability of their armed forces to enable the Alliance to defend its collective interests abroad as well as its territory at home.<sup>104</sup> The DCI entailed significant investment in new technologies and cooperative capabilities. Some argued that the DCI increased the economic burden on prospective members, and this caused speculation about their chances to attain sufficient interoperability to support their applications for admission. The September 11 attacks rapidly changed the perceived threat situation, challenging the importance of the DCI. Shortly after the attacks, each of the NATO applicants offered the United States its support in various forms, ranging from official statements to transit rights and military capabilities. In an article for *National Defense Magazine*, Elizabeth Book concluded, “In the new security environment, the aspirants’ willingness to side with the United States in the war on terrorism, to contribute niche emergency-response capabilities and to share information for counterterrorism, have set the countries apart as allies of the United States.”<sup>105</sup> Their willingness to help when needed and as able proved more salient than the expenditure of scant resources on more robust military capabilities. This had an effect on American decision-makers, as the president subsequently became more forthright in his support for a larger round of invitations at the Prague Summit.<sup>106</sup> As the September 11 attacks and the ensuing campaign against terrorism changed dynamics within the

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<sup>103</sup> Mel Huang, “NATO’s Baltic Enlargement Before and After 9/11: The Media’s View,” *The Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook 2004* (Tallinn, Estonia: The Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, 2004), 113, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=87873>.

<sup>104</sup> NAC-S(99) 064, “Washington Communiqué,”

<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth G. Book, “Criteria for NATO Admission Shift After 9/11,” *National Defense Magazine* (October 2002), [http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2002/October/Pages/Criteria\\_for\\_NATO4003.aspx](http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2002/October/Pages/Criteria_for_NATO4003.aspx).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Alliance, the United States sought more Allies upon whom it could call for access, information, and support.

An enhanced collaborative relationship between NATO and Russia emerged as a result of cooperation on counterterror efforts, which reduced much of the impediment to the United States and the Alliance in pursuing a bigger second round of post-Cold War enlargement. According to James Goldgeier, the Bush Administration felt that NATO's enlargement was less of a hindrance to cooperation with Russia than other issues, such as ballistic missile defenses and intervention in Kosovo; and when U.S.-Russian relation improved in the wake of the September 11 terror attacks, Russian opposition became even less of a concern.<sup>107</sup>

Leading up to NATO's first round of post-Cold War enlargement, the Alliance and Russia achieved an extraordinary level of cooperation, with Russia joining the Partnership for Peace and contributing forces to the Alliance's operations in Bosnia. This cooperation culminated in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which formalized the new relationship. Relations quickly began to sour when the Alliance stepped up its Balkan interventions, conducting an air campaign in response to the Kosovo crisis, and when America withdrew from the ABM Treaty and revisited the idea of developing ballistic missile defenses.<sup>108</sup> Russia found common ground upon which to cooperate with the Alliance after 9/11, as opposing Islamic extremists in its Northern Caucasus had long been a priority of the Russian government.

The effect that Russia's cooperation would have on NATO's enlargement was at first uncertain. Many feared that Russia would leverage its improved relations with the West against the Allies' intention to expand, with particular regard to the Baltic states.<sup>109</sup> Others stressed the importance of formalizing an enhanced collaborative relationship between NATO and Russia, building upon the NATO-Russia Founding Act signed prior

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<sup>107</sup> Goldgeier, "Not When but Who."

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> For excerpts from multiple articles, see Mel Huang, "NATO's Baltic Enlargement Before and After 9/11: The Media's View," *The Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook 2004* (Tallinn, Estonia: The Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, 2004), 108–09, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=87873>.

to the previous enlargement round, and even holding open the possibility of Russia's future accession to the Alliance to prevent Russian isolation. President Putin expressed compatible sentiments during an interview in November 2001 with National Public Radio's Robert Siegel: "Russia acknowledges the role of NATO in the world of today. Russia is prepared to expand its cooperation with this organization. And if we change the quality of the relationship, if we change the format of the relationship between Russia and NATO, then I think NATO enlargement will cease to be an issue."<sup>110</sup> Richard Holbrooke, a key player in NATO's previous enlargement round, summed up the effects of 9/11 as follows: "The tragedy increased the urgency of enlarging NATO . . . and reduced Russian resistance to such a move."<sup>111</sup>

Just as the Alliance took steps to improve relations with Russia in conjunction with NATO's previous enlargement, the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was announced in Rome in May 2002. Replacing the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) created by the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, the NRC instituted a more equal partnership: "a mechanism for consultation, consensus building, cooperation, joint decision, and joint action for the member states of NATO and Russia on a wide spectrum of security issues in the Euro-Atlantic region."<sup>112</sup> With a new enriched relationship with the Russian Federation in place, the United States and the other Allies were freer to proceed with the addition of more member states, including the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. At the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, seven states were invited to accede to the Alliance: the three Baltic states, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

## F. CONCLUSION

President George W. Bush shared his predecessor's vision of creating a Europe whole and free through enlarging the Atlantic Alliance to include the democracies of

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<sup>110</sup> "Vladimir Putin: The NPR Interview," National Public Radio, November 15, 2001, <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/putin/nprinterview.html>

<sup>111</sup> Paul Taylor, "Attacks Overcame U.S. Unilateralism—Holbrooke," *Reuters*, October 11, 2001.

<sup>112</sup> "Rome Declaration," NATO-Russia Council, May 28, 2002, [http://www.nato-russia-council.info/media/69549/2002.05.28\\_nrc\\_rome\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.nato-russia-council.info/media/69549/2002.05.28_nrc_rome_declaration.pdf).



Central and Eastern Europe “from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between.”<sup>113</sup> This notion remained popular with a majority of Washington’s political elite. The issue took on a new life and America’s decisions were largely influenced by events in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The applicants pled their case and proved their worth by supporting America’s expeditionary efforts following the shocking and tragic events. Likewise, Russia and NATO stepped up their cooperative efforts, forging a closer collaborative relationship institutionalized in the NATO-Russia Council. These developments paved the way for NATO’s second post-Cold War enlargement in 2004, adding Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, and thereby increasing Alliance membership from nineteen to twenty-six. The “big bang” did not exhaust the list of applicants, however, and thus NATO’s door remained open.

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<sup>113</sup> George W. Bush, “Address at Warsaw University.”

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## IV. NATO ENLARGEMENT 2009

At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, NATO invited two Balkan states, Albania and Croatia, to join the Alliance. These states would become Allies a year later. At Bucharest, the Allies also pledged to extend an invitation to Macedonia<sup>114</sup> pending the resolution of its name dispute with Greece (an issue that had not yet been resolved in 2015) and “agreed today that these countries [Georgia and Ukraine] will become members of NATO” at some unspecified future date.<sup>115</sup> The United States supported a more ambitious enlargement agenda, including an invitation for Macedonia and participation in NATO’s MAP for Georgia and Ukraine. Analysis of NATO’s third round of post-Cold War enlargement reveals that America’s decision to support farther reaching action was based upon broad pre-existing bipartisan support for enlargement and the desire to take in new Allies that might contribute and provide legitimacy to NATO-led military operations abroad. The American debate over potential candidates, both those vying for NATO membership and those seeking increased association, stressed foremost the importance of the candidates’ contributions to ongoing military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo, subordinating pertinent concerns about their progress in implementing reforms, their ability to fulfill Alliance collective defense obligations, and the potential effects on relations with Russia.

### A. INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

The international environment confronted American decision-makers with several challenges pertinent to the issue of enlarging the Alliance. Unrest in the former Yugoslavia, which led to NATO’s intervention on behalf of Kosovo, had not yet been resolved. Western backing for the Kosovar government’s desire to establish its independence threatened to reignite tensions with Russia, who would not support a unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo. Indeed, just two months prior to the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Kosovo declared its independence and many Western

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<sup>114</sup> Official NATO documents reference the “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (FYROM).

<sup>115</sup> “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 3, 2008, par. 23, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm).

countries quickly extended recognition, while Russia condemned the act as a violation of several international accords and agreements and called upon the international community to “respond responsibly to this challenge” and recognize the “dangerous consequences” that supporting separatism poses to the international order.<sup>116</sup> The U.S.-led intervention in Iraq, which Russia and many European Allies opposed and criticized, escalated, as President Bush surged the American troop presence to its highest level in 2007. Additionally, violence soared in Afghanistan as the NATO-led campaign against the Taliban and al Qaeda wore on. With the U.S. military broadly engaged in overseas conflict, the contributions of Allies and partners became the subject of much scrutiny. Shortly after the Bucharest Summit, armed conflict would erupt over Georgia’s attempt to reintegrate the Russian dominated, separatist controlled regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, elevating concerns about NATO’s relationship with Georgia and Russia’s intentions in the post-Soviet space. It was in this context of conflict that NATO’s third round of post-Cold War enlargement would take place.

## **B. PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES**

NATO membership was a long standing goal for the Balkan states of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia, having been original members of the Vilnius Group, which saw seven of its ten members accede to NATO in 2004. Leading up to the Bucharest Summit, however, a bevy of issues complicated the Balkan states’ quest for membership invitations. Albania was on a well-established path toward reform and Western integration. In a 2007 news conference with President Bush, Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha declared his government’s determination to “undertake any reform that would make Albania suitable to receive the invitation [to NATO].”<sup>117</sup> Public support for NATO in Albania was extremely high, in relation to other candidates, and Albania

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<sup>116</sup> “Statement by Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Kosovo,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, February 17, 2008, [http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/041c5af46913d38ac32573f30027b380!OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/041c5af46913d38ac32573f30027b380!OpenDocument).

<sup>117</sup> Sali Berisha, “The President’s News Conference with Prime Minister Sali Berisha of Albania in Tirana, Albania,” The American Presidency Project, June 10, 2007, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=75342>.

offered some strategic benefit given its geographic location bordering Kosovo.<sup>118</sup> Arguing against Albania's candidacy was its status as "the poorest European state, plagued by political instability throughout the 1990s, with a reputation for widespread corruption."<sup>119</sup> Croatia did not establish a formal relationship with NATO until joining the PfP in 2000, but it was quick to win over the Allies in its campaign for NATO membership. Indeed, President George W. Bush declared his support for Croatia's accession to NATO as early as 2006.<sup>120</sup> Croatia's largest obstacle was its lack of domestic support for NATO membership.<sup>121</sup> Like Albania, Macedonia enjoyed widespread public support for NATO membership, but demonstrated a lack of reform progress, and its longstanding dispute with Greece over the use of the name Macedonia was an impediment to accession.<sup>122</sup> Greece, a NATO member since 1952, objected to the use of the name for fear that it implied claims on Greek territory, despite Macedonia's assertions to the contrary, and threatened to block Macedonia's accession.

To overcome their issues, Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia worked very closely with the United States to support Western initiatives, reform their governments and militaries, garner public support for NATO membership, and promote regional security. They concluded the Adriatic Charter with the United States in 2003, affirming their dedication to reform and Euro-Atlantic integration. They participated in and hosted a variety of PfP exercises and contributed to U.S.-led and/or NATO-led missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo to varying degrees, which gained them great favor with the George W. Bush Administration. (Croatia abstained from participation in Iraq in the absence of what Zagreb regarded as satisfactory UN Security Council authorization.)

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<sup>118</sup> Vincent Morelli, Carl Ek, Paul Belkin, Steven Woerhel, and Jim Nichol, "NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates," Congressional Research Service, April 14, 2009, 5–7, [http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/RL34701\\_04142009.pdf](http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/RL34701_04142009.pdf).

<sup>119</sup> Ryan C. Hendrickson, Jonathan Campbell, and Nicholas Mullikin, "Albania and NATO's 'Open Door' Policy: Alliance Enlargement and Military Transformation," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 19, no. 2 (2006), 244.

<sup>120</sup> Louise Fenner, "President Bush Supports NATO Membership for Croatia by 2008," IIP Digital, U.S. Department of State, October 17, 2006, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2006/10/20061017172757xlrennef6.557864e-02.html#axzz3PDwzDXFP>.

<sup>121</sup> Morelli, Ek, Belkin, Woerhel, and Nichol, "NATO Enlargement," 7–9.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–12.

Despite the significant progress made by these three Balkan candidates, serious issues of corruption, organized crime, and accountability remained at the time of their accession. By many accounts, the U.S. government nonetheless went to extraordinary lengths to support their accessions, even securing remarkable extensions to their approved reform timetables to allow them to make more significant progress.<sup>123</sup>

Georgia and Ukraine were (and remain) controversial and divisive candidates seeking closer ties to NATO and eventual membership in the Alliance. Both states saw pro-Western reformist governments ascend to power in the so-called color revolutions (the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine). Both states had long-standing histories of cooperation with NATO beginning in the early 1990s. Both states sought invitations to participate in NATO's MAP at the Bucharest Summit. Ukraine established a special relationship with NATO in 1997 through the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, which established the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) that oversees cooperation and consultation. Furthermore, the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan was established in 2002. Comparable to the MAP, it measures Ukraine's progress in the five key areas of political and economic issues, defense and military issues, resource issues, security issues, and legal issues and, like the MAP, is reviewed annually. At the time of the Bucharest Summit, Georgia had implemented many reforms outlined in its Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO and established an Intensified Dialogue with the Alliance.<sup>124</sup> Both Georgia and Ukraine made significant contributions to operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and especially Iraq (where Georgia was the third largest contributor of troops).<sup>125</sup>

Despite the long-established partnerships, several arguments against closer cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine persisted within the Alliance. The lack of public support for NATO in Ukraine at that time was particularly damaging for this country's

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<sup>123</sup> Steven Lee Myers and Thom Shanker, "NATO Expansion and a Bush Legacy Are in Doubt," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/15/world/europe/15nato.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/15/world/europe/15nato.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>124</sup> Jim Nichol, "Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement: Issues and Implications," Congressional Research Service, March 7, 2008, 2, <http://research.policyarchive.org/20134.pdf>.

<sup>125</sup> "Iraq: As Third Largest Contingent, Georgia Hopes to Show Its Worth," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty/Radio Liberty, September 10, 2007, <http://research.policyarchive.org/20134.pdf>.

membership prospects. Low poll numbers and mass demonstrations against NATO were causes for concern.<sup>126</sup> Ukraine's large Russian-speaking population and the country's dependence on Russian resources also argued against its candidacy. In Georgia, separatist movements warned of instability, and the government's crackdown on demonstrators and media outlets raised doubts about the country's progress toward democratization.<sup>127</sup> Georgia's relations with neighboring Russia remained tense. A Congressional Research Service report cited Russia's envoy to the NATO-Russia Council, Dmitriy Rogozin, as stating that Georgia's accession to NATO would "destabilize the Caucasus region and further harm Russia-Georgia relations."<sup>128</sup> The report also quoted statements from Russian officials who argued in early 2008 that, "If NATO invites Georgia to participate in a MAP, then Russia should extend diplomatic recognition to Abkhazia and South Ossetia in order to base Russian troops in those regions."<sup>129</sup> The Russians acted on this threat later in 2008. Despite their shortcomings in military capabilities and democratic credentials, American support for both Georgia and Ukraine remained strong. During a visit to Georgia, in a news conference with President Mikheil Saakashvili, President Bush declared, "I believe that NATO would benefit with Georgia being a member of NATO, and I think Georgia would benefit. And there's a way forward through the MAP."<sup>130</sup> He made a similar declaration with regard to Ukraine during a visit to Kiev prior to the Bucharest Summit.<sup>131</sup>

### C. THE ALLIES' OUTLOOK

Though it appeared to be widely accepted that some progress would be made toward enlarging the Alliance, America's European Allies were in disagreement over the

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<sup>126</sup> Jan Maksymiuk, "Ukraine: U.S. Navy Stopover Sparks Anti-NATO Protests," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 1, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1068836.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Nichol, "Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement," 2.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>130</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks Following Discussions with President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and an Exchange with Reporters," The American Presidency Project, July 5, 2006, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=289>.

<sup>131</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Bush Supports Ukraine's Bid to Join NATO," *The New York Times*, April 2, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/02/world/europe/02prexy.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/02/world/europe/02prexy.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

scope of the enlargement decision that would take place in Bucharest. The principal point of discord came over whether Georgia and Ukraine would be invited to participate in the MAP. Many of NATO's newest members, including Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states, endorsed the American view supporting the extension of the MAP to both Georgia and Ukraine. Estonian President Toomas Hendrick Ilves cited the MAP's influence on motivating aspirants to make progress: "[The MAP] forces nations to reform even when they don't want to do it."<sup>132</sup> Others reminded the Allies that the MAP set countries on a long and difficult course and was no guarantee of membership; thus, taking action in support of Georgia and Ukraine should not be provocative to Russia. Latvian President Valdis Zatlers warned about the risks of delaying action and the possibility of alienating reformers in Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>133</sup>

Other influential Allies opposed taking such a large step toward closer cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine. Germany, in particular, was unequivocal in its position against according MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine. German Chancellor Angela Merkel argued that Georgia's unresolved border disputes, and the potential to provoke Russia excluded Tbilisi from consideration.<sup>134</sup> Other German officials cautioned that, in the Georgian case specifically, the potential for confrontation with Russia was too great to justify a MAP invitation. Likewise, France opposed making progress toward NATO membership for both Georgia and Ukraine for fear of upsetting relations with Russia and the European balance of power. Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Spain also opposed MAP for Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>135</sup>

The Allies also disagreed over the leading candidates up for accession. The aforementioned name-dispute with Greece disqualified Macedonia from NATO membership (pending a resolution to the dispute) since accession requires unanimous

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<sup>132</sup> Steven Erlanger and Steven Lee Myers, "NATO Allies Oppose Bush on Georgia and Ukraine," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/03/world/europe/03nato.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/03/world/europe/03nato.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2&).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Marc Champion, "Merkel Slows NATO Bids by Georgia and Ukraine," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 3, 2008, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122297151270999027>.

<sup>135</sup> Erlanger and Myers, "NATO Allies Oppose Bush on Georgia and Ukraine."



consent. Some Allies remained skeptical that Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia had made sufficient reform progress and sought to slow the pace of NATO enlargement to deal with other issues.<sup>136</sup> Some felt that American support for the membership of these three Balkan states was based more on their contributions to U.S.-led or NATO-led operations than fulfillment of MAP guidelines. These differences of opinion added to ongoing disagreements over Alliance policy, including ballistic missile defenses and troop levels in Afghanistan.<sup>137</sup>

#### **D. RUSSIAN OPPOSITION**

Leading up to the Bucharest Summit, a wide range of issues burdened U.S.-Russian and NATO-Russian relations. Allied operations in Kosovo, tensions over European land-based ballistic missile defenses, and vocal opposition and criticism of U.S.-led military operations in Iraq were among the major points of contention. Indeed, Russia threatened to reverse its position with regard to recognizing separatist movements in Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Georgia in response to Kosovo's independence.<sup>138</sup> After the United States revealed its plans to station missile defense systems in the Czech Republic and Poland, Russian President Putin accused the West of starting "an inevitable arms race" and threatened to pull out of several treaties.<sup>139</sup> President Putin delivered harsh anti-U.S. rhetoric in his speech at a conference on security policy in Munich in 2007, stating that "Unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problems. Moreover, they have caused new human tragedies and created new centers of tension . . . plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. . . . The United States has overstepped its national borders in every way."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Morelli, Ek, Belkin, Woerhel, and Nichol, "NATO Enlargement," 21.

<sup>137</sup> Erlanger and Myers, "NATO Allies Oppose Bush on Georgia and Ukraine."

<sup>138</sup> Peter Rutland and Gregory Dubinsky, "U.S.—Russian Relations: Hopes and Fears," in *U.S. Foreign Policy*, eds. Michael Cox and Doug Stokes (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15, <http://prutland.web.wesleyan.edu/Documents/US-Russian%20relations.pdf>.

<sup>139</sup> Steven A. Hildreth and Carl Ek, "Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defenses in Europe," Congressional Research Service, September 23, 2009, 19, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RL34051.pdf>.

<sup>140</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Prepared Remarks at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Munich Conference on Security Policy," *The Washington Post*, February 12, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>.

Regarding NATO, in his 2007 Munich speech, President Putin called the Alliance's enlargement "a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust."<sup>141</sup> He issued a threat to aim Russian nuclear missiles at Ukraine should this country ever accede to the Alliance and host NATO facilities.<sup>142</sup> He later told President Bush in Bucharest that Ukraine would "cease to exist as a state" should it ever attain NATO membership.<sup>143</sup> Additionally, Russia demonstrated its influence over Ukraine by exploiting its dependency on Russian energy resources. With respect to Georgia, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that Russia would not allow Georgia to join NATO, while Sergei Markov, the director of the Moscow Institute of Political Studies, was quoted in 2006 as saying, "Georgia has not yet earned our respect for its sovereignty."<sup>144</sup> President Putin also threatened to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in response to Georgia's bid for NATO membership.<sup>145</sup> Russia's increasingly aggressive foreign policy and ever more repressive domestic policy signaled a significant departure from the course set by the democratic reformers with whom the United States and NATO sought to establish a cooperative relationship following the collapse of the Soviet Union. A 2006 report issued by a task force of the Council on Foreign Relations asserted that "Russia's emergent authoritarian political system will make it harder for the two sides to find common ground and harder to cooperate even when they do," though the report did stress the long-term importance of cooperation.<sup>146</sup>

U.S.-Russia relations were not totally absent cooperation, however, as combined efforts to counter terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction continued.

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<sup>141</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Prepared Remarks at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Munich Conference on Security Policy."

<sup>142</sup> Peter Finn, "Putin Threatens Ukraine on NATO," *The Washington Post*, February 13, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/12/AR2008021201658.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Jeffrey T. Kuhner, "Will Russia-Ukraine Be Europe's Next War?" *The Washington Times*, October 12, 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/oct/12/europes-next-war/?page=all>.

<sup>144</sup> Lavrov, Markov, and Putin quoted in Stephen Blank, "Commentary—Russia Versus NATO in the CIS," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, May 14, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1117479.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Independent Task Force Report Number 57, "Russia's Wrong Direction," Council on Foreign Relations (March 2006), <http://www.cfr.org/iran/russias-wrong-direction/p9997>.

Also, the United States supported Russia's bid to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006. In any event, Russian opposition did not seem to affect U.S. support for the NATO aspirations of any of the Eastern European hopefuls. Russia had not yet emerged as a major foreign policy concern for the Bush Administration. Russia's purported red lines around the Baltic states did not prevent their accession to NATO in 2004, and the United States sought to preserve the principle that Russia would not get a vote in NATO's decision-making process.

#### **E. EXECUTIVE DECISION**

President George W. Bush's unwavering support for enlarging NATO continued throughout his eight-year tenure in office. In his remarks at a 2004 ceremony honoring the Alliance's recent addition of seven new European Allies, President Bush praised Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia for their progress toward reform and participation in U.S.-led and NATO-led operations. He added, "The door to NATO will remain open until the whole of Europe is united in freedom and in peace."<sup>147</sup> Speaking at Latvia University in Riga in 2006, the president again reaffirmed his and the Alliance's commitment to an open door policy, and expressed an intention to extend additional invitations at NATO's next summit in 2008, mentioning Albania, Croatia, Georgia, Macedonia, and Ukraine specifically; he then went on to discuss at length the importance of U.S.-led operations in Iraq and NATO-led operations in Afghanistan.<sup>148</sup>

When pressed by the Albanian media regarding their country's prospects for receiving an invitation to join the Alliance, President Bush coyly asserted only that Albania's best chances resided in its continued efforts toward reform.<sup>149</sup> When meeting shortly thereafter with Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha in Tirana, however, the president conveyed his full support for Albania's accession, and thanked the Albanian

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<sup>147</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring Seven Nations on Their Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," The American Presidency Project, March 29, 2004, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64068>.

<sup>148</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks at Latvia University in Riga," The American Presidency Project, November 28, 2006, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=24325>.

<sup>149</sup> George W. Bush, "Interview with Andi Bejjta of Albania's Vizion Plus TV," The American Presidency Project, May 31, 2007, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=75150>.

Prime Minister for putting Albanian troops in harm's way in support of U.S.-led and NATO-led operations.<sup>150</sup> President Bush expanded the scope of his support for enlargement when he spoke in Bucharest at the start of the NATO Summit in April 2008. He openly advocated membership invitations for Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia and MAP participation for Georgia and Ukraine, while considering intensified dialogues with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, and closer cooperation with Serbia.<sup>151</sup> He even visited Ukraine, where he spoke out in support of its NATO aspirations, in the days leading up to the Bucharest Summit. In his letter requesting the advice and consent of the United States Senate for the ratification of the protocols concerning the accessions of Albania and Croatia to the North Atlantic Treaty, President Bush touted NATO enlargement as “an historic success in advancing freedom, stability and democracy in the Euro-Atlantic area” and stated that Albania and Croatia “demonstrate to other countries in the Balkans and beyond that NATO’s door remains open to nations willing to shoulder the responsibilities of membership.”<sup>152</sup>

In contrast to President Clinton, who confronted opposition to NATO enlargement within his administration, President Bush’s own viewpoint was supported by those of his cabinet and advisors. For example, President Bush’s Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld expressed his backing in a news conference with his counterparts from Southeastern Europe, applauding the success of the PfP and praising the contributions made by new members and future candidates in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>153</sup> In regard to the accession of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia, Daniel Fata, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy, remarked, “A common

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<sup>150</sup> George W. Bush, “The President’s News Conference with Prime Minister Sali Berisha of Albania in Tirana, Albania,” The American Presidency Project, June 10, 2007, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=75342>.

<sup>151</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks in Bucharest, Romania,” The American Presidency Project, April 2, 2008, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=76889>.

<sup>152</sup> George W. Bush, “Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Croatia Adopted at Brussels,” U.S. Government Printing Office, July 23, 2008, <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/treaty110-20.pdf>.

<sup>153</sup> John D. Banusiewicz, “Rumsfeld Voices U.S. Support for NATO Enlargement,” Department of Defense News, U.S. Department of Defense, September 27, 2006, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=1272>.

theme from us ... has been the appreciation for all that the three countries are doing in Afghanistan and Iraq.”<sup>154</sup> Additionally, Condoleezza Rice, both as National Security Advisor and as Secretary of State, stressed the importance of keeping NATO’s door open and denying any non-member state a veto in NATO decisions.<sup>155</sup> Stephen Hadley, Secretary Rice’s successor as National Security Advisor, was also a long-time proponent of NATO’s enlargement, as was Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried, along with many others in the State Department.<sup>156</sup> The majority of Washington’s political elite, by this point, had come to support the enlargement of NATO in principle, occasionally expressing their reservations about specific candidates, rather than questioning the general merits of enlargement. A noteworthy exception was the Secretary of Defense at that time, Robert Gates. In his memoirs, published in 2014, Gates wrote that

Trying to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was truly overreaching. The roots of the Russian Empire trace back to Kiev in the ninth century, so that was an especially monumental provocation. Were the Europeans, much less the Americans, willing to send their sons and daughters to defend Ukraine or Georgia? Hardly. So NATO expansion was a political act, not a carefully considered military commitment, thus undermining the purpose of the alliance and recklessly ignoring what the Russians considered their own vital national interests.<sup>157</sup>

When Russia was weak in the 1990s and beyond, we did not take Russian interests seriously. We did a poor job of seeing the world from their point of view, and of managing the relationship for the long term. All that said, I

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<sup>154</sup> Gerry G. Gilmore, “Albania, Croatia, Macedonia Qualify for NATO Membership, a U.S. Official Says,” Department of Defense News, U.S. Department of Defense, February 21, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=49034>.

<sup>155</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice on President’s Travel to Europe,” American Presidency Project, June 6, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=78897>; Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Hadley, “Press Briefing by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley,” Archive, U.S. Department of State, April 3, 2008, <http://2001–2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/04/102935.htm>.

<sup>156</sup> Stephen Hadley, “Challenge and Change for NATO: A U.S. Perspective,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, October 3, 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021003e.htm>; Daniel Fried, “NATO: Enlargement and Effectiveness,” Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, March 11, 2008, <http://2001–2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/2006/76464.htm>; For multiple statements from state department officials see the archive at <http://2001–2009.state.gov/p/eur/rt/nato/c2771.htm>;

<sup>157</sup> Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 157–158.

was now President Bush's secretary of defense, and I dutifully supported the effort to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO (with few pangs of conscience because by 2007 it was clear the French and Germans would not allow it).<sup>158</sup>

A report issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) aids in identifying President Bush's specific motivation for supporting NATO's enlargement in 2008. A congressional resolution passed in 1999 mandates that the president inform Congress about political, economic, defense and other related issues regarding countries seeking admission to NATO prior to making any accession decisions. The Bush Administration submitted such reports to Congress, and the GAO produced an assessment of the president's reports in September 2008. The assessment lauded the reports as improvements over submissions preceding earlier rounds of enlargement; however, the report highlighted some shortcomings in the president's analysis. In particular, the GAO concluded that the information provided did not give an adequate assessment of the ability of the aspirants to meet the financial obligations of membership, nor did it reveal adequate resolution of some of the issues that might affect accession, such as Albania's corruption problems. The information submitted for Congressional review highlighted Albania's and Croatia's participation in U.S.-led and NATO-led operations as evidence of their ability to further Allied principles and contribute to American national security, while only speculating on their ability to continue to support such efforts.<sup>159</sup> The GAO assessment suggests that the president's consideration of potential new Allies focused mainly on their contributions to ongoing military campaigns and less on meeting the established guidelines for membership, including their ability to enhance the Alliance's collective defense posture.

## **F. CONGRESSIONAL DECISION**

Throughout the fifteen years since NATO enlargement first became an important issue in American foreign policy in 1993, the United States Congress has passed

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<sup>158</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 158.

<sup>159</sup> Joseph A. Christoff, "NATO Enlargement: Reports on Albania and Croatia Respond to Senate Requirements, but Analysis of Financial Burdens Is Incomplete." Government Accountability Office, September 22, 2008, 9, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/100/95779.pdf>.

numerous pieces of legislation in support of enlarging the Alliance. These measures came in various forms, including declarations of support for specific candidates, authorizations of funds to facilitate reforms in prospective members, and ratification protocols for the accession of new Allies. Congressional support for enlargement remained exceptionally strong leading up to the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. Both Houses of Congress passed the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007 with unanimous consent. The bill's official title, "A Bill to Endorse Further Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and to Facilitate the Timely Admission of New Members to NATO, and for Other Purposes," and its content, authorizing funds for security assistance to Albania, Croatia, Georgia, Macedonia, and Ukraine under the auspices of the NATO Participation Act of 1994, reflected comprehensive congressional support for extending invitations and expanding cooperative efforts with the hopeful states at the approaching meeting of NATO leadership in Bucharest.<sup>160</sup> Additionally, both houses of Congress reaffirmed their support for NATO enlargement and passed independent resolutions calling upon the Allies to extend a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to both Ukraine and Georgia in February 2008. It should be noted that a motion to reconsider was nonetheless tabled for the House resolution.<sup>161</sup>

The debate in the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee leading up to Senate's the ratification of the accessions of Albania and Croatia encompassed a wide range of issues, including economic, political, and military reform as well as broad security implications, and was largely supportive of NATO membership for both Albania and Croatia. Senator Richard Lugar referenced Albania's and Croatia's contributions to NATO missions in Afghanistan and their geostrategic location to support operations in the Balkans as compelling arguments in support of their accession to the Alliance, and his sentiments were echoed by several others.

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<sup>160</sup> S.494, "NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007," 113th Congress, Library of Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/494>.

<sup>161</sup> S.Res. 439, "A resolution expressing the strong support of the Senate for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to enter into a Membership Action Plan with Georgia and Ukraine," 100th Congress, Library of Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-resolution/439>; H. Res. 997, "Expressing the strong support of the House of Representatives for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to enter into a Membership Action Plan with Georgia and Ukraine," 100th Congress, Library of Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/997>.

For example, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Dan Fried described NATO enlargement in general as a way to promote reform and reconciliation in Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on the political merits rather than military enhancements, before commending the progress made by Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. Additionally, Assistant Secretary Fried referenced threats to European security posed by Russia's invasion of Georgia and nationalism in the Balkans, which could be partially alleviated by incorporating new members into the Alliance.

Several concerns were thoroughly addressed during testimony: the commitment of each candidate to democratic reform and Western values, the increased potential for conflict by taking on new members given existing turmoil and perceived spheres of influence, and, oddly, the lack of participation in the hearing by key players. Connecticut Senator Christopher J. Dodd, acting as chairman of the committee, remarked several times about the small turnout of committee members and the absence of military and Defense Department representation. Notably absent, Dodd remarked, were the EUCOM Commander, GEN Bantz J. Craddock; the Committee Chairman, Delaware Senator Joseph R. Biden; and junior Illinois Senator Barack Obama, having recently received the Democratic nomination for the White House.<sup>162</sup> The low level of senatorial participation suggests that NATO enlargement was not seen as an issue of paramount importance or controversy.

With regard to other concerns, the expert testimony given before the committee largely downplayed the significance of any apprehensions, lauded the aspirants' progress, and specifically referenced their military contributions to ongoing operations. Ultimately, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended ratification of the protocols of accession for both Albania and Croatia.<sup>163</sup> On September 25, 2008, the Senate voted to ratify the protocols for accession to the North Atlantic Treaty for Albania and Croatia

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<sup>162</sup> Senate Hearing 110-507, "Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Croatia (Treaty Doc. 110-20)," Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Second Session, September 10, 2008 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000066746256>.

<sup>163</sup> Christopher J. Dodd, Executive Report 110-27, "Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Albania and Croatia," Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Second Session, September 23, 2008, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-110erpt27/pdf/CRPT-110erpt27.pdf>.



subject to presidential certification that in neither case would the accession result in an increase in overall U.S. expenditure as a percentage share of NATO's common budget nor would the United States' ability to meet its global military requirements be hampered.<sup>164</sup>

## **G. CONCLUSION**

The American position supporting further NATO enlargement at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 reflected the continuation of an accepted foreign policy initiative and a desire to increase Allied support of U.S.-led and NATO-led military operations abroad. Presidential statements and documentation revealed that, while the logic of creating a Europe whole and free by enlarging NATO remained valid, aspirants' contributions to U.S.-led operations in Iraq and NATO-led operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo were of paramount importance. Shortcomings in reform efforts, questions about the candidates' ability to fulfill their collective defense obligations, and the impacts of enlargement on relations with Russia were issues of secondary importance. The Congressional debate reflected the same pattern. These issues were addressed, but ultimately subordinated to the desire to expand America's pool of Allies and reward these states for their contributions. The third round of post-Cold War NATO enlargement was significantly different from the previous rounds in that no formal efforts to placate Russia preceded the enlargement decision. Russia's objections regarding Georgia and Ukraine influenced the policies of some Allies, but had little demonstrated effect on America's support for establishing closer ties with these countries and setting them on a clearer path to membership. The admission of Albania and Croatia, small countries with limited military capabilities located in a region rife with conflict, suggests that NATO's role as a political cooperation and stabilization association came to rival its position as a collective defense organization.

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<sup>164</sup> Senate Hearing 110-507, "Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Croatia (Treaty Doc. 110-20)."

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## V. CONCLUSION

Time and again, persistent threats to transatlantic security have revealed the need to sustain the Atlantic Alliance, despite the changing nature of the threats at hand. Cold War fears of communist aggression were replaced by the dangers of instability created by ethnic and religious conflicts, as demonstrated in the Balkans. These dangers in turn gave way to menacing transnational terrorist organizations, including al Qaeda. As the threats changed, so too did the appropriate means for addressing them. With regard to certain threats, the importance of enhanced political association trumped that of increased military capability. Enlarging the international community of free democracies by expanding NATO membership provided a way to counter some types of emerging threats, such as tensions between neighbors.

### A. NATO'S POST-COLD WAR ENLARGEMENT

In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were admitted to the Alliance, due, in no small part, to American support. This support was born of the belief that the ethnic and nationalistic dangers that had wrought havoc upon the European continent, and ultimately the world, during the first half of the twentieth century survived in Central and Eastern Europe. The United States and its NATO Allies sought to contain these forces by extending NATO's umbrella of protection to cover the newly formed democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, alleviating their fears of external aggression and rewarding their progress toward Western democratic reform. The accessions of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland would serve as a model for other European countries and promote the spread of democracy to ensure peace and stability on the continent. In this context, the Russian Federation set itself on a path to become a strategic partner of the United States, NATO, and the European Union, a goal desired by all of the countries involved. Russian concerns carried great weight as Western leaders sought to cultivate the relationship and support Russian reformers. Russia would not receive a vote in the North Atlantic Council, however, and the enlargement of NATO proceeded on its own merits despite Russian objections. The United States and the Allies sought to soften

the blow and serve the greater goal of peace and stability by signing the NATO-Russia Founding Act and establishing the Permanent Joint Council for closer consultation and cooperation with their Russian counterparts. The desire among American decision-makers to consolidate the democratic gains made in Central and Eastern Europe carried the day.

In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined NATO in the so-called Big Bang round of enlargement. The momentum for these additions was created at the Washington Summit in 1999 when NATO heads of state and government agreed to have their foreign ministers continually assess the enlargement issue through the newly created Membership Action Plan (MAP) and to formally address the issue again at the next NATO Summit.<sup>165</sup> Thus, this second round of post-Cold War NATO enlargement was largely a question not of whether NATO should accept additional members or when new invitations would be extended, but rather who would be invited. The terrorist attacks against the United States by al Qaeda on September 11, 2001 greatly affected this debate. The United States, in response, launched a global war on terrorism, and partners in this effort were of great importance. A country's ability to provide access and information became just as important as its ability to contribute forces and equipment. The NATO hopefuls gained great favor with the United States by providing whatever they could muster in support of U.S.-led and NATO-led operations. Russia, too, seized the opportunity to seek rapprochement with the NATO Allies and add legitimacy to its own domestic counterterror efforts; the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was created as a result in 2002. The United States thus supported a large-scale increase in the Alliance's membership to expand NATO's base of support. The contentious incorporation of the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was accepted by Moscow in the context of NATO's greater formalized cooperation with Russia. The principal consideration at this juncture was increasing the Alliance's ability to address the emerging terrorist threat, and the aspirant candidates proved their worth by

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<sup>165</sup> Press Release NAC-S (99) 64, "Washington Summit Communique," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 24, 1999, par. 7, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm>.

expressing solidarity with the United States and the other NATO Allies and providing what assistance they could.

The year 2009 saw the accessions of Albania and Croatia. Some observers argued that the two Balkan states were admitted to the Alliance more on the basis of their contributions to ongoing U.S.-led operations in Iraq and NATO-led operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo than on their progress toward fulfilling Western democratic reforms, though both made significant strides toward achieving such reforms. Rewarding Albania and Croatia with NATO membership for their support and involvement despite their small size, limited resources, and proximity to conflict zones illustrates that political considerations were elevated above military capabilities as factors influencing decision-makers in the United States and the Alliance as a whole. The United States and the other NATO Allies have supported NATO membership for Macedonia since 2008, as soon as its name dispute with Greece has been resolved on a mutually acceptable basis. By supporting the candidacies of these nations, the United States gained additional supporters for its increasingly controversial military operations abroad and attempted to further consolidate democratic reforms by extending the Alliance security umbrella into the Western Balkans.

With regard to Georgia and Ukraine, strong Russian objections undermined support for their NATO aspirations in some Allied governments, but not in the United States. As with other NATO aspirants, the support that Georgia and Ukraine provided for U.S.-led and NATO-led military operations garnered them great favor with U.S. leaders, despite their ongoing disputes with the Russian Federation, which alienated some European Allies. Whether all officials in the administration of George W. Bush genuinely supported the extension of MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine or whether some privately relied upon the negative votes of Allies like France and Germany to prevent closer association and Russian provocation is open for debate. The recent memoir of former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates suggests that he had reservations about this part of the Bucharest Summit Declaration. It is clear, however, that Congress strongly supported the candidacies of both Georgia and Ukraine, as evidenced by the multiple resolutions to that effect passed in both houses, as discussed in Chapters III and IV. It is also apparent that

U.S. leaders continuously sought to limit Russian influence on NATO decision-making and to preserve the policy that NATO's door remains open to any European state willing and able "to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area," as indicated in Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

## **B. PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ENLARGEMENT**

In 2015, the consolidation of European democracy through NATO is not yet complete; four states are actively seeking closer association and full-fledged membership in the Alliance. These states are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.<sup>166</sup> Under President Viktor Yanukovich Ukraine backed away from its active pursuit of NATO membership over the past decade.<sup>167</sup> Since December 2014, however, under President Petro Poroshenko, Ukraine's official policy has been to seek NATO membership.<sup>168</sup> As noted previously, the Allies have been in agreement since 2008 that Macedonia will be invited to accede to NATO as soon as it reaches an agreed solution to its name dispute with NATO member Greece,<sup>169</sup> but little progress has been made toward that end. Montenegro reached out to NATO shortly after gaining its independence in 2006 by joining the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and was quickly invited to participate in the MAP in 2009. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, the Allies agreed to assess the country's membership application "with a view to deciding on whether to invite Montenegro to join the Alliance" by the end of 2015.<sup>170</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina also joined the PfP in 2006 and was invited to participate in the MAP in 2009; this shows remarkable progress considering the fact that this country was the site of a NATO-led military intervention against the Bosnian Serbs in the early 1990s. Bosnia and

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<sup>166</sup> "NATO Enlargement," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated June 12, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49212.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm).

<sup>167</sup> "NATO's Relations with Ukraine," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated December 16, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm).

<sup>168</sup> "Ukrainian President Signs Law Allowing NATO Membership Bid," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty/Radio Liberty*, December 29, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-poroshenko-signs-law-allowing-nato-bid/26767916.html>.

<sup>169</sup> "NATO's Relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated August 22, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_48830.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48830.htm).

<sup>170</sup> "Wales Summit Declaration," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 5, 2014, par. 95, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm).

Herzegovina's NATO candidacy is complicated by its failure to resolve an issue regarding the registration of all military installations and immovable equipment in its territories as central government property. The issue persists due to the reluctance of the government of the Republika Srpska, one of the country's two semiautonomous regions, to conform to NATO's guidelines.<sup>171</sup> Georgia's application has been hampered by its 2008 war with Russia and the subsequent territorial disputes over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia has recognized the separatist regions as independent states and has established a military presence in each region.<sup>172</sup>

The prospects for continued American support for NATO enlargement are good, especially for the Balkan aspirants. By incorporating all of the Balkan aspirants, NATO would encapsulate Serbia, with which most of the Allies have an ongoing dispute regarding the independence of Kosovo. Each of these states must continue to make progress on its designated reform path. Movement toward membership for Montenegro might motivate Macedonia to work toward settling its name dispute with Greece. Likewise, Bosnia and Herzegovina might be persuaded to resolve the issue regarding the registration of its immovable defense property and commit to greater reform progress. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro are relatively far removed from what might be considered the Russian Federation's current sphere of influence. In any event, such claims by Russia did not deter U.S. support for NATO hopefuls in the past, such as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Baltic states also had unresolved border disputes with Russia that did not prevent their accession, although it must be noted that these disputes were relatively minor compared to those involving Georgia.

One might assume that Russia's actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine will halt NATO enlargement for the near term, especially in Georgia's case; however, there is evidence suggesting that Russia's actions might provoke the exact opposite reaction, at

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<sup>171</sup> Stephen Woehrel, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Current Issues and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, January 24, 2013, 7–9, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40479.pdf>.

<sup>172</sup> Jim Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2014, 7, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33453.pdf>.

least in the United States. Many officials in the executive branch and many Members of Congress have voiced their continued support for Georgia's closer cooperation with the Alliance. In April 2014, in response to the Ukraine crisis, a resolution was put forth in the House of Representatives calling for the immediate extension of invitations for Montenegro to join the Alliance and for Georgia to join the MAP.<sup>173</sup> Additionally, forty Members of Congress signed a letter urging Secretary of State John Kerry to "make enlargement a key priority of the United States and the Alliance" at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales; the letter also advocated implementing Bosnia and Herzegovina's MAP and extending an invitation to Georgia to participate in the MAP.<sup>174</sup> In response, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Julia Frifield wrote, "We believe Georgia deserves credit at the upcoming NATO Summit for the progress it has made and its demonstrated commitment to NATO operations and standards. We stand ready to support Georgia's own efforts to build a consensus within the Alliance for granting it a Membership Action Plan."<sup>175</sup> As long as Russia continues its departure from cultivating a partnership with the United States and NATO, Russian objections will not deter U.S. support for NATO enlargement and may even bolster it.

President Obama's support for Georgia's candidacy and NATO enlargement in general appears to have wavered. In January 2012, following a meeting with Georgian President Saakashvili, President Obama declared, "the United States will continue to support Georgia's aspirations to ultimately become a member of NATO."<sup>176</sup> More recently, at a March 2014 press conference in Brussels, President Obama backtracked on his previous commitment to support Georgia's membership in NATO: "I think that neither Ukraine or [sic] Georgia are currently on a path to NATO membership, and there

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<sup>173</sup> Jim Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2014, 2, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33453.pdf>.

<sup>174</sup> Michael Turner, Letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, February 5, 2014, <http://engel.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=24&itemid=3669>.

<sup>175</sup> Joshua Kucera, "U.S. Endorses NATO MAP for Georgia," Eurasianet, The Open Society Institute, February 27, 2014, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68092>.

<sup>176</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks Following a Meeting with President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia," The American Presidency Project, January 30, 2012, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=99156&st=&st1=>.



has not been any immediate plans for expansion of NATO's membership.”<sup>177</sup> Explicit support from the president for continued enlargement had been a continuous element of America's Alliance policy. President Obama's comments do not bode well for NATO applicants and may be particularly damaging to Georgia's prospects for MAP participation, at least under the current U.S. presidential administration.

Though the circumstances driving America's support for NATO enlargement have changed over time, the desire to create a Europe whole and free continues to be its underlying justification. NATO and European Union military missions persist in the Balkans, but the greater threat to European security there has largely been managed. The United States has withdrawn most of its troops from military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and its continued presence in the Middle East, fighting Islamic State militants, has not been as controversial as its earlier intervention in Iraq. Nonetheless, the need for cooperative efforts to combat emerging threats endures. The threat of violent extremists participating in ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia and then traveling to Western countries to spread the violence has emerged, and transnational terrorist organizations continue to pose a danger to the United States and its NATO Allies. The logic of enhancing Western security through increased political and military association within NATO remains sound. The United States will probably continue to support NATO membership for additional European democracies, particularly those in the Balkans with large Muslim populations, in order to promote stability and other shared Alliance purposes through integration. NATO's post-Cold War enlargement has enhanced the Alliance's ability to address evolving threats to trans-Atlantic security, and the negative effects of enlargement that many predicted have not yet materialized. In light of this record, U.S. support for the NATO aspirations of Europe's remaining democratic applicants will probably persist.

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<sup>177</sup> Barack Obama, “The President's News Conference with President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council and President José Manuel Durão Barroso of the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium,” The American Presidency Project, March 26, 2014, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=105069&st=&st1=>.

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