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NATO: Origins of the Enlargement Debate in Central Europe

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Summary

At the December 1994 NATO Ministerial meeting, the Clinton Administration will propose that the allies begin to draw criteria for possible new members. Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia are the likely initial candidates. Russia is not under consideration.

Proponents of NATO expansion, or "enlargement," believe that it could serve to stabilize Central European states seeking to build democracies and free-market economies; promote U.S. investment and trade in the region; lend stability to the whole of Europe; and serve to contain Russia, should it become increasingly unstable and assertive.

Opponents of NATO enlargement believe that Russia must first be engaged constructively. They believe that expansion near Russia's borders, instead of bringing stability, would be seen as a provocative act in Moscow. They also contend that incorporating an unstable Central Europe would dilute NATO's political resolve and military capabilities, and that enormous costs would be required to raise the level of Central Europe's defense posture.

Russia, having traditional interests in Europe, opposes any extension of the alliance near its borders, a view held not only by nationalists but by centrist democrats and the Yeltsin government.

NATO is continuing to define a mission that moves away from collective defense and towards more political objectives. Though few observers believe that Russia is a threat today, the North Atlantic Treaty's Article V commitment to mutual defense will remain important until the appearance of a stable, democratic Russia. Central European governments express different levels of desire to enter the alliance, but all believe the Article V commitment to be central to their consideration of eventual application for admittance.

Criteria for entry will be central to any debate. Those believing that NATO's political objectives are the key to its future would require only that new members have functioning democracies and market economies. Those stressing the need for NATO to maintain a capable collective defense capacity contend that new members must also build strong militaries, an expensive undertaking that could tax both current and future members.

Some Europeans believe that the European Union (EU), instead of NATO, should guide the effort to bring stability to Europe. In this view, because the Cold War is over, political and not military institutions should lead the effort to build security; and the European Union is more well-placed to promote democracy and economic growth in the region, in part because it is not seen by Moscow as a potential military threat.

ABSTRACT

This paper captures the origins of the debate in 1994 over NATO enlargement. It analyzes the early rationale for enlargement and its possible effect upon Russia. It weighs the importance to the alliance and potential candidate states of the traditional mission of collective defense and the emerging "new missions," such as peace operations. It also analyzes early criteria for candidate states being discussed in 1994. This report will not be updated. See also CRS Issue Brief 95076: *NATO: Congress addresses Expansion of the Alliance*, and CRS Report 97-1041: *Senate Consideration of the North Atlantic Treaty and Subsequent Accessions: Historical Overview*.

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Introduction

Fundamental political change in Europe since 1989 has led to a call for structural change in institutions meant to secure stability on the continent. NATO remains the principal institution through which the United States seeks to protect its interests in Europe. In light of a greatly diminished threat from Russia, the alliance has sought to adjust its mission. While collective defense remains its cornerstone, the alliance is also attempting to meet more immediate needs, such as developing an effective peacekeeping capacity and encouraging the growth of democratic institutions throughout Europe.

The United States intends to make the expansion, or "enlargement," of NATO the principal issue at the NATO Ministerial meeting in December 1994. President Clinton has said that enlargement would serve to anchor Central European states to democracy, the free market, and stability. However, the Clinton Administration and Congress are still in the process of clarifying U.S. interests in Central Europe. Achieving a consensus on those interests, and how to secure them, weighs heavily on the debate over enlargement.

The debate over enlargement is taking place within the context of evolving NATO-Russian relations. The United States and its European allies are attempting both to build cooperation with Russia and to circumscribe Moscow's desire and ability to wield influence over its neighbors. Whether enlargement, or other policies, would best further these goals is the crux of the debate.

The debate over enlargement remains in its opening stages, with the American public as yet barely engaged. An extensive public discussion of U.S. interests in Central Europe has not taken place. Though a consensus in Congress and among the American people undoubtedly favors the strengthening of nascent democracies and free markets, the more difficult issues lie in the price, both economic and political, to be paid to assure their survival. This report sketches the pro and con arguments for enlargement; analyzes U.S. interests at stake in Central Europe; and assesses the emerging components of the debate likely to affect decisions over expansion.

Pros and Cons of Enlargement

Not all proponents of enlargement advance the same rationale. That said, the following are the most common arguments in favor of enlargement.

- ! Enlargement would secure a principal gain of the Cold War by strengthening new free markets and democracies in Central Europe.
- ! Western Europe cannot enjoy stability and prosperity unless similar conditions prevail to the east. War in the former Yugoslavia and the ensuing ethnic tensions and flow of immigrants into western Europe are evidence that unsettled conditions in Central Europe bring social tensions and the threat of wider instability to the entire continent.
- ! Central European states, through membership in interlocking European institutions, could serve as a bridge to mesh East and West.
- ! Central European states could make a contribution to western security, particularly through participating in peacekeeping operations.
- ! Should a nationalistic, assertive government succeed to power in Russia, Central Europe could contribute resources to NATO's defense posture and serve as an important buffer.
- ! U.S. and west European investments in Central Europe are growing, and prospects for profitable trade are good, but trade and investment require a stable security environment.
- ! If the European Union (EU) expands, as seems likely, and NATO does not, decisions on European security affecting U.S. interests could be made without Washington's participation.

Opponents of enlargement tend to stress issues touching upon defense and financial resources. Like proponents, they may embrace some arguments and not others. The following are the most common arguments against enlargement.

- ! Russia, as the foremost power in Europe, must be engaged, if not as a full partner, then as a country with which Europe and the United States may work to resolve key global issues. Enlargement would exclude Russia from Europe's principal security institution, and thereby risk antagonizing and isolating it.
- ! An unstable Central Europe, with ethnic tensions, economic problems, and questions of political leadership unresolved, would dilute NATO's political strength and inject divisiveness into the Alliance.
- ! NATO would see its overall defense posture weakened by the addition of Central European militaries, and would incur heavy costs in raising those militaries to an acceptable standard.

- ! With the Cold War over, NATO should reduce rather than increase its burdens, and resources should be concentrated on pressing domestic needs in the United States and in western Europe.
- ! The European Union, in time, will develop its own security apparatus and can take the lead in providing for European stability.

U.S. Interests

The United States has a broad range of political, economic, and security interests in Europe. There is a longstanding consensus in the United States that the spread of democracy in Europe and the rest of the world is in the U.S. interest. Since the mid-1970s, a more tenuous consensus has supported encouraging observance of basic human rights. Democracy and human rights reflect the basic values of the American people; strengthening those values abroad serves to build other nations sharing a community of interests with the United States.¹ The NATO allies have generally joined with the United States in supporting new democracies in Europe, and in encouraging legal and political norms that protect human rights. The allies often provide political support to the United States in such international forums as the UN and CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). A cohesive alliance, then, has served to contribute to U.S. political interests.

The United States also has key economic interests in Europe. The European Union as an entity is the United States' largest trading partner. From 1989 through 1993, approximately one fourth of all U.S. trade was with the European Union; in each of those years, the United States enjoyed a trade surplus with the Union.² Until the end of the Cold War, Central Europe attracted few U.S. investors. (While there is no commonly accepted definition for "Central Europe," increasingly the term refers -- among the former communist countries -- to the Visegrad states and Slovenia. Governments of these countries use the term for political reasons, to differentiate themselves from Russia and the Balkans.) Today, the picture is sharply different. The United States, exceeding even Germany, is the largest single investor in the Visegrad states (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary). U.S. investment creates greater employment opportunities there, a factor in encouraging stability and the strengthening of democracies. In contrast, some U.S. officials believe that the European Union has been slow to invest in the region and has shielded its markets from Central European exports.³

¹See, for example, Anthony Lake, "From Containment to Enlargement". Address at Johns Hopkins University. Sept. 21, 1993, in U.S. Department of State Dispatch. Sept. 27, 1993. P. 658.

²"Progress Report on EU-US Relations", European Commission. No. 3, March 1994. P. 15.

³"EU policies 'main threat to E. Europe exports'," Financial Times (FT), Oct. 20, 1994. P. 3.

The United States has security interests on the European continent. Stability in Europe not only strengthens existing democracies, but also provides a settled climate for U.S. trade and investment. The preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty states that signatories "seek to promote stability and well-being" in the treaty area. U.S. military presence and a credible alliance defense posture have served to signal that the United States will defend such interests. NATO allies and infrastructure have also proved beneficial outside the treaty area, as in the Persian Gulf war, when large concentrations of forces and equipment from Europe contributed to winning the conflict.

In essence, the debate over enlargement is one to determine whether NATO expansion is likely better to protect U.S. political, economic, and security interests in Europe, or other means can better achieve that end.

Assessment of the Debate over Enlargement

NATO has been a principal instrument for securing the protection of U.S. interests in Europe. Proponents of enlargement believe that stability in Central Europe will bring continued stability and prosperity in western Europe, and that NATO should play a role to that end. Opponents of enlargement tend to question that role, sometimes contending, in the aftermath of the Cold War, that other institutions -- such as the European Union or CSCE -- are better suited to achieve ends that they believe to be fundamentally political and economic.

Article X of the North Atlantic Treaty requires unanimous agreement among member states before admitting new states. The Clinton Administration intends to raise enlargement as a principal issue at the NATO Ministerial meeting in December 1994, and will propose setting standards for admission, which the President asserted in Poland in July 1994 would probably be established "sometime next year."⁴ The Administration made preliminary soundings on the issue at the NATO Defense Ministers meeting in Seville, Spain, in September 1994. In interviews, Administration officials said that the German Defense Minister alone expressed strong support for admitting Central European states. Among other members, only Britain appears open to moving towards support, but its enthusiasm for enlargement remains low.

Establishment of standards, or criteria, for membership would be a change of policy from that which has guided the Partnership program. Partnership for Peace puts adherents on the path to potential alliance membership, but does not guarantee that membership. In creating the Partnership program, the United States and its allies purposely avoided establishing criteria for NATO membership because they wished to have any decision on enlargement remain solely in allied hands.⁵ Because

⁴Interview on Polish television, July 1, 1994. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents. Vol. 30, no. 27. P. 1410.

⁵See U.S. Library of Congress. CRS. Partnership for Peace, by Paul E. Gallis. CRS Report 94-351. Aug. 9, 1994.

enlargement has great implications for NATO security, the alliance did not wish to hand applicants a public instrument in the form of subjective criteria from which they might campaign for membership.

Proponents of near-term enlargement are likely to press for criteria that prospective candidates can readily achieve. Opponents, or those who favor a more deliberate pace towards enlargement, are likely to press for more difficult criteria or to oppose the establishment of any criteria.

Criteria

The North Atlantic Treaty does not establish explicit criteria for entry. The preamble to the Treaty does state that member governments are "founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." Article I obligates member states to refrain from the use of force, unless attacked, to resolve international disputes. Article II commits them to "strengthening their free institutions." Article III commits them to "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." Article X states that, by unanimous agreement, current members may admit other states "in a position to further the principles of this Treaty."⁶ These principles have not always been strictly applied, either for applicants or for member states. Portugal became a member in 1949, even though it had a dictatorial government. Today, some members criticize Turkey for its intermittent suppression of the Kurds, or Greece for discrimination against Moslems. Other members, such as Luxembourg and Iceland, have virtually no military capacity, or have sharply declining defense budgets and marginally effective forces. NATO's history, then, suggests that there have not been explicit criteria applied in selecting new members or guiding existing ones.

Should Criteria Emphasize Political, or Collective Defense, Goals? A variety of criteria for potential members have been suggested by Administration officials and by some Members of Congress.⁷ Their suggestions reflect the current debate over whether NATO should now place greater emphasis on its political objectives, or on the continuing objective of collective defense. The following criteria have been advanced by those who emphasize political objectives

- ! Development of democratic rule and civilian control of the military;
- ! Training of military forces for peacekeeping;

⁶The North Atlantic Treaty, in NATO Handbook. NATO: Brussels, 1992. P. 143-144.

⁷See, for example, the "NATO Participation Act," adopted as an amendment to the International Narcotics Control Corrections Act of 1994, in Congressional Record. Oct. 7, 1994. P. H11382; and the remarks of Sen. Richard Lugar in 103rd Congress. 2d sess. Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Subcommittee on Coalition Defense and Reinforcing Forces of the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The Future of NATO." Feb. 1, 23, 1994. P. 16. Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1994.

- ! A commitment by new members not to use military forces against its civilian population;
- ! Respect for the territorial integrity of neighboring states and renunciation of territorial claims.

There is greater divergence of opinion over the quality of military capability that new members should have. Some current European NATO members and some Administration officials believe that strict standards, contributing not only to the growth of democracy but also to building capable militaries, should be applied to any potential members to assure that the alliance has a capacity for collective defense and a strong measure of political like-mindedness. Advocates of such standards are generally concerned about a potentially more assertive Russia. Some of the most commonly mentioned standards are:

- ! Defense expenditures at the level of 3 percent of GDP over a period of years;
- ! Modernization of equipment to contribute to interoperability;
- ! Development of specific capabilities in such areas as anti-submarine warfare and air defense;
- ! Acceptance of basing of allied forces of specified size and capability, including nuclear forces.

Officials advocating such standards acknowledge that many current NATO members do not meet these criteria. For example, interoperability of equipment among current members is fitful at best. France and Spain, which are not in NATO's integrated military command system, make many decisions about the specific capabilities of their forces without guidance from NATO headquarters. However, these officials believe that NATO is in a position to demand more from Central European states, particularly because those states seeking to join the alliance wish above all to be embraced by the Article V commitment to mutual defense, and because they would be on any forward defense line in the event of a new threat from the east.

In developing arguments against more particularism in the alliance, some U.S. officials cited the current European Union debate over EU enlargement. Some EU members oppose permitting more "opt-outs," such as Britain's decision to subscribe neither to the Maastricht Treaty's social charter nor to its plan for European Monetary Union. Some EU members believe that opt-outs diminish EU cohesiveness by tacitly acknowledging that responsibilities seen as upholding important principles by some states, might be disparaged by others. Similarly, some U.S. officials express concern that permitting opt-outs for new NATO states would undercut the alliance's credibility in collective defense. In addition, current NATO members might have to bear the financial burden of raising the quality of new members' military capacity if their entry is permitted before their having reached specified levels of modernization.

The Candidates for Admission

President Clinton has said that Poland is "at the front of the line" should NATO be expanded.⁸ U.S. officials believe that, in addition, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic would likely be in a first group of Central European states to be admitted. These countries have made progress in building democratic institutions and are in close geographic proximity to current NATO members. Entry by the year 2000 is the rough timeframe generally favored by their advocates. A second group of entrants at a later date, according to U.S. officials, might include Romania and Bulgaria. Both countries lag behind the Visegrad states and Slovenia in progress towards democracy and a free-market economy, and Romania has a range of disputes over ethnic matters with its neighbors. The Baltic states are in a third group. In the view of many NATO military officials, their geographic location would make a mutual defense commitment difficult to sustain.

Poland has undertaken the strongest campaign for membership. In the view of President Lech Walesa, stability can not come to Poland primarily through a strong economy, in part because EU states exclude many Polish products, in part because foreign investors fear instability in the region; NATO (and EU) membership, then, would provide the needed stability for strengthening the country's democratic institutions and free market economy. The other Visegrad states and Slovenia are on record as favoring entry into NATO. However, some of their officials are disappointed that NATO has thus far offered only the Partnership program, viewed as a weak contribution to their security. These governments are making strong overtures to the European Union for eventual entry as a means to consolidate political and economic gains, but all would welcome criteria offered by NATO for entry.

Elements of the political leadership in Austria, Sweden, and Finland -- all neutral countries -- have quietly begun to raise the issue of eventual NATO membership. The governments of these countries have not made explicit overtures to NATO, nor are likely to do so until they undertake a domestic debate on the issue.

The Role of Russia

Russia plays a pivotal role in European affairs because it remains a nuclear power, asserts influence over its neighbors, and has traditional interests in countries now being considered for membership in NATO and the European Union. The Clinton Administration is seeking to pursue a policy of "constructive engagement" with Russia. The objective of the policy is to work with Russia to bring greater stability to Europe, for example, through brokering a settlement to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Partnership for Peace, CSCE, the G-7, and the UN are among the institutions through which the United States seeks to engage Russia in European affairs.

Some U.S. officials place the improvement of relations with Russia as the highest priority on the Administration's European agenda. Critics of this view contend that the Administration is allowing Russia to drive U.S. policy towards

⁸News Conference in Berlin, July 12, 1994. Weekly Compilation. P. 1489-90.

Europe. For example, such critics believe that Partnership for Peace is a policy intended to postpone NATO enlargement by offering Central European states in search of greater security half-loaves that in fact do little to add to security. In their view, the Partnership program, because it does not include the alliance's mutual defense commitment, signals Russia that it may pursue a policy of intimidation in the region.⁹

President Clinton has said that any Partnership member, including Russia, may one day be eligible for NATO membership. Some senior Administration officials have said publicly, however, that Russia is unlikely ever to become a member of NATO. Because Russia's territorial expanse makes it an Asian as well as European state, U.S. and allied government officials believe that its inclusion would fundamentally alter NATO's purpose as a European security organization. Moreover, a strong, lingering distrust of Russia remains. No allied government favors Russian admission to NATO. For its part, the Russian government evinces no interest in joining.¹⁰

The Yeltsin government, its moderate opposition, extreme nationalists, and the Russian military continue to express concern about developments near the country's borders, including the possible expansion of NATO. Russia's new (post-Cold War) military doctrine claims the right to maintain influence over the "near-abroad," or countries once within the former Soviet Union. That doctrine also states that the placing of foreign troops in states adjacent to Russia would constitute an "immediate threat." A member of Russian President Boris Yeltsin's Presidential Council complained in June 1994 that the United States was using NATO to "preserve and consolidate its military and political leadership in Europe."¹¹ A group of centrist Russian democrats often strongly critical of Yeltsin are echoing these suspicions of the United States and its Allies. They warn that expansion of NATO would result in a "qualitative and long-term increase of geopolitical isolation of Russia and weakening of its international positions.... [To prevent] a return to a military confrontation in Europe... require[s] preservation of the semi-demilitarized belt of states that has emerged in the center of Europe...."¹² Some of the criteria for new NATO members mentioned above are clearly more provocative to Russian officials than others. For example, political criteria, such as the establishment and maintenance of democratic institutions in Central European states, would be welcomed by many current, pro-democracy Russian officials. However, criteria

⁹See Gallis, Partnership for Peace, p. 8-9.

¹⁰See, for example, the testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Canada Richard Holbrooke in "Developments in Europe." 103rd Congress. 2nd Sess. Hearing of the Europe and Middle East Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Sept. 20, 1994. Unpaginated manuscript.

¹¹See Library of Congress. CRS. Russia's Emerging Foreign and Defense Policy, by Stuart Goldman. Report 94-493F. June 8, 1994. P. 2-5; and Andranik Migranyan, "Partnership for Peace: No, Russia is too big for this exercise," International Herald Tribune. June 24, 1994. P. 6

¹²"RF Foreign, Defense Policy Council Revises 'Strategy for Russia'," May 27, 1994, in FBIS-USR-94-062. June 13, 1994. P. 68, 73.

touching upon collective defense, such as acceptance of the basing of U.S. troops or of nuclear weapon systems, would be viewed as a hostile move aimed at Moscow.

Some western observers believe that expansion of NATO could serve not only to isolate Russia, but also to abandon certain states to Russian influence. Should the Visegrad states be invited first to join NATO, in this view, then the Baltic states, Belarus, and Ukraine might come under added pressure to make political, economic, and military accommodations with Russia. Moscow is actively seeking agreements now that would enhance its influence over these countries.¹³ In strategic terms, particularly with regard to Ukraine, such an outcome could prove detrimental to U.S. interests. An independent, democratic Ukraine could promote stability on Russia's borders as a state close to the west that abjures the maintenance and use of nuclear weapons.

There is ambivalence within the Administration over the role of an expanded NATO. Some Administration officials continue to emphasize NATO's long-term purpose as a collective defense organization. In February 1994, before Russia joined the Partnership for Peace, Secretary of Defense William Perry said that the Partnership program could be used to build "a protective grouping against Russia if things go wrong in Moscow."¹⁴ Other officials tend to emphasize that NATO is in evolution and will become primarily a political organization. They generally avoid discussion of collective defense. In their view, if NATO expands, it will not be "an alliance directed...against any particular country; but rather it's an attempt to expand the zone of stability and security in Central Europe."¹⁵

There is similar ambivalence in other NATO countries. Some German officials contend that NATO expansion, while it might be provocative to Moscow, would nonetheless serve to "contain" an unstable Russia. They believe that German, and allied, interests would best be served by a policy that consolidates emerging Central European democracies and builds a larger alliance reaching near Russian borders. However, most allied governments, making improved relations with Russia a centerpiece of their foreign policies, believe that the debate on enlargement must proceed cautiously in order not to arouse Russian concerns. Most allied European officials interviewed for this report said that should NATO expand before the year 2000, Russia will certainly not have reached a point of stability by that date. Under such conditions, in this view, expansion would likely be interpreted by any Russian government as a confrontational move.

Possible Alternatives to Enlargement

Some senior EU officials and some officials in EU governments are concerned that the nurturing of improved relations with Russia and Russia's efforts to build

¹³See "Yeltsin Claims Russian Sphere of Influence," Washington Post. Sept. 27, 1994. P. A10; and U.S. Library of Congress. CRS. Ukraine's Uncertain Future and U.S. Policy, by Steve Woehrel. Sept. 21, 1994. P. 16-17.

¹⁴Cited in "NATO Peace Partnership's New Look: A Protective Shield against Moscow," Washington Post. Feb. 8, 1994. P. A11.

¹⁵Testimony of Holbrooke, op. Cit., unpaginated manuscript.

democracy might be jeopardized by NATO enlargement. They believe that institutions other than NATO should direct the future course of European security. They advocate political and economic measures to protect U.S. and west European interests by encouraging democracy, the growth of free markets, and stability in Central Europe. Collective defense plays a receding role in their equation for reaching stability. This design, advocates note, has the appeal of avoiding the heavy financial costs likely under any plan for NATO enlargement requiring modernization of Central European militaries.¹⁶

These observers believe that the European Union and CSCE are the two principal institutions that would design the political and economic measures intended to bring stability to Central Europe. In May 1994, under the auspices of the French government, the European Union began an effort intended to yield a "stability pact" for Europe. Both the United States and Russia are participating in this effort. Through "round table" negotiations with the United States, EU members, and Russia serving as facilitators, the EU's intention is to require Central European countries to resolve disputes with their neighbors over borders and minorities in order to be eligible for Union membership. The Union is using eligibility for EU membership as the incentive for resolving current disputes over borders and minorities and thereby reducing the potential for new ethnic conflicts.¹⁷ CSCE will serve as the "guardian" of agreements comprising the "stability pact," and will likely monitor such agreements.

In 1993, the Union drew general criteria, to which the stability pact is linked, for potential EU members. These criteria require the development of democratic institutions, respect for human rights, observance of the territorial integrity of neighboring states, and free market economies.¹⁸ Many EU states, with Germany at the forefront, support EU expansion by 2002 to include at least the Visegrad countries. Proponents of EU expansion believe that the combination of these countries' desire to join the Union, combined with an EU intention to enforce its criteria, will serve to build stability on the continent.

The Russian government supports EU expansion as a means to contribute stability to Central Europe. But the Yeltsin government also contends that CSCE, as a political institution in an era in which there is no credible military threat to NATO, should supplant the alliance as the principal security institution on the continent. CSCE has a broad mandate that includes conflict prevention, arms

¹⁶See, for example, Fraser Cameron, "The EU's new Ostpolitik," EU Policy Forum Series: 5, 1993; and Report on the Future Relations between the European Union, WEU and the Atlantic Alliance. Committee on Institutional Affairs, European Parliament (Karel de Gucht, rapporteur). Strasbourg, 1994.

¹⁷See U.S. Library of Congress. CRS. European Security Conference: The Balladur Plan, by Paul E. Gallis. CRS Report 94-335.

¹⁸See "The Associated Countries," I.13, Bulletin of the European Communities — Commission. June 1993. P. 12-13.

control, and crisis management, as well as oversight of human rights issues.¹⁹ While the United States and its NATO allies believe that CSCE should play a role in conflict prevention and protection of human rights, they reject the Russian view that CSCE should become Europe's pre-eminent security institution. The allies also believe that CSCE, having 53 members and a requirement for unanimity in decisionmaking, is a cumbersome institution.

Some European officials believe that NATO has proved unable to define its post-Cold War mission. This view is often voiced by EU officials and by French government officials, but is not confined to them. The conflict in Yugoslavia has fed this sentiment: If NATO's mission in part is to provide stability in Europe, then, they believe, its efforts have failed an important test. Moreover, they believe that the end of the Cold War and a declining U.S. military presence on the continent are signals that the United States is on a path to terminate its involvement in European security affairs; they tend to advocate efforts to strengthen the Western European Union (WEU), the nascent defense arm of the Union, as the continent's future security institution, replacing NATO in the long term.²⁰ Others, more emphatic, contend that U.S. refusal to send ground forces to the former Yugoslavia is evidence that Washington is unwilling to "take the risk of physical involvement in the management of real crises alongside the Europeans." They doubt U.S. leadership, and believe that the WEU must quickly begin to assume greater responsibilities in European security.²¹

Some U.S. State Department officials and European foreign ministries, such as the British, contest the view that the European Union can make important contributions to stability in Central Europe. Though some U.S. officials believe that EU initiatives may contribute to building stability in Europe, they point out, as noted above, that Brussels has restricted the flow of imports from Central Europe into the Union, a factor in retarding the growth and flexibility of Central European economies. In addition, there is no consensus in Europe that favors the defense expenditures necessary to make the WEU a credible defense organization in the foreseeable future; only France among European EU members has a growing defense budget.

Some U.S. State and Defense Department officials express the additional concern that EU expansion, proceeding without a decision to enlarge NATO, carries with it a "back-door" U.S. involvement in the security of Central European states. They do not necessarily oppose EU expansion, but believe that it should take place after a decision is made whether to enlarge NATO. In this view, a conflict between a new EU member from Central Europe and a neighboring state such as Serbia or

¹⁹See Kozyrev Speech on European Stability. (May 26, 1994). FBIS-USR-94-103. Sept. 22, 1994.

²⁰Interviews; and de Gucht, Report on the Future Relations. P. 17-18.

²¹See, for example, Nicole Gnesotto, "Lessons of Yugoslavia," Chaillot Papers. No. 14. Institute for Security Studies-WEU. Paris, March 1994. Though such views appear to be most strongly held in the French government, they are heard in such countries as the Netherlands and Britain as well, traditionally among the principal advocates of a U.S.-led NATO.

Romania would quickly involve current EU (and NATO) states such as Germany, France, or Italy. EU officials believe that it is politically impossible to admit a new member, require it to surrender elements of its sovereignty by accepting guidelines that restructure economic and social policy, and then spurn a call for assistance in a conflict. The United States might then have an obligation under the North Atlantic Treaty to come to the assistance of one its NATO allies drawn into such a conflict. Several neutral countries -- Finland, bordering Russia, among them²² -- will join the Union in January 1995. Many observers believe that the Union will expand to include some or all of the Visegrad countries by 2002.

Conclusion

Advocates of NATO enlargement face a dilemma. A clear purpose of enlargement is to contribute to Central European stability and the anchoring of democratic institutions and the free market. At the same time, expansion would likely rouse the Russian government to contest the presence of NATO near its borders. Under such circumstances, would Central Europe believe that its security had been enhanced? Given declining U.S. (and European) defense budgets and continuing Russian suspicions of the West, NATO enlargement would most likely strengthen European stability in circumstances in which NATO had fully embraced new political purposes, the conditions that led to the Article V commitment to mutual defense had receded, and minimal criteria for improvements in Central Europe's defense posture were required.

The war in Yugoslavia has fuelled doubts about NATO's credibility. NATO's critics say that it must assure stability in Europe. The United States has not sent ground forces to Yugoslavia because U.S. political leadership has decided that U.S. vital interests are not affected. Advocates of enlargement believe that they must now make the case that such interests are involved in the Visegrad countries, and beyond, because the North Atlantic Treaty requires U.S. military assistance in the event of conflict. No Central European state is interested in NATO membership without the Article V commitment.

Opponents and proponents of enlargement sometimes rehearse the same reasoning, but with different conclusions. Some German officials, for example, believe that NATO should expand because political stability in Russia will deteriorate over the next decade. They conclude that a broadened security shield will protect them, and Central Europe, from a spillover of turmoil in Russia. Opponents who share concerns over Russian stability believe that expansion would serve only to inflame conditions in Russia, thereby worsening conditions in Europe, and drawing the allies into possible conflict involving new members. That is why many opponents of enlargement believe that an expanded European Union provides a more certain, albeit cautious, path to stability.

²²For the implications of Finnish entry into the EU for both NATO and the WEU, see Daniel Vernet, "La Russie aux frontières de l'Union européenne," *Le Monde*. May 12, 1994. P. 1.

Finally, major political questions affect the President's effort to begin the debate over enlargement. The President, should he pursue a policy of enlargement, would have to expend the political capital necessary to lead a significant change in U.S. commitments abroad, a task made more difficult if higher defense expenditures become part of the equation. He has chosen Brussels as the place for the Administration to begin a vigorous debate over enlargement, although U.S. officials have not clearly raised the issue at home. When the domestic debate is engaged, it will likely lead to a sharper delineation of U.S. interests in western and central Europe, and of NATO's role in protecting those interests.

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