Book VIII

THE POLITICAL BATTLE

One major hurdle remained. NATO enlargement required ratification by all the allies. In the United States, this meant a two-thirds majority vote in the U.S. Senate. While the U.S. was the NATO ally most committed to enlargement, it was also paradoxically the country where enlargement was most vulnerable politically. The U.S. constitution, by requiring a two-thirds Senate majority, set a higher bar for ratification than that faced by most other allies. And the independent traditions of the Senate inevitably made the task even harder.

At first glance, the Administration had several key advantages. Both Republicans and Democrats supported NATO enlargement in their party platforms and several votes on nonbinding resolutions on the Senate floor had produced a solid majority in favor of enlargement.[1] The final 80–19 Senate vote suggested an overwhelming victory over enlargement opponents. But the actual political fight was closer and harder fought than those numbers suggested. The Administration's support was broad but often shallow and was not locked in until late in the game. One week after the final vote in the spring of 1998, President Clinton admitted to Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi that the final vote was "a little misleading" and that the outcome of the enlargement battle was closer than it looked. "A lot of people who voted with us were reluctant," the President said.[2]

The reasons were apparent. NATO enlargement to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland involved the biggest increase in the U.S. security commitment to Europe in decades. The Clinton Administration also insisted that the first new members would not be the last and that enlargement could eventually embrace countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea. This ambitious agenda was put forward at a time when foreign policy was seen as a less pressing national priority, and when the American public appeared skittish about new commitments abroad and Congress was less prepared to be deferential to the President. Generational turnover and the decrease in the authority of the key Congressional committees had also undermined the traditional levers for the Senate leadership to ensure building bipartisan support on Capitol Hill.[3]

While both Democrats and Republicans supported enlargement in principle, there were also important differences between them that needed to be reconciled. The Clinton Administration had embraced enlargement as part of a broader overhaul of the Alliance to help unify Europe and create a new trans-Atlantic partnership oriented toward new threats. It emphasized that enlargement was part of a broader effort to create a "new NATO" for a new era. In contrast, many Republicans were inclined to support enlargement as a geopolitical hedge against Moscow. They were suspicious of, if not opposed to, negotiating the NATO-Russia Founding Act. They were skeptical about NATO assuming new missions such as peace support operations and uncomfortable that the Administration put emphasis on such missions beyond NATO's borders. Lurking behind these questions was the broader issue of why the U.S. remained in Europe after the end of the Cold War and what NATO was for in the future.

Partisan politics was also a factor—and increasingly so. The President's avoidance of the draft, his handling of gays in the military, and what Republicans perceived as his unsteady record on the use of force had all contributed to Republican criticism of Clinton's handling of foreign affairs. The bitter debates over Bosnia policy had also left political scars on both sides. While the Monica Lewinsky scandal would not break until early 1998, the increasingly bitter tenor of Washington politics made it difficult to knit together bipartisan cooperation in any area, including foreign policy. After the end of the Cold War, politics no longer stopped at the water's edge, if it ever had. Even Republicans inclined to support enlargement nevertheless asked why they should help the Clinton Administration achieve a major foreign policy victory.

Opposition to enlargement was also passionate. The opponents included many well-known and respected figures in the U.S. foreign policy establishment. George Kennan, a key architect of post–World War II containment policy, attacked the decision to enlarge NATO as "the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post–Cold War era."[4] John Lewis Gaddis, the well-known diplomatic historian, wrote: "I can recall no other moment in my own experience as a practicing historian at which there was less support, within

the community of historians, for an announced policy position."[5] The *New York Times* issued one editorial after another opposing enlargement and urging Congress to do the same. Critics openly predicted that support would collapse once it was exposed to public scrutiny. Some suggested that enlargement would never be ratified. The stage was set for a major political battle.

1. CREATING A COMMAND POST: THE BIRTH OF S/NERO

Recognizing the challenge the Administration faced, President Clinton and Secretary Albright decided to create a special NATO Enlargement Ratification Office to spearhead the ratification effort. Like everything in the State Department, it had to be reduced to an acronym—S/NERO—which in State Department-ese meant that it answered directly to the Secretary of State. But the acronym led to more than one quip about whether we truly wanted a name that many people associated with the hubris and fall of the Roman Empire. While located in the State Department, this office was to be the command post for coordinating the entire Administration's political effort to ensure enlargement's ratification.

The Administration turned to Jeremy Rosner to head this office. Rosner had been a senior NSC aide in charge of legislative affairs and speechwriting in Clinton's first term and had written the President's January 1994 Prague speech on enlargement. After leaving the White House, he had gone to the Carnegie Endowment, a leading Washington-based think tank, to write a book on why some foreign policy issues become relatively easy successes on Capitol Hill and others fail.[6] One of the first books Rosner read was Stull Holt's *Treaties Defeated by the Senate* which traced the history of the Senate's handling of treaties in explaining the demise of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I.[7]

Rosner immediately saw parallels between the League of Nations' defeat and the looming battle over NATO enlargement. In both cases, the Administration was trying to push a treaty through the Senate involving a major new U.S. commitment following victory in a war but at a time when there were real pressures to retrench from international commitments and refocus on domestic issues. Rosner was convinced enlargement ratification was a winnable proposition and that public support for it existed. But the more Rosner looked at the parallel between the League of Nations and NATO enlargement, the more convinced he became that the Administration could lose this battle if it adopted a "business as usual" approach in the uncertain political environment of the post–Cold War era—a point he made in an article in *Foreign Affairs* and pressed with both Lake and Berger in private in the fall of 1996.[8]

Rosner believed that the main political danger facing the Administration was on the right. Democrats seemed less enthusiastic about enlargement at first

glance but at the end of the day were unlikely to desert their President on this issue in spite of their qualms. Republicans, in contrast, seemed more supportive on paper but, Rosner noted, they were deeply uncomfortable with the Administration's enlargement rationale, its policy on Russia, and the implications for NATO's effectiveness as a military alliance. In a memo to Berger in early 1997, Rosner laid out four scenarios detailing how the Administration might lose the ratification battle. In the first scenario, Republicans defected from the pro-enlargement coalition because the Administration was viewed as having gone too far in accommodating Moscow's concerns. In a second scenario the pro-enlargement coalition splintered over cost and burden-sharing issues. A third scenario envisioned Republicans deserting the President because Democrats tried to monopolize the political credit for enlargement. Rosner's final scenario foresaw the Senate turning down enlargement because it felt it had not been given an adequate say in the process, as was the case in part with the League of Nations.[9]

To avoid these pitfalls, Rosner believed the Administration had to reach out to the conservative Republicans and pursue a "center out" as opposed to "left in" strategy. In other words, it had to start by locking in political support among both internationalist Democrats and Republicans in the center and then build out toward both political extremes. On February 26, 1997, Rosner sent Berger and Albright a private memo outlining his strategy. The stakes involved were high, he argued. Success "would give NATO, Europe and general U.S. foreign policy an important boost." But a loss "would be League of Nations II with grim consequences for NATO and the ability of the U.S. to pursue its goals abroad." The Administration therefore needed a "good win" in the Senate "on a comfortable, larger-than-expected margin rather than simply winning 67 votes by the skin of our teeth."[10]

To get this "good win," Rosner concluded, the Administration had to pursue the ratification effort "aggressively, broadly and doggedly" and knit together a coalition spanning divergent groups—"hawks and doves, Russo-phobes and NATO-philes, Democrats and Republicans." It also had to recognize just where its political Achilles' heel was: "While most of the votes we need to pick up at this point are from Democrats on the left, the most serious prospect for defeat entails a broad defection by Republicans on the right." This meant that a focal point of our strategy had to be winning over conservative Republican figures like Trent Lott and Jesse Helms, hardly beloved figures for most Democrats. Some senior White House officials initially strongly opposed the notion of giving Senate Republicans preferential treatment. One week later, however, Rosner received a copy of his memo dated March 3 with a handwritten note scrawled on it by National Security Advisor Berger: "I agree with this approach."

Rosner's strategy required three ingredients if it were to work. The first was a close working relationship with the Republican Senate leadership, especially

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which had formal jurisdiction over the issue. That meant dealing with the Committee's Chairman, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC). Albright was already working hard to establish that relationship. In her confirmation testimony, she had pledged to be nonpartisan, joking that she had had her partisan political instincts surgically removed when she became Secretary of State. Albright journeyed to Wingate, North Carolina in late March 1997 to visit Helms on his home turf where he had attended college. A picture of Helms and Albright holding hands on the stage at Wingate University would later become a popular poster of the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO in the campaign for Senate ratification with the slogan: "Let's Do It Right. Secure the Peace. Expand NATO."

Helms was an especially harsh critic of the Clinton Administration. But he liked Albright's straightforward style and her anti-communist credentials. He was inclined, at least initially, to give her the benefit of the doubt. But Helms was not yet locked in as a supporter of enlargement. While he had voted in favor of several nonbinding resolutions supporting NATO enlargement, his staff also made it clear that he was reserving final judgment and that he had concerns that needed to be addressed. Pro-freedom and anti-Yalta, he was also skeptical of entangling alliances and overseas commitments. Indeed, during the actual Senate vote on ratification, Helms would say to one of his top aides, Steve Biegun: "You don't know how big a shift this was for me. I was a supporter of the Mansfield amendment"—a reference to the attempt to pull U.S. troops out of Europe in the mid-1970s."[11]

The Administration also needed a mechanism for generating bipartisan support for enlargement in the Senate and spanning the five different committees that could potentially claim a stake in the issue. It got it when on March 21, 1997 Majority Leader Senator Trent Lott announced the creation of a Senate NATO Observers Group (SNOG) for what he called "the painstaking effort" to build support for ratification.[12] Lott had been a member of the Arms Control Observer Group as a member of the House, which in turn served as a model for the SNOG. The idea of creating such a group had originally been floated with the Administration by Ian Brzezinski, an aide to Senator William Roth (R-DE), in December 1996. Roth, who was also President of the North Atlantic Assembly (NAA), became chair of the SNOG. It started work on April 22, 1997 with 28 Senators as members.

Other private groups also stepped forward to reach across the political aisle. Perhaps the most important was the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO (USCEN). It was the brainchild of several Republican supporters of enlargment who had worked together in the Dole Presidential campaign: Bruce Jackson, a former Defense Department official in the Reagan Administration who had become a Vice President at Lockheed Martin; Steve Hadley, a lawyer and well-known figure in the strategic community who had been Assistant Secretary of

Defense in the first Bush Administration and would become Deputy National Security Advisor in the second Bush Administration; and Julie Finley, a prominent Republican philanthropist and fundraiser whose foreign policy views had been shaped by the late Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-WA). Along with Paula Dobriansky, Paul Wolfowitz, and Bob Zoellick, they had helped ensure that the Dole campaign and the Republican Party platform took a strong stance in favor of NATO enlargement in the summer and fall of 1996 and defeated the more isolationist sentiments in the GOP.

Once it became clear that Clinton was going to be reelected, Finley, Hadley, and Jackson reached out to centrist Democrats to create what they envisioned as a bipartisan "citizen's initiative" to support NATO enlargement.[13] They approached Greg Craig, a well-known Democratic lawyer at the law firm of Williams & Connolly who had worked for Senator Ted Kennedy and would become Albright's first head of Policy Planning before going on to defend President Clinton during his impeachment hearings. They asked Craig to join them in a bipartisan effort to support enlargement. On November 1, 1996 the Committee was established with a bipartisan Board of Directors and a group of senior advisors, including strategic heavyweights like Richard Holbrooke, Anthony Lake, as well as Wolfowitz and Zoellick. On November 12, 1996, one week after Clinton's reelection, Jackson sat down with NSC Senior Director Dan Fried at the Metropolitan Club to discuss the Committee's plans to help build bipartisan support for enlargement.[14]

Jackson became the Committee's President. He had initially been skeptical about NATO enlargement, but Hadley had convinced him that it was the logical extension of Ronald Reagan's support of Solidarity in Poland in the 1980s and George Bush's unification of Germany in NATO.[15] Jackson had been involved in the bitter fights within the Republican Party between the internationalist and isolationist wings prior to Pat Buchanan's departure from the Party. He believed the key to ensuring Republican support for enlargement was to lock in conservative stalwarts like Senator Helms and Senate Majority Whip Don Nickles (R-OK) to form a firewall against isolationists within his own party. In a memo to the members of the Committee Board in March 1997, he wrote that "the greatest threat to a successful ratification of a treaty expanding NATO lies in the potential defection of conservative Republicans" led by "national security conservatives and Rocky Mountain unilateralists."[16]

Jackson also believed that NATO enlargement ratification required freezing out the isolationists in both political parties. He called it the "wing nut strategy." It meshed well with the "center-out" approach Rosner was developing. As a Reaganite Republican, Jackson also had the credentials to bring conservative Republicans on board in favor of enlargement. When Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) said he would "never" vote for any initiative pushed by "that———Arkansasan," Jackson told him that "you may be shooting at Clinton but you are hitting Reagan." In the spring of 1998, he went to see Nickles to follow up on a

commitment the Senator had made the previous year to support enlargement. Jackson reminded him of his pledge and underscored how critical his support was in securing conservative support. Nickles told Jackson he was a man of his word and the Committee could count on his vote. But he added: "Young man, don't ever come back in my office asking for a favor for Bill Clinton."[17]

In early 1997 the Committee hosted the first of many dinners at Finley's residence. At the suggestion of Kozminski, it invited Adam Michnik to be the guest of honor at a dinner designed to showcase Poland's case for Alliance membership. Michnik was a well-known former Polish dissident who had gone on to become editor-in-chief of Poland's first independent newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The dinner was held on February 18. Finley and Jackson waited nervously for Michnik to arrive for a dinner of red wine and lamb chops with a select group of Washington's power elite. Michnik arrived late, dressed in blue jeans and a leather jacket—and having clearly already had a few drinks. He proceeded to sit down and, while chain-smoking cigarettes and drinking scotch, mesmerized his audience with a two-hour discourse on Poland's tragic history, his own incarceration and torture by the communist police, and how NATO membership was the logical culmination of Solidarity's struggle for democracy and freedom. The audience was overwhelmed.

Finley's stately home on Woodland Drive soon became a kind of salon where both Republican and Democrat activists rubbed shoulders with Central and East European intellectuals-turned-diplomats and former freedom fighters. Political gossip was exchanged on who was on board and who was not and NATO enlargement lobbying efforts were coordinated. Central and East European Foreign Ministers vied with one another for invitations to meet Senators and members of Congress to make the case for their entry into NATO. Craig noted jokingly in a fax to Finley on March 6, 1997 after receiving requests from several Central and East European Foreign and Prime Ministers for dinner during the same week: "Well, now I know (finally) what it is like to be in demand. We are really where it is at in Washington these days!"[18]

Jackson became a well-known figure who could almost always be found at the Metropolitan Club after work comparing notes and discussing tactics with Administration officials and Central European diplomats on the most recent twist and turn in the debate. At a time when partisanship in Washington was on the rise, the Committee was one of the few examples of bipartisan foreign policy in practice. At a time when the Administration needed to shore up support on the Hill, the Committee members helped reach out to the target audience the Administration needed most—conservative Republican Senators. By early June 1997, the Committee had met one-on-one with some 25 Senators, along with the staff of 15 others.[19]

The third piece of Rosner's strategy was to make it easy for Senators to vote in favor of enlargement. One way to do that was to signal that this was a top

Administration priority that the President was prepared to go to the mat over. By sending that message early and often, the Administration wanted to deter potential opposition. NATO enlargement was the topic of Clinton's only foreign policy speech during the 1996 Presidential campaign and listed as the first priority in Clinton's January 27, 1997 State of the Union speech. Along with the creation of a special envoy, these steps were also designed to underscore that the Administration's commitment was serious.

Another way was to line up as many public endorsements of enlargement as possible. The debate over enlargement was always going to be predominantly an elite issue. But Rosner was determined to change the face of the issue—from its perceived image as an "ethnic issue," into a broad-based "American" issue by lining up a broad and diverse set of supporters. When a Senator subsequently focused on the issue, he or she would almost inevitably take a look at who was in favor and who was against. If the list included groups whose views the Senator considered important, it eased the way for that Senator to join the "yes" column.

Rosner's first step in setting up S/NERO was to hire as his right-hand man Dr. Cameron Munter, a talented foreign service officer who had served in Poland and the Czech Republic. Munter was not only Rosner's eyes and ears but also the point person in organizing a domestic coalition supporting NATO enlargement. S/NERO staff crisscrossed the country doing briefings on NATO enlargement for state and local politicians, business councils, etc. They accompanied religious, ethnic, and veterans leaders on visits to the candidate countries; arranged for Administration representatives to go on public call-in radio shows; and worked tirelessly to enlist support from veterans' groups, business associations, labor leaders, local politicians, as well as the American Jewish community and other representatives of the religious and values community.

By the time of the Senate vote in the spring of 1998, S/NERO staffers had visited more than 40 states to brief local leaders and editorial boards, and to meet with a variety of groups representing different segments of American society. When, in the spring of 1998, opponents would claim that enlargement had not been debated and did not have the support of the U.S. public, they were confronted with evidence of public support in the form of endorsements from more than 60 organizations. In a flyer circulated to Senators, the Committee estimated that these organizations represented more than 10 million Americans.

In early March 1997, however, the Administration still had a long uphill struggle ahead of it. Much of the foreign policy establishment was still skeptical of, if not hostile to, the Administration's policy. In a widely publicized debate at the Council on Foreign Relations in December 1996 between former Assistant Secretary Holbrooke and NATO enlargement critic Michael Mandelbaum, an informal vote taken at dinner following the debate clearly favored the opponents of enlargement.[20] As Richard Cohen wrote in *The Washington Post*,

"Holbrooke lost the debate—not to mention, on occasion, his temper." Whether the audience was predisposed to oppose enlargement or won over by Mandelbaum's arguments was not important: "Whatever the case, NATO lost—and lost big," Cohen noted. "If a bunch of internationalists feel this way, how's NATO expansion going to play in Peoria?"[21]

Support on Capitol Hill was also broad but often shallow. The Senate had overwhelmingly passed several non-binding resolutions in favor of enlargement, but these were precisely that: non-binding. They were important as a barometer of sympathy and an indication of which way Senators were leaning. But at the end of the day they did not mean that the Administration had the votes of these Senators locked in. A closer look at the views of the heads of several key committees revealed that the Administration still had work to do, even among its own party faithful. The ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Joe Biden (D-DE), signaled his unease with the Administration's policy in January 1997 as well. "I have serious reservations about NATO enlargement," Biden told *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman. Anyone assuming that Congress was on board for enlargement, the Senator emphasized, "was making a big mistake."[22]

In early March Rosner set up shop in a dingy State Department office. He and Munter put up a calendar on the wall mapping out what needed to be accomplished by when. On March 5, Rosner's first day in the job, Albright called him up to her office. The Secretary had testified on Capitol Hill earlier that day and had found herself criticized from both the left and the right and by Democrats and Republicans on NATO enlargement. Albright was no newcomer to the job of dealing with Congress, having worked as Seantor Ed Muskie's chief legislative assistant and having been NSC Senior Director for legislative affairs in the Carter White House. Her message to Rosner was clear: we're behind the curve on this. She emphasized to Rosner the need to develop a clear and crisp message on enlargement and to have answers for the barrage of questions she was being confronted with—and quickly.[23]

2. THE CAMPAIGN STARTS

The Administration's campaign to sell enlargement started in earnest in late April 1997 when Albright and Cohen were scheduled to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Albright had asked Rosner and me to arm her with the best arguments in favor of enlargement. We had both joined the Administration within weeks of each other with the same mandate: to successfully enlarge NATO. We both believed that this debate was not just about adding new members to an existing Alliance. Instead, it would be about why the U.S. should remain in Europe following communism's demise and what kind of NATO made sense in the post–Cold War era. Even before joining the State

Department, we had discussed at length how to integrate the policy and politics of enlargement. We often joked that my office did the "engineering" of enlargement while Rosner's did "sales." Our staffs would work together closely and avoid the normal bureaucratic frictions and rivalries that often plagued policymaking in the Department.

Albright wanted to clearly lay out the Administration's vision of Europe and our rationale for enlargement as the centerpiece of a broader Alliance overhaul. Whereas critics were portraying enlargement as a radical and potentially dangerous step, the Administration saw it as the logical adaptation of the Alliance to a new Europe. Albright also wanted us to convey our view that if the Alliance did not adapt to the needs of modern-day Europe, it was doomed. Rosner and I decided on an approach that drew on an argument I had picked up at RAND—namely posing and then answering the question of what kind of NATO we would want if we were building it over from scratch. It was an attempt to get people to think beyond the status quo. If NATO did not exist, would we create it and what would it look like?[24]

Our answer was that of course we would still want to have a strategic alliance between the U.S. and Europe to defend our common interests against future threats. But it was also obvious that such an alliance would look quite different—and would have new members and be focused on a different set of missions. Ergo, enlargement was part of the natural transformation and modernization of NATO for a new era. Albright liked the argument and asked us to work it into her testimony. It was a way to underscore that the changes we were making in NATO were a commonsensical adaptation of the Alliance to a new post–Cold War world.

On April 23 Albright and Cohen appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Albright led off her testimony by stating that the Administration's goal was "to build, for the very first time, a peaceful, democratic and undivided trans-Atlantic community" that would do for the eastern half of the continent what the Alliance had previously done for the western half—namely provide peace and prosperity. But Albright immediately framed the issue of enlargement as the centerpiece of a broader effort to transform the Alliance for a new era. "The debate about NATO enlargement is really a debate about NATO itself. It is about the value of maintaining alliance in times of peace and the value of our partnership with Europe."

"Clearly, if an institution such as NATO did not exist today, we would want to create one," Albright insisted. "Just as clearly, if we were creating a new alliance today, we would not make the old Iron Curtain its eastern frontier. We would not leave a democratic country out in the cold because it was once, against the will of its people, part of the Warsaw Pact." The key question, she said, was the following: "Which democratic nations in Europe are important to our security and which are willing and able to contribute to our security?" She

urged the Senators not to be confined by the old thinking of the Cold War and to think in terms of what an Alliance between the United States and a Europe whole and free should look like.

Albright listed four reasons why NATO enlargement was in America's interest. First, it was the best way to prevent another war in Europe. Second, it was the best way to consolidate Europe's gains toward democracy, peace, and integration. Third, it was needed "to right the wrongs of the past" and to allow Europe's new democracies to join the old ones as American allies. Finally, the Secretary insisted that enlargement would also strengthen NATO by adding new, capable allies. The issue, she concluded, was "whether the people who knocked the teeth out of totalitarianism in Europe and who helped to liberate us from the Cold War are worthy members of history's greatest democratic alliance."[25]

But the responses of many of the Senators were skeptical. One Senator after another now asked whether enlargement would not create a new dividing line in Europe, whether it wouldn't weaken and dilute NATO and who would pay for it. The Chairman of the Committee, Senator John Warner (R-VA), summed up his concerns at the end of the hearing by saying: "I come from the school 'if it's not broken, why try and fix it?'" By the end of the hearing Albright was forced to concede: "In listening to you," she said, "there is no question that we have a very difficult job ahead of us." [26] *New York Times* columnist and enlargement opponent Tom Friedman gloated that the Administration had run into bipartisan skepticism from some of the Senate's most knowledgeable defense experts. "Imagine," he wrote, "what happens when the 'know nothings' in Congress start debating expansion."[27]

The committee hearings were also a reminder of the tensions within the coalition we were trying to knit together. Democrats on the left were worried that enlargement would damage Russian democracy and arms control. The Administration's most effective political weapon in addressing these latter concerns was Talbott, whose commitment to Russian democracy and reform was beyond question. Throughout the spring of 1997 he met with numerous Democratic Senators and Members of Congress to explain why the Administration believed it could pursue both NATO enlargement and support Russian reform in tandem. Talbott corresponded privately with a number of critics, including George Kennan, to explain Administration policy. Diplomatic breakthroughs at Helsinki and the NATO-Russia Founding Act helped lock-in Democratic support, including that of Senator Joseph Biden (D- DE), the ranking Democrat on the SFRC.

But Republican critics now lashed out at the Administration for going too far in NATO's relations with Russia. Perhaps no one was more outspoken than former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Whereas the Administration saw the NATO-Russia Founding Act as a major accomplishment that preserved our re-

lations with Moscow, shored up support for enlargement among the allies, and secured our liberal political flank at home, many Republicans, led by Kissinger, belittled these accomplishments and accused the Administration of granting Moscow too much say in the Alliance's inner workings and trying to turn it "into a U.N.-style system of collective security."[28] The former Secretary of State's argument that enlargement was a good idea done wrong was exactly the kind of critique that Rosner feared could lead to the defection of conservative Senators.

But Albright fought back, defending the Administration's approach. She told one visitor after another: "Henry just has his facts wrong on this one." Administration officials fanned out to meet with key Senators and other influential Washington individuals to explain the safeguards we had built into the NATO-Russia Founding Act. We also got some help from Czech President Vaclav Havel who defended the Administration's attempt to shift NATO away from a focus on a Russian threat in *The New York Times*. "Some people simply want to continue fighting the cold war and consider Russia their chief enemy; they see the threat of Russia as the reason to enlarge NATO," he wrote. Such thinking, Havel underscored, underestimated the range of dangers facing the Euro-Atlantic region. NATO needed to focus on these new threats or else it would turn "into a hopelessly antiquated club of cold war veterans."[29]

The Administration was also determined to blunt suggestions that it was afraid to talk about the risks enlarging NATO involved, above all the pledge to go to war to defend Central and Eastern Europe if need be. There was no better way to kill this argument than to have President Clinton address the issue himself. The venue chosen was the U.S. military academy at West Point. After all, it would be these young cadets who were likely to command the U.S. troops who might be called upon to defend Central Europe at some point in the future. Addressing the graduating class of West Point on May 31, 1997, Clinton told them that he was proposing to expand NATO "to make it less likely that that you will ever be called to fight in another war across the Atlantic." But, looking directly at the graduating cadets, the President acknowledged that enlargement was not risk free and that enlargement "means that you could be asked to put your lives on the line for a new NATO member, just as today you can be called upon to defend the freedom of our allies in Western Europe."[30]

But nowhere was the President more effective than in dealing directly with key Senators himself. On the evening of June 11, the SNOG leadership was invited to the White House for consultations before Clinton made a final decision on the countries the U.S. would support inviting to join NATO at Madrid. But it was also an opportunity for the President to gauge the overall level of support among the Senators on enlargement. Clinton opened the session by laying out his arguments in favor of inviting just three countries—the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. "You know from press reports that I favor a smaller expansion," he told the Senators. "These three countries are the best prepared.

Extending a security guarantee is important. No NATO member has ever been attacked." He also underscored the need to avoid creating a new dividing line in Europe that could jeopardize the Baltic states or Ukraine.

"If you take a smaller number, we have a better chance to keep the Europeans in line for a second round of admissions. It will also keep people from going nuts on the Baltic issue. We need to keep a certain amount of ambiguity here. If we take five, we are just creating a new dividing line. But we want to keep the door open," Clinton told the group. "The Europeans originally did not like enlargement," the President added. "But now they think it is their idea. They think the easier thing to do is to just let everyone in. But if we listen to the JCS and their arguments, I'm tilting to three. I know there's a lot of support for Slovenia and maybe even Romania. But I'd like to hear your views."

Roth, as Chairman of the SNOG, responded first. He supported four candidates including Slovenia—and handed Clinton a letter signed by 11 Senators backing that small Balkan country's candidacy.[31] Biden also supported Slovenia and argued that including it would have a positive effect on stability in the Balkans. But he agreed that Romania was not ready and would be a problem on the Hill. "If Romania is the price for Slovenia, I wouldn't do it," he concluded. The President thanked Roth and Biden. Noting that the two SNOG leaders both came from the small state of Delaware, the first to ratify the Constitution, he quipped: "All of us who come from other states appreciate that Delaware supported enlargement in the United States."

Senator Helms was next. "Mr. President, I think you have sized it up just right." He was unimpressed with the argument that the Alliance had to bring Romania in because it was fragile. "That is not a good reason to bring them in. NATO is not a therapy group. Romania's reforms are great, but they are not yet locked in. It would be very tough politically to do 4 or 5." As they went around the table, there were a variety of views. Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Dan Coats (R-IN) underscored their support for Romania.

The President then turned to Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC). Thurmond, the 95-year-old Senator who had recently broken the Senate's record for the longest term in office, responded with remarkable succinctness: "I'd stay with three and do it quickly and by doing that it will lend hope to the others." There was a wave of laughter, as everyone marveled at his insight and brevity. The President quipped: "Strom, this is the first time I have spoken to you since you broke the longevity record. If I could say so much so briefly, they'd repeal the 22 amendment!"—a reference to the two term limit for Presidents.

But several Senators fired warning shots across the President's bow on the wisdom of enlarging NATO at all. The strongest warnings came from Republican Senators Warner and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska). As Chairman of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees respectively, each was a political powerhouse in his own right. Each of them had traditionally been a

strong proponent of NATO throughout their careers in Congress. They were potentially dangerous opponents if they publicly opposed enlargement. And both were leaning in that direction.

Warner told the President that he had come to learn. "But I have strong concerns," he added, signaling that he was not on board. "We have to make sure we're not ruining the best military alliance in history." Stevens echoed that sentiment. He asked how we could be expanding U.S. commitments at the same time we were shrinking the size of the military and our defense budgets. The way the debate was being conducted made it sound like joining NATO was joining a political club, Stevens continued. "I have not opposed enlargement publicly," he added, but he feared it would ruin the Alliance. A younger generation of U.S. politicians would not pay for it. He was also not convinced it was in the U.S. interest to go forward with enlargement in light of other global defense commitments, particularly those in Asia, a region that the Senator from Alaska had long urged the U.S. to pay more attention to.

The President responded first to Warner. "What's the option if we don't expand? If you believe that we and the Canadians have an interest in staying engaged in Europe, I guess we could dress up PfP and leave that as our strategy. But one thing I learned as a result of Bosnia is that the bottom line for us is that we should have the broadest and deepest alliance with the democracies of Europe."

Addressing Stevens, Clinton said. "Your point is that we may need our defense resources in Asia. I agree with that. We need to be honest about providing what we need to fund defense, including in Asia. But my thought has been that if we could get a good deal with Russia, strengthen NATO and PfP, then we could eliminate the possibility of a major upheaval in Europe. Even if things happen on the edges of Europe—like in Bosnia—we would have a mechanism, the allies and the resources to handle them. So I see this as freeing up resources for Asia. But you are right we have to be honest about the defense dollars."

But Stevens warned: "I expect another Mansfield amendment [on withdrawing U.S. troops from Europe]. If Europe is ready to have a collective defense mechanism, why not let them do it without us. They all talk to me about interoperability, but it only means more U.S. dollars." Berger broke in to say: "We're more vulnerable to the Mansfield Amendment if we freeze NATO in Cold War amber. I think we are more likely to have public support if we keep it as a strong collective defense pact but one which is also helping to bolster new democracies." Clinton agreed that the Europeans should do more for their own defense. "That's why we support ESDI," he said. "But," he told Stevens, "if we were not there, Bosnia would still be going on."[32]

Meanwhile, Rosner was also looking for a way to put a human face on the enlargement issue. He had asked both Munter and Roger Kaplan in the Defense Department whether Polish or Czech forces had fought alongside the

U.S. during World War II. They pointed him to John Keegan's *Six Armies in Normandy* which describes a battle where U.S. and Polish forces fought side by side in Normandy after the D-Day invasion. Outside the French city of Chambois, several German tank divisions were encircled when the U.S. Army's 90th Infantry Division met up with the Polish 1st Armored Division to close the last escape route—the so-called Falaise Gap. Over the next few days, the Polish units held their ground against a series of bloody German counterattacks while awaiting Canadian reinforcements. In the days after the battle, the bodies of 325 Polish soldiers were buried in makeshift graves. A Canadian unit subsequently placed a sign in English on the French farmland that read "A Polish Battlefield."[33]

Rereading Keegan, Rosner realized this battle could offer a way to remind an American audience that Poles had already proven their worth as allies in Europe's last great war. The American soldier who had made the first contact with the Polish 1st Armored Division in closing the Falaise Gap had been U.S. Army Captain Laughlin E. Waters. Rosner asked Kaplan in the Pentagon's Public Affairs Office to track him down. They found Waters in Los Angeles, where the 82-year-old Waters was a retired federal judge—and a Republican. Rosner called him to inquire whether he would be willing to introduce President Clinton at a NATO enlargement event at the White House. "That's a pretty broad invitation to extend to a Republican," quipped Waters, but he agreed to do it.[34]

On July 3, Judge Waters introduced President Clinton at a ceremony in the East Room of the White House. In his remarks, the President noted that for more than five decades U.S. soldiers had labored for the goal of an undivided, democratic and peaceful Europe. That goal, he noted, was now "within reach" as the Alliance prepared to expand to Central and Eastern Europe. "Judge Waters," the President concluded, "your presence here today 53 years later reminds us of the character of these we are about to add to NATO." Taking on those critics who claimed that adding these countries as allies would weaken NATO, the President added: "They, too, have fought and died for freedom and democracy, for ours as well as their own. Our ties have been forged in blood. And just as they were strong allies in World War II, they will be again."[35]

But the opposition was organizing as well. On June 16, the first news wire reports crossed our desks announcing that a group of prominent foreign policy figures were denouncing NATO enlargement in an Open Letter to the President. Led by Susan Eisenhower, the granddaughter of the late President Dwight Eisenhower and the ultimate icon of America's ties with Europe, the group consisted of nearly 50 foreign policy experts, retired diplomats, senators, and senior military officers spanning the political spectrum from left to right. Among the signatories were former Senators Bill Bradley, Gary Hart, Gordon Humphrey, Mark Hatfield, and Sam Nunn, as well as former Secretary of Defense Robert

McNamara, Ambassadors Paul Nitze and Jack Matlock as well as Professors Michael Mandelbaum and Richard Pipes.

The letter attacked NATO enlargement "as a policy error of historic proportions." It claimed enlargement would undercut Russian reform, degrade NATO's primary mission of self-defense, diminish the security of countries not in enlargement's first round, and extend a U.S. guarantee "to countries with serious border and national minority problems and unevenly developed systems of democratic government." The letter concluded by stating that enlargement was "neither necessary nor desirable and this ill-conceived policy can and should be put on hold."[36] Several signatories made their case at a press conference on June 26. Matlock, former U.S. Ambassador to the USSR, warned that an enlarged NATO would be too "preoccupied with its own navel and its expanding waistline" to carry out its mission. Asked whether it was not too late to stop enlargement, Mandelbaum insisted that the end of the Cold War meant that U.S. credibility was no longer on the line in the same way. "The world is now safe for the United States to recognize its errors and correct them."[37]

Even more worrying was a letter to President Clinton dated June 25, 1997 and signed by 20 Senators. It had been organized by enlargement skeptic Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX). While careful not to explicitly oppose enlargement, it listed more than one-and-a-half pages of concerns and questions that could not be read as anything but a warning light. The letter was signed by twice as many Republicans as Democrats.[38] The most troubling name on the list was that of Senator Helms. The doubts of Warner and Stevens as the Chairmen of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees were known to the Administration, but Helms's signature came as a surprise. The conservative *bête noire* was thought to be in the pro-enlargement camp. His defection would have been a major boost for the opposition. Along with Warner and Stevens, it would have meant that the Chairmen of all three key Senate Committees on foreign, defense, and appropriations opposed enlargement.

Jesse Helms's shadow seemed to follow us on the road as we departed for the Madrid summit. As part of its outreach effort, the President had invited a SNOG delegation led by Senator Lott to accompany him to Madrid. We had also arranged for SNOG Chairman Roth to address the summit in his capacity as head of the North Atlantic Assembly. After Madrid, the President arrived in Warsaw for a stop intended to be the trip's emotional highlight. President Clinton and the entire U.S. delegation received an emotional reception from a crowd of more than 30,000 Poles in Warsaw's Castle Square. I watched as Poles spontaneously went up and hugged a U.S. military officer who was in the crowd.

Our jubilant mood was punctured when, on the morning of July 9 we woke up in Warsaw to read an op-ed by Senator Helms in the European edition of *The Wall Street Journal*. In it, he launched a frontal assault on our NATO policy

by throwing almost every conceivable conservative criticism at us. The Administration was accused of pursuing a "dangerous and ill-considered plan for NATO transformation" that was a combination of "nation building," and "an exercise in the appeasement of Russia." The editorial ended on a threatening note: "If the Clinton Administration views NATO not as a tool to defend Europe, but as a laboratory for social work, then NATO should not only eschew expansion, it should declare victory and close shop." Helms's op-ed demanded that "dramatic changes must be made" before he would support enlargement—and listed nine conditions that the Administration had to meet to gain his support. [39]

We were stunned. Had Helms defected to the opposition? Or was he merely firing a warning shot across our bow? Rosner called Helms's press spokesman, Marc Thiessen, from his cell phone while standing on Warsaw's Castle Square. He told Thiessen that the President and Secretary Albright had read the Senator's op-ed, but were also seeing news reports suggesting that the Senator had come out against NATO enlargement. Rosner asked whether the latter reports were accurate. As Thiessen wrote in an email to Bud Nance later that day: "I told him the news reports were inaccurate, and that Helms's position is what he wrote in the op-ed: he is inclined to support expansion but has a number of serious concerns that need to be addressed." Rosner, Thiessen wrote, had responded that he thought the Administration could "meet Senator Helms's conditions." When Senator Helms saw Thiessen's e-mail, he wrote in hand on it: "Bud, Marc handled this just right."

It was the start of a careful dance between the Administration and Senator Helms that would lead to a set of understandings that, in turn, became a cornerstone of the Senate ratification effort. We needed Helms's seal of approval, both as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and as a conservative icon to lock in conservative Republican votes—and he knew it. We were willing to address his concerns—but not at the expense of reversing core policy decisions, alarming the allies or reopening the NATO-Russia Founding Act with Moscow. Given the other tensions in the pro-enlargement coalition, we had to be careful that whatever moves we made in the direction of Helms did not alienate those Democratic Senators whose votes we needed, too.

3. DANCING WITH JESSE HELMS

We returned to Washington from the President's Madrid trip to find the critics of enlargement keeping up a steady drumbeat of attacks.[40] The Council for a Livable World, a liberal anti-nuclear group that opposed enlargement, issued a vote count showing 49 Senators leaning in favor of enlargement, 26 against and the rest undecided. It underscored that in spite of the Madrid summit the opposition was only 8 votes shy of the 34 votes needed to defeat enlargement.[41]

Especially worrisome were signs of erosion of support in Republican ranks more generally.[42] Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), one of the staunchest supporters of enlargement, sent National Security Advisor Sandy Berger a private memo warning that the Administration was in danger of losing the battle in the Senate.[43]

In late July, Rosner sat down to assess where the Administration stood politically. Paris and Madrid had consolidated support among some Senate Democrats. The Senate Republican leadership was still solidly behind enlargement although there were signs of erosion in Republican support. Rosner himself counted fewer than 40 Senators as confirmed supporters. The danger the Administration faced, he wrote Albright, was that Senators with very different concerns would coalesce into a bloc to provide the 34 votes needed to defeat enlargement.[44] But the first fruits of the Administration's outreach strategy were also starting to come in. In late June, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the American Jewish Committee endorsed enlargement. Throughout the summer and early fall a series of veterans organizations came out in favor as well—the Reserve Officer's Association, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jewish War Veterans and the American Legion.

In early September the Administration got a major boost when the New Atlantic Initiative (NAI) issued a pro-enlargement letter signed by more than 130 figures from the foreign policy establishment—including former secretaries of state, five former national security advisors, six former secretaries of defense, eight former senators, and two former vice presidents. It was presented in early September by Republicans Jeane Kirkpatrick and Paul Wolfowitz, along with Democrats Tony Lake and Richard Holbrooke, in the Andrew Mellon Auditorium of the State Department.[45]

But the key to the Administration's strategy was the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which would make the initial recommendations to the Senate as a whole and draft the resolution of ratification, and in particular Senators Helms and Biden. . With the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees chaired by skeptics, we needed Helms and Biden to cheerlead enlargement in the Senate. Over the summer Rosner met regularly with Helms's and Biden's chiefs of staff, Bud Nance and Ed Hall, as well as the key European-foreign-policy aides of the two Senators—Steve Biegun and Mike Haltzel. Randy Scheuneman from Majority Leader Lott's staff and Ian Brzezinksi from Senator Roth's staff also played a key role. We agreed to a series of fall hearings focusing on the rationale for enlargement, new members' qualifications, and burden-sharing as well as NATO-Russia relations.

On August 28, Rosner reported to Albright on how the planned hearings fit into the Administration's strategy. He underscored Albright's crucial role in aggressively addressing Helms's concerns during the hearings—while at the same

time working to bring skeptical Democrats on board. NATO planned to sign the protocols of accession at its Foreign Ministers meeting in December. The tentative window for the vote in the Senate was in March 1998. The clock was starting to tick. Therefore, the autumn hearings were key to locking in the Senators' support.[46]

The following week, Helms' staff sent him a parallel memo proposing the fall hearings as initiating the formal process of Senate advice and consent. The Senator agreed to chair the hearings, and circled on his copy of the memo the issue of burden-sharing and writing: "This should be number one."[47] But Helms was still being lobbied by conservative opponents of enlargement to reconsider his position. On September 2, Helms wrote Jude Wanniski, a friend of the Senator and patron saint for conservative supply side economists, denying that he had irrevocably committed himself to expansion. "My only firm public position is that I do not favor further soaking the American taxpayer for any NATO expansion (and I do favor diminishing our enormous outlays as quickly as may be possible)."

When Helms' staff saw the letter, they realized their boss had still not yet fully made up his mind. They requested a meeting with the Senator to clarify his views on enlargement. In preparation for that meeting, they sent him a memo on September 8 arguing that enlargement was a conservative idea that came from anti-communist leaders like Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel who feared Russian encroachment. They noted that it was supported by key U.S. conservative figures such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard Perle, and Dick Cheney and had been part of the Republican "Contract with America." The message was clear: enlargement had a solid Republican pedigree. The Clinton Administration, the memo alleged, had initially opposed enlargement for fear it would offend Russia. "Clinton political advisors," it noted, had "belatedly accepted the issue of NATO enlargement and tried to claim credit for the initiative." But the memo admitted that Albright's appointment as Secretary of State "has put the United States on a clear course toward NATO enlargement."

Republicans, the memo noted, had three concerns about the Administration's handling of enlargement. One was the Clinton Administration's reticence to justify NATO enlargement as a military response to a residual Russian threat. The second was the NATO-Russia Founding Act's provisions on potential joint decisionmaking. The third was the costs of enlargement. "Notwithstanding some of the unfavorable inclinations of the Clinton Administration, NATO enlargement can be done right," the memo concluded. "For the somewhat moribund though still formidable military alliance of NATO, enlargement will be a certain improvement. For the legacy of Yalta it will be a reversal, and for the future stability of Europe it can build upon the fifty years of the NATO alliance which kept the United States *out* of yet another world war in Europe."[48]

Helms signed off on the memo—and in favor of enlargement. One week later Helms went public with his support—but also with his qualifications. In a letter to Secretary Albright, he wrote: "I have arrived at my decision to support enlargement based on my belief that this is a worthwhile endeavor. However, my support remains conditioned upon our ability to work together to include proper safeguards." Those safeguards, he continued, needed to include "a clear, military rationale for NATO enlargement," agreement in advance on the costs of enlargement, and assurances to U.S. taxpayers as to costs, and clearly delineated limits to Russia's role in NATO decisionmaking. The letter concluded by stating: "The alternative is for the process of NATO enlargement to fail upon the very concerns that I have outlined above. *We must not let that happen*" [emphasis in original].[49]

Rosner and I were greatly relieved. While each condition required meshing different political impulses, we felt the Administration could meet them. In terms of the military rationale for NATO enlargement, the Administration recognized that a revanchist Russia might someday again threaten Central and Eastern Europe. We thought the chances of that happening were low and that engaging Moscow through a cooperative NATO-Russia relationship could make that probability even lower. We also wanted a rationale for NATO that went beyond a hedge against Russia and that was based on what we were *for*, not only what we were *against*. We thought NATO should focus on all the possible threats to its allies. Russia was one of those but not the only or even the most likely one.

Republicans, in contrast, saw enlargement primarily as a hedge against Russia. They thought the Administration was ducking the issue of Russian neoimperial ambitions and too focused on new missions like peacekeeping. Many Republicans were comfortable with NATO assuming a more active war-fighting role out of area, but wanted to avoid messy and at times ambiguous peacekeeping operations—i.e., they wanted an Alliance that could deploy to the Persian Gulf but not get bogged down in Bosnia. In contrast, the Administration saw peace support operations as important in their own right *and* as a stepping stone for our allies to embrace other, more ambitious post–Cold War missions. There was common ground here between Republicans and Democrats. But finding it in the politically heated context of the NATO enlargement debate was not always easy.

Republican skepticism on Russia lay behind Helms' demand that clear limits be set on the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. Above all, Helms wanted it to be clear that NATO would always have a common position before it sat down in the PJC to talk with Russia. Helms wanted this safeguard on the record in a clear way. He and his staff repeatedly told us that they wanted to tie not only our hands, but those of future Administrations as well. One day in mid-September Steve Biegun from Helms' staff called Rosner with the idea of a cho-

reographed exchange between Albright and Helms to clarify what the PJC would and would not do. Among other things, the exchange would underscore that NATO would always have an agreed position before sitting down with Moscow. He then proceeded to read a question slowly so Rosner could take down every word. Rosner came to see me and we spent the next couple of days clearing an answer Albright could give Helms. When we first showed Albright our proposed answer, she said, "It's not tough enough," and added several sentences drawing the line even more firmly against Russia having too strong a voice in the North Atlantic Council (NAC).

Shortly thereafter, however, Talbott, who was out of town, called in to complain that our proposed response sounded too anti-Russian. So we added yet another paragraph that addressed his concerns as well. Rosner then called Biegun back: "Of course, you understand that I can't predict what the Secretary will necessarily say, but what do you think the reaction would be if her response was as follows?" He then read the carefully scripted response. Biegun responded: "I think if the Chairman asked that question, and the Secretary gave that answer, the response would be very positive." The day before the hearings Biegun faxed Rosner a piece of paper with the question he had provided Helms. "This is what we gave the Senator," he wrote on the fax. "I *cannot* guarantee 100 percent that he will ask it" [emphasis in original].[50]

The third of Helms' concerns was on the costs of enlargement. Here the Administration was in a quandary of its own making. NATO did not have an agreed upon methodology for measuring the costs of enlargement. Initial studies by RAND and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had produced a wide spectrum of estimates ranging from as little as $10 billion to more than $100 billion.[51] A Defense Department study issued in February 1997 had estimated the costs of enlargement—for the United States, other current allies, and the new members—to be between $27–35 billion over a ten year period. This estimate was premised on the assumptions of the NATO enlargement study—i.e., that no immediate military threat existed and that NATO could rely on a reinforcement capability to carry out new commitments. It also made the point that such costs spread out over a 10-year period were modest in an Alliance where European allies spent $160 billion per year on defense—and were in any case much lower than what these countries would spend if they were providing for their own national defense.[52]

Politically, these numbers nonetheless created sticker shock across the continent—and promised to hand our opponents at home an issue with which to attack us. Allies were under pressure to meet the fiscal criteria for the European Monetary Union and in no mood to increase defense spending. They accepted U.S. thinking on the military requirements for enlargement—i.e., what kind of forces were needed to defend these countries—but not our methodology for costing out those requirements. Instead, they wanted to limit those costs to what

NATO would spend on its common budget on for infrastructure. This was less than half of one of the categories the Administration had identified in its cost study. They wanted to stretch even those costs over a longer period and fund them through reprioritization and reallocation. At Madrid, we squeezed a statement out of our allies that they would provide the resources needed for enlargement—but it had been like squeezing blood out of a stone.[53]

The Administration had a political problem. Isolated in NATO, it had little choice but to give in to the allies. As a result, NATO's official cost estimates were going to be a fraction of what DoD had estimated some eight months earlier. We had to explain why the Administration had decided to go with new, much lower numbers measuring a different, and much smaller, piece of the NATO enlargement pie. Such an approach promised to make the cost numbers so small that they ceased to be an issue for some—but it also opened us up to the charge of either having been incompetent in grossly overstating the costs initially or as having capitulated and accepted lower figures under political pressure from free-riding allies.

On the eve of Albright's committee appearance, Rosner and I laid out our private thoughts in a memo to her. "The set of hearings you will kick off on Tuesday offer an enormous opportunity, but also distinct dangers. If we handle the hearings right, we could be well on our way to generating the momentum we need to assure both the ratification of NATO enlargement and the absence of harmful reservations. You are the key asset, because you can speak with great credibility to the concerns of both the anti-communist-right and the too-worried-about–Russia-left." Momentum was building in our favor, we emphasized, but events were still fluid and there was plenty of room for mistakes. We still had less than fifty confirmed votes in our favor.

The vote count was not our only concern, however. "The danger here is not simply falling short of 67 votes, although that remains possible. The larger danger is that we will face a raft of reservations and conditions, and each of which only needs 51 votes to become binding." While some amendments were unobjectionable, others were potential "killer" amendments we would need to defeat—and would need a bloc of cohesive voters to do so. "Thus, the stakes are high," the memo concluded. "If this month's hearings go badly, we will face a long sustained fight, particularly over reservations. But if you hit a home run, we could start to see more critics folding their hands, more undecideds declaring support, and more reporters and observers concluding that this fight may not be much of a fight after all."[54]

On October 7, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee kicked off the first of nine full committee hearings on enlargement over the next thirty days before three different Committees—Foreign Relations, Appropriations, and the Budget Committee. Albright led off the first hearing before the Foreign Relations Committee on the morning of October 7. In her testimony, she di-

rectly addressed the concerns that Helms had laid out in his letter the previous month. Why, she asked, was the U.S. so focused on enlarging NATO at a time of relative peace when there was no immediate military threat in Europe? "The answer," she said, "is that we want the peace to last. We want freedom to endure, and we believe there are still potential threats to our future emanating from European soil."

"Let us not deceive ourselves," she said. "We are a European power. We have an interest in the fate of the 200 million people who live in the nations between the Baltic and the Black Sea. We waged the Cold War in part because these nations were held captive. We fought World War II in part because these nations had been invaded. If there were a major threat to the security of their region, we would want to act, enlargement or no enlargement. Our aim must be to prevent that threat from arising."

One of the threats NATO enlargement was designed to address, she told Helms, was Russia's uncertain future. "We want Russian democracy to endure. We are optimistic that it will. But one should not dismiss the possibility that Russia could return to the patterns of the past. By engaging Russia and enlarging NATO, we give Russia every incentive to deepen its commitment to peaceful relations with neighbors, while closing the avenue to more destructive alternatives." While there was no way to predict what dangers might arise in or to Europe in the decades ahead, we did know the following, she said: "whatever the future may hold, it will be in our interest to have a vigorous and larger alliance with those European democracies that share our values and our determination to defend them." "A larger NATO," she concluded, "will make America safer, NATO stronger and Europe more peaceful and united. That is the strategic rationale."[55]

Helms then read Albright the exact question on the NATO-Russia relationship that Biegun had previewed with Rosner, adding, "A pretty hefty question but I know you can handle it." Albright reiterated that the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council did not give Russia "any role in decisions the Alliance takes on internal matters, the way NATO organizes itself, conducts its business, or plans, prepares for and conducts those missions which affect only its members." The independence of the North Atlantic Council was sacrosanct, she underscored. Russia would never have a veto over internal NATO decisions and NATO-Russia consultations would only take place after NATO had first set its own policies. After she finished, Helms replied: "That is a very good answer to my question and I appreciate it."

Senator Biden made it clear that he, too, supported enlargement, but that the Administration still had to convince the American public that enlargement was needed. Americans wanted to know, he insisted, why NATO was still needed after the end of the Cold War. "The thing I hear my colleagues say is, 'Damn it, Joe, why can't they do it?' "

"I believe very strongly," she responded, "that this is a very smart additional preventive measure because history has shown us that we will go into Europe when we see massive wars that involve people we are closely related to, and when it involves our economic and strategic interests."

Other Senators asked Albright a series of questions about different aspects of enlargement, but it was also clear that the majority of Senators on the Committee were now inclined to support the Administration. After the hearings Biden said: "I think I've got the votes but I'm not sure."[56]

In the following weeks, critics of enlargement such as Ambassador Jonathan Dean, Ambassador Jack Matlock, and Michael Mandelbaum also had their say before the Committee. But they received a critical reception from both Helms and Biden. Biden in particular dismissed the arguments of Dean and Mandelbaum against enlargement as "dead wrong." He described the suggestion that U.S.-Russian arms control agreements could be in trouble because of enlargement as "a perversion of recent history" and suggested that to not enlarge NATO because there was no immediate Russian threat was "a prescription for paralysis." There was no longer any doubt on which side of the issue the Democratic Senator from Delaware stood.[57]

The Albright-Helms exchange also took much of the sting out of conservative complaints about the NATO-Russia Founding Act. In a special session set aside to explore the NATO-Russia issue, Henry Kissinger stated that he was reassured by the Albright-Helms exchange on the PJC and that enlargement should proceed with bipartisan support.[58] When Moscow was briefed by American diplomats about the restrictive interpretation of the Founding Act that the Administration and the Senate had agreed to, it was not pleased.[59]

The cost issue, in turn, was tackled on October 21 before Senator Ted Stevens' Appropriations Committee, where Albright appeared along with Secretary of Defense William Cohen. Stevens had called the hearing because he believed the Administration's assumption on both costs and troop deployments was too rosy. He believed that the demands on U.S. forces would be greater and that the end result would be a further erosion of U.S. military readiness when the main strategic threats to the U.S. were in Asia. Shortly before the hearing started, Cohen turned to Albright and said "Let me handle this. I know these guys and can talk to them." It was one of many moments where Cohen's credentials and support were invaluable in terms of winning over skeptical Republican Senators. A Republican and former member of the Armed Services Committee himself, he enjoyed great respect among his former colleagues.

Stevens opened the hearing by reading Albright Dean Acheson's unfortunate response to Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper (R-Iowa) at the 1949 hearings when Acheson had stated that the U.S. did not intend to deploy substantial numbers of U.S. troops in Europe on a more or less permanent basis.[60] Stevens

now asked whether Albright could assure him that the U.S. was not repeating the same mistake. Albright responded by carefully explaining why NATO did not see the need to deploy any additional U.S. troops in Europe in the existing environment—and argued that enlargement was the best way to lock in the peace and prevent the U.S. from fighting a future European war.

But it was Cohen who bore the lion's share of the burden in explaining why the Administration's cost estimates had changed so dramatically. He put his prepared statement aside and addressed the Senators as their former colleague. He laid out the reasons why the initial U.S. estimate was so high and why NATO's own estimates were going to be lower. He explained that NATO assessment teams had found that the infrastructure in these countries was in better shape than expected. And he assured the Senators that, based on his discussions with his colleagues in NATO, that the allies would pay their fair share.[61] Cohen concluded by quoting President Eisenhower that a soldier's pack is not as heavy as a prisoner's chains. "That is something that these three countries have endured for too many decades." They have had to carry around the weight of prisoner's chains. They now have an opportunity to join the most successful military institution in the history of the world, and to secure their security, and to promote their prosperity and stability. That is in our vital interest and we should ratify for those reasons alone."[62]

At a final hearing before the SFRC in early November, nongovernmental and other organizations were offered an open mike to go on the record either supporting or opposing enlargement. Representatives of some fifteen groups testified, including the Atlantic Council, Freedom House, the American Jewish Committee, trade unions, veterans and ethnic groups—with twelve of the fifteen supporting enlargement. The broad-based coalition of enlargement supporters was starting to come together. S/NERO's work in encouraging many of these groups to get involved was paying off. Bipartisan support was growing—and Senators were starting to pay attention.[63]

4. NEW MEMBERS AND NEW MISSIONS

In mid-November Helms and Biden issued a joint "Dear Colleague" letter summarizing the SFRC hearings. "We are convinced more than ever," the two Senators wrote, "that the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to include Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary is the correct policy for the United States to pursue." Many of the principles upon which the Administration's policy was premised, they noted, had gone largely uncontested in the hearings. But their concluding paragraph was the key one politically: "We believe that NATO enlargement, arguably the most important foreign policy initiative for the country in many years, is an issue that transcends partisan poli-

tics. Both of us are firmly convinced that enlargement is squarely in the American national interest and we anticipate that the Senate debate before the ratifications vote early next year will validate our conclusion."[64]

With this seal of approval from the leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a cornerstone of the Administration's strategy was in place. A month later, Albright joined her NATO colleagues in Brussels to officially sign the protocols of accession. Albright signed the document using her full name: Madeleine Korbel Albright. Afterward she turned to Rosner and me and noted that she rarely signed her name that way but wanted to do so on this document as it would bring the homeland of her father into NATO. We returned home to find on our desks the most recent vote count of the Committee to Expand NATO from mid-December. It showed 66 Senators inclined to vote yes, 13 inclined to oppose, and 21 undecided. We had turned the corner and were well on the way to consolidating the two-thirds majority we needed in the U.S. Senate.

In the meantime, an important piece of our open door strategy had also fallen into place with the completion of negotiations on a U.S.-Baltic Charter. On her plane after visiting Vilnius during the Administration's post-Madrid tour of Central and East European capitals, Albright had turned to me and said: "Ron, that was a great speech but where is the strategy to turn it into reality?" With a direct mandate from Albright, I had spent much of the summer working with my colleagues at State, the Defense Department, and the White House to develop our Baltic strategy. If the Charter were going to provide the perspective of NATO membership, we needed an action plan. Major General "Buzz" Kievenaar at DoD took the lead in developing a plan to help the Baltic states reform their militaries so that they would become NATO compatible. In early September, Assistant Secretary of State Marc Grossman had unveiled a new U.S. "Northern European Initiative" at a meeting with Nordic and Baltic Foreign Ministers in Bergen, Norway which embraced the idea of an expanding regional cooperation around the Baltic Sea, including with Russia.[65] It was a part of a broader strategy to help re-create the spirit of the old Hanseatic League, where all of those countries were connected by commerce and regional cooperation.

In mid-October, a final round of negotiations between the U.S. and the Baltic states held in the State Department produced a common text. The distrust from the previous spring had dissipated as we all sat around a table with a Thesaurus looking for the right adjectives to resolve final wording issues. When the White House schedulers postponed the initial signing date for the Charter, National Security Advisor Berger called in the three Baltic Ambassadors to reassure them that everything was on track. To everyone's surprise, he revealed that his ancestors were from Riga and quipped that he was the first Baltic-American National Security Advisor of the United States.

In an emotional ceremony held in the White House on January 16, 1998, President Clinton and the Presidents of the three Baltic states met to sign the U.S.-Baltic Charter. Clinton pledged to the three Baltic Presidents that the U.S. would never consider Europe to be fully secure until they, too, were secure. He underscored the importance of NATO's open door policy and underscored that the United States was "determined to help create the conditions under which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can one day walk through that door."[66] Albright turned to Grossman and me and said: "It doesn't get much better than this. This is what we all signed up for." At a reception at Blair House, conservative Republican supporters of the Baltics mixed with Democrats, another sign of the bipartisan support that was starting to emerge.

At the same time, the Senate hearings from the fall and the public debate on NATO were changing. Increasingly, we were no longer confronted solely or even primarily with questions on the pros and cons of enlargement. Instead, the debate was shifting from the question of NATO's future roster to rationale—i.e., what was an enlarged NATO for and what would its future mission be? The question was not a new one. The Administration had fought bitter fights over whether the Alliance should intervene in Bosnia and whether U.S. troops should be deployed as part of a peacekeeping mission on the ground. More generally, the Administration had argued that in a post–Cold War world the Alliance had to be prepared to intervene beyond its borders to defend its members against new and different threats.

This debate over NATO's future missions had been percolating in the strategic community. In early 1997 a group of RAND analysts published a book putting forth the thesis that the U.S. and Europe should embrace a new global partnership in which NATO should refocus on threats to common trans-Atlantic territory and interests that could come from beyond Europe in the form of weapons of mass destruction or terrorism. The argument was simple but controversial: as Europe became increasingly stable and the Russian threat continued to wane, the traditional U.S. role of defender of Europe was becoming less relevant. As opposed to viewing Europe as a place the U.S. had to defend, we needed to think of it as a partner with which we tackled new threats to our common interests *together*. This meant that NATO had to shift its focus away from Russia to the most likely military threats of the future—many of which were likely to be beyond Europe.[67] Prior to joining the State Department, I was among those arguing for NATO's "double enlargement" of new members and new missions.[68]

At the time, such views were dismissed by many in the U.S. government as beyond the pale in terms of what the U.S.-European relationship could handle or our European allies would ever embrace. But Albright was open to this kind of rethinking. It resonated with her belief that we had to modernize NATO for

a new world in which we would confront very different threats than during the Cold War. That view was also shared by her new Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and my new boss, Marc Grossman, who had arrived to take up the reigns of the State Department's European Bureau that summer. Grossman had spent much of his diplomatic career going back and forth between diplomatic assignments in Europe and the Middle East. As Ambassador to Turkey, he had seen how events in one region increasingly affect the other, and how the neat bureaucratic distinction between European and Middle Eastern or Persian Gulf security often broke down in the real world and how events in one region increasingly affected the other.

Within the State Department, Albright's new chief of Policy Planning, Greg Craig, was also pushing for a more radical rethink of NATO's core missions in conjunction with enlargement. Craig was one of the founders of the Committee to Expand NATO and had independently come to the same conclusion that NATO needed to be overhauled if it was to remain relevant.[69] Grossman encouraged me to pursue my ideas in private, as well as in collaboration with Dan Hamilton from Craig's staff. A strong advocate of enlargement, Grossman nonetheless realized that size was not the same as purpose. Madrid had clarified NATO's future roster, but not its future role. Grossman wanted NATO to remain a strong and effective military alliance. He had started his career as the special assistant to NATO Secretary General Lord Carrington and had remained a staunch Atlanticist. One day he confided to me that his nightmare was that we would wake up in ten years and find that NATO had begun to look like the EU or the OSCE as it competed with these institutions for something meaningful to do.

In the fall of 1997 and early 1998, Grossman and I exchanged a series of notes in which we debated those issues. Should the prime focus of U.S. policy be simply to continue the enlargement process eastward? Or was it more important to refocus the Alliance on addressing new threats of instability in the south, including potential threats from weapons of mass destruction coming from beyond Europe? Or should we try to do both in parallel? Grossman called it the "mega-question" in U.S. policy on NATO.[70] We concluded that we needed a NATO that both helped to build a Europe whole and free that also served as a stepping-stone for a broader partnership. The question was how both to enlarge the Alliance and to reorient it to face the missions of the future—and prevent it from becoming a politically weak and militarily impotent organization as it grew in numbers.

The best way to avoid this dilemma, Grossman believed, was to make sure NATO was focused on real military missions in a new post–Cold War environment. NATO, he emphasized, had to remain focused on what it did best—deterring and, if need be, fighting wars. If those threats came from new sources or beyond Europe, the Alliance had to reorient itself to meat them. The U.S., he

believed, should view NATO as "the institution of choice" when the U.S. and Europe would have to act together militarily. If the residual Russian threat continued to wane, NATO had to focus on the new threats to our territory and interests. This meant the Alliance had to rethink what Article 5 meant in a new era and prepare for missions that would take the Alliance beyond its own territory. But it had to do it in a step-by-step fashion that did not fracture the Alliance's consensus.

At Madrid the Alliance had decided to rewrite its strategic concept. In the fall of 1997 the Administration was starting to define its own goals for this exercise. At first there was little appetite in the U.S. government for an ambitious rewrite of the strategic concept as it promised to be divisive with the allies. But Albright firmly believed that NATO had to start to tackle such issues as Saddam Hussein and his attempt to acquire weapons of mass destruction. At the December NAC, she publicly called on NATO to "start a discussion" on the challenge posed by the growing spread of weapons of mass destruction to the Alliance and the need to think about new threats to Alliance security that could come from beyond Europe. Those remarks dominated the headlines of the December 1997 Foreign Ministers' meeting but it was clear that most of our allies were not yet ready for such a discussion.[71]

Following our return from the December Foreign Ministers meeting, Grossman raised the need to focus on the issue of NATO's future missions in a memo to Albright.[72] In parallel, he asked me to prepare a presentation for him to make at Albright's annual strategic retreat in early January.[73] In making our case, we were joined by Craig. Grossman and Craig made their pitch to Albright on January 9, 1998 at the Secretary's annual retreat with her senior advisors. Albright was supportive and asked us to develop our views further.

On January 15, Grossman sent her a note suggesting the U.S. consider using 1999 to define a new U.S.-European bargain for the 21st century premised on the U.S. and Europe working together in an expanded trans-Atlantic framework to solve problems both in *and* outside of Europe. This would require a new NATO with expanded missions, the reorientation of US-EU relations to global challenges, and a retooled OSCE to promote democracy throughout the Euro-Atlantic region. Grossman suggested using major summits that each of these institutions had scheduled for 1999 to push for this new U.S.-European bargain. He had a name for it—the trifecta. Albright wrote back on the note: "Good idea. Let's develop a 21st century better than the 20th—Europe's bloodiest."[74] It was a green light to make this a top policy priority—but after the ratification vote. We wanted to avoid provoking a debate on this sensitive issue prematurely.

In mid-December, National Security Advisor Sandy Berger sent President Clinton a memo laying out an endgame strategy for NATO enlargement ratification. It emphasized that the Administration was in good shape in the Senate, but pointed to the failure to obtain fast-track authority for a new free trade

round as an example of the need not to take things for granted. Even though a two-thirds majority in the Senate appeared increasingly likely, the memo warned that support for enlargement in the Senate was still tepid; the Administration would face battles over key amendments. It urged early Presidential involvement to strengthen the Administration's hand early in the endgame, generate political momentum, and create the solid victory that would strengthen Clinton's future prerogatives and those of his successor.[75]

President Clinton kicked off the campaign by highlighting his commitment to enlargement in the State of the Union address in late January. On February 11, he officially transmitted the protocols of accession from the executive branch to the Senate. He was joined by the three Foreign Ministers and the Senate leadership for a ceremony in the ornate Franklin Room of the State Department. The President delivered his remarks in front of a full-size photo replica of the Berlin Wall, which Rosner had borrowed from the Pentagon for the event. As he finished his remarks, the President pointed to the display and said: "Behind me is a picture of the wall that for so long represented the false and forced division of the European continent. NATO cannot maintain the old Iron Curtain as its permanent frontier. It must and can bring Europe together in security, not keep it apart in instability." As they left the ceremony, Vice President Gore reminded Senator Biden that it was the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Yalta conference that had started to cement the original division of Europe—and that the West was now overcoming.[76]

Events were now breaking our way. In late January the AFL-CIO came out publicly in favor of the Administration's policy, following meetings between both Albright and Clinton with the organization's president, John Sweeney.[77] A few days later, a group of sixty senior retired military commanders—including five former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—endorsed enlargement in an effort organized by Steve Hadley of the Committee to Expand NATO.[78] It all seemed almost too good to be true. On January 20, Polish Ambassador Jerzy Kozminski sat down to write a cable identifying what could still go wrong for Warsaw. He sketched out several scenarios in which NATO enlargement might still be derailed.

The first was a crisis with Russia in the Balkans or elsewhere that would lead Western leaders to rethink enlargement. The second was a crisis in one of the candidate countries that might disqualify it or lead to new doubts about their qualifications. A third was something happening in the U.S. that damaged the President's ability to get enlargement through the Senate. The next day, January 21, 1998, Rosner walked into my office with a copy of *The Washington Post* and pointed to a story alleging that President Clinton had had an affair with a young intern by the name of Monica Lewinsky and had tried to cover it up. We were probably the only people in the world thinking about the connections between Lewinsky and NATO enlargement. We were lucky that the President's im-

peachment hearings, as well as the war in Kosovo, did not unfold until one year later. Ratifying enlargement against that backdrop of either would have been much more difficult and perhaps impossible.

The opposition had not given up either. In late January, we received reports about a new anti-enlargement group, the Coalition Against NATO Expansion (CANE). It consisted of political groups from both ends of the political spectrum, from the Free Congress Foundation and Eagle Forum on the right to the Union of Concerned Scientists and Council for a Livable World on the left. CANE's Founding Declaration claimed that NATO enlargement amounted to a "Gulf of Tonkin" resolution that would entangle the U.S. in ethnic conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe and soak the U.S. taxpayer of billions of dollars. Claiming that enlargement was being driven by Washington elites out of touch with the American public, they called for exhaustive hearings and an extensive floor debate with no vote before mid-1998, alleging that plans for an earlier vote were "railroading the issue."[79] Similarly, we also picked up reports of growing internal debate and opposition to enlargement within conservative Republican circles and the board rooms of think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation who officially supported enlargement. Both ends of the political spectrum, it seemed, had their own Russia-firsters.

Later that spring CANE was joined by the Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities (BLSP) whose President, Ben Cohen, was a co-founder of the Ben and Jerry's ice cream empire. BLSP was committed to shifting U.S. government spending from defense to domestic needs. It would fund a series of ads that opposed enlargement and showed the mushroom-shaped clouds of nuclear explosions and warned that NATO expansion could alienate Russia and rekindle Cold War tensions. They were focused in states where Senators had yet to announce their positions on NATO enlargement. But the opposition was unable to make significant political inroads—either in the Senate or in the broader public. They were not well organized politically, too disparate in their ideological composition, and unable to put together a broad-based coalition. Above all, they could not enlist a critical mass of political leaders, neither on Capitol Hill, nor more generally from the political center—which the Administration had assiduously cultivated.

By this time S/NERO had become a kind of a political rapid reaction SWAT unit. Every time Rosner received a report that a Senator might be wavering, he immediately arranged for a phone call from the President or from Albright, Cohen, or Berger addressing his or her concerns. A team of senior officials was often dispatched to follow-up with a briefing for the Senator or staff. Rosner and I met regularly with the Ambassadors of the three invited countries over breakfast to compare notes and were on the phone several times a day with USCEN exchanging notes on how to counter the critics. Rosner joked it was like playing the game "whack-a-mole"—every time an opponent popped up, the Administration tried to bat down what it considered a bad idea.

But it was a two-front struggle. While waging the public battle, the Administration was also engaged in intense and at times contentious talks with the Republican staff from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over the language of the resolution of ratification. It was the vehicle through which Senators could attach reservations or amendments that could constrain future Administrations or, in the worst case, force the Administrations to abandon the treaty. By mid-February we had had several difficult rounds of contentious talks but were finding common language on many key issues: Russia, costs and burden-sharing, the open door, CFE, intelligence sharing with new members, POWs, and Jewish property restitution. On February 19, Helms' staff sent him an updated draft resolution of ratification. Helms sent it back with his comment: "Looks good to me!" Two days later, Rosner and I sent our assessment to Talbott concluding that we could work with the SFRC draft as well.[80]

5. THE ENDGAME

The SFRC was scheduled to hold the last in a series of seven hearings concluding the formal testimony record on NATO enlargement on February 24. The day before, February 23, we got the SFRC's latest draft of the resolution of ratification. We were narrowing the gap.[81] That same day the results of a new poll on U.S. public attitudes on enlargement showed that public support was high and unchanged from the fall of 1996. It belied the argument of the critics that once Americans became more familiar with the issue support would fall. The poll showed that 61 percent of Americans supported adding the first three members, and 50–43 percent supported adding additional states after the first three. As Rosner underscored in an e-mail, virtually all the pro-enlargement arguments tested had gained support whereas nearly all the anti-enlargement arguments had lost support.[82]

The next morning Albright made her final appearance before the SFRC. In addition to repeating the Administration's arguments in favor of enlargement, she took aim at some of the proposed amendments that enlargement opponents were starting to circulate. The signing of the U.S.-Baltic Charter two weeks earlier had opened another line of attack from enlargement critics who now claimed the Administration's open door strategy was reckless. In a *New York Times* editorial in early February, four well-known opponents of enlargement—Howard Baker, Sam Nunn, Brent Scowcroft, and Alton Frye—called for "a definite if not permanent pause in this process" after the first enlargement round.[83] It was quickly embraced by Senator Warner in the form of an amendment.[84]

The Administration believed that a "pause" on enlargement was unnecessary because the U.S. already had a de facto veto over further invitations, and it was dangerous because it could undercut democratic reforms in the region. Albright, who was already on record opposing the amendment before Warner

officially offered it, wanted to lay down a marker that we were going to fight hard against Warner in her final testimony.[85] She pointed out that NATO had already enlarged several times in its history and had become stronger, not weaker, each time. She insisted that an open door policy was "central to the logic" of a new Alliance that would help knit Europe together. "A mandated pause," Albright told the gathered Senators, "would be heard from Tallinn in the north to Sofia in the south as the sound of an open door slamming shut. It would be seen as a vote of no confidence in reform-minded governments from the Baltics to the Balkans."[86]

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee convened on March 3 to vote on the resolution of ratification. The vote was 16–2 in our favor. Rosner's "center-out" strategy had worked. We had the support of all but the most conservative and liberal Senators on the Committee—Republican John Ashcroft (R-MO) and Democrat Paul Wellstone (D-MN). But several Senators had made it clear that they were uncomfortable over where NATO was headed. In a memo to Albright that evening, Rosner and I wrote: "Today's meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on NATO enlargement was intellectually and politically fascinating, and holds many lessons. The 16–2 margin clearly bodes well for the final tally. But the substance of the Committee's deliberations suggest the debate has gone beyond the merits of enlargement to these first three states, and has moved to broader issues: NATO's future orientation and new missions; future rounds of enlargement and the European security strategy beyond NATO."

We warned Albright that a number of Senators still had concerns and were likely to try to use amendments to put their imprint on enlargement. "Today's meeting," the memo stated, "does nothing to diminish our confidence that we will obtain the needed two-thirds vote. But it does suggest that if the ultimate vote is going to stand as a broad affirmation of our vision for NATO and Europe, we have work to do."[87] The next morning, March 4, the USCEN issued an informal vote count that had 72 Senators voting yes, 13 opposing and 15 undecided. By this count, we had crossed the hurdle of 67 votes required for ratification. We could now focus on the endgame. In a subsequent memo we underscored: "How this ends—the final margin, the amendments that prevail, the post-mortems by the press—will all color our ability to pursue the next phase of policy toward NATO and Europe."[88]

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee vote was a major victory for the Administration. The critics were furious. The *New York Times* charged that, "Rarely has such an important matter seemed headed for approval with so little enthusiasm or attention."[89] Tom Friedman accused the SFRC of putting on a "shameful performance." In a column in *The New York Times*, he complained, "Senators Jesse Helms, Joe Biden & Co. rolled over like puppies having their bellies rubbed when Clinton officials explained their plans for NATO expan-

sion by dodging all the hard questions."[90] Other major newspapers, including *The Washington Post*, praised the SFRC vote.[91] And on March 13, *The Chicago Tribune* reversed its previous position opposing enlargement and now came out in our favor—a reversal that followed an intense effort by S/NERO to get at least one major editorial board opposed to enlargement to change its position.[92]

Sensing that momentum was rapidly building on our side, enlargement opponents urged a postponement of the final Senate vote. Seventeen Senators sent Lott and Daschle a letter asking that the vote be delayed until June 1. Former Senators Sam Nunn and Howard Baker also wrote the Senate Armed Services Committee criticizing the SFRC resolution and calling for additional hearings and a delay in the vote.[93] When Albright heard about their request, she rolled her eyes and reminded us that during the four years we had been debating enlargement the founding fathers of NATO had not only created the Alliance but also already enlarged it once. Pro-enlargement Senators countered with their own letter, and President Clinton weighed in with Lott to urge him to stick to the planned schedule.[94] Helms, in turn, defended his handling of enlargement in an op-ed.[95]

The Senate floor debate on enlargement started on March 18 but then, faced with the need to address a pending education bill, Lott postponed it until after the Senate's Easter recess. While disappointed, this was a pause we could live with. With the final floor fight now scheduled for late April, we had a chance to step back and review the order of battle. The fight was now over amendments. More than a dozen Senators had signaled their intention to offer amendments, often more than one. The amendments we worried about most were those proposed by Ashcroft, Harkin, Hutchison, Levin, Moynihan, Stevens, and Warner. They were proposing amendments ranging from restricting bilateral assistance to new members, a cap on U.S. contributions to NATO budgets, limits on new missions, creating a new conflict resolution process within the Alliance for Central Europe, to a suggestion that we create a way to eject allies from the Alliance if they did not meet our standards.[96]

While the Administration was determined to fight each of them, two were at the top of our list of "must wins." The first was Senator Warner's "pause" amendment. The second was an amendment Senator John Ashcroft had announced to limit any future out of area role for NATO. The Senator from Missouri was considering a run for the Presidency and positioning himself as the candidate of the right wing of the Republican Party. He had launched a mean-spirited attack mischaracterizing Albright's views on NATO's new missions. Albright had written him explaining in detail why his characterization of her views was wrong, but Ashcroft had ignored her explanation and instead accused the Administration of trying to distort the intent of the Washington Treaty.[97]

But Ashcroft had his history wrong—and the consequences of his amendment were potentially far-reaching and dangerous. The Washington Treaty was

clear that NATO's collective defense commitment was limited to the North Atlantic area as defined in the treaty in geographic terms. But it had left open the option of NATO members coming together voluntarily under other articles of the Treaty to defend their common interests outside of that area. Acheson had made these points quite clearly in March 1949 in public interviews in which he had explained each Article of the Washington Treaty. We had dug the Department's summary of those interviews out of the archives and circulated it as part of our effort to defeat the Ashcroft amendment, which we feared would prevent NATO from being able to address new threats from beyond Europe in the future.[98]

On April 21 Albright met with the Democratic Caucus to shore up their support. She told the gathered Senators that the enlargement vote was one of the most important they would cast. It was a chance to truly end the Cold War—"to put it in concrete"—and to overcome Europe's divide. "I hope you would view it as an honor to vote for enlargement—to make these three countries part of the best Alliance in the world," she told them. Even at this late stage, however, it was clear that a number of Senators still had doubts centering largely on enlargement's impact on Russia and arms control. Albright went out of her way to address them: "I want you to know how committed the President and I are to making our relations with Russia work." The Russians did not like enlargement but they had accepted that it was going to happen, Albright said. There were still problems in U.S.-Russian relations, but it was a mistake to blame them on enlargement. "That's like blaming everything on El Nino," she quipped. A number of Senators said they were going to support the President—but without enthusiasm.[99]

On April 24, 1998 Senators Roth, Lieberman, and McCain sent around a "Dear Colleague" letter urging their colleagues to vote in favor of enlargement. They noted that enlargement enjoyed wide bipartisan support and had been endorsed by three former Presidents, eight former secretaries of state, seven former secretaries of defense, five former national security advisors and sixty former senior flag officers in the U.S. military. In addition, enlargement had been endorsed by 13 state Senates and House of Representatives, the U.S. conference of Mayors, the National Governor's Association, the Council of State Governments, the AFL-CIO, numerous veterans groups, and 26 ethnic, religious and humanitarian organizations. "These endorsements," they concluded, "are a powerful reflection of the broad consensus affirming that NATO enlargement is in America's national interest and deserves the full support of the Senate."[100]

The final floor debate opened on a slightly nervous note on April 27, 1998. Only a few days earlier Senator Lott had publicly urged the Administration not to take anything for granted. "I told the White House for the third and last time, 'If you don't pay attention to this bill this thing could get away from us,'" the Mississippi Republican told reporters. "The odds are we're going to get over 70

votes, but there's not a lot of enthusiasm in here," he warned.[101] The pro-enlargement forces were led by Senator Biden who took over the role of floor manager and became in many ways the key figure in managing the Senate debate. The opposition was *de facto* led by Senator John Warner. By the evening of the first day some fifteen Senators had spoken—ten for, five against and one undecided.

Behind the scenes, the President, Albright, Cohen and Berger worked the phones to line up the votes to defeat the amendments the Administration was fighting. SACEUR General Wes Clark pitched in by calling a number of Republican Senators to explain why the Ashcroft amendment was damaging to NATO. The rest of us spent most of the day working with SFRC staff to answer the concerns of individual Senators and to field requests for last-minute phone calls to help get them on board. A Democratic whip count found that there was almost no support among Democrats for the Ashcroft amendment—but that there was support for the Warner "pause" amendment. Secretary of Defense Cohen met privately with Senator Stevens to convince him to withdraw his amendment.

The first amendments came to the Senate floor for votes on April 28. Senator Harkin's amendment proposing limits on bilateral assistance to the new members was defeated 76–24. Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) offered an amendment suggesting guidance for the rewrite of the strategic concept which made clear that NATO's future missions would not be limited to peacekeeping. It was a vehicle to deflect support away from Ashcroft by allowing Senators to underscore their support for NATO's core mission of collective defense and to note their reservations about peacekeeping while keeping open the option of more ambitious out-of–area war fighting missions. The Administration eagerly supported it. It passed overwhelmingly 90–9. We also enlisted the support of Zbigniew Brzezinski and senior Republican strategists to lobby against the Ashcroft amendment. In a memo written late on the evening of April 28, Rosner wrote: "Today was a good day."

The political battle was now being fought on the editorial pages of the major U.S. newspapers. *The New York Times*' ongoing opposition to enlargement was relentless.[102] Anticipating that the *Times* would issue a final blast against the Administration on the day of the vote, Albright submitted her own editorial making the case for enlargement. On April 29th, we woke up to see the two contrasting editorials on *The New York Times* editorial page. As expected, the *Times*' editorial attacked enlargement as a mistake of historic proportions. "It is delusional," they wrote, "to believe that NATO expansion is not at its core an act that Russia will regard as hostile."[103] In contrast, Albright entitled her editorial "Stop Worrying about Russia"—and urged her readers to stop viewing Central Europe through the prism of Russia but instead think of these countries as independent nations who wanted to be America's allies. Enlarging NATO, she argued, would

be a sign that we understood the world had changed and the Cold War was over.[104]

A group of us headed over to the Senate to help head off any last-minute surprise challenges before the final vote. A highlight came when Dan Fried, who had since moved on to become U.S. Ambassador in Warsaw, phoned to tell us about an amusing incident he had experienced earlier in the day. While visiting the Jasna Gora monastery in southern Poland, the home of the famous Black Madonna icon, Fried had been approached by one of the Fathers—complete in white robe and cell phone—who said: "We know you are having some problems in the Senate." He then pointed to the ceiling and said: "We're willing to provide a little help."

The day was filled with political skirmishing before the final vote. In the Senate, a series of last-minute maneuvers was underway. At one point enlargement opponents suggested that the vote be put off because Helms was scheduled to undergo surgery the next day. But Helms called their bluff by saying he was prepared to debate through the night if necessary. Lobbying by Biden along with Berger and Talbott helped convince Democratic Senators Leahy (D-VT) and Bingaman (D-NM) to withdraw amendments on CFE and the Baltic states. Biden and Helms urged their colleagues to fold as many other amendments as possible into a single manager's amendment to get to a final vote. But we still faced a number of potentially dangerous amendments, above all those being pushed by Ashcroft, Moynihan, Stevens, and Warner. When David Gompert, a senior NSC official responsible for European affairs in the Bush Administration, wrote an op-ed criticizing Ashcroft, we made sure it was faxed to every Republican Senator's office.[105]

Voting on amendments started at 3:30 P.M. There were now seven of them. Ashcroft and Warner had each asked that their amendments be considered last. It was an attempt to gather the protest votes of those Senators who had supported enlargement but still wanted to signal that their support of our policy was not *carte blanche*. But the momentum was now clearly on the Administration's side. Moynihan's amendment linking EU and NATO enlargement was defeated 83–17 in spite of an emotional warning from the New York Senator that the U.S. was re-creating the hair-trigger tensions that existed at the height of the Cold War.[106] Senator Hutchison's amendment on a new conflict dispute resolution was defeated 62–37. Warner continued to argue against enlargement as committing the U.S. to a "blank check" for an ill-defined military alliance. "We'd be creating through this expansion a 911 organization," he argued claiming that NATO was in danger of becoming "Dial a cop, dial a soldier." But his "pause" amendment also went down to defeat, 59–41.[107]

Throughout the day Ashcroft bargained with Lott over how much debate time should be set aside for his amendment. Lott wanted to wrap up the vote that evening and became increasingly irritated with Ashcroft's demand for sev-

eral hours of debate at prime time when other Senators were getting much less. Finally, fed up with Ashcroft's tactics, he walked over to ask Senator Biden to move to table Ashcroft's amendment. It was a parliamentary maneuver to kill it before it even reached the floor. Biden agreed—but only if Lott would second his motion to make it clear that this was not a partisan move. After hesitating for a minute, Lott concurred. As Ashcroft walked back into the Senate chamber, he saw his amendment, which the Administration feared would be the most dangerous and closely-voted amendment, go down to defeat 82–18 without ever having reached the Senate floor.

At 8:30 P.M. the final floor debate commenced. The vote started at 10:25 P.M. Senator Robert Byrd (D-WVA), invoking an old Senate tradition for votes on grave matters of state, insisted that the Senators remain at their desks and rise one at a time to have their votes registered. There was a hushed silence in the chamber as each Senator rose with his "yea" or "nay." The final vote was 80–19 with 45 Republicans and 35 Democrats in favor. Rosner was called into another room to take a congratulatory call from the President. Senators Lugar and Biden came over to congratulate us. Standing outside the visitor's galley in the corridors of the Senate, we saw the 84-year-old Jan Nowak walking toward us swinging his cane like a spry youngster with a big smile on his face. "I never thought," he said, "that I would live to see the day when Poland is not only free—but safe."

The next day Secretary Albright issued a statement on the vote. "The Senate has done the right thing at the right time. For this is a moment of relative peace in Europe, a time when freedom is ascendant. Now we can be that much more confident that peace and freedom will endure." Albright underscored the broader implications of the vote for U.S. foreign policy. "Today's vote sends a message to our old and new allies that America will continue to defend its interest in the peace and security of Europe. It will reassure all of Europe's new democracies that we are not going to treat them as second class citizens in the future just because they were subjugated in the past. It is a signal that America will defend its values, protect its interests, stand by its allies and keep its word."[108]