Conclusion

MAKING THE PIECES FIT

ANDREW A. MICHTA

The 1999 enlargement of NATO concluded the first post–Cold War phase of restructuring of the European security system. The move has proved that the United States is committed to remaining directly involved in the security realm on the European continent after the Cold War, and it has established NATO as the primary security organization in Europe for the foreseeable future. It has broken down the organizational barrier between the former communist and noncommunist states and, as such, has advanced the process of erasing the effects of the Cold War in Europe. Though problem areas remain, on balance the 1999 enlargement decision holds promise. In the geopolitical sense, NATO enlargement has contributed to stabilizing central Europe. It has also laid the foundation for a new security dynamic in the region. The next requisite step is to bring Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into the European Union.

In the long term, the 1999 NATO enlargement has the potential to move central Europe away from its historical pattern of instability and great-power competition and toward further integration into Western political and economic institutions. The post-1999 integration process will serve as an important test of whether the emerging security architecture will water down NATO's core defensive role or whether NATO can indeed build on the enlargement to preserve the alliance as the linchpin of the post–Cold War trans-Atlantic system. This will depend on how well Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic integrate themselves into NATO and on how successfully NATO resolves its internal debates about future missions.

The New Allies

The success of democratic transition in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic cannot be reduced to a single factor; however, the prospect of NATO membership was a further inducement to the establishment and consolidation of democracy in the region. In the case of Poland, the political criteria for NATO membership framed the boundaries of civil-military relations and established patterns that were emulated by subsequent governments. In the Hungarian and Czech cases, the prospect of NATO membership encouraged non-antagonistic relations with neighbors and contributed to the sense of external security the countries needed in order to proceed with democratic reforms. In early 1999, the three new entrants ranked among the most successful postcommunist democracies.

Although they joined NATO as a group, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are three very different countries. They share the experience of communist domination and the attendant loss of sovereignty during the Cold War. Likewise, they are united in their determination to take their place among Western democracies. They differ in terms of size, population, culture, and economic and military potential. Poland, with a population almost twice that of the other two combined and situated at the heart of central Europe, outranks Hungary and the Czech Republic in its potential significance to future NATO missions. Hungary's primary significance lies in its strategic position along the southern axis, facing unstable southeastern Europe and the Balkans, though this aspect of Hungary's contribution may be questioned in light of Romania and Slovenia's absence from the alliance. The Czech Republic is the most insulated of the three, exposed to hypothetical security threats only along its border with Slovakia.

All three new entrants still have some way to go to complete the restructuring of their militaries, to institute effective modernization programs, and to integrate their armies with those of the alliance in order to become meaningful contributors to NATO—a task that may not be finalized until 2005 or later. In order to transcend fully the legacy of decades of Soviet control, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic will also need to complete the generational turnover at key military positions in their

countries, strengthen the English language skills of their personnel, and develop a military ethos on a par with that of the armies of Western democracies. If the experience of East Germany can serve as a guidepost, a successful transformation of the postcommunist military culture requires considerable investment in training and education, as well as the strengthening of the military's prestige. Rebuilding the armies of the three new NATO allies will require time to bear fruit, but it should accelerate in step with the progressive consolidation of democracy in these countries.

Military reform proceeded at a different pace in each of the three entrants. In the case of Poland, in 1991 and 1992 the process was initially retarded by the continued presence of the Northern Group of Soviet forces, and then by struggles between the president and the parliament over a new constitutional framework. (The Russian forces left Poland in 1993; they departed Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1991.) In the case of Hungary, lingering structural problems within the defense ministry and the need for further constitutional reform required improvements in civilian control over the military, which, though adequate, needed to be consolidated to meet NATO standards. In the case of the Czech Republic, the reform program was complicated by the disintegration of the Czechoslovak federal state, even though the "velvet divorce" was accompanied by a relatively smooth breakup of the federal armed forces. Though NATO will provide the necessary common framework, the responsibility for further steps in the reform process in the years to come lies squarely with each individual new member.

These problem areas, however, should not diminish the overall record of achievement of the three. Through military reform, by sending their officers to study in the West, and through cooperation within the Partnership for Peace program in preparation for joining NATO, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have laid the institutional foundations for building NATO-compatible militaries. In the coming years we should expect to see their officer corps progressively acculturated to NATO's procedures and practices. Further consolidation of civilian control over the military should follow.

The most significant reforms in the area of personnel that will be crucial to building NATO-compatible militaries by the three new entrants

include creating a genuine Western-type NCO corps, further reducing the ratio of senior to junior officers (eliminating the "inverted pyramid" inherited from the Warsaw Pact era), gradually professionalizing the armed forces as budgetary limits permit, providing adequately for the individual soldiers, and continuing the shift away from the authoritarian pattern of command. The new allies have begun to tackle some of these tasks, but much remains to be done to complete the process.

Another important area in which to gauge the future value of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO lies in their willingness to spend sufficient resources to make a contribution to the alliance commensurate with their size and economic potential. So far only Poland has demonstrated a sustained commitment to invest more in military modernization, while Hungary and the Czech Republic have neglected defense investment, cutting defense spending and thereby raising justifiable concerns in Brussels and Washington that the Hungarians and Czechs might become NATO's "second-class citizens" by their own making, and that they want to "free ride." Although it is true that, considering the pressing needs of their continued economic transitions, it would be unreasonable to expect Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to launch radical modernization programs for their armed forces, NATO has every right to expect them to contribute equitably. The critical task for the three armed forces is to raise the effectiveness of their existing weapons through investment in "C3" (command, control, communications) equipment in order to take advantage of the surveillance and reconnaissance assets of the alliance. The Poles and the Czechs have begun to invest in such equipment, but Hungary has lagged behind. In the coming years, all three will need to spend more on C3 systems if they are to function effectively in multinational alliance operations. The next five years will show whether the new allies' rhetoric about commitment to NATO security will translate into real procurement and acquisition. Indeed, NATO's credibility with the US Congress will depend on it, and the record will have considerable impact on how US lawmakers view future proposals for NATO enlargement.

One way to assess the new allies' budgetary contribution is to set targets for their defense burden, expressed in terms of defense budgets as a

percentage of GDP. For the new entrants to become meaningful contributors, they will need to approach a defense burden close to the NATO mean—approximately 2.2 percent of GDP in 1998—and, more importantly, they will need to spend the funds more efficiently from the standpoint of NATO compatibility. By 1999 only Poland had showed that it was willing to commit the resources necessary to ensure the requisite degree of compatibility with NATO. Hungary and the Czech Republic were below these levels. Though spending close to the NATO mean for defense is not a magic bullet, Washington and Brussels would do well to treat it as a gauge of how determined the new entrants are not to become "free riders" in the alliance.

Continued military reform in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic requires their commitment to a sustained level of defense burden of at least 2 percent of GDP. They should focus on enhancing the readiness and training levels of their armed forces through increased expenditures on operations and maintenance, as well as through a long-term and carefully targeted procurement program. They should place high priority on the acquisition of equipment designed to integrate their armed forces into the alliance—especially "C4ISR" systems (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). Showcase programs, such as the often-discussed purchase of high-performance, multipurpose aircraft (which would effectively consume the entire defense budgets of the three entrants), should best be handled through leasing arrangements similar to one explored by Poland and the United States in late 1998.

In the coming years, the target size of the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech armed forces ought to be carefully reviewed once again. Although the three have already been substantially reduced in comparison with the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact era, further reductions in personnel might be warranted. The new allies need to consider realistically their military reform objectives against the limitations of their current defense outlays and NATO's budgetary allocations for enlargement. For example, although the ultimate goal of the three is to maximize the professionalization of their armed forces, they cannot expect to move away from draft-based armies any time soon if they remain committed to the current size

of their armed forces. Hence, the push to reduce the term of conscription to fewer than twelve months in the Czech Republic, or to six months in Hungary (while maintaining current force levels), raises serious doubts about the quality and combat readiness of these forces.

An alternative and more effective approach would trade quantity for quality by investing the available resources into a smaller military. This would increase professionalism while allowing Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to reduce further the term of the draft. The Polish case illustrates this dynamic. If Warsaw remains committed to the current size of its armed forces, it is unlikely that the 30,000 troops it plans to contribute to NATO missions will be of consistently high quality. However, if the idea of reducing the armed forces below the 100,000 level (mooted by senior Polish officers in 1998) were implemented, Poland could provide NATO with a smaller contingent of well trained and equipped personnel. Such a high-quality force of approximately 18,000 men would make Poland's contribution to NATO more meaningful. It would also give Poland a higher standing among NATO allies than will be achieved by the larger but lower-quality force it currently plans to contribute.

Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have the potential to make a significant military contribution to the alliance, but as yet their value to NATO's force-projection missions is marginal. In the short term, the core assets that the three bring to the alliance lie in the political rather than the military arena. The three countries must play an important role in achieving NATO's foreign policy objectives and keeping the future enlargement option open. In this respect, they can contribute to the US "peacetime engagement" effort in the context of the enlarged Partnership for Peace program.[1] By taking an active role in PFP initiatives with their neighboring partners, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic can make a difference. Initiatives such as Hungarian-Romanian military cooperation or the Polish-Lithuanian joint military unit will help engage the non-NATO states in a meaningful dialogue on security issues. In the coming years, the enhanced Partnership for Peace program may prove to be the most effective tool of American influence in postcommunist Europe.

If the idea of a democratic security community evolving around NATO and reaching out into the former communist states is to come to

fruition, the new allies must be seen as bridge builders across the region. Since they are among the most pro-American states in Europe, they can provide a conduit for extending Washington's influence farther east and southeast. As the contributors to this book have argued, Poland's ability to successfully manage its relations with Ukraine and Lithuania (and to some extent with Russia), Hungary's relations with Slovakia and especially with Romania and Ukraine (including active participation within the PFP) and the Czech Republic's relations with Slovakia will be a significant test of the efficacy of NATO's 1999 enlargement decision and of the new members' ability to be contributors to, not merely consumers of, security. In the political arena, the extent of the new allies' positive contribution to NATO will lie in their ability to bring closer the states left out of the first round of the enlargement process. If the process remains open, and if NATO's assertion that enlargement will continue in the future remains credible (even if the next round of enlargement is not expected anytime soon), then the policy will have contributed to the further systemic transformation of Europe's new democracies.

The New Alliance

NATO's evolution is a work in progress. Whereas during the Cold War NATO's mission focused on the defense of its territory, by 1999 the American position on the future mission of the alliance had shifted to emphasize the defense of shared interests. As part of the redefinition, NATO shifted its primary emphasis to the "non-Article 5 outer core missions."[2] In 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic entered a NATO alliance that continued to seek consensus on its post–Cold War purpose. In the 1990s NATO steered progressively in the direction of collective security, conflict prevention, and peacekeeping. The IFOR/SFOR operations in Bosnia and the 1998 threat to use NATO air power in Kosovo were symptomatic of this trend. However, allied consensus on how far NATO should go to strengthen the organization's proactive outlook remained in question. Between 1991 and 1999, the sixteen NATO members debated the scope of their new mission, the territory to which NATO should limit itself, and whether it should act independently of other international organizations. In 1999, misgivings about NATO's new

identity further complicated the task of successfully integrating the new central European allies, raising the question of whether the "new" NATO was the kind of alliance Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic had aspired to join.

At the base of the continued disagreement within NATO over its mission lay the divergence of national interests between the United States and its principal European allies in the absence of the singular, overwhelming external Soviet threat of the Cold War era. Increasingly, the American vision for NATO as a security-projecting organization based on shared interests but not limited exclusively to Europe (and dealing with issues such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction) came into conflict with the European vision, with its more limited regional focus. The protracted argument among the allies over the 1999 New Strategic Concept in preparation for the April 1999 summit underscored this issue.

The principal decisions that will determine NATO's role and its continued viability into the twenty-first century rest on the allies' ability to reach an agreement on the scope of NATO's new mission. That decision will have a direct effect on the place the new entrants will have in the alliance, as well as on their own procurement decisions and long-term defense policies. In 1998–99, the hotly debated question in Brussels and in allied capitals was the scope of NATO's security-projecting missions and the territory to which they should be confined. The American view was that NATO's future role should be extended to cover allied missions outside of Europe and focused on missions in areas of broadly defined "shared interests." For the Europeans, the emphasis was on Article 5 and Article 4 missions on the continent. The differences were further underlined by France's initial push to create a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) outside of NATO. The American proposal to create Combined Joint Task Forces to include NATO and possibly non-NATO forces and to be controlled by either NATO or the Western European Union was a compromise solution to decrease the growing tension between the European and American visions of the alliance, as well as to lower the cost of continued US commitment to European security. Though the French position was moderated by the German and British preference to build the ESDI by further strengthening the Western European Union through

the creation of a European corps, the disagreement over the nature of the emerging ESDI was indicative of stresses building up within the alliance.

Some in Washington expected that NATO would be further "globalized." The Clinton administration saw the mission of defusing the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction as an integral part of NATO's mandate into the twenty-first century. For this purpose, it proposed the establishment of a Center for Weapons of Mass Destruction as a clearinghouse for intelligence-sharing among the NATO allies, in order to arrive at more unified threat assessments. In addition, Washington pushed for greater collaboration to deter weapons of mass destruction and to defend allied populations and territory against them. The US position reflected the American call for extending NATO's mission to defend common allied interests in Europe and elsewhere.

The US vision triggered considerable concern among Europeans that the new mission, which would play up the vastly superior US military capability, might reduce Europe to a junior partner in the pursuit of American interests in places such as the Middle East. At the core of the disagreement were two divergent views held by the United States and its European allies of what the security-projecting missions should be and how far beyond allied borders such missions ought to be sanctioned. The Europeans continued to take a regional position, in keeping with their primary foreign policy interests, while the US emphasized a more global role for NATO as a tool for the security of the developed Western democracies.

Placing a clear limitation on the American vision of the new NATO, the Europeans and Canadians insisted that if NATO were to act out of area in cases that were not specifically self-defense, it could do so only under a mandate from the United Nations Security Council. Compromise between the American and European positions was likely to water down the mission statement to a level of generality that would allow for divergent interpretations in the future. The issue became further complicated by a move by the coalition government of the German Social-Democrat and Green parties (with considerable support from non-nuclear allies) to reopen the debate on the role of nuclear weapons in NATO. During the December 1998 meeting of NATO foreign ministers, the new German

foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, challenged NATO to reduce its dependence on nuclear deterrence, offering a "no first use" policy option.

The discussion among NATO governments over the alliance mission would soon be overtaken by the Kosovo crisis, which deepened in the winter of 1998-99. From the start, the allied response would serve as a potent reminder of how far NATO had already traveled from its original mission of collective defense against the Soviet threat. NATO's warnings to Serbia, especially the statement on January 28, 1999, that is was ready to use force to end human rights violations in Kosovo,[1] could have already been viewed as a de facto expansion of NATO's mandate to include the new mission of "extending freedom, human rights, civility, and the rule of law in Europe."[2] At the time, however, the Americans and the Europeans chose to interpret the initial NATO decision to threaten the use of force in Kosovo in different ways. While US envoy Richard Holbrooke called Kosovo a "precedent," the Germans and the French still insisted that it was "merely a special case."[3]

NATO's Fiftieth Anniversary Summit, held in late April of 1999 in Washington, D.C., had originally been planned as a gala celebration. However, it was overshadowed by the allied military operation in Kosovo, then already underway. The members adopted a revised Strategic Concept, with wording that included "common values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law." The document articulated NATO's broad commitment to the security of the "Euro-Atlantic area," stating that "the Alliance not only ensures the defense of its members but contributes to peace and stability in this region."[4] Among others, the new Strategic Concept endorsed the efforts to build the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within NATO, as a follow-up to the decisions taken in Brussels in 1994 and Berlin in 1996.

The Washington summit endorsed two Partnership for Peace documents intended to strengthen the program and the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) that would increase interoperability in NATO for power projection missions. The allies affirmed their commitment to the Mediterranean Dialogue initiative with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, and launched the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) initiative to include the creation of a WMD center at NATO

headquarters in Brussels. Finally, NATO adopted the Membership Action Plan that, while keeping the enlargement option open, deferred future decisions on enlargement until the year 2002.

Most important, however, was the statement on Kosovo, in which the allies reiterated their determination to step up the air campaign against Serbia.[5] At the Washington summit NATO was eager to show that, having staked its credibility in the Balkans, it would see the military operation to a successful conclusion, regardless of the misgivings that some among the members had about the events leading up to the crisis.

The 1999 Kosovo Campaign

The military action against Serbia between March and June 1999 will have a profound impact on the direction of NATO's evolution. The long-term legacy of the campaign is yet to be fully appreciated. Still, the seventy-eight days of NATO's aerial bombing halted the Miloševič regime's increasingly brutal efforts to keep the province under Belgrade's control. The operation succeeded without the need to commit NATO's ground troops, although it appears that a mounting threat of NATO ground action finally led to the Serb agreement to NATO's terms.

The bombing campaign tested allied unity and showed that, despite disagreements over tactics, NATO members were able to commit to a common military action and to see it through. The decision to use force in Kosovo reflected the American view–shared by some of its allies—that military power ought to be used to defend common democratic values. Though the campaign succeeded, the argument between those in the alliance who maintained that NATO should not have acted in Kosovo without a UN sanction, and those who felt NATO could do it without appealing to international institutions has yet to be resolved. Likewise, NATO continues to seek common ground for those members who were eager to codify the action as a way of the future for NATO and those who do not wish to do something like Kosovo again.

Overall, in the wake of the war in Kosovo the American perspective on NATO's future mission has gained momentum. For better or worse, NATO has assumed primary responsibility for the Balkans, notwithstanding Russia's limited participation in KFOR. Debates over the

efficacy of the strategy employed in Kosovo will continue; nevertheless, NATO has demonstrated that it can launch out-of-area operations without a UN mandate and sustain allied consensus in the process. Still, as NATO troops assigned to KFOR deployed in Kosovo, the key question for the alliance was whether the operation would be an exception or a precedent-setting event for the future.

The 1999 air campaign against Serbia has also reignited a debate over the need for Europe better to coordinate its foreign policy and to develop its own forces for similar future contingencies, so that it would not have to rely again on American power. However, during the early discussions after Kosovo it was uncertain whether the Europeans would in fact be willing to commit the resources necessary to make such forces a reality.

Not sufficiently noticed amidst the Kosovo campaign was the far-reaching new role taken on by NATO. In effect, NATO has guaranteed the borders of almost every state of Europe (excluding the former Soviet Union), since during the campaign NATO pledged to uphold the borders of non-member states in the Balkans, with the exception of Serbia. The Romanian and Bulgarian decision to close their airspace to Russian transport aircraft in the wake of the Brussels-Moscow confrontation over the nature of Russian participation in KFOR, made the two countries act as if they were associate members of NATO. Today Romania and Bulgaria, as well as other states in the region who supported NATO during the air campaign, expect their actions to be rewarded with eventual membership. These expectations may prove to be too high; how the alliance will deal with them, however, will be an extremely delicate issue in the years to come.

The Kosovo operation also meant that the initial test of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as NATO allies came much sooner and in a different form than many had expected. As of this writing, all three new members have or will contribute troops to KFOR, though their actions during the campaign had varied greatly and the three received widely divergent marks in their first test of allied solidarity. Poland passed the test with flying colors, Hungary received only a satisfactory grade, and the Czech Republic had problems passing at all and needed "extensive tutoring" from Brussels and Washington even to make it.

Poland proved to be among the most pro-US allies within NATO, with public opinion polls showing consistent support for the bombing campaign. Moreover, among all NATO countries, the Poles exhibited higher support levels for ground force action against the Serbs than most other NATO members. A small Polish contingent was deployed to Albania during the air campaign, and a Polish airborne infantry battalion has joined KFOR in the US sector after the air war.

Hungarian support for NATO's mission was adequate, though it was tinged with seemingly excessive timidity and concern for safety of its own territory. Hungary allowed US aircraft to use two of its airbases, and the experience demonstrated the viability and NATO compatibility of its air traffic control and air sovereignty systems. After the air campaign, as requested by Brussels, Hungary denied the Russian permission to fly through its air space during the stand-off over Russian participation in KFOR. Also, a Hungarian combat service support unit has been assigned to support KFOR's activities. But during the campaign Budapest argued strenuously against NATO using Hungary as a staging area for any ground combat operation against Serbia. And, in an action that raised some eyebrows among other NATO members, the Hungarian government used the issue of Kosovo to pursue its own regional agenda, arguing the case for greater rights to ethnic Hungarians in the Vojvodina region of Serbia and in Romania.

Czech behavior during the bombing campaign was probably the biggest disappointment to NATO, with the Czech Republic ranking just behind Greece in terms of its open dissatisfaction and disapproval of NATO's action. Czech President Václav Havel again emerged as a lonely pro-NATO voice amidst condemnations of the action by the majority of the Czech political elite and the public. This distancing at the political level was moderated somewhat by the actual deeds of the Czechs, with a Czech field hospital deploying to support the operation, and then a reconnaissance company joining KFOR in the British sector. The Czech troop contribution may grow further if the Czech government deploys a battalion-size force, authorized by the parliament. Still, Czech behavior during the Kosovo air campaign demonstrated the continued low appreciation of contemporary security issues in Europe, among both the elite

and the general public. This political problem could reappear in the future, even if the Czech military made an appropriate contribution at the military level, for it is tied to longstanding patterns in Czech history.

The Regional Dynamic

Today NATO finds itself more than ever before enmeshed in the system of overlapping Euro-Atlantic security organizations, which, in addition to the EU and the Western European Union, includes the Partnership for Peace program, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe. Though NATO and the European Union remain central to the emerging security architecture, the other organizations provide a network of interlocking institutions that blur the distinction between NATO members and nonmembers, including the successor states to the former Soviet Union. The 1999 enlargement of NATO changes the institutional dynamic outside the core of the Euro-Atlantic security system.

Historically, NATO has always been closely linked to Europe's integration by providing a security framework for the evolving economic and political union. The 1999 NATO enlargement can contribute to the widening of European integration by providing a security framework for the future economic integration of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into Europe. Considering the mixed signals that emanated from Bonn and Paris in early 1999 regarding an early EU enlargement decision, for Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague to become EU members may prove much more difficult than had been expected. Still, prospects for extending the EU into central Europe sometime in the early twenty-first century are arguably better than they would have been otherwise, because the 1999 NATO enlargement has brought Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into a security structure shared by the key members of the European Union. In the years to come, the three states' shared aspiration to join the EU will have a direct impact on the internal NATO and the internal Washington dynamic.

Although most of the discussion of NATO enlargement has focused on political and military institutions, one has to appreciate the potential effect of the 1999 enlargement in the context of central European history.

Throughout the twentieth century, the region was the site of some of the world's bitterest national antagonisms, as well as a prize in the imperial contest between Russia and Germany. From this historical perspective, NATO enlargement has the potential for beginning the process of a lasting reconciliation among the central Europeans. Hungary's aspirations to join NATO have already helped to defuse tensions in its relations with Romania, and in the Czech case they moderated Czech-Slovak relations.

The regional axis most affected by the post-1999 NATO framework is the Polish-German relationship. For the Poles and the Germans, the enlargement has offered a secure framework and an oversight mechanism for what can become the "second great European reconciliation"—a historic shift in Polish-German relations parallel to the Franco-German reconciliation after World War II. In light of the dramatic disparity in the economic and military potentials of Germany and Poland, it is doubtful that the bitter legacy of the Second World War would be effectively overcome outside a larger, multinational framework such as the network of relations present within NATO. Notwithstanding the short-term policy objectives and the often contradictory policy rationales that guided the NATO enlargement process, 1999 closed the chapter on Polish-German hostility.

The impact of the 1999 enlargement on NATO-Russia relations is more problematic. Though Russia is no longer a power on a par with the former Soviet Union, it remains the most unpredictable security variable in Europe. The NATO-Russia Founding Act, agreed upon during the March 1997 summit between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, was the price NATO paid for Moscow's grudging acquiescence in the enlargement decision. The creation of the Permanent Joint Council that brought Russia into the allied deliberative process was intended to defuse the danger that enlargement might trigger a renewed round of Russian hostility and pressure on the region. However, if the Russian presence in NATO paralyzes the allies' ability to reach consensus, it may prove to have been too high a price to pay. And even if the institutional mechanism works effectively, Russia is unlikely to reconcile itself easily to future NATO enlargement—a process Russian elites across the political spectrum see as a visible sign of the country's diminished power and influence. Even if

Russia ultimately accepts the idea of its former central European clients belonging to NATO, it is highly unlikely that it will welcome an "engagement policy" reaching directly into the former Soviet republics (especially the Baltics and Ukraine). If NATO's policy of remaining open to further enlargement is to remain credible, then the United States and its allies must accept its negative impact on NATO-Russia relations and weigh their collective interests accordingly.

If the worst predictions about renewed Russian hostility toward the West were to come true, Russia would still be in no position to confront NATO in Europe with a conventional military option in the foreseeable future. The decline in Russia's economic and military potential has reached such levels that its status as a developed country is in doubt, and trends continue to point further downward. In 1998, Russian infant mortality outpaced births, and the population fell by more than 600,000 to 146.6 million.[5] Chaos reigned in the Russian administration, while the Russian military all but decomposed. The threat that the Russian army might launch a large-scale military operation into central Europe will remain purely hypothetical for years to come, even if the current political turmoil in Moscow were to give rise yet again to assertive imperialism. In short, it is possible that Moscow will be unable to recover its former position as a global power, and although Russia will remain an important regional player in Europe, the era of Russian imperial drive may be over. The more urgent short-term security threat stems not from renewed Russian geopolitical assertiveness but from the danger of Russia's accelerated decomposition.

If NATO perseveres in its commitment to a special relationship with Russia, it remains to be seen whether the alliance can play a role in limiting the security threats that might be generated by continued post-communist turmoil in Russia, or whether further enlargement will in fact fall hostage to Russian objections. Still, engagement offers Moscow the option of participating in a larger context of European security. Free of direct threat from the east, the new members of NATO should be able eventually to initiate a process of reconciliation with Russia and improved relations with other neighboring states based on genuine partnership. It remains to be seen, however, whether post-Yeltsin Russia will

share this view of NATO and choose engagement as the preferred option. Depending on the level of Russia's concern over the Islamic states along its periphery and, especially, over China, antagonism toward the West need not be a given. And finally, one must allow for the possibility that enlargement may be impeded not only by Russia but also by allied concerns over diluting the alliance and, ultimately, duplicating the OSCE.

On the geostrategic level, NATO's enlargement was selected by the Clinton administration as the preferred formula for coming to terms with the consequences of the breakdown of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War. It is expected that by moving east, NATO will stabilize the periphery of unified Germany and contribute to the consolidation of democratic transition in the region. For the three new entrants, NATO membership will go a long way to dispel concerns about a future threat from a resurgent Russia or pressure from a unified and dominant Germany. Its impact on the alliance itself and on NATO's relations with Russia remains uncertain. Because NATO's enlargement and its evolution in the direction of collective security are taking place simultaneously, the success or failure of the integration of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic will go a long way toward testing the founding principles of the "new" NATO.

In conclusion, the 1999 NATO enlargement is most significant in the context of changes taking place within the alliance. There is no question that the Russian dimension is important and that Russia remains a player in European politics. It is certainly crucial for NATO to continue a good working relationship with the Russian government and the Russian military. Russia remains an important partner for NATO both in terms of the Partnership for Peace program and further joint peace operations. In the coming years, however, it will be more meaningful to focus on the political rather than the security dimension of the NATO-Russia relationship. In the near future, of greater importance to NATO will be the continued debate over relations with Ukraine and over whether the Baltic states' aspirations to join the alliance should override Moscow's objections. Likewise, the future of NATO enlargement along the southern axis will have to be addressed, especially in the aftermath of the war in Kosovo.

The queue for future NATO membership is already long. In addition to the Baltic states (of which Lithuania is a possible NATO entrant in the next decade), the front-runners include Slovenia and Slovakia. Slovenia is probably the most plausible candidate for early accession because of its relatively affluent society and its emerging small but effective armed forces. Following the ouster of Vladimír Mečiar from power, Slovakia's prospects for NATO membership improved considerably, because the country geographically links Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Romania's candidacy for membership has had strong support from the southern NATO members, but its continued economic problems constitute a serious obstacle to membership. Prospects for Bulgaria's membership are uncertain for similar reasons.

The above considerations notwithstanding, NATO's approach to future enlargement is bound to be affected by the outcome of the 1999 Kosovo operation. Although the Membership Action Plan (MAP), announced by NATO during the April 1999 Fiftieth Anniversary Summit in Washington, D.C., reaffirmed that "the door to NATO membership under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty remains open," it also cautioned that participation in the MAP "does not imply any timeframe . . . nor any guarantee of eventual membership."[6] With NATO now firmly committed to the Balkans and the allies looking at the substantial costs of postwar reconstruction, enthusiasm for another round of enlargement any time soon has been dampened. Likewise, if and when the next round of enlargement takes place it will probably focus on the states in the Balkans. NATO's troop deployments in the region point that way. In mid-1999, in addition to the unfolding KFOR deployment of 57,000 in Kosovo (where the allies would provide the majority of the troops), NATO already had 30,000 troops in Bosnia, 10,000 troops in Macedonia, and 7,500 troops in Albania.[7]

In addition to the southern axis of enlargement, one should also consider Europe's former "neutrals"—Sweden, Finland, and Austria. They all belong to the EU and have been increasingly drawn to NATO. In the coming years, depending on the direction their internal debates take, any or all of them may choose to apply for NATO membership. All three are affluent democracies with ample resources to become meaningful

contributors. They have already taken steps toward greater compatibility with NATO, and it is unlikely that if they applied to join they would meet much resistance.

In the coming years, if NATO's evolution continues in the direction of further enlargement as just outlined, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic will have the potential to become assets for the alliance in dealing with prospective new members. Much depends, however, on the way the 1999 entrants themselves handle enlargement. If they are successfully integrated, then enlargement will be given a boost; if they lag in integration, their failure will have negative repercussions throughout central and eastern Europe. In the final analysis, the success or failure of the 1999 enlargement will be judged by the military and political contributions made by Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO's mission, as well as by the direction the evolution of NATO as a whole will take. In this regard, the defining factor will be the long-term impact of the Kosovo campaign and NATO's commitment to the Balkans. Considering the potential cost to the allies of stabilizing southeastern Europe, the region may define the limits on NATO's future sphere of action, including enlargement, for several years. The next decade will show whether the new allies are going to be equal partners or second-class citizens, and whether the NATO they have joined will still meet their own national security objectives.

Notes

1. Elaine Sciolino and Ethan Bronner, "Crisis in the Balkans: The Road to War," *New York Times*, 18 April 1999.

2. Roger Cohen, "NATO Shatters Old Limits in the Name of Preventing Evil," *New York Times*, 18 October, 1998.

3. Steven Erlanger, "US to NATO: Widen Purpose to Fight Terror," *New York Times*, 7 December 1998.

4. *The Alliance Strategic Concept* (Brussels: Press Release NAC-S 99-65), 24 April 1999.

5. "Special Washington Summit Issue," (Brussels: NATO Update http://www.nato.int/docu/update/1999/u990421e.htm), 21-27 April, 1999.

6. *Membership Action Plan*, (Brussels: NATO Press Communique NAC-S 99-66, 24 April 1999).

7. William Drozdiak, "NATO Looks to the Balkans for Growth: Baltic States Fear They May Get Overlooked in Expansion," *Washington Post*, 7 July 1999.