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NATO EXPANSION: WHO'S NEXT?

BY

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ABSTRACT

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NATO was originally established in 1949 with 12 members. It later added Greece and Turkey in 1951 and then Germany and Spain to bring the total number of members to 16. These 16 members remained the basis of NATO until the end of the Cold War. With the fall of the Soviet Empire, expansion in NATO was essential to its continued relevance, and the first new members were admitted in 1999, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic.

With the continual change in Europe and throughout the world, regional security and perhaps even global security are dependent in many ways on the success of NATO. To ensure success and increased influence, NATO will continue to expand to include more of the former Eastern Block countries. This paper will look at six countries that are eligible for admission into NATO and determine which are best suited based on geopolitical issues, democratic reforms, economic capabilities as it relates to percent of GDP for military spending, overall military capabilities and what they can bring to the table, and finally the location of the country and how it can assist in the land, sea, or air lines of communications.

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NATO EXPANSION: WHO'S NEXT?

INTRODUCTION

In November of this year, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will gather in Prague to hold a summit to offer membership to aspiring nations. This will represent a continuation of the efforts to bring to reality a vision of a European continent that is "whole and free". NATO is an alliance that provides collective defense and to some extent collective security and stability across the continent, and the process of NATO enlargement serves to enhance security initiatives and political and economic reforms for aspiring candidates.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the NATO enlargement process, analyze the countries that are currently being considered for inclusion in NATO, and make a recommendation as to who should be should be accepted in the next round of enlargement.

WHY NATO?

In March of 1948, the Brussels Treaty was signed marking the first step towards a military alliance within Western Europe, with the premise that the comprising members would come to the military assistance of each other in the event of attack. Aligning with their European allies, the United States and members of the Brussels Pact finally came to an agreement that focused on the security of the North Atlantic nations and on 4 April 1949 a formal treaty establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was signed.¹ The original treaty was signed by twelve nations – Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United States. The Alliance provided a security umbrella from Soviet aggression in order for the nascent political and economic institutions to mature without interference. This assurance of collective defense is outlined in Article 5 of the treaty, which states that "the parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all".² This Article was part of the original containment strategy, whose primary objective was to allow the deficiencies of communism to cause the economic ruin of the Soviet Union and lead to the eventual victory by the democratic nations of Europe after 40 years of the Cold War and it remains the linchpin that holds this alliance together today.

With the end of the Cold War and the absence of a true legitimate threat, NATO has still been able to show its relevance as a means to help extend democracy and zones of stability, and create an environment favorable to international investment in Central and Eastern Europe.³ NATO's current strategic concept reflects an adaptation to post Cold War ideology

and the instability within the European region, but the underlying premise for NATO is still the same as set out in the preamble of the treaty, "to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic Area and to unite their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security".⁴ The last five decades have shown that European security is the basis for European unity, and NATO has served as the guarantor of this security and cornerstone for the unification of a European continent of democratic nations.

RATIONALE FOR ENLARGEMENT

The idea of enlargement within NATO is not new. Since the establishment of NATO in 1949, there have been four rounds of enlargement. The first round added Greece and Turkey in 1952, quickly followed by the addition of West Germany in 1955 as the threat of communist aggression spread across the entire European continent. In 1982, Spain was added in round three, completing an alliance of 16 nations that remained steadfast in their purpose of collective defense, which ultimately led to the fall of the Soviet Union and brought the Cold War to an end in 1989. After the Cold war, NATO needed to address the changing strategic environment or risk becoming irrelevant. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland – all former members of the now defunct Warsaw Pact – became the three newest members.

Fundamentally, there exists now a unique opportunity to build on the current improved security architecture in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area, with the overall goal of increased stability and security for all of the region, without recreating dividing lines. The salient reasons for enlargement are as follows:

- To strengthen the Alliance's effectiveness and cohesion, and preserve the Alliance's political and military capability to perform its core functions of common defense as well as undertake peacekeeping and other new missions.
- To extend to new members the benefits of common defense and increasing openness in defense planning and military budgets, thereby reducing the likelihood of instability that might be engendered by an exclusively national approach to defense policies.
- To encourage and support democratic reforms, including civilian and democratic control over the military.
- To reinforce the values toward integration and cooperation in Europe based on shared democratic values, thereby curbing the tendency of disintegration along ethnic or territorial lines.
- To strengthen and broaden trans-Atlantic partnerships.⁵

The United States has supported NATO enlargement since initial discussions began in 1994. Taken unilaterally, enlargement is a means to enhance the United States' three strategic goals in Europe, which are the "integration of the region, a cooperative transatlantic relationship with Europe on global issues, and fostering opportunities while minimizing proliferation risks..."⁶ However, looking at the process as a whole, the challenge of building a Europe that is fully integrated, democratic, prosperous, and at peace is the underlying principle behind enlargement and this is fully supported by the United States. This is evident in statements from the previous administration when President Clinton stated, "Expanding NATO will enhance our security. It is the right thing to do. We must not fail history's challenge at this moment to build a Europe that is peaceful, democratic, and undivided, allied with us to face new security threats of the new century."⁷ In a similar note, former Secretary of Defense William Cohen linked the enlargement process to the national interests of the United States when he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, stating that "NATO enlargement is critical to protecting and promoting our vital national security interests in Europe. If we fail to seize this historic opportunity to help integrate, consolidate, and stabilize Central and Eastern Europe, we would risk paying a much higher price later."⁸ This same philosophy remains today, as the Bush administration supports the establishment of regional security and freedom without artificial lines "eastward and southward, northward and westward."⁹ Each previous instance of enlargement has served to strengthen NATO's standing and legitimacy and integrated more nations into the community of secure market democracies.

In the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement, members of NATO agreed to "keep the doors open" for enlargement.¹⁰ This was reiterated on 13 June 2001 at a summit in Washington DC, showing the commitment of NATO to the enlargement process. The "open door" policy is based on Article 10 of the NATO Treaty that states that the parties to the treaty "may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty."¹¹ Essentially, this ensures that no country in Europe may be excluded from consideration because of history or geography, and when the leaders of the 19 NATO nations assemble this November, at least one new country will be invited to join the alliance.

In light of the events of September 11th, the case for enlargement seems stronger now than ever before. Enlargement will ultimately contribute to the process of integration that has helped stabilize Europe for the past five decades and promote the development of strong new allies to support the global war on terrorism.¹² The political and military solidarity of the NATO countries after the attack, especially with the invoking of Article 5 for the first time in the history

of NATO, demonstrates the resolve of the Alliance to fight for stability and security not just within the borders of the Alliance but in regions that could influence the integrity and cohesiveness of the Alliance. Finally, many reforms have developed in Central and Eastern Europe, largely due to the Membership Action Plan (MAP). Though supported by the European Union expansion process as well, these reforms could falter and instability increase if nations believe that NATO has closed its doors and turned its back on them.¹³

CRITERIA FOR EXPANSION

The 1995 NATO Enlargement Study developed a specific list of criteria that candidates are to meet prior to consideration of NATO membership:

- A functioning democratic political system (including free and fair elections and respect for individual liberty and the rule of law) and a market economy.
- Democratic-style civil-military relations.
- Treatment of minority populations in accordance with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) guidelines.
- Resolution of disputes with neighboring countries and a commitment to solving international disputes peacefully.
- A military contribution to the alliance and a willingness to take steps to achieve interoperability with other alliance members.¹⁴

Despite NATO's foundation of collective defense, it is interesting to note that only the last criteria focuses on a military capability, reflecting an emphasis on long-term security, and the need for aspiring nations to focus their efforts on political, economic and military reforms.¹⁵ This criteria only establishes the pre-conditions for consideration, but in no way guarantees that if a candidate meets all of the criteria it will be offered membership. What it does do, however, is narrow the field of eligible candidates. Then the ultimate decision becomes a political consensus building process based on strategic considerations or alliance bargaining, with the major NATO members (US, UK, GE, FR) having greater say than the others.

Additionally, though not stated as specific criteria, there exists four other basic conditions for the overall enlargement process that should be kept in mind: (1) additional members should be judged by the degree to which they enhance the Alliance's political-military potential; (2) only qualified candidates who truly desire and are ready for membership should be considered; (3) no qualified European state can be excluded by Moscow's unilateral "red line", a term referring to the supposed sphere of influence by Russia under the previous Soviet regime; (4) there are no automatic linkages or clusters of states that have to be admitted together, either in the

southeast or the northeast.¹⁶ One additional comment is that NATO enlargement is a process that occurs over time, as opposed to a one-time event.

Recognizing the possible complexities associated with accession into NATO, programs have been developed to assist aspiring countries in their preparations for possible membership. Two of the major programs include the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and Membership Action Plan (MAP). The PfP program contributes to their preparation both militarily and politically by familiarizing the countries with the Alliance's structures and procedures and deepens their understanding of the obligations and rights that membership will entail. Additionally, PfP is a prerequisite for MAP, which enhances the technical issues associated with military development and the corresponding purpose of enhancing stability. All candidates must participate in the MAP.

COMPARISON OF COUNTRIES FOR CONSIDERATION

The dynamics of change in today's world make it extremely difficult to know for certain which countries will be considered for acceptance in the next round of NATO enlargement. The focus of the summit will be on the candidates and not the question of enlargement itself. Those eligible for consideration include nine countries – Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. This section of the paper examines each country in terms of its ability to meet the specified NATO criteria, with special emphasis on potential for contributions to NATO military capabilities; geographical advantages to security and integration; and possible impacts on the stability of Europe politically and economically. For ease and consistency, the data represented in the following five tables is taken from NATO Enlargement: Forecasting the "Who" and "When" by Thomas Szayna.

GDP PER CAPITAL

The first comparison looks at the GDP per capita and populations of each potential member. For analysis, a candidate is compared with Turkey, which has the lowest GDP (6,800) of the NATO members. Table 1 below shows the populations and GDP of the candidates and Turkey, as well as the three newest members for comparison.

The GDP per capita is calculated by dividing the GDP by the population. Based on this data it can be seen that Slovenia clearly has the highest GDP per capita, almost double that of Turkey. Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia also have GDPs that are higher than Turkey's, but Latvia and Lithuania are lower than the three newest members who have the next three lowest GDPs among the NATO members. In terms of population, Slovenia and Estonia have very small populations (only Iceland and Luxembourg are smaller) while Romania is relatively

large, exceeded by only 7 of the 17 European members. The best combination is a high GDP per capita and small population, as this generally relates to a better standard of living and

STATE	TOTAL POPULATION (in 000's)	GDP (PPP in billions of US\$)	GDP Per Capita
ALBANIA	3,510	10.5	3,000
BULGARIA	7,708	48.0	6,200
ESTONIA	1,423	14.7	10,000
LATVIA	2,385	17.3	7,200
LITHUANIA	3,610	26.4	7,300
MACEDONIA	2,046	9.0	4,400
ROMANIA	22,364	132.5	5,900
SLOVAKIA	5,415	55.3	10,200
SLOVENIA	1,930	22.9	12,000
CZECH REP.	10,264	132.4	12,900
HUNGARY	10,106	113.9	11,200
POLAND	38,634	327.5	8,500
TURKEY	66,494	444.0	6,800

TABLE 1 GDP PER CAPITA COMPARISONS¹⁷

capital available for defense spending. Slovenia, Slovakia and Estonia appear to be the best candidates in this category.

PERCENT GDP FOR DEFENSE

The second comparison examines each country's expenditures towards defense as a percentage of the GDP. The current goal within NATO as well as the MAP is for each aspiring member to achieve 2 percent of GDP, with 1.5 percent set as the lowest acceptable for consideration. Table 2 below shows the percentage of GDP for defense spending for the nine candidates as well as the four lowest current members of NATO. It also contains a column depicting the size of each country's military with a corresponding column for an approximate amount of defense expenditures per troop. The rationale behind this comparison is if the defense

spending as a percentage of GDP is below the 1.5 percent level it represents a concern, since the country may not provide for its military sufficiently and as a result would depend on other NATO members for its security while at the same time contributing little to the collective defense of the alliance. Likewise, a low amount for defense expenditures per troop indicates a less sophisticated military, and hence it would create interoperability problems with the other NATO members. Current median within the NATO countries is about \$94K.¹⁸

Only Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania have a percentage of GDP at the desired 2 percent, with Albania, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia the only other countries to meet the minimum required level of 1.5 percent. In terms of the defense spending per troop, Slovenia is way ahead of the other candidates, as well as all three of the newest members and Spain. The

STATE	Defense Expenditures (in mil \$US) (FY)	Defense Expenditures as a % of GDP (FY)	Size of Active Force (2000)	Defense Expenditures per Troop (US \$)
ALBANIA	42(99)	1.5(99)	47,000	894
BULGARIA	344(00)	2.4(00)	79,760	4,313
ESTONIA	70 (99)	1.2 (99)	4,800	14,583
LATVIA	60 (99)	0.9 (99)	5,050	11,881
LITHUANIA	181 (99)	1.7 (99)	12,700	14,252
MACEDONIA	76.3 (00)	2.2 (00)	16,000	4,769
ROMANIA	720 (00)	2.2 (00)	207,000	3,478
SLOVAKIA	380 (00)	1.7 (00)	38,600	9,844
SLOVENIA	370 (00)	1.7(00)	9,000	41,111
BELGIUM	2500 (01)	1.2 (99)	39,250	63,694
CZECH REP	1175 (01)	2.2 (01)	57,700	20,797
HUNGARY	822 (00)	1.6 (00)	43,790	18,771
LUXEMBOURG	131 (99)	1.0 (99)	899	145,717
POLAND	3144 (00)	2.0 (00)	217,290	14,727
SPAIN	6000 (97)	1.1 (97)	166,050	36,134

TABLE 2 DEFENSE EXPENDITURES (% GDP AND PER TROOP)¹⁹

rest of the candidates fall below the lowest current member (Poland, \$14,727), with Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania significantly below. However, Estonia and Lithuania are only slightly behind Poland. (Note that the figures in the chart for percent of GDP for defense expenditures in Estonia are from data taken in 1999, but some articles have shown more recent figures to be at 1.8 percent or higher)²⁰.

An overall examination of the data shows that Lithuania and Slovenia meet the necessary minimum GDP and exceed or are very close to the lowest current NATO member in expenditures per troop. If the data that has been reflected in other articles for Estonia were correct (percent GDP at 1.8 percent), then it too would be very close.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The next comparison is how well the candidates are doing economically, especially since a major part of the success of NATO is its support for a free democratic market economy. One measure of this success is the GDP growth for each country, especially those that are relatively new to the free market concept. A sustained high GDP growth (3-4 percent) over time indicates a stable economy and one that should be able to maintain its required levels of defense spending.²¹ Table 3 shows the GDP growth for each candidate over a period of six years, using 1995 as a baseline data point, and then looking at the last three years and a projection for 2000-2004. This data is a combination of information provided in the CIA Fact Book profile of each

STATE	1995	1998	1999	2000 (est)	2000-2004 (proj)
ALBANIA	13.3	8.0	7.3	7.8	7.1
BULGARIA	2.9	3.5	2.4	5.8	4.6
ESTONIA	4.3	4.7	-1.1	6.4	4.9
LATVIA	-0.8	3.9	1.1	6.6	5.0
LITHUANIA	3.3	5.1	-3.9	3.3	5.0
MACEDONIA	-1.1	2.9	2.7	5.1	N/A
ROMANIA	7.1	-4.8	-2.3	1.6	4.0
SLOVAKIA	6.7	4.1	1.9	2.2	N/A
SLOVENIA	4.1	3.8	5.2	4.6	N/A

TABLE 3 GDP GROWTH, 1995-2000²²

country and from the World Bank based on the existing country profiles. Unfortunately, projections for some of the countries were not available.

With the exception of Romania, all of the candidates have essentially had good to high GDP growth rates throughout the period, and projections out to the year 2004 look extremely high. It should be noted that

several of the countries did have a decline in performance in 1999, but that can be attributed to the economic problems Russia experienced in 98-99. This is directly related to the trade relations between these countries, as the majority of their trade was with Russia during that period. Since then, a significant shift in trade has occurred and EU members are now major trading partners. Interesting to note, despite the economic challenges that the other candidates faced, Slovenia maintained a strong showing in 1999, and in terms of future potential, though not available in this data, it would appear Slovenia should continue to perform very well with a GDP growth in the 4-5 percent range. Bottom line, except for Romania all of the countries meet the necessary requirement for admittance into NATO based on their GDP growth.

POLITICAL INDICATORS

The next comparison is an examination of each country's ability to establish democratic political institutions and market economies based on a level of existing political and civil liberties rights programs. Table 4 shows the last ten years of performance based on data provided by Freedom House, a highly credible institution for gauging political and civil rights within countries

STATE	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
ALBANIA	4,4,P F	4,3,P F	2,4,P F	3,4,P F	3,4,P F	4,4,P F	4,4,P F	4,5,P F	4,5,P F	4,5,P F
BULGARIA	2,3,P F	2,3,P F	2,2,F	2,2,F	2,2,F	2,3,P F	2,3,P F	2,3,P F	2,3,P F	2,3,P F
ESTONIA	2,3,F	3,3,P F	3,2,F	3,2,F	2,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
LATVIA	2,3,F	3,3,P F	3,3,P F	3,2,F	2,2,F	2,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
LITHUANIA	2,3,F	2,3,F	1,3,F	1,3,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
MACEDONIA	N/A	3,4,P F	3,3,P F	4,3,P F	4,3,P F	4,3,P F	4,3,P F	3,3,P F	3,3,P F	3,3,P F
ROMANIA	5,5,P F	4,4,P F	4,4,P F	4,3,P F	4,3,P F	2,3,F	2,2,F	2,2,F	2,2,F	2,2,F
SLOVAKIA	N/A	N/A	3,4,P F	2,3,F	2,3,F	2,4,P F	2,4,P F	2,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
SLOVENIA	2,3,F	2,2,F	1,2,F							
GREECE	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,3,F							
TURKEY	2,4,P F	2,4,P F	4,4,P F	5,5,P F	5,5,P F	4,5,P F	4,5,P F	4,5,P F	4,5,P F	4,5,P F

TABLE 4 FREEDOM HOUSE RATINGS²³

around the world. The two numbers represent the extent to which a country meets the Freedom House guide for approval, with the first number representing political and the second civil rights. One is the best score, with seven the worst. The letter(s) are a combined assessment of "freedom" in the country, defined as following: F (free), PF (partly free), and NF (not free).

All of the NATO countries, with the exception of Greece and Turkey, have a Freedom House score of (1,2,F). Greece still has some questions regarding civil liberties and Turkey is only shown as partly free due to low scores in both categories. For clarification on the level of freedom, if the two scores, when added together average between 1 and 2.5, the country is considered free. Likewise, if the score is between 2.5 and 5.5, it receives a partly free score, and anything lower than 5.5 is considered not free. Using the score of (1,2,F) as the benchmark for acceptance into NATO, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia already meet these criteria. Romania is on the threshold with its (2,2,F), but Bulgaria (2,3,PF), Macedonia (3,3,PF), and Albania (4,5,PF) still need improvement. Obviously, achieving and maintaining a score of (1,2,F) is not critical for admittance (as evidenced by Turkey and Greece), but achieving such a rating does show the presence of political reforms and democratic governance.

Another means to evaluate a candidate's level of preparedness politically is to examine the possibility of acceptance into the European Union (EU), since the two enlargement programs complement each other. The criteria for membership into the EU are very similar to that of NATO, and the majority of the European countries currently in NATO are in the EU. The assessment is based on the Copenhagen criteria, which looks at the democratic governance within a country. It evaluates the "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for one's protection of minorities."²⁴

Based on EU criteria for ratings, Table 5 reflects that the highest assessment has been given to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia. Each of these countries fulfills the Copenhagen criteria and has addressed all or most of the short-term priorities for accession. Bulgaria and Slovakia fall into the next category, for though they continue to meet the Copenhagen criteria they still need to work on short-term priorities. Romania still exhibits problems that require monitoring by the EU and Albania and Macedonia are clearly not ready for admission into the EU.²⁵

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

The geographical location of each country is a significant factor regarding NATO membership since it affects NATO's power projection potential. Obviously, ongoing operations

STATE	EU POLITICAL ASSESSMENT (2000)
ALBANIA	Not on membership track; EU assessing in establishing "democracy and a rule of law".
BULGARIA	Continues to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria; further actions required regarding short term priorities for accession; problems: weak judicial system, very serious corruption, protection of minorities.
ESTONIA	Continues to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria; addressed most short term priorities for accession, working on medium term priorities; problems: administrative and judicial reform, integration of minorities and non-citizens.
LATVIA	Continues to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria; advanced in addressing short term priorities for accession, working on medium term priorities; problems: administrative and judicial reform, corruption, integration of non-citizens.
LITHUANIA	Continues to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria; significant progress regarding short term priorities for accession, working on medium term priorities; problems: administrative and judicial reform, corruption.
MACEDONIA	Not on membership track; EU assessing in supporting progress "toward democracy".
ROMANIA	Continues to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria; EU still monitoring the situation closely; further actions required on short term priorities; problems: discrimination against minorities, administrative and judicial reform, high level of corruption.
SLOVAKIA	Continues to meet the Copenhagen criteria; additional action needed on short term priorities for accession; problems: administrative and judicial reform, corruption, integration of minorities.
SLOVENIA	Continues to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria; progress regarding short term priorities for accession, working on medium term priorities; problems: administrative and judicial reform, slow pace of denationalization.

TABLE 5 EU ASSESSMENT OF MEMBERSHIP READINESS²⁶

in the Balkans have shown the need for NATO and non-NATO forces to have access to the region rapidly and efficiently, and the addition of some countries from this region could greatly assist in this process. Additionally, since most of the land borders with non-NATO countries is to the east, making that the only logical possible conventional military threat, the collective defense mission can be enhanced by the location of some of these candidates. Likewise, the ease of movement into Eastern Europe or Southwest Asia is just as important since the potential future operations by NATO members could be outside NATO borders.

Albania

Located along the Adriatic Sea, Albania provides key seaports and ground and air bridges for ongoing NATO operations in the Balkans. Bordering many of the war torn countries from former Yugoslavia, Albania has been instrumental in the success of operations throughout the region. Sharing a border with Greece, Albania would provide a contiguous land region from the Mediterranean Sea all the way up to the Balkans. This would be a major benefit to NATO for operations in the region.

Additionally, with its extensive coastline on the Adriatic, Albania provides several critical ports for resupply operations as well as needed bases for current or future military operations in Southeastern Europe. In the event all three candidates from this region (Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia) are admitted, a significant addition to the contiguous borders is realized, providing a needed land bridge between the Black Sea and Adriatic Sea, and the removal of a potential salient between the majority of the NATO countries and Turkey and Greece is eliminated.

Bulgaria

Sharing a common border with two current members (Turkey and Greece), Bulgaria is strategically located along the Black Sea in Southeastern Europe. Its addition to NATO would strengthen the collective defense in the region and increase the contiguous land and air bridge from Turkey and Greece into the Balkans region. Bulgaria has been a significant partner for NATO throughout the Kosovo crisis, providing bases and access routes into the region. Additionally, if both Bulgaria and Romania are offered membership now or in the future, the contiguous land and air bridge for NATO would stretch from the edge of Asia along the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea all the way to the North Sea.

Slovakia

Located essentially in the middle of the three countries admitted last time, Slovakia provides a significant ground and air bridge for any possible NATO operations into Eastern Europe. It would naturally close the ground and air lines of communication and operations between the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary and eliminate an existing salient in the NATO border, thus reducing the required number of troops to defend the region.

Slovenia

Bordered by Italy and Hungary, the addition of Slovenia would provide a critical air and ground bridge between the two current NATO members. This is significant with the current operations in the Balkans and the potential for out of sector operations to be in this region. Another advantage of Slovenia is its location along the Gulf of Trieste, which would provide access to the region from the Mediterranean. Obviously, Italy provides some key ports, but having additional options for possible seaports of debarkation are always an operational advantage. However, the addition of Slovenia would create an added border with Croatia (which already borders Hungary), which could ultimately increase the risk to stability within the Alliance but that, is not likely at the present time.

Romania

A very large country, Romania provides a significant ground and air bridge between the Black Sea and Hungary. This is very significant in terms of the ability to transit or receive materiel, equipment, or personnel by ship to portions of southwest Asia as well as Turkey and Greece. Additionally, it has been a critical node for both ground and air operations for NATO to the Balkans region. In terms of a possible increase in non-NATO borders, the addition of Romania would add more than 2,000 km. Not a showstopper in itself, this could create a problem for NATO until either Bulgaria is admitted to the alliance to provide a contiguous border with Greece and Turkey, and/or instability in the Balkans region is resolved.

Macedonia

Located in the heart of the Balkans, Macedonia has played a significant role in NATO efforts over the last six to seven years. On numerous occasions, Macedonia provided access to Kosovo for military operations and continues to provide assistance to forces involved in KFOR. However, despite being bordered by Greece in the south, Macedonia is a land locked country and its addition will not allow Greece and Turkey to be connected to the rest of NATO and it will not provide any key ports that are currently needed for operations in the Balkans. Along the same lines, it will increase the border of NATO countries to non-NATO countries by 500km.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Bordered by the Baltic Sea in the north, the Baltic States provide critical access to the Baltic Sea. Additionally, Lithuania borders Poland, so ground and air lines of communication and operation could be established within NATO from Central or Western Europe all the way to the far edges of the Baltic Sea, greatly reducing the distance to Finland. With both Finland and Sweden currently remaining as neutral countries, the only non-NATO countries that could pose a threat in this region are Russia (which includes the Kaliningrad) and Belarus. However, the possibility exists that all three countries would not gain acceptance simultaneously, so in terms of adding to the existing contiguous NATO borders, only Lithuania would provide this opportunity since the others are north of Lithuania.

The addition of any of these countries is a risk to increase the perceived threat to Russia as they are seen as a major part of the "buffer zone" between Russia and NATO. But in accordance with the "open door policy" and no recognition of a preconceived "red line", these countries must be considered for membership. Moreover, their acceptance into NATO would more than likely end the continual threats and pressures from Russia with their neighbors. In terms of adding to the existing border with non-NATO countries, the acceptance of any of these countries will increase the border by at least 600 km, with Lithuania adding as much as 1100

km. Bottom line, the addition of these three Baltic States would significantly increase the collective security of Northeast Europe while also eliminating a potential threat of a reemerging Russia.

Slovakia and Slovenia would provide the best opportunities for NATO geographically. Each would enhance the contiguous borders of NATO, while at the same time reducing salients in the defense and providing increased air and ground lines of communication to the eastern and southern parts of Europe. Likewise, the increase to the existing non-NATO borders would be minimal if either of these two were offered acceptance. Romania would seem to be the next best candidate in this category since it provides a link between Hungary and the Black Sea, and as such would also increase the contiguous borders of NATO. However, the increase to non-NATO borders is significant and would result in a possible increase in threats to the Alliance, though Moldova and Ukraine are not really seen as a threat.

A similar analysis could be used for Lithuania, Bulgaria, Albania and Macedonia, but only Lithuania adds to the contiguous borders of NATO in the northeast while the rest, if taken separately, merely bring Greece and/or Turkey closer to the other NATO members. Macedonia is possibly the best of the others just mentioned as it does border Greece, but with the rest of the country bordered by unstable (Yugoslavia) and weak democratic and economic countries (Albania and Bulgaria), its addition would also increase the possible threats to NATO. Finally, because of their location along the Baltic Sea, the additions of Estonia and Latvia with Lithuania would add a significant amount of access to the Black Sea, increase the ground and air lines of communication from Poland almost to Finland, and possibly have an even less impact on the tensions with Russia since it would end the dispute over the future of these countries.²⁷

MISCELLANEOUS FACTORS

The possibility of political ramifications exists concerning the acceptance of the Baltic States into NATO. These states are generally considered within the "red line", a unilateral perception by Russia that delineates an area Russia feels is still within its domain. However, this concept has basically been eliminated in recent months and members within the Alliance feel that if the open door policy is truly going to be honored then one or all of these states should be strongly considered. Additionally, in January 1998 the United States signed a formal Charter of Partnership with the Baltic States that essentially promised them that Washington would do everything possible to get the three countries ready to join NATO and would support their efforts to do so.²⁸ Finally, some authors have stated that NATO should consider the northeastern region and the southeastern region as coherent wholes and accept them as a

package. The rationale for this concept is the geographical and defensibility enhancements this would provide.²⁹

Independently, Estonia has been actively involved in European security both in terms of peace support operations in Kosovo and Bosnia and by voluntarily increasing its financial contributions to UN peacekeeping by renouncing its "poor country" discount (20 percent) and paying in full.³⁰ In support of Lithuania and the other Baltic states, in September 2001 Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus spoke at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and said the Baltic people share the same values as Americans and residents of Europe's members in NATO. He further said his country is pro-Western, open and tolerant with one of the fastest growing economies in Northern Europe.³¹

Slovenia has made special efforts since the last round to resolve maritime border disputes with Croatia, establish diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia, and increase accommodation of Italian, Hungarian and Slavic minorities within its borders. Additionally, Slovenia joined the PFP program as soon as it was announced and has participated in most peacekeeping operations in the region, to include Stabilization Forces (SFOR) in Bosnia, Kosovo Forces (KFOR) in Kosovo, and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).³²

In terms of Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania, their addition would send a strong message about NATO's commitment to the southeastern region and represent a much-deserved acknowledgement of their contributions to the Alliance during the Kosovo conflict. Future instability within Europe and out of sector operations will likely continue to exist in the Balkans and assistance from each of these countries will continue to be a major necessity.

The last intangible to mention here is the impact of the political process in the eventual selection of candidates. Slovenia and Romania were very strong candidates last round and many members felt they would be offered admittance. However, they were not ready and some of the more powerful nations were able to influence the others to hold off until perhaps this round. Politics will certainly be a factor this round as well, as each candidate has its sponsor, but I will limit my recommendations to the details discussed previously, with my own opinions as to who would be the best fit for the alliance. The general rationale for all three Baltic States is the possibility of destabilizing the region if they are taken one at a time. Italy favors the inclusion of Slovenia as it would enhance the geographical cohesion of the Alliance and the region. The formal Charter of Partnership signed between the US and the Baltic States has placed these three countries high on their list for acceptance, if not this round then for sure in a future round. Finally, many are pushing for the admittance of both Slovenia and Slovakia since that would essentially connect all of the current NATO members in Central Europe and possibly

apply additional pressure on Austria, a definite potential for NATO, to choose to apply for membership.³³

LIKELY CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERSHIP

One of the underlying issues to this entire enlargement process is just how many countries should be offered admittance in this next round. There have been several opinions offered, each with its own bit of legitimacy, but a common theme among most is that one of three things may happen: NATO will take a pause and wait until the next opportunity in perhaps 2007; there will be a limited enlargement, admitting some of the aspiring members; or there will be a "big bang" process and all of the candidates will be admitted together.³⁴

In the first option, the "pause", this would be in direct conflict with the open door policy, and the credibility of NATO would be damaged, and it could have a very devastating affect on the region³⁵. Those countries who have made significant changes and progress toward democracy and free markets could feel betrayed and the efforts all for naught, and as such possibly driving a wedge between the democratic states of NATO and the rest of the region. On the other hand, if none of the candidates is truly ready, it could afford all of them more time to complete their reforms and meet the requirements for admittance into NATO. In the interest of increasing stability and security within the region and promoting the efforts of other possible future candidates.

Likewise, the "big bang" does not seem logical or likely. Some say it would prevent intra-Alliance disputes, as there are supporters within the Alliance for the southern candidates and others for the northern candidates. Additionally, it would surely avoid protracted tension with Russia, if there were to be any, by admitting all of the Baltic State countries at once.³⁶ However, these potential positives are far outweighed by the negatives of such an option. First, some analysts discarded Albania and Bulgaria because they were considered long shots from the start based on their current political and economic status, as well as opinions of many during the last acceptance round. The NATO criteria were established for a specific reason, and if it appears they are being lowered to allow all the candidates admittance it could only weaken the validity of the process as well as perhaps the Alliance. Second, NATO is still grappling with the requirements of 19 members and a sudden jump to 26 (let's assume they don't allow Albania and Bulgaria for failing to meet the criteria) could cause serious interoperability issues, as well as financial or political strains within the Alliance.³⁷ Finally, if all of the candidates were suddenly admitted in one shot it might leave the impression on all other hopefuls that this was it

and they have missed their chance.³⁸ This last concept may be farfetched if the open door policy is fully adhered to, but perceptions are sometimes just as important as reality.

The second option is the concept of limited enlargement. This will likely be the option that the leaders of NATO (as well as the U.S. Congress) choose when they offer admittance to some of the candidates. To assist in the decision-making process, Table 6 below represents a rollup of the comparisons that were done previously, with a simplistic numerical process utilized to determine the best candidate(s). Under each category, 1-9 reflects where that particular country ranked in each comparison, with 1 being the best. In the event of a tie or lack of conclusive evidence to determine who was better, an average number is applied to each candidate. The last column is for the miscellaneous factors and for these pluses or minuses are used based on political or intangible reasons.

STATE	GDP per capita	% GDP for Defense	Defense Exp per Troop	GDP Growth	Political Reforms	EU Pol Assess	Geo Factors	Intangibles
ALBANIA	9	7	9	1	9	9	4	-
BULGARIA	6	1	7	3	7	5.5	4	
ESTONIA	3	8	2	6	3	2.5	8.5	-
LATVIA	5	9	4	4	4	2.5	8.5	-
LITHUANIA	4	5	3	5	2	2.5	6.5	+
MACEDONIA	8	2.5	6	7	8	8	6.5	-
ROMANIA	7	2.5	8	9	6	7	4	+
SLOVAKIA	2	5	5	8	5	5.5	1.5	+
SLOVENIA	1	5	1	2	1	2.5	1.5	++

TABLE 6 COUNTRY COMPARISONS

Looking at the data and using a simple process of adding up the numbers (least is best in this concept) the following totals in ranking order can be determined: Slovenia – 14; Lithuania – 28; Slovakia – 32; Estonia – 33; Bulgaria – 33.5; Latvia – 37; Romania – 43.5; Macedonia – 46; Albania – 48. In terms of the intangibles, the numerical order far outweighs any significant input from this category, except perhaps for Slovakia, but not enough to warrant any changes in the current order.

There is a distinct separation between Slovenia and the rest of the countries. With a score that is half as much as the nearest competitor, Slovenia should be a definite invitee at the summit in Prague in November. The next clear break is after Latvia, which puts Albania,

Macedonia, and Romania in the group that is not ready for this round. That leaves the other five candidates, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia and Latvia in the gray zone. If pure numbers were the only factor then Lithuania should be a strong candidate since it finished higher than Estonia and Slovakia in four of the seven categories, to include Percentage of GDP for Defense (beat Estonia and tied Slovakia) and GDP Growth, two of the most important comparisons.

Accepting the fact that Slovenia and Lithuania are admitted, a closer look at the other four is in order. Slovakia enhances the contiguous borders of NATO and offers increased ground and air bridges to other portions of Europe, hence the intangible plus rating. Additionally, Slovakia scored very well in the GDP per Capita and Percentage of GDP for Defense (better than Estonia in each case). Additionally, the acceptance of Slovakia would close the outer border of NATO between Poland and Hungary, eliminating a salient and reducing the requirement of defensible borders. Turning to the northeast, the difference between Estonia and Latvia is only four points. This difference is too small to prevent a country from membership, especially since it would not make sense to accept Lithuania and Estonia and omit Latvia, the country in the middle. This would only create greater problems for the Baltic region, especially if any issue requiring NATO support in Estonia should arise since it would require special compensations or agreements from Latvia. The only logical thing to do is admit all three of the Baltic States since they all have scored well, and as stated before it would end the possibility of future meddling by Russia in this region. Lastly, Bulgaria presents a strong case for its acceptance into NATO based on its high GDP growth rate and percentage of GDP allocated for defense expenditures. However, there still exists a significant need for political reform and increased spending for troops before it would truly be an asset to NATO.

NATO will enlarge in November of this year, and membership will likely be offered, as a minimum, to Slovenia, Slovakia and all three of the Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia based on the analysis. Additional countries may be asked to join based on political reasons, but any additions beyond these five could come with a significant cost either economically or politically to the Alliance and neighboring countries in Europe.

IMPLICATIONS OF ENLARGEMENT

Any change to an organization comes with a cost. Despite all the preparations aspiring countries make to gain admittance into the Alliance, once they are accepted significant political, economic, and military capital will be invested to bring the new members on line as quickly as possible to ensure the capabilities and cohesion of the alliance are maximized. Obviously, negotiations with Russia will be required to diminish any thoughts of NATO meddling on its

borders and an understanding of the fact that the enlargement process is actually enhancing the security of all of Europe, which ultimately should lead to genuine reconciliation. The key point here is that "NATO is, and always has been, a defensive alliance, and both before and after enlargement it poses no threat to Russia".³⁹ Forces have been reduced across NATO (the US alone has decreased its forward deployed forces by two-thirds) and those forces that used to defend along the old East-West line have been relocated to clearly demonstrate to Russia that NATO is not an offensive threat to them. "Ultimately, NATO enlargement will benefit Russia's security along with the rest of Europe by helping to enlarge the zone of democratic security on the continent".⁴⁰

Economically, NATO operates on a burden sharing concept. This simply means that each country is required to provide a portion of the costs for the operation and conduct of NATO operations. The amount is based on each country's GDP, tailored to current economic situations and the ability for a country to pay its share. Initially, the percentage for each of the new members will be very low to allow them time to become economically stable, which at times requires the other nations to cover the costs of the new members. This will be especially true in the area of infrastructure improvements as NATO assists the new members in developing their existing bases to meet NATO standards and enhance the power projection capabilities of the alliance. In the long run, however, each member is expected to strive for a percentage of GDP for defense expenditures of 2 percent, which will ensure the ability to provide its fair share as well as maintain a suitable force structure and modernization program.

Militarily, NATO stands firm on the requirement that the responsibilities and missions of new members will be the same as those of current members. Most importantly, this includes the ability for each member to defend its own country; more specifically a capability to deter aggression by applying an effective defense until the Alliance can provide assistance.⁴¹ Inherent in this requirement is the need for interoperability among all the NATO countries, as well as a common doctrine that each of the new countries will need to adapt. Fortunately, all of the candidates have been involved in PfP exercises on a regular basis, as well as peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, which provides them the opportunity to train with the NATO members and learn their doctrine as well as enhance the overall capabilities of the non-NATO countries. Regardless, there will be a cost, in terms of time, energy, and money to ensure the new members are fully prepared to add to the collective defense of the Alliance. In addition, each of the countries must be prepared to provide forces for missions outside their borders, such as peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations, which means the size and level of

modernization must be adequate enough to add to the alliance rather than be a drain on its ability to execute missions.⁴²

A decision to not enlarge NATO, be it this round or in any future round, could result in the eventual collapse of the Alliance, or even worse increased instability in Europe. Membership is based on a shared belief of collective defense and political and economic values. If the perception among candidates is that membership is no longer an option, then efforts being made for political and economic reforms could collapse and an increase in human rights violations and political unrest could become a reality. No one ever dreamed of a Euro-Atlantic community 100 years ago, but the enlargement of NATO is making this a reality. To cease these efforts could adversely impact on other critical organizations, such as the European Union, and ultimately lead to a continent filled with political and economic instability, and perhaps set the stage for another hegemonic power to emerge.

CONCLUSION

NATO enlargement is a positive necessity to ensure the total integration and stability of Europe. Enlargement serves to increase the size of a community based on democratic and free market governments, with shared values and interests, focusing primarily on the benefits of freedom, prosperity, and protection of rights of all citizens. A future Europe joined together for the betterment of society and conflict prevention can only serve to improve relations with their neighbors and possibly increase stability around the globe.

The summit in Prague in November 2002 will “continue the process of building a united Euro-Atlantic community by extending membership to those democratic European countries who have demonstrated their determination to defend the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law, their desire to promote stability, and their resolve to unite their efforts for collective defense.”⁴³ I recommend the United States support the acceptance of Slovakia, Slovenia, and the three Baltic States, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia into NATO this round. Additionally, support should continue for the remaining candidates to ensure their eventual invitation into NATO in a future round.

Enlargement is a means to help NATO achieve its core purpose, the collective security of Europe, and it must continue until all of Europe is part of this great organization. As President Bush stated in June 2001 in Warsaw, “All of Europe’s democracies, from the Baltics to the Black Sea and all that lie in between, should have the same chance for security and freedom – and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe – as Europe’s old democracies have.”⁴⁴

WORD COUNT = 8,013

ENDNOTES

¹ Office of Information and Press, NATO, NATO Handbook, 50th Anniversary Edition, (Brussels: Office of Information and Press, NATO, 1998), 26.

² *Ibid.*, 396.

³ "Study on NATO Enlargement," 27 January 2000; available from <<http://nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9502.html>>; Internet; NATO Basic Texts, accessed 21 January 2002.

⁴ NATO Handbook, 50th Anniversary Edition, 395.

⁵ "Study on NATO Enlargement", paras. 2 - 4.

⁶ William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy for a Global Age (Washington, D.C.: The White House Press, December 2000), 39.

⁷ President William J. Clinton. Remarks to the Corps of Cadets. (U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, 31 May 1997).

⁸ Secretary of Defense William Cohen. Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee. (Washington D.C., 23 April 1997).

⁹ "George W. Bush and Republicans About NATO", 15 June 2001; available from <<http://store.yahoo.net/expandnato/repnato.html>>; Internet; remarks by President Bush in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, p. 2; accessed 25 January 2002.

¹⁰ "Study on NATO Enlargement", para 4.

¹¹ NATO Handbook, 50th Anniversary Edition, 398.

¹² Philip H. Gordon and James B. Steinberg, "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward," November 2001; available from <<http://brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb90.html>>; Internet; accessed 23 January 2002.

¹³ James M. Goldgeier, "Keeping the Door Open," December 1998; available from <<http://cpss.org/nato50bk/23.html>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

¹⁴ "Study on NATO Enlargement", paras. 4-7.

¹⁵ Thomas S. Szayna, "NATO Enlargement: Forecasting the "Who" and "When", National Security Studies Quarterly, Volume VII, (Summer 2001), 34. Hereafter referred to as Szayna, *Forecasting*.

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion," October 1998; available from <<http://cpss.org/nato50bk/23.html>>; Internet; accessed 24 January 2002.

¹⁷ Szayna, *Forecasting*, pp 40-42. The numbers are slightly different than those shown in Szayna's article, as these numbers are more current but taken from the same source, "The

World Factbook 2001", January 2002; available from <http://odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002. (Note that PPP stands for purchasing power parity and represents a different value than the common exchange rate in terms of the US dollar.)

¹⁸ Szayna, *Forecasting*, p. 45.

¹⁹ Szayna, *Forecasting*, p. 46. The numbers differ slightly as my data is more current, but the analysis remains the same.

²⁰ CSIS EuroForum Newsletter, "Enlarging NATO: Views From Estonia and Austria", 18 June 2001; available from <http://csis.org/europe/euroforum/v3n5.html>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

²¹ Szayna, *Forecasting*, p. 49

²² Szayna, *Forecasting*, p. 50. The numbers differ slightly as my data is more current, but the analysis remains the same.

²³ Szayna, *Forecasting*; p. 51.

²⁴ Szayna, *Forecasting*, p. 52

²⁵ Szayna, *Forecasting*, pp.54-60.

²⁶ Szayna, *Forecasting*, pp. 54-55.

²⁷ Szayna, *Forecasting*, pp. 60-67. The underlying concepts of the geographical analysis process were taken from the Szayna article, but a large portion of the individual country analysis is mine.

²⁸ Sir Hugh Beach, "NATO at Fifty: Political Factors Bearing on Further Enlargement", 12 June 1999; available from <http://csis.org/europe/eurofocus/v7n4.html>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

²⁹ Peter W. Rodman, "The Future of NATO Enlargement", February 1999; available from <http://csis.org/europe/eurofocus/v7n4.html>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

³⁰ "Enlarging NATO: Views from Estonia and Austria", para 4.

³¹ Andrew F. Tully, "Lithuania: Leader Gives Reasons for Joining NATO", 11 September 2001; available from <http://referl.org/nca/features/2001/09/11092001141149.asp>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

³² CSIS Euro-Focus, "EU and NATO Enlargement for 2004", 19 June 2001; available from <http://csis.org/europe/eurofocus/v7n4.html>>; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

³³ "Enlarging NATO: Views From Estonia and Austria", para 9.

³⁴ "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward", paras 8-16. The concept of the three options available for acceptance was taken from this article. The analysis that follows was also supported in part by information provided in the article, but a large portion of the discussion is my own.

³⁵ "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward", para 9.

³⁶ "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward", para 14.

³⁷ "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward", para 15.

³⁸ "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward", para 15.

³⁹ Fact Sheet, "Top Ten Questions on NATO Enlargement", 19 February 1998; available from http://state.gov/www/regions/eur/fs_980219_natoganda.html; Internet; accessed 7 February 2002.

⁴⁰ Top Ten Questions on NATO Enlargement, para 7.

⁴¹ Szayna, Forecasting, p. 69.

⁴² Szayna, Forecasting, p. 70.

⁴³ Marc Grossman, Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. (Washington D.C.: 28 February 2002).

⁴⁴ "George W. Bush and Republicans About NATO", 15 June 2001; available from <http://store.yahoo.net/expandnato/repsnato.html>; Internet; remarks by President Bush in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, p. 2; accessed 25 January 2002.

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