

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in 1949, its primary mission was to present a common front should the Soviet Union attack any NATO member. In responding to the creation of NATO, the Soviet Union established the Warsaw Pact alliance, and thus the dividing lines of the Cold War were drawn.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Warsaw Pact are now prompting NATO to redefine its mission. Historically, NATO provided a way to keep the United States engaged in European affairs and to prevent Germany from reverting to nationalistic foreign and defense policies, which were ancillary but unstated goals of the alliance. Those goals have now assumed greater importance as the primary mission has waned. In addition, NATO has begun to assume responsibility for military operations outside of its own geographical boundaries. Those operations include peacekeeping and crisis management, such as the recent NATO air strikes in Bosnia and the subsequent peacekeeping mission.

Expanding the organization's membership is a key element of redefining NATO's mission. Several former Warsaw Pact adversaries--now reforming their political and economic systems--are actively seeking membership in NATO. Some proponents of expanding NATO argue that if the organization does not expand its membership and missions, it will lose its relevance in the post-Cold War world. Putting it bluntly, they argue that NATO must "expand or die."

In fact, the alliance has expanded on four previous occasions. The first was in 1952, when Greece and Turkey became members. In that case, the United States government was seeking to counter a perceived threat to those countries from the Soviet Union. The second instance was the addition of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955, and the third was the entry of Spain in 1982. When Germany reunited in 1990, the alliance added territory to defend but admitted no new members.

Further expanding the alliance has become the official policy of both the Administration and NATO. At the January 1994 NATO summit, the communique of the heads of state and government stated that they "expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East." President Clinton has declared that the question is not whether enlargement will happen, but rather when and how.

Disagreement exists in the alliance, however, on the pace of expansion. In January 1994, under the leadership of U.S. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, NATO adopted the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program. That program is designed to bring nations of the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact (called partners) into closer military cooperation with the alliance and in some cases to serve as a precursor to formal membership. The PFP program offers the militaries of former communist states ways to operate with NATO by adopting some compatible equipment and procedures and by participating in multilateral exercises (peacekeeping, humanitarian, and search and rescue operations). PFP also provides some of the countries with an avenue to demonstrate that they are ready to join the alliance politically and militarily.

Although PFP was originally designed to relieve the pressures for expansion, the Clinton Administration eventually began to advocate that enlargement move forward. Although all of NATO's other members agreed to enlarge the alliance, many were less enthusiastic about it and wanted the process to proceed more slowly. As a compromise, NATO nations agreed to conduct an analysis of why the alliance should be enlarged and how it should be done. That analysis, titled *Study on NATO Enlargement*, was released in September 1995.¹

According to a press report, foreign and defense ministers from the alliance recently decided to begin a protracted dialogue with countries interested in membership while activities under PFP are intensified.² The opinions of several diplomats at NATO coincided with this report; they predicted that no decision would be made on whom to admit or when to admit them until at least 1997.

Although NATO has not officially decided which nations will join and when, the limited public debate on NATO expansion to date has focused on admitting Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. (The Congressional Budget Office uses the term "Visegrad nations" as a shorthand to refer to those countries. The label comes from Visegrad, Hungary, where the four nations met in 1991 to pledge regional cooperation.) Those nations are geographically closest to NATO and, for the most part, have undertaken significant political and economic reform. (See Summary Figure 1 for a map of the region and Appendix B for a summary of the security situation of those nations.) In the Congress, several bills have been introduced--including the original version of the National Security Revitalization Act

-
1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Study on NATO Enlargement* (Brussels: NATO, September 1995).
 2. Rick Atkinson, "French Pledge Greater Role in NATO," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1995, p. A-28.

(implementing the national security provisions of the Contract with America)--that implicitly or explicitly give preference to the Visegrad nations for admission.

Other nations of Eastern Europe are often cited in the public debate as possible candidates for later admission--including Slovenia, Romania, Ukraine, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Some proponents of expanding NATO--albeit a minority--have even urged inviting Russia to join. In any case, all of the calls for expansion are part of a larger spectrum of views on the future of NATO.

