

# The Pros and Cons of NATO Expansion: Defining US Goals and Options

Report of the Thirty-Eighth  
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US Foreign Policy  
Conference

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Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.

## Conference Report

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Europe has changed since the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in 1949. With over twenty new nations, the continent now faces different challenges: from international terrorism and crime to drug trafficking and intrastate ethnic conflict. The collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have caused governments to change and democracies to form in Southern and Eastern Europe. In the wake of these changes, the stability and predictability of Europe is in question while the symbol of stability and security during the past fifty years, NATO, is being honored, extended, and enlarged.

As NATO turns fifty, expansion has been proposed to meet the new threats and challenges. The idea of expansion comes at a time when the organization has fulfilled its original missions. NATO was created to keep Germany in check, the United States in Europe, and Russia from expanding westward. Today, Germany is an integral part of the European community; Russia is yearning to be a part of democratic Europe; and, although the US role in Europe has changed from defender to pacifier, it is firmly grounded on the continent. NATO is no longer preparing for war against Russia, the Warsaw Pact is defunct, and the United States shows no sign of isolating itself from Europe.

With the end of the Cold War, NATO seems to some an anachronistic organization that need not be revived. To others it seems a valuable mechanism to promote democracy, peace, and security in all of Europe. President Clinton thought the latter and proposed opening NATO's doors to new nations. Since President Clinton's decision was announced, the US foreign policy community has engaged in a debate on the pros and cons of NATO expansion. At the Airlie Center in Warrenton, Virginia, a diverse group of experts on both sides of the issue met to examine the proposal to expand, determine the dangers and benefits of expanding, and propose recommendations in response to expansion.

## **The Proposal to Expand NATO**

The discussion of expansion centered on how the proposal has been devised; why Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have been selected for the first phase; and what expansion beyond these first three might entail. These three nations are named the Visegrad three after the small resort community in Visegrad, Hungary, where international summits on Central European cooperation have taken place.

## **Critics of US Policy**

Many participants questioned how the decision to expand was made. Was it a staff-generated proposal, or did it originate at the Oval Office, or did it come from the emerging non-NATO nations of Europe? Several participants claimed it was definitely a “top-down” policy. The president was the real motivating force behind expansion, pushing for adding new nations to NATO despite objections from his staff and some US allies. At the other end, nations such as the Czech Republic and Poland intensely lobbied for admission. It seems they made a persuasive case—having well-respected leaders, such as Václav Havel, personally lobby the president helped. Another participant mentioned that the president might have agreed to admit these nations for fear of losing votes in the 1996 presidential election. Most participants did not support that contention, however.

The president’s role in expansion raises several questions. Some asked whether the president would stake his second term on this policy. Does expansion hinge on presidential support and leadership? Will the president go the extra mile to ensure expansion works? Dare he renege on the offer? Several participants did not think the president would stand by his policy. They claimed that in the past this president has been too willing to compromise on issues he considered important to the nation and his presidency. If the president is so intent on making expansion work, why has he not publicly explained or justified the policy, they ask?

In pronouncements on the policy, the administration has not clearly enunciated the threats Europeans and Americans face today and

how an expanded NATO will confront those threats. When the administration has discussed NATO expansion, it has not offered a consistent explanation of the purpose behind it. In fact, several spokespersons have flip-flopped on the issue and given each audience—whether it is the Baltic States, Poland, or the US Senate—what they want to hear. Because of the contradictions and inconsistencies, several participants concluded that there has been little in-depth analysis by the administration on the goals and effects of expansion.

Several participants also suggested that White House staff and government agencies have not thoroughly reviewed and analyzed the plan to expand. The government in open and closed forums has not considered the short-term and long-term effects of expansion. According to one participant, the policy is ill-conceived and has been haphazardly developed. One participant likened the administration's policy process to putting "the cart before the horse."

### **Proponents of the US Policy**

A minority of participants defended the president and the policy. The president shows no signs of backing down from his proposal to expand. He understands the implications involved with reneging on the deal, and he believes this is an ideal way to make his mark in history. These participants also did not agree with the assertion that



*Rapporteur Corbin Stone.*

The rapporteur prepared this report following the conference. It contains his interpretation of the proceedings and is not merely a descriptive, chronological account. Participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

the messages from the administration have been unclear. The effects and goals of expansion are being debated and discussed, and the administration is responding to them. They cited examples of the administration's consideration of Russian concerns. For instance, the Founding Act, which was signed by Russia and NATO in Paris on May 27, 1997, includes Russia in NATO decisions and activities by creating a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council.



*Chair Dick Clark.*

An interagency dialogue is being conducted on the policy. It may not have been carried out as extensively as some participants want, but it is under way. Some of the inconsistencies in administration responses may be explained by the politically sensitive nature of expansion. Administration spokespersons are just being careful when publicly discussing the policy. In addition, some government officials have defended the policy in the press, and members of the foreign policy community have thoughtfully articulated and supported the reasons for expanding.

**The First Phase of Expansion**

The administration's proposal to admit Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic was accepted by the alliance in July 1997 in Madrid, Spain, at a NATO ministerial meeting. The Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary were chosen because they were furthest along in meeting the criteria proposed for membership, including civilian control over the military and NATO-compatible armed forces. A few conference participants thought these nations had met such criteria. Poland was considered the closest. The majority of participants, however, did not think that these nations had sufficiently met the criteria. These participants were critical of the decision-making process, complaining that the criteria were neither clear nor attainable. To them, NATO expansion is an "exclusive" policy in which the United States

uses the lack of objective criteria to selectively choose those members it wants, irrespective of their qualifications and readiness. To many participants, the politics of expansion far outweigh any objective process.

In the absence of clear and objective criteria, many current NATO members proposed their own candidates for membership in the first phase. France, in particular, lobbied hard for Slovenia and Romania. This led to “intra-alliance squabbles,” which some participants postulated would cause irreparable harm to the organization. A few participants expressed concern about the effect US insistence on admitting only the Visegrad three in the first phase would have on the alliance. These participants thought the US administration might have twisted too many arms at the expense of good alliance relations.

Other participants downplayed the US action and the alliance reaction. NATO has always had its squabbles. As long as France, Turkey, and Greece are members, there will continue to be differences and arguments, claimed one participant. Any time you get that many diverse entities together, there will be some conflict; that is to be expected, insisted another participant. The French may have been angered by the way the United States went about proposing its policy, but they are not going to leave the organization. A threat from France to expand the Western European Union (WEU) is hollow. NATO is what Eastern Europe wants, not the WEU.

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Many participants anticipated that intra-alliance differences would generate debate on expansion. Several participants expressed concern and surprise that since the Madrid declaration, expansion has not received much media attention. Without more extensive media coverage, participants opposing expansion saw the enlargement process continuing unabated. They worried about the momentum of the process and warned of a “slippery slope” should the first three gain entry without sufficient debate and analysis. Once in NATO, others would soon join the newly admitted nations.



Not all participants believe the media has avoided the subject. NATO expansion is just not getting the kind of coverage the opponents would desire. And the reason they may not be getting the result or coverage they want is because the arguments against expansion lack credibility. The idea that more coverage will translate into a delay of expansion was not supported. There is no “slippery slope,” they asserted, because the policy calls for expansion to whoever qualifies, and it is based on criteria that are free from politics.

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### **The Next Phase of Expansion**

Secretary of State Albright has stated that NATO is theoretically open to all. In fact, she has said that NATO can expand all the way to include Russia. There have been no public announcements to the contrary. Based on the Madrid declaration, however, it appears Russia, Ukraine, and others would have to wait some time before receiving an invitation to join NATO. On the other hand, the Madrid declaration does not prohibit them from joining at a later date. Specifically, the Madrid declaration urges the organization to review Slovenia and Romania in 1998 for membership in 1999. Both nations could be admitted as early as 1999. Overall, however, it is not clear from the Madrid meeting which nations will be prepared for membership beyond 1999.

The critics of expansion in the group were not convinced that there would be any entrants beyond the first three. For instance, several participants do not think Romania and Slovenia are prepared for membership. Although the Romanian public is the most enthusiastic about joining NATO, Romania has a very fragile democracy with deep-seated problems that may not be fixed by 1999. Slovenia also has problems since it does not really have a military. Other nations, which were considered for membership in the second phase but were not included, face similar problems. Slovakia, for example, is not up for review in 1998 because its military is too involved in domestic politics and lacks civilian control.



*Strategy for Peace features four simultaneous discussion groups and informal time for participants to mix.*



*The NATO group.*



PHOTOS BY KEITH PORIER

Other participants were more interested in how the newly admitted nations would impact the process of further expansion. One participant pointed out that there might be little interest to join NATO as the burden of new membership increases. The desire to “up the ante” may be too great for the newest members and this could discourage potential members from seeking admittance. Another participant mentioned that Poland might have serious problems with admitting Ukraine, as it would create greater tension between Russia, the alliance, and its new members.

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Some participants did not think there would be an end point to expansion. They claimed that Poland and other nations have made deals with the Baltic States to support their candidacies. In addition, with its credibility at stake, the United States cannot very well renege on its decision to expand. They fear that the consequences would be devastating to US interests in the region and elsewhere.

### **The Baltic States**

Although some grudgingly accepted that Romania and Slovenia may be admitted in 1998, all participants wondered who would be next. Many were most concerned about admitting the Baltic States. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia all expect to be admitted as full members of NATO in the third, if not second, stage of expansion. Some participants agreed that admitting the Baltic States would be a costly mistake. Inviting the Baltic States to be full members will cause all sorts of problems for US-Russia relations and the alliance itself. Some felt it would be an “outright disaster.” What is worse, some suggested, the United States may have promised the Baltic States membership.

Several participants did not think the Baltic States were promised membership. They also did not think that the Baltic States would be admitted. Nothing in the Madrid declaration indicates that the Baltic States will be next or that they were promised membership. Surely, US policymakers understand the implications of admitting the Baltic

States, claimed some participants. The negative effect this would have on US bilateral relations with Russia is too great to ignore.

Quoting several high-ranking US government and military officials, one participant stated the Baltic States would *never* be admitted. A participant took this last argument one step further by claiming that a deal was made with Russia not to expand beyond the Visegrad three. Another participant felt the United States had told both Russia and Baltic States little “white lies” regarding who would be the next to join NATO. As this participant explained, the United States is capable of some deception as it has made “bad faith representations” to Russia in the recent past.

### **Future Expansion Options: To the South and East**

Some concern was expressed about expansion to the south because it is an area of great instability. There is a lot of potential for the United States to be drawn into conflicts in Southern Europe should such nations become full members of NATO. As a result, a few participants thought NATO or the United States might make alternative arrangements with southern nations. For instance, one participant suggested that nations not admitted to the alliance would become “strategic partners” and gain partial membership in NATO without the full security guarantee. Several participants doubted such a proposal would work for prospective nations since they want to be nothing less than full members of NATO and would not agree to a diminished status without the security guarantee.

The United States would not endanger its relationship with Russia over further expansion to Russia’s borders, according to many in the group. Expansion to Ukraine would have a very negative effect in

Russia and on US-Russia relations. It was felt that such an expansion would be a tragedy and a foreign policy blunder of major proportions. To these participants, any expansion to the east of Poland would be disastrous for European security. It would pit Europe, with the United States at the helm, against Russia. These participants hoped expansion would not get this far.

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In contrast, the supporters of the policy in the group saw expansion continue eastward to Ukraine. They saw dangers in not expanding to the east. Placing an artificial limit on expansion, particularly to the east, would have dire consequences for European security. Where will the nations who have been denied admittance in NATO turn for aid? Will they also seek out alliances with nations such as China? The Bulgarians are particularly fearful of being shut out—the isolation of being left out of NATO is too great for them to contemplate.

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Expansion is also a foreign policy necessity. NATO will disappear and “go away” if it does not change. Currently, its mission and purpose are outdated and the strategic concept of the organization needs to be reassessed. Adding nations who have been denied the opportunity to be a part of Europe will help make NATO a more effective stabilizer. It is in the best interests of NATO, Europe, and the United States to keep expansion open-ended. To establish an end point is shortsighted; all must have the opportunity for the organization to survive and thrive.

### **Mission Impact of NATO Expansion**

Most participants think adding nations to NATO will impact the mission of the organization. Some thought for the better, others for the worse. A few participants saw the organization changing very little.

### **Ruining NATO?**

Some participants view expansion as ruining a successful organization. NATO has kept Russia out and the United States in Europe, and it should not tamper with that. Expanding NATO would not necessarily keep the United States in Europe, nor make the continent safer. In addition, the US burden of membership in NATO may increase if new member nations are not prepared. More troops may be needed and different kinds of troops and equipment may be required to protect Poland. This all costs money and needs the support of the US public and Congress, which may not go along with added costs for an organization that has already served its purpose.

The addition of more nations will also impact the decision-making process of NATO. Consensus will be much harder to achieve with more diverse nations, which may require a change in the way decisions are made. Additionally, a few participants claimed that the effectiveness of the organization could be diluted if NATO makes decisions by majority rather than unanimity. They emphasized that one of the most attractive and appealing aspects of the organization is the way decisions are reached through consensus.

### **Article 5**

NATO is a unique security organization in that it binds all members to collective self-defense. Although never tested, it is presumed an attack on one will be defended by all. This premise as embodied in Article 5 has always been difficult to clearly define. What Article 5 means to the United States means something else to others. Historically, it has meant the United States will come to the defense of European members who are attacked. But the United States has never had to formally make that guarantee because its force posture has defined the action it would take in response to an attack. If Germany were to be invaded, US troops were positioned as a “tripwire,” meaning they would be the first to be attacked, leaving the United States no choice but to respond with force.

The problem of Article 5 will surface when new members begin to ask about security guarantees. When the United States does not place its troops in Poland, it will be forced to clarify its policy regarding Article 5. To some participants, the United States is already interpreting Article 5. The United States will have to put more resources into conventional armaments and perhaps rapid deployment units if troops are not to be placed on the ground in the new nations. In addition, there is no sign in the US strategic and budget planning that the administration will make changes to meet those needs. Several participants concluded that the United States does not anticipate coming to the defense of Warsaw or any new entrant. What would replace Article 5 then? Would it need to be revised?

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Several participants lamented that these kinds of questions are not being asked. US policymakers have too much to lose by encouraging a public discussion of Article 5 and NATO security guarantees. It is not a debate that many participants wanted the media or the US Senate to cover. One participant stated that he could envision a US senator asking Secretary Albright whether the United States has agreed to fight for Budapest. Other politicians may want to know why the United States agreed to fight for Lisbon or Athens in the first place.

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*US policy-makers have too much to lose by encouraging a public discussion....*

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Article 5 is an issue that will eventually be covered. The United States will need to determine its meaning and how US policy reflects this interpretation. In this politically charged atmosphere, one participant wondered whether a two-tiered NATO with an “A” list of established members and a “B” list of new members would be created to differentiate the level of security guaranteed. Some participants reflected the alliance would either unofficially accept some sort of verbal security guarantee or it would be rewritten. A few thought any radical change would end the alliance and the strength and credibility of its security guarantee. Others thought it would strengthen NATO’s ability to promote peace and security in the region.

### **Managing Military Power**

With or without change in this policy, other participants felt an expanded NATO would better fulfill one of its original missions to “manage the minimization of military power.” NATO is one of the few organizations capable of keeping military power at a manageable level while enhancing balance and stability. NATO ensures Germany does not dominate Europe militarily. It holds each NATO military in check and each civilian government’s control over the military secure. One participant concluded that the more nations in NATO, the better; it will help manage military power on the continent as a whole. Integrating the militaries of Europe would reduce the threats posed by large, unstable militaries.

This theory had its detractors, however. They claimed that NATO does not effectively manage military power. They complained that NATO forces are not that integrated, citing the historical enmity between Turkey and Greece. Integration of more diverse militaries will be even more difficult, particularly without a common threat to keep nations focused.

Furthermore, it was noted that the integration may change, and the integration of more armies could lead to an increase in the bureaucracy. One participant estimated NATO headquarters could survive with about 2,500 less staff; but, with Russia now involved, headquarters staff will most certainly increase. According to one participant, NATO headquarters is already bloated at over 3,500 personnel. With three new entrants that number could very well double. In the end, NATO has enough trouble managing its own headquarters, let alone the militaries of an expanded NATO.

### **Germany in an Expanded NATO**

Participants also considered the role of Germany in an expanded NATO. Several expressed concern about the threat Germany poses, others chose to downplay the German threat.

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#### **Germany as a Threat**

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While US concern over Russia has been foremost in the minds of the foreign policy community, several participants warned about a resurgent Germany. A unified Germany presents many problems to a new, expanded NATO. After expansion the German role in military and economic affairs may increase with the addition of new members to the east who provide much of Germany's source of cheap labor. These new member nations may also be heavily reliant on German goods and services. According to a few participants, Germany has already successfully carved its own sphere of influence in Eastern Europe (former Yugoslavia, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Poland).



Militarily, integrating more armies into the NATO structure may effectively weaken the US position but strengthen the German one. To some participants the public, media, and NATO underestimate that German threat. Since the German factor cannot be publicly debated, its true potential is unappreciated, claimed a few participants. There is a perception that Germany is “defanged,” and Europeans will not admit they fear a resurgent Germany. The fact that US troops may leave Germany in greater numbers is subsumed in the enlargement debate feeding into the quiet fear of Germany. Apparently the Russians and French still look to the United States as Germany’s pacifier. Several participants voiced concern about NATO changing so much that Germany is allowed to become the most important nation economically and militarily. A few participants noted that the Germans would prefer to keep US troops in Germany for fear of becoming viewed as number one in Europe. According to one participant, the Germans themselves perceive the need for “someone to watch over them and keep them in line.”

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### **The New Germany**

Several participants did not share this concern over Germany. In their eyes, the German threat is overblown. These participants preferred to embrace the new thinking on Germany that while it is potentially threatening, it has changed significantly. To them, the view that Germany remains a larger threat than Russia is a product of old thinking and needs to be revised. Today, Germany is a “full member of the civilized nations of the world” and an integral part of NATO. The same cannot be said currently of Russia. Germany may have its own problems since unifying, but those do not compare to Russia’s. In addition, Germany should not be considered threatening because it has not taken active and visible roles in “out-of-area” military operations. It is the United States that is pushing the Germans to take a more active military role in NATO and UN operations. Russia, by comparison, is taking foreign policy stances that conflict with the United States and NATO, including the operations in the Balkans and Iraq.

## **Russia and Expansion**

Many participants who opposed expansion were most concerned with its effect on Russia. Others were convinced the United States has taken measures to ease the tension and reassure Russia.

### **Fearing the Russian Response**

The opponents of expansion believed the expansion policy does not effectively take into account the Russian response, suggesting several reasons why Russia may fear any expansion. Expansion gives the xenophobic and extremist elements in Russia an issue to use to their advantage. Several participants also mentioned Russia's historic sense of paranoia regarding encirclement as being aggravated by expansion eastward. NATO enlargement also has the effect of excluding Russia from Europe despite assurances by Secretary Albright that the alliance is open to all who meet the criteria. Perhaps most important, expansion could force Russia to look for alternative alliances and to even consider developing a nuclear first-strike capability.

Several participants opposing expansion explained that the first three entrants would cause Russia to feel encircled. There will be fewer and fewer buffers left between Russia and Western Europe after NATO expands. Because NATO was designed to keep Russia at bay, the organization is viewed with disdain, skepticism, and fear. If

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NATO expands to Ukraine or the Baltic States, Russia will be forced into a corner. The large populations of ethnic Russians in these nations (in Ukraine 22 percent are ethnic Russians) may or may not have allegiance and sensitivity to an embattled and encircled Russia. In addition, Russia may feel a need to protect the Russian minorities in the Baltic States. As one participant explained, having been invaded by Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, French, even the British and Americans, Russians have a historical basis for their fear over NATO expansion, and this should be acknowledged by the proexpansion forces.

How Russia reacts militarily to expansion greatly concerned several participants. They claim expansion may encourage Russia to develop a more offensive and threatening nuclear policy to offset an expanded and potentially aggressive NATO. The recent decision by Russia to build more SS-22s was cited as evidence of the effect NATO expansion has already had on Russian military thinking. Some participants hypothesized what would happen if the United States put troops on Polish soil or if the new entrants developed significant militaries. Russia, alone without a modern, updated, conventional army, could not feel very comfortable at all. In particular, after losing their buffer and with few monies to beef up conventional arms, they may resort to spending what little cash they have on tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.

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Many participants expressed unease at how the climate of arms control and current arms control agreements, such as the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the ratification of START II in the Russian Duma, may be affected by expansion. Transparency in negotiations could be affected, as could problems in verification and trust, particularly if NATO expanded eastward to Ukraine. If the Baltic States are added, Russia may be forced into a corner; and if the United States decides to develop a rapid deployment capability in these nations, Russia will no doubt feel pressure to change its nuclear policy. As one of the concerned summarized, NATO expansion “strengthens the hands of those in Russia who look to nuclear weapons as the answer to their security problems.”

### **The Founding Act**

Not many participants felt the United States has made it easy for Russia to respond benignly to expansion. To ameliorate the problems Russia may have with expansion, the United States proposed including Russia at the NATO table as a member without full benefits. The Founding Act creates the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, which keeps Russia advised on NATO activities. Several

participants did not think it would reassure Russia. One participant criticized the act as a “fig leaf.” Some complained that Russia had no choice but to sign. Others did not think the Founding Act could alleviate all Russian concerns. In fact, many participants questioned what Russia really gets out of the Founding Act. Does it get a veto over the next entrants or a veto over “out-of-area” operations?

There are no indications that the Founding Act would stop NATO from expanding to Ukraine and the Baltic States. In this context, how can Russia possibly take a benign look at expansion? Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has made good faith efforts to meet US foreign policy concerns. One participant emphasized that Russia dismantled the Warsaw Pact, signed the CFE, stopped projecting power in the Third World, and responded well to German reunification. In turn, the United States has devised a policy to expand a Cold War institution that was originally created to keep Russia out of Western Europe. Not many participants were optimistic about the Russian reaction to this perceived latest US lack of good faith.

Russia wants very much to be a part of Europe. The Founding Act does not get Russia into Europe; it does not make Russians European. The NATO-Russia Council does not open Western markets to Russia. The Founding Act represents another halfhearted attempt to include Russia in the West. In fact, preventing Russia or inhibiting it from joining the civilized nations of the world by denying membership or access to Europe will anger Russia, claim several opposing expansion. It only pushes Russia to seek out alternative alliances with outlaw nations or growing regional powers of great unpredictability and economic or military potential such as China and Iran. For example, Russia recently agreed to sell China advanced Su-37 and Su-30 warplanes. China accounts for about 30 percent of Russian arms exports, totaling some \$1 billion each year.

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***The Founding Act does not get Russia into Europe....***

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**Russia Obtains a Good Deal**

Other participants were not as concerned with provoking Russia over expansion. They feel that Russia has obtained a good deal. It has one foot in

Europe and will put the other forward when it obtains similar status in the European Union (EU). Some participants think Russia has conceded those nations already within the sphere of Western influence in exchange for a tacit understanding that NATO will not move farther east. It also bargained away the three entrants for another seat at the NATO table. Russia now has two seats at the NATO table—one for the Partnership for Peace program and one from the Founding Act. Russia has also gambled that the US Senate may not ratify the treaty. In any event, Russia will still be in NATO whether the Senate ratifies the treaty or not. For an organization that was meant to hem in Russia, it has “given away half the store,” complained one participant. Several participants questioned how expansion could possibly be seen as a hostile policy if Russia has been given so much as “half the store.”

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Some participants were more concerned about managing the store and the transformation of Europe and NATO. They acknowledged that the United States could do a better job of managing the process of expansion. Involving Russia in NATO and European affairs through the Founding Act is a good first step. The Founding Act may improve efforts to reduce arms and a positive NATO-Russia relationship could go a long way in promoting arms control. One participant emphasized that Russia would need to be included in the discussion and debate to expand farther east for the Founding Act to have a profound effect.

### **Expansion and Other European Organizations**

NATO expansion has sidetracked the issue of the EU’s own expansion as well as the effectiveness of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Participants were particularly interested in how the EU is affected by expansion, how its own expansion would impact NATO, and where the OSCE would fit in while the EU and NATO change.

## The European Union and NATO

Most participants agreed that there exists a high degree of linkage between the EU and NATO expansion. Most nonmembers view the EU and NATO as tickets to democracy, security, and prosperity. Being the last two major institutional frameworks in Europe, however, these organizations face dilemmas. What nations will they select, how will they select them, and what nations will choose them? Having only two tools at their disposal—membership and conditionality—the organizations have to be careful not to waste them.

How will the EU and NATO determine the conditions of membership, and will they have an interorganizational dialogue on the matter? Also, what will Europe and the United States do if the EU and NATO do not expand simultaneously or similarly? For example, Estonian membership in the EU before NATO raises questions about when the country should get into NATO. If Russia does not get into NATO, the Europeans may have to square the circle by including Russia in the EU. Unfortunately, the issue of parallel expansion has not received as much attention as it deserves, according to a few participants. There are no indications that the US administration has thought this through.

Multiple tracks are at play here: EU expansion, NATO expansion, the Russia track, and the Southern as opposed to Eastern track. Several participants agreed that EU-NATO relations need greater study. For example, if the European Monetary Union is successful, it could spark an interest in NATO from such traditionally neutral countries and EU members as Finland and Sweden who want more military

and strategic security. However, if the European Monetary Union starts but does not work, the stability of Europe and NATO could be impacted. It may change NATO membership and its mission further with more nations looking to join and calling for it to expand its role beyond providing security.

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*...there exists a high degree of linkage between EU and NATO expansion.*

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### OSCE and NATO

The OSCE is also affected by NATO expansion. One of the principles of the Founding Act states

that NATO and Russia will work to strengthen the OSCE, including “developing further its role as a primary instrument in preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation, and regional cooperation.” Although there are more than fifty nations who are members of the OSCE, it has been successful in resolving and managing some conflicts. Yet, as a Soviet-initiated organization, the OSCE is viewed with skepticism and carries a lot of baggage. In this sense, it may always play second fiddle to NATO, but it does do good work in areas where other organizations have faltered. For instance, the OSCE has a strong history in dealing with ethnic domestic policy and conflict. What will NATO expansion do to that success? How will these programs be affected when NATO expands to those nations most affected by ethnic divisions? Participants raised these questions as areas that should be given more attention in the NATO expansion process.

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### **NATO and Power Projection**

Supporters of expansion viewed expanding as a way for the United States to project power and promote democracy and stability in Europe. Opponents of expansion did not favor expanding as a means to project power. To them it increases the burdens, costs, and dangers to the United States.

### **The Benefits of Power Projection**

Expansion was seen by some participants as a way for the United States to project power eastward, southward, and beyond. One participant emphasized that such a capability enhances stability and US interests abroad. As this participant explained, the real strength and basis of NATO lies in its ability to allow for coalitions of the willing, such as in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. The Gulf and Balkan crises clearly revived faith in ad hoc coalitions and NATO. NATO is the only existing institution that can bring together a group of nations to project power in efforts to stabilize nations and regions. Applying this power projection model to NATO means the United States will maintain a foothold in Europe while securing its interests abroad without having to expend as many of its own resources.

The proponents of this model view the United States and NATO's ability to effect positive change in the fragile democracies and economies of the former Soviet bloc as substantial. NATO can effect positive change through its presence in places of great instability. According to several participants supporting expansion, NATO is the ideal organization to promote stability, democracy, and economic growth. For instance, internal reforms have been enacted in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to meet the membership demands of NATO. In addition, Hungary and Romania have negotiated agreements on borders and ethnic minorities to be compliant with NATO.

Power projection will clearly require certain changes in NATO thinking, strategy, and capabilities. It will take more than just coalitions of the willing; it will require rapid deployment units for instance. Training, forming, and deploying such units will be costly. The supporters of power projection felt it was worth the cost of enhancing stability in the region, however.

### **The Dangers of Power Projection**

Several participants felt the costs were too high, the burdens too great, and the dangers too numerous to push for expansion as a means of projecting power. The United States will not continue to rely on others to pay for the costs of coalitions of the willing. The United States' NATO allies will not always be eager to provide services or money to pay for operations it may not approve. Where will the money come from to pay for "out-of-area" operations that may take NATO out of Europe? The Gulf and Balkan crises clearly revived faith in ad hoc coalitions and NATO.

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Despite what the alliance has accomplished in the Balkans, many opponents of expansion doubted the ability of NATO to be a force of stability in Eastern Europe. They insisted that NATO is not the right organization to use to build democracy in Europe. The organization is not prepared to advise nations about civilian reforms; it is a military



alliance whose goal has been to protect Western Europe. In addition, new members who are unprepared for NATO will lessen its effectiveness and its ability to appropriately intervene to achieve political goals.

### **Costs of NATO Expansion**

Participants were divided on the issue of cost. Most criticized the financial burden of expansion. A few worried about the diversion of funds from more worthwhile projects. Others were not concerned about the cost and claimed the estimates were too high.

### **Expansion is Costly**

Several participants criticized the costs involved with adding members and expanding operations to project power. Costs have been estimated at anywhere from \$6-35 billion. It is very difficult to find an accurate estimate of the costs. As one participant noted, it is like “chasing a shadow;” the US government will always find a way to revise the costs to fit the concerns of each audience it engages. Most participants agreed about the difficulty in coming up with a figure for the monetary costs when the expansion is so open-ended. Some participants felt it would remain elusive until the Senate ratifies the treaty.

In the media and the US Congress, the issue of cost is the foremost topic today. However, proponents and opponents at Airlie did not view the issue of cost as that important a subject. It was only important to opponents insofar as they could use it to derail the expansion process. Many opponents thought the cost issue a political cover. If it were absolutely necessary for US security and the viability of the alliance to expand, then the issue of cost would not be debatable, they claimed. According to several participants, this reveals the extent to which NATO expansion is not justifiable. Reports from RAND and the Congressional Research Service have estimated the US share at \$9 billion and \$6 billion respectively. The United States estimates Europe sharing as much as 94 percent of the costs incurred by expansion, which is unacceptable to many Europeans.

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Several participants who opposed expansion concentrated on the tradeoffs required to fund expansion and specifically on the lost opportunity costs of investing in military personnel and equipment rather than economic infrastructure and development. In addition, one participant noted that the lost opportunity costs to the United States would be high considering it will have to rely heavily on expensive conventional forces and equipment to the detriment of other defense-oriented programs, such as integrated information technology. One participant argued that the cost to the US economy would be great as well. The investment in defense-related development and manufacturing would not help the overall economy. One participant called expansion a bonanza for arms merchants. Another referred to expansion as a welfare program for defense contractors.

### **Expansion is Worth the Cost**

Supporters downplayed the issue of cost. They claimed that the United States will not pay most of the expansion and that the cost of joining will be significantly less than anticipated. They also did not think that the European share would be so high as some estimates currently floated in the news. The cost of the new nations integrating their militaries into NATO will be small as well, since they do not need to integrate at the same level as Germany or even Spain. In addition, whether the cost is greater for the United States or its allies, a few participants believed that in the long run it was worth it. These participants were convinced NATO expansion is the key to preventing conflicts that may require costly US interventions.

### **Prospects for NATO Expansion and Ratification**

Although many participants agreed the drawbacks to expansion far outweighed the benefits, they disagreed on its prospects for success.

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The participants were divided into three groups. There were those that opposed any expansion and sought to delay or derail the process. Others opposed expansion at this time, but viewed at least the first phase as a *fait accompli* and, therefore, thought US interests would be better served by managing the process of expansion more effectively. A few proponents argued for no delay or derail-

ment; they preferred, as did the second group of opponents, a better management of the process after phase one.

### **Derailing the Train**

Throughout the discussion, the group opposing expansion was continually trying to come up with ways to prevent the “NATO train from leaving the station.” Building on the campaign by the Center for Strategic and Political Studies and others, they suggested mounting a more active public relations campaign to stop it. They did not think that the president would go to the mat for Hungary or the Czech Republic. They also advised setting up a bipartisan commission to study the long-term and short-term effects of expansion. Others suggested lobbying the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to delay a vote and hold hearings to discuss the implications of the US proposal for expansion. The problem they faced was whether the NATO train was going to leave the station before the “truth” about expansion was fully aired. It may leave before the public knows what is occurring and what they are sacrificing. Complicating matters is the sense created by those favoring expansion that the train has left the station, negating any substantive discussion or debate.

### **Managing the Store**

The other group of opponents to expansion was much more inclined to accept the first phase and engage in a substantive review of the stage after phase one. Some pointed to the fact that the president has staked his reputation and legacy on this issue as evidence of a *fait accompli*. They thought the president would not back down to the first phase of expansion and feared how far the United States would go in expansion? They worried about the lack of a coherent and long-term response to the first phase and about which nations would be next. Making up the policy on the fly will not ease Russian apprehensions, nor will it mollify the Baltic States who may or may not have been given the green light to join. From here on out, the process of expanding eastward, southward, or beyond needs to be reviewed and managed. These participants also urged the Senate to hold hearings on the wave of entrants after Visegrad three.

## **Keeping the Train on Track**

The proponents complained of the fallout among NATO allies and prospective alliance members that would result from delaying a vote or renegeing on US promises to keep the alliance open to everyone. Some participants noted that Central Europeans would feel a bitter sense of betrayal, Western Europeans would question US leadership and policy, and Russia would have control in NATO secured. This is why this group of participants was also concerned about US policy after the first phase. They saw the need for intra-alliance debate after the first phase. What if the “NATO train gets ahead of EU expansion?” What if the “NATO train has no stopping point”? There will need to be some discussion of its effect on Russia and how NATO will confront an increasingly apprehensive and enclosed Russia should that occur. Supporters of expansion hoped for Senate ratification and expansion for the three and beyond, and they are convinced this president will support expansion as a way to promote stability and democracy and project power.

## **Conclusion**

NATO is almost fifty years old, and the world around it has changed. Some say NATO needs to be upgraded and modernized. A few question the need to fix something that does not need to be fixed. Many more want to scrap the organization and get a new one to meet future needs. Consensus is hard to achieve when its history has been so storied. Some supporters cling to those successes and find it hard to scrap NATO, find a new one, or modernize the current model. Others worry that making adjustments to the organization would adversely affect the outside world.

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The participants criticized, celebrated, and acceded to modernizing NATO. The opposition to the expansion was very vocal and made a strong case regarding its effect on Russia, Germany, European institutions, and US policy. A smaller, yet no-less-vocal, opposition reluctantly accepted the policy voicing concern about American credibility and US-European relations. The expansionists

expressed the same concerns, but at the same time saw an opportunity for the United States to effect positive change in the world by expanding NATO.

There are serious implications to expanding NATO; some of which may or may not have been considered. Can the United States afford to renege on its deal to expand, sacrificing its credibility, relations with its allies, and opportunity to create a Pax Americana out of NATO? Or can the United States push for expansion knowing it may cause an arms race, compromise US-Russia relations, strengthen Germany, and place the United States firmly in the role of policeman to the world? Although the participants were divided on this, clearly the Clinton administration and most of the US Senate are not. How the United States manages the process after the first wave is the next crucial foreign policy debate that faces NATO expansion.

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***How the United States manages the process after the first wave is the next crucial foreign policy debate....***

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## About the Conference

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Strategy for Peace, the Stanley Foundation's US foreign policy conference, annually assembles a panel of experts from the public and private sectors to assess specific foreign policy issues and to recommend future direction.

At the October 1997 conference, eighty-five foreign policy professionals met at Airlie Center to recommend elements of a strategy for peace in the following areas:

1. [Accountability and Judicial Response: Building Mechanisms for Post-Conflict Justice](#)
2. [Building Multilateral Cooperation in the Americas: A New Direction for US Policy](#)
3. The Pros and Cons of NATO Expansion: Defining US Goals and Options
4. [US Sanctions Policy: Balancing Principles and Interests](#)

The work of the conference was carried out in four concurrent round-table discussions. These sessions were informal and off the record. The rapporteurs tried to convey the conclusions of the discussions and the areas of consensus and disagreement. This is the report of one discussion group.

# The Stanley Foundation

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[The Stanley Foundation](#) is a private operating foundation that conducts varied programs and activities designed to provoke thought and encourage dialogue on world affairs and directed toward achieving a secure peace with freedom and justice.

Programs engage policymakers, opinion leaders, and citizens interested in solving problems and finding opportunities that present themselves in an increasingly interdependent world. Areas of particular interest are: global peace and security, US international relations, sustainable development, human rights, the United Nations, global education, and the expansion of policy deliberations to include wider public representation.

## **Activities include:**

- Round-table, off-the-record conferences and meetings for policymakers and other experts.
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- Citizen programs for educators, young people, churches, professional associations, civic groups, and educational institutions. These activities are often held in collaboration with other non-profit organizations.
- Production of [Common Ground](#), a weekly public radio program on world affairs.
- Publication of the monthly magazine [World Press Review](#).
- Publication of [conference reports](#).

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