
NATO's PROBLEMATIC ENLARGEMENT TOWARD CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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ÖZET

Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden yaklaşık onbeş yıl sonra, 'Avrupa'nın bir bütün ve bağımsız' oluşturulması hedefi halen daha tamamlanamamıştır. Bütünleşmiş ve kendini idare edebilen bir Avrupa hedefi ışığı altında, bu makale, çok yönlü NATO genişleme sürecini Varşova Paketi'nin dağılması ile Avrupa'da ve dünyada değişen güvenlik parametreleri kapsamında irdedelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın ana konusu, NATO'nun Orta ve Doğu Avrupa ülkelerine doğru genişleme amacına ve, buna ek olarak, başarılı bir şekilde genişlemiş ve sağlam NATO'ya ulaşılması yolundaki engellere dikkati çekmektedir.

ABSTRACT

Almost fifteen years after the end of the Cold War, the goal of creating a 'Europe whole and free' is still incomplete. Under the light of the aspiration of integrated and self-directed Europe, this article examines the multi-faceted process of NATO enlargement in the context of changed parameters of the security situation in Europe and in the world since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The central theme of this study is to draw attention to nuts and bolts of NATO enlargement toward Central and Eastern European countries as well as hurdles on the way of achieving a successfully enlarged and stable NATO.

AN OVERVIEW

Article 10 of the Washington Treaty allows the possibility of enlarging North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) membership. It asserts that 'the Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite

any other European State in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty' (The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949). This clause allowed membership to be extended from the original 12 members to Greece and Turkey in 1951, the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955, Spain in 1982 and Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic in 1999. Membership to Central and East European countries is, therefore, viable under this Article.

There are currently nineteen members of the Alliance (Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States). The hand of friendship was first extended with the 1990 NATO London Declaration to Central and Eastern Europe immediately after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact for achieving the Alliance's basic aim of enhancing security and extending stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area. This declaration stated that the 'Alliance begins a major transformation. Working with all countries of Europe, we are determined to create enduring peace on this continent' (NAC-London Declaration 1990). This was actually based on the NATO strategy, deriving from the 'out of area or out of business' concept, which is indicating to make NATO operable with a role and a future in the area of out-of-Europe security threats, for the aim of reforming and adapting the post-Cold War NATO's operational and institutional structure into the new security environment at that time. Thus, the US has secured its future position of prominence in European affairs through NATO enlargement.

Since then, there have been more concrete steps taken toward enlargement. The inaugural meeting

of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC) was held in December 1991. This was described as a 'forum for consultation and co-operation on political and security related issues' (NATO Handbook 1995: 43). This consultation led to a Work Plan for Dialogue, Partnership and Co-operation. Emphasis was placed on security, in particular eastern defence planning and conversion, economy and dissemination of information and policy (Simon 1993: 27). The NACC was replaced on 30 May 1997 by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which is described as providing the overarching framework for political and security related consultations and enhanced co-operation. There are currently 46 members of this organisation, the 19 NATO members plus a further 27 countries. All former NACC members and all Partnership for Peace (PfP) participating countries can join automatically.

NATO, EU and Enlargement

The European Union (EU) is the most important Western institution to Central and Eastern European countries, but obviously the one least directly influenced by the US's NATO policy. This part of this paper will concentrate on the role of NATO in European security. The core of NATO throughout the Cold War was the assurance of common defence against the common enemy (the Warsaw Pact), contained in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This Article asserts that attack against one member is an attack against all members (The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949). In many ways, this is still a core element of the organisation and a prime attraction for Central and Eastern European countries which – emerging from a history of invasion and domination – are preoccupied with military security, ostensibly from Russia (von Plate März 2002: 18-22).

Russian intentions are a source of anxiety to former satellite states, especially since its internal institutions are far from stable and the country has adopted what may be termed an 'argumentative' approach to international politics – a side effect of frustration, due to deep power asymmetry between the US and Russia, which derives from no longer being considered a superpower. However, Article 2 of the Washington Treaty allows for the possibility of extending the scope of NATO's interests beyond defence matters. The transformation of Alliance affirmed this rethink, stating that, security and stability do not lie solely in the military dimension and Alliance members intend to enhance economic and political components of the organisation as provided for by Article 2 of the Washington Treaty (The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949).

The aim of NATO would seem to be the harmonisation of scope and membership, complementing other European institutions' integration trends, notably the EU enlargement and strengthening the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). That is, an extension of membership of NATO would, in turn, promote stability throughout the continent. Hence, *Study on NATO's Enlargement*, published in September 1995 and includes the principles of 'why and how' new members could join in, states that 'meeting NATO's fundamental security goal and supporting the integration of new members into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions are thus complementary goals of the enlargement process' (Study on NATO Enlargement, 1995). The NATO membership criteria, which became more concrete in 1993, are based on the following measures: a functioning market economy, stable liberal democracy and prospective membership of the EU (Taylor 1994: 173).

Therefore, the possible NATO expansion is targeting to bolster the desire for promoting democracy, free market, stability and, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, safeguarding 'freedom, common heritage and civilisation of all Alliance members and their people, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law' (Study on NATO Enlargement, 1995). NATO's intended expansion is, therefore, in keeping with the liberal internationalist approach of other European and global organisations.

The *Study on NATO Enlargement* affirms that risks, which are carrying the principles of 'multi-directional' and 'multi-faceted' security threats, do still remain in Europe and, therefore, their assessment is very difficult (Study on NATO Enlargement, 1995). However, in order to manage these risks, NATO envisages a broad security architecture, involving an interplay of institutions where NATO being a cornerstone. This was achieved by the creation of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) in the first half of the 1990s, the purpose of which is to enable all European allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to missions and activities of the Alliance as an expression of their shared responsibilities and to reinforce the transatlantic partnership as a whole (NATO Handbook, 2001: 97). This will make NATO assets, for example, logistic or headquarter units, available to the Western European Union (WEU) leadership and allow the development of a solely European role in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (WEU Rhodes Declaration, 1998).

PfP: Means for Membership and Better Co-operation

The Partnership for Peace is a US-led initiative established in January 1994, open to all NACC and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) countries, focuses on defence-related co-operation as well as interested in going beyond co-operation and dialogue in order to forge a real partnership between each partner and NATO (NATO Handbook, 2001: 67). There are 27 countries participating in PfP, all members of the EAPC, if the 19 NATO members considered as a separate group. This is a practical programme with the joint aims of preparing potential states for membership and reassuring those who are not yet invited for joining fully. Central to the programme are attempts to create transparency in national defence planning and budgeting, ensure democratic control of the military, participate in joint military planning and exercises and develop a readiness to work within NATO and contribute to United Nations (UN) and/or OSCE exercises (NATO Handbook, 2001: 68).

The Madrid Summit of the North Atlantic Council, held in July 1997, extended an invitation of full NATO membership to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. These three former PfP members became the members of NATO on 12 March 1999. Beside the PfP programme, NATO is signatory to two bilateral treaties: The 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation' (27 May 1997); and the 'Charter for a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine' (29 May 1997).

Moreover, the Membership Action Plan (MAP) is launched at NATO's Washington Summit on 23-25 April 1999. It is designed to provide possible applicant states with advice, assistance and practical support on all aspects of NATO membership. However, this Plan should not be considered as a rival or a substitute initiative to the PfP programme. The most important feature of the MAP is to oversee aspirant members' national reports on 'Annual National Programme', which is about preparations for possible NATO membership and includes political, economic, security, defence/military, resource and legal issues (NATO Handbook, 2001: 65-67).

Hurdles in and for the Enlargement of NATO

Is further enlargement feasible? There are problems and costs involved. *Firstly*, NATO is trying very hard to adapt itself, both internally and externally,

to the changed new security environment. However, its strength remains as a military organisation with the principle of common defence at its core. Although Central and Eastern European countries are eager to enjoy the one-for-all collective security of the Alliance, their transitional problems, which are originating from the communistic-socialist ideology, are more economic, political and societal in nature and unlikely to be stemmed by NATO membership alone.

Secondly, although expansion is likely to establish a deterrent to invade any member and stem potential conflict between members, NATO's attempts at reform seem to contain more rhetoric than substance. It has, as yet, failed to establish a concrete role for itself, except training Central and Eastern European countries' military forces, harmonising their defence planning with the Alliance and undertaking tentative steps toward joint peacekeeping exercises and crisis management. In order to move from rhetoric to reality, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the 'principal' decision-making authority of NATO, must take into account the needs and interests of both its new former-communist members (Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic) and those European states, which declared their interest in joining NATO in the foreseeable future (Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Republic of Macedonia).

Thirdly, actual costs of NATO enlargement are a source of concern for current members. As part of the criteria for entry, potential members must be able and willing to contribute on an equal footing in NATO costs and exercises. North American and West European countries that, in general, are pursuing a reduction in defence expenditure, do not welcome the accession of prospective 'free riders' into the organisation. Therefore, concerns over costs, cohesion, reforms and, most of all, Russia, are making the next stage of enlargement more difficult.

The Question of Russia

Russia and some other countries, which are not taking part in accession negotiations for various reasons, are a significant problem for NATO enlargement. Russia has historically surrounded itself with a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. NATO's expanding beyond Central Europe, particularly to former Soviet Republics, is a source of anxiety for the Russians. This is due to a deep lack of trust between the US and Russia, which emanates from the Cold-War NATO structure, in which considered by Russians as an 'aggressive military block' under the US sphere of influence of

Table 1
Source: Nationwide VCIOM Surveys, 24-27 January 2003, N=1592

Q: How do you think the inclusion in NATO of Eastern European and Baltic states affected the security of Russia?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengthened Russian security ➤ Threatens Russian security ➤ Doesn't affect Russian security ➤ Don't know 	<p>All replies %</p> <p>5</p> <p>46</p> <p>29</p> <p>20</p>
Q: In recent years several Central and East European (CEE) countries have joined NATO or are about to join it. Do you think this is being done...?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Due to the desire of CEE peoples and governments to protect themselves ➤ Under pressure of the US and other NATO members ➤ Don't know 	<p>All replies %</p> <p>28</p> <p>46</p> <p>26</p>

US/NATO on Central and Eastern European countries

Although intentions of NATO policy-makers are apparently based on a desire to promote the values of democracy and stability and to create a pan-European organisation without dividing lines, Russia is more likely to be concerned at NATO's capabilities rather than their intention. Although Russia has several times tried to prevent NATO's expansion toward Eastern and Central Europe, these attempts have categorically rebutted by NATO authorities. One of the most long-standing Russian objections to NATO enlargement has been the loss of arms markets in Central and Eastern European countries. However, the bilateral 'Founding Act', which established the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council (PJC) – designed

as a forum for consultation and cooperation on political-military issues – has gone some way in reassuring Russia of NATO's intention.

As a matter of fact, the Russian President Vladimir Putin began more constructively focusing on developing a new institutional relationship with NATO through deeper co-operation. Moreover, since the beginning of 2002, Putin's leadership has surprisingly dropped its opposition to NATO's enlargement and focused on replacing NATO's PJC with a new NATO-Russia Council that has been loosely termed 'NATO at 20'. A survey, conducted in January 2003, is demonstrating the best interest of Russia with regard to NATO as a co-operative relationship, rather than basing it on counterbalance (see Table 2).

Table.2

Source: Nationwide VCIOM Surveys, 24-27 January 2003, N=1592

Q: Which of the following do you think meets Russia's interests better?	
	All replies %
➤ Admission to NATO	5
➤ Co-operation with NATO	43
➤ Forming alliances to counterbalance NATO	14
➤ Non-alignment	22
➤ Don't know	16

It is also important to put emphasis on that, for a robust NATO enlargement, NATO member states must work actively with Russia to develop a new plan so that a reinforced institutional relationship would be more advanced than NATO-Russia PJC.

A Glance Ahead

The EU is and will continue to be Central and Eastern European countries' largest trading partner and the further enlargement of EU/WEU would directly determine the fate of the stability and reform processes in the region. In the short term, Putin, because of his primary goal for the moment is Russia's economic modernisation, would be more willing to make some concessions with regard to NATO enlargement plans. However, in the long term, Central and Eastern European countries' closer co-operation with the EU/WEU could be more in the interest of these countries than NATO membership, because Brussels may hold more leverage, economically and politically, than Washington over their hegemonic neighbour's – Russia – security, political, and economic concerns.

The security environment after terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 has also become a new twist on highly contentious issues of the 1990s like NATO enlargement and US's National Missile Defence (NMD) project. Both US President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin have to resolve their differences over the US's intention of withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 and controversy over the revival of US's NMD project and focus on the creation of a new Russia-NATO institutional relationship for fighting together against international terrorism.

Finally, is there to be a continued role for the victorious superpower – the United States? The US has taken a self-appointed lead in European security affairs since the Second World War. Encouraging Central and Eastern European countries' deeper co-operation with the two main Western security and economic institutions – NATO and EU/WEU – is essential for their integration into them though a full membership. Although it is unlikely that the US, at the time, anticipated their role to be lasting, they, in large part, provide the will and the capability to lead on European security issues. The development of NATO's ESDI and EU's Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP), which is establishing a greater role for the EU/WEU, may pave the way for US disengagement in the region. The question must, therefore, be asked: Can Europe maintain a security unit cohesive enough to provide leadership in and out of the European sphere?

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, NATO since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact has undertaken a number of initiatives designed to both adapt itself to an alternate and relevant role, and to incorporate the former members of the Pact. However, the Alliance, although it has made headway in the enlargement process, has had some difficulty in establishing a purpose. Furthermore, the nervousness which fuels the Central and Eastern European countries' desire for membership is not compatible with the Alliance's objective of creating stability through enlargement.

Under the light of these analysed facts in this article, we should, also be in a position of questioning whether NATO's enlargement toward Central and Eastern European countries has some –

if any – value or becoming marginalized as a Western European security institution under US’s unilateralist temptations in a multi-polar world.

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