

"IT [WAS] NEITHER HOLY, nor Roman, nor an Empire," so Voltaire depicted the amorphous, yet long-lasting behemoth of the old European political structure. From the fall of the Romanov dynasty to the prophetic events of the early 1990s, another political agglomeration, with strong expansionist and totalitarian tendencies, dominated and held hostage Eastern Europe and Asia. Recognizing the pathological inclinations

in the region. The more democratized and stable nations, like Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the Baltic states, Bulgaria, and Romania, have cited the power vacuum and the ominous presence of an unstable Russia as primary reasons for their desire to join NATO. The United States, as the chief NATO partner and leader of the free world, must support full and expedient NATO integration for these new democracies.

ernized democracies, formed the Visegrad Group in 1991 (named after the town in Hungary where their leaders met). The Group's ardent petitions for NATO membership have put this issue at the top of NATO's priorities.

The current US administration, major American allies, the applicants, and the Russians have adopted different stances on the East European situation. Until recently, President Clinton has refused to support full membership for these new

## i The Conundrum of Post-Cold War Europe: The Integration of East European nations into NATO

*Allowing full integration of ex-Warsaw Pact nations into NATO is the most visionary and desirable option for the United States and other NATO partners.*

By Alan P. Konevsky

NATO: THEN AND NOW

of this block and its ideology, the West prudently responded to its existence and ambitions in kind. Economically, the Western powers demonstrated to the Soviet bloc the superiority of the free-market system and their military-industrial complex. Socially and ideologically, the West continued to champion, protect, and foster the liberal, constitutional democracy and its guarantees. Militarily, the Western democracies responded with the creation of a strong, united alliance, with steadfast ideology, iron resolve, and a superior military muscle behind it — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

When the internally decayed Goliath of the 'Soviet Empire' collapsed, it became clearly evident from the sheer number of its quarreling remnants that it was 'neither Soviet, nor an Empire.' The fall of the Empire, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the ensuing de facto dissolution of the Warsaw Pact has created an ominous security vacuum in the Central and Eastern Europe. That vacuum is also exacerbated by the extreme state of flux and territorial and ethnic volatility

The Cold War arrangement necessitated the presence of a united, determined, military alliance, to counter the Soviet threat. Motivated and united by the presence of a common enemy, economic supremacy, ideological steadfastness, and a mutual agreement that "...an armed attack against one or more of [the allies] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against [all allies]," the Western Allies created NATO in 1949 [*The New Yorker, Inc.* 6]. Regardless of such external crisis and internal predicaments as the French pull-out from Integrated Command and President de Gaulle's expulsion of the European NATO headquarters from France, NATO prevailed over the Warsaw Pact without a major confrontation, and caused the disintegration of the Soviet bloc.

The collapse of the drained Soviet machine left the independent and increasingly democratic ex-Soviet satellites contraposed against western NATO powers on one side and volatile Russia on the other. Of these nations, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, the four most stable and west-

democracies. He has recently proposed the Partnership for Peace, a loose guarantee of cooperation and military training, that stops short of full NATO support and membership. The NATO allies have split on the issue, with British Prime Minister John Major opposing full membership from fearing of the dilution of Britain's influence in the organization, while the French Premier Balladur opposes it because of French desire to use the European Union as the foundation for security in Europe. The German Chancellor Kohl, however, expresses enthusiastic support for full membership. He is motivated by both sincere concern for the new democracies and concern for the eastern borders of Germany. Lastly, Russia itself has vacillated on the issue itself, with Boris Yeltsin at first declaring Moscow's indifference to NATO expansion, and later, via Foreign intelligence Chief Primakov, expressing the view that NATO expansion would serve as a threat to Russian security.

### THE FIVE POLICY OPTIONS

Expressly denying NATO membership of any kind to any applicant from the

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region is the most easily implemented option. This choice effectively bars the new East European democracies from acquiring any kind of formal association with the alliance. Several arguments support this elective. First, it placates the Russians. According to Primakov, Russia considers any expansion of NATO's umbrella as an "...approach of danger to the Motherland's borders" (Facts on File, Inc. 907). Our British and French partners, opposed to full integration, would also appreciate such a move. Furthermore, all financially pressed members of NATO could avoid the costs of bringing the newcomers' military infrastructure up to NATO's benchmark. However, the opponents of this option argue that denial of membership to the East European petitioners leaves the security vacuum unfilled, jeopardizes the democratization and economic development of these nations, and above all, serves to appease Russia and may rekindle its imperialistic desires.

The second alternative is to accept, endorse, and support the Partnership for Peace (PFP), which has been introduced by President Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Strobe Talbott. Essentially, the Partnership is a cooperative arrangement between NATO and its former Warsaw Pact adversaries. This policy is rooted in the Bush Administration's double-headed policy

of "Don't Gloat" and "Big Brother" at the end of the Cold War. The Bush policies sought to fulfill America's special responsibility for the wellbeing of the new European democracies while acknowledging that the humiliation and defeat of Russia would be very damaging. It allows the countries aligned with it to partake in joint NATO military exercises, disaster relief, and peace-keeping missions. Individual 'work programs,' joint defense planning, and depending on the availability of funds, assistance with upgrading of military infrastructure, would also be available to the new 'partners.' In turn, the new additions are required to place their defense ministries under civilian control, disclose their defense budgets to outside scrutiny, and fulfill stringent social requirements for fair treatment of ethnic minorities and a democratic form of government. Every nation is eligible to become a signatory to the Partnership, technically even Russia. However, the new partners are not guaranteed a full membership, nor are they granted the coveted Article 5 of the NATO Treaty extended security umbrella. Overall, according to its proponents in the administration, this plan insures that "...everyone will be a winner, and no one will be a loser" (Knight et al. 21).

There are two distinct views of this proposal. On the one hand, the Partnership For Peace gradually trans-

forms East European military infrastructure to a compatible western format, while allowing for mutual training and education between NATO and its partners. This concept enables NATO and the Partnership signatories to adjust and fine-tune the rate of military conversion and cooperation, as domestic and international situations fluctuate. Also, the gradual nature of the plan, may possibly prevent the rapid introduction of ethnic and territorial quarrels that may upset NATO into the organization. The crux of the argument in favor of the PFP, is that a formally expanded NATO would quarantine and estrange the already unstable Russia in general, and the Yeltsin regime in particular. Russian distrust and caution are demonstrated by Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev's remark, "NATO is a military alliance. So, what does it need new members for? Against whom is it aimed?" (Nelan 68).

The main criticism of the PFP, however, is that even if the partners pass all of the rigorous tests and fully demonstrate their social, political, and military worthiness, their acceptance into NATO is not guaranteed or scheduled. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary branded the proposal as an unacceptable substitute. Polish Foreign Minister Andrzej Olechowski voiced his concern:

**They ask us to divert scarce resources and go through all kinds of exercises to prove ourselves. They ask us to talk and walk and act like a duck. That's O.K. And we agree that letting us in right away could upset Yeltsin at a difficult time. What's not O.K. is that after we've done all that's asked of us, NATO reserves the right to say, "Well, now we want you to be a chicken instead" (Kramer 56).**

The President's Partnership approach is Russo-centric: it concentrates only on preserving democracy and Boris Yeltsin in Russia, and brushes other East European democracies and their interests aside. Temporizing on NATO membership, leaving the security void virtually unfilled, and waiting until the smoke of conflict arises over Eastern Europe is paradoxical, ignorant, and historically unwise. Bowing to the Russians is most unwise, for as Dr. Henry A. Kissinger asserts, "We have resisted blackmail when Russia was strong. Does it make sense to permit Moscow to blackmail us now with its domestic weakness?"

The third alternative is the possibility of formatting of a separate military alliance, composed of the former Warsaw Pact states. These autonomous states,



Cartoon by Raul Aviles

united by their newly-acquired freedom, democracy, and economic prospective, would pool their own forces and unite under a common security umbrella. Subsequently, the East European group would negotiate individual arrangements with NATO and Russia. This option shifts the burden of security and filling the security vacuum from NATO to the East Europeans themselves, thereby minimizing possible economic and political costs to NATO members. Second, the Russian situation would be de facto resolved, as the locus of attention switches from NATO expansion to East European organization. Such an arrangement has already been looked favorably upon by senior British representatives, and the French Premier Edouard Balladur has approached the European Union with a plan to encourage the formation of such an alliance. The main reservation on this approach is prospect that the new nations are left to organize for and by themselves, with relatively little experience and standard armaments. In addition, there is also a chance that Russia will look at the West's encouragement of such an arrangement as a virtual unwillingness to associate with and defend these nations, and thus see it as a "green light" for potential "border adjustment."

Yet another possible alternative for solving this dilemma proposes disbanding NATO and shifting greater emphasis on continental security arrangements. Already, there are favorable discussions about the rapid developments of the Franco-German Eurocorps, and, more importantly, the Western European Union, an exclusively European security alliance. This concept of new collective security arrangements can be expanded to include the United States, Europe, as well as Russia, in an alliance which would firmly guarantee the borders, and serve as a guardian of democracy and human rights.

Proponents of this option claim that NATO is obsolete in its nature, and its continuation, it only serves to sustain the rivalrous postulates of the Cold War. They cite NATO's inability to firmly settle the Bosnia situation, as well as NATO command's inability to redefine the organization's roles and objectives for the post-Cold War age. Most convincingly, the proponents of dissolution argue that NATO can only exist in the present era, if it expands eastward, a move that will undoubtedly fuel Russian suspicions. Yet, if NATO does not move in that

direction, it excludes a good half of European territories. Finally, the proponents of the dissolution assert that NATO's organization around a potential or existing threat to the east is simply incompatible with the emerging world order.

On the other hand, opponents of NATO dissolution argue that although the collapse of the Soviet block and its military structure has removed the immediate threat, this does not dissolve the bonds that have held Europe and

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America together for the past half a century. They claim that our common moral, social, political, historical, and economic bonds extend far beyond mutual opposition to communism and totalitarianism. They argue that the post-Soviet era necessitates a trans-Atlantic link and Euro-American cooperation to respond to the ever expanding challenges and predicaments of a multipolar world.

The fifth possibility is the complete and immediate integration of the East Europeans (exclusive of Russia), into the NATO structure. This entails offering these new democracies full NATO membership, including military training, joint defense planning, and peacekeeping and crisis-management operations. Most importantly, however, this would, to the East Europeans' delight, also involve granting them the full security guarantee of "if you are attacked, all of NATO is attacked."

There are several arguments in favor of full integration. First, the security vacuum in Europe is effectively addressed by such a move. Subsequent westernizing of the new members' infrastructures is a crucial aspect of stabilization of the region, plagued by regional and ethnic competitions. In addition, full NATO membership may serve to foster internal stability in these countries, a role of possibly more important long-term significance than that of defense against Russia.

A functional example of this argument is West Germany, which was not a stable democracy before it was brought into the NATO structure. However, the affiliation with the organization facilitated West Germany in achieving its present economic, political, and social apexes. Thus, functional democracy, prosperity, and stability are not prerequisites for entrance into NATO, but rather profits of it. Such inclusion facilitates democratic, free-market, and western advances in these nations.

Another argument for integration partially refers to the earlier criticisms of the Russo-centrism of the Partnership For Peace. Russia must not deter the Western powers and NATO from embracing the new democracies, who are willing and anxious to follow in their paths. The eloquent words of Czech President Vaclav Havel gracefully express this desire:

...We have always belonged to the Western sphere of European civilization and share the values upon which NATO was founded and which it exists to defend (Nelan68).

Failing to "...bind the Europeans..." as the late NATO Secretary General Manfred Wornat asserted, could be disastrous for the West (Kramer 36). We must take Russia into account to a reasonable extent, but as former Secretary of State James Baker HI stated, "...[to] protect democracy where it is showing signs of taking firm root — in Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest," must be our premier concern (Kramer 37).

There are several substantial arguments, however, on the opposing side. The cornerstone of the opposition is the 'eternal' Russian dilemma. The opponents of full integration desire to avoid any provocation of Russian nationalist, imperialist, and communist sentiments that may topple the shaky edifice of the 'Yeltsonian Democracy' (Kramer 36). As Secretary of State Warren Christopher put it, "...helping democracy prevail in Russia remains the wisest and least expensive investment that we can make in American security."

Opponents also argue that rapid expansion of NATO could infuse it with the ethnic squabbles of the Eastern block, and thus bring NATO down from within. The technical incompatibilities of East European infrastructure as well as the astronomical expense in upgrading it are also cited against the said proposal. Opponents challenge the supporters of full integration more generally to show

how a military alliance like NATO, created to deter and confront threats from the east, can provide stability for a region plagued by dilemmas and quarrels rooted in politics, ethnicity, history, and economics. Lastly, opponents argue that unless NATO powers are actually prepared and willing to extend the mutual security guarantee eastward, a mere promise of it debases the cornerstone of NATO's existence, and may, in time, foment its dissolution.

#### RATIONALITY OF FULL INTEGRATION

There are several logical routes that can be taken in handling of the East Europe. As the analysis of each alternative shows, they all vary in merit, plausibility, and short- and long-term consequences. However, only the extension of full membership privileges and guarantees to these new democracies, is in the United States', Europe's, and the world's best interest.

First and foremost, one of the key arguments against the expansion of NATO is the threat of capsizing the fragile Russian democracy. The opponents of full integration claim that surrounding Russia with NATO allies could revive the adversarial nationalist and imperialist drives that are not all that dormant to begin with. Such a move not only endangers the Yeltsin Regime, but all future hope for democracy and progress.

This chief argument against NATO enlargement is flawed on two major grounds. First, the Russo-centric and Yeltsin-oriented policy fervently pursued by the current administration inherently shortchanges any other interests that the United States or NATO might harbor or pursue. It pegs our policy to the weakness of Yeltsin. In essence, it employs overt appeasement, the political implications and effects of which were clearly depicted in Munich in 1938. Secondly, if Russia truly is a reformed and democratized realm with no expansionist intentions, then expansion of NATO to any degree should not trouble the peaceful Russian rulers, Yeltsin or otherwise.

However, there is considerable evidence of Russia's imperialistic intentions. Russia has attempted to dilute the stipulations of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty to allow them to increase military presence in the post-Soviet periphery. Its new military doctrine strangely! mentions the absence of fixed Russian borders and provides for the

presence of Russian troops in areas with ethnic Russian minorities. The Russian Foreign Intelligence Chief Y. V. Primakov stated that NATO expansion would "...bring the biggest military grouping in the world, with its colossal offensive potential, directly to borders of Russia." *Izvestia* reports direct military support and acclamation for Primakov's convictions (Facts on File 907). Russia is not that 'benevolent wounded giant' whose interests and well-being must be carefully nurtured and considered. If we temporize and waffle long enough, it may soon be too late to save these young democracies. Why should The United States and other NATO partners put the supposed interest of the 'new' Russia above their own security interests, and the concerns of these amicable nations?

The most visible alternative, the Partnership For Peace, is as flawed as its Russo-centric approach. Aside from ignoring and shortchanging the interests of the East Europeans, this plan, attempts to please everybody while failing to produce anything more than vague promises, costly routines, and no real solutions. Unlike the recommended full membership, PFP fails to address the issue of the security vacuum in Europe. Instead of filling the gap, PFP creates, in the words of Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, "...two borders in Europe: one with security guarantees, one without" (Kissinger 74). This inactivity by the West could prompt Russia to fill that vacuum, thereby radically altering the situation and negating the recent advances. On the other hand, the recommended integration fills the security vacuum with Western influence. It helps the new democracies to advance ever more closely to their political and economic ideals, as it did in the cases of West Germany, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Greece. The bestowal of NATO membership truly demonstrates to these nations, to Russia, and to the international community in general, the seriousness, respect, and commitment with which the West takes the political and economic restructuring of its former adversaries.

For the United States in particular, integrating the new democracies into NATO can have significant benefits. By securing the European balance of power and filling the security vacuum in a favorable and enduring fashion via NATO expansion, we secure our best foreign policy goals. On a more practical front the US and Europe will mutually profit from a relationship with a secure,

democratic, prosperous, and friendly Eastern Europe, aligned with NATO and the European Union. A Europe secured by NATO will continue to serve as a testament to American principles and the freedoms of liberal, western democracy.

The international arena of 1990s bears little resemblance to the world of the preceding "long peace" of the Cold War (Gaddis 3). New dilemmas and opportunities present a real challenge to each member of the "new world order." While abandoning structures and techniques of the preceding era may seem cosmetically attractive, the United States and other nations must not shortchange their usefulness in the multipolar world. A practical reevaluation of the role and function of Cold War organizations and arrangements in the context of present imperatives and concerns is crucial. Analyzing NATO in relation to the situation in Europe, results in the sober conclusion that embracing the East Europeans under full NATO umbrella is the most rational and 'lucrative' investment the United States and its allies could make in this new environment. U

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