



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy

Dan Reiter

International Security, Volume 25, Number 4, Spring 2001, pp. 41-67 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/14344>

# Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy

Dan Reiter

The debate over the costs and benefits of enlarging the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that preceded the March 1999 inclusion of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic retains policy relevance in the twenty-first century. Nine more countries have formally applied for membership, requesting entry in 2002.<sup>1</sup> Supporters of enlargement have argued that it would help to stabilize Eastern Europe in at least three ways. First, a strong Western commitment to former communist states in this region would deter any future Russian aggression. Second, enlargement would reduce the likelihood of conflict among NATO members, ameliorating security dilemmas and forcing them to accept current borders and pursue the peaceful resolution of disputes. Third, it would further democratization in the region, which in turn would help to stabilize the area because democracies are unlikely to fight each other. As former United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick explained, "There is . . . only one reliable guarantee against aggression. It is not found in international organizations. It is found in the spread of democracy. It derives from the simple fact that true democracies do not invade one another and do not engage in aggressive wars. . . . Preserving and strengthening democracies in Central and Eastern Europe should be the United States' central goal and top foreign policy priority in Europe, in

---

*Dan Reiter is Associate Professor of Political Science and Winship Research Professor at Emory University.*

---

For institutional support, the author thanks the Claus M. Halle Institute for Global Learning at Emory University. For research assistance, he thanks Kamila Valenta. For comments and advice, he is grateful to members of the spring 2000 Halle Seminar, as well as to Michael Desch, James Goldgeier, Paul Kubicek, Robert Pastor, Larry Taulbee, and Hubert Tworzecki. Any opinions and remaining errors are his alone.

---

1. For discussions of NATO enlargement, see Karl Kaiser, "Reforming NATO," *Foreign Policy*, No. 103 (Summer 1996), pp. 128–143; Michael E. Brown, "Minimalist NATO: A Wise Alliance Knows When to Retrench," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (May/June 1999), pp. 204–218; "The Debate over NATO Expansion: A Critique of the Clinton Administration's Responses to Key Questions," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 27, No. 7 (September 1997), pp. 3–10; Michael Mandelbaum, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1996); Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999); Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Plan for Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (January/February 1995), pp. 26–42; Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *NATO Expansion* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1998); Piotr Dutkiewicz and Robert J. Jackson, eds., *NATO Looks East* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998); Anton A. Bebler, ed., *The Challenge of NATO Enlargement* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999); and Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality* (Washington, D.C.: CATO Institute, 1998).

---

*International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 41–67  
© 2001 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

my opinion. Membership in NATO will help to achieve those goals and strengthen the alliance.”<sup>2</sup>

Critics of NATO enlargement worry about its risks and costs. Their principal concern is that expansion may jeopardize relations between Russia and the West, pushing Russia away from cooperating on issues such as strategic arms control and peacekeeping in the Balkans, and perhaps turning it back toward belligerence and even ultranationalism. Critics also express concern that the financial costs of enlargement will weaken NATO’s military power and complicate decisionmaking within the alliance.

The claim that NATO enlargement will spread democracy has been underexamined in the public debate and deserves closer scrutiny. If true, it would be the strongest argument favoring enlargement. Hence the decision to expand should hinge on whether increasing NATO membership will indeed spread democracy. If enlargement furthers democracy, then this would be an important reason to support it. If it does not, then the costs and risks warn against further expansion.

My central argument in this article is that NATO membership has not and will not advance democratization in Europe. The empirical record during the Cold War is clear: Inclusion in NATO did not promote democracy among its members. Further, enlargement did not contribute much to democratization in the three East European states admitted in 1999, and the promise of NATO membership is unlikely to speed democracy within any of the nine countries currently awaiting a decision on their request for membership. The weakness of the democratization argument, coupled with the costs and risks of further enlargement, caution against pursuit of this policy in the near or medium term. Instead the West should rely on the European Union (EU) to spread democracy, an approach that is more likely to foster democratization yet less likely to alienate Russia.

This article proceeds in five parts. First, I present some background on NATO enlargement. I then lay out the principal reasons for supporting expansion, contending that the democratization proposition (if valid) would be the strongest argument favoring an enlarged NATO. In the second section, I discuss the theoretical logic of the proposition that increasing NATO’s membership will spread democracy. In the third section, I explore whether NATO expansion fostered democratization during the Cold War, focusing on the cases of Turkey, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. In the fourth section, I examine NATO

---

2. Quoted in U.S. Congress, “The Debate on NATO Enlargement,” Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 105th Cong., 1st sess., October–November 1997, p. 49.

enlargement in the 1990s, exploring whether the carrot of NATO membership significantly advanced democratization in Eastern Europe, and whether it will spread democracy among the current round of applicants. Finally, after comparing the weak arguments favoring NATO enlargement against its potential costs and risks, I conclude that enlargement will not spread democracy in Europe and that the West should refrain from any further expansion.

### *Democratization in the NATO Enlargement Debate*

On April 4, 1949, twelve countries—Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United States—signed the North Atlantic Treaty. Three components of the treaty relevant to enlargement and democratization are notable. First, Article 5 is the most binding aspect of the treaty, declaring that “an armed attack against one or more of [the parties] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” Second, the treaty in two places (Articles 2 and 10) states its commitment to democratic principles. Third, Article 10 allows for the inclusion of new members by unanimous vote.<sup>3</sup> Four nations joined as new members during the Cold War: Greece and Turkey in 1952, followed by West Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982.

In the early 1990s, the U.S. government began to consider NATO’s future role in Europe. Following suggestions by the German government, President Bill Clinton developed a post–Cold War vision of the alliance that included new members, specifically former Warsaw Pact nations. In January 1994, he made a strong statement favoring their inclusion, declaring to Central European leaders that “now the question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members but when and how.”<sup>4</sup> This statement provided a bureaucratic basis for administration members such as Secretary of State Warren Christopher and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake to push for NATO enlargement. The list of potential invitees eventually narrowed; at the July 1997 Madrid summit, NATO invited the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to negotiations over their membership. In March of the following year, they officially became NATO’s newest members. Nine other states—Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and

---

3. Sir Nicholas Henderson, *The Birth of NATO* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983).

4. Quoted in James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999), p. 57. See also Warren Christopher, *In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Carter and Perry, *Preventive Defense*, pp. 21–64.

Slovenia—have formally applied for NATO membership, and in May 2000 they declared their desire to be admitted as a single group in a “big bang” expansion by 2002.<sup>5</sup>

Will NATO inclusion of these nine countries spread democracy in Eastern Europe? The answer is important for two reasons. First, the supposed democratization benefits have been and will continue to be an important public justification of NATO enlargement. Arguments for increasing membership represent the post-Cold War, neo-Wilsonian foreign policy consensus in the West that international organization, democracy, peace, and trade are all mutually reinforcing. As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright wrote, “To protect our interests, we must take actions, forge agreements, create institutions, and provide an example that will help bring the world closer together around the basic principles of democracy, open markets, law, and a commitment to peace.”<sup>6</sup> The 1991 North Atlantic Cooperation Council’s Strategic Concept calls on NATO to build security in Europe by, among other things, fostering “the growth of democratic institutions.”<sup>7</sup> In the summer of 1993, Secretary of State Christopher reviewed U.S. policy toward NATO, concluding that the alliance should be maintained and expanded eastward, among other reasons to help spread and strengthen democracy in former communist states.<sup>8</sup> Clinton explicitly made the survival of East European democracy a U.S. security interest, stating in 1994: “If democracy in the East fails, then violence and disruption from the East will once again harm us and other democracies.”<sup>9</sup> Later that year, Secretary of State Christopher told the North Atlantic Council: “Our alliance of democracies can help consolidate democracy across an undivided Europe at peace. We can help design a comprehensive and inclusive architecture that en-

---

5. Steven Woehrel, Julie Kim, and Carl Ek, *NATO Applicant States: A Status Report* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2000), p. 1; and William Drozdiak, “Nine Nations United in Bid to Join NATO,” *Washington Post*, May 20, 2000, p. A16.

6. Madeleine Albright, “The Testing of American Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 6 (November/December 1998), p. 53. As President Clinton declared in 1994, “Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don’t attack each other, they make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy.” The address is available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/states/docs/sou94.htm>. See also Strobe Talbott, “Democracy and the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 6 (November/December 1996), pp. 47–63. For theoretical and empirical development of the liberal model, see Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

7. David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1998), p. 164.

8. Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 129.

9. Quoted in Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, p. 55.

hances security and freedom for all. . . . [NATO enlargement] will strengthen the hand of forces committed to political, military, and economic reform.”<sup>10</sup>

As the policy debate over NATO enlargement developed, advocates increasingly argued that expansion would advance both security and democracy in Eastern Europe. In February 1995, Secretary of Defense William Perry presented the “Perry principles,” which would be used to determine which countries would be admitted to NATO. Declaring the spread and defense of democracy to be one of the “four key principles” of NATO, Perry stated that new members would have to maintain democratic institutions. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke publicly argued that year that NATO enlargement would spread democracy.<sup>11</sup> NATO’s July 1997 Madrid Declaration also stressed the importance of democracy by reiterating that “the consolidation of democratic and free societies on the entire continent, in accordance with OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] principles, is therefore of direct and material concern to the Alliance.”<sup>12</sup> Since then, enlargement advocates have continued to tout the democratizing advantages of NATO, including in U.S. congressional debates in 1997 and 1998.<sup>13</sup>

The goal of spreading democracy has been important for other actors as well. European states have focused on democratization as a primary argument favoring NATO enlargement. As early as 1993, the German defense minister, Volker Ruhe, advocated increased membership on the grounds that it would nurture democracy in Eastern Europe. In later years, other European governments also began to use the democratization argument in their national en-

---

10. Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 235.

11. *Study on NATO Enlargement* (Brussels: NATO, 1995). On the Perry principles, see William J. Perry, “The Enduring Dynamic Relationship That Is NATO,” *Defense Viewpoint*, Vol. 10, No. 9 (1995), <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/1995/s19950205-perry.html>. See also Strobe Talbott, “Why NATO Should Grow,” *New York Review of Books*, August 10, 1995, p. 27; and Richard Holbrooke, “America, a European Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (March/April 1995), pp. 38–51.

12. The Madrid Declaration is available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm>.

13. Bebler, *The Challenge of NATO Enlargement*, pp. 95–98. See also Christopher L. Ball, “Nattering NATO Negativism? Reasons Why Expansion May Be a Good Thing,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (January 1998), p. 60. For criticism of the democratization argument, see U.S. Congress, “The Debate on NATO Enlargement,” p. 84; Michael Mandelbaum, “Preserving the New Peace: The Case against NATO Expansion,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (May/June 1995), pp. 9–13; Stanley Kober, “James Madison vs. Madeleine Albright: The Debate over Collective Security,” in Carpenter and Conry, *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality*; Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), p. 348; and Brown, “Minimalist NATO.”

largement debates.<sup>14</sup> In 1997 President Vaclav Havel stressed the democratizing advantages of NATO enlargement when he campaigned for Czech admission.<sup>15</sup>

A second reason to examine the claim that NATO enlargement will spread democracy is that, if valid, it would be the strongest argument in support of such action. Proponents contend that the spread of democracy serves the general American and global interests of building a more peaceful and less repressive world. The assumption of U.S. policymakers that democracies are significantly less likely to fight each other has received strong support from international relations scholarship, using advanced statistical (as well as case study) methodologies, controlling for several possibly confounding variables, and using a variety of data sets.<sup>16</sup> The spread of democracy offers other benefits: Democracies engage in higher levels of trade with each other, democratic governments are less likely to violate the human rights of or commit genocide against their populations, and democracies are less likely to experience famine.<sup>17</sup> NATO enlargement would thus be worth continuing if it could spread democracy in Eastern Europe.

In contrast, the other claimed advantages of NATO expansion, including its potential to increase deterrence, are more dubious. The prospect of renewed Russian aggression against any of the current NATO applicants is extremely remote. Other than among minority ultranationalists on the political fringe, Russia has exhibited no inclination to rebuild the Soviet empire through threats or force, especially against the states that have formally applied for NATO membership.<sup>18</sup> This docility is easily understood for a variety of reasons: an awareness that empire pays no economic returns, the complete absence of a military threat from Western Europe, and a recognition that such action would devastate the emerging structure of Western-Russian coopera-

---

14. Volker Ruhe, "Shaping Euro-Atlantic Policies: A Grand Strategy for a New Era," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 129–137; and Yost, *NATO Transformed*, pp. 110, 131.

15. Vaclav Havel, "NATO's Quality of Life," *New York Times*, May 13, 1997, p. A21.

16. The democratic peace literature is enormous. Important empirical works include Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating on Peace*; David L. Rousseau, Christopher Gelpi, Dan Reiter, and Paul K. Huth, "Assessing the Dyadic Nature of the Democratic Peace, 1918–1988," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 1996), pp. 512–533; and John M. Owen IV, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

17. James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Tressa E. Tabares, "The Political Determinants of International Trade: The Major Powers, 1907–1990," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (September 1998), pp. 649–661; R.J. Rummel, *Power Kills* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1997); Amartya Kumar Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); and Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*.

18. Russian belligerence has been against nations that have not applied for NATO membership (i.e., in Bosnia, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Chechnya, Kosovo, and Ukraine).



tion. Although some foreign policy analysts have outlined scenarios of the ascension of Russian ultranationalists or the collapse of Russian democracy, the survival of an essentially mainstream Russian leadership and the failure of potential demagogues such as Aleksandr Lebed and Vladimir Zhironovsky to seize power even in the wake of the economic collapse of 1998 should strengthen Western confidence in the stability of Russian democracy and foreign policy.<sup>19</sup>

Intentions aside, the capabilities of the Russian military are not what they were feared to be during the Cold War. Russia's economic base has eroded since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and its gross domestic product has declined by 45 percent since 1991.<sup>20</sup> Operations in Chechnya convincingly demonstrated the very serious problems that face the post-Cold War Russian military. Other embarrassments such as the August 2000 sinking of the *Kursk*, the pride of the Russian nuclear submarine fleet—to say nothing of the ruthless cuts in Russian military spending in the last ten years (including the elimination of 600,000 troops announced in November 2000)—further demonstrate that even a newly belligerent Moscow leadership could not rely on the military to support any renewed aggression.<sup>21</sup> As Lawrence Freedman bluntly stated, "There is now no particular reason to classify Russia as a 'great power.'"<sup>22</sup>

Despite the virtual absence of Russian aggressiveness and the collapse of Russian power, some policy and academic analysts still worry about a hypothetical Russian threat in the future, an as yet unforeseen nationalist seizing power and somehow rebuilding Russian military power. There are two reasons why, aside from its sheer improbability, this prospect does not justify NATO enlargement. First, a NATO commitment to defend new members will have very low credibility. The deployment of U.S. troops to defend Eastern Europe from a Russian invasion is not popular with the American public, undercutting the credibility of an American commitment to defend these countries

---

19. Russians generally have accepted the basic democratic norms of free elections and expression. Paula J. Dobriansky, "Russian Foreign Policy: Promise or Peril?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 136–137; and Michael McFaul, "Getting Russia Right," *Foreign Policy*, No. 117 (Winter 1999–2000), pp. 58–71. See also Robert Legvold, "The Three Russias: Decline, Revolution, and Reconstruction," in Robert Pastor, ed., *A Century's Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 139–190.

20. *World Factbook, 2000* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2000).

21. See, for example, Anatol Lieven, "Nightmare in the Caucasus," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 145–159; Gail W. Lapidus, "Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 5–49; and Michael Wines, "Putin Cuts Forces by 600,000, Promising Military Overhaul," *New York Times*, November 10, 2000, p. A14.

22. Quoted in Legvold, "The Three Russias," p. 172.



from a Russian attack. An autumn 1998 survey found that only 31 percent of the American public agreed that the United States had a vital interest in Poland (in contrast, 87 percent agreed that it had a vital interest in Japan). Less than 30 percent of the respondents agreed that spreading democracy should be a “very important” goal of the United States, and only 28 percent favored the use of U.S. troops in response to a Russian invasion of Poland.<sup>23</sup> The American public would probably be even more reluctant to defend less well known states in Eastern Europe, such as Slovakia or Latvia, from a Russian invasion. Relatedly, the West would have difficulty convincing Russia that the sovereignty of these nations was sufficiently important for NATO to go to war to maintain their independence. The West did after all accept Soviet annexation or domination of all of these states during the Cold War without taking military action. Further, none of the candidates for NATO membership is critical to maintaining the European or world balance of power, as none have sizable military forces or economies, and all have relatively low levels of trade with the West (notably, none export an important raw material such as oil).

Second, NATO enlargement is likely to increase the chances of renewed Russian belligerence, rather than provide a useful insurance policy against it. Some observers have expressed concern that enlargement will jeopardize the West’s relationship with Russia. George Kennan, author of the famous “Sources of Soviet Conduct” essay that laid the groundwork for U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, stated it bluntly: “Expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of the entire post-cold war era.” The historian John Lewis Gaddis was equally critical: “Some principles of strategy are so basic that when stated they sound like platitudes: treat former enemies magnanimously; do not take on unnecessary new ones; keep the big picture in view; balance ends and means; avoid emotion and isolation in making decisions; be willing to acknowledge error. . . . NATO enlargement, I believe, manages to violate *every one* of the strategic principles just mentioned.”<sup>24</sup>

Fortunately, some of the gravest predictions regarding Russian reactions to NATO enlargement—such as possible Russian refusal to ratify the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) or Russian withdrawal from the Conven-

---

23. John E. Reilly, *American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, 1999* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

24. George F. Kennan, “A Fateful Error,” *New York Times*, February 5, 1997, p. A19; and John Lewis Gaddis, “History, Grand Strategy, and NATO Enlargement,” *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 1998), p. 145 (emphasis in original). See also Bruce Russett and Allan C. Stam, “Courting Disaster: An Expanded NATO vs. Russia and China,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 361–382.

tional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty—have not come to pass.<sup>25</sup> Many other issues will crowd the U.S.-Russian policy agenda over the next several years, however, including renegotiation of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) treaty in the context of American national missile defense, negotiation of START III, the continuing adaptation of the CFE treaty, oil and gas exploration in Central Asia, the management of ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and the promotion of global nonproliferation. Western and U.S. foreign policy interests would be damaged if progress in these areas were to be sacrificed for the sake of NATO expansion. A new round of enlargement pushing NATO up to Russia's borders may damage Russia-Western relations more than did the first round of enlargement. For example, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law in 2000 stating that "the expansion of military alliances" poses a threat to Russia's borders. The risk may not be in sparking a complete renewal of the Cold War, but rather in pushing Russian leaders away from the belief that the West is a trustworthy partner in cooperation. Already, NATO's Strategic Concept and its 1999 operation in Kosovo have reversed a trend in Moscow's doctrinal development away from the assumption that there are no external military threats to Russia.<sup>26</sup>

Other alleged security advantages also offer little to warrant NATO enlargement. First, qualification for NATO membership is probably not necessary as an incentive for East European states to resolve their disputes with one another. Early 1990s' fears of an epidemic of conflicts in Eastern Europe driven by border disputes and concerns for minority rights have not come to pass: The only clashes have been in former Soviet republics in the Caucasus (which have not applied for NATO membership) and the former Yugoslavia (among the former Yugoslav republics only Slovenia, which has avoided involvement in much of the post-1990 Balkan conflict, has applied for membership).<sup>27</sup> Although some attribute NATO membership demands as encouraging the 1996 Romania-Hungary reconciliation treaty, domestic political changes and incen-

---

25. For concerns about Russian reactions, see Thomas L. Friedman, "The Grand Bargain," *New York Times*, January 22, 1999, p. 25; and Doug Clarke, "Russia May Suspend CFE Cuts If NATO Expands," *OMRI Daily Digest*, April 4, 1995.

26. Celeste A. Wallander, "Wary of the West: Russian Security Policy at the Millennium," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (March 2000), pp. 7–12; Drozdiak, "Nine Nations United in Bid to Join NATO," p. A16; and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1999–2000* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 107–108. See also Paul Kubicek, "Russian Foreign Policy and the West," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, No. 4 (Winter 1999–2000), pp. 547–568. Regarding the issue of an alliance bordering Russia, NATO already borders Russia along the Poland-Kaliningrad frontier.

27. For crises through 1994, see Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

tives to qualify for EU membership were at least as important to completion of this agreement. Further, this “success” for NATO should be weighed against Romania’s failure to reach similar agreements with Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia.<sup>28</sup> Second, NATO’s alleged ability to lessen disputes between its members should not be taken for granted; NATO was famously unsuccessful in preventing conflict between Greece and Turkey during the Cold War.<sup>29</sup> This is not terribly surprising, given the deep skepticism among many observers that international security organizations can dampen conflict between their members.<sup>30</sup> Regarding Serbia, Europe’s only real post-Cold War mischief maker, the United States has already demonstrated its willingness to contain Serbian aggression, and NATO membership for countries such as Albania and Slovenia is probably unnecessary to boost the alliance’s credibility. Lastly, if accepted, the states that have formally applied for membership would be unlikely to make significant contributions to NATO operations. They can already make contributions as members of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), and Hungary as a new member of NATO provides the necessary staging areas for launching operations in the Balkans.<sup>31</sup>

---

28. Ronald H. Linden, “Putting on Their Sunday Best: Romania, Hungary, and the Puzzle of Peace,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (March 2000), pp. 121–145, especially p. 141; and Michael Shafir and Dan Ionescu, “Radical Political Change in Romania,” in *The OMRI Annual Survey of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: 1996—Forging Ahead, Falling Behind* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 160–161.

29. Ronald R. Krebs argued that NATO membership actually exacerbated conflict between these two states. Krebs, “Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict,” *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 343–377.

30. Charles L. Glaser, “Why NATO Is Still Best,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Summer 1993), pp. 26–33; John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 26–37; and Robert J. Art, “Creating a Disaster: NATO’s Open Door Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 383–403. For supporting quantitative evidence, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jon C. Pevehouse, “Trade Blocs, Trade Flows, and International Conflict,” *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Autumn 2000), pp. 794–796.

31. The PfP, created in 1994 to develop intermilitary cooperation with several Eurasian states, already attempts to do this in several former communist states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. On the contributions of PfP members in Bosnia, see Art Pin, “NATO Program for Ex-Foes Has Early Payoff,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1995, p. A1. Hungary’s location gives NATO the needed proximity to conduct ground and air operations against Yugoslavia, the region’s only serious threat. Hungary contributed to the 1999 air campaign against Serbia, as NATO aircraft flew missions from Hungarian bases, and Hungarian territory would probably have been a launching point for a ground assault. Susan Milligan, “Hungarians’ Plan: Dump Milosevic,” *Boston Globe*, June 4, 1999, p. A21; and Michael J. Jordan, “NATO Enlists a Reluctant Hungary into Kosovo War,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 2, 1999, p. 5. Even one observer who found that the new NATO members made important (though limited) contributions during the Kosovo operation argued against further enlargement. Ryan C. Hendrickson, “NATO’s Visegrad Allies: The First Test in Kosovo,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 2000), pp. 25–38, especially p. 35.

Some might counter that even if the geopolitical arguments favoring NATO enlargement are weak, expansion should still be pursued. Indeed the West ought to exploit Russia's weakness by rolling NATO right up to the Russian border, in essence kicking Russia while it is down. Even if one assumes that NATO enlargement would not cause a Russian backlash, other very real costs would trump the virtually nonexistent geopolitical advantage of engaging in a policy of post-Cold War rollback. There is the financial cost to current NATO members, with estimates reaching into the tens of billions of dollars.<sup>32</sup> More worrisome, NATO membership will force new members to increase their own spending on defense to facilitate integration into NATO's command framework; the Czech Republic, for example, is planning to heighten the share of its gross domestic product devoted to defense by a tenth of a percent per year.<sup>33</sup> The increased budget and trade deficits that may attend such growing spending are especially ill-advised for new democracies with fragile market economies, given that economic prosperity is one of the most important factors driving successful democratization.<sup>34</sup> Further, enlargement weakens NATO because the more members it has, the more difficult it will be to reach decisions. As NATO includes more states, it will become increasingly difficult to reach consensus, especially on the conduct of peacekeeping and out-of-area operations. Such consensus is especially difficult to acquire among democracies, as demonstrated by Western inaction in the early 1990s over Bosnia. The lackluster support of the Czech Republic for the 1999 Kosovo operation should give special pause to those who advocate widening NATO's decisionmaking circle even further.<sup>35</sup>

### *How NATO Might Spread Democracy*

Advocates have claimed that NATO enlargement will spread democracy. They have not, however, sufficiently explained why. This an important task, both to understand the argument and to test its propositions empirically. I develop

---

32. Amos Perlmutter and Ted Galen Carpenter, "NATO's Expensive Trip East: The Folly of Enlargement," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (January/February 1998), pp. 2–6.

33. Author's interview with Pavel Telicka, deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Czech Republic, Prague, May 19, 2000.

34. Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

35. Art, "Creating a Disaster," p. 396; and Joseph Lepgold, "NATO's Post-Cold War Collective Action Problem," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 78–106. On the Czech Republic, see Hendrickson, "NATO's Visegrad Allies," p. 35.

three mechanisms to explain how NATO enlargement could encourage democratization in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

The first mechanism is that the prospect of NATO membership can be used as a carrot to induce potential new allies to become democratic. The proposition is straightforward: NATO promises to admit states that make democratic reforms, and potential new members respond by adopting such reforms. Compliance with this democracy requirement would be relatively easy to verify, through inspection of a state's electoral laws and constitution and by election monitoring (note that transparency is also a democratic characteristic, facilitating verification). As discussed above, democracy was formally declared in 1995 as a requirement for new NATO members.

Second, NATO membership can be used as a stick to spur democratization: Any new member that reverts to authoritarian rule would be ejected from the alliance. Significantly, the stick must be credible to make the carrot incentive work. Without the threat of ejection from NATO, a tyrannical cabal within a state could permit democratic reforms, earn alliance membership, and then reimpose authoritarian rule (perhaps through a military coup) without jeopardizing the state's membership status. The stick argument also would carry more weight for new East European members, given that all former East European states have already taken significant steps toward democracy, most of them enjoying an uninterrupted decade of democratic governance.<sup>37</sup>

Significantly, there is no legal basis for the ejection of a state from NATO, within the North Atlantic Treaty or elsewhere. By ejection, I mean revocation of a state's status as a signatory of the North Atlantic Treaty, and thereby of the benefits of the security commitment in Article 5.<sup>38</sup> The only mention of exit

---

36. Another argument might be that alliances spread democracy by preventing democratic members from being attacked or threatened; see Daniel N. Nelson, "Post-Communist Insecurity," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 5 (September/October 2000), pp. 31–37; Jacques Rupnik, "Eastern Europe: The International Context," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 121–123. The empirical evidence shows, however, that neither war nor international threats undermine democracy. Dan Reiter, "Does Peace Nurture Democracy?" *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63 (forthcoming). Democracies tend to win wars with or without allies, raising confidence that even unallied democracies can defend themselves. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam III, "Democracy, War Initiation, and Victory," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (June 1998), pp. 377–389.

37. See Mary Kaldor and Ivan Vejvoda, "Democratization in Central and East European Countries: An Overview," in Kaldor and Vejvoda, eds., *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Pinter, 1999), pp. 1–24.

38. A hypothetical lesser sanction would be exclusion from certain functions or bodies. No such sanction has ever been imposed, though some states have voluntarily withdrawn from NATO's military command. This kind of lesser sanction would carry significantly less weight because the Article 5 commitment would remain intact, and because new NATO members would likely have little interest in participating in NATO activities beyond the defense of their own borders. Also, ex-

from the treaty is in Article 13, which allows for voluntary exit with a year's notice. Although both the 1995 *Study on NATO Enlargement* and the 1997 Madrid Declaration state that democracy is a prerequisite for membership, neither says anything about states that revert to autocracy being ejected from NATO or even sanctioned. In contrast, the Charter of the Organization of American States declares that "a Member of the Organization whose democratically constituted government has been overthrown by force may be suspended from the exercise of the right to participate" in OAS bodies and functions. A similar "democracy guarantee" clause was added to the Southern Cone Common Market (or Mercosur) free-trade agreement in 1996, which allows for the imposition of economic sanctions against any member that moves away from democracy. The European Union also permits the suspension of a member's treaty rights and privileges as accorded by EU treaties if that member fails to uphold the "principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law."<sup>39</sup>

The absence of a specific mechanism does not necessarily render expulsion from NATO impossible. The United States severed its security ties with New Zealand within the Australia-New Zealand-United States treaty in 1986 over the issue of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed vessels visiting New Zealand ports, even though that treaty has no provision for involuntary expulsion.<sup>40</sup> The New Zealand example should not boost confidence in the stick of NATO expulsion, however, because New Zealand has to date failed to comply with American demands for porting privileges of U.S. nuclear vessels.

The alliance's large membership further complicates efforts to expel a state from the North Atlantic Treaty. The most legally defensible strategy for ejecting a state would probably be by unanimous vote of the other members, given that Article 10 allows for new members to join by unanimous vote. Reaching a unanimous decision to expel a newly authoritarian East European state would be difficult, however, because other states may not agree that democratic reversal constitutes a sufficient condition for expulsion. Consider two likely candidates for the next round of inclusion, Romania and Slovenia. If either were

---

pulsion of a state from NATO's military command would reduce NATO's ability to encourage civilian control of the military in that state.

39. The North Atlantic Treaty can be found in Henderson, *The Birth of NATO*, pp. 119–124. The OAS charter is available at <http://www.oas.org/>. On the Mercosur treaty, see Calvin Sims, "Chile Will Enter a Big South American Free-Trade Bloc," *New York Times*, June 26, 1996, p. D2. On the EU, see Articles 6 and 7 of the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, available at [http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/eu\\_cons\\_treaty\\_en.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/eu_cons_treaty_en.pdf).

40. Paul Landais-Stamp and Paul Rogers, *Rocking the Boat: New Zealand, the United States, and the Nuclear-Free Zone Controversy in the 1980s* (Oxford: Berg, 1989).



admitted and then experienced autocratic reversion, France, Italy, or Turkey might vote to keep the new member because of cultural and historic ties (France) or because of local security concerns (Italy and Turkey). France pressed extremely hard to get Romania included in the 1997 Madrid Declaration, conceding to the list of three new members only after NATO agreed to take up Romania's case again in 1999.<sup>41</sup> Faced with such opposition, a push by the United States to line up support for ejection would likely split the alliance, with the United States on one side and its most important European allies on the other. A failure to achieve unanimity would then leave the United States in the difficult position of promising to honor its NATO commitments only selectively. Not only would this position be legally insupportable, but it might also undermine its reputation as a treaty guarantor. Even if the United States did elect to withdraw its security commitment, this action might be unmotivating to the newly autocratic state if the state could still count on the commitment of other large NATO members such as Britain, Italy, or France.

Lastly, the threat of ejection is undermined by a fatal Catch-22. In a dangerous environment, the threat to eject autocratic states from the alliance may not be credible, because the democratic members of the alliance may prefer to retain a useful alliance member even if it is autocratic. This explains why neither Greece nor Turkey was ejected from or even sanctioned by NATO when they reverted to autocratic rule. In a low-threat environment, however, the possibility of ejection will not deter a state from reverting to autocracy, as long as the state believes that it can afford to be unallied in the absence of significant international danger.

The third argument as to how NATO membership could nurture democracy concerns civil-military relations. One potential threat to democracy is military intervention in domestic politics, specifically military coups d'état, which are frequently ignited by economic collapse. A recommended inoculation against such military intervention is institutionalized civilian supremacy over the military that the military accepts.<sup>42</sup> Specific suggestions regarding the formulation

---

41. Both France and Italy pushed for the inclusion of Romania and Slovenia in the first round of expansion in Eastern Europe. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, pp. 120–121; Karl-Heinz Kamp, "NATO Entrapped: Debating the Next Enlargement Round," *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), pp. 170–186; and Jonathan Peterson and Norman Kempster, "NATO Formally Invites Three Nations to Join Fold," *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 1997, p. A1. Turkey favors Bulgarian and Romanian NATO membership. Ali L. Karaosmanoglu, "The Limits of International Influence for Democratization," in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds., *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), pp. 214–215.

42. This is similar to the objective control model of civil-military relations described in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1957).



of civil-military relations in East European states include having a civilian minister of defense, ensuring that civilian officials work in the defense ministry, keeping the military out of partisan politics, maintaining legislative supervision of both the defense budget and defense policy, and encouraging open discussion of defense issues.<sup>43</sup>

How can NATO membership help to solidify civilian control of the military? One proposition is similar to the carrot-and-stick argument: Alliance membership will be contingent upon institutionalizing (perhaps by constitutional design or amendment) civilian control of the military. As Madeleine Albright proclaimed in 1997, "Just the prospect of NATO enlargement has given Central and Eastern Europe greater stability than it has seen in this century. . . . Country after country has made sure that soldiers take orders from civilians, not the other way around."<sup>44</sup>

A second and more sophisticated proposition is that membership in a democratic alliance, especially one that is highly institutionalized, provides an environment within which transgovernmental contacts between militaries can spread norms of civilian control of the military. Some institutionalists have argued that international organizations in particular can be effective in spreading norms, and thereby change national preferences. Robert Keohane and others have proposed that transgovernmental and transnational connections can affect domestic politics, in particular on issues such as domestic governance and human rights.<sup>45</sup>

Transgovernmental linkages between militaries are thought to institutionalize civilian control both by exchanging technical information and by spreading norms of conduct. The "technical" information in this context concerns the building of legal structures—including matters of constitutional form, budgetary authority, and so forth—which would in turn provide an institutional foundation for civilian control. Spreading norms would mean the communication from the members of one military to another of the importance of accepting civilian control of policy, avoiding participation in national politics, and so on.<sup>46</sup>

---

43. Ben Lombardi, "An Overview of Civil-Military Relations in Central and Eastern Europe," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 1999), p. 15.

44. Madeleine Albright, "Why Bigger Is Better," *Economist*, February 15, 1997, p. 21.

45. Robert O. Keohane, "Conclusion: Structure, Strategy, and International Roles," in Keohane, Joseph Nye, and Stanley Hoffman, eds., *After the Cold War: State Strategies and International Institutions in Europe, 1989–91* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 381–406; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed., *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures, and International Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

46. Talbott, "Why NATO Should Grow," p. 27.

Security institutions, however, are unlikely to address the core factors that affect the likelihood of democratic transitions and breakdowns. The quantitative empirical literature on democratization shows conclusively that economic prosperity is a central factor affecting the likelihood of democratic emergence and collapse. Richer autocracies are more likely to undergo the transition to democracy, and more prosperous democracies are less likely to experience democratic failure. On the latter point, Adam Przeworski and his colleagues have argued that once a democracy's per capita income reaches \$4,000 per year, it essentially cannot be overthrown. Other research has found that higher levels of development are an effective inoculation against military coups d'état, and relatedly that the military is likely to resist civilian control when there is internal instability.<sup>47</sup> Whether democracy emerges and thrives is more likely to be determined by economic factors than by membership in an international security institution.

### *NATO and the Spread of Democracy during the Cold War*

During the Cold War, NATO was focused more on maintaining allied unity in the face of the Soviet threat than on democratizing its members, arguably reducing the significance of the Cold War period in evaluating the claim that NATO spreads democracy. Still, to provide a complete empirical record, it is important to cover the Cold War period as well as the post-Cold War period. Further, some NATO enlargement advocates have argued that the alliance's success in spreading democracy during the Cold War should increase confidence that it will be able to do so after the Cold War, highlighting the importance of examining the historical record in both periods.<sup>48</sup> The focus here is on autocratic or democratizing members or potential members of NATO. Overall, the cases provide almost no evidence that NATO membership significantly promoted democracy: The transgovernmental effects on civil-military relations were uneven, the stick of NATO ejection was never applied

---

47. Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*, p. 273; Yi Feng and Paul J. Zak, "The Determinants of Democratic Transitions," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 162–177; John B. Londregan and Keith Poole, "Poverty, the Coup Trap, and the Seizure of Executive Power," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (January 1990), pp. 151–193; and Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

48. Talbott, "Why NATO Should Grow," p. 28; and Albright, "Why Bigger Is Better."

to members that reverted to autocracy, and in the instance of NATO entry there is no evidence of the NATO carrot spurring democratization.

Turkey is an example of a state undergoing turbulent democratization despite NATO membership. Turkey has experienced three breakdowns of democracy since 1952—in 1960, 1971, and 1980—all because of military intervention motivated by perceived civilian misgovernance. In a fourth episode, in 1997, the military successfully pressured an elected pro-Islamic prime minister to step down from power in favor of a secular leader. None of these actions inspired NATO to eject or even sanction Turkey. During the 1960 military coup against the elected Democratic Party government, for example, despite the decisions of the coup plotters to execute the prime minister, foreign minister, and finance minister, NATO took no action against Turkey.<sup>49</sup> This pattern continued in the second and third Turkish democratic breakdowns, as well, though Turkey's economic ties to the European Community—especially through the Council of Europe—may have facilitated the country's return to democracy.<sup>50</sup>

Spain emerged from World War II under the rule of the dictator Francisco Franco and was not an original NATO member. Spanish inclusion into NATO (culminating in formal entry in 1982) and Spanish democratization occurred at about the same time. Importantly, democracy was not then a requirement for membership. Notably, even if the military's failed February 1981 coup had been successful, this would probably not have jeopardized Spain's bid for membership, given NATO's dominant interest in containing communism.<sup>51</sup> Some have attributed the perseverance of Spanish democracy since 1982 to NATO membership, arguing that the acceptance of civilian supremacy was encouraged by the institutional structure of NATO within which civilians are dominant.<sup>52</sup> Disturbingly, however, several of the 1981 coup participants had taken courses at American military schools in part to fulfill the pre-NATO se-

---

49. George S. Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1972), pp. 83, 86–87; and *Keesing's Record of World Events*, June 1997, p. 41702.

50. Ihsan D. Dagi, "Democratic Transition in Turkey, 1980–83: The Impact of European Diplomacy," in Sylvia Kedourie, ed., *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), p. 127; and Karaosmanoglu, "The Limits of International Influence for Democratization," pp. 128–131.

51. Howard J. Wiarda, *The Transition to Democracy in Spain and Portugal* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1989), p. 193; Felipe Aguero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 308, n. 46; and Victor Alba, "Spain's Entry into NATO," in Lawrence S. Kaplan, Robert W. Clawson, and Raimondo Luraghi, eds., *NATO and the Mediterranean* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1985), p. 101.

52. Aguero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy*, especially pp. 205–206.

curity agreements between the United States and Spain.<sup>53</sup> Therefore the attempted overthrow occurred despite the presence of the kinds of transgovernmental military-to-military contacts that are supposed to make coups less likely.

Portugal was also a dictatorship after World War II, although unlike Spain it was an original NATO member. Interestingly, the government of Antonio Salazar in 1949 did not even pay lip service to the North Atlantic Treaty's rhetorical embrace of democracy.<sup>54</sup> The dictatorship was toppled in a military coup in 1974 and replaced by a democracy. Here, NATO membership's contribution was to expose the Portuguese military to foreign influences, opening their eyes to the flaws in Salazar's dictatorship and producing rifts between civilians and the military.<sup>55</sup> This exposure to the outside world through military and other exchanges, however, soured some officers on affiliation with the West, pushing them to consider joining the Nonaligned Movement as an alternative to NATO membership.<sup>56</sup>

Greece entered NATO in 1952. The (limited) postwar Greek democracy persevered until a military coup in April 1967, which was motivated by a desire to protect the corporate interests of the armed forces. Interaction with officers from other NATO states had failed to instill in the Greek military respect for the idea of civilian control; for example, the Greek military resisted a May 1964 effort by the civilian leadership to expand control over and depoliticize the armed forces. The coup did not disrupt support for and aid to Greece. Democracy returned in 1974, but not because of NATO or American pressure.<sup>57</sup>

In sum, what does the Cold War historical record suggest about the effects of NATO membership on democratization? Is there evidence favoring the carrot, stick, or transgovernmentalism arguments? In total, NATO membership has exerted only minimal influence on democratization. Regarding civil-military relations, NATO membership has generated disparate results. Turkey is a mixed case; several military coups occurred while Turkey was a NATO mem-

---

53. Alba, "Spain's Entry into NATO," p. 101.

54. Rainer Eisfeld, "The Ambiguity of Portugal's Foreign Policy in the World," in Kenneth Maxwell and Michael H. Haltzel, eds., *Portugal: Ancient Country, Young Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center Press, 1990), p. 84. See also Albano Nogueira, "Portugal's Special Relationship: The Azores, the British Connection, and NATO," in Kaplan, Clawson, and Luraghi, *NATO and the Mediterranean*, p. 90.

55. Douglas Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 147.

56. Eisfeld, "The Ambiguity of Portugal's Foreign Policy in the World," p. 86.

57. Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Constantine P. Danopoulos, *Warriors and Politicians in Modern Greece* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1984).

ber, although contact with NATO militaries probably helped to restore civilian rule.<sup>58</sup> NATO membership did not prevent a military coup in Greece in 1967, although in Spain no military coup has occurred since accession to NATO in 1982. Military contacts with NATO strengthened the Portuguese military's motives for overthrowing the dictatorship there. But although this action eventually had a pro-democratic impact, it runs contrary to the model of civil-military relations touted by NATO of the military accepting firm civilian control. Also, the leftist leanings of the Portuguese military jeopardized Portugal's membership in NATO after the intervention. The Turkish military interventions also were taken for what was seen as the good of the country; indeed NATO membership may have indirectly contributed to the 1960 coup by raising the expectations of junior officers and inspiring them to rebel against their superiors.<sup>59</sup>

There is little support for either the carrot or stick arguments. NATO has never sanctioned, much less ejected, a state for domestic political changes, but not because it lacked opportunity: Both Greece and Turkey experienced reversions to autocracy.<sup>60</sup> Portugal's membership as a dictatorship demonstrates that strong national security interests can trump liberal interests in advancing democracy. Even at the dawn of the Cold War, however, realpolitik concerns did not always dictate policy (note Spain's exclusion). NATO membership's lack of effect on democratization echoes the results of quantitative research, which found that from 1960 to 1992 NATO membership did not delay the breakdown of democracy.<sup>61</sup>

### *NATO and the Post-Cold War Spread of Democracy*

The post-Cold War period offers another opportunity to evaluate the question of whether NATO membership can facilitate democratization. I discuss first the cases of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, which entered NATO in March 1999. Did the promise of NATO membership speed the democratization process in these three countries?

The simple answer is no, because their societies and their elites were committed to democracy anyway. One way to assess the impact of the NATO

---

58. Karaosmanoglu, "The Limits of International Influence for Democratization," p. 126. For a more negative appraisal, see Lombardi, "An Overview of Civil-Military Relations in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 17.

59. Nicole and Hugh Pope, *Turkey Unveiled: A History of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook, 1997), p. 91.

60. Phillippe C. Schmitter, "The International Context of Contemporary Democratization," *Stanford Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1993), pp. 26-27.

61. Reiter, "Does Peace Nurture Democracy?"

membership carrot is to examine the progress that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic had made toward democratization by early 1994 when Clinton remarked that NATO enlargement was no longer a question of “whether NATO will take on new members but when and how.”<sup>62</sup> History reveals that these states had made long strides toward democracy even before the NATO carrot was dangled before them. Competitive electoral systems were established, and elections were held by 1990 in all three states (though in 1990 the Czech Republic was still part of Czechoslovakia). None of the three states suffered democratic breakdown in those early years or later.<sup>63</sup> Importantly, the idea of NATO enlargement originated with these states, with Poland calling for membership as early as 1992 and President Vaclav Havel pressing for Czech membership during a 1993 visit to the United States.<sup>64</sup>

In short, the link between NATO enlargement and East European democratization is best understood in the following terms: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic chose democracy because it was the will of the majority; the ruling leaderships and publics favored membership; and the leaderships began to request entry following the installation of democratic institutions in each country. In interviews, policymakers in the Czech Republic and Hungary echoed this view: NATO membership was not necessary for democratization because each already had a strong national commitment to democracy.<sup>65</sup> This is different from the process envisioned by the carrot hypothesis: that NATO promised membership in exchange for the continuation of democratic reforms, and that these reforms went farther and faster than they would have absent the promise of NATO membership.

A special issue is civilian control of the military. Some hope that the military-to-military contacts of NATO membership will spread norms of military acceptance of civilian control. The Partnership for Peace group already attempts to do this in several former communist states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The PFP may have unexpected adverse effects on strengthening the civilian hold on the military, however, because its programs focus on building military rather than civilian expertise. This may contribute to the sentiment among the military that a relative lack of civilian knowledge makes civilian

---

62. Quoted in Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, p. 57.

63. In 1990 each had zero autocracy and at least eight democracy scores from the Polity data set.

64. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*.

65. In Prague, interviews with Pavel Telicka, first deputy minister and state secretary for European Affairs; and Brigita Chrastilova, director of law and legislature for the office of the president. In Hungary, interview with Oscar Nikowitz, senior NATO adviser to the minister of foreign affairs. All interviews with the author, in Budapest, May 2000.



oversight unnecessary, which in turn may actually undermine civilian control of the military.<sup>66</sup>

Did the prospect of NATO membership push Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to take steps that significantly reduced the chances of military coups? Again, the answer is no. Some have argued that the PfP and the requirements of NATO membership did move these states toward the institutionalization of civilian control of the military. In none of the three, however, did democracy face a real threat from political action by the military. Even though these states may enjoy stronger civilian control of the military and better defense policymaking because of the incentives introduced by NATO membership, they have not avoided military coups because of these incentives.<sup>67</sup>

In Poland, the strengthening of civilian control of the military began even before the fall of communism. Between 1988 and 1989, the Polish government moved authority of the National Defense Council (which controlled the defense and interior ministries) from the Communist Party to the president. As of April 1989, the council has been a state bureaucracy controlled by the parliament. The overthrow of the Communist Party saw continued moves to subordinate the military to noncommunist, civilian control. Two noncommunist civilians, Bronislaw Komorowski and Janusz Onyszkiewicz, were appointed as deputy defense ministers, and continued efforts to remove the influence of the Communist Party in the military and in foreign relations. The solidification of civilian control continued after Lech Walesa became president in December 1990. His moves to consolidate power in the presidency at the expense of the parliament also meant the expansion of (civilian) presidential authority over defense matters. Walesa chaired the National Defense Council and also exerted authority over the National Security Bureau, which is responsible for military doctrine, threat assessment, and reforms of the defense establishment.

The postcommunist government in Poland moved to solidify civilian control of the military from the earliest stages, banning officers from taking part in po-

---

66. Lombardi, "An Overview of Civil-Military Relations in Central and Eastern Europe," pp. 28–29. For other views on the PfP, see Dana Priest, "U.S. Military Builds Alliances across Europe: Effort to Expand Influence and Security Called Risky," *Washington Post*, December 14, 1998, p. A1; Daniel N. Nelson, "Civil Armies, Civil Societies, and NATO's Enlargement," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Fall 1998), pp. 137–159; and John Ibbitson, "Reshaping Warsaw Pact Armies: Canadian Military School Teaching English to Former Communist Officers," *Gazette* (Montreal), June 6, 1997, p. A10.

67. On Poland, for example, see Elizabeth P. Coughlan, "Democratization and the Military in Poland: Establishing Democratic Civilian Control," in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Daniel Zirker, eds., *The Military and Society in the Former Eastern Bloc* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1999), pp. 115–136.



litical activity and specifically weakening the power of ex-communist military officers. There was a minor ruffle in civil-military affairs in 1994 when Walesa attempted to increase military involvement to strengthen his hand at the expense of the parliament and cabinet; some have argued that ambiguities in the Polish constitution facilitated this power play. However, note that it was a civilian (not military) action that appeared to undermine strict civilian control. These constitutional ambiguities were mostly resolved by the passage of a series of 1996 laws aimed at the ministry of defense and the 1997 constitution, but critically the constitution effectively shifted power away from the president and toward the parliament, specifically by placing the chief of the general staff under the authority of the minister of defense, which in practice means under the National Assembly. As such, the 1994 fracas and the legal changes that followed did not indicate a genuine military threat to democratic rule, followed by the institutionalization of civilian control, which may in turn have been motivated by the carrot of NATO membership. Rather, the 1994 episode was caused by the president's political ploy to increase military involvement in politics, which in turn motivated changes to shift the balance of power in favor of the parliament at the expense of the president.<sup>68</sup>

Power plays between the president and parliament aside, underlying this process has been the consistent willingness of the Polish military in the 1990s to accept democratic principles and civilian control. This acceptance emerged because President Wojciech Jaruzelski, Poland's military ruler under martial law in the 1980s, agreed to civilian control and the move to democracy. The rest of the armed forces saw advantages in depoliticization both because of past negative experiences with military intervention in politics and because the military wanted to avoid association with the tough decisions to be made on shock therapy economic reform policies, leading one observer to conclude that "fortunately for Poland, the officer corps is not likely to question the principles of democracy."<sup>69</sup>

---

68. See also Jeffrey Simon, "Central European Civil-Military Relations and NATO Expansion," *Strategic Forum*, No. 22 (March 1995); Dale R. Herspring, "Civil-Military Relations in Post-Communist Poland: Problems in the Transition to a Democratic Polity," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (March 2000), pp. 89-94; Janusz Onyszkiewicz, "Poland's Road to Civilian Control," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 99-109; and Coughlan, "Democratization and the Military in Poland."

69. Quoted in Jerzy J. Wiatr, "Military Politics and Society in Poland during the Democratic Transition," in Anton A. Bebler, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Post-Communist States: Central and Eastern Europe in Transition* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), p. 84. Elizabeth Coughlan also remarked that "there is no evidence that the military has contested the principle of civilian control [in Poland]." Coughlan, "Democratization and the Military in Poland," especially p. 133.

Hungary also established civilian control of the military in the early 1990s. As early as 1989, the postcommunist government recognized the importance of establishing civilian control of a depoliticized military. In February 1990, the Hungarian National Assembly passed legislation giving the parliament control over the Hungarian military, specifically by taking from the Defense Council the power to deploy the armed forces. In the next two years, disputes followed over specific issues relating to civil-military relations, such as control of military education and the use of the armed forces domestically. As in Poland, however, the disputes were over which civilian sector of the government had power over the military; they did not emerge from military attempts to assert authority at the expense of the civilian leadership. A constitutional court ruling facilitated the 1992 restructuring of the defense ministry by increasing the power of the civilian defense minister. Further reforms followed, including the 1993 Defense Law, which clarified areas of authority and accountability. These were accomplished relatively swiftly and successfully, in part because the Hungarian military had maintained a similarly subordinate role under communism.<sup>70</sup>

Of these three countries, the risk of a military coup was and is the lowest in the Czech Republic. Indeed the principal problem in Czech civil-military relations is not dissuading a military man on horseback from riding to power, but rather making the military more respected in society. The military has traditionally gotten little respect in Czech society, a condition reflected in the Czech saying that the last battle the Czech army fought was in the Thirty Years' War (which it lost). The original program of the Civic Forum called for civilian control of the military as early as 1989, and in December of that year all political parties were banned from conducting activity in the armed forces. Civilian control was further advanced with the appointment of a noncommunist civilian defense minister in 1990. In the early 1990s, draft-dodging was rampant in Czech society, rendering the very idea of a coup by this traditionally marginalized and unpopular institution highly implausible. Like its neighbors, however, the Czech Republic moved to institutionalize civilian control of the military. The December 1992 Czech constitution requires parliamentary approval for a declaration of war or the dispatch of troops be-

---

70. Zoltan Barany and Peter Deak, "The Civil-Military Nexus in Postcommunist Hungary," in Danopoulos and Zirker, *The Military and Society in the Former Eastern Bloc*, pp. 31–49; Patrick H. O'Neil, "Hungary: Political Transition and Executive Conflict: The Balance or Fragmentation of Power?" in Ray Taras, ed., *Postcommunist Presidents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 195–224; and Jeff Simon, "Central European Civil-Military Relations and NATO Expansion," in Bebler, *Civil-Military Relations in Post-Communist States*, pp. 120–122.

yond the republic, and declares the president to be the head of the armed forces.<sup>71</sup>

It is useful to consider other NATO aspirants in Eastern Europe. The failure of states such as Romania and Slovakia to undergo sufficient political or economic reforms to qualify them for inclusion in the June 1997 Madrid list must be considered at least in part a failure of the carrot argument. The prospect of NATO membership was insufficient incentive to push these states toward accepting an adequately extensive level of democratization.

One could argue, however, that Slovakia might offer some evidence favoring the carrot argument. It has had democratic political institutions since emerging as a sovereign state in 1993, but under the elected strongman Vladimir Meciar the practice of Slovak politics deviated from democratic norms.<sup>72</sup> Once it became apparent at the July 1997 Madrid summit that Slovakia would not be on the list of first-round invitees, one could argue that the Slovaks realized that their democratic reforms would have to go further before their nation could be considered for NATO membership. The most important step in this direction was to oust Meciar from power, which the Slovaks did in their September 1998 election, a contest that enjoyed fair practices and an 84 percent turnout.

The Slovak example has several problems, however. Among them, there is no evidence that the issue of NATO membership was a major factor in steering voters toward dumping Meciar in 1998. Several other factors—including the perception that Meciar's policies were decreasing Slovakia's chances of earning membership in the EU and dissatisfaction among ethnic Hungarians with their treatment under Meciar—helped turn voters toward the opposition.<sup>73</sup> This focus on the EU over NATO reflected popular preferences: A poll taken a few weeks after the September 1998 election revealed that 70 percent of the Slovak public supported entrance into the EU, whereas only 48 percent favored NATO membership.<sup>74</sup> This lukewarm support for NATO accession does

---

71. Marybeth Peterson Ulrich, "The Democratization of Civil-Military Relations in the Czech Republic," in Danopoulos and Zirker, *The Military and Society in the Former Eastern Bloc*, pp. 51–75; Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), pp. 233–234; Zdenek Kavan and Martin Palous, "Democracy in the Czech Republic," in Kaldor and Vajvoda, *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 78–92; and *Constitution of the Czech Republic of 16 December 1992*, English translation (Prague, 1992).

72. Martin Budora, "The Present State of Democracy in Slovakia," in Kaldor and Vajvoda, *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 93–104.

73. Jacques Rupnik remarked that "Slovakia is certainly the clearest case so far of the effectiveness of EU democratic conditionality." Rupnik, "Eastern Europe," p. 126.

74. Eduard Kukan, "Slovakia and NATO," in Bebler, *The Challenge of NATO Enlargement*, pp. 165–166; and "Slovakia: Poll: 70 Percent Support EU, 48 Percent NATO Accession," Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Eastern Europe, 98-334, November 30, 1998.

not square with the interpretation that Slovak voters ejected Meciar from office principally because they were furious that he had missed an opportunity for Slovak participation in the first round of NATO enlargement. Indeed the NATO issue was probably neither a necessary nor sufficient cause for Meciar's loss at the polls, given the public's greater interest in joining the EU and general disillusionment with the Meciar government.

One might also argue that Romania is an example of the carrot of NATO membership spurring democratization. A communist-dominated party (the Party on Social Democracy in Romania [PSDR]) ruled the country after a bloody revolution in 1989, and was not turned out of power until the 1996 election. Did the 1995 democracy standards for NATO membership push the Romanians to make crucial steps toward democracy in 1996, effecting what was arguably the nation's first ever peaceful leadership transition? The answer is no. Notably, Romania held its first postcommunist election in 1992, before the issue of NATO membership became salient. That election was determined to be free and fair by international observers, and the PSDR under President Ion Ionescu won not because the election was rigged, but because the opposition was disorganized and fragmented. In 1996 opposition leader Emil Constantinescu won because he had proved to be not only a party uniter but also an effective campaigner. Even more important, Romanians were dissatisfied with the poor state of their economy. In short, factors other than a desire to prepare Romania's entry into NATO led to the leadership transition.<sup>75</sup>

The carrot of NATO membership is unlikely to influence significantly the democratization of states currently aspiring to enter NATO. The most likely candidates for the next round of enlargement—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia—have all established constitutional democracies carrying out free and fair elections since the fall of communism.<sup>76</sup> Hence the NATO carrot is no longer necessary to encourage democratization. Indeed the exclusion of many of these states (especially the Baltic states) from the first round of NATO enlargement indicates that progress toward establishing a market democracy is not sufficient for NATO membership. The Baltic states,

---

75. Woehrel, Kim, and Ek, "NATO Applicant States," p. 28; Virginia Marsh, "The End of the Beginning," *Financial Times*, November 19, 1996, p. 21; Jane Perlez, "Man in the News: Romania's Anti-Communist Revolutionary," *New York Times*, November 19, 2000, p. A3; Christine Spolar, "New Leader Vows Results for Romania," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1996, p. A16; and Shafir and Ionescu, "Radical Political Change in Romania."

76. Woehrel, Kim, and Ek, "NATO Applicant States"; and Kaldor and Vejvoda, *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe*.

for example, were left out of the first round of enlargement because of concern for the Russian reaction.<sup>77</sup> This undermines the power of NATO membership as a carrot for democratization, because it seems that adopting a market democracy does not guarantee NATO membership.

Finally, democratization in Eastern Europe after the Cold War is most likely to be advanced by international institutions other than NATO, specifically the EU, which is likely to do better than NATO at providing the carrot and stick necessary to promote and maintain democratization. Including a state in the web of EU institutions strengthens domestic economic and political reforms, thus making it more difficult to overturn them. As mentioned, the EU both explicitly requires democracy as a condition of membership and contains a measure permitting the sanctioning of a member that backs away from democratic norms.<sup>78</sup> The carrot of EU membership continues to be the most effective international means of coaxing Turkey toward democracy. In May 2000 the Turkish parliament elected a prominent judicial official to be president, signaling Turkey's determination to make the democratic reforms necessary for entry into the EU.<sup>79</sup> EU membership is likely to prove more effective than NATO membership as both a carrot and a stick: Even after the Cold War, when NATO is supposedly putting more emphasis on democratization, confidence that NATO or the United States will be willing to punish NATO members if they backslide on democracy or human rights should be tempered. For example, the end of the Cold War has not put democratization and human rights significantly higher on the agenda of U.S.-Turkish relations. In 2000, high politics proved dominant when the U.S. Congress elected not to pass a resolution condemning the 1915 Turkish genocide against Armenians for fear of disrupting U.S.-Turkish relations and jeopardizing American security interests.<sup>80</sup> Significantly, Russia has not opposed the eastward expansion of the EU, raising the possibility that EU enlargement may permit the consolidation of de-

---

77. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When*, p. 118.

78. John Pinder, "The European Community and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe," in Geoffrey Pridham, Eric Herring, and George Sanford, eds., *Building Democracy: The International Dimension of Democratization in Eastern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), pp. 119–143; Heather Grabbe and Kirsty Hughes, *Enlarging the EU Eastwards* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), pp. 43–46; Susan Senior Nello and Karen E. Smith, *The European Union and Central and Eastern Europe: The Implications of Enlargement in Stages* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 19–24; and Rupnik, "Eastern Europe."

79. "Turkey's Parliament Selects Top Judge to Be Country's President," *New York Times*, May 6, 2000, p. A4.

80. Eric Schmitt, "House Backs Off on Condemning Turks' Killing of Armenians," *New York Times*, October 20, 2000, p. A11.

mocracy in Europe without the disadvantage of undermining relations between Russia and the West.<sup>81</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Proponents of NATO enlargement argue that it will help spread democracy in Eastern Europe. The experience of the Cold War and post-Cold War periods demonstrates, however, that NATO enlargement has not and will not have a significant impact on the survival of democracy. During the Cold War, some states flipped between democracy and autocracy with no effect on their status within NATO. Since the end of the Cold War, former communist states have successfully pursued democracy, demonstrating a willingness to democratize regardless of whether NATO membership is in the offing. This does not mean that the West is powerless in advancing the laudable goal of promoting democracy in Eastern Europe. The EU is likely to be equally if not more effective than NATO at democratizing Eastern Europe, without the costs or the geopolitical risks incurred by enlarging the alliance. More broadly, NATO's inability to spread democracy exemplifies limits in the democratizing potential of international institutions, providing an important caveat to the liberal optimism of the synergy between democracy and international organization.<sup>82</sup>

NATO's inability to spread democracy is a telling blow against arguments for further enlargement. NATO did not push democratization during or after the Cold War, and there is no reason to believe that it will do so in this decade. Further NATO enlargement has very real costs, including financial costs to both old and new members and the deterioration of relations with Russia, potentially sacrificing progress on important issues such as Balkan peacekeeping and global nonproliferation. These costs encourage the rejection of any further enlargement.

---

81. Roland Dannreuther, "Escaping the Enlargement Trap in NATO-Russian Relations," *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter 1999–2000), pp. 145–164.

82. Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*; and Jon C. Pevehouse, "International Influences and Democratic Consolidation," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia, September 2–5, 1999.