

# foreign policy *in focus*



Interhemispheric Resource Center  
and  
Institute for Policy Studies



## Costs and Dangers of NATO Expansion

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created in 1949, according to a popular adage, for three purposes—to keep the Americans in Europe, the Russians out, and the Germans down. Since 1989 the security landscape of Europe has changed tremendously. The Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union, and the Warsaw Pact are no more. Yet NATO continues to adhere closely to its original objectives. NATO is still the key instrument of U.S. involvement in Europe. It remains deeply concerned about Russian influence. And it anchors

Germany firmly in a security alliance, allaying the fears of neighboring countries of a resurgent, reunified power.

U.S. policy toward NATO has remained remarkably consistent throughout the post-1989 convulsions. The Bush administration steadfastly refused to consider dissolving NATO in favor of strengthened European security structures such as the OSCE (now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe). But with the cold war effectively over, NATO will have to find new rationales—it will have to go “out of area,” as Senator Richard Lugar predicts, or go “out of business.” Without the Soviet Union, NATO needs new enemies. Thus NATO has begun to look outside Europe (toward rapid response to conflicts in the Persian Gulf or the Horn of Africa) and outside traditional military definitions of security (to issues such as crime, terrorism, and narcotics) to justify its existence. By handling these issues within the NATO framework, the U.S. can count on European contributions to offset costs.

But the chief preoccupation for U.S.-NATO relations has been NATO expansion into the former

Warsaw Pact. In 1994, responding to calls for NATO membership from the new democracies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the United States created an interim structure—the Partnership for Peace (PFP). Now host to 27 members, the PFP has worked closely with European security organizations and has begun to prepare countries—even those that have no stated intention of joining—for eventual NATO membership. The Clinton administration, with strong support from the Republican majority in Congress, is also committed to expanding NATO eastward—it is no longer a question of “if,” but of “how and when.”

The “how and when” of NATO expansion have proven controversial. Like the European Union, NATO must decide whether to expand broadly or deeply—to welcome all prospectives or to integrate a select number of new members more closely into NATO operations. The Clinton administration seems to favor the latter option, and the most likely candidates for early admission would be three of the Visegrad Four—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (the fourth, Slovakia, would probably not be in the first group). Second-tier candidates include Slovenia and Romania. In a campaign speech in October 1996, Clinton called for expansion by 1999 with a decision on the first candidates in mid-1997.

NATO expansion is currently the centerpiece of U.S. security policy toward Europe. It is not, however, a fait accompli. Expansion will cost a great deal of money and encounter possible opposition from deficit hawks stateside. Unless handled adroitly, expansion could strain U.S.-European relations as Western Europe struggles to define its own security identity. Conflicts both real and potential—from the former Yugoslavia to Central Asia—may also temper U.S. enthusiasm for raising the ante of its involvement in European security.

### Key Points

- With the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet threat, NATO must find new rationales for its existence.
- The Clinton administration is urging NATO to welcome new members from East-Central Europe as early as 1999.
- The U.S. treats expansion as a fait accompli, but many serious obstacles remain.

The current U.S. policy on NATO expansion suffers from three main problems: it needlessly provokes Russia, it would remilitarize and sharpen conflicts in the region, and it would cost both Europe and the U.S. a great deal of money.

Although a member of PFP, Russia has steadfastly opposed NATO expansion. Virtually all political forces within the country view this policy as an encirclement, a containment that will lead to greater isolation. Thus, Russia is particularly sensitive about the inclusion of bordering countries—the Baltics, Ukraine, Moldova. Should the Baltic countries join NATO, Russian officials hinted that they would counter with troop concentrations or tactical nuclear weapons on the border, thus decreasing, not increasing, security in the region. The Yeltsin government also threatened to scuttle key arms control agreements such as START II, CFE, and INF. Since Russia poses a considerably diminished security threat to Europe (see *In Focus: U.S.-Russian Relations*), expansion is an aggressive act that threatens to undo decades of security cooperation and tilt Russia closer toward considering an anti-Western alliance with China or pariah states such as Iraq.

Even if Russia should suddenly change its mind, NATO expansion still represents a step backward for Eastern and Central Europe. On the heels of Soviet withdrawal, expansion would reverse the trend toward demilitarization in the region. New NATO members would have to devote enormous funds to buy the weapons and communication systems necessary to mesh with the Western command structure—an increase by one estimate of at least 60 percent and possibly 80 percent over current military expenditures. These defense budget hikes would put enormous pressure on strained budgets and divert money from the reform of productive sectors at a time when the region is cutting its military spending (Hungary has pared its defense spending by 60 percent since 1988, Poland by 44 percent). Expansion will also undo the steps, however tentative, that these countries have taken toward military conversion.

NATO has promised to pick up some of the bill, but this aid would be earmarked for military expenditures rather than critical economic or civic reform. U.S. policy is driven in part by domestic considerations: new NATO members would be prime markets for U.S. arms exports (F-16 and F-18 fighter aircraft and Cobra attack helicopters have already been offered to the region). Yet, even with NATO subsidies and weapons giveaways from the Pentagon, the Congressional Budget Office

(CBO) estimates that the Visegrad Four would still be unable to afford the necessary modernization.

The costs to the region are not simply monetary. By admitting certain countries before others, NATO would sharpen already existing divisions in the region—between the more prosperous North and the less prosperous South, between Eastern Europe and the struggling countries of the former Soviet Union. This division in particular threatens Ukraine, whose eastern half contains a large ethnic Russian population. Russia simply cannot countenance the absorption of Ukraine into a Western security alliance. Ukraine itself suspects that it will be allowed to slip into the Russian sphere of influence in exchange for Russia's approval of Visegrad Four membership in NATO. The Clinton administration's preference for limited expansion—a "two-community solution"—would draw new lines of demarcation through an already conflicted region.

Should NATO pursue membership for the region as a whole, a new set of problems arise. For instance, how would NATO handle already existing conflicts—between Hungary and Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine, Ukraine and Russia, Estonia and Russia? To date, only Greece and Turkey maintain a substantial rift within the alliance. Could the alliance survive a new set of fault lines?

Finally there are the costs to the U.S. of NATO expansion. According to the CBO, incorporation of just the Visegrad Four would cost an additional \$60 to \$125 billion over 15 years. The bill for the U.S. would be \$5 to \$19 billion—but only if the Visegrad Four covered a substantial portion of the upgrade, an implausible scenario.

The countries of East-Central Europe largely favor joining NATO. The region has been promised a great deal in terms of European integration and Western aid, but integration remains in limbo, and Western aid has not been forthcoming in large quantities. Sadly, NATO expansion has become a substitute for more substantial political and economic integration into the West, which is what East-Central Europe really desires.

Lost in the discussion of NATO expansion is the obvious question: is the alliance still necessary after the end of the cold war? The risks outlined above seem to outweigh any possible benefits for postcommunist Europe.

**Key Problems**

- NATO expansion needlessly provokes Russia.
- Expansion promotes divisions in an already divided region.
- Expansion halts the demilitarization of East-Central Europe and costs alliance members a great deal of money.

<p><i>Foreign Policy in Focus</i> is a joint project of the Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). It is supported by subscriptions, by financial support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and by various church organizations. <i>In Focus</i> internships are available.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Orders and subscription information:</b></p> <p><b>Mail:</b> PO Box 4506 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87196-4506</p> <p><b>Phone:</b> (505) 842-8288</p> <p><b>Fax:</b> (505) 246-1601</p> <p><b>Email:</b> resourcectr@igc.apc.org</p>					
<p><b>Editors</b> Martha Honey (IPS) Tom Barry (IRC)</p>		<p><b>Production</b> Grant Moser</p>					
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Communications Director</b> Erik Leaver (IRC)</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Editorial inquiries and information:</b></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>IRC Editor</b> <b>Phone:</b> (505) 388-0208 <b>Fax:</b> (505) 388-0619 <b>Email:</b> resourcectr@igc.apc.org</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>IPS Editor</b> <b>Phone:</b> (202) 234-9382/3 ext. 232 <b>Fax:</b> (202) 387-7915 <b>Email:</b> ipsps@igc.apc.org</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.zianet.com/infocus">http://www.zianet.com/infocus</a></p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p><b>IRC Editor</b> <b>Phone:</b> (505) 388-0208 <b>Fax:</b> (505) 388-0619 <b>Email:</b> resourcectr@igc.apc.org</p>	<p><b>IPS Editor</b> <b>Phone:</b> (202) 234-9382/3 ext. 232 <b>Fax:</b> (202) 387-7915 <b>Email:</b> ipsps@igc.apc.org</p>	<p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.zianet.com/infocus">http://www.zianet.com/infocus</a></p>	
<p><b>IRC Editor</b> <b>Phone:</b> (505) 388-0208 <b>Fax:</b> (505) 388-0619 <b>Email:</b> resourcectr@igc.apc.org</p>	<p><b>IPS Editor</b> <b>Phone:</b> (202) 234-9382/3 ext. 232 <b>Fax:</b> (202) 387-7915 <b>Email:</b> ipsps@igc.apc.org</p>						
<p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.zianet.com/infocus">http://www.zianet.com/infocus</a></p>							

If not NATO expansion, what can the U.S. do to strengthen security and cooperation in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union?

- The U.S. must work to strengthen the OSCE, an organization whose membership includes virtually every country from the U.S. to Tajikistan. While an OSCE that subordinates both NATO and the European Union's military arm (a Russian proposal) is unrealistic at the moment, the OSCE could gradually assume more responsibilities. It has already done important mediating, monitoring, and peacekeeping work in Nagorno-Karabakh, Latvia, Georgia, Moldova, and Macedonia. It is also helping to supervise Bosnia's national elections. The OSCE's strength—non-military conflict resolution—is precisely NATO's weakness.
- The U.S. must commit to a policy of arms control and disarmament for the region, not remilitarization. It should consider the recent suggestion by

## Key Recommendations

- Strengthen the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a body committed to conflict mediation and peace-building.
- Promote arms control and disarmament in East-Central Europe, and declare a moratorium on the transfer of advanced weapons to the region.
- \* Engage Russia in the process of determining a new European security architecture.

Belarus to establish a nuclear-free weapons zone in East-Central Europe and build on the unprecedented denuclearization of Ukraine and Kazakhstan. NATO has indicated that it will not deploy nuclear weapons in new member states, but no official documents have been signed to that effect. The U.S. should declare a moratorium on the transfer of advanced weapons to the region, and it should provide funds for conversion of arms production facilities in the

region. It should also work with Russia to reduce further the levels of nuclear and conventional armaments in areas that border the region (see *In Focus: U.S.-Russian Relations*).

- The Clinton administration must engage Russia, not alienate it. Instead of provoking Russia with a neocontainment policy, the United States must include Moscow in regular discussions with top security institutions such as the North Atlantic Council, the Defense Planning Committee, and the Nuclear Planning Group. It must encourage constructive relations between Russia and its European neighbors, not defensiveness and mis-

trust. The U.S.-proposed NATO-Russia Charter is a step in the right direction, but not if it acts as a mere fig leaf for expansion.

- The U.S. should consider a "Scandinavian solution" for East-Central Europe and the Baltics—an extension of NATO security guarantees but not membership.
- The U.S. must commit to "Europeanizing" security by supporting a stronger European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). The diplomatic failures around the war in Yugoslavia demonstrated that the European Union was not yet able to act with a common foreign policy. The U.S. must support European efforts to strengthen its capacity to respond to conflicts without resorting to NATO. This policy would require U.S. support for a stronger Western European Union, the security arm of the European Union.

The Clinton administration has pointed to several other virtues of NATO expansion—consolidating economic and political reform, monitoring human rights, conducting peacekeeping, and combating environmental problems. These have dubious validity. Economically, NATO has only been a burden to its member states. It has never promoted democracy (for example, looking the other way at Turkey's democratic flaws). Finally, NATO was conceived as—and continues to be—a military alliance designed to counter military threats. It is not designed to do peacekeeping, and it has no training in or understanding of human rights monitoring or environmental protection.

If the U.S. is truly committed to peacekeeping, resolving ethnic disputes, solving environmental problems, and monitoring human rights, it should devote funds to organizations already involved in these issues rather than expanding NATO to assume roles it was never intended to fulfill. NATO expansion is not inevitable, despite statements from the Clinton administration. Expansion requires a two-thirds majority vote in the U.S. Senate. Several key politicians have recently changed their minds about NATO. John Linder (R-GA), for instance, recently switched his position from pro-expansion to a recognition that NATO "expired in August 1989." In addition, civic pressure on behalf of disarmament and demilitarization can play a critical role in blocking NATO expansion.

*Written by John Feffer, National Writers Union, Philadelphia. Author of Shock waves: Eastern Europe after the Revolutions. Co-editor of Europe's New Nationalism.*

## ***Global Focus: A New Foreign Policy Agenda 1997-1998***

*Edited by Tom Barry (IRC) and Martha Honey (IPS)*

This collection of policy briefs describes current U.S. foreign policy, examines its problems, and prescribes alternative policies.

Available January 1997.

\$15.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

# sources for more information

## Organizations

### British-American Security Information Council

1900 L Street NW, #401  
Washington, DC 20036  
Voice: (202) 785-1266  
Fax: (202) 387-6298  
Email: basicusa@igc.apc.org

### Congressional Budget Office

Second and D Streets SW  
Washington, DC 20515  
Voice: (202) 226-2809

Martin Butcher, Tasos Kokkinides, and Daniel Plesch, Study on NATO Enlargement: Destabilizing Europe (BASIC, 1995)

"The Costs of Expanding the NATO Alliance," Congressional Budget Office, March 1996.

Jonathan Dean, "No NATO Expansion Now," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, May 1996.

Ted Galen Carpenter, *Beyond NATO* (Washington: Cato institute, 1994).

Tasos Kokkinides, "Financial Costs of NATO Enlargement," *Network on European and Transatlantic Security*, May 1996.

Andrei Kozyrev, "Partnership or Cold Peace," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1995.

Richard Kugler, *Enlarging NATO: The Russian Factor* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1996).

Anatol Lieven, "Baltic Iceberg Dead Ahead: NATO Beware," *The World Today*, July 1996.

Michael Mandelbaum, "Preserving the New Peace: The Case Against NATO Expansion," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1995.

"Moscow's Strategy for Opposing NATO Expansion," *Prism*, Jamestown Foundation, June 9, 1996.

"NATO, European Security, and Transatlantic Relations," *Security*, Spring 1996.

Jeremy Rosner, "NATO Enlargement's American Hurdle," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1996.

Gwendolyn Sasse and Tasos Kokkinides, "NATO Enlargement and Ukraine," *Basic Papers*, April 1996.

## Publications

"Arming Central and Eastern Europe," *Basic Papers*, September 1995.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Plan for Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1995.



The Interhemispheric Resource Center, founded in 1978, produces books, policy reports, and periodicals about U.S. foreign policy and U.S.-Mexico border issues. The Institute for Policy Studies has served as an independent center for progressive research and education for more than three decades.

Interhemispheric Resource Center  
P.O. Box 4506  
Albuquerque, NM 87196-4506

Institute for Policy Studies  
1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20009



## Subscription Information

You can subscribe to *In Focus* at one of three levels, you can receive *In Focus* in one of five ways, and you can choose which categories of *In Focus* you want to receive. Please mark the level of subscription you want, how you want *In Focus* delivered to you, and the topic categories you want. There is no extra charge for email delivery to mail and fax subscribers. (Individual copies of *In Focus* are \$2.50, postpaid; bulk orders of *In Focus* are \$12.00 for 10 copies, postpaid; orders for delivery outside the US are double the listed prices.) Make checks payable to the Interhemispheric Resource Center. We also accept VISA and MasterCard.

### Level

- \$15 10 briefs  
 \$30 20 briefs  
 \$60 50 briefs

### Delivery

- Regular mail only  
 Fax only  
 Email only  
 Regular mail and email  
 Fax and email

### Topic Categories

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All (receive all briefs)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Aid   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexico                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Policy Overview    | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Governance/United Nations                     | <input type="checkbox"/> South America              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade and Investment       | <input type="checkbox"/> International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Debt | <input type="checkbox"/> Africa                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government Agencies        | <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Farm  | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle East                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military and Peace         | <input type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigration                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Asia/Pacific               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights and Democracy | <input type="checkbox"/> Central America                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Western Europe             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment                | <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean  | <input type="checkbox"/> Central and Eastern Europe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Labor                      |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Former Soviet Union        |

Name		Institution	
Street Address			
City	State	Zip Code	
VISA/MasterCard Number		Expiration Date	
Signature	Daytime Phone	Fax Number	Email Address