‘One in, all in?’ NATO’s next enlargement

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In the wake of the war in Kosovo, and the subsequent downfall of President Milosevic, it was easy to see NATO as the most powerful military organization in the world. A large number of states that are geographically close to the alliance share this assessment and therefore quite naturally seek to benefit from NATO membership. Managing this persistent demand to enlarge, however, has confronted the alliance with a number of difficult political and strategic issues.

At NATO’s Madrid summit in 1997, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (the so-called Visegrad Three) were invited to join, and they formally acceded to the alliance shortly before the 1999 Washington summit.[1] The alliance also noted at Washington that it would consider further enlargement at its summit meeting in Prague in November 2002. The NATO secretary-general, Lord Robertson, reiterated this claim in June 2001, saying that ‘NATO hopes and expects, based on current and anticipated progress by the aspiring members, to continue the process of enlargement at the forthcoming Prague summit. In other words, the so-called “zero option” is off the table.’[2] There are currently ten official applicants for membership—Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (the so-called Vilnius Nine), plus Croatia—and there is a very real possibility that other states, such as Ukraine,[3] might follow in the not too distant future. The question is not whether NATO will invite more states to become members at the Prague summit, but how many it will invite.

Four years ago, Karl-Heinz Kamp argued that without a clear structure for enlargement based on agreed principles and criteria, NATO would become entrapped in a continual series of enlargements without reference to political direction, coherence or military efficiency.[4] NATO at present seems to be

[1] Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation, 8 July 1997, at http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97–081e.htm; Washington summit communiqué, 24 April 1999, at “http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm” http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99–064e.htm.

[2] Lord Robertson, ‘NATO: managing the challenges of today, and tomorrow’, speech at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington DC, 20 June 2001, at http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s010620a.htm, p. 2.

[3] Ukraine publicly announced in May 2002 that it would seek membership of NATO. See Associated Press, ‘Ukraine seeks to enter NATO’, *New York Times*, 23 May 2002.

[4] Karl-Heinz Kamp, ‘NATO entrapped: debating the next enlargement round’, *Survival* 40: 3, Autumn 1998.

moving towards approaching the new round of enlargement in much the same way as it did the last.[5] This approach would entail simply inviting a select number of states to join the alliance (speculation currently puts this number at between three and seven[6]), possibly repeating the process at some future date to account for those states that do not receive an invitation in 2002 or who have yet to declare their interest in joining. This procedure, moreover, gives no explicit consideration to accession after invitation. The implication is that those states invited at one summit will simultaneously accede at or shortly before the next, in much the same way as the Visegrad Three did in 1999. Such an approach is undoubtedly very appealing politically to many current members. But enlargement conducted simply by default on a selective and limited basis is likely to be attended by a number of problems relating to the security and stability of the uninvited states, the reaction of Russia, NATO–EU defence and security relations, and the impact on alliance political and military effectiveness. NATO needs to consider how to manage the enlargement of its membership, both at Prague and beyond, lest the process engender serious repercussions for the alliance and for European security.

There is an alternative to ad hoc sequential enlargement. The applicant states, meeting in Vilnius on 19 May 2000, issued sets of principles focusing on the solidarity and cooperation that they would develop in their collective search for admission to NATO together, a commitment reiterated in Brussels in December 2000 and more recently at Riga in July 2002.[7] Their call for a 'big bang' approach needs to be taken seriously and, drawing upon early work by Jiri Sedivy,[8] this article seeks to do so. It begins by examining the potential problems of the current approach to enlargement, characterized as a 'default' approach. Next, the various alternative approaches that NATO could adopt are set out. Finally, a detailed outline is given of a managed enlargement based on the idea of issuing a qualified invitation to the large majority of current aspirant states, as well as a firm signal of intent to the remainder, to be followed by a staggered process of accession.

Problematic consequences of selective enlargement

If NATO at the 2002 Prague summit proceeds in much the same way as it did at the 1997 Madrid summit and invites only a few select states to become members

[5] See NATO Fact Sheet, 'The accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland', at http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/access.htm.

[6] See e.g. 'NATO lawmakers give nod to seven aspirant countries', *AFP*, 28 May 2002, repr. in *NATO Enlargement Daily Brief* (*NEDB*), 28 May 2002, 16:53 EDT; Maxim Kniazkov, 'US adopts more-is-better NATO formula', *Baltic Times*, 9 May 2002, republished at *Hoovers Online*, 9 May 2002, at http://hoovnews.hoovers.com/fp.asp?layout=displaynews&doc_id=NR20020509670.4_6f0b000d5c204164; Steven Erlanger, 'For NATO, little is sure now but growth', *New York Times*, 19 May 2002.

[7] See joint statement of the foreign ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, Brussels, 15 Dec. 2000, at http://www.nato.int/pfp/sk/statement121500.htm; 'NATO hopefuls pledge no shirking as entry looms', *Reuters*, 6 July 2002, at http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/world/international-nato-enlargement.html?pagewanted=print&position=top.

[8] For a very persuasive analysis of this approach, see Jiri Sedivy, 'The puzzle of NATO enlargement', *Contemporary Security Policy* 22: 2, Aug. 2001, pp. 1–26.

of the alliance, it risks a number of unwelcome consequences. First, the candidate states that are not invited might suffer increased instability in three areas: military–strategic, economic and political. Each would affect the candidate states to a different degree. Moreover, military, economic and political insecurity are intricately linked, so that each can contribute to the worsening of the situation in the other areas. The threat of a strategic vacuum and military insecurity is particularly prominent in the case of the Baltic states, which feel the greatest need of a security guarantee because of their historical experiences and anxiety over the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.[9] However, other sources of military insecurity, such as transnational crime and terrorism, affect all aspirants, in particular the candidates in south-eastern Europe.[10] Already the prospect of NATO membership has significantly contributed to keeping these dangers in check as aspirants have been encouraged to restructure and redeploy their armed forces. As the leaders of some candidate states readily admit, failure to be invited to join NATO might undermine these achievements.[11]

Moreover, military and strategic insecurity might exacerbate the economic dangers associated with rejection by NATO. In particular, they could impede the restructuring of defence industries among the applicants and prolong existing proliferation risks.[12] Most crucially, military instability could prevent much-needed foreign investment in the candidate states and stifle their long-term development towards functioning market economies.[13] Such possible economic instability would not only further delay the accession of the candidate states to NATO and the EU, it would also pose political dangers such as the resurgence of communist parties because of popular discontent with the apparent failure of market reforms. The political situation is particularly precarious in those states, such as Bulgaria and Romania, where economic improvements have been relatively slow.[14] Further, the impression that NATO does not, and may never, recognize the significant sacrifices which have been made both by governments in central and eastern Europe and by the publics they represent might well lead to a political backlash, especially in those states, such as Slovakia and Slovenia, where popular support for NATO membership is below 50 per cent.[15]

[9] James Morrison, 'Embassy row', *Washington Times*, 19 April 2001.
[10] See Bert Koenders, 'Draft report of the Sub-Committee on Central and Eastern Europe on "NATO enlargement"', 23 Aug. 2001, at http://www.naa.be/publications/comrep/2001/au-214-e.html.
[11] See e.g. Clifford Beal, interview with the Romanian president Ion Iliescu, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 9 May 2001.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Robert Anderson, 'Slovaks lead NATO aspirants', *Financial Times*, 21 May 2001; 'Stoyanov assures NATO of "irreversibility" of Bulgaria's desire for membership', *Bulgarian News Agency* (*BTA*), 30 April 2001; 'Latvian president responds to questions on Baltic NATO membership', *Helsingin Sanomat/ BBC Monitoring*, 8 May 2001.
[14] See Koenders, 'Draft report of the Sub-Committee on Central and Eastern Europe'.
[15] See 'Slovak soldiers increasingly support Slovak entry into NATO', *Czech News Agency* CTK, 10 July 2001; Editorial, 'A commitment to Europe', *Washington Post*, 29 April 2001; Nicholas Fiorenza, 'Aspiring NATO member', *Armed Forces Journal International*, April 2002, at http://www.afji.com/AFJI/Mags/2002/April/polbudget.html.

Finally, in addition to creating new dangers, a selective approach to enlargement might reverse the positive developments which have been set in motion with NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP).[16] MAP's most prominent achievements have been to encourage good-neighbourly relations, strengthen cooperation among the candidate states and create further impetus for military, economic and political reforms. Key to this process has been the assumption among the current aspirants that fulfilment of the MAP standards will improve their chances of attaining NATO membership. If accession is postponed, therefore, it will undermine the MAP process by withdrawing one of the main incentives to reform among the aspirant states.[17]

The second potential consequence is that continuous enlargement might well elicit an unwelcome backlash in Russia. Official ties between Russia and NATO, which were severed by Moscow in 1999 primarily in response to the alliance's use of force in Kosovo, have been gradually restored over the past three years. This *rapprochement* has been based on a pragmatic realization by President Vladimir Putin and his administration that, whatever the disagreements between Moscow and the alliance, NATO remains 'a real entity in European and world policy' and thus that Russia's own security interests are best served by a 'constructive interaction' with it.[18] Prior to 11 September 2001, this pragmatism had meant that Putin and the Russian civilian leadership were much more restrained in their opposition to enlargement than President Boris Yeltsin had been. Putin had been at pains to stress that NATO was not a threat to Russia, had talked of enlargement in tones of bewilderment rather than anger (questioning why enlargement was necessary, given that Russia posed no threat to the applicants) and even raised the possibility of Russia itself joining the alliance.[19] Moscow's *rapprochement* with the West, and with the US in particular, was accelerated by Putin's quick and wholehearted support of Washington's actions against the Taliban and the al-Qa'ida terrorist network in Afghanistan in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks. There was early speculation that Moscow might seek to use its support for Washington, which included acquiescence in the establishment of US military bases in several of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia, as political leverage to stem a further enlargement of the alliance.[20] Instead, Moscow continued to seek to improve its ties to the US and NATO, accepting the alliance's offer to replace the moribund Permanent Joint Council with a new body designed to give Russia a greater consultative role in select alliance decisions and in May 2002 signing an agreement creating a NATO–Russia Council.

[16] See Membership Action Plan, at http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99–066e.htm.
[17] Anthony J. Blinken, 'NATO needs to grow', *New York Times*, 2 April 2001.
[18] President Putin's speech to the Russian Foreign Ministry Collegium, 26 Jan. 2001, as carried on *Johnson's Russia List*, 27 Jan. 2001, via http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/.
[19] 'Putin softens tone on Baltic quest for NATO', *Monitor* (Jamestown Foundation), 6 Sept. 2001; P. Baker, 'Putin offers West reassurances and ideas on NATO', *Washington Post*, 19 July 2001; D. Hoffman, 'Putin says "Why not?" to Russia joining NATO', *Washington Post*, 6 March 2000.
[20] See Benjamin Smith, 'US, Russia allegiance in war on terror may stall Baltic states' entry into NATO', *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 5 Oct. 2001.

Overarching these moves, moreover, is the strategic vision held by Putin that no alternative exists to greater Russian integration with the West. Putin shares, in this respect, the view of both Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev that Russia's economic modernization is dependent on such a course. But where Putin has moved ahead of his predecessors is in the recognition that any relationship with the West (and the US specifically) is no longer one of equals. Russia ought not, in other words, to take principled positions (on enlargement, missile defence, Iraq and so on) only to court embarrassment in the face of American (and to some degree, European) indifference.[21] It would be much better advised to adopt a 'realistic' course of seeking to ally itself with the powerful and to promote any possible Russian advantage in the face of the inevitable. Such a calculation is as relevant to the Russian position on the 'war on terrorism' or the American withdrawal from the Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty as it is to the issue of NATO enlargement.[22]

Despite this shift in Russia, it should not be assumed that Moscow has been won over to the cause of alliance enlargement. Russia's official National Security Concept lists 'NATO's eastward expansion' as a 'fundamental threat' to Russia.[23] Indeed, just as Putin was signing the agreement on the new NATO–Russia Council, Russia's foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko suggested that further eastward enlargement was a 'mistake', asking '[f]rom whom is NATO preparing to defend its new members? And why is such a defence needed if we are no longer enemies and the period of confrontation is over?'[24] Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, meanwhile, suggested in July 2002 that Russia would be 'forced to review not only its own military positions but also the entire spectrum of international relations' should the Baltic states join the alliance.[25]

In fact, the second post-Cold War enlargement, to be inaugurated at Prague in 2002, is in some ways even more problematic for Moscow than the earlier wave in 1999. The accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland may have made the loss of Russian influence irreversible, but once this bitter pill was swallowed, bilateral relations with these countries noticeably improved. While a similar state of affairs can be envisaged should Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania accede to NATO, relations with the Baltic states are likely to be much more difficult. Putin publicly stated in June 2002 that Baltic membership in NATO would be 'no tragedy' for Russia, but tempered this observation by noting that '[w]e do not think NATO's enlargement improves anyone's security,

[21] See e.g. the interview with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in *Izvestiya*, 10 July 2002, as reported in *Johnson's Russia List*, 11 July 2002, at http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/.

[22] For such an interpretation of Russian foreign policy under Putin, see D. Trenin, *Putin's 'new course' is now firmly set: what next?*, Moscow Carnegie Center briefing paper no. 6, June 2002; V. Sobell, 'Russia turns West', *World Today*, Nov. 2001, p. 19; E. Barjarunas, *Putin's Russia: whither multi-polarity?*, publication F76, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, March 2002.

[23] English-language version available at *Johnson's Russia List*, 20 Jan. 2000, at http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/.

[24] Quoted in 'Russia and NATO to seal new era of cooperation', *New York Times*, 27 May 2002, at http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/world/international-nato-russia.html?pagewanted=print&position=top.

[25] 'Russia to review military if NATO expands', *Reuters*, 18 July 2002.

neither of the countries which intend to join NATO nor the organisation itself.'[26] The Baltic states are exceptional from Moscow's point of view given their status as former republics of the USSR, the residence there of significant numbers of Russian-speakers, and their strategic proximity to St Petersburg and the Russian Baltic fleet based in Kaliningrad (also possibly the site of Russian tactical nuclear weapons). On this basis, it has been argued that the Baltic states possess particular strategic vulnerabilities, which render NATO defence guarantees largely untenable. Such worst-case thinking may be out of line with Russia's current military ambitions, but by embracing Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, NATO will at a minimum have to address operationally the possibility (albeit remote) of both conventional and nuclear scenarios in the region.[27]

While these types of consideration are more hypothetical than real, Baltic membership does present other dangers to the alliance. Should relations with Moscow deteriorate, Russia would have a relatively soft target over which to attempt leverage and pursue strategies of destabilization. Further, the inclusion of the Baltic states in NATO against Russian wishes (however emolliently expressed by Putin) could embolden other interested former Soviet republics—Azerbaijan, Georgia and, not least, Ukraine—to pursue membership in a concerted fashion. Whether these states are admitted depends, in part, on their military and political readiness to assume the obligations of membership (and at present, all three are a long way from this point[28]). None of these states, moreover, has formally begun the process of requesting accession. Nevertheless, an invitation to the Baltic states at Prague could provide the trigger for such a request. This would confront the alliance with the difficult issue of having to deal with states where Russia still has extensive strategic, political and economic interests, and can exert considerable influence. Ukrainian membership, in turn, could bring into the arena of realistic contemplation the development that hitherto has remained in the realm of speculation, namely Russian entry into NATO. Of course, this may seem an enlargement too far; but if, in the light of this possible train of events, NATO were to back-pedal on Ukraine's accession, a problem of another sort arises: how to justify curtailing an enlargement process which had seemed to be open to all comers. And any such rationale, however presented, would, in turn, risk upsetting the careful and, in many respects, successful cultivation of Kiev which NATO has pursued in recent years.

A further issue is that of NATO's European dimension and its relationship with the EU. The pressure on the diplomatic agenda over the next two years will be immense. The key aims for the EU include the development of a rapid reaction force, in line with the Helsinki force goals, by the end of 2003, and the

[26] Quoted in Marcus Warren, 'Putin lets Nato "recruit" in Baltic', *Daily Telegraph* online, 25 June 2002, at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2002/06/25/wnato25.xml&sSheet=/news/2002/06/25/ixworld.html.

[27] *Strategic and operational implications of NATO enlargement in the Baltic region*, White Paper, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Washington DC, June 2002, pp. 3–4, at http://www.ifpa.org/pdfs/whitepaper.pdf.

[28] See e.g. 'NATO urges Ukraine to modernize for membership bid', *New York Times*, 9 July 2002.

further enlargement of the EU so that any new members might participate in the 2004 European parliamentary elections. A central question for NATO is: What impact will its own enlargement have on such developments?

The effort to resolve the NATO–EU security relationship satisfactorily is already seriously constrained by the problem posed by the non-EU members of NATO, and in particular Turkey,[29] which have serious concerns about the implications of the development of the EU's Common European Security and Defence Policy. The addition to NATO of more members that are not also members of the EU could exacerbate the current dilemmas unless these are resolved before the new members take their seats at the alliance's decision-making tables.[30]

The last main consideration is that further enlargement carries with it ramifications for NATO itself, in particular for its political and military effectiveness. The alliance principle of consensus means that its decision-making process is cumbersome, and this awkwardness has become more evident as NATO has taken on ever more tasks, up to and including the deployment of crisis response operations that have encompassed the use of force. Probably the most prominent example is provided by the problems of decision-making during the Kosovo military campaign.[31] But the ponderous nature of decision-making in NATO is not simply a problem in respect of the hard decisions on whether and how to use force taken by the North Atlantic Council (NAC); rather, it permeates the entire decision-making structure of the alliance, affecting all decisions, large or small.[32] Secretary-General Lord Robertson, in large part driven by US concerns about the effectiveness of NATO, has been pushing for reform of the alliance's decision-making process since early 2002.[33] In particular, the alliance needs to determine whether it can continue to adhere to the principle of consensus in each of the some 400 committees it currently encompasses, or whether the principle of consensus should actually be applicable only to a severely pared-down number of its most important internal councils. The periodic ad hoc addition of yet more voices throughout a consensus-based structure can only worsen the problem, unless Robertson's reform effort is successful.

Adding new members, particularly if they are invited on an episodic basis, also has potentially significant implications for the alliance's military effectiveness. New member states will expect, in line with NATO's practice, to be assigned a certain number of functional posts within the structure of the Supreme

[29] See e.g. Martin Walker, 'Greece, Turkey stymie EU's rapid reaction force', *Washington Times*, 5 June 2002.

[30] These issues are analysed at length in M. Webber, T. Terriff, J. Howorth and S. Croft, 'The Common European Security and Defence Policy and the "third country" issue', *European Security* 11: 2, 2002, pp. 75–100.

[31] See Dana Priest, 'Soldiering on in a war of constraints', *Washington Post*, 30 May 1999; Bradley Graham and Dana Priest, 'Professional consensus: no way to fight a war', *International Herald Tribune*, 7 June 1999; Dana Priest, 'Target selection was long process', *Washington Post*, 20 Sept. 1999.

[32] See e.g. Michael Evans, 'Nato "under threat from red tape"', *Times Online*, 16 May 2002, at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3–297770,00.html.

[33] See e.g. Judy Dempsey, 'Robertson declares war on old guard to reinvent Nato', *Financial Times* online, 6 Feb. 2002, at http://news.ft.com/ft/gx.cgi/ftc?pagename=View&c=Article&cid=FT3ACG9LDXC&liv=true.

Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). A particularly salient aspect of this is the desire to be assigned one or more 'flag' posts, which carry influence, prestige and symbolism. There are, however, only a finite number of posts available within SHAPE, and hence present member states will have to give up posts that they are currently allocated to make room for new officers. This replacement process need not itself affect SHAPE's ability to function efficiently if the new officers are completely fluent in its working languages and have a thorough working knowledge of its operational concepts and practices. But should these qualifications be lacking (as was the case in some instances after the first round of enlargement), these officers, in spite of their undoubted competence, will bring little of substance to the organization.

Another military problem is the gap between the military capabilities of current member states and those of prospective members, and what this implies for integrating the new members' militaries.[34] Critical is the issue of interoperability: the capability of all forces to work alongside other alliance armies and replace them if necessary. One important aspect of this issue concerns equipment, and in particular the compatibility of means of secure communication. But probably even more important than the right equipment is the structural reform, education and training of the aspirant states' militaries to bring them up to minimal NATO standards, including the ability to communicate in one of NATO's two official languages.[35] Meeting these standards has proved problematic for the alliance's three newest members, as their equipment, training standards and doctrine, and even language skills, all fall short of what is required for effective integration. Although these three states have been successful in integrating politically, there is, as Janusz Onyszkiewicz, head of Poland's national defence committee in parliament, admitted in mid-2001, 'in military integration much is left to do'.[36] This has exacerbated the development of a two-tier military structure within NATO, with one tier composed of the standardized military forces that are well trained, professional, deployable, interoperable and better equipped, and the other composed of the non-standardized militaries that are conscript-based, immobile, top-heavy, poorly equipped and less effective.[37]

The central problem that new members have faced, and continue to face, in meeting their commitments to attain NATO military standards has been financial. Developing and maintaining modern armed forces is very expensive, and their economies have not developed sufficiently for them to sustain appropriate levels

[34] '9 NATO candidates pledge to join in a "Big Bang" bid', *International Herald Tribune*, 20 May 2000.

[35] See e.g. 'Bulgarian army does not train enough', *Standard*, 11 June 2001; Primoz Savc, State Undersecretary, MoD, Slovenia, Second International Conference on the Lessons Learned and the Enhancement of the Membership Action Plan, 28–29 May 2001, Sofia, Bulgaria, at http://www.md.government.bg/_en_/Conf_2805/conf_2805.html.

[36] Quoted in 'Nato's newer members battle to upgrade their military punch', *Financial Times* online, 10 July 2001, at http://news.ft.com/ft/gx.cgi/ftc?pagename=View&c=Article&cid=FT30PA3WZOC&live=true&tagid=ZZZAFZAVA0C&subheading=europe.

[37] See Jeffrey Simon, 'The new NATO members: will they contribute?', *Strategic Forum*, 160, National Defence University, INNS, April 1999, at http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum160.html. Indeed, in light of the growing gap in military capabilities between the US and the rest of NATO's current members, the alliance has to be concerned about the development of a three-tier military structure.

of defence spending.[38] The current group of aspirant states face the same sets of daunting problems in upgrading their military capabilities not only to meet NATO standards but also to provide for their own security. Although they are working with NATO through the MAP to realize the reforms necessary to attain these goals, they have a long way yet to go.[39] If any of these states were accepted into membership before they reach at least minimal NATO standards and the capability of managing their own security, they would not only be unable to contribute significantly to NATO security, whether for Article 5 or non-Article 5 military operations, they would also pose an increased burden on NATO's already stretched military capabilities because of the requirement for the alliance to assure their national security.

Alternative principles of enlargement

Given the problems likely to follow a repeat of the ad hoc approach to NATO enlargement used in 1997, what might the alternative approaches be? This section makes a distinction between styles of invitation and the conduct of an accession process. From a consideration of both aspects, a preferable alternative approach emerges.

There are three different styles of enlargement that NATO might adopt at the Prague summit. The first is that of the *default position*, namely that used at the summit of 1997 in Madrid, where the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were invited to join the alliance while other states, notably Romania and Slovenia, were not, even though they received a large amount of support. This approach implies that following the 2002 summit, after some months of wrangling, two, three or even seven states might be invited to join, the selection being made on the basis of whatever has been achieved through the MAP process. The adoption of this style has implications not only for the Prague summit, but for what follows, for it sets in motion a logic for NATO's next summit, perhaps in 2005, where more states could be invited in similar fashion. In short, all states that are currently applicants would be invited to join, but those invitations would be spread out over the next two or probably three summits. The difficulties with this approach have been set out in the previous section.

The second style is that of the *regatta approach*,[40] in which a large number of states (possibly all of the Vilnius Nine) are invited to join, and then accede to

[38] See e.g. 'Nato's newer members battle to upgrade their military punch', *Financial Times* online; Christopher Lockwood, 'Nato plans for eastward enlargement put on hold', *Daily Telegraph* online, 3 April 2000, at http://www.portal.telegraph.co.uk/htmlContent.jhtml?html=%2Farchive%2F2000%2F04%2F03%2Fwnato3.html.

[39] See Peter Almond, 'NATO newcomers not a natural fit', *United Press International*, 29 May 2002, repr. in *NEDB*, 30 May 2002, 15:31 EDT; 'NATO commander urges Latvia to keep spending plans', *Reuters*, 28 June 2001; 'NATO satisfied with Slovakia's progress, but shortcomings persist', *Czech News Agency*, 20 April 2001; 'Bulgaria's army reform "progressing slowly"', *BTA*, 24 April 2001; David R. Sands, 'NATO hopefuls attempt to revive membership bids', *Washington Times*, 11 May 2001.

[40] See Tom Canahuate, 'No automatic admission to NATO, says US envoy', *Defense News* online, 16 April 2001, at http://www.defensenews.com/pgt.php?htd=i_story_290962.html; James Morrison, 'Big bang or trickle?', *Washington Times*, 19 April 2001.

the alliance in an order dictated by NATO's political and military judgement.[41] The regatta approach formalizes in advance the approach that would emerge over time with the default position. It allows NATO to decide upon its ability, as an organization, to absorb new members. The key difference from the default position is at the front of the process rather than the end: it gives applicants a clearer idea of what comes next, in effect putting them into a race with one another. And this is the central problem: such a procedure has been firmly rejected by the applicants, and the Vilnius Nine have, on the contrary, sought invitations to join the alliance together.

The third style is that of a *big bang*.[42] This—as sought by the applicants—would see each of the Vilnius Nine receiving an invitation at the Prague summit to join NATO,[43] with all the states subsequently acceding to the alliance at the same time. Thus, as long as a state had applied by a set deadline ahead of a summit, it would know that its application would automatically be accepted. This is the position preferred in principle by the current applicants. But, crucially, this style would effectively allow any state the same privilege in future, whether that state be Austria, Ukraine, Georgia or Russia. Such an option reduces the ability of NATO to select new members: an application almost automatically leads to an invitation. However, this reflects not only the reality of the applicants' preference, but also the logic of statements made, above all, by President Bush. Speaking to the North Atlantic Council in June 2001, Bush said that at the Prague summit NATO 'should continue to include new members able and willing to strengthen our alliance. No state should be excluded on the basis of history or geography . . . And we should look ahead, beyond Prague, to our vision of a truly united Europe.'[44]

There are, then, three styles of enlargement that NATO could follow in terms of issuing invitations to join the alliance. Following on from this, there are two alternative modes of managing the accession process. The first is *automatic*: the assumption here is that the key moment is the issuing of the invitation, and all that follows, is administrative. Automatic accession was the approach adopted after the invitation to the Visegrad Three in 1997. Two years later, formal accession was achieved. However, combining this style of accession with either the regatta or the big bang style of invitation would be hugely difficult for NATO, in that the mechanisms of the alliance would have to be adapted immediately towards coping with perhaps more than 29 members over a short number of years. Could the alliance live with such a change? Is it safe simply to assume that the influence of the United States is such that it does not matter

[41] As originally conceived in NATO, the regatta approach had a somewhat different connotation: a promise would be given to all of the Vilnius Nine that they would be invited to join, with a staggered approach to accession based on when they were ready.

[42] See William Drozdiak, '9 NATO candidates pledge to join in "big bang" bid', *International Herald Tribune*, 20 May 2000.

[43] When the big bang bid was first devised, Croatia had not stated that it wanted to join NATO.

[44] President George W. Bush, 'Excerpted remarks to the North Atlantic Council', 13 June 2001, at www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s010613g.htm.

how many states must be associated with consensus, in hundreds of NATO committees?

The alternative would be *sophisticated and differential* negotiations. A sophisticated and differential approach is one that makes a crucial distinction. It assumes that an invitation to join the alliance is a de facto extension to that country of Article 5, but also that NATO requires a facility actually to admit new member states in stages, in order to adapt to the implications of larger numbers of members for decision-making. This approach is not about preventing accession. The key here is a dual assumption: that de facto extension of Article 5 follows an invitation to join the alliance; and that for NATO to continue to be a functioning and decisive military alliance, significant capability is required on the part of the new members, not necessarily in terms of military capability, but certainly in terms of working with the NATO *acquis* and in terms of decision-making; certainly, new members must be able to provide adequate levels of security in dealing with information. These requirements would be individually tailored for each new member, with a realization that local conditions in particular sub-regions of Europe would lead to slightly different emphases. Not only would such an approach recognize the impact of enlargement upon the NATO machine as a legitimate concern, it would also continue to encourage processes of reform in the candidate members.

A variant of this would be to add *conditionality* at the negotiation stage. Accession would continue to be fairly automatic, but the actual negotiations on accession to the alliance would not begin immediately while certain specific conditions remained visible. For example, it might well be diplomatically uncomfortable for the alliance to be conducting accession negotiations with a state on whose territory it was at the same time involved in a peacekeeping operation. No changes of principle would be involved here—simply the suggestion that the negotiations leading fairly automatically to accession would be delayed until certain local conditions had been addressed.

Whatever the merits of the styles outlined above, NATO appears to be moving forward with the default position, with automatic accession. This is the worst option. Far better would be to issue a big bang invitation—it is not clear in any case that NATO has the language to do anything other—while pursuing sophisticated and differential negotiations, perhaps including conditionality with regard to Albania and Macedonia (and possibly other states as well), given the special circumstances currently pertaining to those states. The following section examines how this might be achieved.

The way forward

Simultaneous invitation, staged accession

NATO should at the Prague summit officially invite Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia to join the alliance on the basis of 'one in, all in'—with the stringent stipulation that the actual accession of these

states will be subject to each of them successfully meeting a range of specified standards.[45] NATO should attach to the official public declaration of invitation to the identified aspirant states an annexe which sets out the standards that all need to attain before accession is granted. Subsequently, each particular invitee should be issued with an even more detailed, individualized annexe or report that delineates much more fully and specifically the steps it must achieve in order to meet the standards for official accession.

Albania and Macedonia have also applied, and these two states must also be covered by the principle of 'one in, all in'. The alliance should therefore officially note that the absence of an official invitation to these two states at the Prague summit is due to their current special circumstances, and that an official invitation will definitely follow at a later stage of the enlargement process (as outlined below), when those circumstances have changed. In the meantime, Albania and Macedonia can also each be issued with an individualized annexe or report to make evident to them the progress that they need to make.

NATO should, in addition, formally establish a structured process that provides for the phased incorporation of current, and possible future, prospective new members according to a set schedule. In particular, NATO needs to establish at Prague that there will be a summit meeting of the NAC every three years, starting in 2005 or 2006,[46] at which the progress of the invited states in meeting the annexe standards will be assessed through identified evaluation mechanisms, with accession to the alliance being dependent on the NAC's determination that each invited state has met the standards set forth in the invitation annexe. Those states deemed by the NAC to have achieved the standards could then expect their accession to occur within a set period of time, while those prospective members that had not yet attained the standards could expect to be evaluated again in three years' time.[47]

[45] There are some concerns about whether Slovakia should be invited to join should Vladimir Meciar win its national elections to be held just a month before the Prague summit. Whatever the outcome of the elections, Slovakia should still be issued an invitation. On concern about Vladimir Meciar, see e.g. 'Slovak NATO entry hinges on next cabinet—US envoy', *Reuters*, reprinted in *NEDB*, 7 Jan. 2002, 17.50 EDT; 'The menace of Vladimir Meciar', *The Economist* (US edn), 26 Jan. 2002, repr. in *NEDB*, 25 Jan. 2002, 14:37 EDT; 'Voinovich praises Slovakia for changes to join NATO', *The Plain Dealer*, 5 May 2002, at http://www.cleveland.com/world/plaindealer/index.ssf?/xml/story.ssf/html_standard.xsl?/base/news/1022837946225760.xml.

[46] This schedule is consistent with the declaration during the 1999 Washington summit that NATO would consider further new members in 2002. As the Prague summit will be held in November 2002, the next summit could occur in early 2006 instead of late 2005.

[47] NATO needs to address the possibility that the process could be derailed by the failure of a member state's legislature to agree to the amendment of the Washington Treaty. There seem to be two basic approaches. First, national legislatures would be asked to amend the Washington Treaty in the months following a summit agreement that one or more of the invited states be permitted to become a fully fledged member of the alliance. An inherent problem with this approach, however, is that the member states' governments confront the need to put the appropriate legislation before their legislatures repeatedly, and the more often this process occurs the greater the chance that one or more national legislatures may refuse to pass the needed amendments. Alternatively, NATO member states could propose legislation for the amendment of the Washington Treaty subsequent to the Prague summit that would provide the appropriate amendment for the inclusion of all the Vilnius Nine, but worded to permit for the variable formal accession that is likely to occur. Such legislation may be difficult to formulate and to get passed, but it would obviate the problems associated with repeated amendments by the national legislatures.

This process for managing the enlargement of the Atlantic alliance avoids many of the problems with which it would otherwise be faced. First, it gives many of the aspirants what they are in effect asking for: Article 5 protection. Second, each of the invited states would know that it would not be excluded from membership. This knowledge provides a reward for their reform efforts to date and confidence that continued perseverance will receive a further guaranteed reward. Third, NATO would be assured that the new members' militaries would meet basic alliance standards, as well as being furnished with the time to plan for their incorporation into its military structure. Fourth, it provides NATO with the time it needs to implement decisions taken at the Prague summit on how to reform its decision-making processes, and indeed to consider further reform if needed or desired. Fifth, it provides more time for NATO and the EU to negotiate the modalities of their defence and security cooperation, as well as to develop and agree a general understanding of their respective roles in the management of European security. Sixth, although it does not resolve entirely Russia's concerns, extending an invitation to all of the current aspirant states at Prague has the benefit of confronting Moscow with a *fait accompli* rather than with a series of sequential steps in enlargement, each of which could niggle away at the broader NATO–Russian relationship. Finally, the establishment of a formal and continuing process for accession signals to other states that the alliance remains open to accepting new members beyond those invited at Prague—including Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, the problematic case of Ukraine,[48] and possibly even Russia. NATO can make this very clear by publicly stating that its door remains open to other states which at present have not unambiguously stated an interest in joining the alliance. Prospective invitations would be based on the formal structured timetable established, and actual accession would be on the basis of meeting the same standards demanded of those states invited at Prague.

There are a number of elements to this suggested accession process that are worth considering in more detail, most notably the standards to be set forth in the invitation annexe and mechanisms for evaluating the progress of invited states towards readiness for full membership of NATO.

The practicalities

NATO has already, in effect, set forth in a general manner the standards for new members in the MAP.[49] The purpose of stating in the annexe the standards that states must reach to gain accession is to ensure that the invited states, on acceding to the alliance, demonstrate that they uphold the norms and principles of NATO,

[48] See e.g. 'NATO urges Ukraine to modernize for membership bid', *New York Times*, 9 July 2002, at http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/world/international-ukraine-nato.html?pagewanted=print&position=top.

[49] See NATO, *Membership Action Plan (MAP)*, NAC-S(99)66, 24 April 1999, at http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99–066e.htm.

and that they are able to integrate politically, diplomatically and militarily into the organization without disruption. In other words, these standards must support the principle that the new members will be not only consumers of but also contributors to NATO's security. Hence, the standards in the invitation annexe should be more than just benchmarks that states *should* meet to gain accession; they need to be benchmarks that the states *must* meet before they can accede to a seat in NATO's councils. In this regard, meeting the standards in the political, economic, military, security and legal categories of the MAP is important. However, as all the aspirant states at present effectively meet the political standards that NATO has set forth in the MAP (or are at least close to meeting them) and all are making progress towards achieving the economic standards, the concentration here is on the core standards in the military, security and legal categories.[50]

The military and defence requirements which the candidates need to fulfil before NATO accession will need to be specified in five areas.[51] First, the candidate states must meet training requirements to ensure their ability to cooperate fully within NATO. Such requirements include fluency in NATO's working languages (English and French), familiarity with NATO's operational concepts, and similarly high numbers of flying hours and training days at sea as well as integrated training throughout their armed forces. Second, states need to achieve comparable management procedures and standards; these include the expansion of their administrative capacity for logistics, the development of functional defence planning, budgeting and programming systems, and the streamlining of personnel management. Third, the candidate states must be required to complete the restructuring of their armed forces before accession. In particular, they need to change their current personnel mix by increasing the proportion of non-commissioned officers, and reducing the average age of troops through the retirement of senior officers and the hiring of more qualified junior personnel. Fourth, states must enhance their military capabilities in the areas of combat and self-defence, logistics, infrastructure and rapid reaction forces. Finally, the candidates need to modernize and improve their equipment, in particular as regards their naval and air forces, air surveillance and communication.

In the category of security, potential accession states must demonstrate that they have a secure environment for the management of sensitive alliance and national information. This requires the establishment of the legal framework for the protection of confidential information as well as the creation of national

[50] For a recent assessment of the aspirant states' progress in meeting the political and economic standards set in the MAP, see NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Sub-Committee on Central and Eastern Europe, *NATO enlargement and partnerships* (draft report), International Secretariat, 30 April 2002, pp. 4–7. These states have effectively met the political standards, but the degree to which they have fulfilled the economic standards is more varied, with some, such as the Baltic states, generally being deemed to have met them while others, such as Bulgaria and Romania, are perceived as not having done so. Whether or not the economic standards as set forth in the MAP can be maintained or achieved in light of the economic repercussions of the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September is a difficult question to answer.

[51] Compare NATO's Partnership Work Programme, at http://www.nato.int/pfp/docu/d990616a.htm.

agencies for that purpose. Further legal and legislative requirements include adapting constitutions in order to respond when necessary to an invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and compliance with a number of multilateral agreements signed among the members of NATO.[52] Candidate states should also be able to demonstrate that they have adopted documents specifying a new national security strategy, defence strategy, military strategy, civil defence, and military long-term development and equipment plans which endorse and support the new Strategic Concept of the Atlantic alliance.

These standards do not encompass the full spectrum of standards that can and should be generated for the invitation annexe, but they are among the most important ones. They serve also to highlight several important characteristics of the standards that should be set. First, the standards should be orientated with reasonable specificity to ensure that each accession state has the capacity to integrate politically, diplomatically and militarily with ease. NATO should be able to generate a sound list of standards based on the lessons learned from the work done in the lead-up to accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and from integrating those states into its political and military structure. Second, these standards are not, and should not be seen as, a simple checklist. Many standards can be objectively checked, particularly in the military, security and legal categories; however, more importantly, as a few of the examples above suggest, many if not most of the standards NATO should include in the annexe are interrelated, both within each category and across the categories. Hence an essential aspect of evaluating an invited state's progress is the degree to which all the various standards pull together to create a coherent whole. The basis of official accession is thus not simply a matter of assessing all aspects of the presented standards and metaphorically ticking the appropriate boxes. Rather, any decision by the NAC as to whether an invited state is ready to take a seat in NATO's councils will involve a determination that the whole is greater than a mere sum of the parts.[53]

Another key element in this process would be the establishment by NATO of appropriate mechanisms for the evaluation of each invited state's progress in achieving the standards indicated in the annexe to support the NAC's deliberations every three years. The Military Committee can be given oversight responsibility for the evaluation of each invitee's progress in meeting the annexe's military and security standards, and the Senior Political Committee oversight of the annexe's legal standards. Clearly the annual reports on each invited state's progress under the MAP process should be considered, but the alliance should establish further procedures for a separate, rigorous evaluation. Each of these two committees could delegate the evaluation of an invited state's progress in particular categories to appropriate units in the International Staff or International

[52] See NATO, *Membership Action Plan (MAP)*.

[53] Thus, if NATO does have concerns about the fitness of Slovakia to be a member should Vladimir Meciar win the October election (see note 45 above), the country would still have to meet all the standards, including political standards, in 2005.

Military Staff, to SHAPE, to specifically created 'task force' committees with the required expertise, or to some combination of these.

Conclusion

Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, NATO has endeavoured to ensure that it is an inclusive rather than exclusive organization. This effort has taken many forms, including the successful Partnership for Peace programme, but most salient were the invitations issued to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to join the alliance in 1997. The alliance publicly reaffirmed at the Washington summit in 1999 that it remained willing to take in new members and has subsequently made clear, most recently at the Reykjavik ministerial meeting of the NAC in May 2002, that it will at the Prague summit invite a further select number of states to join. Moreover, and importantly, NATO has underpinned its stated willingness to accept new members by establishing the MAP to help each aspirant state develop a plausible plan to implement necessary reforms. NATO has opened its door to new members, and this door cannot now be closed.

The essential question facing NATO is thus not whether it should enlarge, but how it should do so. At present the alliance appears set to repeat the manner in which the first post-Cold War enlargement occurred, with NATO issuing invitations simultaneously to between three and seven states. Such an outcome carries with it a number of problems harmful to European security. An alternative approach is for NATO to issue an inclusive, 'big bang' invitation to all the states that currently have publicly made clear their desire to join the alliance, but to marry this with sophisticated and differentiated processes for managing actual accession to membership. To summarize:

- NATO should at the Prague summit in 2002 invite Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia to become members of the alliance, with the qualification that they must subsequently meet political, military, economic, security and legal standards that are set forth in an annexe to each official invitation before actual accession occurs. Croatia should be informed that it will be invited in due course, while Albania and Macedonia should be informed that they will be issued invitations to join on the same basis when their special circumstances have changed.
- NATO should agree to hold a summit meeting of the NAC every three years, for the purpose of assessing the candidate members' progress in meeting the criteria. Other candidate states should be encouraged to develop their reform programmes in accordance with this timetable.
- NATO should establish a mechanism, in the form of identified bodies, for the assessment of the candidate members' progress.
- Candidate members who meet the standards will become members.

Such a formal framework sets forth a graduated but ultimately assured process

through which aspirant states must progress if they are to accede to NATO councils and protection. It has two very significant advantages. First, it avoids many of the difficult problems that will almost certainly arise from proceeding in a more ad hoc, piecemeal manner. In particular, it provides a process that furnishes NATO with the time to deal with the requirements of absorbing new members in terms of reforming its decision-making process and its military structure, while encouraging the aspirant states to continue and deepen reform, yet still extending to them the de facto protection of Article 5. Second, the establishment of a formal process for the assessment of the suitability of aspirant states to become members of the alliance leaves open the membership door to those states that so far have not indicated unambiguously a desire to join. NATO must not only style itself as an inclusive security organization, it must be seen by all concerned to be one. In short, the suggested process for managing enlargement alleviates many prospective problems associated with that process while presenting NATO with a way to enhance its credibility.