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The Geopolitics of NATO Enlargement

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"Great statesmen have never lacked a feeling for geography" -- Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie*, 1903

The debate in the United States over NATO enlargement ended on 30 April 1998 when the Senate voted 80-19 in favor of admitting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the Alliance as full members. Whether for or against, many of the participants in and observers of the debate are just glad that it is over; after almost seven years, it had become an exercise more hackneyed than illuminating. Like it or not, NATO is moving East.

A question pregnant in the extreme remains for those dealing with the strategic level of military affairs in Europe. Just what is it that we've enlarged and just what is this enlarged alliance to do? Strategists will find little guidance, for the component most missing from the high-level political debate over NATO enlargement was the geopolitical one. US administrations seem to have avoided geopolitical rationales during the years that NATO enlargement has been evolving. Geopolitics might have offended Russia (an exclusionary and encircling military alliance moving ever closer), left the Baltic nations in a hopeless gray zone (your geography is your destiny), and forced everyone to link closely the future of the Bosnia intervention with the future of NATO (out of area or out of business). As Michael Roskin recently pointed out in these pages, none of this was desirable when most American officials were selling NATO enlargement as a no-cost, feel-good, end-of-history shoehorn for democratic systems and market economies rather than hard and fast military affairs.[1] The Secretary of State even described US policy as one "that should appeal to our hearts as well as our heads." [2]

And yet the newest noncommissioned officer in any service knows something that seems to have disappeared from discussions at Foggy Bottom: geography and geopolitics still matter. Geography [3] itself, as we know, is not a strong suit for many Americans. [4] Confusion over the nexus of strategic and political geography clouds further the most sophisticated foreign policy mind. Take, for instance, the pronouncement of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright just before the July 1997 enlargement summit in Madrid: "We must pledge that the first members will not be the last and that *no European democracy will be excluded because of where it sits on the map*" (emphasis added). [5] Or deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott arguing that with the end of the Cold War, "military and geopolitical considerations" can be put aside as "other nonmilitary goals . . . shape the new NATO." [6] In fact, the rallying cry of the enlargement campaign was that it would not create "new lines in Europe."

But a military alliance is about lines, lines that demarcate territory which alliance members have taken solemn oaths to protect, as opposed to other lines that identify territory in which they might have an interest, but certainly no obligation to defend. Military alliances, formed for collective territorial defense, define their entire existence by their "lines." There is no doubt that the Cold War NATO, Truman's "shield against aggression," fit this bill. But even in 1998 and beyond, it is still officially so for the Atlantic Alliance. Indeed, NATO officials have gone on record that "enlargement will do nothing to dilute NATO's focus" and that following enlargement, "the alliance's core mission will remain the collective defense of NATO soil, and the addition of new members will improve its ability to carry out this mission." [7] How, then, to account for the seeming discord between US rhetoric during the enlargement campaign and the Alliance's stated purpose?

There are three possible explanations. First, Administration officials simply might not understand what a military

alliance is and what it does. Former Ambassador Robert Hunter affirms that "NATO is not a club, it is a military alliance." [8] Nonetheless, NATO is nowadays thought of more as a political grouping than a military alliance (it is both, of course). But, as many critics of enlargement have pointed out, if that is the case and enlargement was as much about democracy and free markets as we have been led to believe, expansion of the European Union, not NATO, would be the hot topic. Does not the flag follow trade in the post-Cold War world? In the absence of a security threat, would not the economic benefits of European Union membership serve former Warsaw Pact countries far better than an expensive military commitment to NATO aimed at the defense of their "soil"?

The second reason for the gap between rhetoric and reality might be that these same officials may be Machiavellian stealth-geopoliticians who deliberately chose to soft-pedal geopolitical considerations during the enlargement campaign, planning to bring them quietly back into play after all was said and done. However, this explanation does not make sense given the debate over which states will be the next to be invited to join the Alliance. Those upcoming discussions will be much more animated by geopolitical considerations. In fact, as explained below, the geopolitics has only begun to get serious. If NATO enlargement is to be a continuous process, as Secretary Albright insists it is, geopolitical discussions can only temporarily be restricted to NATO's cloakrooms. Sooner rather than later, geopolitics will explode onto the scene. When it does, who is where on "the map" will become a terrifically important question. Geopolitical issues were, for the most part, purposefully excluded during the first round of accessions.

The final possible explanation is that the Clinton Administration has in mind, as do many in Europe, a very different kind of NATO. There have been hints to that effect. Secretary Albright observed that NATO should evolve into "a force for peace from the Middle East to Central Africa," [9] and in a letter President Clinton urged the Senate not to call for a pause in the enlargement process after the entry of the three new members. Both of these visions, of NATO bigger in size and mission, are relatively modest compared to Deputy Secretary of State Talbott's enthusiasm for eventual Russian membership in NATO. But it was former Administration official Gordon Adams who summed up the changing vision most clearly. "The [enlargement] decision does not enlarge an alliance whose core purpose is to defend against the Soviets. Rather, it recognizes NATO's new mission: collective security." [10] So if Adams's view prevails, NATO is being primed to evolve into what some wags have variously called "a white man's UN" or "a rich man's Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)." If that is the case, geopolitics truly will not matter.

But for now at least, NATO continues to insist that it is focused on the collective defense of its member states, not regional collective security. To that end thousands of American service members, millions of man-hours, and billions of dollars will have to be dedicated to defining and preparing to defend NATO's new strategic concept and the territory of all its members. And although geopolitics may have been the skunk at the first post-Cold War enlargement garden party, in the next round of invitations there are questions of geography, power, resources, and the political ambitions and strategies of many states to address. And as those invitations are scheduled to be issued in 1999, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of NATO, little time remains to develop the geostrategic foundation on which they must rest.

It is our contention that should NATO divorce itself from geopolitics, whether by design or default, it will cease to be an effective alliance. It will no longer be an organization that should command the extraordinary attention and resources from the United States that it has for the past 50 years. If NATO (regardless of whether it has 16, 19, or 25 members) gets out of geopolitics, then it will indeed go out of business--and deservedly so.

Why Geopolitics Matters

The meanings and consequences of boundaries and terrain--the essence of geopolitical thinking--shape the discussion from this point, just as they should in determining which states receive invitations to join the Alliance. What, however, is geopolitics? The most useful definition of the term is offered by Geoffrey Sloan: "a theory of spatial relationship and historical causation whose perspective is the international system as a whole." [11]

Geopolitics, broadly defined, may actually be seen as two broad schools that comprise the organic state theory and geostrategy. The organic state theory originated in the thinking of two European scholars: Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) and Rudolph Kjellen (1864-1922). Ratzel, a professor at the University of Leipzig, argued from Darwinian theory that

states are like living organisms. The size of a state and its resources, he reasoned, would gauge its strength. Therefore, states would seek to grow in size in order to retain their vitality. He is generally credited, quite ominously, with the term *Lebensraum* (living space).[12] Ratzel also argued that states were constantly in competition, in which larger states would naturally seek to expand in order to consolidate their power. In this way the world would eventually be composed only of super states that would have immense resources and power at their disposal.[13] Kjellen, a member of the Swedish parliament and a political scientist, took Ratzel's theory one step further, concluding that states actually were organisms. Kjellen's theories would soon thereafter gain an insidious popularity with a generation of emerging Nazi, and then other Axis, geopoliticians.[14] This strain of geopolitical thinking, as Robert Strausz-Hupé has written, was revolutionary, and dangerous, because it tried to transcend the 19th-century conception of the balance of power and in fact sought hegemony and domination.[15]

At roughly the same time, an American and an Englishman would compose their theories of geostrategy. Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) argued that seapower was vastly important to the state. He concluded that seapower was the key to commerce and economic competition, if not strategy and global political advantage.[16] Mahan's theories helped to shape America's growing international interests at the turn of the century and are said to have deeply influenced Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt.[17] Conversely, Sir Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), a professor of geography and director of the London School of Economics, felt that the relationship between sea power and land power had been altered. Mackinder espoused the view that inventions such as the railroad would cause land power to be the determinant in international affairs.[18]

To Mackinder, the area known as the Heartland was the key to understanding the shift from an era of seapower's dominance to one where land power would reign. The Heartland was defined as the Eurasian core (read: central Russia) at the center of the World-Island[19] which is protected from seapower by vast distances of land. In *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, Mackinder warned: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island. Who rules the World-Island commands the World." [20] Therefore, he proposed that Eastern Europe is the central piece of terrain for balancing the Heartland's power. His ideas would help to shape the West's perception of the Soviet threat and the conduct of the Cold War.

Early in the 20th century another American, Nicholas J. Spykman (1893-1943), entered the debate. Spykman, a professor of international relations at Yale University, argued that the Heartland was not of primary geopolitical significance, offering instead an area that he called the Rimland (the area bordering Mackinder's Heartland). He departed from Mackinder in recognizing the importance of seapower in what we are calling today the "littoral." He capped Mackinder in these words: "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." [21] The intellectual give and take generated by these theories, and among geostrategic writers such as Raymond Aron, Luther Gulick, and Hedley Bull, greatly influenced those responsible for strategic policies and plans during World War II and the Cold War.

Subsequently, the demise of the Soviet Union found many theorists and most practitioners ready to argue that geopolitics were no longer relevant in a world where there was no apparent global contest for power. The End of History meant the end of geopolitics. Power in the post-Cold War world would be transferred to boundary-less entities such as ethnic groups, nongovernmental and international organizations, or corporations.[22] Those who subscribed to that point of view would argue that NATO should be expanded not because of some Mackinderesque calculation, but because it was part of the triumph of liberal democratic systems and market economies. Considerations of power and geography were not to be linked to alliances like NATO. All that was required for membership would be a stock market, some environmental regulations, and election booths. Many who concluded that the raw calculations of geopolitics were passé joined the long line of hopeful Western intellectuals who have since classical times forecast the end of war and of strategy.[23]

Reports of the death of geopolitics, however, were greatly exaggerated. Core geopolitical concerns propelled India and Pakistan into the nuclear club in spite of resistance and sanctions from those who espouse the global agenda of peace, free trade, and a safe environment. Closer to home for NATO, the proliferation of ethnic conflicts since 1989 tends to support Sloan's definition that geopolitics is about spatial relations and historical causation. Serbian and Croatian ethnic cleansing in areas of Bosnia show that disputes involving cultural, political, and physical geography can have intensely severe outcomes. After all, what was being played out in the hills around Srebrenica and Banja Luka was not

an environmental dispute. Harvey Sicherman explains the enduring significance of geopolitics (writ small) after the Cold War:

An overarching geopolitical struggle has merely given way to numerous "underarching" struggles. The Kremlin may be emptied of ideologues plotting campaigns against America, her allies, and strategic points around the globe, but the world as a whole teems with as many geopoliticians as ever. One might call them the "meat-eaters," those to whom power, territorial possession, military action, and pirated wealth matter far more than do environmental issues, diplomatic niceties, human rights and other hobbies of social transformers.[24]

Sicherman refers to this latter group as the "plant-eaters,"[25] whose "one-big-happy-family" theories, spun out of think tanks and academe just after the Gulf War, have proven to be off the mark in their assumptions about what motivates humankind. But even as these untested theories shaped our behavior in the post-Cold War world, they left us wanting. As Thomas Friedman noted, "globalization doesn't mean the end of geopolitics." [26]

For his part, Colin Gray maintains that even in our progressive age, "Geography defines the players (which are territorially organized states, or would like to be), frequently defines the stakes for which the players contend, and always defines the terms in which they measure their security relative to others." [27] Gray's observation and Sloan's contemporary definition of geopolitics suggest that states and other political groups worry very much about their geographical locations. This is particularly the case when states are surrounded, or are bordered, by states with historical grudges or by states that have previously used their power against weaker states. In this century alone the Central and Eastern European states, particularly the Czechs, Hungarians, and Poles, have been dominated and occupied by two great powers, the Germans and the Soviets. It is for this reason, more than any advanced by politically correct American "enlargers" on the right and left, that the great majority of former Warsaw Pact nations want to join a NATO focused on collective defense. They understand, even if presently we seem not to, that a military alliance, like an umbrella, is most useful on a rainy day.

The Nature of Alliances

Gray and like-minded thinkers argue that states constantly worry about their security relative to other states, and that this preoccupation defines national interests. Those interests may be advanced by membership in an alliance, which may be defined for our purposes as:

An agreement by states to support each other militarily in the event of an attack against any member, or to advance their mutual interests. Alliances may be bilateral or multilateral, secret or open, simple or highly organized, of short or long duration, and may be directed at preventing or winning a war. Balance-of-power systems tend to encourage the conclusion of military pacts to offset shifts in the power equation.[28]

Stephen Walt adds that alliances may be offensive or defensive in nature and may offer "a restraining influence on allies and adversaries alike." Most important, however, is his assertion that alliances are not collective security arrangements.[29]

Others have defined collective security in these terms:

A power system in which each state of the world would guarantee the security and independence of every other state. The key to the collective security pattern is universality of participation and obligation. Under these conditions, an aggressor nation would have to expect to face the united opposition of the entire community.[30]

The important differences to note here are that collective security is universal while alliances are limited and, as Walt notes, alliances are exclusive in their membership whereas a collective security arrangement is inclusive.[31] That distinction gets to the heart of the matter; exclusiveness has historically been the key to concerted multinational military actions. Different historical circumstances notwithstanding, the more exclusive a multinational military arrangement, the more dynamic and challenging the military operations it can hope collectively to sustain over

Collective security exists only in the abstract, whereas alliances have often put collective defense into practice, at times quite successfully. Collective security remains abstract because universality can never be achieved. At times various collective security groupings (the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) have acted as the forum through which like-minded members approach problems collectively. But solutions produced by such organizations are most often diplomatic, economic, or quasi-military in nature (peacekeeping for instance). They are almost never decisive military reactions to aggression. When the going gets tough in multinational military operations that are managed through large and diffuse collective security organizations, the tough tend to go in many different directions. The experience of Bosnia is but the most recent demonstration of what happens when organizations not so habituated try to deal effectively with interstate violence on a large scale. Figure 1 below highlights the differences between alliances and collective security arrangements.

	Alliances	Collective Security
Aim	Military	Political
Ends	Limited	Unlimited
Means	Unlimited	Limited
Membership	Exclusive	Inclusive

Figure 1. Alliances vs. Collective Security Arrangements.

But can an alliance such as NATO, not facing even a potential case of military aggression against one of its members, buck this trend and transform itself into an effective collective security organization? Walt points out that the preponderance of American power and sheer bureaucratic inertia in Mons and other NATO headquarters might combine to help NATO survive. He maintains that alliances persist when "there is a large asymmetry of power within them, when the allies share similar political values, and when the relationship is highly institutionalized. Such alliances will find it easier to adapt to new conditions and will be better equipped to handle the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise." [33] Conversely, alliances disintegrate when the threat they once defended against has ended; when their credibility has declined to the point where they are no longer viable; and when domestic political issues among member nations, such as demographic and social trends, domestic competition, regime changes, and ideological divisions, cause their dissolution.[34]

Based on Walt's qualifications, a reinvention of NATO as an effective and robust collective security arrangement would require both a disintegration along the lines outlined above and a resurrection made possible by his conditions for persistence. The threat that shaped NATO is dormant, if not eliminated, and NATO's credibility remains intact. And if one puts aside Greek-Turkish issues and the role the French have created for themselves within NATO, issues among members do not divide the Alliance to the degree that Walt's theory could not be applied. An asymmetry of power clearly exists, allowing the United States to lead the Alliance without question, the Allies generally share political values, and their relationship is highly institutionalized within the Alliance. Thus it would appear that NATO could theoretically allow itself to evolve from a defensive alliance to a collective security organization. The Alliance would only seem to disintegrate, but would endure by morphing into something else, dragging into a new future the sense of purpose, sacrifice, and institutional resources that once made it great. That's the theory anyway.

Toward Tomorrow's Alliance

Several times during the Cold War, the Soviet Union officially proposed that NATO and the Warsaw Pact be disbanded and replaced with one pan-European collective security arrangement. For geopolitical reasons, the United States and its Allies resisted this and other proposals that would have diluted both the US role in Europe and the focus

of NATO. The Soviets knew, as the West did, that a broader focus on collective security with dozens of disparate nations involved would assuredly divide the Alliance, dilute its influence, and weaken its ability to counter Soviet initiatives. Removing the simple, common, and fundamentally profound goal of collective territorial defense would have removed the glue that had originally caused the Allies to pool resources in such an unprecedented fashion. As one senior European diplomat remarked recently when the French balked at certain out-of-area ideas, "If NATO is changing a military destiny once based on geography to a defense of common values, then where do we draw the limits? Will we all agree on which values to fight for? And just how far do we then go to defend them?"[35]

Article V of the NATO treaty is flexible (as Roskin pointed out), but fairly unambiguous: it's about real estate after all. New or modified articles to the original treaty might claim to identify the broader aims of a new NATO, especially goals that exclude geopolitical considerations. But such pronouncements stand a good chance of being merely paper assurances. Security guarantees made in the absence of a peek at the map, as the Secretary of State suggested, could well be reckless for the guarantor, meaningless for the recipient(s), or both in varying degrees. Geopolitical considerations, while sometimes not politically correct, have the advantage of being tangible. They add weight, focus, and cohesion to NATO, underpinning the myriad daily activities of the Alliance with a foundation that rests on national interests that until recently 16 sovereign states thought were worth fighting and dying for.

Conversely, a large collective grouping that ignores geopolitics while expecting broad military sacrifices for a certain concept of human rights, pluralistic democracy, environmental standards, or laissez-faire markets will not endure, especially during the desperate times when its effectiveness is most needed. It should be remembered that a military alliance is ultimately constructed for those desperate times, not for periods when the international arena is calm and cooperative. Effective alliances institutionalize collective responses when such responses might not otherwise be made. The considerations of geopolitics that cause interests to converge act as fences that discourage horses from bolting when the herd has been panicked.

Eventually one must ask whether a new NATO Strategic Concept, divorced from geopolitical realities, would hold up under pressure. Collective responses in an alliance whose *raison d'être* had ignored geopolitics will merely be the sum of the loosely coordinated constituent parts, with nothing greater than the whole. Make no mistake: in the absence of the threat that created NATO in the first place, the simultaneous burdens of undertaking enlargement and controversial new missions have reduced cohesion. As Frederick Bonnart wrote after the July 1997 summit in Madrid,

Behind the euphoria, a hollowness has appeared that had not been evident before. The leaders seem unclear about the purpose of the organization, and therefore about the political and military shape it is to take. Worst of all, strains have shown up in the alliance that indicate weaknesses in its most vital asset: its cohesion.[36]

Cohesion can neither be directed nor invented; it evolves through common purpose and shared experiences. In NATO's case, cohesion must continue to be grounded in calculations of political, economic, military, and cultural geography.

Geopolitics and the New Members

Geopolitically, the new member states of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary add spatial depth to the Alliance. If one subscribes to Lord Ismay's famous dictum that NATO's *raison d'être* is to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down, then the invitation of these three nations was indeed a coup. Robert Hunter implicitly recognized this in his all-too-brief discussion of the significance to NATO's future of geographic location and proximity.[37]

From the strategic perspective the inclusion of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary achieves two prime objectives. First, the addition of these states creates a *de jure* buffer zone between the historic great powers of continental Europe, Germany and Russia. Second, the inclusion of Hungary creates a firewall against Balkan instability. A drawback is that Hungary will not share a common border with any Alliance member. It has, however, proven useful as a staging area for NATO operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The inclusion of these three nations in the Alliance does not create immediate operational or tactical concerns. Poland's short border with Kaliningrad is the only common border between any of these nations and the Russian Federation.

Poland's common border with the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine should not create tension, but the defense of the Polish plains remains a strategic challenge. Because no new NATO troops will be stationed in Poland, its nine mechanized divisions, one armored cavalry division, one air cavalry division, and numerous brigades and regiments will have to suffice for contingency planning, no matter how fantastic such scenarios may seem today.[38] These units, and those of the Czech Republic and Hungary, are on their own until they are fully incorporated into the NATO command and control network--a process that could take several years.

Nonetheless, the absence of a clear threat and other geographical considerations surrounding Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary do not make them a geopolitical risk at the strategic, operational, or tactical levels. The incorporation of these nations into the NATO command structure and infrastructure will make them more easily defended in the event of conflict on the continent.

Geopolitics and the Failed Suitors

If geopolitical issues emerge in the next round of invitations, what sort of decisions might we expect? Slovakia, despite the disastrous way in which it (mis)managed its NATO campaign, might be forgiven its struggle to adapt to the ways of the West. It is puzzling, in geopolitical terms, to admit Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic without Slovakia. Not only is there a gap in the territorial contiguity of NATO's new eastern border, but an important one at that: the Slovak Republic occupies geographically and strategically what Sun Tzu would call key and difficult ground.[39] The Carpathian Mountain range covering the eastern part of the country causes a canalization of key rail and road hubs leading to Germany, Poland, and Hungary. Slovakia shares a common border with Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary. Slovakia offers a growing industry, tremendous timber resources, zinc deposits, and an eastern oil field that it shares with a region of southern Poland and western Ukraine. Several former Soviet airfields and bases provide the potential to project Alliance power for all manner of military missions.



Figure 2. Central Europe.

Slovenia might also get the nod because it is a land bridge to Hungary and an important firewall sealing off the Balkans. Romania might be accepted based upon its geostrategic location, natural resources, and Black Sea access. Conversely, Slovenia and Romania could be rejected precisely *because* of their proximity to potential hotspots such as the Balkans and Moldova. Or perhaps the defense of Slovenia and Romania, even in the absence of a clear and present danger, would be a chimerical exercise. Moreover, an Article V commitment to these and similar aspirants could challenge the interests, if not the conscience, of NATO's principal players.

This is very much the case for the Baltic nations. Extending an iron-clad security guarantee now to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as full NATO members is sheer whimsy and sends the message: "We are no longer a serious military alliance." [40] Nonetheless, the well-earned notoriety of their intellectual class's struggle against the Soviet Union has helped form a special bond with NATO states not enjoyed by the likes of the Romanians, Slovaks, Bulgarians, or Ukrainians. This has led the United States to promise the Baltics, implicitly and repeatedly, full membership in

NATO, causing resentment in Moscow and rolled eyes among military planners in Brussels. Questions such as these are difficult and emotive. There are good reasons why modern diplomats prefer ambiguous generalities to the harder-edged answers spun out by geopolitical analysis. The former allows the diplomat to answer successfully, albeit temporarily, the "Do I look fat in these pants?" question.

But to avoid geopolitical questions (and their answers) will eventually make the Alliance a mere shadow of its former self. Geopolitical considerations in deciding what NATO does and who belongs in the Alliance must underpin any collective military grouping that hopes to respond effectively in times of crisis. This does not mean NATO should not enlarge again. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently observed that a well-studied and geopolitically based enlargement "will make constructive relations with Russia easier, because a stronger NATO will shut off Russia's avenues to destructive patterns of behavior." [41] Senator Jesse Helms recognizes that maintaining good relations with Russia and aiding its transition to a democratically oriented state are among the paramount tasks of US foreign policy. He also recognizes, however, as Robert Frost once wrote, that "good fences make good neighbors." Even a Russia that "looks like us" will have interests in Europe that conflict with those of the NATO countries. A geopolitically informed and enlarged NATO can help to avert conflicts when interests inevitably clash.

It is facile to think that a military alliance is inherently adversarial and should therefore not exist until conflict is full-blown. We subscribe to Henry Kissinger's view that Russia should participate in NATO deliberations, but in a very limited way. It will be difficult enough to keep nearly two dozen states focused on the important issues in the years ahead without giving the former adversary a veto over Alliance business.

Geopolitical analysis would not necessarily refute NATO enlargement, nor would it prescribe that NATO should not take on new regional missions or decide to operate out-of-area. However, new missions should not detract from the cohesion created and fostered by the Alliance's core purpose of territorial defense. That purpose serves as a form of centripetal force in NATO's organizational dynamics and gives the Alliance its cohesion. But collective defense must be preserved as the pillar on which NATO strength rests for other reasons as well. First, it is the hardest mission for which to prepare and must be practiced in peacetime with an uncommon sense of urgency and focus. Second, it is the most consequential, even if least probable, military mission that NATO performs. Failure to prepare for it means nothing less than the dissolution of the Alliance. Third, it is far easier for combat troops to flex downwards for the occasional peacekeeping operation than for specially trained peacekeeping troops or paramilitary police to flex upwards for war. The experience of the Dutch peacekeepers at Srebrenica offers stark evidence of that phenomenon.

A NATO cognizant of the geopolitical dimensions of its new or redefined roles and its expanded size stands a good chance of continuing as a useful tool for advancing American and Allied interests and values. One that ignores such changes will not endure. A static and reactionary NATO refusing to conclude a victor's peace or to respond to the changed geopolitics of post-Cold War Europe will fade away because it is an anachronism. An expanded NATO trying to transform itself into an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with slightly more muscle will ultimately lose American support because it will not match America's role in European security to its interests there. The United States will not long keep nearly 100,000 troops in Europe to settle regional disputes in which it no longer has a unique and decisive role to play. In addition, security guarantees made regardless of "the map" have the legitimacy and buying power of today's ruble. Flooding the market with them will cause inflation and collapse.

Both of these extremes--NATO standing fast or NATO becoming a competitor of the OSCE--would make NATO the end in itself, instead of the means to advancing vital American interests. We should not, however, sustain NATO in any form merely for sustainment's sake. It is quite natural for alliances to wither and die. Hans Morgenthau noted that "whether and for how long [an alliance] will be operative depends upon the strength of the interests underlying it as over against the strength of the other interests of the nation concerned." [42] For now US national interests and those of its allies are well-served by US leadership in NATO. The continued evolution of this role and of the Alliance itself--both in scope and in size--appears inevitable. Evolution can be both manageable and useful if we reintroduce geopolitics into the debate.

1. Michael G. Roskin, "NATO: The Strange Alliance Getting Stranger," *Parameters*, 28 (Summer 1998), 38.
2. Madeleine Albright quoted in US Department of State, *The Enlargement of NATO* (Washington: State Department, February 1998), p. 9.
3. Geography may take the forms of topographic, human, economic, cultural, linguistic, and political. For our purposes in this essay we will focus first and foremost on political geography.
4. See for instance, David G. Hansen, "The Immutable Importance of Geography," *Parameters*, 27 (Spring 1997), 55-64.
5. Quoted in Michael Dobbs, "U.S. Indicates Preference for Just 3 New NATO States," *The Washington Post*, 30 May 1997, p. A30.
6. Quoted in Jesse Helms, "NATO Expansion Has All the Safeguards it Needs," *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 March 1998, p. A22.
7. US Department of State, *The Enlargement of NATO*, p. 7.
8. Robert E. Hunter, "NATO in the 21st Century: A Strategic Vision," *Parameters*, 28 (Summer 1998), 19.
9. Quoted in William Drozdiak, "European Allies Balk at Expanded Role for NATO," *The Washington Post*, 22 February 1998, p. A27.
10. Gordon Adams, now deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, 4 March 1998, p. A26.
11. G. R. Sloan, *Geopolitics In United States Strategic Policy, 1890-1987* (Brighton, UK: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988), p. 20.
12. Martin Ira Glassner, *Political Geography* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993), p. 224.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. See, for instance, Robert Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), and his *The Balance for Tomorrow: Power and Foreign Policy in the United States* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945). These two books would have a great effect on a generation of strategists and diplomats in the United States, particularly during the early phases of the Cold War.
16. Glassner, p. 225.
17. Sloan, pp. 87-104.
18. Glassner, p. 226.
19. For Mackinder, the World-Island is composed of the areas of Eurasia and Africa.
20. Halford T. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Holt, 1919); as quoted in Glassner, pp. 226-27.
21. Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), p. 43; as cited in Glassner, pp. 227-28.
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24. Harvey Sicherman, "Agenda 200: The Revenge of Geopolitics," *Orbis*, 41 (Winter 1997), 7-8.
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26. Thomas Friedman, "The New Iron Curtain," *The New York Times*, 20 March 1997.
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28. Jack C. Plano and Roy Olton, *The International Relations Dictionary* (4th ed.; Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1988), p. 169.
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30. Plano and Olton, pp. 17-18.
31. Walt, p. 158.
32. See John Hillen, *Blue Helmets: The Strategy of UN Military Operations* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998).
33. Walt, p. 170.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-64.
35. Quoted in Drozdiak, p. A27.
36. Frederick Bonnart, "Either Get Back to Alliance Basics or NATO is in Big Trouble," *The International Herald Tribune*, 25 July 1997.
37. Hunter, p. 25.
38. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997-98* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 90-91.
39. To Sun Tzu key ground is "Ground equally advantageous for the enemy or me." Difficult ground, on the other hand, speaks to the Slovak Republic's vast timber coverage and the daunting Carpathian Mountain chain. Sun Tzu, translated by Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 130-31.
40. This does not preclude membership down the road (if geopolitical realities are borne in mind) nor alternative security arrangements between the United States and the Baltics such as that concluded between the United States and Ukraine. The Baltic nations have been very inflexible in this regard however and the United States has been less than creative as few officials, as noted, are concerned with these sorts of issues.
41. Helms, *Wall Street Journal*, 23 March 1998.
42. Hans J. Morgenthau, revised by Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (6th ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), p. 205.

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