

# Nattering NATO negativism? reasons why expansion may be a good thing\*

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**Abstract.** This article seeks to contribute to a transatlantic discussion by examining the theoretical and policy claims for and against NATO expansion that have dominated discussions in the United States. American academics have been almost unanimous in opposing NATO expansion, but the arguments they have put forward have often been contradictory. The proponents of NATO expansion, on the other hand, have not been clear in their arguments, and have tended to stress deterrence over reassurance. It is suggested here that there are indeed good reasons to expand NATO. Central European states have legitimate security concerns and so does Russia. However, an expanded NATO's value rests in its ability to reassure not only its new members but Russia and other countries in the region. If its focus remains primarily to coordinate military plans for deterring attacks on its members alone, its expansion will most likely exacerbate security relations in Europe.

At a time when Europe seems more secure than ever, the United States and its allies in Europe have decided to expand the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). At the 8 July 1997 NATO ministerial in Madrid, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were invited to join the alliance in 1999, pending further progress toward membership criteria and parliamentary and congressional approval by the existing NATO members.<sup>1</sup> In 1989, when fears of insecurity in Central Europe were high, the US was uninterested in expanding NATO membership or creating new security institutions.<sup>2</sup> Today, security seems abundant, not scarce, but NATO is focused on providing greater security for Central Europe. The proponents of NATO expansion, however, have not been clear in their arguments.<sup>3</sup> While they make reference to reassuring Russia, they fail to focus on the strategic implications of such a policy. In practice, they stress deterrence more than reassurance. In part, some of the ambiguity is for political reasons. They have to

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<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, 9 Jul. 1997.

<sup>2</sup> John Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future' and Jack Snyder, 'Averting Anarchy in the New Europe', in Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller (eds.), *The Cold War and After* (Cambridge, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, and F. Stephen Larrabee, 'Building a New NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (Sept./Oct. 1993); Ronald D. Asmus, et al., 'NATO Expansion: The Next Steps', *Survival*, 37:1 (Spring 1995); Richard L. Kugler, *Enlarging NATO: The Russia Factor* (Santa Monica, CA, 1996); F. Stephen Larrabee, *East European Security after the Cold War* (Santa Monica, CA, 1993); Condeleezza Rice, 'Now, NATO Should Grow', *New York Times*, 8 Jul. 1996; Michael Portillo, 'Give Nato the Tools to Finish its Job', *The Times*, 8 Jul. 1997.

convince parties to accept a series of policies; opponents want to see those policies abandoned.<sup>4</sup> Both sides fail to define clearly where the legitimate security interests of NATO end and those of Russia begin.

This article argues that there are good reasons to expand NATO. Central European states have legitimate security concerns, and so does Russia. An expanded NATO's value rests on its ability to *reassure* its new members, Russia, and other countries in the region that they are secure from intimidation and attack from each other. This could be achieved by a web of political commitments that NATO expansion and cooperation with Russia would establish. NATO's military deterrent function is secondary. NATO should expand only if it is reconfigured to serve as an alliance that reassures all *status quo* states, including Russia and others not formally a part of it. If its focus remains primarily to coordinate military plans for deterring attacks on its members alone, its expansion will most likely exacerbate security relations in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

This argument has certain counterintuitive implications for European security. First, the Central European states, albeit unintentionally, pose as much of a threat to European security as Russia does. Second, NATO expansion should be configured to enhance, not diminish, Russian prestige. Third, NATO expansion should lead to a reduction, not an increase, in NATO military forces in Europe. This article also has important theoretical implications. It shows how little progress academic security studies has made in converting new security ideas into practical policies. I argue that a late Cold War idea, reassurance, is worth investigating in more detail today. Its central argument is the basis for the qualified endorsement of NATO expansion here.

## Arguments against NATO expansion

### *Expansion is unnecessary*

The leading argument against expansion is that Russia presents no immediate threat to its neighbours. Without such a threat, there is no reason to extend the NATO security commitment to any Central European countries. Russia is focusing on domestic reform, and the Russian military is now underfunded, badly equipped, and demoralized since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The failed intervention in Chechnya exposed the weakness of the army.<sup>6</sup> If Russia was unable to control its

<sup>4</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, *Winning the Peace* (New York, 1996); Michael Mandelbaum, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe* (New York, 1996); Michael Brown, 'The Flawed Logic of NATO Expansion', *Survival*, 37:1 (Spring 1995); Charles Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best', *International Security*, 18:1 (Summer 1993); Susan Eisenhower, 'Bear at Bay', *The Spectator*, 12 Jul. 1997, pp. 14–15; George F. Kennan, 'A Fateful Error', *New York Times*, 5 Feb 1997; Thomas L. Friedman, 'Bigger Isn't Better', *New York Times*, 6 Sept. 1997.

<sup>5</sup> This article does not address the debate over whether the expansion of the alliance is a vital interest of the United States. My aim is to show how international relations theories dominant in US academic discussions apply, not to present a theory of US foreign policy.

<sup>6</sup> 'Forgotten Victim of Chechnya: Russian Army', *New York Times*, 19 Jan. 1997. 'Russian Army May Be Close to Collapse, a Study Finds', *New York Times*, 15 Feb. 1997.

own territory, it cannot pose much of a threat to Central European states. In short, extending NATO is unnecessary.<sup>7</sup>

There are three problems with this argument. First, by itself it is not a compelling reason against expansion.<sup>8</sup> If there is no threat from Russia, then the defence commitment will never be invoked. There is no risk to expansion, and therefore no reason *not* to expand. Second, many NATO expansion opponents want to retain NATO to insure Western Europe against a resurgent Russia.<sup>9</sup> This implies that Russia *could* threaten the rest of Europe. Certainly, for Russia to threaten Western Europe it would have to dominate Central Europe. This means that Central European concern over a Russian threat is not as unreasonable as some NATO expansionists imply.<sup>10</sup>

Third, while there may be no *present* threat, Central European states fear that Russia may become more powerful in the future. Opponents of NATO expansion point out that Central European countries themselves have reduced their military forces. If they feel threatened or think they will be threatened, they should be strengthening them.<sup>11</sup> This argument is not compelling. First, it ignores military spending. The Visegrad four (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) have increased their defence spending.<sup>12</sup> Second, the decline in the number of units and manpower reflects reorganization away from Soviet-era doctrines, not simply responses to threats. These armies relied heavily on conscripts. Much of the manpower reductions comes from declines in conscription. Third, presumptive NATO candidates have an incentive to moderate their defence policies so as not to jeopardize their chances for membership. If NATO does not expand, their policies are likely to change.

These states seeking membership and their supporters argue that if Russia does revive expansionist aims or seek to extend its political influence, these countries will be dominated.<sup>13</sup> The best way to avoid this scenario is to deter Russia from considering such policies before the fact by incorporating these countries within the NATO defence perimeter. Expanding NATO will deter future Russian aggression. The anti-expansionists have a response to this.

### *Expansion threatens Russia*

NATO expansion opponents have problems with using NATO as a deterrent. They invoke the logic of the security dilemma.<sup>14</sup> Efforts to make Central Europe secure will reduce Russia's perceived security. While Russia may not pose a threat now, if

<sup>7</sup> See Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, p. 83; Brown, 'Flawed Logic', p. 36; Friedman, 'Bigger Isn't Better'.

<sup>8</sup> I will examine more sophisticated versions of this argument below.

<sup>9</sup> Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best', p. 20; Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, ch. 2; Steve Weber, 'Does NATO Have a Future?', in Beverly Crawford (ed.), *The Future of European Security* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), p. 361.

<sup>10</sup> Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 54; Brown, 'Flawed Logic', pp. 36–7.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, 'Flawed Logic', pp. 36–37; Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> *The Military Balance: 1995–1996* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 71–3.

<sup>13</sup> Rice, 'Now, NATO Should Grow'; William Safire, 'NATO: Bigger is Better', *New York Times* 16 Dec. 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation under the Security Dilemma', *World Politics*, 30:2 (Jan. 1978).

NATO expands, it will feel threatened and react defensively. In other words, states that fear future Russian expansion will create a self-fulfilling prophecy. The expansion will provoke Russia into responding with policies that it otherwise would not have pursued.<sup>15</sup>

This argument is logical on its own, but it contradicts the previous claim that Russia poses little threat to Central European states. If Russia is capable of threatening Central Europe if provoked, it follows that Russia is also capable of threatening Central Europe if its intentions change for other reasons. A Russia that inherently lacks the capability to threaten its neighbours is not a problem even if provoked.

NATO opponents must be clear about whether they think Russia has the capacity in the future to threaten Central Europe. If so, then they must show that Russia is unlikely to reassert influence in Central Europe anyway. On the other hand, if Russia inherently lacks the capacity to intimidate Central European states, then the Russian reaction is irrelevant. An anxious Russia will be too weak to do any harm. However, if we assume that Russia is capable of posing a threat in the future, a new set of objections to NATO expansion arises.

*Including some states in NATO makes those states excluded less secure*

If Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic join NATO, Russia may counter by meddling in the regions that are excluded from the alliance.<sup>16</sup> It may do this to increase its security in a defensive move, or it may think that NATO is not concerned about these states. This argument recalls the omission of South Korea from Dean Acheson's definition of the US security perimeter in Asia.<sup>17</sup> By not mentioning South Korea, he led North Korea to believe that the US would not defend it. If the Baltic republics, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Slovakia are not incorporated in NATO, Russia may increase its pressure on these states, believing that NATO considers them to be within Russia's legitimate sphere of interest. Or it may do so to create a security buffer between itself and the expanded NATO. By partially expanding NATO, the West risks making unincorporated Central European states less secure.

One answer to this argument is to include these states in NATO. But this would truly encircle Russia, and would make the military strategy for the alliance more complicated. Most likely, the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and Moldova would not be fully defensible without considerable military expansion by the alliance. Such a policy would clearly worry Russia, since the nature of the force structures needed would make offensive and defensive intentions indistinguishable.

There are more reasonable replies. Russia may increase its political pressure on these states regardless of whether NATO expands. First, if domestic or other international events bring aggressive nationalists to power, Russia may intervene in these

<sup>15</sup> Brown, 'Flawed Logic', pp. 41–2; Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, p. 83; Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 59; Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best', p. 7; Kennan, 'A Fateful Error'.

<sup>16</sup> Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, pp. 49–51; Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, p. 84.; Brown, 'Flawed Logic', p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Acheson's speech, see Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1974), pp. 146–7.

states anyway. Second, in the future, a more powerful Russia could want to expand its influence. In short, Russian expansion in these areas may occur independently of NATO expansion.

To argue that expansion will leave states outside the expanded NATO more at risk logically means that the level of danger to Central Europe is not trivial. If Russia expands or increases its influence into the unprotected regions, the threat to NATO-protected Central European states will increase. Anti-expansionists think that NATO expansion itself will provoke this. But they have no guarantees that this will not occur anyway.

The best argument *against* NATO expansion would be that Russia is defensive and strategically cautious. It does not intend to re-enter the region, and will not do so even if NATO expands. Enlarging NATO is therefore unnecessary and wasteful. Moreover, it can only embolden Central European states, who should have no genuine fear of Russia if it has no expansionist plans or means. Rather, they wish to advance their national interests by using NATO as threat against Russia: they can provoke Russia with impunity, so it ought to yield. In this case, Central European countries will become expansionist because of the NATO guarantee.

To the best of my knowledge, no one has made this argument. In part, this is because no one believes with a sufficient degree of certainty that Russia will not be hostile in the future. Also, the currently weak condition of the Central European militaries and their economic challenges make them implausible threats to Russian interests in the near future.

### *NATO can expand later if Russia becomes aggressive*

If Russia is potentially hostile, other scholars call for expansion only if Russia actually behaves aggressively. In essence, they call for a tit-for-tat strategy of cooperating by not expanding NATO now, but expanding it later if Russia proves aggressive.<sup>18</sup> The trouble with this strategy is that the barnyard door is closed after the horses have left. Once Russia has become clearly aggressive, it may be too late to deter it. First, Russia might already have formed a paper-tiger image of the West, and not believe that any new commitments are credible.<sup>19</sup> Second, psychological theories provide some evidence that earlier deterrent commitments are more likely to be heeded than threats made after a challenger is committed to use force.<sup>20</sup> After leaders decide to challenge, they may have a motivated error to discount the credibility of deterrent threats. A NATO commitment might fail if Russia were already committed to advance.

Third, trying to develop an effective defence plan to deter Russia might prove difficult over a short period. The necessary weapons interoperability, doctrines, and training might be so disparate that fast and effective cooperation would be impossible. While the Partnership for Peace programme would help alleviate this

<sup>18</sup> Brown, 'Flawed Logic', p. 35; Michael Mandelbaum, 'Preserving the New Peace', *Foreign Affairs*, 74:3 (May/June 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, (Ithaca, NY, 1991), pp. 5–6.

<sup>20</sup> Janice Gross Stein, 'Deterrence and Reassurance', in Philip Tetlock et al. (eds.), *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, vol. 2 (New York, 1989), pp. 23, 29.

problem, it is not a substitute for the coordination that would occur under NATO. The West might be forced to rapidly deploy large units in Central Europe during a crisis. But placing large NATO forces in these countries during a crisis might trigger a war, not deter one.

Of course, expansion opponents could point out that deterrence may be dangerous where domestic political instability or strategic vulnerability lead to motivated and cognitive distortions.<sup>21</sup> Instead of dissuading a potential challenger, they may magnify the incentives to challenge. In this case, the expansion of NATO will prompt Russian challenges. But it is unlikely that deterrence attempts *after* the challenge would be any more effective. Expanding NATO later would only exacerbate any crisis. To argue that NATO can expand later is only compelling as a political cover for abandoning Central Europe if Russia becomes aggressively revisionist.

### *Russia will obstruct other security efforts*

If NATO expands, Russia may not challenge directly the alliance, but it may reject a number of other security agreements that current NATO members value, like START II and non-proliferation measures on nuclear and chemical weapons.<sup>22</sup> While this is a risk, there are several reasons to doubt that Russia will respond this way or that such responses are valid reasons for forgoing the gains of expansion.

First, Russia already has pursued a number of foreign weapons and technology sales that the US has opposed. It has sold submarines and reactors to Iran, plans to sell reactors to India, and has sold anti-aircraft systems to the Greek Cypriot government.<sup>23</sup> But these sales have been motivated by the desire for revenue, especially revenue for the industrial sectors involved.<sup>24</sup> Regardless of NATO expansion, Russia has an incentive to continue these sales. If the alliance is not expanded, there is no reason to believe that Russia will apply new restraints. Of course, if the alliance does expand, Russian officials may be less willing to restrain such sales. However, the ability to make these sales depends on demand for weapons rather than NATO expansion. Furthermore, the adverse security implications of the marginal increase in such sales must be weighed against the gains from increased Central European stability. That trade-off is not obviously equal or more in favour of NATO, but fear of increased weapons exports would not be a radical change in Russian policy.

The second concern is that Russia may reject ratification of START II and abrogate the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. The Clinton administration has claimed the START II process as one of its foreign policy successes.<sup>25</sup> But this argument is less compelling than it seems. First, ratification of START II is in doubt regardless of NATO expansion. The nationalists in the Russian parliament are not supportive of the treaty anyway. They believe that further reductions in the nuclear arsenal harm Russia's prestige.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 60; Brown, 'Flawed Logic', p. 42; Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> 'Russia is Selling Nuclear Reactors to India', *New York Times*, 6 Feb. 1997.

<sup>24</sup> 'Russia's Surly Answer to NATO', *The Economist*, 1 Feb. 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address White House Press Office, 24 Jan. 1995.

<sup>26</sup> *The Economist*, 1 Feb. 1997; Brown, 'Flawed Logic', p. 42.

Second, failure to *ratify* START II may not be a serious problem. The US Senate never ratified SALT II, yet the Carter and Reagan administrations abided by its terms. The Russian parliament may refuse ratification in a symbolic nationalist move, but there is no reason to believe that the Russian executive branch will fail to comply with the terms of the treaty. Abrogating the treaty gives Russia no greater security than it has now. Moreover, current US cooperation on nuclear dismantling and defence conversion helps bolster the economy. Will the Russian executive end this cooperation if NATO expands? While nationalist legislators may call for this, Yeltsin and his successor would have to consider the severe economic costs of such a move.

Third, Russia has a strong incentive to cooperate on nuclear weapons issues after NATO expansion. Under the charter with Russia, NATO has made commitments not to introduce nuclear weapons into new members' territory.<sup>27</sup> While NATO may have no intention of basing nuclear weapons in Central European countries, both because it is unnecessary militarily and because it only increases the risks of accidents, the possibility of future deployment of such systems should Russia fail to comply with existing agreements could deter Russian renunciation of previous arms control commitments. Reducing levels of arms spending and competition is in Russia's best interest.<sup>28</sup>

With the CFE Treaty, the fission of the Soviet Union has led to some renegotiations already. At the December 1996 Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) ministerial in Lisbon, the CFE signatories agreed to begin negotiations on a review to the treaty.<sup>29</sup> Already, the US Senate unanimously amended the treaty to let Russia retain heavy weapons for a longer period near southern republics.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it is in the interest of current NATO members and Russia to renegotiate the treaty. This would provide an opportunity to deal with the arms policies of countries that would remain outside NATO as well.<sup>31</sup>

### *NATO could be entrapped by Central European states*

There is one reason that Russia and NATO have in common against expanding the alliance: the fear that one of the new Central European states will chain-gang the alliance into a war.<sup>32</sup> This is a legitimate Russian concern and one against which NATO member states should take precautions. There is a chance that other NATO members are committed enough to be pulled along into war but not diligent enough to avert a crisis. A NATO-protected member might be emboldened to take actions that it would not otherwise take without NATO membership.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *New York Times*, 15 May 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Edward L. Rowny, 'No Link to START 2', *New York Times*, 7 Aug. 1997. Rowny was the chief US negotiator for START I.

<sup>29</sup> US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 'Adaptation of the CFE Treaty', 2 Dec. 1996.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, 14 May 1997.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 and 20 Feb. 1997.

<sup>32</sup> On abandonment and entrapment, see Glenn Snyder, 'The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics', *World Politics*, 36 (Jun. 1984). On chain-ganging, see Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, 'Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity', *International Organization*, 44 (Spring 1990). I do not know anyone who argues this explicitly, but it is a possible danger.

<sup>33</sup> Glaser is concerned that NATO will be dragged into wars in the East, as he calls it, but he does not see chain-ganging as likely. See Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best', pp. 10–18.

But the likelihood of entrapment is low. First, NATO has made progress toward democratic control over national militaries a condition for entrance to the alliance. If civilian control is strict, the chances of a military-led provocation are reduced. Second, democratic institutions should consolidate under greater interaction with the West. Since states with consolidated democratic institutions are less belligerent, the chance of entrapment occurring is diminished further.<sup>34</sup> Third, reckless actions by any member will likely yield a restricted interpretation of Article 5 obligations by the rest of NATO. The NATO Charter does not mandate immediate military defence by other NATO members. Two points are crucial. First, the use of armed force is not required unless the other parties deem it necessary. So, if a state blatantly entraps the alliance, NATO can avoid being chain-ganged without undermining its commitments. No one commits to entrapment. Second, the action will be referred to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Should the US, for example, move the dispute there, the entrapping state will be at a disadvantage since Russia holds a veto on any resolution. Any prospective state *provocateur* will need to consider that NATO will not support aggressive actions, and that the UNSC decision will harm its interests.

#### *Why not Partnership for Peace over NATO?*

One could argue that many of the advantages of NATO could be better realized by continuing with the Partnership for Peace programme, which provides for military cooperation, training, and exercises between the US and Central European countries as well as Russia. Defense Secretary William Perry suggested that qualified states that are not admitted to NATO become ‘super’ partners: ‘To me, it means that the Partnership for Peace should be able to perform all functions except the Article V function of NATO. That is, every member of the “super” Partnership for Peace should have the possibility of performing any of the functions or be involved in any of the activities that NATO members undertake, except the Article V responsibility.’<sup>35</sup> Since Russia is a member of the Partnership for Peace and has already participated in four major exercises with the US involving peace-keeping and humanitarian missions, it would seem that this policy would not imperil Russian security.<sup>36</sup>

The problem with this policy as a substitute for NATO expansion is that Partnership for Peace lacks the very guarantee that Central European states want, the Article V commitment. While Partnership for Peace is better than nothing, its attractiveness would diminish if no states were invited to join NATO. All those excluded would have an incentive to pursue unilateral strategies. If some are

<sup>34</sup> The democratic and liberal peace literature is premised upon this. Moreover, so is the rest of NATO. See Thomas Risse-Kappen, ‘Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security* (New York, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> *Defence Issues* 11:89, ‘NATO and a “Super” Partners in Europe?’ Prepared remarks by Secretary of Defense William J. Perry at the Seminar on the Future of Defence Cooperation Around the Baltic Sea, Copenhagen, 24 Sept. 1996.

<sup>36</sup> *Defence Issues*, 11:97, ‘A Pragmatic U.S.–Russian Partnership?’ Prepared remarks by Secretary of Defense William J. Perry to the Military Academy of the Russian General Staff, Moscow, 17 Oct. 1996.

included, then those outside NATO still have the incentive to become ‘super partners’ and possibly NATO members in the future.<sup>37</sup>

*Is there a reason for NATO at all?*

Opponents of NATO expansion rarely carry their argument to its logical conclusion. If there is no need to extend the alliance, is there a reason to retain it at all? Russia has every reason to see the *continuation* of the alliance as a threat. The alliance was created to reassure the Western Europeans of the US commitment to defend them against an imagined, but later more real, Soviet threat.<sup>38</sup> The Soviet Union is gone and the Russian threat is only a future potential. Germany is unified but no longer militaristic, and it is economically integrated with the rest of Europe.<sup>39</sup> Relations within Europe are more peaceful than ever before. A war in Western Europe is hardly conceivable.

All these factors should make NATO unnecessary.<sup>40</sup> While the alliance would continue to exist in name, the military components could be dismantled and more drastically reduced. If Europe is secure, and the threat from Russia distant, NATO could reduce its military force sizeably. Indeed, if the sources of stability are so strong, the alliance itself would appear unnecessary. If NATO expansion opponents believe that the non-necessity of defence commitments argues against them, why not dismantle NATO?

One answer could be that abrogating defence commitments is different from offering them. This is semantically true but theoretically and empirically uninteresting if there is no source of danger among the NATO members. At best, one could argue that the alliance mitigates Greek and Turkish tensions. But the fear of war among these states seems to be nearly on a par with the fear of war among some Central European states. If NATO is needed to preserve stability in southern Europe, why not in Central Europe?<sup>41</sup>

The maintenance of NATO could well be viewed as threatening by Russia. If the extension of the alliance undermines the reformers, why does the continuation of the alliance not have a similar, if less severe, effect? Logically, maintaining NATO should generate insecurity within Russia. The best way to alleviate Russian concerns and secure Central Europe would be to eliminate NATO. This follows logically from the anti-expansion arguments. That these critics do not advocate NATO’s abandonment is puzzling.

There is an empirical answer. Russia has not called for NATO’s abandonment, and it has some compelling reasons not to do so. First, NATO embeds Germany, the

<sup>37</sup> See the discussion below, ‘Restraining effects on non-allied states’.

<sup>38</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York, 1982), pp. 72–4; Robert Jervis, *Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1989) pp. 206–9.

<sup>39</sup> See Stephen Van Evera, ‘Primed for Peace’, in Lynn-Jones and Miller (eds.), *The Cold War and After*; Hanns W. Maull, ‘Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers’, *Foreign Affairs*, 70 (Winter 1990/1). Thomas U. Berger, ‘Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan’, in Katzenstein (ed.), *Culture of National Security*.

<sup>40</sup> See Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 167.

<sup>41</sup> An essay focusing on interest could possibly answer this. The point here is that a non-normative theory of security does not offer an answer.

most serious challenger to Russia in Central Europe, within NATO.<sup>42</sup> If Russia is concerned with future German policy, it should prefer that NATO remains. But this argument means that Russia trusts NATO to restrain a powerful state. If NATO can restrain Germany, it ought to be able to restrain the Central European states too. It is illogical for Russia to trust NATO to contain Germany but distrust it to restrain the Central European states. A second reason that Russia does not oppose NATO is that it would be futile. Since the Soviet Union accepted NATO as part of the German unification treaty, it lost its best opportunity to dissolve the alliance.

Many NATO expansion opponents believe that the alliance is still necessary for the security of Western Europe.<sup>43</sup> It restrains Germany against any future contingencies and reassures the other states in Western Europe.<sup>44</sup> And it deters Russia.<sup>45</sup> But if Western European states fear an established, domestically institutionalized Germany embedded in interconnecting international organizations, this would seem to make the newly democratizing and independent Russia a far more likely threat. By arguing for the retention of NATO, opponents of expansion undercut their argument that there is little to fear. While the German state may be more powerful than the Russian in the near future, there is no reason to believe that Germany has any interest in expanding its military. What security threat is there? If Russia could pose one, then expanding NATO may be wise after all.

### Why NATO expansion might be good

Those who support NATO expansion offer a combination of deterrence and reassurance arguments. The prime objective is to secure Central Europe, both from itself and from Russia. Depending on how these policies are crafted, this can secure Russia too. If NATO is directed more as a reassurance institution than a deterrent one, NATO expansion could benefit the Russians as much as the candidate members.

Many of these arguments have been made by NATO expansion proponents, including NATO's own *Study on NATO Enlargement* (September 1995).<sup>46</sup> Their reasoning follows from the logic of the security dilemma. NATO expansion opponents fail to acknowledge that their theories can be justifications for expansion as well as cautions against it. What is crucial is how NATO expands, not simply the fact of expansion. I do not argue that current advocates of expansion offer a good set of policies.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, expansion plans now focus too much on deterrence.<sup>48</sup> What

<sup>42</sup> Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 157, esp. n.2.

<sup>43</sup> Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best', pp. 8–9; Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, ch. 9; Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, p. 171.

<sup>44</sup> Ironically, Mandelbaum downplays the restraining role of the alliance for Central Europe given the failure of NATO to prevent the 1974 Turkish intervention in Cyprus (*Dawn of Peace*, p. 52). Another limited NATO supporter disagrees, citing the restraints as crucial for western and southern European security. NATO prevented the conflict from escalating. See Weber, 'Does NATO Have a Future?', p. 379.

<sup>45</sup> Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best', pp. 5, 9–10; Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, ch. 1, esp. pp. 16, 19.

<sup>46</sup> See Asmus et al., 'NATO Expansion'; Ronald D. Asmus and F. Stephen Larrabee, 'NATO and the Have Not', *Foreign Affairs*, 75:6 (Nov./Dec. 1996).

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., 'Clinton's NATO: Keen on Growth, Murky on Mission', *New York Times*, 13 Jul. 1997.

<sup>48</sup> While the advocates have moderate military visions for NATO, their reassurance measures do not focus sufficiently on NATO force reductions given Russia's currently weakened military. Instead, they argue for the current NATO *status quo* with the addition of some Central European forces. See Asmus et al., 'NATO Expansion', pp. 31–2.

I do argue is that international relations theories provide outlines for what kinds of policies would create greater security by expanding NATO.

*Advantages for NATO and Central Europe*

One set of arguments for NATO expansion focuses on the benefits it will have for NATO members, the candidate members, and other Central European countries. First, NATO expansion could deter Russian revisionism. Second, expansion offers implicit but conditional protection to those states not included in expansion. Opponents have focused exclusively on the disadvantages for these states, without considering how expansion could improve their security in the future. Third, expanding NATO would both require and permit a reduction in current NATO members' militaries.

*Deterring Russian revisionism:* Central European publics and leaders doubt that Russia will remain satisfied with the post-Cold War order.<sup>49</sup> Optimistic and pessimistic scenarios for Russia's social, economic, and political future can yield revisionist foreign policy goals. A Russia trapped in further economic decline may seek to divert attention from domestic troubles by asserting itself internationally. The breakdown of Russian democratization could lead to an aggressive foreign policy.<sup>50</sup> More funds may be devoted to the military, and society may be mobilized around restoring Russian political prestige in Ukraine, the Baltics, or elsewhere in Central Europe. Alternatively, a prosperous Russia may claim greater regional influence as a growing great power. Instead of being a country committed to the *status quo*, Russia will attempt to restore or increase its role in the region. If at least some Central European states were within the NATO alliance, Russia would have to consider that its ability to intimidate them by use or threat of use of force would be met with a response from NATO.

*Implicit deterrence of states outside the alliance:* For those countries outside the enlarged NATO, an expanded NATO offers tacit protection. Ukraine borders Poland. Should Russia threaten the use of force, Ukraine could be assisted by Polish or NATO forces. Poland would have good reason to aid Ukraine since otherwise Russian influence in the region would increase. Russia would face a dilemma. If it attacks Polish defence installations, it will have committed an armed attack on NATO. The collective security obligation could be invoked. In other words, expanding NATO to some of the Central European countries may improve the security of countries not in the alliance. If Russia is wary of an enlarged NATO, it will have to consider the consequences of its actions in the area. Intimidating policies are likely to drive the Baltic republics and Ukraine closer to the West. If Russia considers the use

<sup>49</sup> For a representative sample, see 27 Nov. 1996 US Information Agency summary of foreign press commentaries from Central European states. 'Joining NATO: Central Europe Sees a Cure-all', *New York Times*, 11 Jun. 1997.

<sup>50</sup> Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield, 'Democratization and the Danger of War', *International Security*, 20:1 (Summer 1995).

of force against unallied states, it must still fear that events may get out of control, and that NATO will become involved.<sup>51</sup>

Some NATO expansion opponents effectively concede this point. Michael Brown argues that the alliance could be extended later if Russia proves threatening. So, if the extended alliance would be effective then, it ought to be at least as effective at deterring such aggression now.<sup>52</sup>

Why is this argument not used to reassure Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic now, instead of their being incorporated in NATO? First, if the West intended to defend them without incorporating them in NATO, the alliance commitment should be less contentious. On the contrary, the strong opposition from many public figures to the idea of providing the security guarantee gives them strong reasons to fear that NATO would not be extended to them should Russian foreign policy change in the future. Therefore, they would need to take defensive measures in the short term in the absence of NATO defence. Second, if the alliance were not extended, the Central European states closer to Russia might pursue policies that threaten the other Central European states or that lead Russia to make more interventionist moves. Ukraine and the Baltic republics would have little incentive to restrain their policies now, since future NATO support would be unlikely. Indeed, they would have an incentive to bolster their security when Russia is weak. This, of course, would only exacerbate Russia's sense of threat.

*Allying with the strong states to influence the weaker ones:* It is ironic that the stronger states are incorporated into the alliance, while several weaker states (Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Moldova) are excluded. At first glance, permitting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to enter and not the weaker, eastward states does not make sense. But this ignores a number of points. First, the strong states are the most capable among the Central European countries of posing threats to Russia. If a set of countries should be restrained, it is these. The Polish border with Belarus and Ukraine, and the Hungarian border with Ukraine insulate them geographically from any immediate Russian action against changes in their security policies. They could pursue more offensive doctrines before Russia has the ability to deter them. Second, the weaker states like Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Romania are more easily manipulated by economic and diplomatic instruments than are Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Because the former group are economically more troubled, they are more reliant on Western support.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, they pose less of a threat to Russia, and are less likely to be a focus of its attention. It is unnecessary to defend, restrain, and reassure them to the degree that other NATO candidates need restraint.

While hostile actions by Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic appear preposterous now, any argument against expansion must speculate about how they may behave if their NATO application is rejected. Under different political conditions, their behaviour could change dramatically. As of January 1996, the armies of these three totalled almost 362,000 men. Russia had 818,000 men.<sup>54</sup> But the Russian

<sup>51</sup> On the risk of events getting out of hand, see Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT, 1966), chs. 8 and 9, esp. pp. 52–55 on implicit commitments.

<sup>52</sup> Brown, 'Flawed Logic', argues that it would be provocative to expand now.

<sup>53</sup> *New York Times*, 24 Jan. 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Data from *SIPRI Yearbook 1996* (Oxford, 1996), p. 731.

military faces future cuts, and has other military concerns in the south and east. NATO expansion opponents can argue that the addition of these forces to the existing NATO forces worries Russia. But Russia should be even more concerned should these forces remain outside NATO, and relations with these states deteriorate.

*NATO members could and should reduce their forces:* If NATO expands, there are three reasons why NATO members should reduce the size of their forces in Europe. First, by adding the former Warsaw Pact members to NATO, the alliance will be obligated to reduce its force levels under the CFE Treaty. The already planned renegotiations of the CFE will set exact levels.<sup>55</sup> Second, NATO intends to modernize new members' forces to make them less offence-oriented. Such forces will be compatible with NATO equipment and less threatening to Russia and other neighbours. The cost of this modernization will mean that smaller forces should be created. Third, if the size of the alliance is increased and the Russians and other Central European countries are reassured, the security environment should improve in Europe. This means that NATO will not need the current-sized force. If Europe is more secure and Russia poses no near-term threat, then the size of NATO forces can decline. France and Germany are engaged in troop reductions now. The US currently plans to retain around 100,000 troops in Europe.<sup>56</sup> If expansion proceeds, this number should be reduced.

The error in current thinking about NATO is that force levels should be increased under expansion.<sup>57</sup> Much of the argument over the cost of NATO expansion depends on the supposed size of the new Central European armies and the issue of how the burden should be shared.<sup>58</sup> While defence plans for the new states are necessary, there is no need to maintain force levels in Europe to defend against a Russian attack in the near future. An index of NATO commitment to mutual security and not unilateral advantage would be a reduction of the size of NATO forces. The US might reduce its number of troops in NATO by 20,000. The point is to signal clearly and credibly to the Russians that NATO expansion is not an encirclement plan. Of course, practical military plans need to be made, but NATO itself and expansion proponents ought to consider more seriously the views of expansion opponents over the likely challenges to European security.

### *Reasons Russia should like NATO too*

So far, I have focused exclusively on the benefits of expansion for NATO and Central European states. However, expansion has benefits for Russia as well. These focus on the effect the alliance will have on restraining Central European states from exploiting present Russian weaknesses, and on preventing instability arising from regional rivalries.

<sup>55</sup> US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 'Adaptation', 2 Dec., 1996.

<sup>56</sup> US Department of Defense, 1996 Annual Review.

<sup>57</sup> Asmus et al., 'NATO Expansion', argue that current levels are adequate in term of combat vehicles and divisions (p. 30), but I argue that those levels should be lower if we believe that security is increased.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., 'A Bigger NATO', *The Economist*, 12 Jul. 1997.

*Central European states would search for security without the alliance:* The trouble with the logic of the NATO expansion opponents is that they do not consider what action Eastern European states might take in the *absence* of a NATO commitment. Just as Russia will supposedly fear for its security if NATO is expanded, Central European states will fear for their security if NATO does *not* expand.<sup>59</sup> A number of unsettling dynamics may occur.

First, nationalist politicians may gain greater influence, affecting foreign policies and increasing the chances of conflict in the region.<sup>60</sup> Without the protection afforded by NATO and with concern over future security, nationalist foreign policy arguments might be more legitimate to citizens than if the countries were part of NATO. While ethnic tensions are mild in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in comparison to countries like Ukraine and the Baltics, they could worsen if international tensions increase.

Second, without the alliance, the temptation to pursue unilateral security measures increases. Without cooperation, there is the danger that intra-regional arms spirals could occur. For example, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine may all be sceptical of Polish arms building. The trouble in such a system is that who is arming to balance against whom is unclear. These are the dynamics that John Mearsheimer feared would occur.<sup>61</sup> For example, the development of a Polish nuclear deterrent could frighten Poland's neighbours, including Germany, and worry Russia. While Poland may be unlikely to develop such a weapon now, that is not the point. The proper question is, how likely would it be if its bid to join the alliance were refused and security conditions in the region were perceived to be deteriorating?

Third, a four-power alliance of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia could form.<sup>62</sup> Following the same security dilemma logic that makes an expanded NATO more of a threat to Russia, this new alliance would worry Russia and any other non-alliance members. To defend the members from multiple contingencies, these states might procure more mobile forces. Because they could not rely on forces from NATO countries to come to their aid, the alliance members would have to have greater forces in being and larger reserves than if they were NATO members. This would heighten the security dilemma for other states and complicate the renegotiation of the CFE Treaty.

Fourth, Germany might offer or be solicited to make bilateral defence arrangements. Germany would have some incentive to do so to forestall any local alliance that could lead to greater local instability. Other EU members and NATO might discourage Germany from such a policy, and Germany would be reluctant to extend any unilateral guarantees to other Central European states. But this depends on whether it needs to forestall action by these countries, and the perceived level of Russian assertiveness. It is possible that NATO would be willing to extend guarantees later, but Germany might think it is necessary to take measures sooner.

<sup>59</sup> Kugler, *Enlarging NATO*, pp. 12–14.

<sup>60</sup> Anti-expansionists often assume that Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary will be readily incorporated into the EU. But if the EU delays this and if their independent security efforts reduce this likelihood further, relations may deteriorate even further.

<sup>61</sup> Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future'.

<sup>62</sup> Including Slovakia would be necessary to provide for geographic continuity among the members. Otherwise, Hungary would be separated from Poland and the Czech Republic. *The Times*, 7 Jul. 1997, criticizes the expansion for this reason.

Such intra-European and intra-alliance discord could be averted under NATO expansion by careful diplomacy and alliance commitments now rather than later.

*Membership could restrain Central European states:* The fear by NATO and Russia that NATO would be entrapped by the Central European states remains a concern. But the risk of a Central European state provoking a crisis is diminished by a variety of institutional restraints and controls that NATO membership would impose. Having Central European states in the alliance should restrain their foreign and military policies. Their foreign policies will be more explicitly monitored and influenced by the West. Intra-European disputes would be adjudicated informally or formally by other NATO members, reducing the likelihood of Eastern crises arising without clear great-power responsibility for dealing with them. This advantage to expanding NATO is reflected explicitly in administration thinking. President Clinton speaking in Detroit said: 'I came to office convinced that NATO can do for Europe's East what it did for Europe's West: *prevent a return to local rivalries*, strengthen democracy against future threats, and create the conditions for prosperity to flourish.'<sup>63</sup>

The future formation of a European concert of great powers is not inconceivable. A Russia that met with the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany to monitor Central European defence policies would be more assured that its interests were being protected than one confronting the Central European states alone. But without NATO expansion, the four Western powers would have limited leverage over these states, and they would be less willing to assume responsibility for restraining them without any defence relations.

Efforts can be made to limit military policies as well. The *severity* of the security dilemma is a variable, not a constant. Unilateral measures can reduce the likelihood of hostile intentions being inferred from capabilities.<sup>64</sup> The expansion of NATO is not analogous to a security situation where offensive and defensive capabilities are indistinguishable. For example, before World War I, a British navy capable of defending its overseas territories threatened German colonial possessions. Security for Britain, by the nature of the military technology, was threatening to Germany.<sup>65</sup> But that analogy is not apt to the situation in Europe today. If the size of armies, the number deployed on the continent, the mobility of the forces, and other features are limited, military capabilities can be more defensive than offensive, regardless of beliefs about intentions.

First, the defence requirements for these states should be measured with their alliance membership taken into account. A pan-European arms treaty could limit the arms spending and deployment of these militaries, providing Russia with greater security. The renegotiation of the CFE Treaty provides an opportunity to set new arms limits that incorporate Russian security concerns.

Second, modernization of the Central European militaries to update their equipment and make it compatible with NATO equipment will be expensive.<sup>66</sup> The expense means that the size of these forces will be smaller than they would otherwise be. Since there is no immediate Russian military threat, the size of these forces

<sup>63</sup> Comments in Detroit, 23 Oct. 1996 (my italics).

<sup>64</sup> Jervis, 'Cooperation under the Security Dilemma'.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>66</sup> See Asmus et al., 'What Will NATO Enlargement Cost?'

should be small anyway. This makes defensive doctrines more likely since the cost of offensive doctrines would be high. Indeed, intra-alliance disputes over paying for these costs make it more likely that smaller forces will emerge by default, even if NATO planners might wish for larger forces.

Third, to reassure Russia, defensive doctrines could be publicized. A distinguishable defence is possible. Less reliance on armoured divisions and more concentration on anti-tank and less mobile artillery operations could contribute to this. It is true that crafting careful arms control policies is difficult.<sup>67</sup> But this does not make the task impossible. By restricting the size of air wings and not basing them in Eastern Europe during peacetime, and a variety of other confidence-building measures, an expanded NATO can indicate that it does not have aggressive intentions. Indeed, it is feasible that reductions in the size of NATO forces could occur if the Central European states are incorporated.

*Central European arms increases would increase Russian fears:* The dynamics of Central European arms competition in the absence of NATO membership could create the basis for Russian nationalist appeals for a more assertive foreign policy. In other words, with NATO expansion, Russia will be bothered unnecessarily. Without NATO expansion, Russia could well be bothered for good reasons. The point is that the policy outcome that the West fears, nationalist resurgence in Russia, is possible under both scenarios. The crucial difference is that in the latter scenario, Russian concerns are likely to be far more credible and the costs of intervening in a crisis much higher.

Opponents of NATO expansion could counter that we have strong evidence that the Russians are opposed to NATO expansion, while we have only a hypothesis that Central European security dilemmas will prompt Russian nationalism. Why not accept the probability of the here-and-now versus the possibility of future dynamics? First, the logic of both arguments is the same. The likely Russian reaction makes sense because the fear is rational under an anarchic setting. The same rational fears should operate among the Central European states, and since they lack a nuclear deterrent, their fears of military coercion should be much higher than Russian fears.

A second reason to be as concerned over Russian reaction to unilateral Central European security policies as over NATO-guided ones is that we have little reason to accept the truth of public Russian claims that NATO expansion frightens them. Russian officials may prefer that NATO not expand so that they can maintain or revive their influence in the region. They may have moderate revisionist aims. In this case, they have a strategic incentive to misrepresent the intensity of their opposition and exaggerate the chances of a nationalist backlash, in order to prevent expansion from proceeding. Statements by Russian officials have varied over how much they oppose the alliance and what responses they would have to such expansion.<sup>68</sup> These mixed messages could be the result of genuine policy disputes, or they could reflect the unwillingness of some to exaggerate their opposition as much as others.

Even if these reasons are rejected, an argument that Russian officials would fear limited NATO expansion but not fear unilateral Central European security policies

<sup>67</sup> Richard K. Betts, 'Systems for Peace or Causes of War?', *International Security*, 17:1 (Summer 1992), pp. 30–40.

<sup>68</sup> *The Economist*, 8 Feb. 1997; *New York Times*, 27 Sept., 11 Oct., and 19 Dec. 1996 and 5 Jan. 1997.

is too clever by half. If Central European countries increase their forces considerably, they may have greater forces than they would under NATO-supervised modernization and arms limitation policies. Opponents have to argue that Russia would be worried by small, defensively oriented forces under NATO but not by larger, offensively oriented forces without NATO.<sup>69</sup> This may be the case, but balance-of-power arguments suggest otherwise. Under security dilemma arguments, the latter outcome should be more worrisome.

*Restraining effects on non-allied states:* An explicit objective of NATO expansion is to stabilize relations within Central Europe.<sup>70</sup> But since NATO plans to include only some, not all, of the countries involved, opponents say control over instability in the region will be limited.<sup>71</sup> This is partially true, but the unallied states may feel more secure if the alliance is extended to their borders and military cooperation through the Partnership for Peace programme continues. The degree of protection an expanded NATO would be willing to afford depends on the foreign policies these states pursue. NATO is not obligated to protect them, and should *they* provoke Russia, they are unlikely to be assisted by the West.

These countries are caught in a delicate balance, but this serves the interests both of the current NATO members and of Russia. They have the ability to resist Russian pressure within reasonable limits, but they will not be protected if they antagonize Russia by pursuing aggressive or ethnically divisive policies. These constraints operate successfully because of the proximity of NATO to these countries. Lithuania and Ukraine will be contiguous with a NATO country if Poland joins. If Poland remains outside NATO, the defence contingencies that could be provided are more limited.

NATO expansion opponents can argue that this very contiguity exacerbates Russian security concerns. This is true. But how much it worries Russia should depend on how NATO forces are deployed. Having contiguity makes it easier for a rapid reaction force to be deployed should tensions worsen or Russian troop levels increase. This permits NATO to limit the size of its newly expanded army, and not increase its airlift capabilities much.

Only if Russia demands nearly absolute security should this be a severe problem. But if it does so, this implies that Russia might pursue a variety of other policies designed to garner absolute security, like expansion westward. NATO expansion opponents must explain why Russia will pursue absolute security policies only if NATO expands, but otherwise refrain from such actions despite the likely measures by Central European states to increase their security unilaterally.

A different argument for limited expansion accepts the basic logic of the security dilemma, but with a twist. The refusal of the West to include some states in NATO should reassure Russia that NATO expansion is not hostile. Russia has compelling security interests there. These states are not accidentally left outside the new NATO;

<sup>69</sup> The nature of threat estimates must be clearly specified. It is possible that Russian decision-makers make only qualitative assessments. So while a Central European alliance would be considered inherently weak, the potential for US and Western European participation in a Central European state's war with Russia is threatening, no matter what the actual force posture is. The point is that critics of NATO expansion have not been clear about which argument they are making or what evidence they have for either one.

<sup>70</sup> Asmus et al., 'NATO Expansion', p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Brown, 'Flawed Logic', p. 37.

they are intentionally left out. NATO expansionists recognize that to incorporate them could be provocative. Not including them serves as a signal of NATO intentions. Were the alliance members trying to encircle Russia, they would include them. In essence, these states serve as hostages to moderate behaviour on the part of NATO. If Poland or any of the other Central European states becomes more strident in its relations with Russia after joining NATO, it runs the risk of provoking Russia into extending its influence closer to its borders. The rest of NATO might temper its response if they felt new members were behaving recklessly.

*Democratization reinforces peace:* Since the candidate NATO members are democratizing states, NATO membership could help consolidate their democratic institutions in ways that are beneficial for Western and Russian security. First, NATO requires that these countries place firm civilian control over their militaries. The importance of this move is illustrated by the initial opposition from the Polish military. NATO expansion opponents argue that democracy will not be furthered by NATO membership. But in the Polish case we see that the prospect of NATO membership has affected the institutionalization of democracy.<sup>72</sup>

Second, cooperation with the democratic NATO militaries should reinforce norms of civilian rule. Beliefs that the military is subordinate to civilians are instilled in the US and other Western militaries.<sup>73</sup> Cooperation among the militaries, and training in Western military academies, should help socialize Central European officers into these norms. On the other hand, if the countries pursued unilateral security policies, these norms might not take root, and civilian control might not be fully established.

### **Risks of a genuine Russian backlash**

So far, I have assumed that Russian policy-makers have few legitimate reasons to fear a NATO expansion that they know is not hostile, and many reasons to welcome it. But there is a chance that Russian opposition to NATO expansion is credible. This section examines the possible reasons for this.

#### *The world through a Cold War looking-glass*

Russian elites may not have abandoned the Cold War conception of alliances or security policy more generally. In the words of Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, the mistakes of the Russians 'included defining their security at the expense of everyone else's and misdefining security itself as the expensive and wasteful capacity to destroy and intimidate'.<sup>74</sup> But if Russian elites do define their interests this way, then expanding NATO may be necessary. It is necessary since it is unlikely

<sup>72</sup> See *New York Times*, 23 and 24 Jan. 1997, p. A8.

<sup>73</sup> See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (New York, 1957); Bruce M. Russett and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *Military Force and American Society* (New York, 1973).

<sup>74</sup> 'America and Russia in a Changing World', address at Columbia University, 29 Oct., 1996.

that Russian decision-makers will pursue cooperative policies unless NATO creates high disincentives against non-cooperation.<sup>75</sup> If NATO is expanded, the security consequences for Russia of pursuing unilateral policies become much more serious. If Russia abrogates the CFE Treaty and fails to ratify START II, for example, NATO may increase defence spending. Russia has an incentive to cooperate if the price of security increases.

There is more of a danger if the Russian public shares the government's perception of the West. Current evidence indicates that this is not so.<sup>76</sup> But one cannot be sure that public opinion will not change when NATO actually expands, although it is unlikely that this would not be the result of elite manipulation. The Russian public probably has more prosaic concerns.<sup>77</sup> But if public sentiment is strongly anti-Western, then compulsion policies could drive Russian leaders to take reckless actions, which would be costly to NATO and to Russia itself.

If Cold War images prevail, an expanded NATO will have to try to reassure Russia. Limiting force sizes further and establishing more prominent and meaningful bilateral consultations will be necessary. Employing economic linkages would be counterproductive under this scenario, because Russian leaders would feel more vulnerable under such influences.

### *Genuine fear of contemporary containment*

Just as the West and Central Europe fear that Russian intentions may change, it is not unreasonable for Russian leaders to think that the intentions of the new NATO members might change. While ostensibly restrained by the alliance, they may begin to pursue one-sided policies toward Russia, Belarus, or Ukraine. Russian officials cannot be certain that the alliance ties will be effective in moderating the new members' intentions or capabilities. If CFE Treaty revisions and internal economic constraints impose force imbalances on Russia, it might feel threatened. Old-guard military planners and politicians suspicious of the West might make better Russian military capabilities the price for accepting an expanded NATO.

Some measures mentioned previously should reassure Russia. One is reduction in NATO force levels. Another is close consultations among the NATO four with Russia over Central European affairs. If regular diplomacy can work after the Cold War, it ought to be able to work in reassuring Russia that NATO policies are not aimed at restricting legitimate levels of Russian influence in the region. The key is negotiating what constitutes legitimate interests. If opponents of NATO expansion think this is improbable, then they need to explain how the West will bargain with Russia over security relations without the influence or presence in Central Europe that NATO expansion would create.

<sup>75</sup> See Pushkov, 'The Risk of Losing Russia'.

<sup>76</sup> Kurt W. Bassuener, 'Russia's Concerns Aside, NATO Must Expand', letter, *New York Times*, 10 Feb. 1997; *Washington Post*, 6 Feb. 1997.

<sup>77</sup> See Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 'What Kind of "Democracy" Is This?', *New York Times*, 4 Jan. 1997, p. 23.

*Partisan political propaganda*

Some Russians will use NATO expansion for partisan purposes in Russian domestic politics. They can criticize the Yeltsin government and pro-Western parties by portraying NATO expansion as a failure of the foreign policy of pro-Western Russian Governments. The argument here is not that NATO is a central domestic issue because political figures view it through a Cold War prism, as mentioned above, but that they adopt a defiant position because their political opponents will likely acquiesce in the expansion.

Cold War prisms, fears of containment, and partisan politics all complicate NATO expansion, and could lead Russian leaders and citizens to overlook the stabilizing effects of expansion in the region, and the security benefits to Russia specifically. There are two reasons to still pursue expansion. First, concerted diplomacy by the US and other NATO members could change Russian perceptions. Second, if these biases to expansion are severe and widespread, the likelihood of cooperative Russian policies is low regardless of NATO expansion. But an expanded NATO would permit the West to challenge aggressive Russian policies.

*Restricting NATO might strengthen Russian nationalists*

If NATO does not expand after the policy was proposed, it will be a political victory for Russian nationalists. How they will interpret the Western decision may differ from how Westerners assess it. Russia might see its forceful opposition as being the key factor, rather than the Western fear of Russian overreaction. While NATO may wish to avoid antagonizing Russia, Western decision-makers need to consider the possibility that Russian decision-makers will take the Western choice as a lack of resolve in dealing with Russia. Under this scenario, Russian nationalists will be strengthened, leading to more anti-Western policies, and the West will lack the deterrent of a completed alliance with Central European states.

This argument is not a compelling one on its own for expanding NATO. If it were accepted, many policies, once proposed, would have to be followed for reputational reasons even though they are inherently unwise. But if Russian nationalists do have the ability to drive Russian foreign policy if NATO does expand, NATO opponents have to consider mechanisms for averting these outcomes if NATO does not expand.

The above sections have made the case for NATO expansion under the argument that the nature of Central European security relations without NATO expansion is likely to be worse than relations with NATO expanded because of responses to uncertainty under anarchy. This discussion has serious implications for the kinds of theories of security in international relations that we employ.

**Implications for security theory**

NATO expansion opponents rely heavily on the security dilemma to sustain their claim that expansion would be harmful. The main flaw in the policy implications

they draw is that these same motivations should apply to the Central European states. If they react without being embedded in NATO, they are likely to exacerbate Russian security concerns if Russia is as weak as the NATO expansion opponents claim it is. Why do none of these scholars pursue this line of reasoning? Primarily, there is a biased view of rationality behind their arguments.

*Bias and bad science in realism's rationality trap*

Realism in both its classical and neorealist variants assumes for the purpose of theory-building that states are rational. The will to power may motivate statesmen for classical realists, but they will pursue power rationally.<sup>78</sup> Neorealists argue that states pursue power rationally in order to survive. Excessive accumulation of power is self-defeating.<sup>79</sup> Most scholars accept this, but they overlook realism's latent pessimism on these points. The rationality that realism finds as an explanation for behaviour is too often confused unintentionally as offering a solution to the problem. At best, these problems can be mitigated.<sup>80</sup>

This assumption of rational pursuit of security drives assessments of Russian reaction to NATO expansion. Because Russia is weaker than ever before, NATO expansion must be read by Russia as a change in NATO's intentions. Since the balance of capabilities is more in NATO's favour after expansion, its intentions toward Russia must have changed. Therefore, Central European states should not be incorporated, to assuage Russian fears.

But the rationality of Central European calculations is ignored. If Russian instability worsens, it may become aggressive, and it has latent power to harm other states. If Russia stabilizes, it will become more powerful. Under either scenario, Central European leaders must be fearful of their ability to survive. Realism's self-help dynamics mean that Central European states should be estimating their power relative to Russia individually. The motive of each to join NATO exists because these calculations show they are weak individually, and therefore vulnerable. If NATO does not accept them, they must either ally among themselves or balance unilaterally.

The issue is not whether Russia is a *status quo* state or a revisionist one.<sup>81</sup> Realism predicts that Russia will drive other states to seek security just as it will attempt to achieve its own. Intentions are irrelevant. If they are considered, then it should be possible to reassure Russia. For realist logic to explain why NATO should not expand, the rationality assumption must be dropped for Russia alone: Russian leaders are paranoid; Central European leaders are rational. They will understand why NATO will not cover them; Russia will not understand if it does. This argument

<sup>78</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York, 1948/93), p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> While the structure of the system drives the security dilemma, Kenneth Waltz argues that expansionist statesmen deluded themselves into thinking they can succeed despite the likely formation of a balancing alliance. See K. Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', in Robert Rotberg and Theodore Rabb (eds.), *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge, 1988).

<sup>80</sup> K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, 1979), p. 187. 'A dilemma cannot be solved.'

<sup>81</sup> For a view that this is a central issue in international security theory in general, see Randall Schweller, 'Neorealism's Status Quo Bias', *Security Studies*, 5:3 (Spring 1996).

is unsettling and unscientific. It is unsettling because we are trusting a non-rational regime to stay restrained. It is unscientific because we are dismissing analytic positions to shape synthetic claims.

### **Common, mutual, and cooperative security: new bottles for old wine?**

Scholars who see a greater role for international institutions agree with the realist assessment of NATO expansion.<sup>82</sup> They adopt some of the same arguments for why expanding NATO is wrong, but they have twists of their own. Foremost, they think the prospects for peace increase when security is understood cooperatively. International institutions rooted more in political and economic integration than in military cooperation provide the structure for these relations. These arguments are clear, but they are poorly applied as criticisms of NATO expansion.

Ruggie and Mandelbaum call for a larger European Union role in stabilizing the democratic polities and market economies of Central Europe, instead of NATO. But Mandelbaum, in a footnote, acknowledges that the EU has shown little enthusiasm for accepting these countries.<sup>83</sup> Ruggie argues that the Marshall Plan preceded NATO, so economic and political institutions should be established first. This argument is unconvincing. The Marshall Plan preceded NATO by two years.<sup>84</sup> This was hardly time for integration to take hold. While other forms of cooperation are desirable, they do not replace security cooperation. The institutionalists seem to want cooperative security with little substantive cooperation on security affairs.

A second feature of the cooperative security discussion focuses on concerts.<sup>85</sup> No one argues that collective security is feasible yet. Mandelbaum sees the Concert of Europe as a model for current relations.<sup>86</sup> Richard K. Betts has criticized the use of concert models for Europe. The paradigm Concert of Europe focused on preventing nationalism and liberalism from thriving, whereas the current European order is premised on institutionalizing these ideas. The old concert system also trammelled the interests of smaller states, especially Poland.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, none of the concert systems call for intervention in Central European conflicts. If institutionalists see the concert system as a model, it is no wonder Central European states wish to join NATO.

<sup>82</sup> Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, uses the term 'cooperative security'; Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, uses 'common security.' The terms are essentially interchangeable, although Ruggie's discussion is rooted more deeply in the work on security communities, while Mandelbaum focuses on defence dominance (ch. 5) and confidence-building (ch. 6). These ideas Ruggie would call part of 'cooperative balancing', the least advanced form of cooperative security, p. 103–6.

<sup>83</sup> Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 50. Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, pp. 85–8, 103.

<sup>84</sup> The Marshall Plan was launched in June 1947. The North Atlantic Treaty was signed in April 1949. In his recent article, Ruggie notes the two-year difference, but argues that the Marshall Plan, not NATO, was the primary mechanism for achieving European security. See J. G. Ruggie, 'Consolidating NATO's European Pillar', *Washington Quarterly*, 20:1 (Winter 1997), p. 111.

<sup>85</sup> See Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, pp. 106–7; Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, pp. 88–9. Also Charles and Clifford Kupchan, 'Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe', *International Security*, 16:1 (1991).

<sup>86</sup> Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, pp. 106–7.

<sup>87</sup> Betts, 'Systems for Peace', pp. 27–8. See p. 21 for discussion of these proposals.

Ruggie has sought to update the concept of a concert. He sees the revival of the UNSC as a modern concert.<sup>88</sup> The concern in this article is a concert of great powers in Europe. The security regime is the model for contemporary concerts in general. A concert as a security regime requires that the great powers are satisfied with the *status quo*; that others place value on mutual security and cooperation; that none believe that security is provided by expansion; and that war and unilateral security policies are costly.<sup>89</sup>

In assessing the prospects for a security regime in Europe today, mutual security and cooperation appear valued. War and unilateral security measures are seen as very costly by all parties.<sup>90</sup> At issue is how satisfied Russia is with the *status quo*, and whether it believes security can be provided by expansion. NATO expansion presumably leads it to doubt the NATO members' belief in that principle. But there is a crucial difference between NATO policy and fears of Russia. NATO seeks to provide security for Central European states. Russia, it is feared, might expand territorially, although there is no strong evidence of such intent now.

The conditions for a concert are partially present, but convincing Russia that NATO expansion would improve its security is crucial to ensuring that all exist. There are strategies for doing this while deterring Russia from pursuing unilateral or expansionist policies in the future.

### Reassuring Russia: letting old wine breathe

Decision-making psychology offers a different theoretical angle on NATO expansion. This literature has been cast aside since the end of the Cold War. First, nuclear deterrence theory as a central field of study declined with the Soviet Union. Second, the literature focused on cases of immediate deterrence, rather than general deterrence.<sup>91</sup> There are sound methodological reasons for this: showing that a state never considered the use of force because deterrence was successful is tricky.<sup>92</sup> The task for policy-makers today is to establish a general deterrence relationship with Russia. The way to do so is through a strategy of reassurance.

Reassurance refers to a 'set of strategies that adversaries can use to reduce the likelihood of resort to the threat or use of force'.<sup>93</sup> The concept was vague and has lost vogue.<sup>94</sup> Reassurance is not necessarily incompatible with a deterrence strategy: it can complement or substitute for it.<sup>95</sup> Theories of reassurance locate the source of hostility in an adversarial relationship in a challenger's needs and weaknesses, not just a search for opportunity.<sup>96</sup> It is hard to consider Russia and NATO members as adversaries today, but they are not allies yet. This makes the success of reassurance strategies more likely than if they already regarded each other as adversaries.

<sup>88</sup> Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, pp. 89–103.

<sup>89</sup> See Robert Jervis, 'Security Regimes', *International Organization*, 36:2 (Spring 1982), esp. pp. 176–8.

<sup>90</sup> For more detail on changes in Soviet thinking on these matters, see William C. Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, 19:3 (Winter 1994/5), pp. 110–15.

<sup>91</sup> See Stein, 'Deterrence and Reassurance', p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> See Janice Lebow and Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 317–19.

<sup>95</sup> Stein, 'Deterrence and Reassurance', p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

There are five broad reassurance strategies. One is to exercise restraint so as not to worsen pressures on an adversary. This applies when the use of force is imminent. A second is to develop norms of competition. A third is the use of non-conventional methods of making irrevocable commitments. President Anwar Sadat's offer and visit to Jerusalem is an example of one that helped defuse tensions in the Middle East.<sup>97</sup> A fourth is to establish informal or formal limited regimes to build confidence, reduce uncertainty, and set limits of cooperation. For example, the previous US–Soviet limited security regime was based on a common aversion to war.<sup>98</sup> A fifth strategy is to initiate reciprocity using a tit-for-tat or GRIT.<sup>99</sup> The first and last strategies are less relevant to the present NATO–Russian relationship, since it is not in a hostile pattern yet. Exercising restraint applies to crisis situations, and is less relevant here. The level of tension between NATO and Russia is low enough that TFT or GRIT are unnecessary.

But other strategies have already been tried between NATO and Russia in uncoordinated ways. Norms for competition are emerging, although competition hardly characterizes the relationship now. The confidence-building measures incorporated in the OSCE, and discussions through Partnership for Peace and other channels, are helping to establish such norms. Unusual irrevocable commitments have been attempted. The US has proposed having Russia and NATO establish permanent liaison offices at each other's defence headquarters.<sup>100</sup> To withdraw this offer would be an indicator of hostility.

NATO needs to make clear that its objectives in expansion are limited. There are other steps it can take. First, regular concert-style meetings among US, British, French, German, and Russian foreign ministers would insure that policies are understood. Relying on head-of-state summits to resolve matters would complicate affairs.<sup>101</sup> This means that Russia must be given a greater role in European decision-making. The issue is not whether Russia has a formal veto over NATO policy, but where Russian interests are strong the new concert must permit Russia a tacit veto. Cooperation is about compromise, not railroading. Second, NATO must further reduce its already reduced force levels. The roughly 40 per cent reduction in forces since the Cold War ended is not enough.<sup>102</sup> This reduction could be negotiated as part of the CFE revisions. Some progress has already been made in this area at talks in Vienna in July 1997.<sup>103</sup> However, earlier proposed changes to the CFE are insufficient.<sup>104</sup> While Central European states, especially those joining NATO, should reduce their arms, so should current NATO members themselves. Third, the new NATO states must understand that their inclusion is conditioned on great-power coordination. The new NATO members and the unallied Central European states must recognize that their security is dependent on Russia's perceptions of its security. A deeper but more exclusive institutionalization of security is necessary for this.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42–3.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52–6.

<sup>100</sup> *Defence Issues*, 11:97.

<sup>101</sup> Betts, 'Systems for Peace', for a discussion of concerts over collective security.

<sup>102</sup> The figure is from *Defence Issues*, 11:97.

<sup>103</sup> *New York Times*, 24 Jul. 1997.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 Feb. 1997.

## The near future and US policy

NATO expansion can provide greater security to all European states, provided that the proper balance among deterrence, reassurance, and diplomatic linkage is maintained. The single best argument for NATO expansion is that the next war is likely to arise out of the uncoordinated pursuit of security by the Central European states, not unprovoked hostile actions by Russia. The fears that Central European countries have about their future security are not unreasonable. Opponents of NATO expansion downplay or ignore the consequences of those fears. The key to the success of NATO expansion is conducting diplomacy that tempers all Central European states' foreign policy while reassuring them of their security.

An independent role exists for US diplomacy.<sup>105</sup> In dealing with the unallied states, the US will have to rely on economic, political, and cultural instruments to exercise control. The Partnership for Peace has some use in this regard. US–Russian cooperation must not rest on military bargaining. The task is the negotiation of security and prosperity. Economic relations will be an important feature, as will political consultations. The alternatives in the NATO expansion debate are not militarized diplomacy or cooperative diplomacy. Rather, the choice is between cooperative diplomacy with military levers, and diplomatic impotence. The latter, given the predicted behaviour of the Central European states if NATO does not expand, is more likely than effective US diplomacy. Without NATO expansion, the US role in the region will be smaller. With some Central European states inside NATO, the US can moderate their policies. Recent US relations with Ukraine illustrate this point. The US succeeded in having Ukraine relinquish its nuclear forces by June 1996, but this required making unspecified security commitments to Ukraine.<sup>106</sup>

While cooperation and diplomacy outside NATO is helpful, it must not replace cooperation among the present and future NATO members. The perception in the United States and elsewhere is that NATO expansion is a US-led effort.<sup>107</sup> Russia seems to prefer to bargain directly with the United States, but future discussions should be incorporated more deeply into NATO institutions. If Russia is a *status quo* power opposed to security through expansion, it should be possible to form a security regime. Such a regime should make NATO expansion less destabilizing than most academic analysts fear. The new members are not scheduled to join until April 1999, NATO's fiftieth anniversary. This allows time for a new security regime to be established. But if a security regime is not possible, because Russia hopes to alter the *status quo* or seeks security through expansion, then NATO expansion could help deter it. Either way, careful NATO expansion seems on balance better than the *status quo*.

<sup>105</sup> For an argument that US diplomacy can achieve some of these aims without NATO expansion, see Robert Jervis, 'Legacies of the Cold War', *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 2:2 (Summer 1995).

<sup>106</sup> For a discussion of Ukraine's nuclear behaviour, see Scott Sagan, 'Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?', *International Security*, 21:3 (Winter 1996/7), pp. 80–2.

<sup>107</sup> See *Financial Times*, 25 Feb. 1997; *New York Times*, 15 May 1997.