

# NATO, the Baltic states and Russia: a framework for sustainable enlargement

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NATO is about to initiate its second round of enlargement since the end of the Cold War. In the late 1990s three central European countries—Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland—were admitted into the alliance. At a summit due to be held in Prague on 21–22 November 2002, the NATO heads of state are likely to invite at least four and possibly as many as six or seven additional countries to join. In total, ten former communist countries have applied for membership.<sup>1</sup> Seven of the prospective new members—Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and Macedonia—lie outside the former Soviet Union. Of these, the least controversial candidate is Slovenia. Slovakia's chances were once very good, but the return of the demagogic leader Vladimír Mečiar to national political prominence has impeded its candidacy. Romania and Bulgaria do not yet meet most of NATO's political and military requirements, but both countries stand an outside chance of gaining membership because of their current and potential contributions to US and allied military operations in the Middle East.

The three other aspiring members of NATO—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—would in the normal course of events have been prime candidates from the very start, but their status was complicated because they were republics of the Soviet Union until August 1991. Until recently, the Russian government had vehemently objected to the proposed admission of the Baltic states into NATO, and many Western leaders were reluctant to antagonize Moscow. Since 2001, however, the extension of NATO membership to the Baltic states during the second round of enlargement has become far more plausible and indeed probable. The various parties involved—NATO, the Baltic states and Russia—have all modified their positions in small but significant ways. Progress

<sup>1</sup> In principle, only nine of these ten countries are eligible for consideration at the Prague summit. Croatia, which in the 1990s was embroiled in warfare and under the autocratic rule of Franjo Tuđman (who died in December 1999), was not admitted into NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) until May 2002, three years after the other candidate countries entered the MAP. Normally, at least three years of participation in the MAP are required before a country's request for official candidacy can be accepted. Hence, unless an exception is made, the soonest that Croatia can formally be considered for membership is 2005.

in forging a new security arrangement in Europe began before the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, but the improved climate of US–Russian relations in the wake of the attacks has clearly expedited matters.

If the Baltic states are indeed admitted into NATO, it will be a step forward both for the alliance and for European security. The arguments that have sometimes been raised against Baltic membership—that the three countries are not ready to join the alliance, that Baltic territory could not be defended against a Russian attack, and that NATO should defer to Russia’s objections (or erstwhile objections)—are of little merit and are based on a static notion of the challenges facing both NATO and Russia in the post-Cold War world. The entry of the Baltic states into NATO should be accompanied by a gradual reorientation of the alliance. Rather than preserving NATO permanently as a predominantly military organization, the member states should increasingly emphasize its political role. NATO’s military functions remain important and must be retained, but the alliance should also take a greater and more explicit part in the promotion and consolidation of democracy in central and eastern Europe, including Russia.

A restructuring of NATO along these lines would not confer a special status upon Russia. Although Western governments should reach out to Russia (as they did by forming a NATO–Russia Council in May 2002), they would be ill-advised to adopt a more far-reaching British proposal that would give Russia a privileged role in allied decision-making on a full (or nearly full) range of subjects. The British proposal, outlined by Prime Minister Tony Blair in late 2001, makes no sense at a time when Russia has not even applied to join NATO. Rather than treating Russia as a special case, the alliance should encourage the Russian government to apply for NATO membership (as the ten other countries have) and should help Russia carry out the far-reaching political and military changes that would eventually qualify it to enter the alliance. The mere prospect of joining NATO would give a salutary fillip to the frequently stalled processes of democratization and military reform in Russia, and would strengthen the hand of pro-Western forces.

This article will explore the implications of Baltic membership in NATO, the factors that have guided the alliance’s decisions, and the prospects for NATO’s relationship with Russia after the Prague summit. It will begin with a brief overview of Russian policy towards the Baltic states, explaining why the Baltic governments have been motivated to look to NATO as a counterweight. It will then discuss the evolution of NATO since 1991, focusing on changes in the alliance that have paved the way for new members. The article will then turn to the main issues involved in the prospective membership of the Baltic states in NATO, taking as the point of departure the major arguments that have been invoked against their admission. In particular, the article will consider the political and military qualifications of the Baltic states, the recent changes in Russian policy *vis-à-vis* NATO enlargement, and the impact of Baltic membership on the alliance itself. The final section of the article will offer conclusions and policy recommendations pertaining to all three entities discussed here—the

Baltic states, NATO and Russia. It will propose further changes in NATO—beginning with the admission of the Baltic states—that will solidify a new purpose for the alliance and expedite Russia's integration into NATO through the same channels available to other states.

### **Russian–Baltic relations**

Russia's policy towards the Baltic states since 1991 has been cooperative in some respects and confrontational in others. The domineering nature of Russian policy has been largely responsible for the vigorous efforts that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have made to seek NATO membership. In some important ways, however, Russia has also been cooperative—perhaps more so than might have been expected.

#### *Cooperative elements*

From mid-1990 onwards, the new Russian government under Boris Yeltsin endorsed the Baltic states' aspirations to become independent, and Yeltsin promptly recognized the three as independent countries after the aborted coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991. Although Yeltsin's support for the Baltic states was largely a product of his manoeuvring *vis-à-vis* the Soviet regime, Russia's policy towards the Baltic countries in 1990–1 laid the basis for what might have been a sound relationship after the Soviet Union collapsed.

Moscow's ties with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were also helped in the first half of the 1990s by the complete withdrawal of Russian troops in accordance with a schedule established shortly after the demise of the Soviet Union. Although Russian officials frequently threatened to suspend the pull-outs unless the Baltic states behaved more deferentially, the removal of troops and weapons was completed on time. The shut-down of Russia's large phased-array radar at Skrunda, Latvia, in September 1998, and the transfer of the last territory around the radar to the Latvian government in October 1999, marked the end of Russia's military presence in the Baltic states.

It is also commendable—though rarely noted—that Russian leaders made no attempt to foment violent unrest or full-fledged insurgency in Estonia or Latvia in the early 1990s; they also refrained from any direct threats of military force against the Baltic states. The presence of a large, relatively unassimilated ethnic Russian minority in Estonia created the potential for havoc in the early to mid-1990s if the Russian government had attempted to stoke violent unrest. Fortunately, no such meddling occurred in the Baltic states, even though Russia actively supported insurgents and separatists elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, notably Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. By the same token, Russia's eschewal of direct threats of armed intervention against the Baltic states stood in notable contrast to the military operations that Russian forces undertook in Moldova, the Caucasus and Tajikistan. In retrospect, it may not be

surprising that Russia did not try to provoke violence or use force in the Baltic states, but in the early 1990s (when Russian troops were still deployed in the region) that outcome was by no means preordained.

### *Sources of tension*

Despite these positive developments, the Russian government took numerous steps during the decade after 1991 that caused a good deal of unease and acrimony in relations with the Baltic states. From early 1992 on, Russian leaders often employed belligerent rhetoric and made unrealistic demands of the Baltic governments. They also frequently exaggerated the 'plight' of Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia. Although the Estonian and Latvian governments have occasionally been clumsy in their handling of the status of ethnic Russians, the treatment of minorities in the Baltic countries has been remarkably lenient overall (especially compared to practices in other former communist states, including Russia), and the Russian government's shrill rhetoric has distorted the real situation.

Tensions between Russia and the Baltic states have also been caused by Russia's periodic use of economic pressure (mainly threats to withhold oil and gas supplies), and by the construction of oil-loading facilities at Primorsk and other Russian ports on the Gulf of Finland that will bypass the Baltic states and thereby deprive them of at least some of the lucrative transit fees they have been collecting since 1992 from Russian exporters.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Russia has occasionally resorted to indirect military pressure, most notably by conducting land and sea military exercises near the borders of Latvia and Estonia. The growing reintegration of Belarus with Russia, and the fortification of garrisons in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad (including the deployment of 18 nuclear-armed SS21 missiles), have sparked further anxiety in the Baltic capitals.

Another recent source of discord in Russian–Baltic relations has been the resurgence of disputes about the Soviet past. In June 2000 the Russian government declared that the Baltic republics had 'voluntarily' joined the Soviet Union 'in accordance with international law' and had 'invited' Soviet troops to occupy their territory at the beginning of the 1940s. In a formal statement that was reaffirmed in the spring of 2001, the Russian foreign ministry claimed that 'assertions about the "occupation" and "annexation" of [the Baltic countries] by the Soviet Union ignore the political, historical and legal realities and are therefore devoid of merit.'<sup>3</sup> These remarks triggered complaints from Baltic leaders and the Baltic Assembly, a joint advisory body set up by the three Baltic governments. The Assembly expressed 'regret that Moscow has not yet offered a formal

<sup>2</sup> John Varoli, 'Russia is moving to ship more of its oil', *New York Times*, 25 Dec. 2001, pp. W1, W7.

<sup>3</sup> Viktor Sokolov and Andrei Litvinov, 'Moskve pora potrebovat' ot Vil'nyusa kompensatsii: Mif ob "okkupatsii" Baltii stal ideologicheskim obosnovaniem ne tol'ko litovskikh pretenzii k Rossii, no i massovykh narushenii prav cheloveka', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 June 2000, p. 1; Ivan Andreev, 'Baltovet nas rassudit', *Kommersant Daily*, 22 June 2000, p. 3.

apology for the crimes committed by the legal predecessor of the Russian Federation, the Soviet Union, against Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians ... Our appeal to Russia about the past is simultaneously an appeal about the future. Without clearing up the past, the future will have no firm foundation.<sup>4</sup>

Moscow's stance on this matter has been motivated in part by a desire to avoid any liability for reparations (which all three Baltic states have been pursuing), but this does not wholly explain the comments. After all, the Russian government could plausibly argue that post-Soviet Russia should not be held accountable for the crimes of the Soviet regime. The whitewashing of Soviet rule in the Baltics is instead symptomatic of Russia's broader failure to come to terms with the Soviet past, and it also reflects a widespread sense in Moscow that the Baltic states should remain in Russia's 'sphere of influence', a term used in March 2001 by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

To be sure, the Baltic governments themselves have sometimes been wont to gloss over unpleasant historical episodes. They have pressed charges against former Soviet state security officers who took part in the mass deportations of Baltic citizens in the 1940s, but until recently they were much slower in seeking redress against those who collaborated with the Nazis in 1941–5, including some who abetted the slaughter of Jews. This imbalance has been partly rectified over the past few years, but much greater progress is still needed.<sup>5</sup> That said, the complaints from Moscow about the arrest of retired state security officers who were complicit in the deportations ring hollow.<sup>6</sup> The Russian authorities have made no effort of their own to hold accountable those who carried out atrocities and mass repressions during the Soviet era. The lack of any such effort helps explain why the Russian foreign ministry's recent claims that the Baltic countries 'voluntarily' joined the Soviet Union and 'invited' Soviet troops onto their territory provoked such consternation in the Baltic states.

Russia's misrepresentations of the past, along with many other points of contention over the decade since Baltic independence, have given even greater impetus to the efforts by Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to join NATO. Their desire for membership in the alliance does not reflect a sense of immediate threat. Baltic officials have often said that they do not expect the Russian army to attack their countries or to undertake other malevolent actions in the near future. Nonetheless, as long as the Russian government fails to acknowledge that the Baltic countries were victims of Soviet rule and not voluntary participants,

<sup>4</sup> 'Baltic Assembly discussed aspiration to NATO', *Estonian Review* 10: 49 (4–10 Dec. 2000), item 2.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Wiesenthal Center, *The failure to prosecute Nazi war criminals in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, 1991–2002* (Los Angeles: Simon Wiesenthal Center, July 2002). See also Mel Huang, 'It's never too late: hunting aged war criminals in the Baltics', *Central Europe Review* 1: 15, 4 Oct. 1999, pp. 1–3.

<sup>6</sup> For a sample of complaints, see 'Estonskii parlament prinyal zayavlenie o prestupleniyakh okkupatsionogo rezhima v Estonii', *Izvestiya*, 19 June 2002, p. 3; Andrei Riskin, "'Moe delo—politicheskoe": V Latvii gotovyat sud nad veteranom chekistom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 Sept. 2001, p. 5; Roman Golubev, 'Desyatyi eks-chekest obvinen v Latvii', *Kommersant*, 5 April 2001, p. 4; Viktor Fal'kov, 'Prezidenty Rossii i Latvii vstretilis' v Avstrii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 Feb. 2001, p. 3; Viktor Sokolov, 'Vse delo v "okkupatsii": 84-letnii veteran-antifashist Mikhail Farbtukh osuzhden na pyat' let za to, chto schitaetsya v Latvii "okkupantom"', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 May 2000, p. 5.

suspicions of Moscow's ultimate intentions will persist. Baltic leaders see NATO membership as the only reliable way, over the long term, to allay those suspicions and to hedge against a turn for the worse in Moscow.

## Enlargement of NATO

During the Cold War, the military functions of NATO were predominant, but the alliance also came to be seen as a political community of democratic states. When the Cold War ended in 1989–91, the military *raison d'être* of NATO—an alliance formed to prevent Soviet encroachment in western Europe—largely disappeared, whereas the organization's political functions (as a grouping of democratic states) still seemed relevant, especially if NATO sought to take in some of the new democracies in Europe. The establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in late 1991 enabled the former communist states to pursue much closer relations with the alliance. The creation of the NACC was followed in 1994 by the setting up of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP), an organization intended to help the former communist states develop professional militaries under firm democratic control and to prepare themselves in other ways for possible membership in NATO.<sup>7</sup> Under the auspices of the PfP, the alliance set up a Planning and Review Process (PARP) to help aspiring NATO members achieve optimum force levels and greater interoperability.

These initial moves by NATO were relatively modest and did not amount to any basic rethinking of the purpose of the alliance, despite the drastic changes that had occurred in East–West relations after 1989. In the mid-1990s, however, a somewhat greater effort was initiated to recast NATO in accordance with the new, post-Cold War environment. In particular, the allied governments began considering how to expand their membership, a step that, under article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, requires the unanimous approval of existing members. In September 1995 the alliance issued an official set of political and military criteria for new members, including the stipulation that all countries entering NATO must adhere to democratic principles and procedures, and must resolve any outstanding border disputes with their neighbours.<sup>8</sup> (The criteria, it is worth noting, apply only to *new* members; they do not apply to existing members, such as Turkey and Greece.)

The promulgation of these requirements merely codified what the former communist states had known all along—namely, that they would have to comply with democratic norms and other rigorous standards before they could be considered for admission into NATO. The criteria for aspiring members were valuable in the mid-1990s in spurring changes in civil–military relations in

<sup>7</sup> 'Partnership for Peace: framework document issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council', Brussels, 10 Jan. 1994, in *NATO Review* 42: 1, Feb. 1994, pp. 2–5.

<sup>8</sup> *Study on NATO enlargement* (Brussels: NATO, Sept. 1995).

Poland and Hungary, in encouraging democratization throughout central Europe, and in prompting Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Ukraine and Romania to settle territorial disputes.<sup>9</sup>

The initial post-Cold War enlargement of NATO in 1997–9, encompassing Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, marked a further (though still limited) stage in the alliance's post-Cold War transition. At a summit in Madrid in July 1997, the NATO countries formed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (which superseded the less ambitious NACC) and extended formal invitations to the Polish, Hungarian and Czech governments to join the alliance. The allied leaders also issued a declaration affirming that NATO 'remains open to new members ... The Alliance expects to extend further invitations in coming years.'<sup>10</sup>

Two years later, at a summit in Washington DC to mark the fiftieth anniversary of NATO (which coincided with the Kosovo conflict), the assembled leaders renewed their pledge to expand the alliance further. To this end, they issued a Membership Action Plan (MAP) providing for yearly 'progress reports' on aspiring members' success (or lack thereof) in meeting stringent political and military criteria.<sup>11</sup> The NATO aspirants, for their part, were required to formulate Annual National Programmes laying out the steps they have taken—and other steps they intend to take—to ensure full compliance with NATO's requirements.

The framework created by the September 1995 report and by the Madrid and Washington summits, especially the provisions of the MAP, will shape NATO's deliberations at the Prague summit in November 2002. If the first round of post-Cold War enlargement offers any guidance, the United States will in all likelihood play a disproportionate role in determining which countries are admitted as new members in the second round. During the first round, France wanted to bring in at least five or six central European countries, but the US government's desire to limit the initial enlargement to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic ultimately prevailed. There is little reason to believe that US preferences will carry any less weight in the second round. Although the NATO governments generally agree about most of the prospective new members, divisions may emerge regarding the candidacy of three countries—Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. Ordinarily, Slovakia would be a prime candidate for NATO membership, but the political resurrection of Mečiar—after apparently having been relegated to oblivion in 1998—has stirred unease about the future of liberal democracy in Slovakia. The exclusion of Slovakia from NATO would be a drastic and undesirable step, which the alliance will do its utmost to avoid. But if the political situation in Bratislava becomes increasingly volatile, the risks

<sup>9</sup> See Mark Kramer, 'NATO, Russia, and east European security', in Kate Martin and Uri Ra'anan, eds, *Russia: a return to imperialism?* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 105–61, esp. 130–2 and Mark Kramer, 'Neorealism, nuclear proliferation, and east-central European state strategies', in Michael Mastanduno and Ethan B. Kapstein, eds, *Unipolar politics: realism and state strategies after the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 385–464, esp. 429–31.

<sup>10</sup> 'Madrid declaration on Euro-Atlantic security and cooperation issued by the heads of state and government', 8 July 1997.

<sup>11</sup> *Membership Action Plan* (Brussels: NATO, 24 April 1999).

and trade-offs facing NATO at the Prague summit will be substantial. Under those circumstances, the fate of Slovakia's candidacy is likely to depend on the position taken by the United States.

US officials also will play a key role in deciding what to do about Romania and Bulgaria. If the two countries were judged solely by the political and economic criteria for new members, it is clear that Romania (whose candidacy was championed by France during the first round) would not qualify. Romania's latest presidential election, in December 2000, came down to a run-off between two unpalatable candidates: Ion Iliescu, a warmed-over communist who performed miserably during an earlier term as president, and Corneliu Tudor, a virulently anti-Semitic ultranationalist. The clear-cut defeat of Tudor was welcome, but the return of Iliescu hardly constituted a ringing endorsement of Romania's post-communist evolution. Nor is Romania's candidacy helped by the continued presence of communist-era spies and informers at all levels of the country's security and intelligence establishment.<sup>12</sup> In Bulgaria, the political outlook is brighter than in Romania, though some uncertainty has arisen in the wake of the April 2001 parliamentary elections, which witnessed a decisive victory by the party of the former king, Simeon II. Although Bulgaria has taken bold steps over the past six years to implement macroeconomic stabilization and free-market reform, the country generally still falls short of the political and economic standards for new NATO members.

On the other hand, the military support provided by both Romania and Bulgaria (in the form of access to bases, transit and refuelling rights, and contributions of peacekeeping and combat troops) for US and allied operations in Afghanistan and for a potential war against Iraq, the strategic location of the two countries near potential areas of instability, and the active role that both states have been playing in PfP military exercises (most recently the Cooperative Poseidon naval exercise) have prompted some US officials to look more favourably upon their applications to join NATO.<sup>13</sup> General William Odom, a former director of the US National Security Agency, recently testified that 'stability in the Balkans' offers 'a very compelling argument for admitting these two countries'. Although Odom acknowledged that both states 'face large internal difficulties', he claimed that 'bringing Romania and Bulgaria into the alliance will give us

<sup>12</sup> Philip Shishkin, 'NATO insists Romania screen ex-agents of old secret police', *Wall Street Journal*, 30 April 2002, p. 3. This article attracted widespread attention in Romania and led to extensive debate and investigation in the Romanian media, much of it highly unfavourable to the government, despite official efforts to stifle the coverage and intimidate journalists. See, for example, 'NATO vrea ca România să examineze cu atenție cazurile foștilor securiști', *Ziarul Financiar*, 7 May 2002, p. 1; 'România nu are nevoie de recomandările jurnaliștilor on privința foștilor ofițeri ai Securității', *Breviarul Evenimentelor*, 7 May 2002, item 3; 'NATO nu a discutat niciodată cu MApN problema foștilor securiști, declară Sorin Encuțescu', *Breviarul Evenimentelor*, 7 May 2002, item 4; Ioana Câmpean, 'Armata nu a discutat cu oficialii NATO problema foștilor securiști', *Ziarul Financiar*, 8 May 2002, p. 1; 'Geoană dixeră', *Curentul*, 11 May 2002, p. 2; 'La reuniunile cu oficialii NATO, reprezentanții MApN nu au fost ontrebași on legătură cu foștii securiști', *Breviarul Evenimentelor*, 14 May 2002, item 1.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Peter Finn, 'War boosts NATO hopes of two nations: Romania, Bulgaria gain new relevance', *Washington Post*, 26 March 2002, pp. A01, A09. For an itemized list of the contributions that Bulgaria and Romania made to the war in Afghanistan, see US Department of Defense, Office of Public Affairs, *Fact sheet: international contributions to the war against terrorism*, 22 May 2002, pp. 3, 11–12.

the foundation for a Balkan security framework.<sup>14</sup> No consensus about this matter emerged within NATO in the first half of 2002, but the status of Romania and Bulgaria will be easier to resolve if the United States takes a firm stance.

As with the initial round of enlargement, any further expansion of the alliance will require the explicit consent of the US Senate as well as all other NATO parliaments. In April 1998 the Senate voted by a large margin (80 to 19) to approve the ratification of protocols concerning Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland. Although the senators attached numerous conditions to the resolution of ratification, these amendments did not establish requirements for new members any more rigorous than the criteria laid out in the MAP. In the future, however, heated debate may ensue about the provision attached to the 1998 resolution stipulating that the entry of additional countries must 'serve the overall political and strategic interests of NATO and the United States'.<sup>15</sup> This provision, as discussed below, will indeed be fulfilled by the membership of the Baltic states, but the somewhat mixed experience with the initial group of new members may prompt greater questioning of NATO enlargement this time around.<sup>16</sup> Although the senators who took the lead in promoting the first round of enlargement—notably, Richard Lugar of Indiana and Joseph Biden of Delaware—have strongly endorsed the inclusion of six or more new countries in the second round, they have expressed serious reservations about specific cases (for example, Lugar about Romania).<sup>17</sup>

Even if some opposition materializes, however, there is no reason to believe that it will be enough to derail the enlargement. Legislation supporting the further expansion of NATO was passed in both houses of Congress by overwhelming margins (372 to 46 in the House and 85 to 6 in the Senate) in November 2001 and May 2002.<sup>18</sup> A series of congressional hearings in the first several months of 2002 also revealed strong backing for the admission of a large number of former communist states.<sup>19</sup> Although the final Senate vote on the second round of enlargement may be slightly narrower than the vote in 1998, the net outcome is likely to be the same.

<sup>14</sup> 'Statement of Lieutenant General William E. Odom', in US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Europe, *The future of NATO and enlargement*, hearing no. 107-78, 107th Congress, 2nd session, 17 April 2002, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Sec. 2(7)(a)(iv)(II) of US Congress, Senate, 'Resolution of ratification of the protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic', Washington DC, 30 April 1998.

<sup>16</sup> A recent analysis by Zachary Selden and John Lis, 'NATO's new members: net gain or drain?', *Problems of Post-Communism* 49: 4 (July–Aug. 2002), pp. 3–11, concludes that 'the experience of the first round of expansion is at least moderately encouraging', though it acknowledges that 'there are many valid concerns that still must be addressed.' Selden and Lis focus on military and budgetary criteria, but an assessment of the initial group's diplomatic/political performance would yield similar conclusions.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. 'Why Europe still matters and why NATO should enlarge, again', address by Senator Richard G. Lugar, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington Roundtable, Washington DC, 13 June 2001.

<sup>18</sup> 'Freedom Consolidation Act of 2002', *Public Law* 107-187, 10 June 2002, 22 USC 1928, 116 Stat. 590–593.

<sup>19</sup> US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *The future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*, hearing no. 107-57, 107th Congress, 2nd session, 28 Feb. 2002; US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Europe, *The future of NATO*

## The candidacy of the Baltic states

### US policy

From 1945 until 1991, the United States officially maintained that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had been illegally annexed by the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> When the Baltic countries regained their independence in 1991, the US government promptly recognized them. After 1991, however, the United States initially sought to avoid discussing the prospect of Baltic membership in NATO. As the alliance was preparing in 1996 for its first round of post-Cold War enlargement, US Defense Secretary William Perry argued that 'the Baltic states are not ready to join NATO. These countries simply do not meet the alliance's standards.'<sup>21</sup> The general caution of the US approach continued even after the State Department issued a 'Baltic Action Plan' in the autumn of 1996. The document committed the United States to promoting the integration of the Baltic states into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, but it did not signal any near-term prospect of NATO membership.<sup>22</sup> Several months later, however, a shift began in US policy, thanks in part to the advent of a new US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, in 1997. The first indication of a new US approach was offered by the State Department in March 1997:

Neither the Baltic Action Plan nor this [proposed bilateral] charter is intended to take the place of NATO membership. The US recognizes that membership in NATO is a top foreign policy objective for each of the three Baltic countries. And it is our position that NATO doors, once opened, will remain open to all European democracies that are able to contribute to its goals. We remain committed to continuing our efforts to help the Baltic countries with their preparations to meet NATO accession requirements.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly before the Madrid summit, Albright herself expanded on these sentiments, calling on NATO to 'pledge that the first [new] members will not be the last and that no European democracy will be excluded because of where it sits on the map'.<sup>24</sup>

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*and enlargement*; US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The future of NATO*, hearing no. 107-579, 107th Congress, 2nd session, 1 May 2002; US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Europe, *NATO enlargement: a view from the candidate countries*, hearing no. 107-81, 107th Congress, 2nd session, 1 May 2002; US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Europe, *NATO expansion*, hearing no. 107-85, 107th Congress, 2nd session, 19 June 2002.

<sup>20</sup> For background on this matter, see William J. H. Hough, 'The annexation of the Baltic states and its effect on the development of law prohibiting forcible seizure of territory', *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law* 6: 2 (Winter 1985), pp. 301-433.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Philip Shenon, 'US says Baltic nations "not ready" for NATO membership', *New York Times*, 28 Sept. 1996, p. A7.

<sup>22</sup> US Department of State, 'Baltic Action Plan', fact sheet, Washington DC, 31 Aug. 1996.

<sup>23</sup> US Information Agency, 'Report on State Department briefing', 28 March 1997, State Department Report no. 97-03-28.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Michael Dobbs, 'US indicates preference for just 3 new NATO states', *Washington Post*, 30 May 1997, p. A30.

US policy shifted further in early 1998 with the signing of the Baltic Charter of Partnership.<sup>25</sup> Although the document did not irrevocably guarantee that the Baltic countries would eventually be admitted into NATO, Albright and other senior officials left no doubt that the aim was ‘to create the conditions under which Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia can one day walk through NATO’s door’.<sup>26</sup> This message was reiterated several times in 1999 and 2000, especially in a statement by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott that the admission of the Baltic states into NATO was ‘inevitable’.

Thus, by the time George W. Bush’s administration took office in January 2001, the United States had already gone a long way towards supporting the Baltic states in their quest to join NATO. The Bush administration said relatively little about NATO enlargement for several months, and some observers speculated that the administration was rethinking the whole process, especially with regard to the Baltics. One of the leading officials in the administration, Attorney-General John Ashcroft, who had earlier been a US senator, was among the small number in the Senate in 1998 who voted against the first round of NATO enlargement. Although Ashcroft’s position as attorney-general did not give him any direct say in policy towards the alliance, the Baltic governments were worried that the Bush administration might not look favourably upon their candidacy.<sup>27</sup>

This initial period of hesitation, however, gave way to a strong endorsement of the Baltic states’ aspirations. In a landmark speech at Warsaw University in June 2001, President Bush declared that ‘all of Europe’s new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have ... the same chance to join the institutions of Europe [that] Europe’s old democracies have.’ He pledged to ‘erase the false lines that have divided Europe for too long’ and to support ‘NATO membership for all of Europe’s democracies that seek it and are ready to share the responsibilities that NATO brings. The question of “when” may still be up for debate within NATO; the question of “whether” should not be.’<sup>28</sup> In subsequent statements and meetings with representatives from the Baltic states and from Baltic American organizations, senior administration officials indicated that the United States will support the admission of the Baltic states into NATO. In June 2002 President Bush signed into law the Freedom Consolidation Act, which called for the further expansion of NATO and provided \$21 million in new military aid to the Baltic countries.

The speech in Warsaw and the many subsequent US statements favouring ‘NATO membership for all European democracies ready to share in NATO’s

<sup>25</sup> ‘A charter of partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia, and Republic of Lithuania’, Washington DC, 16 Jan. 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Remarks by President Bill Clinton at signing ceremony of the US–Baltic Charter of Partnership, Washington DC, 16 Jan. 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Conversations between the author and Latvian and Lithuanian foreign ministry officials, Riga and Vilnius, April 2001.

<sup>28</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, ‘Remarks by the President in address to faculty and students of Warsaw University’, 15 June 2001.

responsibilities' have raised widespread hopes in the Baltic countries that they will receive invitations in November 2002 to join the alliance. By mid-2002, expectations in the Baltic states were so high that anything short of a commitment to full NATO membership would come as a severe jolt. Although Baltic officials were not yet ready to assume that everything was 'in the bag', their level of confidence by the summer of 2002 was higher than ever before.<sup>29</sup>

*Are the Baltic states ready to join NATO?*

Western observers who oppose the admission of the Baltic states into NATO have offered three main arguments: that the Baltic states are not—and probably will never be—ready to enter the alliance; that the entry of the Baltic states will cause deep antagonism between Russia and the West; and that the admission of the Baltic states will dilute the military core of the alliance by creating a defence commitment that the member states will be loath to fulfil. Each of these points will be addressed here in turn.

Opponents of Baltic membership in NATO have contended that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia 'have not created the conditions necessary to achieve the political and military criteria [for] new members'.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, they argue that the Baltic states are deficient in three areas: first, they have not resolved external territorial disputes with Russia; second, they have failed to make 'a clear commitment to resolving ethnic disputes within their countries' and are faced with 'a large, alienated, and embittered Russian minority' that threatens their 'internal stability'; and third, 'none of the Baltic republics currently possesses a credible military force capable of adequately defending its own territory or of effectively contributing to NATO's collective defence'. These claims do not withstand scrutiny.

With regard to external territorial disputes, Lithuania signed border agreements in the 1990s with both Poland and Russia (in the latter case regarding Kaliningrad) and therefore has fully met NATO's criteria on this matter. Estonia and Latvia have not been able to sign formal border treaties with Russia, but that is solely because the Russian government—in the expectation that NATO will not accept countries if they have not settled their external territorial disputes—has refused to put a final stamp on agreements that were ready for signing several years ago. Western leaders have already indicated that they will not permit Russia's stalling tactics to impair the candidacy of the Baltic states. Hence this is a non-issue for the Prague summit.

With regard to the treatment of ethnic minorities in Latvia and Estonia, the arguments cited by opponents of NATO enlargement are based on information

<sup>29</sup> This mood was well captured in an interview in late July 2002 with the Lithuanian ambassador to the United States, Vygaudas Ušackas, published in Stasys Gudavičius, 'Atpigęs doleris patušino diplomato piniginę', *Kauno Diena*, 26 July 2002, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Kent R. Meyer, 'US support for Baltic membership in NATO: what ends, what risks?' *Parameters* 30: 4, Winter 2000–1, p. 72.

that is either outdated or inaccurate. In Latvia, a referendum held in 1998 brought the country's citizenship law into conformity with standards set by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>31</sup> The OSCE officially closed its mission in Riga in December 2001 after concluding that the Latvian government had complied with international norms for the treatment of minorities. The OSCE also praised the Latvian parliament's willingness in May 2002 to amend the country's election law by deleting the requirement that candidates for national and local office be proficient in Latvian.<sup>32</sup> Despite the difficulties posed by citizenship requirements, ethnic Russians in Latvia, unlike those in several other former Soviet republics (especially the Central Asian states), have no desire to leave; on the contrary, there has been a net inflow of Russians into Latvia rather than a net outflow. Although a modicum of inter-ethnic tension persists in Latvia, it is little different from—and in some ways less serious than—the problems one finds in other multi-ethnic democracies such as Belgium, Canada, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

In Estonia, ethnic tensions have taken somewhat longer to dissipate, but the situation has improved markedly since the early 1990s. The OSCE and other international organizations, including the Helsinki Committee of Finland, have attested that the amended citizenship law and amended language law in Estonia comply fully with international standards.<sup>33</sup> The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has confirmed that Estonia has met the requirements set by the OSCE (regarding the naturalization process, the granting of citizenship to newborns, the teaching of Estonian, the language requirements for parliamentarians and other matters), and the OSCE felt justified in closing its mission in Tallinn at the end of 2001. The situation in Estonia is far from perfect, but, as in Latvia, the potential for ethnic discord nowadays is no greater than in many other NATO states.

Thus, in terms of being politically ready to enter NATO, the Baltic states have done precisely what they were asked to do.

The military contribution that the Baltic countries (with a combined population of only around 7.4 million) can make to NATO is, of course, very limited, but this by no means disqualifies them from membership. NATO's September 1995 report states—without much elaboration—that 'new members must . . . be prepared to contribute to collective defense [and] to the alliance's new evolving missions'.<sup>34</sup> Part II of the MAP (titled 'Defense/security issues') provides a more detailed set of requirements and stipulates that aspiring members must display 'willingness to commit to gradual improvements in their military capabilities' and 'to pursue standardization and/or interoperability' with the alliance's weapons and equipment.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> 'Latvia', in US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country reports on human rights practices—2001*, Feb. 2002, item 81.

<sup>32</sup> 'OSCE, US welcome changes in Latvian election laws concerning language', *Baltic News*, 9 May 2002.

<sup>33</sup> 'Estonia', in Department of State, *Country reports on human rights practices—2001*, item 74; Don Hill,

'Estonia: OSCE says it has fulfilled its purpose', *RFE/RL Report*, 23 Nov. 2001, item 3.

<sup>34</sup> NATO, *Study on NATO enlargement*, pp. 15, 18.

<sup>35</sup> NATO, *Membership Action Plan*, part II, point 1.

The Baltic states had to create their armies from scratch after 1991, a task that would have been difficult even for much larger countries. It is not surprising that progress, especially in the early 1990s, was relatively slow. Over the past few years, however, the Baltic governments have moved steadily closer to the military requirements set by NATO. By combining their efforts and resources on important activities, they are better able to 'contribute to collective defense and to the Alliance's new missions', as stated in the MAP.

Among the countries' joint projects is the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), which was set up in the mid-1990s with extensive assistance from Denmark and other NATO countries (as well as from two non-members, Sweden and Finland).<sup>36</sup> Denmark, Norway, the United States, Germany and Sweden all have provided sizeable quantities of guns, mortars, vehicles and other weaponry and support equipment for the battalion, which currently consists of three motorized infantry companies (one from each Baltic state), a combined headquarters and logistics company, and a support company. The battalion has contributed units to NATO-led peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SFOR) and Kosovo (KFOR), and the Baltic states individually have assigned troops to monitoring forces in Georgia, the North Caucasus and southern Lebanon under the auspices of the UN and the OSCE. Although the full Baltic Battalion has not yet been deployed in either SFOR or KFOR, the BALTBAT commanders have used company group contingents (BALTCONS) for extended periods.

Initially, the Baltic Battalion faced obstacles because of the limited number of officers and soldiers who knew English (the language of command in NATO) and because of inadequate training for peacekeeping missions.<sup>37</sup> Over time, however, English-language education programmes and rigorous military and peacekeeping training have ensured an ample supply of qualified troops. The battalion, headquartered in Latvia, is being converted from a peacekeeping unit into a full-fledged infantry battalion complete with integrated anti-tank and fire-support platoons.<sup>38</sup> This upgrading will enable the battalion to take part in all conceivable manner of peacekeeping and peace enforcement actions, precisely the types of 'new missions' envisaged in the NATO documents.

Other collaborative military projects established by the Baltic states include:<sup>39</sup>

- a joint Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), with bases at Riga, Liepaja and Ventspils (in Latvia), Tallinn (in Estonia) and Klaipeda (in Lithuania);
- a joint Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET), which provides wide regional coverage and is interoperable with NATO's integrated air defence and early-warning system (and will soon be electronically tied into it); and

<sup>36</sup> Major T. D. Møller, 'BALTBAT: lessons learned and the way ahead', *Baltic Defence Review* 5, 2000, pp. 38–42; Colonel Janis Kazocins, 'The Baltic Battalion five years on', *Baltic Defence Review* 3, 1999, pp. 47–54. For additional background and updated information on the Baltic Battalion, see Estonian Ministry of Defence (EVK), *Baltic co-operation* (Tallinn, July 2002), part 1.

<sup>37</sup> Vera Rich, 'Delays as BALTBAT proves ineffective', *Jane's Intelligence Review* 10: 3, March 1998, Pointer Supplement, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Latvian Ministry of Defence (LRAM), *Report of the minister of defence to the Saeima on state defence policy and armed forces development for the year 2001* (Riga, January 2001), ch. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*; EVK, *Baltic co-operation*, pts 2, 3, 4.

- the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL), a military academy established in Tartu, Estonia, in 1999 under the command of a Danish general (who eventually will be succeeded by a Baltic general) to train officers for service in their respective ministries of defence as well as in joint Baltic units. The training emphasizes NATO's standards and procedures, and is conducted mostly in English.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to these joint activities, the Baltic countries individually have been stepping up their military programmes to ensure that they are able to meet NATO's requirements. Table 1 shows that the efforts undertaken by the Baltic governments are now broadly comparable, on a per capita basis, to those of several existing NATO countries, including the ones that joined in 1997, and are also comparable to those of other aspiring NATO members. Because the Baltic states are so small, their combined military contribution to the alliance will necessarily be modest, but on a per capita basis they are certainly within NATO's bounds.

Moreover, table 1 understates the efforts that the Baltic countries are actually making now because it does not reflect the increased spending they allocated to defence in 2001 and 2002 and the further increases they have projected for 2003. Under the MAP, Lithuania and Estonia have been devoting 2 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to military spending in 2002, and Latvia has pledged to reach that figure by 2003.<sup>41</sup> This level of expenditure is well above the current average in NATO. The additional spending will permit the acquisition of Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stinger surface-to-air missiles from the United States as well as RBS70 and Mistral anti-aircraft missiles from Sweden and France respectively. Although Norway earlier supplied hundreds of anti-tank missiles to the battalion, the purchase of longer-range Javelins will be a major step forward for the Baltic states, as will the purchase of Stingers and RBS70s.<sup>42</sup>

Even with these improvements under way, the Baltic armies still need to acquire longer-range air defence systems, and they must step up their efforts to attain true interoperability with NATO and to reach the force levels they have set in their Annual National Programmes. The countries admitted during the first round of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement—Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland—have not yet achieved the force targets they originally set, and there is no ironclad guarantee that the Baltic states will implement all the measures they have proposed. Nonetheless, the steps that the Baltic governments have taken over the past few years to comply with the military provisions of the MAP have already made a big difference. Moreover, it is

<sup>40</sup> Tiia Somer, 'The Baltic defence college: educating a new generation of officers', *NATO's Nations and Partners for Peace* 3 (2001), pp. 20–1, with 'Commentary' by Ole Kvaerno. For periodically updated information on the Baltic Defence College and links relating to Baltic security cooperation, see the College's official website (<http://www.bdcoll.ee>).

<sup>41</sup> LRAM, *Latvijas 2002. gada Rīcības plāms dalībai NATO* (Riga, September 2001), pp. 1, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Sharon Weinberger, 'Baltic countries strive for limited but strategic acquisitions', *Aerospace Daily* 201: 51, 15 March 2002, p. 5.

**Table 1: Comparative sizes of armed forces and defence spending in four groups of countries, 2000**

	Country	Troops in armed forces, total	Troops in armed forces, per million residents	First-line reserves	Defence spending as % of GDP	Population (m)
<b>Baltic states</b>	Estonia	4,450	3,225	14,000	1.5	1.38
	Latvia	6,500	2,814	14,400	1.0	2.31
	Lithuania	12,190	3,331	27,800	1.8	3.66
<b>Other NATO aspirants</b>	Slovenia	7,600	3,838	61,000	1.7	1.98
	Slovakia	33,000	6,122	20,000	1.2	5.39
	Bulgaria	65,960	8,053	303,000	2.7	8.19
	Romania	82,000	3,688	470,000	2.1	22.23
<b>Newest NATO members</b>	Czech Republic	35,400	3,464	18,200	2.1	10.22
	Hungary	33,810	3,381	90,300	1.6	10.00
	Poland	206,045	5,307	406,000	2.1	38.82
<b>Selected other NATO members</b>	Belgium	39,420	3,872	100,500	1.3	10.18
	Canada	56,800	1,789	35,400	1.1	31.75
	Denmark	21,400	4,030	64,900	1.5	5.31
	Iceland	0	0	0	0	0.28
	Luxembourg	900	2,045	0	0.8	0.44
	Netherlands	50,430	3,181	32,200	1.8	15.85
	Norway	26,700	5,946	139,000	1.8	4.49

Source: Calculated from data in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The military balance, 2001–2002* (London: IISS, Autumn 2001), pp. 48–51, 60–1, 64–7, 88–9, 92–3, 97–100.

worth noting that almost all of the NATO countries repeatedly fell short of their projected force levels and interoperability goals during the Cold War, without any fatal effects on the alliance.

It is true that the Baltic states on their own will never be able to repulse an all-out military attack launched by hundreds of thousands of troops (assuming, for the sake of argument, that a neighbouring state could and would wage such an attack). But the ability to withstand a full-scale onslaught is not, and never has been, a requirement for NATO membership. Indeed, the main reason that countries have joined NATO—in recent years as well as in the more distant past—is precisely that they are *not* capable of dealing with this sort of contingency on their own. The Baltic states, even when combining their efforts, are smaller

than most of the other NATO members (Iceland and Luxembourg are the two exceptions), but their military role in the alliance will not be different in kind.

It is, then, a red herring to claim that the Baltic states' inability to defend themselves against all comers disqualifies them from NATO membership. From the military standpoint, the only real question is whether they have lived up to Part II of the MAP. The evidence suggests that they have, and that they will be increasing their efforts along these lines in the future.

### *Russia's position*

Opponents of Baltic membership in NATO have argued that 'any NATO movement into the Baltic region is likely to aggravate [anti-Western] attitudes [in Moscow] and create an irreconcilably suspicious and hostile atmosphere between Russia and the West—one that could result in a Russian return to Cold War postures and policies.'<sup>43</sup> To avoid provoking a rift, the argument goes, NATO should give Russia a de facto veto over the selection of new members for the alliance.

There are two basic problems with these arguments: they greatly overstate the damaging effect that the admission of the Baltic states will have on Russian–Western relations, even in the short term (not to mention the longer term); and they overlook the risks of giving Russia a de facto veto over NATO membership.

Well before the events of September 2001, there were signs that Russian leaders had come to believe that the Baltic states would be admitted into NATO, and had therefore concluded—if only grudgingly—that Russia would be wise to avoid expending too much political capital on a futile quest to prevent that outcome. The 'Foreign Policy Concept' promulgated by the Russian government in July 2000 affirmed that 'Russia sees good prospects for the development of relations with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Russia is for guiding these relations towards good-neighbourliness and mutually beneficial cooperation.'<sup>44</sup> The document set two preconditions for good relations with the Baltic states: first, that Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania must respect Russian interests (though the Concept did not promise that Russia would respect Baltic interests); and second, that the Baltic governments must uphold the rights of Russian and Russian-speaking minorities. Despite these stipulations, the tone of the document was conciliatory enough to prompt statements of guarded approval in all three Baltic capitals.<sup>45</sup>

Signs of progress in Russian–Baltic relations were also evident during a visit by Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus to Moscow in March 2001. With

<sup>43</sup> Meyer, 'US support for Baltic membership in NATO', p. 72.

<sup>44</sup> 'Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki RF', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 July 2000, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> 'Latvia hopeful about new Russian foreign policy concept', 'Russia's new foreign policy more pragmatic—Estonian official', and 'Lithuania applauds Russian plans to boost Baltic ties', all in *Daily News Report*, 11 July 2001, BNS Baltic News Service. For a more sceptical reaction, see 'Landsbergis soldiers on despite opposition', *Baltic Times*, 19 July 2001, p. 2.

considerable fanfare, Adamkus and Putin signed a joint declaration pledging that each side 'recognizes the right of every country to choose the way to ensure its security along with the commitment not to strengthen its own security at the expense of the security of other countries'.<sup>46</sup> In separate remarks, Adamkus stressed that 'no one will lose from NATO enlargement. I repeat once again that Lithuania's membership in NATO is not directed against any country. On the contrary, NATO's door never has been and, I am convinced, never will be shut to Russia.'<sup>47</sup>

In the wake of Adamkus's visit, Russian policy continued to shift in a more accommodating direction. On the one hand, Russian leaders still insisted that NATO should not grant membership to the Baltic states, and some hardline Russian military officers warned of 'dangerous consequences' if the alliance failed to heed Russia's objections.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Putin himself seemed to have concluded that the Baltic states would eventually join NATO regardless of what Russia did. This sentiment pre-dated the attacks of September 2001 and became more firmly established thereafter, as US–Russian relations quickly improved. Although Putin voiced conflicting statements about NATO enlargement in the first several months of 2002, the main message that came through was relatively simple—namely, that Russia still opposed the admission of the Baltic states into NATO, but would not stake its whole relationship with the West on this issue.<sup>49</sup>

In line with Putin's more conciliatory approach, high-ranking Russian officials who had earlier been staunch opponents of NATO enlargement have toned down or even abandoned their criticism as the date of the Prague summit has approached. In July 2002, Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov said that although he still believed it was 'a mistake' to expand NATO, he regarded the matter as an 'internal affair' of the alliance. Ivanov assured Western leaders that 'Russia is not planning to get overly dramatic about the situation,' and he emphasized that 'every state has the right to decide for itself which military bloc it will join.'<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, during a visit to Lithuania, Ivanov praised the Lithuanian government and declared that 'every state [including all the Baltic countries] has the sovereign right to decide whether to seek NATO membership.'<sup>51</sup>

This is not to say that Russian concerns about the matter have ceased altogether. In the spring and summer of 2002, Russian officials and legislators repeatedly called on the Baltic governments to sign the amended Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty to ensure that Russia would not be faced with 'an uncontrolled zone, a kind of legal "black hole" in which there would be no

<sup>46</sup> 'Novye usloviya diktuyut novyi podkhod', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 3 April 2001, p. 1. This meeting came less than two months after a much chillier meeting between Putin and Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga in Austria.

<sup>47</sup> 'LR Prezidento Valdo Adamkaus kalba Maskvos valstybiniam tarptautinių santykių institute', *Lietuvos rytas*, 30 March 2001, pp. 1–2.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. the interview with General Leonid Ivashov in 'Boi s ten'yu', *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 20 Sept. 2001, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Vladimir Zmeyushchenko, 'Rokirovka v dlinnuyu storonu', *Profil* 48, 24 Dec. 2001, pp. 14–17.

<sup>50</sup> 'Ministr oborony v Finlyandii', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 19 July 2002, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> 'Baltiiskie zaboty Rossii', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 1 Aug. 2002, p. 1.

restrictions on the deployment of NATO forces and equipment'.<sup>52</sup> The chairman of the Russian Duma's defence committee, Army General Andrei Nikolaev, warned that the Russian parliament might not ratify the amended treaty unless the Baltic states agreed to sign it.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the Russian foreign ministry indicated in June 2002 that Russia would not be sending any representatives to the Prague summit, lest their presence imply tacit approval of NATO's expansion.<sup>54</sup>

These statements, however, were relatively low-key and did not adumbrate any change in Putin's basic approach. Western analysts who predicted that the entry of the Baltic states into NATO would 'create an irreconcilably suspicious and hostile atmosphere between Russia and the West' have turned out to be completely wrong. NATO's willingness to grant membership to the Baltic states has been accompanied by a dramatic *improvement*, not a breakdown, in relations with Russia. Putin's chief objective is to maintain good ties with the West, and he has concluded that 'it would make no sense for us [in Moscow] to huff and puff over the admission of the Baltic countries into NATO.'<sup>55</sup> In earlier years, the Baltic states' aspirations to join NATO were greatly impeded by Russia's objections, but that barrier essentially disappeared in 2002.

### *Effect on NATO*

One of the most outspoken opponents of Baltic membership in NATO, Colonel Kent Meyer of the US Army, has claimed that NATO's 'mission [is] to defend the territory of its members against Russia' and that letting the Baltic states into NATO will 'jeopardize vital US national interests' and 'seriously undermine the Alliance's ability to perform its Article 5 mission' of collective defence. Meyer concedes that 'Baltic membership in NATO may help spread democracy and prosperity' in the former communist states, but he argues that this benefit will be outweighed by the harm that the admission of the Baltic countries will supposedly inflict on 'NATO's traditional defense mission'.<sup>56</sup> There are several problems with this argument.

First, for the reasons cited above, there is no convincing evidence that the admission of the Baltic states into NATO will 'seriously undermine the Alliance's ability to perform its Article 5 mission'. During the Cold War, collective defence against an all-out Warsaw Pact offensive would have been extremely difficult. No mission in the post-Cold War era—at least up to now—has been even remotely as perilous or uncertain. The notion that the entry of the Baltic states into NATO will leave the alliance worse off militarily than it was during the

<sup>52</sup> Comments of Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov, broadcast on evening news summary, ORT (Russian public television), 28 July 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Andrei Nikolaev, 'NATO i strany Baltii brosayut vyzov: Dogovor ob ogranichenii vooruzhenii v Evrope teryaet vsyakii smysl dlya Moskvy', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 July 2002, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Vitalii Dymarskii, 'Ot Baltiki do Tikhogo okeana', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 14 June 2002, p. 26.

<sup>55</sup> Cited by Vyacheslav Nikonov, head of Politika, in 'Press konferentsiya politologov Vyacheslava Nikonova, Sergeya Oznobishcheva i Evgeniya Kozhokina o vzaimootnosheniyakh Rossii i NATO', *RIA Novosti*, 10 July 2002, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Meyer, 'US support for Baltic membership in NATO', pp. 67, 69.

Cold War is untenable. As General Odom has explained, NATO's collective defence obligations are easier, not more difficult, to fulfil nowadays than when the Warsaw Pact existed:

Some observers insist that the Baltic countries are militarily indefensible. This judgment is wrong on two counts, technical and strategic. On the first count, given the great lethality of US and NATO forces against the greatly deteriorated Russian military, a local defense is highly feasible in Estonia, the most exposed of the three countries. On the second count, Berlin was indefensible during the Cold War, but the strategic context prevented a Soviet attack on it. The same holds true for the Baltic states today. If Russia invaded them, it would risk general war with Europe and the United States. The strategic question, therefore, is the defensibility of Europe, not [just of] the Baltic states. Thus the indefensibility objection is a red herring, not to be taken seriously.<sup>57</sup>

Second, Meyer's conception of NATO takes almost no account of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He uses 'Russia' and the 'Soviet Union' interchangeably, and he claims that, for the indefinite future, the alliance must commit itself to deterring—or, if necessary, defending against—Russia. But in the absence of a drastic turn for the worse in Moscow (a scenario that seems less plausible as time passes), it is neither desirable nor practical to regard NATO as being permanently directed against Russia. Western leaders should be under no illusions that liberal democracy is about to take firm root in Russia, but neither should they simply act as though the Cold War never ended and the Soviet Union never disintegrated.

Third, Meyer suggests that collective defence against an all-out attack in Europe will remain the dominant purpose of the alliance. During the Cold War, preparations for collective defence in Europe were the defining feature of NATO, and as recently as 1998 (during the US Senate's deliberations on the first round of enlargement) the Clinton administration affirmed that 'NATO's core mission will remain the same—the defense of the territory of its members.'<sup>58</sup> Yet, in the absence of a clear-cut threat from Russia, the relevance of NATO's collective defence mission in Europe is bound to diminish over time. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that the alliance has increasingly pursued other military tasks since 1991, notably its peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and, most recently, Macedonia. If other such missions arise in the future, the three Baltic states will certainly be capable of making a tangible, if small, contribution. For some time now, all three have been deploying troops as part of the NATO-led peacekeeping forces in the Balkans. Further projected improvements in the capabilities of BALTBAT will enable the Baltic states to play an increasing role in NATO's peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. Hence, far from imposing a fatal burden on NATO,

<sup>57</sup> 'Prepared statement of Lieutenant General William E. Odom', in Subcommittee on Europe, *The future of NATO and enlargement*, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by the President on the national interest for enlarging NATO', 20 March 1998.

the Baltic countries actually will be a net asset for the types of operations the alliance is most likely to be undertaking in Europe.

Fourth, Meyer implies that the political dimension of NATO is and must remain largely peripheral. But in fact the alliance has always had a political *raison d'être* as well as a military purpose. The military role necessarily predominated during the Cold War, but the changing nature of NATO's military missions in the post-Cold War era will make the alliance harder to sustain as a predominantly military organization. This is particularly the result of the large and growing disparity in military capabilities between the United States on the one hand and all other members of NATO on the other. In modern combat, which places a premium on aerial and space reconnaissance, electronic surveillance, strategic airlift and sealift, long-range tracking, real-time target acquisition, instantaneous and secure communications, remotely piloted vehicles, stealth technology, massive airpower and precision-guided weaponry, the United States surpasses the other members of NATO by such a wide margin that the 'joint' operations of recent years (dating back to the 1991 Gulf War) have been something of a façade.<sup>59</sup> The one partial exception to this rule—the peace enforcement operation that NATO undertook in Kosovo in 1999, which was the only time the alliance has ever been used in combat—merely underscores the point. The problems that US commanders faced during the Kosovo war when dealing with multiple heads of state and defence ministers, all of whom wanted a say in targeting choices and strategy, instilled great wariness in the US military about the sharing of command authority.<sup>60</sup> It comes as little surprise that the Bush administration sedulously avoided using NATO in 2001 as the vehicle for fighting the war in Afghanistan.

This does not necessarily mean that the military role of NATO will now be confined solely to peacekeeping. The alliance's frequent combat exercises and preparations have enabled the member states to achieve a degree of interoperability that, while far from perfect, has been immensely beneficial during wartime.<sup>61</sup> Some NATO officials hope to shift the alliance towards military

<sup>59</sup> This phenomenon has been widely discussed in both Europe and North America; see e.g. US Congressional Budget Office, *NATO burdensharing after enlargement*, CBO paper (Washington DC: CBO, Aug. 2001); Philip H. Gordon, 'NATO and the war on terrorism: a changing alliance', *Brookings Review* 20: 3, Summer 2002, pp. 36–8; Peter Finn, 'Military gap grows between US, NATO allies', *Washington Post*, 19 May 2002, p. A22; 'Special report: the future of NATO', *The Economist*, 4 May 2002, pp. 23–5; NATO, *Défense européenne: Le concept de convergence*, conference report 10, Brussels, March 2000; UK House of Lords, Select Committee on European Union, *The common European policy on security and defence*, 15th report, London, 25 July 2000; Elinor Sloan, 'DCI: responding to the US-led revolution in military affairs', *NATO Review* 48: 1, Spring–Summer 2000, pp. 4–7; and the congressional hearings cited in n. 19 above.

<sup>60</sup> The nettlesome constraints posed by NATO (and even more by the Clinton administration, especially Defense Secretary William Cohen) are vividly recounted in the memoir by the commander of allied forces during the conflict, General Wesley K. Clark, *Waging modern war: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the future of combat* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

<sup>61</sup> This has long been the case with exercises involving US, Canadian and west European troops, and it is also increasingly true of manoeuvres held with the alliance's newest (and aspiring) members. See Vernon Loeb, 'US looks eastward in new NATO: closer ties with ex-Soviet bloc nations help Pentagon's training efforts', *Washington Post*, 28 May 2002, p. A10.

operations outside Europe, transforming it into a body for counterterrorism and counterproliferation. Whether such a transformation will actually occur, however, remains to be seen. Leading US military experts have warned that 'pushing NATO to become a vehicle for the global war on terrorism is good neither for NATO nor for success in that war.'<sup>62</sup> Moreover, even if the alliance does change its orientation, the primary lesson that US civilian and military leaders have drawn from the recent conflicts in the Gulf, Kosovo and Afghanistan—namely, that the United States, not NATO, should be the locus of wartime command authority—will circumscribe NATO's continued viability as a military organization. Although the North Atlantic Council invoked article 5 (the collective defence provision) of the North Atlantic Treaty on 12 September 2001 for the first time in its history, that was mainly a symbolic act; NATO otherwise was bypassed during the conflict.<sup>63</sup> Several allied countries—Britain, Italy, Germany, Canada and France—contributed sizeable numbers of troops and support personnel to the war effort, and most of the other NATO member states sent at least a small number of soldiers; but the war itself was run by the United States, not by NATO.<sup>64</sup>

To the extent that the core military function of NATO (collective defence in Europe) is likely to wane over time, the alliance itself will not survive as a vibrant, meaningful organization unless its political content increases. Both the September 1995 report and the MAP underscored the crucial role of democratic values and institutions in the selection of new NATO members. The NATO states should take this orientation further at the Prague summit by inviting the Baltic states and other qualified candidates to join and then by strongly emphasizing that they will welcome the membership of all European countries that want to take part in the alliance and that are able to meet the strenuous criteria for new members. In particular, the prospect of eventual Russian membership is something that NATO should publicly and strongly encourage. At present, Russia does not come close to meeting the requirements—either militarily or politically—and many years may pass before it qualifies, if indeed it ever does. But there is no question that if Russia does some day get to the point of fulfilling all the criteria for new members and wants to join the alliance, NATO should welcome it with open arms.

<sup>62</sup> 'Prepared statement of Lieutenant General William E. Odom', p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Five airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft that are normally assigned to NATO were temporarily reassigned in October 2001 and flown by NATO crews on patrols in the continental United States. Two further NATO AWACS planes joined the initial five in January 2002, and the seven aircraft flew patrols in the United States up to mid-May 2002. In addition, NATO assigned several frigates from its joint standing naval force in the Mediterranean to the war effort. These deployments, however, were important mostly for their symbolism. Although the use of NATO AWACS planes did, in principle, free up US airborne warning systems that could then be sent for patrols in and around Afghanistan, the United States has enough AWACS aircraft of its own to maintain patrols over US territory even while deploying some to distant points overseas. Similarly, although NATO frigates were dispatched to the eastern Mediterranean, none actually took part in combat.

<sup>64</sup> For a full list of the assistance provided by NATO countries and other foreign states, see US Department of Defense, Office of Public Affairs, *Fact sheet: international contributions to the war against terrorism*, 22 May 2002. See also Christopher Bennett, 'Aiding America', *NATO Review* 49: 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 6–7.

What this means in the near term is that NATO should encourage Russia to aspire to membership in the alliance and should—as far as possible—work with the Russian government in carrying out the far-reaching reforms that are needed in Russia's polity, legal system and armed forces. Although Russia until recently has been loath to take part in PfP activities, this reluctance will undoubtedly dissipate if a greater role in the PfP is linked with a realistic prospect of one day becoming a member of NATO. Now that Russian officials and experts themselves have begun to discuss what NATO membership might entail, the prospect of moving in this direction is by no means fanciful. An adviser to the Russian defence ministry and foreign ministry, Sergei Oznobishchev, recently indicated that 'it should now be quite possible to start some consultations concerning Russia's entry into NATO. Such entry will not occur today or tomorrow, but it would be worth discussing the modalities of it.'<sup>65</sup> If Russia, with NATO's encouragement, does formally apply to join the alliance, that step itself will facilitate the adoption of political and legal measures that conform to the alliance's criteria. Even if Russia cannot actually become a member of NATO for many years to come, the reforms made in pursuit of that goal would be uniformly positive from the West's perspective.

## Conclusion

Seven conclusions emerge from this discussion.

First, by any fair standard, the Baltic states have met the criteria for membership in NATO. The admission of the three countries into the alliance at the Prague summit will mark a true end to the Cold War and will underscore the importance of the requirements laid out in the MAP. Conversely, if the NATO governments had decided not to admit the Baltic states, their refusal would have dealt a serious blow to the process of enlargement, casting doubt on the sincerity of the MAP. A rejection by NATO might also have endangered the political stability of the Baltic countries, and it would have bolstered the impression that the three states were firmly within a Russian sphere of influence. That impression, in turn, might well have encouraged Russian leaders to adopt a more minatory policy *vis-à-vis* the Baltic governments.

Second, the admission of the Baltic states into NATO, far from harming the alliance, will help it adjust to the post-Cold War world. The military functions of NATO will remain important both in Europe and elsewhere, but, in the absence of a catastrophic political setback in Russia (a development that appears increasingly unlikely), the alliance must give considerably more weight to its role in promoting and consolidating democracy. Even during the Cold War, NATO served this crucial political function. The alliance helped fortify western Europe against the threat of social upheaval and communist subversion; it

<sup>65</sup> 'Press konferentsiya politologov Vyacheslava Nikonova, Sergeya Oznobishcheva i Evgeniya Kozhokina o vzaimootnosheniyakh Rossii i NATO', p. 7.

reinforced the democratization of Italy and West Germany; and it bolstered the newly democratic polities in Greece, Turkey, Spain and Portugal after those countries emerged from many years of authoritarian rule.<sup>66</sup> Despite these earlier achievements, it is clear that NATO cannot thrive in the post-Cold War era unless it takes on a more prominent role as a community of democracies *qua* democracies.

Third, the admission of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia will strengthen NATO's internal cohesion. The initial round of post-Cold War enlargement was not entirely satisfactory in this respect. Both Poland and Hungary have been strongly supportive of NATO's activities, but problems have arisen with the Czech Republic, most notably during the Kosovo conflict. Although the Czech president, Václav Havel, was strongly supportive of NATO throughout the crisis, Prime Minister Miloš Zeman and some other officials condemned the 'war-mongers' and 'primitive troglodytes' in NATO who were responsible for the war against Serbia, and they compared the operation to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.<sup>67</sup> These comments, and the public protests that occurred in the Czech Republic (much larger protests than in any other NATO country, including Greece), had a jarring effect in many NATO capitals. A recent study by two Czech experts and an American analyst stressed that 'the Czech Republic was more of a liability than an asset' during the Kosovo war, and that 'even though the Czech Republic eventually fell in line with NATO, Czech behaviour had cast doubts upon the loyalty and reliability of the country as a NATO member.' The authors warned that 'NATO needs to worry about the consequences of having such a member.'<sup>68</sup>

By contrast, NATO officials are confident that the Baltic governments will be staunchly supportive of the alliance's actions. Although public backing for NATO membership has sometimes been lukewarm in the Baltic states (especially Lithuania), this has changed to a considerable extent as their prospects of joining the alliance have become more realistic. Opinion surveys published in Lithuania at the end of July 2002 showed that public approval of NATO membership was nearly 70 per cent, well above the level of a year or two earlier.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the consensus among Baltic political elites—right across the spectrum—is that NATO membership is the only desirable alternative for their countries. No Baltic government would do anything to jeopardize that status.

<sup>66</sup> For a contrary view see Dan Reiter, 'Why NATO enlargement does not spread democracy', *International Security* 25: 4, Spring 2001, pp. 45–67. Space constraints preclude a rebuttal of Reiter's article here (I have responded to it elsewhere); suffice it to say that his arguments and conclusions are tendentious and misguided. He also fails to point out that there was no equivalent during the Cold War for the detailed criteria that NATO has established for new members in the post-Cold War era.

<sup>67</sup> See e.g. Karol Wolf, 'Kosovo ukazuje myšlení politiků', *Mladá fronta dnes*, 6 April 1999, p. 3; 'Premiér ČR si získal poslance čtyřiceti zemí RE otevřeností a neformálností svého vystupování—Úspěšný vstup Miloše Zemana do Evropy', *Hospodářské noviny* (Prague), 27 April 1999, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Ivan Gabal, Lenka Heřusová and Thomas S. Szayna, *The impact of NATO membership in the Czech Republic: changing Czech views of security, military and defence*, report G107, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Feb. 2002, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Visuomenės nuomonės ir rinkos tyrimų centras Vilmorus, 'Viešosios nuomonės tyrimai: Parama Lietuvos narystei NATO', Vilnius, July 2002.

Hence the entry of the Baltic countries into NATO will reinforce the alliance, not weaken it.

Fourth, the admission of the Baltic states into NATO will bolster regional stability. Although some Western observers predicted that Russian policy would become more confrontational once NATO was on the verge of granting membership to the Baltic states, just the opposite has been the case.<sup>70</sup> After Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic entered NATO in 1999, they experienced significant improvements in their bilateral relations with Russia. Now that the Baltic states appear more likely to join NATO, their relations with Russia have likewise been improving. The recent visit to Lithuania by Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov left no doubt that Lithuania's shift towards NATO has been accompanied by a noticeable warming of relations with Russia. By the same token, bilateral links between Russia and the leading NATO countries have markedly improved in 2002—at the very time that NATO has been moving towards a 'wide' enlargement. Ominous forecasts of belligerent responses by Moscow proved unfounded.

Fifth, to remain a thriving organization, NATO must take on an increased political role. The efficacy of that role, however, will depend in part on the political complexion of the alliance's new members. The political criteria for new members, as laid out in the September 1995 report and the MAP, are important and should not be eased. If NATO were to relax or bend the criteria for a particular country, this largess would create a 'moral hazard' *vis-à-vis* other applicants in the future. Countries in which liberal democracy has taken root are fitting candidates for membership, whereas countries that fall far short of that goal and are potentially unstable should not be admitted. For the second round of enlargement, this means that the Baltic states, Slovenia and Slovakia (depending on the political arrangements that emerge in Bratislava after the September 2002 elections) are the only candidates that should definitely be granted membership. Romania has made sporadic progress in the right direction, but does not yet fulfil the criteria. Rather than diluting the standards and creating a moral hazard by admitting Romania during the current round, NATO should encourage the Romanian government to reapply in the next round, which presumably will be scheduled for 2005. The same applies to Albania and Macedonia. Bulgaria is an ambiguous case. Although considerable uncertainty remains about Bulgaria's political and economic direction, the progress that has been achieved in recent years is impressive. The 'reward' of NATO membership (rather than just the continued prospect of membership) may be the best way to consolidate these earlier gains and to encourage further movement towards liberal democracy in Bulgaria.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Erroneous predictions to this effect can be found in Reiter, 'Why NATO enlargement does not spread democracy', pp. 48–9, and Meyer, 'US support for Baltic membership in NATO', p. 72.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Szayna of the RAND Corporation has proposed an innovative way to ensure that in a borderline case like Bulgaria the granting of NATO membership will increase rather than decrease the incentive for the government to continue adopting policies that will fulfil all the political and military criteria of the MAP. He suggests that the candidate be invited to join the alliance, but that actual

Sixth, as the political dimension of NATO increases, the alliance should consider setting up a mechanism to deter or, if necessary, punish sustained departures from democratic norms and procedures. If a member state lapses into a prolonged period of authoritarian rule, the other members of NATO should be entitled to suspend the offending state from the alliance.<sup>72</sup> Although a formal mechanism of this sort has never existed in NATO, allied leaders did consider taking action on an ad hoc basis against Greece and Turkey when they fell under military dictatorships. Informal discussions also took place in the mid- to late 1970s about what to do with Italy if communists were brought into the Italian cabinet. In none of these cases did the NATO governments actually adopt any disciplinary measures, but the very fact that such measures were considered is indicative of what might be feasible in the post-Cold War era. Elaborate safeguards would have to be devised to prevent certain countries (e.g. Turkey and Greece) from trying to abuse the disciplinary mechanism against one another, but problems of that sort should not inhibit NATO from exploring different options.

Seventh, the largely symbolic nature of the newly formed NATO–Russia Council points to the need for other steps to reach out to Russia. Russian envoys in the new council will be meeting with NATO representatives to discuss important issues—terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, arms control, theatre missile defence, civil emergencies and the like—but NATO will not seek or permit Russian input regarding the alliance’s membership, functions and defence preparations.<sup>73</sup> The NATO–Russia Council will be a useful interim body, but the United States and its allies should seek to move beyond it, beginning at the Prague summit. The way to do this is not by treating Russia as a special case deserving of a privileged role in the alliance before it has even applied to join. Instead, the NATO governments should announce at the Prague summit that they hope Russia will some day become a member of the alliance, and they should strongly encourage it to apply. They should then work with Russia so that it can gradually bring itself into compliance with the MAP. This effort may take a decade or longer, but the sooner it begins, the better.

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membership be delayed until the state has complied with the standards set out in the MAP. See ‘Prepared statement of Thomas S. Szayna’, in Subcommittee on Europe, *The future of NATO and enlargement*, pp. 22–3. This approach might be adopted for all the second-round entrants, but it would be especially important for countries like Bulgaria. Szayna emphasizes the military standards of the MAP, whereas I would emphasize the political and economic criteria.

<sup>72</sup> Several experts testifying before congressional committees in 2002 expressed support for this type of mechanism. See e.g. the comments of General William Odom, Philip Gordon and Jeane Kirkpatrick in Subcommittee on Europe, *The future of NATO and enlargement*, pp. 11, 15, 23, 24, 25, 31.

<sup>73</sup> For various documents associated with the establishment of the NATO–Russia Council, see NATO, *Rome summit—28 May 2002: basic texts* (Brussels: NATO, May 2002), also available on the NATO website ([www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)).