

U.S. COMMITTEE TO EXPAND NATO

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NATO ENLARGEMENT Key Questions Answered

Q: With the Cold War over, hasn't NATO outlived its purpose? Shouldn't it be disbanded instead of expanded? Why does America still need NATO?

America still needs NATO because America still needs a Europe that is free and democratic, safe and secure. This is not a question of idealism or charity. It is a question of self interest. Despite all the recent attention given to the Asian market, Europe is still a critical economic partner to an American economy increasingly dependent on trade and investment abroad. But more than economics are involved here. It is the nations of Europe that most share our basic values. It is the nations of Europe who have been our most reliable allies in meeting challenges to our interest and advancing our common values in the world.

For Europe to play this critical role, it must be secure from external attack and at peace within itself. Three times in this century -- two hot wars and one cold one -- America has come to the defense of Europe whether threatened by war, facism. or Communism. History has taught us that only if the United States stays engaged in the security of Europe can the safety and security of the continent be assured.

NATO is the vehicle for America's continued engagement in the security of Europe. But it is also the vehicle by which the Western Europeans have organized their own security and have learned to put aside the historical rivalries and conflicts among themselves. For half a century, NATO has in this way helped to ensure the stability, security and economic growth of Western Europe. Today, by expanding NATO, it can do the same thing for Central and Eastern Europe, and move us closer to the goal of an undivided Europe, democratic, free, safe and secure.

Q: Does NATO advance the national interests of the United States? How?

Since its inception, America has stood for freedom and democracy, human rights and the rule of law, individual initiative and market economy. It has believed that a world in which these principles are broadly accepted is a better world not only for the people of other nations, but also for the people of the United States. No peacetime alliance in history has been as successful as NATO in advancing these principles. It protected Western Europe as it rebuilt its war-torn political and economic systems based on these principles. It can provide similar reassurance to Central and Eastern Europe as they

engage in the same task after the ravages of Communism. By enhancing our values in the world, it advances our interests.

Just the prospect of NATO membership has given Central and Eastern Europe greater stability than at any other time in this century. Hungary has resolved border disputes and minority issues with both Slovakia and Romania. Poland has resolved similar issues with Ukraine and Lithuania. Romania has followed a similar course. An expanded NATO can contribute to a more stable and secure Europe. In this way, an expanded NATO will reduce, not increase, the risk that future American men and women in uniform might have to give their lives once again in a European conflict.

Q: If we enlarge NATO, don't we risk diluting the military effectiveness and political cohesion of the most effective military alliance in history?

No. A judiciously-expanded NATO would gain in military effectiveness and political cohesion. At present, several NATO members have considerably less military capacity than Poland, and a number have less combat power than Hungary. The new states from Central and Eastern Europe will increase the military capacity of the Alliance. Several of them made significant military contributions, in terms of forces, support and bases during the Gulf War and again during the Bosnia crisis.

Perhaps as important, however, the infusion of fresh energies and commitment from these enthusiastically democratic states will help revitalize NATO. These states showed their commitment to freedom particularly during the waning days of the Cold War. They understand from their history the cost of inadequate national defense. They are likely to be among the more sturdy members and contribute to a stronger, not weaker, Alliance.

Q: Even if we wanted to enlarge NATO, isn't the cost prohibitive? Who is going to pay the bill?

The costs directly attributed to expansion are those required to make it possible for the forces of the new members to operate with those of the Alliance. This requires such things as adopting NATO procedures, assuring the forces can communicate with each other, and training with NATO forces. These costs are estimated by the Pentagon to run about \$700 million to \$900 million per year, of which the U.S. share would be \$100 million to \$150 million per year. The remaining costs attributed to NATO expansion are either costs associated with steps that current members should take whether or not NATO expands, or costs the new members must assume to upgrade their own forces.

Some of us forget the "ground zero" level of many European militaries in the early days of NATO. Germany needed to start from scratch in building the Bundeswehr, which

soon became central to NATO's defense. That was at a time of much greater peril to the peace of Europe. By contrast, the current security situation is much less threatening. This allows the new member states to spread over a decade or more the costs of improving their defense forces. These costs are much less than the costs the new members would have to incur if they were to try to provide for their security outside of the NATO alliance.

Even if all of these costs were attributed to NATO expansion, the total would be modest compared to the benefits. And the potential costs of not expanding would be vastly greater. For failing to pay now the cost of assuring the stability of Europe may require the United States -- as it has twice before in this century -- to bear again the much more painful cost of instability and conflict in Europe.

Q: What countries are we inviting to join NATO? Why?

Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic will almost certainly be among the first nations invited to join an enlarged NATO. These nations played a critical role in the fight for freedom in Europe and the fall of Communism. They have made great progress over the last seven or eight years in developing democratic political systems, reformed market economies, and the rule of law. They have worked hard to prepare themselves through the Partnership for Peace program to become members of the Alliance and assume the responsibilities that go with it. They have resolved outstanding territorial and ethnic disputes.

Many of America's European allies and many Americans believe that Romania and Slovenia are also ready to join the first round of NATO expansion. Others believe that the extraordinary sacrifices of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania argue for early consideration. How many countries are invited in the first round and the timing of the following invitations is a question for NATO authorities and the governments of the member countries. President Clinton has said that the first countries to be invited to join NATO will not be the last. This will reassure those not included in the first round that the door to NATO has not been closed on them.

Q: Aren't we really buying into a lot of border disputes and ethnic conflicts that ultimately will cost American lives? Are we really going to send U.S. troops to defend Warsaw?

Poland and the Czech Republic have no internal ethnic conflicts. Only Hungary has an ethnic minority outside its immediate neighbors (largely in Romania and Slovakia). Just the possibility of NATO membership has become a catalyst for new regional agreements designed to resolve these and other longstanding ethnic and border tensions. For example, the Polish Lithuanian Treaty of 1994, the Hungarian Slovakian Treaty of 1996, the 1996 agreements between Poland and Ukraine, the 1996 treaty between Hungary and Romania, and the 1996 agreement between the Czech Republic and Germany.

By agreeing to the entry of Poland into NATO, the United States will be committing itself to send U.S. troops to defend Warsaw -- just as it has committed itself to send troops to defend Oslo, Athens, or Ankara. But the commitment is designed precisely to reduce the risk to American lives. For it is the paradox at the heart of deterrence that by committing to defend Warsaw -- and unambiguously maintaining the military capability to do so effectively -- NATO in fact reduces the risk of the kind of crisis that might require it to make good on that commitment.

Q: The Founding Act was negotiated to answer Russian complaints about NATO enlargement. Haven't we simply caved in to the Russians and, in essence, allowed the "fox" into the "chicken coop"?

The Founding Act, signed May 27, 1997 in Paris, gives Russia an important voice and an important role in European security and stability. It recognizes that Russia has as much to gain from increased European stability, security, and prosperity as any other country. And it recognizes that NATO enlargement is not about excluding Russia but instead about encouraging democratic reform across a united Europe, including Russia. It represents an historic change in the relationship between the United States and Russia and between Russia and NATO. It is a change that recognizes the positive transition Russia is trying to make to democracy and free markets.

The Founding Act does create a number of forums for consultation between NATO and Russia. Some have argued that an obstructionist Russia could use such forums to disrupt the Alliance and compromise its ability to make decisions and take action to protect the interest of its members. But the Administration has said and the Congress can confirm that this is not what the Founding Act contemplates or what the United States will permit to occur. Rather, the North Atlantic Council will remain the supreme body of Alliance decisionmaking, will not be subordinated to any other institution or procedure, and Russia's "voice but not a veto" will not diminish the Alliance's right and ability to act to defend its members and its interest as it deems necessary.

Q: Won't an expanded NATO place Russian democrats at risk and stall progress toward democratic reforms?

Opinion polls reveal that Russian voters care very little one way or the other about NATO expansion. The average Russian is concerned about securing a job in a growing economy and about safety and security. In the long run, an expanded NATO will further the case of Russian democrats by guaranteeing the stability of nations near Russia's borders and by encouraging democracy and economic prosperity in these states. To give in now to the complaints of Russian extremists would only undermine the democratic forces. And NATO enlargement has motivated NATO to offer Russia a new partnership that will ultimately strengthen the democracies by strengthening Russia's ties to the West.

As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the Senate Armed Services Committee (April 23, 1997), "The people of Russia have a chance to achieve the deepest and most genuine integration with the West that their nation has ever enjoyed."

Q: What are the consequences for those countries not invited to join NATO? Isn't this destabilizing?

The first new members invited to join an enlarged NATO will be just that --- the first new members. The door will be open to others and the prospect of inclusion in a stronger, larger NATO will continue to be a catalyst for reform in those states. The inclusion of a first set of new members will strengthen the security of those not included by bringing NATO closer to their borders.

Q: What the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe really need are more economic opportunities not military expenses. Why not just work to enlarge the European Union?

There is a critical link between security and prosperity and no reason to believe that the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe will settle for anything less than full membership in all the Western associations. Expanding the European Union is important but prosperity will not come without the security NATO offers. In addition, expanding the European Union will take time as nations must make significant changes to their regulatory and legal systems. NATO expansion can proceed today. NATO alone can ensure a stable Europe that is strongly connected to the United States.