



NATO ENLARGEMENT: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT



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By: Bruce Weinrod

Introduction

As the Cold War was winding down, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was composed of sixteen nations. Since that time NATO has expanded to include fifteen new members.ⁱ

Whether NATO enlargement is a positive or instead a misguided development has been a subject of intense discussion in the U.S over the years. Given that close to two and half decades have passed since NATO began its post-Cold War expansion in 1999, sufficient time has elapsed for an overall assessment and evaluation of issues related to NATO enlargement.

Post-Cold War NATO Enlargement: Background

In the aftermath of World War II, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established to ensure the common security of the United States and Western Europe against an expansionist Soviet Union. During the Cold War, NATO played a crucial role in deterring any Soviet attack on Western Europe and enabling the West to ultimately prevail against the Soviet challenge.

With the end of the Cold War, NATO and the West were faced with a dramatically changed European geopolitical landscape including the collapse of the Warsaw pact which had been composed of European

nations under Soviet domination, the emergence of newly independent nations that had been a part of the former Soviet Union, and a Russian nation transitioning from the ruins of the Soviet empire and the end of Communist Party rule.

Throughout this post-Cold War period, NATO took on new missions and evolved in various ways.ⁱⁱ A key dimension of this evolution was the expansion of NATO's membership.ⁱⁱⁱ

NATO launched its post-Cold War enlargement process at its July 1997 Madrid Summit where it formally invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to become NATO members.^{iv}

Under the NATO Treaty's accession protocols, each current NATO member must approve the admission of any new members. and each NATO member nation considers proposed new members according to its own governmental review and approval processes the entry of a new member.

For the U.S., this process has involved review and approval by the U.S. Senate.^v Thus, the U.S. Senate engaged in-depth consideration of the proposed expansion of NATO to admit the three Central European nations. A parallel debate on this same issue also took place among U.S. academics, policy experts, opinion columnists, and the interested American public.^{vi}

This debate occurred in two phases: the first phase began and took place primarily during the consideration of membership for the three Central European nations and focused largely on the broad implications of NATO enlargement for NATO itself, as well as for U.S. national security, European security and stability, and Russia's relationship with the West; the second and more recent phase has centered on issues related to NATO and Russia's attack on Ukraine.

During the first phase of this debate and subsequently, the following key issues and concerns regarding the implications and impacts of NATO enlargement have been raised.

NATO Enlargement: Key Issues

Regional Geopolitical Stability

During U.S. consideration of NATO membership for the three Central European nations, it was asserted by enlargement opponents that such NATO expansion would inevitably create "new lines" of instability in Europe. The non-invited nations in the Central and Eastern European region, it was argued, would distance themselves from the West as a result of being excluded from NATO. Of even more concern, such excluded nations could well develop rival alliances or reignite historic sub-regional territorial tensions. This regional destabilization could in turn cause NATO involvement in such disputes.^{vii}

As it has turned out, these alarmist scenarios have not occurred. NATO expansion, as it has proceeded over the years, instead

reinforced regional stability in several crucial ways. First, and very importantly, NATO required all prospective new members to resolve any lingering intra-regional territorial disputes or claims as an absolute precondition for NATO membership, thereby eliminating a potential major source of regional instability.^{viii}

Second, NATO's regional security umbrella has been conducive to domestic political stability among all of the nations in the region. This stability has also enabled solid economic growth, which in turn made these nations much more suitable for subsequent entry into the economically oriented European Union (EU).

Third, membership in NATO significantly minimized any temptation by Moscow to seek renewed domination or major influence over the Central European region. As Professor James Goldgeier has observed, had these three nations been left out of NATO "they may well have faced the same insecurities and struggles that Ukraine and Georgia face."^{ix}

In any event, NATO over the years gradually added most of the remaining Central and Eastern European nations as members, thus obviating any residual concerns about dividing lines and bringing about an overall NATO-based unity based regarding regional security.

Regional Democracy

NATO has also contributed to regional stability through its encouragement of the

development of democratic political systems in the former Warsaw Pact nations.

While primarily a military organization, NATO also has an important political dimension reflecting its founding on the basis of shared democratic values. Thus, the NATO Treaty preamble states that the members “are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.”

The primary mechanism utilized by the Alliance for encouraging democracy in the new members was straightforward. Prior to inviting new members, NATO (and the U.S. bilaterally) made very clear to these nations that the establishment of democratic institutions was a non-negotiable prerequisite for NATO membership.^x

Thus, given that joining NATO was their highest international priority, these aspirant nations responded positively, and with strong and crucial NATO and U.S. support, they eventually met NATO requirements for the institutionalization of democratic structures and processes. Among other things, NATO strongly supported and assisted with the establishment of civilian control of the military; and NATO members Germany and the US launched the George C. Marshall Center (a former U.S. Army facility) located in Germany. The Marshall Center has played a key role in fostering democratic transitions by educating key national security officials from former

Warsaw Pact and Soviet nations to democratic norms, values, and processes.

Such a role is not new for NATO. The Alliance has historically played a meaningful part in fostering European stability and encouraging democracy. For example, in the immediate post-World War II era NATO provided a security umbrella that allowed the consolidation of political stability in war-ravaged Western European nations. This stability, along with the Marshall Plan economic recovery, in turn encouraged economic growth.

Subsequently, the integration of Greece and Turkey into NATO in 1952 not only deterred potential Soviet expansionism but also provided transparency and stability within a common and cooperative security framework for the historically contentious Greek-Turkish bilateral relationship; and NATO memberships also placed both nations within an overall institutional framework of democratic nations that reinforced both external and internal pressures for democratic evolution, and along the same lines subsequently NATO encouraged a newly-admitted Spain to solidify its transition to democracy.

Very importantly, the entry of a democratic West Germany into NATO in 1955 along with the integration of its armed forces into the NATO military structure, were crucial factors, after decades of turmoil and conflict, in fostering long-term European stability by reassuring Germany’s neighbors that Germany would not pose a renewed military threat.

Thus, as former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeanne Kirkpatrick astutely observed during the initial debate over NATO enlargement, “the case for admitting Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to membership in NATO is not only strong, it is essentially the same as the case for organizing NATO in 1949 - to provide a security shield behind which the free institutions of these more geographically vulnerable European democracies can strike deep roots and thrive, to deter aggression and discourage conflict.”^{xi}

NATO Military Capabilities

While NATO does have an important political dimension, its fundamental *raison d’etre* is its military role. Thus, a major concern during the consideration of NATO enlargement was whether adding new members might harm NATO’s military effectiveness.

On this important issue questions were raised concerning whether the militaries of the prospective new member could work smoothly with existing Alliance members in such key areas as meeting NATO military standards for multinational force formations, interoperability of military equipment, and effective communication among different national militaries; and could these nations make positive contributions to overall Alliance military capabilities, or would they weaken NATO’s military capabilities resulting in a so-called “hollow alliance.”

Such concerns at the time were understandable. However, NATO’s experience has been that once admitted the new members by and large have provided

acceptable military support. Post-Cold War NATO members have participated in a myriad of NATO missions, including deployments in Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia, air policing over the Baltic region, and most recently have supported NATO’s defense of Ukraine against the 2022 Russia attack. Most recently, NATO is planning in March 2024 to undertake its largest-ever military exercise that will include participation by all post-Cold War new members of NATO (as well as Sweden). It is also worth noting that Finland (and Sweden even prior to being admitted to NATO) will provide a very significant enhancement of overall NATO military capabilities; and some newer NATO members also possess important niche capabilities, such as the Czech Republic, which deployed chemical warfare detection capabilities during the 1991 Persian Gulf War to expel Iraq from Kuwait.

As historical context, it is worth noting that similar concerns about the impact of expansion on NATO military effectiveness were also raised during early stages of the Cold War. For example, the U.S. military at that time expressed discomfort with the prospect of Italy joining NATO because in its view such membership might overextend NATO’s capabilities in the Mediterranean region. As it has turned out, the opposite has occurred. Italy’s membership in NATO has proven to be an invaluable military benefit for the Alliance as well, especially because Italy’s location permits NATO (and the U.S. bilaterally) to utilize major military facilities for important missions in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere.^{xii}

NATO Defense Costs

Related concerns about NATO enlargement focused on the potential costs to the Alliance for any needed additional military capabilities, and the question of who would pay for any such additional costs. It seemed plausible at the time that NATO itself and the U.S., as the largest contributor to NATO's military capabilities, could incur unknown additional costs in order for the Alliance to acquire the military capabilities needed to deter, or if necessary defend, additional NATO territory against attack.

At the time, various estimates were prepared with costs ranging from modest to very substantial.^{xiii} Within this context, two questions were raised: First, whether the new members themselves had either the willingness or capability to expend the sums necessary for needed military capabilities, especially since once they became members, there would be no mechanism for ensuring the necessary spending was provided.

Second, from a U.S. perspective (as the largest single financial contributor to NATO both in absolute terms and as a percentage of contributions) whether other NATO member nations would contribute their own fair share for any necessary NATO capability upgrades. And third, might the U.S. have to pay substantial new sums to NATO, as well as possibly having to enhance its own military capabilities?

As it turned out, the costs of the initial NATO enlargement for both NATO and the U.S. proved manageable with new members having contributed over the ensuing years

for both NATO's and their own national defense capabilities.^{xiv}

In any event, whatever the specific numbers involved, such costs also need to be considered in the context of the likely much greater costs should transatlantic security have been threatened by an actual Russian military incursion into a destabilized Central Europe that was outside of NATO's security perimeter.

NATO Political Cohesion

During the NATO enlargement debate, concern was also expressed that adding new members could undermine alliance political cohesion. It was observed that even during the Cold War, there were times that had proved challenging to reach agreement and coordinate among just sixteen nations, each with different interests, perspectives and priorities.

Thus, given that NATO operates by consensus and that no major initiatives can be undertaken without the agreement (or at least the acquiescence) of all members, how much more problematic, it was asked, might it be for NATO to reach consensus – and to act quickly when necessary - on contentious issues with an expanded membership. Further, even day-to-day policy development and bureaucratic implementation processes could be slowed considerably with the addition of more participants, and bureaucratic structures and processes.

Bureaucratic theorists understandably suggest that enlargement of any organization

can present challenges for cohesiveness and effectiveness. In fact, as NATO has grown much larger, decision-making, and bureaucratic processes have at times become more challenging.

That said, NATO policies and actions since post-Cold War enlargement began, even with the presence of substantially more members, and despite natural policy differences among such a large group of nations, have been developed and implemented within a framework of overall unity and cohesion,

This challenge of getting important and complex things done by a large and diverse group of nations at NATO is addressed by establishing *ad hoc* working groups on key issues of special interest to subsets of NATO members. Further, as has traditionally been the case, the leading NATO nations can seek to develop common positions prior to full NATO consideration, and there are other ways that the U.S. and other leading interested nations can work around bureaucratic obstacles.

Such cohesiveness has thus enabled the alliance to develop consensus on key issues and for NATO members to work together on a wide range of objectives, missions, programs, and actions. Examples of such common endeavors include NATO's major role in Afghanistan; counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, and counter-piracy missions; cyber defense, Arctic security, and an Iraqi military training mission; security relationships with nations in Asia and the Middle East, and most recently the

coordinated NATO response to the Russian attack on Ukraine.

In a historical context, similar issues regarding cohesiveness were raised even at the time of NATO's formation. For example, some NATO core member governments were skeptical of admitting nations such as Norway, Iceland, and Portugal to the Alliance. The concern expressed was that these nations would detract from NATO cohesiveness since they were geographically distant, and it was further suggested that Iceland and Portugal might not even be truly "European." Similarly, there were concerns about admitting Greece and Turkey to NATO, with the argument being that they were not only distant geographically but also culturally distinct from the West.^{xv}

As it turned out, while all these nations brought different perspectives, approaches and priorities to the table, there was no significant impact on NATO cohesiveness. Instead, the Alliance has over time been able to absorb and benefit from a synergy of the military, political and even cultural strengths of these members and others.^{xvi}

NATO Precedent

Another concern raised during the initial debate on NATO enlargement was that admission of these three Central European nations to NATO would set a precedent for further expansion. If these nations were admitted, it was argued, there would inevitably be other applicants and pressures for further NATO enlargement, which in

turn would raise questions similar to those discussed above.

As it transpired, the initial round of post-Cold War enlargement did in fact set a precedent. That said, this precedent was clearly perceived as positive both at NATO and by the U.S. Senate. Subsequent to the initial admission of the three Central European nations, NATO member nations have unanimously approved adding twelve more nations to the initial three new NATO members (with Sweden's membership pending). In each case, the U.S. Senate approved admitting the new members by overwhelming majorities.^{xvii}

NATO Enlargement and Russia

Issues surrounding Russia and NATO enlargement first emerged during (and continued after) the initial debate over NATO expansion. Key arguments raised were that NATO expansion would cause Moscow to become actively hostile to the West, that in any event there were meaningful alternatives to NATO enlargement which would have minimized any potential Russia concerns, and that Moscow in any event had been given a pledge that NATO would not expand militarily to its east.

Russian Reaction to NATO Enlargement

With respect to Russian reaction to NATO enlargement the Alliance and the U.S. bilaterally (both prior to and after the initial round of NATO enlargement) made sustained and intense efforts to persuade Moscow to participate in an overall European security framework which

included extensive collaboration with NATO itself.

Further, Russia, rather than reacting with hostility, agreed in the years after the initial round (and after subsequent rounds) of NATO enlargement, to join and actively participate in a variety of Alliance initiatives for coordination and cooperation with NATO.^{xviii}

In this regard, NATO welcomed Russian participation in Alliance activities. As a first step, soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO invited Russia to participate in (and Moscow attended) a meeting (referred to as the "Group of Defense Ministers") at NATO headquarters which included all NATO Defense Ministers along with the Defense Ministers of all former Warsaw Pact nations and former Soviet Republics.

During this same period, NATO invited Russia (and Russia also accepted) to join the newly established North Atlantic Coordinating Council ("NACC"). The NACC was launched by NATO as a forum for former Soviet bloc nations to discuss European security matters within a NATO-organized framework.

Subsequently, NATO in 1994 established the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program. The PFP was instituted in order to provide a framework for systematic interaction between NATO and the nations of the former Warsaw Pact and republics of the Soviet Union, and also to advance beyond informal discussions and implement real-

world security-related cooperation activities.^{xix}

In this regard, NATO invited Russia to participate in the PFP (once again Russia accepted). Through the PFP the Alliance engaged with Russia (and other non-members) in a wide range of activities tailored specifically for each participant including civil emergency planning and disaster response, cooperation on science and environmental projects and programs, and military-to-military exercises.

In addition to including Russia in such multilateral forums, NATO in 1997 also launched a separate NATO-Russia bilateral security framework in the “NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security.” Among other things, this Agreement established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as the primary forum for political-military consultation and cooperation between NATO and Russia. In furtherance of such interaction, Russia established a diplomatic mission to NATO and NATO opened an Information Office in Moscow (NIO), as well as a Military Liaison Mission (MLM).

NATO and Russia further enhanced their relationship through the establishment in 2002 of a NATO-Russia Council (NRC). The NRC provided a mechanism for regular NATO - Russia discussions and as a means for individual NATO nations and Russia to interact as what the NRC agreement termed “equal partners” on security matters of common interest. For example, through the NRC Russia cooperated with NATO’s

Afghanistan-related logistical requirements, participated in NATO counterterrorism and counter-piracy maritime missions, and developed various cooperative activities, including a missile-defense research project.

Consistent with this constructive relationship, NATO leaders and then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed at the Lisbon NATO Summit in November 2010, to commence “a new stage of cooperation towards a true strategic partnership.”^{xx}

In support of such NATO initiatives with Russia, the U.S. undertook its own sustained efforts to encourage and reinforce Russian involvement with NATO. For example, President Clinton and key senior U.S. officials met regularly with Russian leaders both before and after NATO enlargement, and conveyed the message that Washington supported a formal and structured Russia-NATO relationship, that Alliance expansion was not aimed at Russia, and that the U.S. did not rule out the possibility of eventual Russian membership in NATO.^{xxi}

On a separate track, the G-7 (composed of major international economic powers), at U.S. urging, added Russia as a discussion partner in 1994 and as an actual member in 1997 (as a result of the 2014 Ukraine attack on Crimea, Russian membership has been suspended indefinitely).

Thus, the concerns and predictions that Russia would inevitably react with hostility towards the West after the initial round of NATO expansion did not materialize.

Instead, Russia over an extended period actively cooperated with NATO in a variety of formal and informal ways. At a subsequent time, Vladimir Putin chose to take Russia on a fundamentally different path which culminated in his February 2022 attack on Ukraine.

Alternatives to NATO Enlargement

Suggestions have been made by NATO enlargement critics that the West, in order to avoid even the possibility of antagonizing Russia, should have pursued one or both of two alternatives to NATO membership for the three Central European nations. The first suggested alternative would have been for the European Union (EU) to invite these nations to become members, and the second would have been for the three nations to remain indefinitely as members of NATO's non-membership Partnership for Peace (PFP) programs.

However, the suggested EU approach would not have supported European security and stability. This is because the EU excluded the U.S and also had no meaningful security role or capabilities. Thus, leaving these nations out of NATO (even if membership in the EU were even possible) would have undermined European stability by leaving a major security vacuum that Moscow would have been very tempted to exploit. In any event, the suggestion was academic, since the EU in the early post-Cold War period was not at all interested in bringing these Central European nations into its fold; nor was such membership at that time of interest to the Central European nations themselves,

whose only focus was on NATO membership.

Regarding the Partnership for Peace alternative to NATO membership, the PFP, as described above, was at that time (and remains today) a meaningful NATO political-military program. At the same time, the PFP as with the EU and unlike NATO, provides no security guarantees; nor does it have any military capabilities whatsoever. Thus, leaving these three nations in an indefinite PFP-only geopolitical limbo would have resulted in a significant security vacuum in Central Europe that Russia could have sought to exploit.

NATO Expansion Pledge?

NATO enlargement critics have also contended that a pledge was made to Russia that the alliance would not expand to its east, and that the fact of enlargement would vitiate this promise and in some way justify Russian actions. This alleged pledge, the gist of which has also been repeated over the years by Russian officials including Putin himself, was supposedly made during the 1990 negotiations for the unification of the former East and West Germany.^{xxii}

However, the most senior U.S. officials who were involved in these negotiations – President George H.W. Bush, National Security Advisor Bret Scowcroft, Secretary of State James A. Baker – all have said that no such commitment was made either by NATO or by the U.S. In fact, the actual negotiations were focused specifically and exclusively on the reunification of the former East and West Germany and were not at all about Central or Eastern Europe.

Further, Mikhail Gorbachev himself then Russian President, has said that “the topic of NATO enlargement was not discussed at all” during the negotiations over German reunification. Thus, even the most basic question of whether the former Warsaw Pact nations (other than East Germany as a part of a newly reunified Germany) might become NATO members was never considered during the negotiations on German reunification.^{xxiii}

Russian Domestic Political Dynamics

The suggestion has also been made that the Alliance’s admission of the Central European nations was a key reason that nationalist and anti-democratic forces prevailed in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The gravamen of these critic’s argument appears to be that NATO should have refrained from enlarging on the extremely slight and unknowable possibility that by doing so Russia’s small group of dedicated democrats would have prevailed over a ruthless, disciplined, determined, and power-hungry Putin.

Bearing in mind Winston Churchill’s astute observation that Russia is “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma,” it would appear that various factors within Russia were conducive to post-Cold War continuation of autocratic rule and unfortunately made it exceedingly unlikely that democratic forces would have prevailed in any event, regardless of NATO expansion.

In the political struggles within Russia after the Cold War, genuine Russian democrats who played by the rules were confronted by former KGB apparatchik Vladimir Putin who along with his allies were ruthless in their pursuit of power and operating in a political environment largely isolated from the norms, values, and political institutions emanating out of the British and French enlightenments.

Thus, the end result of NATO refraining from enlargement would actually have been in effect a double setback for the West - Putin’s autocratic government would have emerged in any event, and the crucial benefits of NATO enlargement would have been missed in the pursuit of a chimera.

As then-Secretary of State Madelaine Albright commented, “we cannot help democrats in Russia... achieve the goals of a strong, consolidated, democratic government by appeasing the extremists and anti-democrats in Russia. We do not help Russian democrats by handing the opponents of democracy in Russia a victory over NATO, a longstanding symbol of the West's commitment to defend democracy. We can only help by strengthening and moving boldly toward the construction of a democratic Europe...”^{xxiv}

Ukraine and NATO Enlargement

After the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, some NATO critics contended that the *casus belli* for the Russian attack on Ukraine was not only NATO’s enlargement as such but more immediately NATO’s

decision at its 2008 Summit in Bucharest that Ukraine would “become a NATO member someday.”^{xxxv}

Putin and Ukraine

Given that the decision to attack Ukraine was made by Vladimir Putin, the merits of this assertion regarding the cause of the Russia attack on Ukraine can only usefully be considered within the context of what is known or can be extrapolated concerning Vladimir Putin’s thinking about Ukraine and its relationship with Russia.

In this regard, Putin consistently has bemoaned the collapse of the Soviet Union and expressed the desirability of reconstituting a modern Russian Empire, which by definition would include Ukraine. Furthermore, Putin has placed Ukraine within a larger geopolitical narrative regarding Russia’s history and regional role which among other things asserts that there should be a Russian sphere of influence over former Soviet-dominated nations, especially Ukraine. Thus, Putin’s various statements and actions related to Ukraine reveal a long-term Putin objective of bringing Ukraine under Russian domination.

Along these lines, Putin in April 2005 famously called the collapse of the Soviet Union “the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century,” adding that this was because “tens of millions of our citizens and countrymen found themselves outside Russian territory.”^{xxxvi} He also asserted more recently that Russians and Ukrainians are “one people” and concluded by declaring “I am confident that true sovereignty of

Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia.”^{xxxvii} Interestingly, these statements are similar to a comment that Putin is reported to have made to President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Angela Merkel at the 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit that, “for me Ukraine is not a real country.”^{xxxviii}

Putin has also repeatedly asserted that Ukraine is an historical aberration and that there could never be an independent sovereign Ukrainian nation. In his 2014 speech announcing the annexation of Crimea, he argued that, “it was [historically] impossible to imagine that Ukraine and Russia may split up and become two separate states.”^{xxxix}

Further, in a lengthy essay published in 2021 and in a speech in early 2022 to the Russian people, Putin asserted that Ukraine, “is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture, and spiritual space,” and he added that, “since time immemorial people living in the south-west of what has historically been Russian land have called themselves Russians.”^{xxx}

The argument that the Russian attack on Ukraine was caused by NATO’s open door policy,^{xxxi} as opposed to Putin’s longstanding view of Ukraine as a natural part of Russia, is contradicted not only by Putin’s own statements but by the assessments of experts who have observed Putin’s thinking and motivations regarding Ukraine.

For example, Russia scholar and former U.S. National Security Council senior advisor on Russia Fiona Hill has concluded that regarding Ukraine: “It’s about him personally — his legacy, his view of himself, his view of Russian history. Putin clearly sees himself as a protagonist in Russian history and is putting himself in the place of previous Russian leaders who have tried to gather in what he sees as the Russian land. Ukraine is the outlier, the one that got away that he has got to bring back.”

Further, as Hill’s analysis importantly notes, Putin’s targeting of Ukraine substantially predates NATO’s decision to identify Ukraine as a potential member. Hill observes that “he’s been in power for 22 years, and the whole of that time, has had Ukraine in the cross hairs one way or another, and it’s intensified over time. Putin wants to be the person who, on his watch, in his presidency, pulls Ukraine back into Russia’s orbit.”^{xxxii}

This assessment regarding Putin’s very longstanding intention to subjugate Ukraine also parallels that provided by Frederick Kempe, President of the Atlantic Council, who has commented that, “European officials who know him best believe controlling Ukraine has become more an obsession than a strategy for Putin, some twenty-two years into holding power and shortly before turning seventy last summer, which would cement his place in his nation’s history, and regaining control of Ukraine alongside Belarus is non-negotiable.”^{xxxiii}

Another motivation for Putin’s attack on Ukraine is his perception that Ukraine’s geopolitical position and its resources could provide an essential component for achieving his ambition that Russia become a global power. As Zbigniew Brzezinski put it pithily, “without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire.”^{xxxiv}

In addition, Putin understands that, as Moscow’s next-door neighbor, Ukraine provides an example to Russia’s populace of the alternative political model of a pluralistic democracy with free and fair elections and a vibrant civil society. Paradoxically, this example could be even more threatening to Putin because, by regularly claiming that Ukrainians are actually Russian, he thereby highlights unintentionally to his own citizenry that an alternative and democratic political and social system can be viable for Russians.

As can be seen, Putin’s own statements, as well as the assessments of Putin experts, undermine fundamentally the contention that NATO enlargement as such or its open-door policy towards Ukraine were the causes of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. Rather, NATO for Putin has been nothing more than a convenient justification for pursuit of his underlying objective to absorb Ukraine into Russia.^{xxxv} Thus, even had NATO not adopted an open-door policy toward Ukrainian membership, Putin would eventually have attacked or otherwise brutally coerced Ukraine in order to seek its

subjugation or disappearance as an independent nation.

NATO Enlargement and Russia: An Assessment

A review of post-Cold War NATO enlargement developments leads to two conclusions: First, NATO enlargement has brought significant positive political and security benefits for Europe and NATO, for the newly admitted nations themselves, and for the U.S. and transatlantic security; and second, the arguments made against NATO expansion have been flawed, predictions have been inaccurate, and concerns raised have not in fact materialized.^{xxxvi}

For the European region, NATO enlargement has established a long-term zone of stability which thereby precluded the emergence of a regional security vacuum that would tempt Russian meddling or expansionism, provided a security umbrella enabling economic development; and facilitated the development and consolidation of democratic institutions, as well as an expansion of the European zone of freedom and democracy.

For NATO itself, expansion has added to military resources, enhanced capabilities necessary for deterrence and for a common and effective response to any attack on NATO territory, and substantially increased the reach of a common democratic security culture.

For U.S. security interests, by bringing a potentially unstable and vulnerable region into a common security framework, NATO

expansion has minimized the likelihood of Russian intimidation or aggression and thus also the possibility that NATO - and therefore the U.S. - might have to be involved in an actual military conflict in Europe. NATO enlargement has also enhanced allied collective military capabilities that could be available to support U.S. political-military objectives not only in Europe but elsewhere.

At the same time, concerns raised and predictions made regarding Moscow's reaction to the first round of NATO enlargement proved unwarranted or inaccurate. Moscow engaged with NATO for many years in various multilateral and bilateral NATO - Russia forums, joint programs, and activities.

It was not, as asserted by NATO critics, enlargement but rather Putin's longstanding revanchist choice to pursue the reestablishment of a Russian empire and his attack on Crimea that resulted in a serious deterioration in relations between NATO and Russia and that fundamentally undermined the NATO-Russia relationship.

At bottom, while many Russian nationalists undoubtedly have disliked NATO, their hostility towards the West is the result not of what NATO has done but rather because of what NATO is and what it represents in terms of European security, national sovereignty, and democratic values.

Nor was Russia's attack on Ukraine the result of needless provocations to Moscow by NATO. but rather the culmination of a

longstanding intention by Putin to completely subjugate Ukraine. Thus, given Putin's objectives, the only way that Ukraine could have avoided a Russian attack was to acquiesce a Russian *dictat* and an end to its own sovereignty or at best to become a Russian vassal state, with no independent relationship with the West and no democratic political system.

NATO Expansion and Global Challenges

In addition to direct threats to European security, an expanded NATO can and should play a helpful role with respect to the growing global challenge to the security and democratic values of the West presented by the Communist Party-ruled China.

To accomplish this objective, the Alliance should continue to expand through the further development of its non-membership multilateral and bilateral security relationships. These relationships currently include regional groups for Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, in addition to the above-mentioned PFP program, and range from minimal security interaction to full-scale involvement in NATO military missions and operations.^{xxxvii}

Such informal relationships were not envisioned by the NATO treaty and do not include a NATO defense commitment. At the same time, global security connections can and should be a significant aspect of NATO's overall future.

In this regard, the Asian region should be a priority for enhancing NATO's relationships with non-NATO nations. NATO already

maintains active political-military relationships with a group of Asian nations (Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand). These nations, especially Japan, can and should be brought into an even closer connection with NATO. NATO should also develop a relationship with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Such strengthened NATO security relationships can enhance deterrence against China which would need to take NATO into account if and when contemplating an attack on Taiwan.^{xxxviii}

Conclusion

The underlying causes of tensions between Alliance members and Russia are not connected to NATO nor to NATO enlargement but are the result of fundamentally different and inherently incompatible conceptions of international norms, and what European security means and what is required for its maintenance.

Putin's concept for a European security system assumes that Russia can only be secure when its neighbors are either insecure or under Russian domination, and it also rejects the concept of a rules-based international order that respects nation-state sovereignty and rejects the use of force to attack, subjugate or absorb another sovereign nation.^{xxxix}

Thus, former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul has accurately identified Putin's longstanding overall goals for Russia as normalizing annexation, denying sovereignty to neighbors and dissolving NATO.

For the West, on the other hand, European security requires abiding by the principle that nations should not engage in aggressive attacks nor seek to subjugate other sovereign nations, and that independent countries should be free to make their own decisions about alliances and international relationships as well as their domestic political systems.

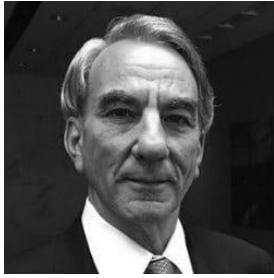
This fundamental conflict of perspectives between the West and Russia means that NATO must continue to remain vigilant regarding Russia and must continue to make clear that any European nation has the right to choose to join the Alliance, that NATO will continue to maintain its longstanding open-door policy, and that Moscow cannot have a veto over new NATO members (including Ukraine). All of this means that Ukraine can and should become a NATO member.

At the same time, the West and the U.S. should keep in mind for the longer term that, as former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul puts it, “Putin will not rule Russia forever” and that those who “equate Putin with all Russians are making a

mistake.”^{x1} Thus, at such a time as new Russian leadership appears, the U.S and NATO should once again offer Russia an opportunity to agree upon a rules-based transatlantic security structure

That said, under present circumstances, NATO and the US. face serious challenges from both an expansionist authoritarian Russia and a quasi-totalitarian China with ambitions for global domination, an expanded NATO and other extensive security relationships can and must provide a defensive shield and also act as a military and political global counterweight to ensure a balance of global forces that favors freedom.

Bruce Weinrod



Bruce Weinrod was the (dual-hatted) Secretary of Defense Representative for Europe and Defense Advisor to the U.S. Mission to NATO (appointed by President George W. Bush). He also served for a time simultaneously as the Acting U.S. Ambassador to NATO as an appointee of the U.S. Department of State. Among his responsibilities were transatlantic political-military matters, NATO military capabilities, Alliance relations with NATO partner nations in the Middle East and Asia and U.S. bilateral political-military relations with European nations.

He earlier served (appointed by President George H.W. Bush) as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for European and NATO policy where he helped formulate and implement U.S. transatlantic political-military and security policies after the end of the Cold War. Among other things, he was the political-military liaison with European nations during the first Gulf War. He also led the development of the first transatlantic security cooperation activities with former Warsaw Pact nations, negotiated the reduction of U.S. military forces in Germany and organized Pentagon support for the establishment of the George C Marshall Center at Garmisch Germany. Subsequently, while in the private sector, he briefed members of Congress and their staff on key enlargement-related issues during the initial debate over NATO enlargement. He has served on Capitol Hill as a senior foreign policy advisor for two U.S. Senators and was also a U.S. Senate-confirmed Board member of the U.S. Institute of Peace where he served as Chairman of its Research and Studies Committee. He has been a Public Policy Scholar at the Wilson Center, a Senior Fellow at the National Defense University, and a Japan Fellow of the Japan Society based in Japan.

He is an Adjunct Professor at the American University School of International Service and the Georgetown University Center for Security Studies; He has published widely on foreign policy and national security issues and lectured or presented papers at major policy institutes in the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

A U.S. Army veteran, he holds a J.D. from the Georgetown University School of Law, and an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the District of Columbia Bar and the Council on Foreign Relations.

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Frank B. Ashley III, acting dean

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– Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.)

NOTES

ⁱ The Berlin Wall came down in November 1989 and the Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991. As of this writing, a membership application for Sweden is pending and that nation will become the sixteenth new post-Cold War NATO member. All current NATO members except Turkey and Hungary have approved Sweden's membership – thus Sweden will become NATO's thirty-second member whenever (as expected) Turkey and Hungary have officially approved its application for membership.

ⁱⁱ For an overview of NATO's post-Cold War evolution, see: Bruce Weinrod, "We Still Need NATO: The American Interest, January 16, 2015, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/01/15/we-still-need-nato/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Article Ten of the NATO Treaty provides that "The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this treaty." This is NATO's so-called "open door" policy under which any nation in Europe can be admitted as a member.

^{iv} NATO operates by consensus. Thus, all nations must agree on any official NATO decision or action, including the admission of a new member.

^v Article Eleven of the NATO treaty provides any enlargement must be approved by all the current member states "in accordance with their respective constitutional processes." Whether under

the U.S. Constitution this process requires the "advice and consent" of the U.S. Senate is somewhat ambiguous. However, the issue has been resolved by mutual agreement of the Executive Branch and the Senate. At the time of the very first NATO enlargement, the Truman Administration pledged that all proposed new NATO members would be submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent; and all such proposals since then have been submitted to the Senate. The legal theory underlying this process is that the accession of a new member to the NATO treaty creates in effect a new treaty between the United States and that nation. For this reason, any such Senate approval requires the same two-thirds support as does any other treaty

^{vi} Doubts or questions about NATO enlargement were raised during the U.S. debate by those concerned about its potential impact on NATO or on relations with Russia, Support for NATO enlargement included those who placed a high priority on the expansion of democracy and the deterring of any possible future Russian expansionism. For arguments offered that NATO enlargement was misguided: see: Michael Mandelbaum, "Anatomy of a Blunder," *American Purpose*, January 24, 2022; see also the testimony of Ambassador Jack F. Matlock Jr. and others at the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on NATO Enlargement, October 30, 1997, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832.htm> For a response to Mandelbaum, see: Bruce Weinrod, "Taking Exception," *American Purpose*, February 2022

<https://www.americanpurpose.com/authors/bruce-weinrod/>

^{vii} See “The Debate Over NATO Expansion,” Arms Control Association, 1997

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-09/features/debate-over-nato-expansion-critique-clinton-administrations-responses-key> and Madelaine Albright, “NATO Expansion Will Erase Dividing Lines,”

RFE/RFL June 6, 1997

<https://www.rferl.org/a/1085316.html>

At a very early point, in 1948 the State Department Policy Planning Staff paper suggested that if NATO boundaries were to be stretched to include areas beyond the North Atlantic coastal region that such expansion would catalyze a dividing line between the West and the Soviet Union. See: James Goldgeier “A Complex Man with a Simple Idea: The Wilson Center, May 2020

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Goldgeier%20Kennan%20Legacy%20Chapter.pdf>

^{viii} For a sense of the underlying historic rivalries in Central and Eastern Europe, see Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919* “Six Months That Changed the World: Random House, 2003

^{ix} James Goldgeier, “Promises Made, Promises Unbroken” *War on the Rocks*, July 12, 2016, <https://warontherocks.com/2016/07/promises-made-promises-broken-what-yeltsin-was-told-about-nato-in-1993-and-why-it-matters/>

^x The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy (DASD) at that time was among the first

senior U.S. Department of Defense official to visit government officials in former Warsaw Pact nations after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Senior officials from these nations expressed a strong interest in joining NATO very quickly. However, they were advised by the DASD that while membership could potentially happen, it would nonetheless take considerable time and necessitate major domestic political reforms.

Concerns have been expressed about possible movement away from democracy (‘democratic backsliding’) in some former Warsaw Pact nations. Whatever the merits of such concerns, it is preferable both for Western interests and Western values that these nations have become a part of the democratic community nations and thereby surrounded by the concentric democratic circles of NATO and the EU, (each in its own way supporting and reinforcing democracy) members, rather than to have these nations been left adrift in political isolation and thus subject to Russian pressure and meddling and domestic anti-democratic factions.

^{xi} Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings, “The Debate on NATO Enlargement, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate,” October 30, 1997,

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832>

^{xii} For a detailed historical review of the origins of NATO enlargement and the admission of new members during the Cold War, see: Mark Smith, *NATO*

Enlargement During the Cold War: strategy and system in the Western alliance, (Palgrave, Macmillan London 2000), for an overview of major arguments concerning why the initial round of NATO enlargement should proceed, see: Bruce Weinrod, “NATO Expansion: Myths and Realities, A Special Report to the Senate Armed Service and House National Security Committee,” March 1, 1996, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/nato-expansion-myths-and-realities>

^{xiii} For an overview of the cost of NATO enlargement estimates see: Ronald D. Assmus, Richard L. Kugler, and F. Steven Larrabee, “What will NATO Enlargement Cost?”; *Survival*, Autumn 1996, pp.5-26 and Reiner Huber “A Zero-Cost Option for NATO Enlargement, The Potomac Papers, The Potomac Foundation, 1999; For details on how NATO is funded see: “NATO Funding, April 1, 2022, NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm

^{xiv} For example, Poland as of 2021 ranked in the top group of NATO members with respect to percent of GDP spent on defense and Romania is close behind. Other post-Cold war NATO members are in the middle of the overall group for spending. Finland and Sweden will add substantial resources to NATO. While NATO spending has increased as a result of the Russian attack on Ukraine, this is not to say that NATO spending is currently at an acceptable level, or that all nations are contributing to the extent that they have agreed to at NATO Summits meetings.

^{xv} Smith op cit

^{xvi} Cohesiveness does not necessarily mean that differences and occasional disagreements do not occur. At times in the past Germany has pushed for a softer approach to Russia than other members. Norway has sought to move away from NATO nuclear capabilities while France has strongly supported such capabilities. Nations located in NATO’s south, north and west have at times different priorities. Turkey at times has been an outlier and most recently in May 2022, conveyed initial opposition to supporting the entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO, which was supported by all other NATO members (except Hungary in the case of Sweden).

^{xvii} Before post-Cold War enlargement NATO had sixteen members. After the admission of the three new Central European members in 1999, the following new members have been admitted: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia were all added as members at the same time in 2004; Albania and Croatia were admitted in 2009; Montenegro was admitted in 2017. On April 3, 2023, Finland was admitted to NATO and Sweden’s membership is pending. For the admission of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004 the vote in the U.S. Senate was 96 – 0; For Albania and Croatia in 2009 the U.S. Senate vote was unanimous in favor. Montenegro was admitted in 2017 and the Senate vote was 97 – 2 in favor of admission. The Senate vote on August 3, 2022, to support admission of Finland (and Sweden) was 95 – 1.

^{xviii} This is not to say that some Russian politicians and in any event nationalist factions were pleased with Russian cooperation with NATO.

^{xix} The PFP was established by NATO to enable NATO to engage in security-related activities with many non-member nations not only in Europe but elsewhere. The PFP was seen by some observers initially as a waystation for some nations before applying for NATO membership, but the vast majority of current members are not currently qualified or even eligible for NATO membership. For details on the PFP see:

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm#:~:text=The%20Partnership%20for%20Peace%20\(PfP,their%20own%20priorities%20for%20cooperation](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm#:~:text=The%20Partnership%20for%20Peace%20(PfP,their%20own%20priorities%20for%20cooperation)

^{xx} See: “NATO-Lisbon Summit,” *NATO* https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_68871.htm; NATO Founding Act, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm; NATO – Russia Council https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50091.htm

^{xxi} For a retrospective discussion of President Clinton’s approach, once the decision was made to support enlargement see: William Clinton, “I Tried to Put Russia on Another Path,” *The Atlantic*, April 7, 2022. Interestingly, Phillip H. Gordon writes in 2001 that “Recently Putin has been musing out loud about whether Russia should consider joining the Alliance, see *Bush-Putin: The End of the Cold War*,” Brookings Institution, November 13, 200; See also for a detailed review of how the Clinton Administration approached NATO enlargement”, see Ron

Asmus, “Opening NATO's Door”, Council on Foreign Relations, November 2002; and for a U.S. argument that Russia should definitely join the Partnership for Peace, see op-ed in *The Moscow Times* - Bruce Weinrod, “A New NATO Partner The Moscow Times, April 21, 1994.

Discussions regarding when and how the U.S. became involved in the NATO enlargement process during the Clinton Administration. have tended to focus almost exclusively on the perspectives and decision-making by the State Department and the White House However, some preconditions for the Partnership for Peace, were developed earlier during the Administration of President George H.W. Bush in which DOD played a key role. As context, (as with the Clinton Administration) there were differences in the Bush Administration between different parts of the Executive Branch regarding whether and if so when NATO enlargement might be appropriate. In this regard, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney (and DOD as such) was very forward-leaning on NATO enlargement, for example commenting publicly that “I, for one, would advocate that eventually we will want to expand NATO and move it to the East,” while specifically mentioning Poland, Hungary, and (then) Czechoslovakia.

Given this policy approach and objective, in preparing Cheney’s draft remarks for an upcoming NATO Defense Minister’s meeting, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for European and NATO Policy requested that the DOD Joint Staff provide some specific and modest ways in which NATO militaries could engage with former Warsaw pact militaries. The Joint

Staff responded with ideas and the DASD incorporated these in a draft which Cheney approved. These ideas included very modest military-to military interaction such as joint search and sea rescue, and humanitarian mission exercises. This draft was circulated to relevant Executive Branch departments for review. Just as Secretary Cheney's plane was about to take off for Brussels, the DASD was notified that another Department had asked that the proposed initiatives be removed (unlike previous anodyne US proposals for which were only talking ("consultations" and: "seminars") with former Warsaw Pact nations, the draft speech contained suggestions for actually doing things between NATO and non-member militaries and thus went beyond the then current USG approach; and there was also caution in parts of the Administration based upon concerns about how Moscow might react.

However, there was no time for any inter-agency back-and-forth, and when Cheney was advised of this request he replied, "Keep it in", and he subsequently offered these proposals in his remarks at NATO. Given how U.S. bureaucratic processes work, once Cheney spoke these ideas at NATO they became U.S. policy (it would have been difficult if not impossible to walk this back); and believing this to be now U.S. policy, NATO itself subsequently adopted such an approach. From DOD's perspective, the overall goal of this initiative (according to a "senior US official on background") was to "institutionalize a process of cooperation so that their defense establishments see each other ... as part of a common political and military culture and in support of 'the

process of transition to democratic open societies."

^{xxii} The so-called "Two Plus Four" talks, held from May until September 1999 were negotiations conducted between three NATO nations (the U.S., the U.K. and France) and Russia to set conditions for the reunification of Germany. Secretary of State James A. Baker led the U.S. delegation;

^{xxiii} For details see for example: Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *Washington Quarterly*, April 2009, and Philip Zelikow, "NATO Expansion Wasn't Ruled Out," *New York Times*, August 10, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/10/opinion/IHT-nato-expansion-wasnt-ruled-out.html>; see also Steven Pifer, "Did NATO Promise Not to Enlarge? Gorbachev Says No," *Brookings Institution* November 8, 2014; For a different perspective, see Joshu Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal:" *International Security*, Spring 2016 <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/deal-or-no-deal-end-cold-war-and-us-offer-limit-nato-expansion> .

It is worth at least noting in passing that it has actually been Russia that has clearly violated an international legal agreement regarding Ukraine. On December 5, 1994, the U.S., the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation met in Budapest, Hungary, to agree on security assurances to Ukraine regarding its agreeing to join the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapons nation. The three nations signed a memorandum pledging to respect

Ukraine's territorial integrity and inviolability of its borders, and to refrain from the use or threat of military force. See: "Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances: U.N/ General Assembly," December 19, 1994, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_1994_1399.pdf

^{xxiv} Madeleine Albright, Testimony before the US. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, October 7, 1997, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832.htm>

^{xxv} The NATO Communique language addressed both Ukraine and Georgia and stated: "NATO Allies welcomed Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership and agreed that these countries will become members of NATO." See: <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2008/04-april/e0403h.html>

The 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit was unusual regarding the communique process. Typically, communique language is worked out and agreed to by all parties ahead of the actual meeting. This Summit was different. In this case, the U.S. (directed by President George W. Bush) had pushed for communique language stating that Ukraine (and Georgia) would be invited to participate in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) which was widely viewed as a clear step towards NATO membership. Prior to the Summit, U.S. officials (including this author and the US Ambassador to NATO) worked to get this approach incorporated in the draft communique language. However, some

nations (including France and Germany) refused to accept such language. Normally, officials would work out anodyne compromise language. However, this was not satisfactory to President Bush. Instead, he asked that this issue be discussed deacetyl by the NATO nation's leaders at their opening evening dinner meeting. After discussion, it was agreed that relevant senior officials in interested governments would meet and seek an approach that was agreeable to all. Thus, after discussion, the language that Ukraine and Georgia would become NATO member was accepted but without any specific follow practical steps as follow-up.

^{xxvi} Vladimir Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation April 25, 2005." http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931#sel=9:10:3VX,9:Taras_Kuzio, "Inside Putin's Ukraine Obsession: *The Atlantic Council*," January 27, 2022.

^{xxvii} Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," *Office of the President of Russia*, July 12, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

^{xxviii} Dan Sabbagh "Ukraine Crisis:," *The Guardian*, December 26, 2021

^{xxix} Vladimir Putin, *Address by President of the Russian Federation*, March 18, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

^{xxx} Vladimir Putin, *Address by the President of the Russian Federation*, February 21, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>

^{xxxii} See John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 2014 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>; Further, since NATO’s beginning, there has been a separate debate regarding whether the U.S. should in fact be an Alliance member at all. Thirteen U.S. Senators (including Senator Robert Taft) voted against the U.S. joining NATO. Others, such as George Kennan who understood the Soviet Union very well, veered off course in opposing U.S. membership in NATO and NATO’s developing strong military capabilities (Kennan also was a vocal opponent of NATO enlargement); and more recently some academic “realists” have regularly predicted NATO’s pending demise based upon realist academic theories which proved to be fundamentally flawed. See Weinrod, “Without NATO the World Might be Very Different Today”, *The Hill*, March 23, 2022 <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/599332-without-nato-our-world-might-be-very-different-today/>

^{xxxiii} Fiona Hill, “Explaining Putin’s Decades-Long Obsession With Ukraine,” *New York Times*, February 18, 2022 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/18/us/politics/putin-ukraine.html>

^{xxxiiii} Frederick Kempe, “Europe’s future rests on whether newfound Western common cause can counter Putin’s threats

to Ukraine,” *CNBC* February 20, 2022, <https://www.cNBC.com/2022/02/20/op-ed-europes-future-rests-on-whether-the-west-can-counter-putins-threats-to-ukraine.html>

^{xxxiv} [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#) : The Premature Partnership” *Foreign Affairs*, [March/April 1994](#)

^{xxxv} Putin and his allies were also well aware that NATO not only was not an offensive threat to Russia but that NATO member-states had after the Cold War for many years instituted sustained reductions in military capabilities. Throughout the Alliance, weapons stockpiles had declined, maintenance was being deferred, and in some instances entire classes of military capabilities were being eliminated – all of which seriously undermined overall military readiness. In addition, modernization programs and new weapons acquisitions were also being reduced or delayed while research and development for future systems were constrained. As a RAND report stated: “In the years following the end of the Cold War, NATO’s ground forces have substantially declined in size and shifted focus away from high-intensity conventional combat.” See “Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe, RAND, 2917 https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2402.html

This assessment is consistent with a study (classified) that this writer co-directed for the National Defense University. The situation of course has now changed as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea and most importantly as a result of the Russian attack on Ukraine.

^{xxxvi} For example, Michael Mandelbaum stated: “First, I believe that we get no benefits from NATO expansion. All public policy must weigh advantages and disadvantages. Whatever the costs of NATO expansion--and I will be talking about that--I believe that the advantages we incur are zero.” U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on NATO Enlargement, October 30, 1997, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832.htm>

^{xxxvii} NATO has over the post-Cold War years expanded its security connections with the Middle East, North Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Asia. First, NATO established the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) in 1994, which has seven North African and Middle Eastern nations (including Egypt, Jordan, and Israel – and could in theory add Saudi Arabia), and in 2004 launched the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), which incorporates Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE (with informal interaction with Saudi Arabia). Additionally, NATO works with a loose grouping of Asia-Pacific nations, referred to as global partners, which includes Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. For details, see Weinrod, *American Interest*, op. cit.

^{xxxviii} See for example: Bruce Weinrod, “A NATO Action Plan for China,” *The Hill*, June 18, 2021,

<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/558900-a-nato-action-plan-for-china>, and “A Road Map for the Quad”, *The Hill*,

<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/546948-a-road-map-for-the-quad/> The participation of both the Japanese and South Korean Prime Ministers in the 2023 NATO Summit reflects the growing closeness between NATO and Asia.

^{xxxix} Interestingly, given that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has parallels to the Russian attack on Ukraine. Moscow in 1990 signed a joint statement with the U.S, stating the following: “ The Soviet Union and the United States, as members of the U.N. Security Council, consider it important that the council promptly and decisively condemned the brutal and illegal invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi military forces....By its action, Iraq has shown its contempt for the most fundamental principles for the United Nations charter and international law. See: US - Soviet Union Joint Statesmen the Invasion of Kuwait, August 3, 1990, <https://apnews.com/article/ddebc8b97184734064b625eecf369f15>

^{xl} Michael McFaul, “Putin Does Not Think Like We Do,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/01/26/vladimir-putin-does-not-think-like-we-do/>