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NATO enlargement: Avoiding missteps

EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY
REPORT

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The European Leadership Network (ELN) is an independent, non-partisan, pan-European network of nearly 200 past, present and future European leaders working to provide practical real-world solutions to political and security challenges.

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Summary

In the values-driven process that has marked the enlargement so far, the bar to membership was set deliberately low. In the radically different security environment faced since 2014, NATO has to shift the balance to an interest driven process. New members have to earn their place in the Alliance and add significantly to NATO's primary function of collective defence. The bar has now to be set deliberately high. Above all, any new member has to be defensible. The Montenegrin example shows that the Membership Action Plan is an effective procedure, particularly in enabling aspirant members to effect reforms which on their own they would be incapable of achieving. This study concludes however that there is no value for NATO in further NATO enlargement¹, even in the longer term, without a more rigorous preparation of and practical commitment to the strategic goals of the Alliance from aspirant members. In considering future enlargements, NATO needs to consider its own interest, particularly the credibility and effectiveness of Article 5. The elements of a more rigorous, self-interest driven, approach to NATO enlargement include partnerships focussed more on the defence needs of NATO and proof that the aspirant member has developed in full its individual capacity to resist armed attack (article 3 of the Washington Treaty). Meanwhile, further enlargements should be put on hold – albeit discreetly with some such formula as “for the foreseeable future, we will concentrate on making our partnerships more effective and practical”.

Introduction

The original scope of this study was limited to the prospects for further NATO enlargement and whether, 20 years after the first post-Cold War enlargements², NATO's procedures are still the right ones for determining and preparing candidates for membership of NATO. This study was primarily conducted by interviewing members of allied and partner representations of NATO, as well as members of the international civilian and military staffs. It quickly became clear that the procedures for NATO membership are inextricably entwined in the arrangements that NATO has developed for its partnerships. Indeed, one influential delegation compellingly argued that questions relating to future enlargement were misplaced so long as NATO's policy and arrangements for partnerships were so complex and under-utilised. This study therefore also takes account of the strategic significance of NATO's partnerships policy. If as is argued in this paper, the prospect of NATO enlargement, even in the medium term is unlikely, can NATO's partnership arrangements achieve a similar strategic effect, and what effect, more pertinently, should NATO seek to achieve with its partners?

The legal position on the accession of new members to NATO is clear. It is determined by Article 10 of the Washington Treaty which states that *"the parties may, by unanimous*

*agreement, invite any other **European**³ 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 ..."*.

In other words, NATO can choose whether or not to invite additional members, and, barring treaty amendments, only European states able to uphold the principles of the Washington Treaty and contribute to security within the North Atlantic treaty area are eligible for membership. North Macedonia is on track to become the 30th member of NATO in 2020. Commitments were made in 2008 to Georgia and Ukraine. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only NATO partner to be following a Membership Action Plan (MAP).

The 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement

NATO enlargement, even the latest accessions, have largely been “values-driven”. NATO leaders declared in January 1994 that they “expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East”. They did not at that time specify how NATO enlargement might be achieved. Consequently, in 1995, the Alliance carried out and published the results of a Study on NATO Enlargement⁴ that considered the merits of admitting new members and how they should be brought in. This study is still a valuable starting point for considering the challenges facing any future NATO enlargement.

Reflecting the strategic optimism of the time, the 1995 enlargement study was long on values, and short on specifics. The purposes and principles of NATO enlargement still remain valid today, even if the optimism does not. Among the key arguments for NATO enlargement to the East were:

- increased stability and security for all in the Euro-Atlantic area, without recreating dividing lines;
- strengthening the Alliance’s ability to contribute to European and international security, including through peacekeeping activities,
- extending common defence, thereby reducing the likelihood

of instability that might be engendered by an exclusively national approach to defence policies;

In the study on NATO enlargement, then, it is clear that the concept and practice of NATO’s collective defence was seen as a means to an end: stability of the east through integration. The importance of collective defence was emphasised, but qualified as means of stabilising the east, rather than a hedge against a resurgent Russia. The study recognised that NATO’s discussion on enlargement was then taking place in very different circumstances than those which

“NATO can do for Europe’s East what it did for Europe’s West: prevent a return to local rivalries, strengthen democracy against future threats, and create the conditions for prosperity to flourish.”

- US President Bill Clinton

prevailed during the Cold War. In this context, the decision to admit new members reflected the fact that the security challenges and risks which NATO faced were different in nature from military challenge faced in the past. In 1991, NATO's first post-cold war Strategic Concept stated, "*The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts has effectively been removed*". In 1995, the study admitted, the risk of a re-emergent large-scale military threat had declined even further.

The importance of NATO's "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) was emphasised as a means of preparing possible new members, through their participation in PfP activities, for the "benefits and responsibilities" of NATO membership. The idea of PfP was already two years old by the time of the NATO Enlargement study. It was first presented by the then SACEUR, General Shalishkashvili, at a meeting of NATO Defence ministers in Travemünde, Germany, on October 20–21, 1993. As a military proposal, PfP reflected military concerns: with the break-up and conflict in the former Yugoslavia, PfP was originally presented as a means of preparing and training non-NATO militaries to operate alongside NATO allies in peacekeeping operations. Preparation for NATO Enlargement was a lower priority – reflecting the fact that it was then considered premature to open an enlargement debate while US attempts were ongoing to stabilise a Russia in difficult transition.

"The risk of a re-emergent large-scale military threat has further declined"

- NATO Study on Enlargement, 1995

By the time it was formally launched in January 1994 at the NATO summit in Brussels, (the same summit as NATO signalled that they would welcome new members), PfP had become much broader in its aims, including as an explicit objective preparation for those countries seeking to join the Alliance. As the Summit Declaration stated:

"Active participation in Partnership for Peace will play an important role in the evolutionary process of the expansion of NATO."

PfP was to be an essential component of association with NATO for any country that wanted to become a member, but it also provided a framework in which other countries could develop a relationship with NATO to the extent and at the speed they wished. The membership Action Plan (MAP) was only conceived later, after the first wave of enlargement in 1999.

What was missing or understated in the 1995 Enlargement Study?

In retrospect, the bar for NATO membership was set deliberately and achievably low. Participation in PfP was considered to be an adequate school for preparing the military of aspiring members to fit in, particularly in terms of joining NATO military operations. In terms of practical obligations on the political side, there was much emphasis on the peaceable resolution of disputes, on contributions to the common budgets (civil, military and infrastructure), and commitments not to close the door behind them for further waves of enlargement.

What was **not mentioned** in the 1990s, and has only become prominent and entered the debate since 2014, is:

i) No guidance as to what level of resources aspiring members should dedicate to defence. The 2% GDP guideline was only developed in the early 2000's at a request for guidance from the three members who had just joined. An ambitious guideline for allies to spend an additional 3% year on year in real terms which pertained for most of the 1980s was quietly disregarded by NATO as the need for collective defence weakened in the early 1990s. So, the first wave of new members uniquely had no steer from NATO as to what they needed to spend

on their military as they adjusted to the requirements of NATO from those of the Warsaw Pact. The absence of guidance has persisted until the most recent accessions. The emphasis, then and now, has been on avoiding new members from becoming a burden to the institution, and seeking commitments to paying their common funded dues. There was little or no requirement for lifting their game to be a contributor to collective defence. Niche capabilities for NATO's crisis management intervention, particularly in the Balkans and Afghanistan, were encouraged. The implicit quid pro quo was that NATO would respond to any, largely putative, threat to the territorial integrity of new members in return for contributions to NATO operations.

ii) Article 3 of the Washington Treaty. Another missing item from the first waves of membership was mention of Article 3 of the Washington Treaty. Article 3, with its emphasis on self-help, has come to the fore in recent years. The 2014 Wales Summit communiqué did not mention Article 3, even though it enshrined the aim of "moving towards NATO's 2% guideline within a decade", ie end 2014. By NATO's 2019 Declaration in London, Article 3 achieved prominence and was linked to the Defence Investment Pledge, ie the 2% guideline. In short, the highlighting of Article 3 as a commitment has only become operative since the pressure from US President Trump⁵ for allies to do more, with the threat of the US doing less, in NATO's collective defence. The

absence of any mention of Article 3 is not surprising in 1995: it was then considered a platitude. It is now presented as a commitment in its own right. Any future enlargement process has to assess whether in fact the aspirant country is indeed “maintaining and developing their Individual capacity” to resist armed attack. So far, the significance of self-help for aspiring members has been overlooked.

iii) Membership Action Plan. The Membership Action Plan (MAP) was inaugurated at the Washington Summit in 1999, the first summit that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland attended, barely five weeks after their accession. Reviewing their own experiences of preparing for NATO membership, the three new members had realised that they had overestimated what they could achieve in transforming their military forces and substantially underestimated the costs of delivery. The three new members concluded that they should each have conducted a thorough defence review and made any adjustments before joining the Alliance. Henceforward, the accession process for further aspirants would be a more intrusive and comprehensive review by NATO’s International Civilian and Military Staffs by means of the Membership Action Plan.⁶ In other words, contrary to what was originally assumed, PfP and close partnership were considered an insufficient and inefficient basis for preparing aspirants for membership.

The requirement for an effective MAP process is borne out by the experience of Montenegro, the latest member to join. Montenegro entered the Membership Action Plan in 2009 and became a member of the Alliance in June 2017. According to one official who was closely involved in the whole process, the value of MAP and the prospect of membership that it afforded, exerted a powerful pressure on Montenegro’s security sector to undertake reforms that left to itself Montenegro could not achieve due to powerful countervailing and entrenched interest groups within the security sector.

In the case of Montenegro these entrenched interests were in the state intelligence system. Pressure from NATO (mainly the Defence Planning Division of the International Staff, but also the international Military Staff) and individual allies (mainly the US), using the prospect of membership as leverage, succeeded in reforming the relationships within the Montenegrin security sector, and reforming them in a way acceptable to NATO. In particular, the state intelligence service, was endowed with a new effective leadership coming from the armed forces, earning the confidence of the Allies. Interestingly, according to this official, the more mechanical and technical aspects of membership preparation (eg military standardisation, interoperability etc) had been largely satisfied or in progress through the PfP and the PfP Planning and Review Process

(PARP as it became known). In other words, in the case of Montenegro's successful membership bid, MAP was not essential for preparing the armed forces for NATO standardisation, interoperability or for assuming the responsibilities of membership – but **MAP was essential for reforming the wider security sector in Montenegro, and the legacy incalculable within it.**

As an aside, NATO's efforts in outreach and assistance (particularly in planning and review) are generally warmly received among European partners because practical. This was due to an exceptionally active and expert team at the Defence Planning Division of the International Staff who worked on allied and partner planning and review processes simultaneously and symbiotically. The influence that DPP has had steering willing partners towards coherence with NATO's force planning was largely invisible and underestimated by NATO members. The recent reorganisation of the international staff which hived off partner capacity building, and hence partners' planning and review process (PARP), to the Operations Division of the International Staff risks disrupting a very productive relationship.

Defendability

The question of what NATO had, or has, to do in order to defend a new member hardly featured, or features, in discussions of new NATO members. In the largely value driven membership processes of the past (including the North Macedonia and Montenegro, who were invited to join NATO in 1999 and 2009 respectively), the key issues in terms of issuing the invitations were mainly challenges that the aspirants faced in adapting themselves to being a responsible member of the Alliance.

Not asked in previous enlargements was the question of what the existing NATO allies and NATO collectively should do in order to fulfil their obligation under Article 5 to defend the new member. In part, this was the result of the idea that with the demise of the Soviet Union large scale threats to Alliance territory had largely disappeared, even emanating from Russia. In part, it was because NATO had confidence in its own deterrent capabilities. And, in part, it was because the focus on the Alliance's crisis management interventions, particularly Afghanistan, made the ability and willingness of partners to contribute to NATO operations a key criterion for being considered as worthy of NATO membership.

As the 1995 NATO Study on Enlargement made clear, the risk of a re-emergent large-scale military threat had further declined [ie using 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union

as a benchmark]. Henceforward, the priority of NATO was expected to be crisis management and intervention, and aspirant's willingness and ability to contribute to NATO military missions was encouraged and closely monitored through the MAP process. The requirements of collective defence, such as they were, were scarcely considered, it being assumed that the higher and more urgent need to contribute to existing operations would imbue aspirants with the flexibility and capability for an eventual collective defence mission.⁷ This in effect reversed the conventional wisdom of the early post-Cold war years that being prepared for the higher exigencies of conventional defence, NATO could easily meet the challenges of lesser scale crisis management operations.

During the course of this study, several central and eastern European allies emphasised that any future NATO enlargements would again have to take the issue of "defendability" into priority account. Their fears stemmed largely from the potential, even the likelihood, for Russia to test piecemeal, as in Ukraine, any future enlargement close to its borders or which it considered impinged on its sphere of interest. Should NATO engage in an ill-considered MAP process (implicitly Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), so their argument runs, Russia would challenge it using hybrid but unmistakably Russian means: the failure of NATO to respond adequately would mean the loss of NATO's credibility vis-à-

vis Russia. For countries who have little faith in the EU's "soft-power" to protect them, NATO's credibility, particularly but not only military, is a precious, but easily squandered, asset. Despite statements of support to those aspiring to membership, central and eastern European countries in practice are most reluctant to contemplate further accessions.

NATO's Open Door

Article 10 of the Washington Treaty is a simple statement that "The parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state ... to accede to this Treaty". There are limitations. Any state which may be invited must be in a position to "further the principles of the Washington Treaty" and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Over time this neural openness⁸ to additional members, based on the discretion and unanimity of existing member states, has become an explicit and active "open door" policy.

The policy of active enlargement ("the open door") was first developed to support the aim of building a Europe "whole and free". The original declaration of support to post-Cold war accessions affirmed the language of Article 10, but added a cautious welcome to "democratic states to our east":

"We reaffirm that the Alliance, as provided for in Article 10 of the

Washington Treaty, remains open to membership of other European states in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. We expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East, *as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe.*⁹ Brussels Summit Declaration, 1994, paragraph 12.

The “evolutionary process” was a reference to efforts underway to persuade Russia that NATO enlargement would not harm its interests. Indeed, by persuading Russia to enter into wide-ranging and far-reaching arrangement, embodied in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, NATO seemed to have come to an accommodation with Russia which would reduce, but not realistically eliminate, friction over the forthcoming enlargement of NATO. The NATO-Russia Founding act foresaw a close and cooperative relationship between the two, with multiple opportunities for consultation and even decision taking.¹⁰ Russia was given assurances that the Alliance did not intend to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, and that it planned to carry out its collective defence and other missions by “reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces”. Nevertheless, NATO had always been explicit that “no country outside the

Alliance should be given a veto or droit de regard over the [membership] process and decisions”.¹¹

The Bucharest Summit

One central and eastern Europe expert characterised NATO’s 2008 Bucharest summit as “a catastrophe”¹². Under US pressure to advance Georgia and Ukraine’s NATO membership hopes at the Summit, NATO leaders met in closed and restricted session and decided not to give them the Membership Action Plan, as the US had argued, but, as a consolation, promised that they would become members without specifying a process or a date. This agreement was reflected in the subsequent Summit Declaration:

“We agreed today that these countries [ie Georgia and Ukraine] **will**¹³ become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations.”

Foreign Ministers were given the authority to decide later on the MAP applications of Ukraine and Georgia, as they considered fit.

The effect of this compromise was perverse. Instead of putting off the issue while reassuring the two countries concerned, as intended¹⁴, it created an endless challenge of

credibility for NATO itself. Ever since the Bucharest Summit NATO had to affirm that the door to membership remains open not just rhetorically but demonstratively. It is not just Allies that are invested in this policy. A Finnish official, though emphasising that his country had no ambitions to join NATO, stressed that Finland set great store by NATO's open-door policy, in that to shut the door would signal to Russia that its assertiveness paid dividends and would furthermore consign remaining aspirant countries, including Ukraine and Georgia, to the status of a buffer zone or Russian sphere of interest.

NATO has manoeuvred itself into a position of reaffirming at all major occasions its commitment to its "open door policy". Indeed, it could be argued that the process of taking in easily absorbable countries like Montenegro is driven by the desire to show that NATO's "open door policy" is still operative. As a result, Article 10 of the Washington Treaty which indicated that allies "may", if they so considered, invite others to join, has become a "must" if NATO is to retain the credibility of its "open door". This is a vicious circle that NATO has to break free of.

Enlargement – future prospects

In the values-driven conception of enlargement which has driven the process to date, Russia loomed large as a country which had in some way to be reassured and compensated given its entrenched opposition. True, NATO has always declared pointedly that no non-NATO country should have a veto or exercise a "droit de regard", but the effect of enlargement on Russia loomed large in the considerations of NATO's capitals when moving forward with the first enlargements to central and eastern Europe. The NATO Russia Founding Act and the limitations it promised on stationing troops and nuclear weapons in new members territory was the direct result of NATO's desire to reassure Russia. Similarly, the establishment of the NATO Russia Council (NRC) in 2002 was meant to herald a new quality in the NATO's relationship with Russia, removing the last vestiges of a NATO-Russia dichotomy and elevating Russia to an equal status within the NRC – heralding invitations the second wave of post-Cold War enlargements in November 2002.

Since 2014 Russia has become an adversary, NATO's prioritisation of collective defence has returned and cooperation in the NRC has ceased. This means that any future invitation to join NATO takes place in a radically different strategic environment. Whereas, as explained

above, NATO's ability to defend a new member and the resources invested in self-defence (Article 3) were hardly, if at all, of concern in the past, such considerations should assume a key importance in any future invitations to join the Alliance. In the values-driven process that has marked the enlargement so far, the bar to membership was set deliberately low. In the radically different security environment faced since 2014, NATO has to shift the balance to an interest driven process. New members have to earn their place in the Alliance and add significantly to NATO's primary function of collective defence. The bar has to be set deliberately high. Above all, any new member has to be defensible.

The decision by Allies to invite a country to join NATO, is above all political, as is the decision to invite a partner with membership ambitions to embark on the Membership Action Plan which is the preparatory phase for membership. Active participation in Partnership for Peace and various partnership activities can help, but is no guarantee. For example, North Macedonia joined the Partnership for Peace in 1995, and commenced its Membership Action Plan in 1999 at the Washington Summit, at the same time as eight other countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia). The eight other countries have long since become members of NATO. By the time North Macedonia joins the Alliance in 2020, it will have been

subject to the Membership Action Plan for almost 21 years.

There is only one country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, currently participating in a MAP, albeit problematically due to internal disagreements over its relationship with NATO. Ukraine and Georgia's MAP application is in abeyance: NATO Foreign Ministers have not yet judged them suitable for MAP, despite many years of partnership activities, training and exercising with NATO force and participating in NATO operations. During the course of this study, no other serious candidate for NATO membership has been suggested which meet the criteria of a European country able to contribute to the values and security of the North Atlantic area. Finland and Sweden, the partners closest to NATO in terms of cooperation and values have no interest in joining. Austria and Ireland are happy in their existing relationships with NATO: arm's length politically, closely cooperative militarily.

“In the radically different security environment faced since 2014, NATO has to shift the balance to an interest driven process.”

Legacy Commitments

Ukraine, Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are therefore legacy commitments which are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. In the case of Georgia and Ukraine, the circumstances in which NATO leaders made their projection at Bucharest that these countries will become members of NATO have changed fundamentally: the orientation of NATO has reversed from prioritising contributions to NATO operations and downplaying the risks posed by Russia in 2008 to the virtual opposite in 2019: in London in December, NATO leaders declared “Russia’s aggressive actions constitute a threat to Euro-Atlantic security”. In these altered conditions, Alexander Vershbow, former NATO Deputy Secretary General and US Ambassador to Moscow, has written:

“NATO should not renounce its commitment to Ukrainian and Georgian membership as a long-term goal, but we and our allies must be frank with Kyiv and Tblisi that membership is effectively on hold for the foreseeable future.”¹⁵

In the meantime, he advocates the use of all available means to strengthen Ukraine’s and Georgia’s security and preserve their independence short of providing security guarantees.

Being frank with Georgia and Ukraine that their membership is on hold for the long-term, means that some, particularly in the US, would be tempted to press ahead with the membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite strong internal opposition within the country, in order to demonstrate that NATO’s door continues to be open despite effectively closing it to Georgia and Ukraine. That would be a mistake. The EU’s Western Balkan strategy holds out the prospect of EU membership for the six Western Balkan countries¹⁶ seeking EU membership. It constitutes the best leverage for alleviating tensions in the Western Balkans, particularly between Serbia and Kosovo. Forcing the pace on NATO membership for Bosnia and Herzegovina would add an additional layer of complexity and distraction to a region which is focussed on its EU ambitions. In the Western Balkans, NATO restraint and EU first is the wiser policy.

The Role of NATO partnerships

The NATO accession of North Macedonia is imminent. This is likely to be the last new member for a long while. If there is no real prospect of additional partners setting out on the MAP journey, then the burden of NATO's commitments to non-allies, including the Georgia, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina, falls to partnership arrangements. But NATO partnership policy since the inception of PfP in 1994 has evolved haphazardly in response to various factors: membership ambitions for some, preparation for participation in NATO operations for others, and generally a desire for many to have a bespoke relationship with NATO for political or military reasons. In an attempt to give partnerships more substance, various initiatives have been superimposed on the basic PfP framework resulting in a multiplicity of acronym and processes (PARP, IPAP, intensified dialogue, defence capacity building recipients, enhanced opportunity partners). As a result, partnership policy is confused, complicated and lacks focus. There are a plethora of formats and distinctions, that need simplification and a renewal of purpose. Annex A indicates the complexity of partnership formats in schematic form.

Recent internal changes of responsibility in NATO's International Staff herald an improvement, at least in management and transparency.

The motive behind the reorganisation is greater efficiency by focusing all NATO's capacity building efforts with partners under one directorate, within the Operations Division, with the purpose of formulating "one partner, one plan". While this approach will result in greater visibility in NATO in what programmes are being conducted and the results achieved with a particular partner, there does not seem to be a strategic purpose, except for better management, to the reorganisation. Capacity building for what purpose? In conversations with the International Staff, they were unable to answer, except in general terms.

Generalized "Capacity Building" risks perpetuating the illusion that partnerships in themselves improve stability and hence NATO's security. There is a considerable risk in the new set-up that the PfP planning and review process will put more and more distance from the force planning system applicable to allies: the force planning system, and the expertise of the staff dedicated to it, was always the motor that aligned partner force planning and standards with NATO's. By transferring partner planning responsibility to Operations, distance is likely to open up between NATO's force planning goals, as one part of the International Staff concentrates on capacity building for partners and another focuses on collective defence planning for allies.

In line with the argument in this paper that NATO enlargement should be driven by NATO's collective defence self-interest, NATO's partnership policy and arrangements, in Europe at least, need to align themselves with and be exploited for the purpose of advancing NATO's defensive military purposes. For example, in the PARP process for partners, there should be close alignment with force goals for allies. Strictly on a voluntary and exploratory basis, partners could be encouraged to participate in major collective defence initiatives that have marked the period since 2014.

As Vershbow argues, the security situation has changed fundamentally since the Bucharest Summit. Further enlargements after North Macedonia, even marginal demonstrative ones, should be put on hold – albeit discreetly with some formula as “for the foreseeable future, we will concentrate on making our partnerships more effective and practical”.

Partnerships should henceforward bear the weight and be adapted. The membership aspirations of some partners should be put on hold as should alternative small country enlargements to demonstrate that NATO's door is still open. The focus of partnerships should be increasingly to encourage partner assistance, and even contributions, to NATO's strategic purposes, including collective defence, on a voluntary contingency basis. The overall strategic goal of

partnerships for aspirant countries, and not only aspirant, would shift towards alignment with major collective defence initiatives: these partners would then be perceived to be irreversibly moving towards western political and security structures without NATO absorbing countries which would be a political and military burden rather than a benefit.

Finland and Sweden, while not wanting to join the Alliance, are a model for how their shrewd association with NATO's defence exercises enhances the benefits of their relationship with NATO, and NATO's collective defence, while maintaining a proper distance from other initiatives. More can be done along the same lines with other partners. For those partners who so wish, the PfP PARP or other initiatives, such as Enhanced Opportunities Partners, could embrace, for example, the NATO's military readiness or mobility initiatives. NATO could even solicit contributions or practical support, on a contingency or “other forces for NATO” basis, from partners for hitherto Allied only projects, such as Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF).

A more rigorous approach to NATO Enlargement

This study concludes that there is no value for NATO in further NATO enlargement¹⁷, even in the longer term, without a more rigorous preparation of and practical commitment to the strategic goals of the Alliance from partners. From a value driven approach hitherto, NATO needs to consider its own interest, particularly the credibility and effectiveness of Article 5. The elements of a more rigorous, self-interest driven, approach to NATO enlargement are sketched out above and listed in brief below.

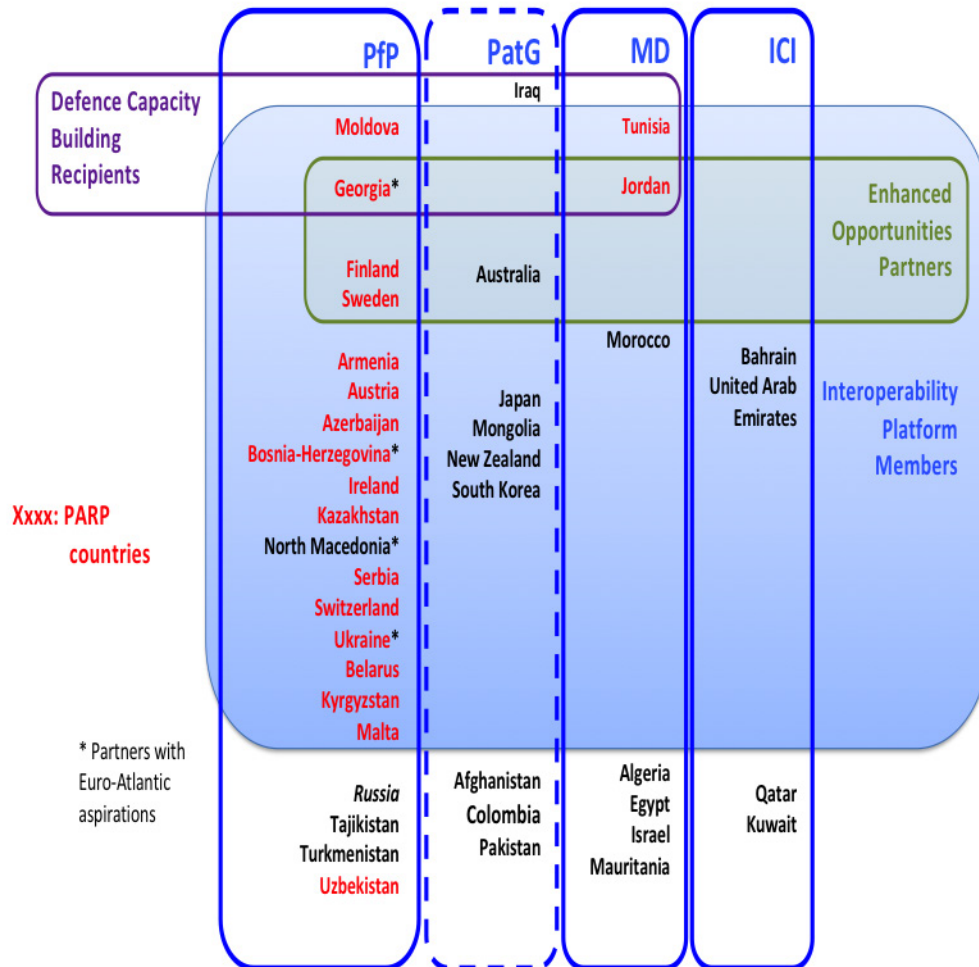
- Partnership arrangements need to be adapted to focus more on the needs of NATO rather than partners. For those who show willing, the focus of partnerships should be increasingly to encourage partner assistance, and even contributions, to NATO's initiatives and collective defence, on a voluntary contingency basis.
- There should be no prospect of NATO membership, even in the longer term, without a rigorous application of the principle contained in Article 3 (self-help) and the demonstration that an aspirant country devotes enough of its own resources to defence.
- Even without the granting of NATO MAP, the path ahead for aspirant

countries should be to get closer to NATO military planning.

- NATO should examine all requests or commitments for membership through the prism of "defendability". As well as assessing that an aspirant country meets NATO standards and is militarily interoperable, the NATO Military Authorities should advise the political authorities what additional resources and adjustments to contingency plans would be required by NATO to extend article 5 to the new member.
- There is a risk that recent changes within NATO will weaken the connection between partnership planning (PARP) and allied force planning. The vague and managerial objective of the reorganisation (capacity building with "one partner, one plan") should be sharpened with an overall strategic objective, such as motivating political support and practical contributions to NATO's strategic initiatives.

"From a value driven approach hitherto, NATO needs to consider its own interest..."

Annex A: Partnership Arrangements



Endnotes

1. Beyond North Macedonia whose membership is agreed and all but ratified.
2. At NATO's Madrid Summit in July 1997, the Alliance invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to begin the process of becoming members. On 12 March 1999 they became the first former members of the Warsaw Pact to join NATO.
3. Author's emphasis.
4. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm
5. Article 3 was not once mentioned in the epic, 139 Paragraph, Warsaw Summit Declaration of 2016, the last NATO summit before the advent of the Trump administration. By contrast, Article 3 is given significance in the nine paragraph declaration of NATO leaders in London in December 2019, indicating a subtle re-emphasis of Allies' national responsibility to earn their privileges of membership.
6. See Frank Boland, 'NATO and the Partnership for Peace', in 'Effective, Legitimate and Secure – Insights for Defence Institution Building' published by the Center for Complex Operations, National Defense University, Washington DC.
7. Interview with a former Director of Force Planning, Defence Planning and Policy Division
8. Interestingly, in the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Washington Treaty, some signatories argued for few rather than more members. The UK had doubts about the inclusion of Italy (which could not contribute to North Atlantic security due to its Mediterranean location), but favoured the membership of Portugal, under the dictator Antonio Salazar, because of the utility of naval facilities in the Azores. In the case of war with Russia, "there might be difficulty in sending any substantial American assistance ... unless the US could at once make use of all naval and air facilities in Iceland, Greenland, and perhaps the Azores." "The Birth of NATO", p 48, Sir Nicholas Henderson, Westview Press 1983.
9. Author's underlining.
10. "The Permanent Joint Council will meet at the level of Foreign Ministers and at the level of Defence Ministers twice annually, and also monthly at the level of ambassadors/permanent representatives to the North Atlantic Council." Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, 27 May, 1997.
11. NATO study on Enlargement, 1995, paragraph 7.
12. In discussion with author.
13. Author's emphasis
14. Author's discussion with official who was there
15. "Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security after the Cold War", Chapter 18, page 444. Brookings Institution Press, 2019.
16. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.
17. Beyond North Macedonia whose membership is agreed and all but ratified.



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