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Evan Jaroff
Claremont McKenna College

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NATO EXPANSION DURING THE COLD WAR AND AFTER

Evan Jaroff

NATO has undergone five rounds of enlargement since its inception in 1949, and it is poised to undergo another round quite shortly, since Albania and Croatia signed accession protocols in 2008. In order to understand future expansions, including the projected entry of Albania and Croatia, it is helpful to examine the history of NATO enlargement, and in particular the criteria used to identify potential new members and the process that they must undergo in order to join the Alliance. This paper demonstrates that accession criteria used during the Cold War, although never explicitly outlined, were quite similar to the suggested criteria laid out in a 1995 report (Study on Enlargement) that was used to evaluate potential new member states for the accessions of 1999 and 2004. However, after the Cold War the actual process of accession became more structured, regulated, and stringent. Understanding NATO expansion in the past will help shed some light on how new member states could be admitted in the future.

NATO'S FOUNDING MEMBER STATES

Issues of NATO expansion arose even before accession talks with Greece and Turkey in 1952, since the first real instance of enlargement occurred after the "Washington Exploratory Talks on Security" (WET), which were negotiations (held between 1948 and 1949) leading up to NATO's founding.¹ These negotiations produced the "Washington Paper" (in September 1948), which discussed the states that would be included as founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.² It laid out three groups of countries and dubbed them the "hard core, the stepping stones, and the goats" (Smith 26). The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg made up the hard core states, which "shared common strategic and ideological concerns, and would form a close association that would be at the heart of the North Atlantic Treaty" (Smith 26). Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, and Portugal were the stepping stones states, whose geographic locations made them of strategic, military importance. The final group, the goats, was comprised of Italy, Turkey, and Greece. None of these three states "fit the term 'North Atlantic' in its geographical or strategic articulations, or (in the Greek

and Turkish cases) its ideological ones, but were nonetheless of key importance to Western Europe" (Smith 27).

ITALY'S INCLUSION IN NATO

Italy's inclusion as a founding member of NATO is a particularly interesting case, since it was "the clearest departure from the geographical concept of the North Atlantic Treaty, and thus is clear evidence of the political criteria for membership" (Smith 57). When the "hard core" states deliberated over which "other" or "additional" states to include in NATO, they did not have clear criteria to guide their evaluation (Smith 29). This was quite evident in Italy's case, which was largely accepted because of Rome's strong desire to join NATO, and influential French support. The Italians argued that "Italy was, by dint of 'her civilisation and her mercantile and maritime traditions' a Western European country" (Smith 30). However, the US and UK worried that incorporating Italy into NATO could lead to an overextension of their military capabilities if the Italians needed military assistance. Although this was a valid concern, it fell to the background as the French backed Italy in part because including the state in NATO would make it more difficult to exclude Algeria (then a French colony) from the organization in the future (Smith 35). The French made it clear that they strongly supported Italy's cause, and when the Italian ambassador signaled Italy's desire for NATO membership to the US State Department, it was a big step towards its eventual inclusion.

By directly appealing to the United States, Italy acknowledged Washington's key role in the accession decision. Italy was "heavily dependent on the US for aid in its post-war reconstruction" and felt that joining NATO would help ensure that US-Italian relations remained friendly (Smith 37). Italy would also economically benefit from closer relations with other NATO member states, using the US as a springboard. Italy placed the Americans in a rather perilous position by giving the US the final decision in their accession. If the US chose to exclude Italy, then it would not only counter strong French support, but it also ran the risk of setting a precedent for which countries would be denied in the future. Moreover, excluding Italy could have swayed the country to side with the Soviet Union in the future, something that neither the US nor Western Europe wanted to happen. Ultimately, the US recommended that Italy join NATO based on a relative consensus among the "hard core" states, the formal Italian request to join the organization, and the possible geopolitical consequences of rejecting a state.

The consequences of rejecting a state's bid to join NATO were taken very seriously during the Cold War, which helps explain why there is no evidence of unsuccessful applications for entry into NATO during this period. As alluded to with respect to Italy, the consequences of an unsuccessful, delayed, or withdrawn application could threaten the organization's vitality. George Kennan, a member of the State Department that negotiated the North Atlantic Treaty, points out that if "individual countries rejected membership or were refused membership, the Russians could make political capital out of this, either way" (Smith 23). In other words, NATO not only had to be careful about dealing with states that actively sought NATO membership during the Cold War, but it also had to be particular about inviting states to join the Alliance so that the organization would not be embarrassed by a rejection.

ACCESSION CRITERIA DURING THE COLD WAR

The guiding principle used to determine which states would join NATO is outlined in Article 10 of the Washington Treaty (also known as the North Atlantic Treaty), which states:

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. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States of America.³

Although this article mentions that the member states must unanimously agree to invite potential states to become NATO members, it does not outline specific criteria upon which to base such invitations. Due to its vagueness, diplomats and scholars debated what the criteria for a prospective NATO member state should be. Kennan argued that NATO membership should be extended only to countries “whose shores were washed by the waters of the North Atlantic” (quoted in Smith 23). Scholar Mark Smith notes that Kennan’s criteria, based purely on geography, would have the advantages of “(a) being clearly a defensive pact and therefore not likely to provoke the Soviet Union into a sort of competition for allies; and (b) possessing solidly delineated membership criteria and therefore not subject to grey areas” (23). However, as evidenced by Italy’s inclusion in NATO (and the later accession of Greece and Turkey), Kennan’s geographical criteria were not adopted as the basis for NATO expansion during the Cold War. In order to better understand the process and criteria used to determine NATO member states during this era, it is helpful to observe the accession of Greece and Turkey in 1952.

THE ACCESSION OF GREECE AND TURKEY (1952)

Following World War II, Turkey underwent a period of modernization and Westernization, underlined by Cold War politics that placed greater importance on alliances and allegiances, rather than neutralism. Turkey sought NATO membership not only for the security guarantee articulated under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, but also to gain closer ties to the United States and Western Europe.⁴ Greece, however, struggled after WWII from the catastrophic damage wrought by the civil war that occurred from 1946–1949 (Smith 57). The Truman Doctrine, which sought to limit the spread of Communism, provided Greece with considerable financial and political aid. The threat of Communism propagated the notion that NATO needed to widen its scope and better secure the territory under its jurisdiction (Smith 88). Based on this idea, the United States argued that “Greece and Turkey needed to be defended and tightly linked to the western fold, and this came to mean that they needed to be *militarily* protected” (Smith 95).

The United States was the main proponent for both Turkish and Greek accession. Greece and Turkey were important to the US because of their link to the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and oil (Smith 67). The US had strategic interests in both “ensuring that the Greek military could maintain an internal order favourable to the West; and... maintaining the capability of the Turkish military to resist Soviet political pressure and possible military attack” (Smith 67). Also, the United States saw extending NATO membership to Greece and Turkey as a benefit, because “if Greece and/or Turkey opted for neutralism (more likely in Turkey’s case), or were somehow drawn into the Soviet sphere (more

likely in Greece's case), this could potentially be the beginning of a spreading tendency in the Mediterranean and Middle East" (Smith 93). As the greatest supporter of enlargement, the US also played a key role in facilitating, and influencing, Turkish and Greek accession.

The Greek and Turkish accessions were decided at a full ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) by a consensus vote. However, before this meeting took place, a great deal of conversation occurred within the Council of Deputies and the Standing Group.⁵ The Council of Deputies was "the primary conduit through which diplomats voiced the positions of their governments, but also through which the weight of intra-Alliance opinion could be brought home to governments themselves" (Smith 75). The Standing Group, comprised of the United States, France, and Great Britain, "exercised almost sole *de facto* responsibility for the formation of NATO strategy" until the establishment of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) in 1951 (Smith 75). The Standing Group wielded immense power, since other "NATO members would be reluctant to block a joint position by the US, Britain and France, and therefore...consensus-building would likely begin with these three" (Smith 75). As "NATO's definitive member," US decisions held the most weight in meetings within NATO and the Standing Group (Smith 89). Ultimately, the accession of Turkey and Greece came down to the American decision to support their entry. Even though the British were initially against Turkish and Greek admission, American backing made them change their position, which in turn influenced other member states to agree to the accession in 1952.⁶

THE ACCESSION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (1955)

Much of the debate surrounding the accession of the FRG arose from uncertainty about how to solve the "German Question." Essentially, European powers were unsure how to incorporate Germany into the international community after World War II. In the past, Germany "had been too powerful to easily fit into the European system, but not powerful enough to dominate the system by hegemonic overlay" (Smith 121). NATO member states were hesitant to allow for German rearmament, but under the organization's new forward strategy, adopted in 1950, a German military force would be almost essential. Germany's strategic case for accession was based on this strategy, which called for defending "Europe as far to the East as possible, and no further West than the Rhine River" (Smith 103). Therefore, including a militarily defensible FRG in NATO was vital, since the "forward strategy would be geographically and materially unworkable without German membership and contribution" (Smith 124).

Along with its strategic importance, the FRG's membership in NATO would be an extension of Chancellor Adenauer's policy of Westernization. Adenauer felt that the only way "Germany could re-establish itself as a legitimate actor and reconcile old enmities was to be 'the most European nation among Europeans.'"⁷ Adenauer saw NATO membership as a key to Germany's successful incorporation (in Europe) and rehabilitation (post-WWII), since it would be a "clear sign of its Western vocation and...a crucial part of Adenauer's policy of embedding the Federal Republic into the emerging politico-economic bloc in West Europe" (Smith 125). The United States was well aware of the strategic significance (both militarily and politically) of including the FRG in NATO, and it was up to the Americans again to garner support for this enlargement.

The process of German accession was more complicated and drawn out than the accession of Greece and Turkey, since the US faced strong French resistance early on. Early

meetings of the NAC saw NATO members pushing for two different strategies. Some allies favored “the enticing prospect of forward defence with an increased US military presence in Europe” while others feared “a corresponding demand for markedly increased European defence spending and the looming prospect of German rearmament” (Smith 104). The French proposed the Pleven Plan as an alternative; this called for the creation of a European Defence Community (EDC) with a European army comprised of both French and German troops, controlled by a European Defence Minister (Smith 107). The French supported this plan because it took power away from an independent German military, which would prevent the possibility of armed German aggression against the French in the future.

After the failure of the Pleven Plan, President Truman tried to sway the Allies in favor of German accession by pointing out the importance of German contributions to NATO’s forward strategy. Truman proclaimed, “Any map will show it, and a little arithmetic will prove what the addition of German manpower means to the strength of the joint defence of Europe” (quoted in Smith 105). The US also swayed NATO members by demonstrating the organization’s utility in answering the “German Question.” By joining NATO, “Germany’s military power would be *channeled* through the multilateral apparatus of SHAPE, but it would also be subordinated to the power of the US” (Smith 121-122). The French proposed EDC did not have the same means of managing German strength, which was a reason why the NATO members decided to include Germany in the organization in 1955.⁸ Also, when the French Parliament failed to ratify the EDC Treaty, the member states threw their support behind Germany’s entry into NATO.

THE ACCESSION OF SPAIN (1982)

Spain’s late accession into NATO was largely due to its political history under Francisco Franco, who ruled from 1936 until 1975. Spain was “clearly a Western European state in geographical and historical terms,” but its tumultuous relationship with its neighbors, due to the nature of Franco’s regime, “prevented Spain from becoming politically accepted by the rest of Western Europe” (Smith 127). Again, although the “British, French and US militaries (the three key players in early NATO strategic planning) were particularly keen for Spain to be admitted as a military necessity[.]” Franco’s dictatorship acted as an obstacle to its entry (Smith 130). However, during Franco’s reign, Spain became militarily aligned with the United States through the Madrid Pacts, which paved the way for eventual Spanish accession after the country’s transition to democracy.

Spain and the United States agreed to the Madrid Pacts in 1953, which “were in essence an exchange: Spain obtained economic aid in exchange for allowing the US to use naval and air bases on Spanish soil” (Smith 131). The US used these agreements to “secure Spain as a strategic point in the Cold War via bilateralism[.]” but other than economic support, Spain received no security guarantee (Smith 131). Fundamentally, Spain was part of the North Atlantic military system, but it was not a member of NATO. Spain continued to strengthen its ties with NATO and the rest of Europe over the next twenty-five years, since “the facilities it granted [under the Madrid Pacts] had become an integral part of NATO strategy and war planning...[and] Spain’s own navy and air force were...increasingly aligned with those of the Alliance in terms of procedure, structure, and even language” (Smith 135). Therefore, Spanish accession was not heavily based on NATO strategy to increase its reach or military capabilities, since it already achieved this through the Madrid Pacts. Instead, the key to Spain’s accession was the government’s democratic transition after Franco’s death in

1975.

Once Spain became a democracy, the US and other NATO member states had little trouble justifying its entry into the organization. During the 1970s and especially the 1980s, European governments began focusing on fostering greater cohesion and cooperation among their neighbors, based on a foundation of shared values (like democracy), through membership in institutions like the European Economic Community and NATO.⁹ Membership in these two organizations went almost hand in hand, and Spain sought acceptance into both as a means of fitting into the European community after decades under Franco's repressive rule. Joining NATO would help Spain become closer to Europe, and help unite Europe. However, there was some disagreement within the Spanish state by socialists and communists who felt that joining NATO would "raise the level of tension between the rival power blocs and would make Spain a more likely target in any future conflict with the Soviet Union."¹⁰ They also argued that NATO membership would not help Spain in its efforts to regain Gibraltar, since "it could be assumed that other NATO members would support Britain on this issue" ("Spain and NATO"). In the end, the most significant domestic support for NATO membership came from Spanish President Leopoldo Sotelo, who felt that it was an urgent matter, since he believed "Spain's entry into NATO would expedite negotiations for integration into the EC" ("Spain and NATO"). Therefore, Spain, backed by domestic and international support, completed the ratification process and was admitted into the organization in 1982.

German Reunification and the Inclusion of the Former GDR (1991)

The reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990, prompted questions over how, and whether, the former GDR should be admitted into NATO. Should it go through the same type of accession process as Greece, Turkey, the FRG, and Spain? Or, should it be ushered into NATO because the FRG, which already belonged to the organization, was absorbing it? The US, France, the Soviet Union, and the UK determined that the reunified German state would be treated "as a continuation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG); and the FRG's treaty commitments, including its participation in NATO, were affirmed as continuing in effect."¹¹ Two treaties, the "Treaty between the FRG and the German Democratic Republic on the Establishment of German Unity and the Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany" affirmed that the former GDR would join NATO under what was previously established by the FRG (Ackerman 4). Full German membership in NATO took place on March 15, 1991.

1995 STUDY ON NATO ENLARGEMENT

After the former GDR entered NATO, the Alliance conducted and published the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement, in order to consider "the merits of admitting new members and how they should be brought in."¹² The study outlined certain criteria that potential NATO member states should demonstrate, which were:

a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; the fair treatment of minority populations; a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts; the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations; and a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.
 ("NATO Enlargement")

Together, Allies would admit new member states based on these criteria and their overall judgment of whether “the membership of a specific country would contribute to security and stability in the North Atlantic area.”¹³ This study signaled a change in how potential member states would be evaluated, since entrance criteria had never been so plainly stated before. During the Cold War, the member states merely abided by Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, which “explicitly stipulated only one criterion (a European state) and two procedural conditions for admitting new members (a unanimous invitation from the member states and a deposit of the instrument of accession).”¹⁴ By examining NATO’s enlargements in 1999 and 2004 in light of the standards laid out in the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement, we can determine how closely the new member states mirrored the organization’s new criteria.

THE ACCESSION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, AND POLAND (1999)

In February 1998, President Clinton remarked to the Senate, “The accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will improve the ability of the United States to protect and advance our interests in the transatlantic area” (quoted in Bebler 95). Clinton’s decision to endorse these prospective member states was based on each country’s strong reputations during the 1990s, but did they satisfy the criteria described in the 1995 Study on Enlargement?

In terms of having a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy, all three countries more than satisfied this requirement prior to their admission in 1999. As of 1998, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic all “had seven years of solid records as stable democracies[, and since] 1989, Poland and the Czech Republic have each held three free parliamentary elections and Hungary, two.”¹⁵ Hungary “upholds Western standards on human rights, freedom of expression, rule of law, checks and balances among branches of government, and independent judiciary, and effective local government,”¹⁶ while the Czechs enjoyed “the benefits of a fully functioning parliamentary democracy, including free speech, free assembly, and a vigorous, free press.”¹⁷ Likewise, the Polish benefited from free and fair elections, a free press, and strong government support for human rights.¹⁸

By 1998, each of these countries was quickly moving towards a free market economy. Poland was admitted to the Organization of European Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996, and since launching economic reforms in 1989, the country’s annual growth rate was five percent (as of 1997) (“Poland’s Record”). The Czech Republic practiced tight “fiscal and monetary policies, liberalization of trade and prices, and rapid privatization of state enterprises[,]” but it suffered from trade and current account deficits in the mid-1990s (“Czech Republic’s”). Hungary, like Poland, joined the OECD in 1996 and shrank its current account deficit to less than four percent of its GDP in 1996, but it remained relatively high in per capita foreign debt (“Hungary’s Record”).

With respect to the fair treatment of minority populations, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland “have emerged from the yoke of communism...[and] made tremendous progress in fostering tolerance for Jewish and other religious minorities and ethnic groups. [Also, property] restitution laws have been passed to restore to their rightful owners assets stolen by communist regimes” (“Enlargement” 20). These three countries have also demonstrated a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, which is evident by the fact that they had no border disputes leading up to their accession in 1999. Hungary has in-

creased cooperation with its eight neighboring countries, while Poland “developed particularly strong ties with Lithuania and Ukraine, overcoming old tensions and reaching out to them with proposals to establish Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Ukrainian peacekeeping battalions” (“Poland’s Record”). Likewise, Czech relations with Slovakia were characterized as “fundamentally sound, although some disputes remain[ed] involving the Czech-Slovak customs union and residual matters stemming from the January 1993 split of Czechoslovakia” (“Czech Republic’s”).

Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland all had the ability and willingness to make military contributions to NATO operations. It was estimated that the three countries would add “200,000 troops and a range of airfields, ports, and lines of communication to the Alliance’s collective defense capabilities” (“Enlargement” 20). Also, as of 1998, “Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary [were]...contributing more than 1,000 troops to the NATO-led mission in Bosnia” (“Enlargement” 20). Moreover, Czechs showed their allegiance to enforcing international stability by fighting with the US in the Gulf War, participating in UN peacekeeping missions, and being founding members of NATO’s Partnership for Peace (“Czech Republic’s”). However, it was estimated that as of 1998, the “process of gearing up the armed forces for full NATO membership [would]...take at least 10 years.”¹⁹

These three European countries also displayed the fifth and final criteria outlined in the 1995 Study on Enlargement: a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures. In 1997, Poland made “steady progress toward the establishment of effective civilian control and parliamentary oversight of the military along Western lines” (“Poland’s Record”). Another notable fact is that the Polish have an even higher regard for their armed forces than for the Roman Catholic Church.²⁰ In the Czech Republic, the President acts as Commander-in-Chief and the parliament has been a “powerful player... in questioning the scope and direction of the government’s military restructuring plans and proposed defense budgets” (“Czech Republic’s”). Hungary controls its military through its constitutional parliamentary system, which gives them “control of the military budget, structure, deployment fielding, stationing, and senior leadership” (“Hungary’s Record”). Interestingly, like the Polish, the “Czech and Hungarian annies...[also enjoyed] in their respective countries more trust than the leading civilian institutions” (Bebler 55). Based on strong public support for the military, civil-military relations seemed to be quite good throughout Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, which made them even more attractive as potential NATO member states. These three states received high marks in satisfying the criteria for NATO membership after the Cold War, which led to their eventual accession in 1999.²¹

THE ACCESSION OF ROMANIA, BULGARIA, ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, SLOVENIA, AND SLOVAKIA (2004)

Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were more than qualified to become NATO member states based on the admission criteria outlined in the 1995 Study on Enlargement. However, the states that entered in 2004 adhered far less closely to the criteria.²²

All seven prospective member states were democracies (to varying degrees) that had, or were establishing, free market economies. In particular, Slovenia was recognized for its “stable political and economic environment that some of the other NATO invitees [did] *not* enjoy[.]”²³ while Bulgaria had also “developed a stable democratic system[.]...a functioning market economy[.]...[and has] held several free and fair elections.”²⁴ Likewise, Romania’s

“major political forces [were]...committed to democracy, free markets, and integration into international institutions” (Bugajski 4). Some critics claimed, though, that “Romania and Bulgaria continue[d] to suffer from corruption in their governing structures.”²⁵ As for Slovakia, the “marketization of...[its] economy has been relatively successful[,]” but the country has “fared worse economically than the Czech Republic.”²⁶

In terms of treatment of its minority populations, Bulgaria had not “experienced any significant ethnic conflicts[,] although the social and economic position of the large Roma minority remain a point of concern” (Bugajski 3). Similarly, Romania has generally experienced stable relations with its minority populations, but it has experienced some disputes with the Hungarian minority and Roma minority, which “will require more intensive governmental and international involvement” (Bugajski 4). Romania and Bulgaria have also demonstrated their commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures. Bulgaria “maintains good relations with all of its neighbors and has no outstanding disputes[,]” while Romania has been a part of peace-keeping missions, regional security initiatives, and played a “stabilizing role across several regions, including South East Europe and the Black Sea zone” (Bugajski 4, 5). Moreover, Romania enjoys full civilian control over its military, while Bulgaria is in the process of consolidating democratic, civilian control of its armed forces (Bugajski 3–4).

With respect to their willingness to make military contributions to NATO, the seven prospective member countries had already demonstrated “enthusiasm and willingness to contribute to NATO-led operations in the Balkans, Operation Enduring Freedom, and ISAF [(International Security Assistance Force)].”²⁷ Slovenia and Slovakia were undergoing military reform programs to prepare themselves for entry into NATO, and although “Slovakia is experiencing many of the ‘normal’ problems associated with such a complex endeavor, their strategy is realistic” (Simon 6). Likewise, Bulgaria has made substantial progress “in the restructuring of the armed forces into a modern and combat-ready military tailored to NATO needs” (Bugajski 3). Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania “have been willing to support the U.S. and NATO farther afield, and are likely to seriously focus on developing NATO *niche* defense capabilities with the U.S. and Poland” (Simon 5). Regarding Romania, it has worked with the United States to develop “military contacts, through joint exercises, educational programs, and arms contracts...[which illustrates that Romania is] becoming increasingly interoperable with NATO and with American forces” (Bugajski 5).

Although these countries clearly illustrated their willingness to make military contributions to NATO, due to their small size and limited resources, there was underlying sentiment that the “seven new members’ physical and institutional capacities [were]...substantially *weaker* than Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic[,]” which would translate into “modest contributions to Alliance defense, [but] provide valuable political and strategic support to the United States in the advancement of [its]...interests in Europe...and help bridge the transatlantic gap” (Simon 3, 7). Harsher critics went so far as saying that the new member states would “[n]either in quality nor quantity...make a substantive difference in NATO’s military potential.”²⁸ This led some to view the 2004 accession with “lowered, more sober and realistic expectations” (Simon 4). Nonetheless, the member states unanimously agreed to accept Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Slovenia into the organization on March 29, 2004.

THE ACCESSION PROCESS FOR THE ENLARGEMENTS OF 1999 AND 2004

Although it can be disputed how well the member states in NATO's fifth round of enlargement adhered to the criteria laid out in the 1995 Study on Enlargement, the accession processes for the fourth and fifth rounds were quite similar. First, the prospective states were invited to accession talks at NATO headquarters in Brussels. After these talks, the invitees sent letters of intent to join NATO, along with a timetable outlining when they expected to finish reforms that were suggested during the accession talks. Some of these reforms revolved around target force goals (TFG) that the supreme allied commander in Europe (SACEUR) set in response to a defense planning questionnaire (DPQ) that each state completed during the accession process.²⁹ In the third step, each invitee signed an accession protocol that allowed the invited countries to be written into the Washington Treaty. The fourth step occurred when the NATO member countries ratified the accession protocols. In the fifth step, NATO's Secretary General invited the potential new member states to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty.³⁰ After the invitees acceded to the North Atlantic Treaty, they deposited their instruments of accession with the US State Department, which made them formal members of NATO ("NATO Enlargement").

The only difference between the process in 1999 and the process in 2004, was that the seven member countries that joined in 2004 had participated in the Membership Action Plan (MAP).³¹ The MAP, which began in 1999, was created to "help countries aspiring to NATO membership in their preparations" ("Enhancing Security" 7). Each of the seven states that joined NATO in 2004 enrolled in this program, which included "both political and technical advice, as well as annual meetings between all NATO members and individual aspirants" ("Enhancing Security" 7). Although this is not officially part of the accession process, there is no doubt that the MAP program helped the seven aspirant countries prepare for NATO membership.

COMPARING ACCESSION CRITERIA

Although the end of the Cold War signaled a change in global security strategy, the criteria used to determine prospective NATO member states has remained relatively constant. Scholar Mark Smith notes that joining:

NATO during the Cold War meant more than acquiring a nuclearised security guarantee. It entailed signing up, first, to the idea of the West: the deepening web of political, economic and ideological linkages that grew up in the pressuring atmosphere of the Cold War. Second, it entailed subscribing to an indigenous balance of power within this web: a system that was reconstituted in the Alliance by expanding its parameters rather than its mechanisms. (Smith 176)

Smith's words still ring true today, which is evident by examining the criteria described in the 1995 Study on Enlargement. The belief in a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy, the fair treatment of minority populations, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures are all notions engrained in Western ideology. While they were not explicitly listed as criteria during the Cold War, they were certainly cornerstones of the types of Western democracies that NATO sought to attract. As for the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations, this was clearly a consideration during Cold War enlargement (although less so in the case of Greece), since NATO would have

difficulty operating as a successful security organization without strong and loyal military participation. Therefore, the 1995 Study on Enlargement seems to have been a modern and contemporary attempt at defining key criteria for potential NATO member states that, at least in essence, had been adhered to during Cold War expansion.

As demonstrated earlier, the countries accepted into NATO in 1999 were excellent examples of states that satisfied the new enlargement criteria. However, the states that acceded in 2004 fell rather short of fulfilling the criteria, especially when it came to each country's ability to make military contributions to NATO. Although this seems like the main criteria for NATO membership (or membership in any security organization), the military benefits of adding these countries paled in comparison to the 1999 accession states. In order to explain the 2004 accessions, I would emphasize that NATO's underlying criteria for perspective member states is that they contribute to the "security and stability in the North Atlantic area" ("Enhancing Security" 6). While their military contributions make be weak, their commitment to peace and democracy helps stabilize the potentially unstable regions of Central and Eastern Europe. For an organization that has expanded from twelve to twenty-six participants, NATO might have realized that it is just as beneficial to invite countries that promote security through the practice of common political and ideological beliefs, rather than through the number of actual forces that they contribute. This may prove to be more important with future enlargements, as the number of states that exemplify the 1995 criteria seems to be waning.

COMPARING THE ACCESSION PROCESS

Although accession decisions made during the Cold War followed the outline in the North Atlantic Treaty and were carefully planned, debated, and agreed upon unanimously by all member states, post-Cold War accessions have followed a more structured approach. The process during the Cold War was largely influenced by NATO's strongest player, the United States, which often found itself lobbying for enlargement. This is less apparent today, as more of the weight is placed on aspiring member countries that are subject to varying reforms (like the MAP) before beginning accession talks. The MAP almost acts as a preliminary step in the accession process, which is a sign that NATO membership is becoming increasingly deliberate. While some may view a stricter and more structured process as a hindrance to future enlargement, I tend to side with Smith, who states, "[NATO] is still an alliance of choice, but the responsibility of the Alliance to choose wisely is more important than it has ever been."³² While criteria for membership may be loosening since the Cold War, the more stringent accession process places a greater focus on inviting countries that will continue to uphold the goals of the Alliance in the future. However, these goals seem to be changing as NATO places less emphasis on perspective member states for their military contributions, and more emphasis on shared ideologies. There is no doubt that this will impact NATO in the future, as it moves further and further away from its origins as a military organization.

END NOTES

1. Mark Smith, *NATO Enlargement during the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave, 2000) 26.

I rely heavily on Smith's analysis for the first part of this paper, since it is one of the best, and few, sources on NATO expansion during the Cold War.

2. Smith 25. The "Washington Paper" was actually crafted by a Working Group com-

prised of “middle-echelon diplomats” who had a greater degree of independence than the upper level ambassadorial staff at the WET. Canada, the US, and the UK were the dominant parties in this group, and they basically headed the drafting and dissemination of the “Washington Paper” to Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, and their own states for their consideration.

3. “The North Atlantic Treaty,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 29 Nov. 2007, 22 March 2009 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/treaty.htm>>.
4. “The North Atlantic Treaty.” Article 5 states: “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”
5. “Final Communiqué,” NATO On-line Library, 2 April 2009 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c490917a.htm>>. During NATO’s first meeting in Washington on September 17, 1949, the member states created a Defense Committee, a Military Committee with a Military Standing Group, and five Regional Planning Groups. The Standing Group was created as a sub-committee “to facilitate the rapid and efficient conduct of the work of the Military Committee.” The meeting also established that the Standing Group should be made up of one representative from France, the UK, and the US.
6. Smith 81. “The eventual decision was clearly emerging: the US had come out in favor of admission, Britain was unwilling to oppose the US, and the other members were waiting on the British position.”
7. Smith 124. Smith quotes Michael Stürmer, a German historian and advisor to Helmut Kohl in the 1980s.
8. Also, the member states looked to the United States for guidance, and they were hesitant to object to the strong American opinion to back the FRG’s accession. France, being one of the three states in the powerful Standing Group, felt that it could at least challenge the US, since it was of equal stance within NATO.
9. Smith 158. “NATO’s key task for its member states was the fostering of cohesion and by extension the implementation of habits of cooperation.”
10. “Spain and NATO,” Country Studies, 2 April 2009 <<http://countrystudies.us/spain/88.htm>>. The “rival blocks” refer to the United States and the Soviet Union.
11. David M. Ackerman, “NATO Enlargement: Senate Advice and Consent,” CRS Report for Congress, 2 May 2003: 4.
12. “NATO enlargement,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 18 Feb. 2009, 22 March

- 2009 <<http://www.nato.int/issues/enlargement/index.html>>.
13. "Enhancing Security and Extending Stability through NATO Enlargement." NATO Public Diplomacy Division (2004).
14. Anton A. Bebler, ed., The Challenge of NATO Enlargement (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999) 49.
15. "The Enlargement of NATO," Public Information Series: U.S. Department of State, Feb. 1998: 19.
16. "Hungary's Record in Meeting NATO's Standards," U.S. State Department, 15 Aug. 1997, 21 March 2009 <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/fs_970815hungary_nato.html>.
17. "The Czech Republic's Record in Meeting NATO's Standards." U.S. State Department, 15 Aug. 1997, 21 March 2009 <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/fs_970815czech_nato.html>.
18. "Poland's Record in Meeting NATO's Standards." U.S. State Department, 15 Aug. 1997, 21 March 2009 <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/fs_970815poland_nato.html>.
19. Otto Pick, "The Czech Republic and Western Integration," in The Challenge of NATO Enlargement, ed. Anton A. Bebler (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999) 108. Ten years was Pick's private assessment of the situation in Poland.
20. Bebler 55. "The armed forces as a rule have continued to enjoy a high degree of esteem from the population. In Poland they have retained the first place among all public institutions and thus outdistanced even the once most popular Polish institution – the Roman Catholic Church."
21. Wade Jacoby, "Military competence versus policy loyalty: central Europe and transatlantic relations," in The Atlantic Alliance Under Stress, ed. David M. Andrews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 244–245, 254. Jacoby felt that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic matched US and NATO political ideologies, but could provide less military support (other than niche forces) to the organization than other member states. The author argues that admitting these three countries into NATO allowed "the United states to fulfill its desire for a broader coalition of the willing and [Poland, Hungary, and the Czech republic]... to demonstrate that willingness given limited means."
22. This assertion is based upon the information available to me about the 2004 accession states prior to their entry into NATO (which is much less compared to the plethora of information found on the preparedness of the 1999 accession states).
23. Jeffrey Simon, "Prepared Statement for Committee on Foreign Relations: United States Senate Hearing on NATO Enlargement," 3 April 2003: 6.
24. Janusz Bugajski, "The Future of NATO: Do Bulgaria and Romania Qualify?" U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 3 April 2003: 3.
25. Paul E. Gallis, "NATO Enlargement," CRS Report for Congress, 5 May 2003: 5.

26. Zoltan D. Barany, The Future of NATO Expansion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 52.
27. Ian Brzezinski, "Statement by Ian Brzezinski, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs," Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 3 April 2003: 5.
28. Thomas S. Szayna, "The Future of NATO and Enlargement," RAND Corporation, April 2002: 5.
29. Wade Jacoby, "Military Competence Versus Policy Loyalty: Central Europe and Transatlantic Relations," in The Atlantic Alliance Under Stress, ed. David M. Andrews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 245–246. These military reforms were part of NATO's Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) to "ensure that all NATO member countries had compatible equipment, personnel, and training." However, the perspective member states were not strictly held accountable for the DCI, since some countries (like Hungary) entered NATO without achieving military compatibility with NATO.
30. This was basically a formal invitation by the Secretary General that acknowledged that all of the member states had accepted the accession protocols for the perspective member states.
31. Jacoby 237. When Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were perspective member states, "the Alliance had no significant programs to prepare the new states for membership." See Jacoby's The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO for more information.
32. Smith 177.

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