

NATO ENLARGEMENT AND RUSSIA

JOHN BORAWSKI

In 1997 NATO is expected at last to make a judgment on whether to proceed with its fourth enlargement since 1952. Caution has by no means dissipated. The US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, in early 1996 ruled out suggestions that the Clinton Administration differentiate towards those nations it saw as the early candidates: "We must resist the temptation to accelerate the enlargement process for certain countries," as this "could well jeopardise our ability to maintain the necessary consensus among our NATO allies"¹ who, with the exception of the German Defence Minister Volker R  he, do not convey the impression of viewing a widened Alliance as an historic opportunity. Presumably, however, NATO agreement to consider the 'next steps' at the NATO Ministerial in December this year must and will overcome this reluctance to make decisions on 'who' and 'when'.

Quite apart from the issue of which countries can be considered qualified for NATO membership, however, is ingrained concern about Russian reaction, perhaps reflecting, and not just in Russia, an ahistoric view of NATO as having been intended solely to counter the Soviet threat rather than serve as a transatlantic community of democratic nations. Russia has consistently and uniformly argued that NATO, being a military alliance *voennaya mashina*, demands an enemy, such that if Russia is regarded today as a partner there is simply no reason for NATO to enlarge -or to do so without Russia. If NATO does, nevertheless, 'expand' then the result would be an objective worsening of Russia's strategic position requiring 'adequate countermeasures', including even new military ties with some of its former Warsaw Pact allies.

Instead, Russia has proposed that both NATO and Russia offer 'cross' security guarantees to reassure Central Europe, and argues that the stability of the new democracies would best be served by membership in the EU, which Russia does not oppose. Moscow further urges that NATO should transform itself into a new all-European organisation where all states would have a voice and which would be specifically styled to support collective security.

For example, on 23 March 1996, Russia proposed in Vienna, as part of a rather oblique discussion on a 'security model' for the twenty-first century, a document that would provide guidelines for a 'new security system' elaborated in a legally-based 'European Security Charter' including security guarantees (thus moving OSCE for the first time beyond 'cooperative security' alone), a system for "coordination and allocation of functions between existing European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and structures," and a Security Council with "appropriate powers."²

Is this Russian alternative valid? Could it be seen as a realistic alternative or at least useful complement to NATO enlargement? The purpose here is to offer some tentative but frank impressions intended to invite further reflection.

ENLARGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

Since January 1994 NATO has sought to move forward with enlargement (14 countries this year are actively engaged in discussing with NATO specific steps towards membership or enhancing the Partnership for Peace, PFP) 'as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe', and towards forging a strategic partnership with Russia while leaving the question of eventual Russian NATO membership open.

By June that same year, NATO and Russia agreed a "Summary of Conclusions" ("Protocol" in Russian) entailing information exchange on issues of importance to European security including defence conversion, defence budget transparency, conflict prevention, crisis management and the European security architecture: political consultations on non-proliferation, nuclear safety and specific crises in Europe; and cooperation on security-

related issues including peacekeeping. Since September 1995, NATO has been seeking Russian assent to a formal '16+1' interaction mechanism based on a 'political framework for NATO-Russia relations,' which could take the form of a 'Charter.'

However, Russian cooperation with NATO has not been active since 1995, with the (vital) exception of Russian officers reporting to a US commander in Bosnia in the Implementation Force (IFOR). The basic line remains the same as that offered by the then Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, upon concluding the individual Russian partnership programme with NATO on 31 May 1995. He insisted that the priority for Russia was "a system of general and comprehensive security" that would lead to an undivided Europe. As part of this NATO was an essential element of the future pan-European security system and European equilibrium, but "one cannot reduce everything only to the prospect of NATO enlargement. So far the Alliance has been changing slowly. If the Alliance wishes in practice to become part of the pan-European security system, it must get transformed from a military alliance to a 'political organisation' with corresponding changes in NATO institutions and basic documents." He further insisted that Russia's position regarding NATO expansion was "invariable. We continue to believe that it does not meet either the interests of Russia's national security or the interests of European security as a whole. Furthermore, the hasty resolution of the issue may threaten the establishment of truly advantageous and constructive relations between Russia and NATO."

This Russian approach of 'perpetual protest' is seen, not without reason, by many OSCE delegations as a transparent ploy to delay NATO enlargement, and even exercise a say - 'coordinate' - over NATO affairs. Thus, the Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak delegations have made it quite clear in Vienna that OSCE can gain in importance as a result of its role in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but its weaknesses must be overcome through new patterns of cooperation with other international organisations including NATO and without any hierarchy of institutions. And for the countries of Central Europe, stated the head of the Hungarian OSCE mission, Ambassador Marton Krasznai, "joining the European Union, the WEU and NATO are integral parts of the very same process: becoming part of the community of democratic States."³

Russia too has a dual-track policy. In addition to its OSCE blueprints, Russia has coyly suggested possible 'acceptable' terms for limited Alliance enlargement. President Boris Yeltsin himself suggested in Oslo on 25 March 1996: "I would like to advise those who are striving to enter NATO to do it like the French: become a member of the Political Committee without joining the military organisation."⁴ However, NATO's Secretary General Javier Solana observed that, "NATO is not interested in semi-detached members, and we are certainly not interested in ideas for political but not military membership of NATO."⁵ In any case, surely Russia is fully aware that France itself has begun moving since December 1995 closer to the NATO integrated military structure, with French (like Russian) forces under direct NATO command in Bosnia, and has rejoined the Military Committee, whereas King Juan Carlos likewise suggested, on 26 April 1996, a closer Spanish relationship to the NATO military structure.

With respect to the NATO-Russia partnership, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Afanasievsky has called for "real consultations and a new quality of cooperation," claiming that NATO was "ready only to share information mostly post factum."⁶ The thirty-eight-state North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) is seen as largely conversational and lacking content⁷ - although this assessment is shared by practically all NATO Partners. According to the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Ambassador Gebhardt von Moltke, whereas NATO offers a '16+1' format to Russia, Moscow seeks a '17' context involving full participation in decisions before they are made.⁸

WHY THE TSAR HAS NO CLOTHES

A way out of the impasse is hardly beyond the wits of governments. However, for such an approach to stand a chance of early success. The West should be clearer about what

Russian ideas might be acceptable, and what are simply too incredible to entertain, and desist from rather meaningless platitudes about not drawing new lines, as if there were some confrontational presumption to differentiated membership in international organisations requiring proof to the contrary. At least five long-standing but urgent questions arise.

First, is an all-European security system as an alternative to an enlarged NATO or NATO itself feasible, and does Russia itself take the notion seriously?

Certainly the professed Russia's embrace of a Europe without 'blocs' has neither precluded its efforts to consolidate the CIS collective security system, nor have fears been allayed of its intentions to preserve "a belt of militarily, politically and economically weak states and gradual expansion of Russia's presence in this area until its effective power enables it to redraw spheres of influence"⁹ - thus compelling Central Europe to move closer to NATO and the EU.

Nevertheless, collective security means countering aggression within the system regardless of national interest. Consequently, NATO member states would legally be obliged to intervene anywhere in the OSCE area. Would Russia for one minute welcome NATO forces on the territory of the former Soviet space, territory which Russia openly regards as its zone of 'special responsibility'? Certainly not, and it has made that clear enough with respect to a possible multinational OSCE peacekeeping mission for Nagorno-Karabakh.

The pan-European security idea has been a feature of Russian diplomacy since 1954. It was, however, viewed then in the West as a presentational effort to delay NATO membership for a rearmed Federal Republic of Germany. Similar considerations came into play four decades later, when 'institutionalizing' the OSCE -the creation of the Secretariat, the Parliamentary Assembly, the then Committee of Senior Officials, the then Office for Free Elections, the Conflict Prevention Centre -featured in German unification within NATO in September 1990. The then Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze claimed, perhaps if only to 'save face' that German unification was linked from the start to "all-European structures for security and political cooperation" and "the transformation of the military blocs into political alliances and the establishment of relations of partnership between the member states of the two alliances."

However, the Warsaw Pact unilaterally collapsed under its own weight, the OSCE remains a 'cooperative security' forum whose 1994 Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security were grossly ignored in the assault on Chechnya, and NATO remains a collective defence alliance even as it has assumed collective security tasks with respect to IFOR and has expanded its political dimension through the NACC and PFP. Despite Soviet ideas floated for associate German membership in both NATO and the Warsaw Pact or German neutrality, in the end the USSR accepted a united Germany in NATO, albeit subject to the conditions that foreign forces and nuclear weapons would not be deployed on the territory of the Eastern Länder.

The parallel with the NATO enlargement debate today is obvious. The very same arguments -how Russian 'public opinion' would not understand, how the threat would move closer to Russia's borders, how a new period of confrontation could come about, neutrality or joint guarantees as alternative security futures- employed during '2+4' are being replicated today, albeit now producing hesitation rather than decisiveness on the part of the West. Indeed, the so-called problem of Russian 'public opinion' is mimicked by some Western officials and politicians, although it is about as serious as the constant drumbeat of 'civil war' that Russian politicians habitually resort to as the alternative to their respective politics. And why did the West convince itself to deliberately 'tone down the rhetoric' on enlargement prior to the June 1996 Russian presidential elections to help Yeltsin, when it was the Russian president himself who openly raised 'compromise' solutions months before the voting?

Second, would not 'cross' guarantees provided by NATO and Russia to Central Europe solve the 'security vacuum' dilemma in the region?

This suggestion is historically repugnant to the intended beneficiaries and suggestive of a new *droit de regard* over them. This wholly implausible Russian offer, moreover, and again paradoxically, recognizes Central European security concerns even though Russian authorities publicly deny them to the extent of warranting NATO membership. Moreover, security guarantees are mutual in NATO, not one-way, and only membership invokes the security clause of the Washington Treaty. NATO knows no protectorates, and history compels the Central European nations to reject them. They could only be interpreted as half-measures, akin to what a Turkish deputy, Kamran Inan, has observed with respect to the Turkish relationship to the WEU: "What does associate membership in a security organisation mean?"

Third, why does Russia not object to EU enlargement?

Apart from what this suggests about the credibility Russia attaches to an independent European defence outside the Alliance—a testament to *realpolitik* seemingly sharply at odds with visions of a new League of Nations, the fact remains that both NATO and WEU have agreed that a European security and defence identity and the European pillar of NATO should be the same (contradictions such as Denmark, Turkey and Norway notwithstanding). As the NATO foreign ministers declared on 4 June 1992 in Oslo: "We reaffirm our support for the objective of developing the WEU as the defence component of the European Union and as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance." It is widely assumed that new members of WEU must become or be members of NATO. Because the EU and possibly WEU will expand, NATO will have to enlarge anyway, so from the European logic there is nothing to debate further about NATO enlargement.

Fourth, would not NATO enlargement, even if intended as non-threatening, objectively upset the strategic balance in Europe in NATO's favour?

Here again Russia chooses to generate an irrational image of encirclement and creeping threat. These concerns can be addressed very simply in two ways: no peacetime stationing of foreign NATO forces on the territory of new members, as is the case with Spain, France, Denmark, the former German Democratic Republic, and Norway, and which no NATO aspirant seeks in any case or considers more than an 'open possibility'; and modernisation of the CFE Treaty, anachronistically based as it is on a bloc-to-bloc basis. Article XXI (2) has from the very outset foreseen the possibility of calling an extraordinary conference in the event a Party wishes to leave its group of States Parties or join the other group of States Parties. The net result could not only improve Russia's legal position, but more than likely, depending on international conditions, mean that the collective military strength of the three or four first new NATO members would be close to what currently exists, and probably leaner.

One could always say that a new CFE Treaty would only be a piece of paper, but the same can be said of any agreement. However, even from the capabilities versus intentions perspective the Russian 'force structures' could be objectively reassured, taking into account, of course, the interests of all CFE signatories, by adjusting equipment quotas and considering regional confidence- and security-building measures (eg. geographic constraints on large-scale exercises and a serious updating of the Vienna Document governing confidence—which has witnessed a dramatic decline in exercise notifications and observations without a corresponding adjustment of thresholds, compare the far lower thresholds negotiated for Bosnia-Herzegovina in January 1996). No doubt a substantial percentage of exercises held on the territory of new NATO members will likely be PFP events open to Russia in any event.

Fifth and finally, would it not be best for Russia to join NATO at the same time as the first new members.

Logical to some, absurd to others, NATO in fact has not 'closed the door' to any PFP partner, Russia included. Russia itself has not ruled out membership in a reformed Alliance. However, NATO is not the Council of Europe, and those which join must be democracies not just in name. For its part, it seems very doubtful whether the collective defence commitment could be credibly extended to Russia: what NATO country will risk engagement in a possible future confrontation with, say, China? Cooperative military action, such as IFOR, does not require Russian membership in NATO nor nation membership in the CIS for that matter. However, the issue of whether Russia should join is not a question that needs to or can be answered today, or be used as an excuse for delaying admitting the new democracies meeting the test of Article X of the Washington Treaty.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The result of even such a cursory inquiry seems more than straightforward: no credible alternative to NATO membership exists for Central Europe and none has been explained - certainly not by Russia. It would seem in the vested interests of Russia to ensure that the path of a transparent, normal enlargement unfolds, for should NATO enlarge only in a new-threat environment, as some suggest, the military requirements might change dramatically: for example, the Study on NATO Enlargement itself does not require stationing weapons on the territory of new members but reserves the right "to modify its nuclear posture as circumstances warrant." Aspiring members as well as Russia are fully aware of this conditionality.

But this does not mean we should focus only on NATO as the sole 'solution' for European security. While offering the enlargement partnership formula to Moscow, NATO and the EU have not come forward with significant ideas in the non-exclusionary OSCE context in which, naturally, Russia feels more comfortable and also which, it is sometimes overlooked, is the only other forum apart from NATO where the United States and Canada participate in European security issues. The potential for OSCE could still be strengthened for the benefit of all participating states while, at the same time, as with German unification, help make NATO enlargement more palatable to Russia and thus serve as an act of preventive diplomacy -as well as a test of bona fide Russian attitudes towards security and cooperation.

One such interrelationship regards peace support missions. The 1992 NATO decisions to offer its unique resources on a case-by-case basis in support of peacekeeping under OSCE authority and of the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions, not only eventually made IFOR possible but coincides with what Russia claims it seeks from the Alliance. The first OSCE peacekeeping mission, planned since 1992 for Nagorno-Karabakh, could not only alleviate the UN burden but project a degree of impartiality through multi-nationality and OSCE sanction to operations on the territory of the former Soviet Union. The peace keepers have yet to be dispatched, but the reasons for NATO attention to OSCE missions remain compelling - and even self-interested given the sheer energy potential of the Caucasus. The closest possible working relations between OSCE and NATO should be forged as part of this emerging collective security system with clear guidelines for impartial and equitably-shared OSCE peacekeeping strengthened.

A second area concerns NACC/PFP and OSCE. Participating Russian officers freely admit that IFOR, shaped through prior PFP experience, could only have been assembled by NATO. The PFP, now with twenty-seven states (with a twenty-eighth, Switzerland, also considering participation) makes a direct contribution to potential OSCE peacekeeping. However, it is questionable whether there is any further need for the thirty-eight-state NACC, founded on the now dated (and hopefully not resurrectable) rationale of bringing together former adversaries, provided a consultative component beyond those related to security threats is held open within the PFP. NACC proceedings have largely lost any value for the participants, including Russia, and its agenda could be better and more comprehensively addressed within the Permanent Council of the OSCE. OSCE also provides a consultative fallback should the still rather 'make believe' WEU military alliance be disbanded.

A third area concerns arms control. As discussed above, an adapted CFE Treaty would provide objective reassurance to the 'force structures' in Russia. NATO and Russia would also have an important technical (verification, inspector training) and political role to play in checking compliance with an OSCE arms control agreement in Bosnia and in and around the former Yugoslavia as a whole.

Finally, an OSCE Security Council where the major OSCE participating states would have a permanent voice, along with others, is a valuable idea. Russia cannot seriously regard the NATO offer of a '16+1 mechanism' for consultation (but not decision) or the conversational NACC as the entire geopolitical menu on offer. The existence of such a council in the OSCE could also provide another means to encourage less confrontational Russian behaviour and policy articulation towards those in what Moscow regards as its zone of 'special responsibility.' Aversion among many countries to this idea has never been rationally explained: it is said that Russia would have a veto, but every OSCE participating state has a veto on OSCE decisions to the extent where, some argue, the organisation has become unmanageable and does require stronger 'executive action.' The council could comprise the present troika of past, current, and future chairmen-in-office, the OSCE nuclear powers, a rotating membership of other states chosen by consensus and geographically, and permanent observer status of the 'mutually-reinforcing institutions.'

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, Zbigniew Brzezinski recalled in 1994 that following doubts about whether a united Germany in NATO could truly be attained, Washington finally informed the Soviet Union that "a reunited Germany will be in NATO. The only question is: will it be in NATO in cooperation with you, or will it be in NATO in spite of you? And the Russians wisely chose that it would be better if it was done in cooperation with them"⁹ The same applies to the next phase of enlargement, which itself will help shape a wider and more effective and democratic strategic community in the OSCE region.

Mr. Borawski has served since 1987 as Director of the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, the interparliamentary organization of the NATO nations, in Brussels. He is the author of *OSCE: A Better Peace* (Tampere, Finland Tampere University Press, 1996). The views expressed are solely attributable to the author.

1 Letter to Jan Nowak, national director of the Polish-American Congress, 13 February 1996.

2 Russian Federation, 'Memorandum on Devising a Common and Comprehensive Security Model for Europe for the Twenty-First Century,' 21 March 1996.

3 Ambassador Marton Krasznai, head of the Hungarian OSCE mission in Vienna, presentation at the international seminar 'Common Security for the 21st Century,' Moscow, 12 April 1996.

4. Interfax, 25 March 1996, reproduced in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Former Soviet Union, 26 March 1996.

5 Address by Mr. Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO, University of Warsaw, 18 April 1996. The September 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement states that "It is important for NATO's force structure that other Allies' forces can be deployed, when and if appropriate, on the territory of new members."

6 Remarks to the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, Moscow, 11 April 1996.

7 Remarks to the seminar NATO Enlargement and PFP, NATO Defence College, Rome, 18-20 April 1996.

8 Poland-NATO (Warsaw: Euro-Atlantic Association, 1995).

9. Keynote address to the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, Washington DC, 15 November 1994.