



NATO Enlargement

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I would like to comment very briefly on the historic and geopolitical significance of NATO's enlargement. In my view, that enlargement has global significance--it is central to the step-by-step construction of a secure international system in which the Euroatlantic alliance plays the major role in ensuring that a peaceful and democratic Europe is America's principal partner.

Hence:

NATO's enlargement is about America's role in Europe--whether America will remain a European power and whether a larger democratic Europe will remain organically linked to America;--it is about Russia's relationship to Europe--whether NATO's enlargement helps a democratizing Russia by foreclosing the revival of any self-destructive imperial temptations regarding Central Europe. (Let me note in passing that NATO and the EU have creatively resolved the old question of disproportionate German power in Europe; the progressive expansion of NATO can similarly resolve the question of disproportionate Russian power in Europe. It is also noteworthy that public opinion in key NATO countries is favorable to expansion. Moreover, so far, all the apocalyptic predictions of the critics of NATO expansion have failed to come to pass.) In brief, to me NATO expansion is not principally about the Russian threat, for currently it does not exist, though one cannot exclude its reappearance and hence some insurance against it is desirable.

Secondly, to me NATO expansion is not primarily a moral crusade, meant to undo the injustice the Central European peoples suffered during the half-century long Soviet oppression, though one cannot ignore the moral right of the newly emancipated and democratic Central Europeans to a life no less secure than that enjoyed by the West Europeans.

For me, the central stake in NATO expansion is the long-term historic and strategic relationship between America and Europe. NATO expansion is central to the vitality of the American-European connection, to the scope of a democratic and secure Europe, and to the ability of America and Europe to work together in promoting international security.

The expansion of the Euroatlantic alliance will bring into NATO counsels new, solidly democratic and very pro-American nations. That will further deepen the American-European kinship while expanding Europe's zone of peace and democracy. Such a more secure Europe will be a better and a more vital partner for America in the continuing effort to make democracy more widespread and international cooperation more pervasive. That is why NATO's enlargement--in itself a vivid testimonial to the dynamism of the democratic ideal--is very much in America's long-term national interest.