

Central Europe After NATO Enlargement

1996-98 NATO Research Fellowship

Final Report

June 1998

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Introduction

After nearly a decade of debate, NATO and the European Union have made their first decisions on enlargement into Central Europe.¹ Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary will join the Atlantic Alliance at its fiftieth anniversary summit in April 1999. These countries, along with Estonia, Slovenia and Cyprus, have also begun accession negotiations with the EU, although exactly when they will join the Union is less clear. In short, the three Central European countries are on the verge of achieving their core strategic objective of integration with the West.

As one Polish observer put it, however, membership of NATO and the EU is not 'the end of history' for Central Europe.² Membership of NATO and the EU will provide the Central European states with a formal security guarantee, full involvement in the two core Euro-atlantic institutions, support for the consolidation of democracy and economic reforms and reassurance of their more general integration with the West. The long term stability and security of the region, however, will depend also on the Central European states relations with their immediate neighbours and with Russia. Thus, even as they are integrated into NATO and the EU, relations with their neighbours excluded from first or subsequent 'waves' of enlargement will become more important for the Central European states.

Despite many historically inherited disputes, the 1990s has seen gradual - if uneven - progress in the normalization of relations between the Central European states and their eastern and southern neighbours. Bilateral treaties have been negotiated, providing recognition of existing borders, guarantees of minority rights and frameworks for cooperation. Various disputes from the communist and pre-communist eras have been resolved. More practical forms of political, economic and military cooperation have also been established, including bilateral cooperation committees, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), transfrontier economic cooperation zones, military-to-military contacts and joint peacekeeping units. Despite Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement, Russian-Central European ties have also been normalized on the basis of bilateral treaties and various forms of practical economic and, to some extent, military cooperation have been put in place. The process of building stable international relations in Central Europe, however, is far from complete. Domestic developments in various countries could trigger the re-emergence of old tensions or the development of new ones.

The next ten years in Central Europe will be shaped by the interaction of the impact of the dual enlargement of NATO and the EU on the one hand and domestic developments within the region on the other. Significant political change is already underway in the region and mor

Hungary: Historic Reconciliation with the Neighbours?

Since the mid-1990s, Hungary has made significant progress in improving its troubled relations with its neighbours.⁴⁵ As Hungary joins NATO and the EU, it will face the challenge of consolidating its 'historic reconciliation' with its neighbours who remain outside these organizations (particularly Romania, Slovakia and Yugoslavia). These countries' incorporation into the nineteenth century Austro-Hungarian empire has left a strong legacy of mistrust in their relations with Hungary. Under the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost two thirds of its then territory to its neighbours, leaving large Hungarian minorities in these states and creating strong revisionist sentiments in Hungary. Suppressed by communism and the Cold War, disputes re-emerged after 1989. Hungarian minorities in Romania, Slovakia and Yugoslavia mobilized politically, demanding guarantees of minority rights (including controversial 'collective rights' and 'territorial autonomy'). Nationalist movements in these countries pursued anti-Hungarian policies and rhetoric, shaping wider politics in Romania and Slovakia in particular. In March 1990, anti-Hungarian violence flared in the Romanian region of Transylvania, resulting in a small number of deaths.⁴⁶

The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) government elected in spring 1990 supported the demands of the minorities and linked the conclusion of bilateral treaties reaffirming existing borders to guarantees of minority rights. In conjunction with provocative rhetoric (such as Jozsef Antall's infamous statement that he was Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians - i.e., also of the minorities outside Hungary's borders), the use of such linkage appeared to question the sanctity of the Trianon borders. The nationalist governments in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia rejected the demands for minority rights, bilateral treaty negotiations stalled and political relations froze.⁴⁷ The MDF government also sought to veto Romania and Slovakia's membership of the Council of Europe because of the minority rights dispute, although Western pressure eventually persuaded it to abstain in the Council vote on this issue, allowing the two countries to join. Aware of the potentially explosive nature of the problem, the Democratic Forum government actively pursued bilateral military confidence-building and transparency measures with these states, in order to ensure that disputes did not escalate into the military sphere.⁴⁸

The victory of the Socialist Party (MSP) and their Liberal coalition partners the Freedom Democrats (SZDSZ) in the May 1994 Hungarian elections proved a significant turning point. The new government committed itself to a 'historic reconciliation' with Hungary's neighbours, agreeing to unconditionally recognize existing borders, dropping the controversial demands for 'collective rights' and 'territorial autonomy' and supporting Romania and Slovakia's bids for

membership of Western organizations.⁴⁹ At the same time, Western governments made increasingly clear that Hungary's membership of NATO and the EU would depend on its ability to cooperate with its neighbours, in particular to conclude bilateral treaties recognizing existing borders.⁵⁰ The long awaited bilateral cooperation treaties with Slovakia and Romania were concluded in 1995 and 1996.

Now, just as Hungary is on the verge of joining NATO and the EU, the victory of the centre-right Federation of Young Democrats-Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) in the May 1998 elections and the formation of a coalition government with the agrarian Independent Smallholders Party (FKGP) raises important questions for Hungary's relations with its neighbours.⁵¹ Prior to the election, the centre-right political forces accused the Socialist government of failing to defend the rights of the Hungarian minorities, criticized the minority rights provisions in the treaties with Slovakia and Hungary and, in some cases, called for the re-negotiation of the treaties. In practice, the coalition partners may be divided on the issue, with FIDESZ (by far the largest party in the coalition) taking a more moderate line and the Smallholders being stronger in their support of the Hungarian minorities and their criticism of Hungary's neighbours.⁵² Western diplomats in Budapest believe that FIDESZ's moderation is likely to win out and that while Hungarian rhetoric may harden, substantive policies will change little.⁵³ It would clearly be difficult (and highly controversial) for the new government to call for the re-negotiation of the treaties with Romania and Slovakia. The government would presumably also face very strong pressure from the West not to do so, with future membership of the EU remaining conditional on the maintenance of the treaties.

Nevertheless, a downturn in relations is conceivable. Disputes already exist over the interpretation of minority rights clauses in the treaties with Slovakia and Romania and may intensify with the change of government in Budapest. Shifts of politics in a more nationalist and authoritarian direction in Romania, Slovakia or the rump Yugoslavia could create tensions with Hungary and the minorities. Romania, Slovakia or Yugoslavia could also react negatively to Hungary's membership of NATO or the EU. In this context, the Hungarian government might try to veto its neighbours' membership of NATO or the EU. Even in this case, however, military transparency and confidence-building measures are likely to remain in place, Hungary will itself have an interest in avoiding serious escalation of tensions, and once Hungary is a member of NATO (and later the EU) major Western powers will have a very strong interest in ensuring that any tensions do not escalate.

The large size of the Hungarian minority in Romania (1.6-2 million people, depending on one's source) and the history of conflict between the two countries makes this the most important of Hungary's regional relationships. Until the election of the new government and

President at the end of 1996, Romania's post-communist politics was defined by nationalism, with a strong anti-Hungarian bent. Nationalist politicians inflamed tensions with the Hungarian minority, nationalist political parties were included in the various post-communist governments, the rights of the Hungarian minority were deliberately curtailed and the Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania (UDMR) emerged as one of the main opposition forces. Bilateral treaty negotiations stalled over the minority rights question and the nationalist tone of both governments undermined wider relations.⁵⁴ Despite these problems, both countries actively pursued military confidence-building measures and cooperation (including a unique bilateral 'Open Skies' aerial inspection regime) and there does not appear to have been any significant risk of violent conflict between them.⁵⁵

Hungary's abandonment in 1993 of its efforts to veto Romania's membership of the Council of Europe and the election of the Socialist-Liberal government led to a partial improvement in relations. Western pressure in relation to NATO enlargement, however, appears to have played a decisive role in persuading the two sides to resolve their differences over the bilateral treaty. NATO members, in particular the United States, made clear to both countries that they would not be able to join the Alliance unless they signed the bilateral treaty. Only after this (but, notably, still before the change of government and President in Romania at the end of the year) was the treaty signed in September 1996.⁵⁶ The Hungarian-Romanian treaty illustrates how the incentive of NATO membership provided a major impetus to efforts to overcome a long-standing dispute in Central and Eastern Europe. The election of a reformist, non-nationalist and strongly pro-Western government and President in Romania at the end of 1996 and the inclusion of the UDMR in the coalition government facilitated a further dramatic improvement in relations between the two countries.⁵⁷ Subsequent progress has included the first ever visit of a Hungarian President to Romania and a reciprocal Presidential visit to Hungary; repeated Hungarian support for Romania's integration with NATO and the EU; progress in the implementation of the bilateral treaty (including its provisions on minority rights), the opening of a Hungarian consulate in the Transylvanian city of Cluj and agreement on the establishment of a Hungarian language university in Transylvania; agreements to establish new border-crossing points, a Hungarian-Romanian bank and a joint peacekeeping unit; as well as a general intensification of cross-border and economic ties.⁵⁸

The Hungarian-Romanian relationship, however, provides perhaps the starkest example of two countries struggling to overcome a history of conflict who will fall, at least in the short-to-medium term, on differing sides of NATO and the EU's new boundaries. In 1996, Romania's previous President, Ion Iliescu, and Defence Minister, Gheorghe Tinca, warned that Hungary membership of NATO without Romania also joining the Alliance might create a

‘climate of competition, mistrust, and instability’, ‘lead to an arms race’ and encourage nationalist forces in Hungary to believe they could achieve ‘their decades-long dream’ of ‘recuperating Transylvania’.⁵⁹ Since coming to power, and despite Romania’s exclusion from the first wave of Central and Eastern European countries invited to join NATO and the EU, the new Romanian President and government have turned away from such rhetoric, instead emphasizing the dramatic progress in relations with Hungary. They have also indicated that they do not expect FIDESZ’s election victory in Hungary to undermine relations.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, tensions remain over issues such as the UDMR’s involvement in the governing coalition, the establishment of the Hungarian University in Transylvania and Hungarian minority language and education rights.⁶¹ Nationalist political forces within Romania, further, continue to demonize Hungary and the Hungarian minority, suggesting for example that increased Hungarian investment in Romania is part of a plan to takeover Transylvania.⁶²

So long as the current Romanian coalition, including the UDMR, remains in place, its commitment to integration with the West and good relations with Hungary is likely to limit any negative reaction to Hungary’s coming membership of NATO. Should the UDMR leave the government or the coalition collapse as a result of other tensions within it, a new coalition might be forced to rely on more nationalist political forces or new elections might return the former communist and nationalists to power. A new Romanian government might well adopt anti-Hungarian rhetoric and policies and the current reconciliation between the two countries could be undermined, particularly if the new Hungarian government is itself more critical of Romania’s treatment of the Hungarian minority. Even in these circumstances, however, a Romanian military reaction to Hungary’s membership of NATO is rather unlikely. The anti-Hungarian and anti-NATO rhetoric of figures such as Iliescu and Tinca was driven by domestic politics, rather than any real sense of a Hungarian or NATO military threat. The Hungarian armed forces are significantly smaller than those of Romania and NATO has clearly signalled its intention not to deploy forces or build significant new infrastructure on the territory of its new members. Economically, poverty-stricken Romania is hardly in a position to divert significant new resources to its armed forces. Romania would also likely face strong pressure from the West not to take any military measures. Even if political relations between the countries worsen, further, existing military transparency and confidence-building measures are likely to remain in place - as they did in the early 1990s.

As in the case of Polish-Ukrainian relations, EU enlargement may in fact have a greater impact on Hungarian-Romanian relations than NATO enlargement. Hungary and Romania currently have visa-free travel arrangements and the border between the two countries is relatively open. One of the positive side-effects of improved relations since 1996 has been a

significant increase in cross-border travel, trade and Hungarian investment in Romania. In the longer term, such 'people-to-people' and economic ties may play an important role in overcoming mistrust and consolidating the 'historic reconciliation' between the two countries. Romania, however, does not currently have a visa-free travel arrangement with the EU. Hungarian politicians and officials express serious concern that membership of the EU could force Hungary to impose the current strict EU visa regime on Romania and thereby undermine cross-border travel, trade and investment - just as the two countries are trying to consolidate their current reconciliation. Hungarian officials argue that it may be possible to resolve this problem by extending membership of the Schengen regime to Romania at the same time that Hungary joins the Union.⁶³ How far the EU will be willing to open its borders to the large but poor Romania, however, is unclear. The issue is likely to be an important one in Hungary's accession negotiations, with significant implications for Hungarian-Romanian relations.

Romania's exclusion from the 'first wave' of NATO and EU enlargement could also have a more general but significant impact on Romania itself and thereby on Hungarian-Romanian relations.⁶⁴ The 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections were a major turning point in Romania's post-communist development, bringing to power for the first time forces strongly committed to liberalization, cooperation with ethnic minorities and neighbouring states and integration with the West. Romania's exclusion from NATO and the EU could undermine these forces and strengthen the hand of their former-communist and nationalist opponents. The key issue, however, may be whether Romania's exclusion from NATO and the EU is perceived within the country to be temporary or permanent. If exclusion from NATO and the EU is perceived to be permanent, the current reformist government and President could be seriously undermined. There might also appear to be little alternative but for Romania to search for an alternative foreign policy, one most likely based on nationalism, confrontation with Hungary and closer ties with other nationalist forces within the region. Conversely, if Romania is seen to have reasonable prospects of membership of integration with the West, the arguments of those pursuing domestic reform and Euro-atlantic integration are likely to be strengthened. In this context, the policies of Hungary and the West as a whole may have a significant bearing on developments in Romania. Efforts by Hungary to maintain and deepen cooperation with Romania, will show that Hungary's integration with NATO and the EU does not threaten Romania. Hungarian criticism of Romania and tensions over minority rights issues, in contrast, will undermine relations. Hungary's new FIDESZ-led government may face difficult dilemmas in balancing support for Hungarian minority rights and reconciliation with Hungary. Maximum efforts should be made to reassure Romania that Hungary is seeking cooperation and supports Romania's Euro-atlantic integration. Romania's economic problems mean that membership of

the EU can be only a longer term prospect. Given this, NATO membership and other political relations with the West may be particularly important. NATO's signal that the door to Romanian membership of the Alliance remains open and the US's commitment to develop a 'strategic partnership' with Romania are important steps in providing reassurance to Romania. Further deepening of cooperation and a realistic prospect of NATO membership will be important in sustaining the momentum for domestic reform, Euro-atlantic integration and reconciliation with Hungary in Romania.

Since the break-up of Czechoslovakia, Hungary's relationship with Slovakia has become as troubled as that with Romania. Against the historical background of Hungary's pre-1918 domination of Slovakia, Slovakia's efforts to consolidate its independence and the Meciar government's authoritarian and nationalist rhetoric and policies have led to repeated tensions with Slovakia's Hungarian minority and with Hungary. The relatively large size of the Hungarian minority (560-600,000, people, making up ten per cent of the country's population) and its location mainly in areas bordering Hungary have made proposals for territorial autonomy a particularly sensitive issue. The HZDS-led coalition includes the extreme nationalist Slovak National Party. Meciar and other coalition leaders have repeatedly used anti-Hungarian rhetoric to mobilize popular support, accusing the Hungarian minority of seeking secession and Hungary of posing a threat to Slovakia. Ethnic Hungarian political parties have become one of the main opposition groups to the HZDS and their demands for guarantees of minority rights and regional autonomy have exacerbated tensions with the governing coalition. As a result, Slovak politics has been characterized by on-going disputes between the government and Hungarian minority parties over Hungarian language and cultural rights and the organization of local government.⁶⁵ International organizations (including the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's High Commissioner for National Minorities) and Western governments have repeatedly criticized the Slovak government for its treatment of the Hungarian minority.⁶⁶

As with Romania, the combination of disputes over Hungarian minority rights and Hungarian linkage of this issue to recognition of the current border and efforts to veto Slovakia's membership of the Council of Europe effectively froze political relations (including bilateral treaty negotiations) in the early 1990s.⁶⁷ Again, however, both sides were willing to conclude a range of military transparency and confidence-building measures (including exchanges of information on troop deployments and movements, extensive military-to-military contacts and co-ordinated air defence in border regions) and military conflict never appeared likely.⁶⁸

Relations improved after Hungary dropped its opposition to Slovakia's membership of the Council of Europe in 1993 and the election of the Socialist-led government in Hungary in 1994. In March 1995, a breakthrough occurred in relations, with the signing of the disputed bilateral treaty, which guarantees the existing border, commits the two countries to cooperate with one another and includes general guarantees of minority rights. The conclusion of the treaty took place against the background of the EU's 'Stability Pact' negotiations (designed to facilitate the development of cooperation between Central and Eastern European states), clear indications that membership of NATO and the EU would depend on resolving such disputes and strong diplomatic intervention from the US - again illustrating how the incentive of NATO and EU membership has encouraged Central and Eastern European states to resolve their differences.⁶⁹

The signing of the bilateral treaty, however, failed to lead to a sustained improvement in Hungarian-Slovak relations. Disputes have continued over the interpretation of the treaty and a separate annex on minority rights, with both sides accusing the other of violating the treaty. Tensions continued within Slovakia between the Meciar government and the Hungarian minority. A November 1995 language law stipulating the use of Slovak in most public ceremonies provoked tensions with the Hungarian minority and Hungary. In 1996, Hungarian government support for Hungarian minority demands for autonomy further undermined relations, resulting in the cancellation of a Prime Ministerial meeting. Prime Minister Meciar has called for the 'voluntary repatriation' of Slovak Hungarians to Hungary (a proposal critics described as 'ethnic cleansing') and accused Hungary of conducting a 'policy of genocide' against its own (relatively small) ethnic minorities.⁷⁰

Relations have been further complicated by disputes over the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros hydroelectric dam project on the Danube river border between the two countries.⁷¹ The project was established in 1977. Hungary unilaterally withdrew from it in 1992 (in opposition to its environmental consequences), leading Slovakia to continue with the project and unilaterally divert the Danube. The European Community then brokered a compromise, whereby the dispute was submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ announced a compromise decision in September 1997, but the two countries are now disputing the implementation of that decision.⁷²

The victory of FIDESZ and the Smallholders in the Hungary elections is likely to further undermine relations. Both parties have been more critical than the preceding government of Slovakia's treatment of the Hungarian minority, are more strongly opposed to the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam than their predecessor and have said they will oppose the opening of Slovakia's Mochovce nuclear power plant.⁷³ In the run-up to the Slovakian elections

in September 1998, further, Prime Minister Meciar may have strong incentives to stoke tensions by 'playing the Hungarian card'.⁷⁴

Against this complex background, it is not clear what impact Hungary's membership of NATO and the EU will have on the Hungarian-Slovak relationship. In the past, Prime Minister Meciar has warned of a Hungarian military threat to Slovakia and responded to Western and Hungarian criticism by alluding to 'a military occupation of Slovakia'.⁷⁵ Such statements, however, are presumably driven by the domestic politics of nationalism, rather than any real perception of a military threat. Even if Slovakia were to consider any military response to Hungary's membership of NATO, its limited economic resources and Western pressure would likely dissuade it from any such steps. It was notable that, despite the poor state of political relations, the two countries' Defence Ministers met in February 1998 to sign an agreement on confidence-building measures (including cooperation in military aviation and anti-aircraft defence) - hardly the act of two states likely to engage in an arms race.⁷⁶ The implications of EU enlargement may be less severe for Hungarian-Slovak relations than for those between Hungary and Romania because Slovakia already has a visa-free travel agreement with the Union, although Hungarian membership of the Schengen agreement may involve tighter restrictions on travel across the Hungarian-Slovak border.⁷⁷ Wider progress in the Hungarian-Slovak relationship, however, is likely to depend on domestic political change in Slovakia. The nationalist policies and rhetoric of Prime Minister Meciar and his allies effectively precludes good relations with Hungary. In contrast, should the democratic opposition come to power in the September 1998 elections, it is likely to include the Hungarian minority parties in government and the kind of 'historic reconciliation' which has occurred with Romania since 1996 could develop very rapidly.⁷⁸

Hungary's relations with Serbia have been greatly complicated by the Yugoslav wars and the situation of the 340-400,000 strong Hungarian minority in the Vojvodina region. As part of his nationalist drive in the late 1980s, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic removed the autonomy of the Vojvodina region. The Hungarian minority then emerged as one of the main forces opposing Milosevic's rule in the region.⁷⁹ When war broke out in Yugoslavia 1991, there were fears that it might extend to Vojvodina and draw Hungary into the conflict - especially when Yugoslav military aircraft violated Hungarian airspace during attacks on Croatia and bombs were dropped on a Hungarian village. The Hungarian government made strong efforts to avoid any escalation and a neutral airspace border corridor and a hotline between airspace commands were agreed with the Yugoslav military, which defused the situation.⁸⁰ As Milosevic's hold on power appeared consolidated in the mid-1990s and the situation of the Hungarian minority remained vulnerable, Hungary established a certain *modus*

vivendi with the rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: effectively agreeing to restrain its criticism of Belgrade in return for a degree of moderation in Yugoslavia's policy towards the Hungary minority.⁸¹

To some extent, the Hungarian-Yugoslav border has *de facto* become the first new NATO border in Central Europe even before Hungary has formally joined the Alliance. In the early 1990s, Hungary permitted NATO aircraft conducting surveillance of Yugoslavia to use its territory. In 1993-94, however, after it had failed to gain Western security guarantees and fearing Serbian retaliation, Hungary announced that it would not take part in airstrikes in the former Yugoslavia, would not allow NATO aircraft to use its airspace for airstrikes and would ask NATO surveillance planes to withdraw during airstrikes.⁸² When the Dayton peace agreement was signed at the end of 1995, however, Hungary agreed that its Taszar airbase near the border with Yugoslavia should become the main staging post for the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) to be deployed in Bosnia.⁸³ With the deployment of IFOR (now re-named the Stabilization Force - SFOR), Hungary became a potential target for any Yugoslav retaliation. With Yugoslavia supporting the Dayton agreement, such retaliation was unlikely and there has been no Yugoslav military response to the NATO forces in Hungary. Indeed, any Yugoslav attacks against NATO military forces in Hungary (or elsewhere in the region) would presumably be met with swift retaliation. Thus, I/SFOR's use of Hungarian territory may have extended a *de facto* NATO security guarantee to Hungary some time before it joined the Alliance. The lack of a Yugoslav reaction to the NATO presence in Hungary, further, suggests that it is far from inevitable that even states antagonistic towards the Alliance will respond to its enlargement in military terms.

Nevertheless, the unstable situation in Yugoslavia as a whole and Vojvodina could raise sensitive issues when Hungary formally joins the Alliance. Since the beginning of violence in Kosovo in spring 1998, democratic activists in Vojvodina have opposed the Yugoslav authorities' actions in Kosovo and again raised the issue of returning Vojvodina's autonomy.⁸⁴ Hungary and Hungarian minority representatives have also called for the withdrawal of ethnic Hungarian conscripts from Yugoslav military units in Kosovo.⁸⁵ If the Yugoslav conflict escalates internally, with Kosovo and Montenegro pressing for (and perhaps achieving) full independence, similar pressures could emerge in Vojvodina. How far to support Vojvodina independence would create a difficult dilemma for the Hungarian government and might drag it into conflict with Yugoslavia, with implications for relations with Romania and Slovakia as well. If NATO intervenes militarily in Kosovo, Hungary could face dilemmas as to how far to support such intervention and whether it might risk becoming a target of Yugoslav retaliation. In such circumstances, military conflict between Hungary and Yugoslavia, perhaps involving NATO as

a whole, is not entirely inconceivable. At present, however, such a scenario appears unlikely. The caution of Hungary's policy towards Yugoslavia over the last decade suggests that it would make strong efforts to avoid conflict. Yugoslavia already faces enormous internal problems in Kosovo, Montenegro and economically, which its leaders will probably not want to add to. The risks involved in any crisis in Vojvodina and Hungarian-Yugoslav relations, however, suggest that Hungary and NATO should avoid any provocative gestures in this area and maintain a confidence-building dialogue with Yugoslavia on the issue. A more general improvement in Hungarian-Yugoslav relations, however, must await real progress in democratization within Yugoslavia.

Hungary's relations with Ukraine, Slovenia and Croatia have developed well in the 1990s. The relatively small size of the Hungarian minorities in these countries (155-200,000 in Ukraine, 26-40,000 in Croatia and 8-10,000 in Slovenia) and their willingness to provide guarantees of minority rights have made the minority issue relatively unproblematic. Hungary successfully concluded bilateral cooperation treaties guaranteeing existing borders and minority rights with all three countries at the beginning of the 1990s. Military cooperation arrangements have also been established, including in the Slovene case the development of a trilateral peacekeeping unit with Italy. Hungary's membership of NATO is unlikely to create problems in relations with any of these states. Hungary's relationship with Ukraine lacks the strategic significance of the Polish-Ukrainian relationship and any Ukrainian reaction to NATO and EU enlargement will result from circumstances beyond its relations with Hungary.

Hungary and Slovenia are strong supporters of each other's membership of NATO and the EU. Hungary's geographical separation from the rest of NATO's territory means that it has a strong interest in Slovenia's membership of the Alliance (because Slovenia will provide a geographic 'bridge' to NATO), but also that Hungary's membership will strengthen the case for Slovenia's inclusion in NATO.⁸⁶ Since Slovenia has been included alongside Hungary in the 'first wave' of Central and Eastern European EU invitees, the two countries will presumably join the Union at the same time or shortly after one another.

Croatia's case is different because it has no Association Agreement with the EU and little prospect of early membership of NATO or the EU. The strong support for integration with the West in Croatia and the good state of relations with Hungary, however, suggest that any negative reaction to Hungarian membership of NATO is unlikely. The imposition of a visa regime as a result of Hungary's membership of the EU could affect travel and trade across the Hungarian-Croatian border but is unlikely to seriously undermine relations between the two states. The example of Hungary (and also Slovenia's) membership of NATO and the EU may

perhaps also have the positive effect of generating support within Croatia for the political and economic reforms necessary to gain membership of these organizations.

The Czech Republic: Foreign Policy Provincialism?

With the break-up of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic's geostrategic situation differs significantly from that of its Central European neighbours.⁸⁷ Unlike the other Central European states, the Czech Republic now borders no former Soviet or Balkan states. Aside from the residual tensions with Germany over the legacy of the second World War, it has no significant border or minority disputes with its other neighbours (Poland, Slovakia and Austria). As a consequence, the Czech Republic has few direct interests in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, is much less immediately vulnerable than its Central European neighbours to developments in these regions and has no bilateral relationships with the strategic significance of the Polish-Ukrainian or Hungary-Romanian relationships. The integration of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary into NATO and the EU will consolidate this position: of the Czech Republic's neighbours, only Slovakia will remain outside both NATO and the EU.⁸⁸ Given this geostrategic transformation, the Czech Republic has both less incentive and less potential to play a major role in promoting stability and cooperation on NATO and the EU's new eastern borders.

The Czech Republic's domestic political and economic circumstances re-inforced its new geostrategic situation. After separation from the economically less developed and politically less stable Slovakia, the Czech Republic appeared to be the most politically stable and economically successful state in Central and Eastern Europe and the leading candidate for membership of the EU. From 1992 until late 1997, Czech politics was dominated by the ruling centre-right coalition government and in particular by Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus. Klaus repeatedly argued that the Czech Republic was better prepared for EU membership than its Central European neighbours and ought to join the Union before them.⁸⁹ His government also opposed the Visegrad group cooperation which had been established with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia at the beginning of the 1990s. Instead, it argued that the Central European states should approach NATO and the EU individually rather than co-ordinating their positions, those states ready for integration with NATO and the EU should not be made to wait for their less prepared neighbours and cooperation should be limited to the development of free trade within the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). These policies resulted in a cooling of relations with the other Central European states and led critics (in the Czech Republic, in the other Central European states and in the West) to accuse the Klaus government of a foreign policy of provincialism and the pursuit of narrow Czech self-interest to the detriment of regional cooperation.⁹⁰

From 1995, however, a gradual shift in Czech policy was discernible. As it became clear that Poland was geostrategically more important to the EU and especially NATO, and that the Central European states would be invited to join both organizations together rather than individually, the Czech Republic began to pursue improved relations with Poland. In particular, discussions were initiated on NATO and on the modernization of armed forces - discussions which were gradually extended to include Hungary.⁹¹ The Czech government also began to expand efforts to support stability elsewhere in post-communist Europe, particularly in the security and defence field (for example, by sponsoring multilateral military training and cooperation activities involving other Central and Eastern European and former Soviet states).⁹²

In the context of NATO and EU enlargement, the one obvious exception to the Czech Republic's relative isolation from the consequences of instability beyond NATO and the EU's new boundaries will be its relationship with Slovakia. The historical and political context of Czech-Slovak relations, however, makes it difficult for the Czech Republic to pursue deeper cooperation with Slovakia. Since the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, Slovaks have tended to resent what they perceive as domination by the larger, wealthier and more Westernized Czech Republic. This was one of the underlying causes of the break-up of the Czechoslovak federation in 1992. Despite an agreement to maintain a single currency for an interim period, the two states moved rapidly to establish separate currencies. Since then, relations have been characterized by various disputes, particularly over the dismantling of economic ties and the division of federal assets. Statements by the Czech President Vaclav Havel that developments within Slovakia were undermining its prospects for membership of NATO and the EU led the Slovak government to accuse its Czech counterpart of deliberately undermining Slovakia's image in the West, degrading into a war of words and cancelled meetings in 1996-7.⁹³

How far the Czech Republic's membership of NATO and the EU will affect Czech-Slovak relations is unclear. Despite the various disputes between the two countries, there is no history of violent conflict between Czechs and Slovaks, the division of Czechoslovakia was achieved peacefully, there are no significant border or minority rights disputes and military relations between the two countries are good.⁹⁴ Violent conflict between the two countries is unlikely in the extreme, there is no sense of mutual military threat between them and Slovak military countermeasures in response to the Czech Republic's membership of NATO seem unlikely. Membership of the EU could perhaps cause more problems if it forces the Czech Republic to abandon its current customs union with Slovakia and if it involves the tightening of controls on travel across the Czech-Slovak border. However, given that Slovakia already has

an Association Agreement and visa-free travel with the EU and external trade arrangements (including the customs union with Slovakia) will be addressed in the Czech Republic's membership negotiations with the Union, these issues should not fundamentally undermine Czech-Slovak relations.

The victory of the Social Democratic Party (CSSD) in the Czech elections in June 1998 and the likely formation of a centre-left government could herald a change in Czech foreign policy towards greater support for regional cooperation.⁹⁵ Elements of such a policy could include: more positive rhetoric towards Slovakia and stronger support for its integration with NATO and the EU; a greater willingness to compromise with Slovakia on the outstanding economic disputes remaining from the division of Czechoslovakia; and greater support for cooperation with Poland and Hungary and for trilateral Polish-Czech-Hungarian efforts to engage Slovakia. The new coalition government, however, is likely to be politically weak and have more urgent domestic priorities, probably limiting its interest in and scope for regional initiatives.⁹⁶ More generally, the Czech Republic's geostrategic situation and Slovakia's sensitivity with regard to Czech involvement in its affairs are likely to limit the extent of Czech engagement in efforts to promote stability on NATO and the EU's new borders.

Slovakia: Isolation or Integration?

Slovakia's exclusion from the first wave of Central and Eastern European countries invited to join NATO and the EU has highlighted the country's growing isolation both from the process of Euro-atlantic integration and from its Central European neighbours. Since gaining independence in 1992, Slovakia has been dominated by Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). Meciar's lack of a parliamentary majority has forced him to govern in coalition with the extreme nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS) and the neo-communist Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). Meciar and his allies have established an increasingly authoritarian, nationalist regime, consolidating their own control of many parts of the Slovak state and economy and undermining the country's democracy. Steps have included: the removal of critics and independent voices from many state, government and local political and administrative structures; efforts to establish control of the electronic and print media and undermine independent voices within them; attacks on the democratically elected President Michal Kovac and the Constitutional Court; attempts to have opposition deputies removed from the parliament; the allocation of state funding to their allies and its removal from their critics; a privatization process effectively giving control of significant parts of the economy to their allies at knock-down prices; a language law designed to limit the use of Hungarian by the Hungarian minority; a state protection law threatening freedom to criticize the Slovak state and government; and plans for local government re-organization designed to undermine the influence of the Hungarian minority.⁹⁷ In the run-up to the September 1998 elections, opponents have accused Meciar of being a 'dictator' and he has reportedly accused the opposition of being 'fascistoid' and said that anyone holding public office who refuses to support HZDS must be 'purged or neutralized'.⁹⁸

Despite the authoritarianism of his regime, Meciar and the HZDS have at least rhetorically maintained that their main foreign policy objective is Slovakia's membership of NATO and the EU. The coalition is, however, divided, with the leadership of the SNS and the ZRS stating their opposition to membership of NATO and the EU. Meciar's rhetoric on Euro-atlantic integration is also directly contradicted by his unwillingness to make the reforms necessary for membership of NATO and the EU. Since 1994, a series of formal demarches from the European Union, the European Parliament and the United States have criticized the authoritarian policies of Meciar's regime and demanded changes.⁹⁹ Western officials have also made clear that Slovakia cannot join NATO or the EU until progress is made in democratization and respect for human and minority rights.¹⁰⁰ US Secretary of State Madelain Albright has described Slovakia as 'the hole of Europe'.¹⁰¹ Meciar has, however, ignored these

Western warnings. A farcical May 1997 referendum on NATO membership, designed to preempt the Alliance's rejection of Slovakia but boycotted by the majority of Slovaks and resulting in the resignation of the Foreign Minister, only highlighted the country's situation.¹⁰² The consequences were clear when Slovakia was excluded in summer 1997 from the first wave of countries invited to join NATO and the EU. Slovakia, moreover, was the only Central and Eastern Europe Associate of the EU specifically excluded from the first wave of accession negotiations on the grounds that it had not made sufficient progress in democratization and respect for human rights.¹⁰³ Although Western officials have not publicly said so, it is an open secret that Slovakia has little chance of membership of NATO or the EU so long as Meciar remains in power.

Slovakia has also developed a 'special relationship' with Russia, which has further undermined its prospects for integration with the West and cooperation with its neighbours. Before Slovakia became independent, Meciar argued that if the West rejected Slovakia, it might be forced to reorient itself toward the East.¹⁰⁴ Since then, Meciar has spoken of a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism and emphasized Slovakia's relations with Russia.¹⁰⁵ Ties with Russia have included a series of meetings between Slovak and Russian leaders, the signing of a bilateral cooperation treaty and a military treaty in 1993, a 1995 defence cooperation agreement, the development of ties between the two countries intelligence services and various economic agreements. Rather than being the more normal bilateral relations which the other Central European states are developing with Russia, the Slovak-Russian relationship is an attempt by Meciar and his allies to develop a 'special relationship', based on the perceived economic benefits of ties with Russia, a sense of common Slavic identity and shared antipathy towards the West.¹⁰⁶ From the Russian perspective, the close ties with Slovakia provide it with an ally in the region to counterbalance the other Central European states membership of NATO. There is particular concern in the other Central European states about the links between the Slovak and Russian intelligence communities and between organized criminals in the two countries - concerns which are shared by domestic critics of Meciar.¹⁰⁷

The domestic and foreign policies of the Meciar regime have also led to its isolation within Central Europe. As was seen above, Slovakia's policies have contributed to tensions in relations with the Czech Republic and Hungary. While both Hungary and Slovakia must share some responsibility for the problems in their relations, the nationalist policies and rhetoric of the Meciar government towards the Hungarian minority have been the most important factor behind these problems - as the contrasting progress in Hungarian-Romanian relations since the coming to power of a less nationalistic government in Bucharest illustrates. Relations with Austria have been troubled by Austrian criticism of developments within Slovakia, Austrian concerns over the safety of Slovakia's planned Mochovce nuclear power plant and an Austrian

court's decision to release President Kovac after he had been kidnapped in mysterious circumstances in Slovakia, dumped in Austria and faced an international warrant for his arrest (- the latter incident is widely suspected of being 'set up' by allies of Meciar within the Slovak secret service).¹⁰⁸ In the mid-1990s, Slovakia also sought to develop ties with the nationalist regimes in Romania and Yugoslavia, particularly in relation to their common opposition to Hungarian demands for guarantees of minority rights - echoing the inter-war anti-Hungarian 'Little Entente' alliance.¹⁰⁹ The Meciar government's domestic and foreign policies also contributed to the decline of cooperation with the other Central European states within the Visegrad group framework.¹¹⁰ When that cooperation was re-established in the second half of the 1990s, and particularly after NATO's July 1997 enlargement decision, it was very much on a trilateral basis, with Slovakia excluded by its own behaviour and failure to meet the criteria for membership of NATO and the EU.

Slovakia's growing isolation from the West and its Central European neighbours is largely self-imposed. Given the serious setbacks to democracy in Slovakia, NATO and the EU had little choice but to exclude it from the first wave of new Central European members. Nevertheless, that exclusion could exacerbate Slovakia's isolation. It could encourage a general belief that Slovakia has little prospect of membership of NATO and the EU, whatever it does. Authoritarian and nationalist political forces within Slovakia may conclude that they have little to lose by defying the West. 'Rejection' by the West could also lead to increased public support for these forces, since they have long argued that the West and the other Central European states are unfairly prejudiced against Slovakia and it has little choice but to look for friends elsewhere. 'Rejection' could also encourage Slovakia to further develop its ties with Russia. Certainly, rhetoric of this nature will be likely from Meciar and his allies in the run-up to the 1998 election. Given the absence of any military threat from Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, economic constraints and likely pressure from the West, however, any Slovak military response to its neighbours' membership of NATO seems unlikely. As noted earlier, if the other Central European states join the EU before Slovakia this could create some problems in terms of tighter border control and reduced travel and trade, but Slovakia's Association Agreement and visa-free travel with the EU suggest that such effects will be limited.

Evidence to date suggests that negative consequences of Slovakia's exclusion from the first wave of new NATO and EU members may be limited. Long before NATO and the EU's 1997 enlargement decisions, President Kovac was arguing that 'the responsibility (for Slovakia's exclusion) will lie with Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar and his government'.¹¹¹ The widespread boycott of the May 1997 referendum on NATO membership suggests that this sentiment is far stronger than opposition to NATO amongst the Slovak people. Since NATO

and the EU's enlargement decisions, further, support for membership of NATO and the EU has actually increased (lying at 58 per cent and 79 per cent respectively in May 1998).¹¹² Both NATO and the EU have also made deliberate efforts to maintain ties with Slovakia in the framework of PFP and Slovakia's Association Agreement with the EU in order not to further isolate it.

Slovakia's future direction will be shaped more by developments within the country than by the consequences of exclusion from NATO and the EU's 'first wave' of new members. The September 1998 elections are likely to be decisive and may herald a turning-point in Slovakia's post-communism development.¹¹³ Victory for the democratic opposition could provide a vital opportunity to make progress in democratization, the dismantling of the structures of political and economic cronyism, and the development of cooperation with the Hungarian minority and Slovakia's neighbours. Given the relatively good state of Slovakia's economy and armed forces, it could quite quickly re-emerge as a candidate for NATO and EU membership. Indeed, given that EU accession negotiations may take some years, Slovakia could yet join the Union at the same time as its Central European neighbours. In contrast, victory for Meciar and his allies could allow the current regime to consolidate its hold on power, resulting in greater setbacks for democracy and further international isolation. In the worst case, a 'Belarusian scenario' could ensue, with a highly authoritarian domestic regime, growing isolation from the West and Slovakia's Central European neighbours and deepening ties with conservative, nationalist forces in Russia. Given this range of possibilities, it is vital that as NATO and EU enlargement move ahead the West and the other Central European states give greater effort to engaging Slovakia, in particular democratic forces within the country.¹¹⁴

Regional Cooperatio

The Central European states are also members of various regional cooperation initiatives which may be affected by NATO and EU enlargement. On the one hand, the new boundaries of NATO and the EU may cut across bodies such as the Visegrad group and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), potentially creating divisions within them. On the other hand, the very fact that these groups bring together Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic alongside the Central and Eastern European states who will not initially join NATO and the EU means that they can play a role in helping to bridge the potential dividing lines of enlargement.

The convergence of the domestic and foreign policy goals of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary at the beginning of the 1990s led to the establishment of trilateral cooperation within the Visegrad group framework. Central European leaders held summits in Visegrad (hence the name of the group) in February 1991, in Cracow in October 1991 and in Prague May 1992, agreeing to cooperate in pursuing integration with the West, in relations with their eastern neighbours, on other security issues and in implementing domestic reforms.¹¹⁵ A large number of trilateral working level contacts were established, although more substantive cooperation (for example, in the military area) tended to be bilateral.¹¹⁶ Cooperation within the Visegrad group strengthened the diplomatic hand of the Central European states in their efforts to dismantle Cold War ties with the Soviet Union and integrate themselves with NATO and the EU, as well as facilitating bilateral cooperation between the Central European states and the reform of their armed forces.

The break-up of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, however, undermined the Visegrad group. The demise of the Soviet Union and Russia's geostrategic separation from Central Europe removed one of the driving forces for cooperation. As was seen earlier, the post-Soviet and post-Czechoslovak geostrategic situations of the four Central European states differed quite significantly. This dynamic was re-inforced by Prime Minister Klaus's opposition to regional cooperation and by the setbacks to democratization in Slovakia. These issues came to a head in January 1994, when NATO established its Partnership for Peace and US President Bill Clinton met with the Central European leaders in Prague. The Czech government rejected proposals for a joint approach towards NATO and refused to send its Defence Minister to a meeting with his Visegrad group colleagues, resulting in acrimonious disputes with the other Central European states.¹¹⁷ By 1995-96, the Visegrad group was largely dead.¹¹⁸

The shifting dynamics of NATO and EU enlargement, however, have produced renewed cooperation, but this time without Slovakia. As was seen earlier, the realization that Poland would be the most crucial country in terms of NATO enlargement led to renewed Czech interest in cooperation with Poland (and also Hungary).¹¹⁹ The emerging cooperation was given a major boost by NATO's July 1997 Madrid summit decision to invite the three countries to join the Alliance. At the summit, the Central European leaders stated that they were 'determined to intensify the political and military cooperation of our three countries'.¹²⁰ Since then, the three countries have established quite intensive cooperation, particularly in relation to NATO and defence policy. This has included meetings of their Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Defence Ministers and Chiefs of Defence Staffs, as well as other senior officials; the establishment of trilateral working groups between Foreign Ministries and Defence Ministries; cooperation in relation to their NATO accession negotiations and building support for ratification of enlargement in existing NATO members; and cooperation in relation to defence reforms, particularly those directly relating to NATO membership.¹²¹ This renewed trilateral cooperation, however, has limits and has been very much driven by the dynamics of NATO enlargement. Whether the Central European states will be able to agree on more contentious issues, such as joint military procurement, is open to doubt. The relatively straightforward nature of the NATO accession negotiations facilitated trilateral cooperation. In contrast, the more complex nature of EU accession negotiations and the differing economic and domestic interests of the Central European states are likely to prevent the adoption of similar common positions in the EU membership negotiations.¹²² The divergent geostrategic positions and interests of the Central European states are also likely to limit the possibilities for common policies towards their 'left out' neighbours. Nevertheless, it would appear sensible for the three Central European states to explore how far they can adopt common positions in supporting or providing reassurance to their neighbours who will remain outside NATO and the EU.

The renewed Polish-Czech-Hungarian cooperation also raises difficult questions about the role of Slovakia. The policies of the Meciar government have effectively excluded Slovakia from this cooperation. Nevertheless, Slovakia's exclusion from this forum only adds to its more general isolation. Poland's Foreign Minister Geremek has said that the three countries are following an 'empty chair policy' with regard to Slovakia, retaining a place for it within their cooperation when it makes progress in democratization. Given the isolation Slovakia faces, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary need to give more consideration to ways in which they might engage it in regional cooperation, particularly on a quadrilateral basis. Certainly, if the democratic opposition wins Slovakia's September 1998 elections there will be a strong case for gradually bringing Slovakia back into the Visegrad cooperation.

One lasting consequence of the earlier Visegrad group cooperation was the establishment of CEFTA. Recognizing the need to expand their mutual trade and avoid the dangers of protectionism, the Visegrad states established CEFTA at the end of 1992. Since then, progress has been made in implementing free trade and CEFTA has expanded to include Slovenia and Romania. It is likely to expand further to include at least other Associates of the EU - Bulgaria and Lithuania being next in line to join.¹²³ As one observer puts it, however, CEFTA is 'not even a poor man's EU'.¹²⁴ The small size and relative poverty of the Central and Eastern European states compared to their EU neighbours means that the majority of their trade is with the West, rather than each other - limiting the economic significance of trade liberalization within CEFTA. CEFTA's members have also been reluctant to give the group any formal organizational structure or to expand its remit beyond that of promoting free trade. Thus, while CEFTA could theoretically take on other roles (for example, in coordinating its members' discussions with the EU or aspects of their relations with Ukraine or Russia), such a role does not seem likely.

CEFTA, in particular, will be affected by the integration of some (but not all) of its members into the EU. Since the EU maintains a common external trade regime, states must abandon other, separate trade arrangements (such as CEFTA) when they join the Union. Thus, CEFTA members will have to leave the group when they join the EU - as occurred with European Free Trade Area (EFTA) members Sweden, Finland and Austria when they joined the Union at the beginning of the 1990s. The free trade arrangements concluded within CEFTA, however, parallel those included in its members' Association Agreements with the EU. Preferential trade arrangements of new EU members with their neighbours, further, are generally incorporated into the EU's common trade regime when they join. The integration of some CEFTA members into the EU's common external trade regime, therefore, is probably unlikely to lead to the introduction of new trade barriers.¹²⁵ Indeed, the Central and Eastern European states have always viewed CEFTA as a temporary body designed to facilitate their integration with the EU - hence their decision to base its structure on their Association Agreements with the Union. Nevertheless, at a more general level, the withdrawal of the core Central European countries from CEFTA when they join the EU is likely to undermine the group's political and geographic cohesion, leaving it as a rather weak rump involving perhaps Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and some of the Baltic states. CEFTA could be maintained, however, as a means of facilitating these states' on-going integration with the EU. In this context, those states which join the EU first could perhaps remain 'honorary members' of CEFTA, for example by attending its meetings and acting as advocates for its remaining members within the EU.

The Central European states are also members of a number of other, larger regional groups which will span the new boundaries of NATO and the EU. Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are all members of the Central European Initiative (CEI) - a sixteen member group stretching from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova to Macedonia and Albania. The CEI seeks to promote cooperation in areas such as economics, transport, the environment, science and culture. Its large and diverse membership and lack of resources, however, limit its impact. Despite this, the CEI does have some more political dimensions, including an 'instrument' providing guidelines on ethnic minority rights, which make a contribution to security in the region. Poland is also a member of the pan-Baltic Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Hungary is a member of the US initiated Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI), both additional means of extending cooperation in these regions. Although regional groups such as Visegrad, CEFTA, the CEI, the CBSS and SECI are inevitably limited in their substance and impact, they nevertheless provide a useful additional means of extending cooperation in their respective regions. In the context of NATO and EU enlargement, the Central European states and the West as a whole need to explore how these groups may be further developed as means of building cooperation with those states remaining outside NATO and the EU.¹²⁶

Central Europe and the 'Russian Question'

As the first new members of NATO and the EU, the Central European states will play a particular albeit limited role in shaping Russia's relations with the rest of Europe. The break-up of the Soviet Union facilitated the normalization of relations between the Central European states and Russia. The emergence of Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states and Moldova as independent states made Central Europe far less vulnerable to Russian influence than it had been to that of the Soviet Union. The prospect of democratization in Russia provided a common political basis for cooperation. In 1992, new bilateral treaties were concluded between Russia and the Central European states, recognizing their independence and borders, pledging non-interference in internal affairs and committing them to cooperation.¹²⁷ Steps were taken to overcome historic conflicts inherited from the Soviet era, such as the 1940 Soviet massacre of Polish soldiers at Katyn and the 1956 and 1968 Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Elements of military cooperation were also established, helping the Central European states to maintain and in some cases modernize their Soviet inherited military equipment.

Despite this normalization of relations, the Central European states remain concerned about Russia's future development and its ambitions towards them.¹²⁸ From the Central European perspective, Russia remains a great power, the largest single military power on the European mainland and a major nuclear power. Despite its current economic problems, Russia retains the territory, natural resources and productive potential to regenerate itself economically in the longer term, which could also enable it to modernize and expand its armed forces. The political and economic situation within Russia is unstable and the country's future direction highly uncertain. After the initially pro-Western foreign policy of the early Yeltsin-Kozyrev era, Russia began to assert its own national interests. In particular, Russia has sought to re-establish a dominant sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union, including the newly independent states lying between it and Central Europe. Russian 'neo-imperial' ambitions, further, are not limited entirely to the Soviet Union. Although less of a priority than the former Soviet Union, Russia has also sought to reassert influence in Central and Eastern Europe and to constrain the independence and Western orientation of the countries of the region. Finally, there remains concern over continuing Russian ties with, activities in and leverage over Central Europe, including intelligence activities, transnational criminal ties (often with political connections) and dependence on Russian energy supplies. For Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and for the democratic opposition within Slovakia, the ties Russia has sought to

develop with the Meciar regime illustrate the dangers of a reassertion of Russian influence in the region.

From 1993 until 1997, the issue of NATO enlargement re-inforced existing mistrust between Russia and Central Europe and became the core issue in their mutual relations. The Central European states' desire for NATO membership was driven in significant part by fear of Russia, although this was not their only motivation. Many in the Russian elite viewed (and still view) NATO as a threat to Russian security and the Alliance's enlargement as part of an attempt to exclude Russia from European security structures. Opposition to NATO enlargement is near universal within the Russian elite. President Yeltsin warned of the possibility of a new 'Cold Peace' and Russian countermeasures in response to NATO enlargement. Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement, however, only confirmed Central European fears that Russia had still not fully accepted their independence, wished to retain a sphere of influence in the region and was willing to use threats and bullying to achieve its goals. Russian offers of joint NATO-Russian security guarantees for the Central European states only served to raise the historic spectres of Yalta and earlier great power divisions of the region in the minds of Central European leaders. In short, so long as it was uncertain whether NATO would take in the Central European states, which states might be included and in what circumstances enlargement might occur, Russian-Central European relations were bound to be riven by disputes over the issue, colouring all other aspects of their ties.

NATO's 1997 decisions on enlargement and its parallel efforts to build cooperation with Russia, Ukraine and other 'left out' states have altered the situation, opening a potentially new era in Central Europe's relations with Russia. With the *fait accompli* of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary's membership of NATO, the issue became not whether Russia could prevent the first wave of the Alliance's enlargement but how it would respond. While Russia retains its formal opposition to NATO's expansion, the conclusion of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the development of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council and Russia's continued engagement in the Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia all indicate that it is seeking to maintain and deepen its cooperative ties with NATO. Russia has also sought compromise on military issues relating to enlargement, gaining assurances that NATO has no plans to deploy nuclear weapons or large conventional forces in Central Europe and agreeing to adapt the CFE Treaty to the new situation. Despite earlier suggestions that Russia might react to NATO's enlargement by redeploying nuclear or conventional forces to more forward positions, there is no indication that it is beginning to take such steps.¹²⁹ Russia has also maintained existing cooperation in its bilateral relations with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Indeed, since NATO's July

1997 decisions, Central European officials suggest that Russia has taken a more pragmatic approach in bilateral relations with them, downplaying NATO enlargement and focusing on more mundane issues.¹³⁰

The longer term impact of NATO enlargement on Russia's relations with the West in general and Central Europe in particular, however, remains uncertain. A number of factors suggest that Russia may have little choice but to pursue cooperation, or at least avoid direct confrontation, with the West. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the overall balance of political, economic and military power between Russia and the West has shifted dramatically in favour of the West. The Russian armed forces are extremely weak, as indicated by their defeat in Chechnya, and face enormous problems in terms of demobilization, redeployment and reform. Economically, Russia is very weak. It is in receipt of substantial Western economic aid, which would likely be cut-off in the event of any renewed confrontation. Russia also has much more urgent priorities than responding to NATO's enlargement into Central Europe. Domestically, economic reform, democratic consolidation, the establishment of effective state structures, widespread poverty, collapsing social welfare structures and rising crime are far greater problems than the impact of NATO's enlargement. Certainly, the Russian public is far more concerned with these issues than with NATO's enlargement. Externally, relations with the former Soviet states and the potential consequences of instability to Russia's South are far greater priorities than NATO enlargement. Despite the growth of Sino-Russian cooperation in recent years, long term concerns over the growth of Chinese influence in Eastern Russia and Central Asia may also mitigate against confrontation with the West (since Russia could need Western support in balancing Chinese power in future).

While these factors all point towards Russian avoidance of confrontation with NATO in the future, they do not guarantee such an outcome. A shift in power within Russia towards the nationalists and communists (particularly if a communist or nationalist leader replaces Yeltsin as President), a deepening of Russia's economic crisis, the expansion of Russian influence in Ukraine, a Ukrainian-Russian crisis or the further enlargement of NATO could result in a hardening of Russian policy towards NATO and Central Europe. While acquiescing in the Central European states membership of NATO, Russian leaders have repeatedly warned that efforts to extend NATO membership to former Soviet states would be a different matter - suggesting that the future of the Baltic states will be one of the most sensitive issues in NATO-Russia relations in the next few years. Should any new Cold War type confrontation ensue, the Central European states would be NATO's new 'front line' and, alongside the Baltic states and Ukraine, most vulnerable to the consequences of such a confrontation.

As the first new members of NATO, the Central European states have a particular responsibility for and interest in reassuring Russia that NATO's enlargement does not threaten it and in helping to avoid any new confrontation with Russia. In retrospect, for example, earlier statements by Central European leaders that their countries would be willing to host the deployment of NATO nuclear weapons were a mistake, only fuelling Russian fears of the Alliance.¹³¹ Since then, the Polish, Czech and Hungarian governments have supported the conclusion of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, NATO's commitment not to deploy large conventional forces or nuclear weapons into Central Europe and the agreement to adapt the CFE Treaty. So long as their countries remained outside NATO, however, Central European leaders remained nervous that measures designed to reassure Russia might make them 'second class members' of the Alliance or be agreed by NATO and Russia at their expense.¹³² Once inside the Alliance as full members, it should be easier for the Central European states to consider how they can contribute to reassuring Russia. This is one area, further, where benefit might be gained by trilateral action by Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The three countries could, for example, make a co-ordinated effort to increase military transparency in their relations with Russia in relation to their military integration with NATO and their national defence plans. They could also consider trilateral initiatives to engage Russia (and also Ukraine and Belarus) militarily via PFP (for example, by taking the leading role in sponsoring military exercises with these countries). While such steps would require careful consultation with their NATO partners, Central European leadership in this area would show that, far from excluding Russia from the region, NATO enlargement actually has the potential to result in deeper Central European engagement with Russia. The Central European states, however, are also likely to face some sensitive issues in terms of how far they should go in reassuring Russia. The CFE adaptation talks, for example, are likely to involve tensions between efforts to reassure Russia and the Central European states' desire to retain their national defence capabilities and the credibility of their newly won NATO security guarantee.

The Central European states' integration with NATO may also lead to growing differentiation in their bilateral relations with Russia. In the mid-1990s, the Central European states' common desire for NATO membership and Russia's opposition to this imposed a common framework on Russian-Central European relations. After NATO enlargement, the Czech Republic and Hungary will simply be small NATO members, with no direct borders with Russia and no important geostrategic or economic ties with Russia. In the longer term, their bilateral relations with Russia may become no more important than those of other small NATO members such as the Netherlands or Denmark. In contrast, Poland's larger size, geostrategic significance, ties with Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, border with Kaliningrad

and history of conflict will Russia will give the Polish-Russian relationship enduring importance. As seen earlier, Poland's ties with its eastern neighbours will play a particularly important role in shaping the environment on NATO's new eastern border. Slovakia's close ties with Russia and its exclusion from the first wave of NATO and EU enlargement are likely to make it a different case again. So long as Slovakia remains outside NATO, it may assume increasing importance for Russia as a 'special friend' in Central Europe: as the other Central European states join NATO, Russia may well seek to expand its existing ties with Slovakia. In contrast, if the democratic opposition takes power in Slovakia and it joins NATO and/or the EU, Slovak-Russian relations may follow the more normal pattern of Czech-Russian and Hungarian-Russian relations.

In contrast to its opposition to NATO enlargement, Russia has expressed no similar concerns about the consequences of the EU's eastward expansion (even in the sensitive case of the Baltic states). The EU-Russia relationship has few of the problems of NATO-Russian relations and includes substantial EU aid to Russia under the TACIS programme, a 1996 EU 'Action Plan' for Russia, a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which came into force in December 1997 and a commitment to establish an EU-Russia free trade zone.¹³³ Nevertheless, EU enlargement could create some problems between Russia and its Central and Eastern European neighbours. At present, Russians are able to travel relatively freely to Central and Eastern Europe and trade between Russia and its Central and Eastern European neighbours is quite large (particularly, in the informal 'grey' economy). If EU enlargement results in the imposition of a visa requirement on Russians travelling to Central and Eastern European members of the Union, stricter border controls and reduced trade, it could create problems between Russia and these states - as Russia and Belarus's reaction to Poland's recent tightening of entry requirements for their citizens illustrates. This problem could be particularly acute in the cases of Estonia and Latvia, because of their large ethnic Russian minorities. As with Poland's relations with Ukraine and Hungary's relations with Romania, visa/entry requirements, border controls and trade are likely to become a sensitive question in both the EU's and the Central European states' relations with Russia as EU accession negotiations progress.

In the final analysis, the Russian-Central European relationship is only a small part of the larger and long-standing 'Russian question' of that great power's relations with the rest of Europe. The answer to the 'Russian question' will be determined more by the progress of democratization and economic reform in Russia, the evolution of Russia's relations with the former Soviet republics and the larger policies of the US, NATO and the EU. For the Central European states, Russia's relations with Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states will be

particularly important. If Russia consolidates a sphere of influence over these states (especially Ukraine), it will once more border directly with Central Europe and pose a potential threat to the region. If Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states are able to consolidate their independence and Russia comes to terms with its post-imperial status, Russia's distance from Central Europe will be confirmed and the Central European states will have far better prospects for developing normal, cooperative ties with both their immediate eastern neighbours and Russia. The Central European states have neither the power nor the resources to fundamentally shape Russia's future relations with Europe. As the first new members of NATO and the EU, however, they can make a particular contribution to developing cooperation with Russia and reassuring it that NATO and EU enlargement are not designed to exclude it from Europe.

Conclusion

Central Europe is entering a new era. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary will join NATO in April 1999. Although EU membership negotiations may take some years and prove problematic, these three countries, plus Slovenia and Estonia, will almost certainly become full members of the EU within the next decade. Critics of NATO and EU enlargement have charged that it will create dangerous new dividing lines between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in Central and Eastern Europe and, in the worst case, could trigger a new Cold War with Russia. Such arguments, however, misunderstand the nature of the enlargement process. The expansion of NATO and the EU is better understood as an *integrative* process extending the internal cooperation within NATO and the EU to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. From this perspective, enlargement is not directed against those states excluded from the process, does not permanently exclude those states not invited to join in the 'first wave' and there is no inherent reason why it should produce dangerous new dividing lines within Europe. The extent to which NATO and EU enlargement produces new dividing lines will depend on the success of NATO and EU policies designed to maintain cooperation with those countries remaining outside these organizations, on the willingness and ability of the new Central European members of NATO and the EU to maintain and develop cooperation with their neighbours, and on the reaction of those states remaining outside NATO and the EU to their exclusion.

The evidence to date suggests that, far from creating new dividing lines, NATO and EU enlargement is helping to promote cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. NATO's efforts to manage the 'first wave' of its enlargement - the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the NATO-Ukraine Charter, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the 'enhanced' Partnership for Peace, intensified cooperation with countries such as Romania and the Baltic states and the commitment to maintain an 'open door' for further enlargement - appear to have been reasonably successful in mitigating the concerns of the 'have nots' and sustaining cooperation with them. The *process* of NATO and EU enlargement, further, has also helped to promote cooperation amongst the Central and Eastern European states: by making membership conditional on the resolution of border and minority issues NATO and the EU have encouraged states to overcome historic disputes, most obviously in the Hungarian-Slovak, Hungarian-Romania and Romanian-Ukrainian cases, but also more generally. As Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have moved nearer to NATO enlargement, they have also intensified cooperation with one another and with their southern and eastern neighbours - partly as a result of Western pressure to do so, but also in recognition of their own interest in deepening ties with neighbours who will remain outside NATO and the EU. Slovakia's exclusion from the first

round of NATO and EU invitees may deepen its isolation. Slovakia's exclusion, however, is the symptom not the cause of setbacks to democratization and growing isolation. Nevertheless, greater efforts need to be made by the West and Slovakia's neighbours to overcome its isolation, particularly if the democratic opposition win the September 1998 elections. The absence of any threat from Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary's integration with NATO, the economic constraints facing all the post-communist states and Western pressure to act with restraint suggest that the Central European states' neighbours are unlikely to respond to NATO enlargement militarily. More generally, the 'left outs' have not so far witnessed significant domestic or foreign policy repercussions from their exclusion. Russia has also responded to the reality of NATO enlargement by seeking compromise and deeper cooperation, rather than confrontation, with the Alliance and the Central European states.

There remain potential dangers, however. In the medium term, NATO and the EU enlargement could yet result in setbacks for domestic reforms and weakened ties with the West in those states (such as Slovakia and Romania) excluded from the 'first wave'. If support for domestic reforms and integration with the West is to be sustained, these countries need a realistic prospect of eventual membership of NATO or the EU - highlighting the importance of expanding Western cooperation with these countries and of NATO and the EU having a genuinely open door to further enlargement. Russian cooperation with the West in general, and NATO in particular, could also face setbacks as a result of developments within Russia or of differences between Russia and NATO. Russian leaders' indications that relations with NATO will be reviewed if Alliance membership is extended to the Baltic states suggest that this issue will have to be handled with the greatest sensitivity.

While most critics have focused on the potential dangers of NATO enlargement, less attention has been given to possible negative consequences of EU enlargement. In both the states likely to join the EU in the 'first wave' and those likely to remain outside, however, there is serious concern that EU enlargement could create far more serious dividing lines within Central and Eastern Europe than NATO enlargement. In particular, there is concern that the integration of new members into the Schengen regime and the imposition of stricter visa regulations and border controls could result in a closing down of previously relatively open borders. In turn, this could undermine cross-border trade, people-to-people contacts, transfrontier cooperation regimes and more general political cooperation between the first new EU members and their eastern and southern neighbours. More generally, the division between wealthier, more stable Central European and their poorer, less stable eastern and southern neighbours could be exacerbated by the former's receipt of greater EU aid and foreign investment once they are inside the Union, as well as by the closing down of borders.

The impact of such divisions is likely to vary depending on the specific character of individual Central and Eastern European states relationships with the EU at the time their neighbours join the Union. States with Association Agreements and visa-free travel arrangements, such as Slovakia, may be less affected. States with Association Agreements but no visa-free travel arrangements, such as Romania, may be affected more seriously - hence Hungary and Romania's concern about the implications of this issue for their relationship. Countries with neither Association Agreements nor visa-free travel arrangements may be the most severely affected. Ukraine may be the most vulnerable of all the Central and Eastern European states to the consequences of EU enlargement: a tightening of controls on its western borders could undermine its efforts to build ties with its Central European neighbours, integrate itself with the West and reduce its economic dependence on Russia. In the longer term, such divisions could also be more important for Russia's relations with the rest of Europe than the issue of NATO enlargement. Tighter restrictions on the ability of Russians to travel to and trade with much of Central and Eastern Europe could generate a more general sense of exclusion from Europe amongst the Russian population, potentially undermining support for political, economic and security cooperation more seriously than NATO enlargement has.

These issues are likely to create a complex triangular relationship between the accession negotiations of those states likely to join the EU, relations between these states and their eastern and southern neighbours, and the latter's own relations with the EU - with the potential to generate tensions between all the parties concerned. Those states negotiating membership of the EU will want the earliest freedom for their citizens to travel freely within the EU. The EU is almost certain to require them to develop stricter visa regimes and border controls with their eastern and southern neighbours if they wish their own citizens to travel freely within the EU. Both the states joining the Union and their eastern and southern neighbours will fear that stricter controls may undermine their relations and are therefore likely to press the EU to liberalize its own visa regimes with those states remaining outside. Domestic pressures within the EU (- the fear, legitimate or otherwise, of being 'swamped' by large numbers of poor Central and Eastern Europeans seeking jobs and EU standards of social welfare) are likely to make it reluctant to agree to such liberalizations. The Central European states joining the EU may face a difficult choice between the freedom of their own citizens to travel freely within the EU and the relative openness of their borders with their eastern and southern neighbours. Ironically, the relatively slow pace of EU enlargement may actually help here by providing time for these issues to be addressed. If the EU can be persuaded to gradually liberalize its border, visa and trade regimes with those states likely to remain outside the Union by the time the Central European states join the Union, then some of the potentially divisive

consequences of EU enlargement are probably manageable. To some extent, it is too soon to assess how far fears of Central and Eastern European dividing lines resulting from E enlargement are legitimate or exaggerated. Certainly, however, far greater attention needs to be given to the issue.

With their accession to NATO, and later the EU, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary will have achieved their central strategic goal and overcome their historic position as vulnerable states located in the 'grey zone' between Europe's great powers. From the perspective of the US and the countries of Western Europe, the zone of stability represented by NATO and the EU will have been extended into Central Europe - historically a source of insecurity for the whole European continent. In the post-enlargement environment, the security of the Central European states and Europe as a whole will depend on the stability of the states further east and south, the extension of the integration process to these states and the maintenance and deepening of cooperation with those states remaining outside NATO and the EU. In contrast to the arguments of many critics, the enlargement process has so far helped to promote cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, rather than creating new dividing lines. Poland, Hungary and to a lesser extent the Czech Republic are also making substantial efforts to intensify cooperation with their eastern and southern neighbours as enlargement moves ahead. Nevertheless, there remains a danger that relations with those states remaining outside the 'first wave' of the enlargement process may be undermined through their exclusion. In particular, EU enlargement could prove to be potentially far more divisive than NATO enlargement. In these circumstances, it is vital that the Central European states and NATO and the EU intensify their efforts to build cooperation with their eastern and southern neighbours.

⁴⁵ On Hungary's relations with its neighbours see George Schopflin, *Hungary and Its Neighbours*, Chaillot Papers 7, Paris: Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, May 1993; Andre Ludanyi, Ed., 'Hungary and the Hungarian Minorities', Special Issue, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 24, No. 3, September 1996; 'Special Issue: The Hungarian Exception?', *War Report*, No. 29, October/November 1994; and, Stephen Borsody, Ed., *The Hungarians: A Divided Nation*, New Haven: Yale Centre for International and Area Studies, 1988.

⁴⁶ V. Socor, 'Forces of Old Resurface in Romania: The Ethnic Clashes in Tirgu-Mures', Report on Eastern Europe, Vol. 1, 13 April 1990.

⁴⁷ Edith Oltay, 'Minorities as Stumbling Block in Relations with Neighbors', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 19, 8 May 1992, pp26-33.

⁴⁸ Alfred A. Reisch, 'New Bilateral Military Agreements', *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 45, 8 November 1991, pp4-10.

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⁵⁰ Author's interviews with Hungarian officials have confirmed the great importance of Western pressure with regard to NATO and EU membership in persuading Hungary and its neighbours to conclude the bilateral treaties.

⁵¹ 'Is Central Europe, along with Hungary, turning right?', *The Economist*, 30 May 1998; George Schopflin, 'Hungary's Political Elite to Face Major Challenges', End Note, *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 99, Part II, 26 May 1998; and, 'Hungary's Young Democrats, Smallholders Sign Coalition Pact', *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 121, Part II, 25 June 1998.

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⁵⁴ Edith Oltay, 'Minority Rights Still an Issue in Hungarian-Romanian Relations', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 12, 20 March 1992, pp16-20; Michael Shafir, 'Transylvania Shadows, Transylvania Lights', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 26, 26 June 1992, pp28-33; Dan Ionescu and Alfred A. Reisch, 'Still No Breakthrough in Hungarian-Romanian Relations', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 42, 22 October 1993, pp26-32; Michael Shafir, 'Ethnic Tension Runs High in Romania', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 3, No. 32, 19 August 1994, pp24-32; Andrew Bell, 'The Hungarians in Romania Since 1989', in Ludanyi, Ed., 'Hungary and the Hungarian Minorities', pp491-507; and Pal Dunay 'Hungarian-Romanian Relations: a Changed Paradigm?', in Wohlfeld, Ed., *The Effects of Enlargement on Bilateral Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*.

⁵⁵ Reisch, 'New Bilateral Military Agreements', pp5-7; Marton Krasznai, 'A Bilateral Accord that Helped Resume the Open Skies Conference: The Hungarian-Romanian Open Skies Agreement', *Disarmament*, Vol. XV, No. 2, 1992, pp176-86; and 'Agreement Between the Government of Hungary and the Government of Romania on the Establishment of an Open Skies Regime, Budapest, 11 May 1991', *Disarmament*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, 1991, pp163-85.

⁵⁶ Dunay refers to the 'high-level, forceful, frank interference' of the West on this issue and notes that the US ambassadors to Hungary and Romania subsequently pointed out that 'both sides are committed because they know that the treaty clears an important hurdle to an even more historic goal: integration with the West'. Dunay 'Hungarian-Romanian Relations: a Changed Paradigm?', p19. On the role of Western pressure with regard to NATO membership in shifting the two countries' positions see Michael Shafir, 'Light at the End of the Hungarian Romanian Tunnel?', *OMRI Analytical Brief*, No. 283, 15 August 1996. Matyas Szabo, "'Historic Reconciliation'" Awakens Old Disputes', *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 8 March 1996, pp46-50. The importance of Western pressure on this issue in relation to NATO membership has also been confirmed in the author's interviews with Hungarian analysts.

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¹²⁷ J. Obrman, 'Russia and Czechoslovakia Sign Friendship Treaty', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, 8 May 1992, Jan B. de Weydenthal, 'Poland and Russia Open a New Chapter in their Relations', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, 19 June 1992 and A. A. Reisch, 'Hungarian-Russian Relations Enter a New Era', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, 8 January 1993.

¹²⁸ For an excellent summary of Central European perspectives on Russia see Laszlo Valki, 'Russia and the Security of East-Central Europe', *European Security*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Autumn 1996, pp448-69.

¹²⁹ Indeed, in the context of NATO's 'first wave' enlargement and Russia's efforts to prevent the Baltic states also joining NATO, Russia has recently announced new reductions in forces in its north-western region bordering the Baltic states. The exact substance of the Russian force reductions remains unclear. See James Meek and David Fairhall, 'Yeltsin slashes Baltic force', *The Guardian*, 4 December 1997; and, Pavel K. Baev, 'Bear Hug for the Baltic', *The World Today*, Vol. 54, No. 3, March 1998, pp78-9.

¹³⁰ Author's interviews with Central European officials, 1998.

¹³¹ Central European officials now acknowledge this, but also point out that NATO failed to make sufficiently clear that such issues would not be tests of the Central European states commitment and loyalty to the Alliance - author's interviews.

¹³² Such fears were expressed in 1996 and the first half of 1997 in relation to the planned NATO-Russia Founding Act, NATO commitments not to deploy conventional forces or nuclear weapons into Central Europe and the adaptation of the CFE Treaty - author's interviews.

¹³³ Dmitrii Danilov, 'A Piece of the Partnership', *Transitions*, Vol. 5, No. 4, April 1998, pp60-3.

is likely to follow. In Poland, the centre-right Solidarity Election Action (AWS)-Freedom Union (UW) coalition replaced the 'post-communist' Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)-Polish Peasant Party (PSL) government in September 1997. In Hungary, the centre-right Federation of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) and its allies the Independent Smallholders Party (FKGP) defeated the 'post-communist' Socialist Party in elections in May 1998. Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus's centre-right government was removed from power at the end of 1997 as a result of financial scandals and elections in June resulted in victory for the centre-left Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD). Elections in Slovakia in September could result in defeat for the increasingly authoritarian Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) or alternatively the consolidation of Meciar's hold on power.

The Central European states neighbours also face political change. In Romania, President Emil Constantinescu and the centre-right government which came to power at the end of 1996 have made significant progress in democratization, economic reform and improving relations with Romania's neighbours, but face coalition in-fighting and could be the victims of the 'costs' of economic reforms at the next elections. The rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia faces a major crisis whose outcome is highly unpredictable, but might include prolonged war in Kosovo, the break-up of the federation, the replacement of President Slobodan Milosevic by more extreme nationalist forces or, more optimistically, the gradual democratization of the country. Parliamentary elections in Ukraine in March 1998 heralded a period of political paralysis which is only likely to be broken by Presidential elections in October 1999. In Russia, Duma elections are due in December 1999 and Presidential elections due in 2000 may well herald the end of the Yeltsin era. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka's authoritarian hold on power appears increasingly strong, but the country's economic problems could produce serious political instability. Across Central and Eastern Europe, but especially in the countries remaining outside NATO, internal developments may have a significant bearing not only on domestic politics but also on foreign policy.

Given the limitation of the first phase of NATO and EU enlargement to a relatively small number of states, there are fears of the emergence of new 'dividing lines' in Central and Eastern Europe between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' of NATO and EU membership. In particular, critics of NATO enlargement argue that expanding the Atlantic Alliance will create an unnecessary and artificial division of the new Europe, in the worst case a new Cold War style front-line. In contrast, most observers are relatively sanguine about the likely effects of EU enlargement. Indeed, opponents of NATO enlargement have argued that much higher

priority should be given to expanding the EU and that Central and Eastern European states should be offered EU membership rather than NATO membership.³

This report examines the emerging security environment in Central Europe, particularly the likely impact of NATO and EU enlargement. I argue that there is no inherent reason why the expansion of NATO and the EU into Central Europe should create harmful, new 'dividing lines'. In fact, there is significant evidence to suggest that the *process* of enlarging core Western institutions is actually promoting stability and encouraging cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, including with those countries remaining outside NATO and the EU. To the extent that there are dangers of harmful, new 'dividing lines' in Central and Eastern Europe, further, these divisions are actually more likely to result from EU enlargement than from NATO enlargement. The incorporation of the Central European states into EU's common external trade, border management and visa arrangements, the implicit economic credibility bestowed on these states by EU membership and the political and administrative demands placed on them by integration with the EU could polarize the division between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and undermine emerging cooperation between the Central European states and their eastern and southern neighbours. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary - and the larger West which they are joining - need to make renewed efforts to deepen cooperation with their 'have not' neighbours. In particular, more attention needs to be given to the potentially divisive effects of EU enlargement - an issue which has not yet been seriously addressed.

The New Dynamics of Integratio

Critics of NATO and the EU enlargement argue that these twin processes will create new 'dividing lines' in Central and Eastern Europe between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', with negative consequences for the region and for Europe as a whole. Such arguments are based on classical realist, zero-sum thinking about security and international relations. They assume that NATO and the EU are in some sense directed against the 'left out' states, that their expansion will have negative consequences for the states excluded or that these states will perceive this to be the case and will therefore seek to counter the enlargement process. This is most obvious in the case of NATO enlargement: critics (in both Russia and the West) base much of their argument on the Atlantic Alliance's Cold War origins and on its role as a collective defence organization directed against the Soviet Union, assuming that expansion will inevitably undermine cooperation with Russia and other left out states. Given that much of the Russian elite still perceive NATO in these terms and oppose NATO enlargement on this basis, such arguments are understandable. Though less obvious, similar arguments are seen in the debate over EU enlargement: arguments that the EU should initiate membership negotiations with all of its Central and Eastern European Associates (rather than a select few, as it has in fact done) were based on the assumption that excluding some states would undermine those states relations with the Union and their progress in democratization and economic reform.

These arguments misunderstand the nature the enlargement process. The extension of NATO and EU membership to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is better understood as part of a broader process of *integration*. In this sense, integration means bringing th countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the community of Euro-Atlantic nations based on common, democratic values and shared goals. Understood in these terms, integration is also about bringing these states into the Western 'security community', where the combination of liberal democracy, relative prosperity, economic interdependence and cooperation in international institutions such as NATO and the EU have made war virtually inconceivable.⁴ Membership of institutions such as NATO and the EU, further, is only one part of this process of integration. The functional integration of the Central and Eastern European states has been underway for some time through the re-orientation of trade and through frameworks such as NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) and the EU's PHARE and TACIS aid programmes. Th development of cooperative ties within NATO and the EU and the reforming of armed forces and economies will continue for many years after the Central European states become full members of these organizations.

Understood as integration, enlargement is not primarily an externally driven process motivated by concerns regarding those states remaining outside the process, but rather an internally driven process motivated by concerns about relations between states *within* the integration process. This is most obvious in the case of the European Union (and before it the European Community): post-war European integration was designed above all to promote cooperation and reduce the likelihood of war between the countries of Western Europe. Now, similar concerns motivate the expansion of the EU into Central and Eastern Europe. Even in the case of NATO during the Cold War, the Atlantic Alliance was driven by internal as well as external concerns. As it was infamously put, the Alliance's role was not only 'to keep the Russians out', but also to 'keep the Germans down and the Americans in'. With the end of the Cold War, the internal, integrative functions of NATO have arguably become even more important. Certainly, advocates of expanding NATO argue that integrating Central and Eastern European states into the Alliance will promote stability by encouraging cooperation within the region in the same way that involvement in NATO has encouraged cooperation in Western Europe for the last fifty years.⁵

Understanding the expansion of NATO and the EU as an internally driven, integrative process has important implications for the potential impact of selective enlargement on Central and Eastern Europe. First, it highlights the point that enlargement is not directed against the states excluded from the process. In this sense, the enlargement of NATO and the EU is not motivated by concerns about threats from these states or a desire to increase the strength of NATO and the EU vis-à-vis these states and does not in itself pose any threat to these states. Second, enlargement as integration implies that initial exclusion from membership of NATO and/or the EU does not exclude any state per se or in perpetuity: if the purpose of enlargement is the promotion of stability via integration, then there is no inherent reason why any state seeking integration and able to meet the criteria should be excluded. Indeed, both NATO and the EU have made clear that enlargement is an open-ended process, open to any European state able to meet the relevant criteria for membership. Third, and flowing from this point, the extent of individual Central and Eastern European states' integration is likely to be determined as much by their own domestic practices and foreign policies as by any geo-strategic logic. Both NATO and the EU have made clear that their enlargement decisions will be made on the basis of individual Central and Eastern European states' progress in democratization and economic reform and contributions to regional and international security. Both organizations appear to be pursuing this in practice: Hungary will join NATO because of its progress in democratization and developing cooperation with its neighbours, despite the fact that it will have no contiguous border with the rest of the Alliance; Estonia is included in the EU's 'first wave' because of its

progress in democratization, economic reform and state-building, while Latvia and Lithuania are excluded because they have made less progress.

Fourth, enlargement as integration is likely to be a flexible rather than rigid process, with loose and fuzzy boundaries. The entire history of the Euro-atlantic integration process reflects this conclusion: some states joined both NATO and the EC; other states joined only one; memberships changed over time; during the Cold War, Sweden and Finland stayed outside both NATO and the EC, but engaged in Nordic cooperation with their NATO and EC neighbours and were part of the broader Western 'security community'. The boundaries between NATO/EC members and their non-member Western neighbours were characterized not by confrontation or sharp 'dividing lines' but by cooperation and relatively open borders. Since the end of the Cold War, further, the boundaries between NATO/EU and Central and Eastern Europe have been characterized by growing cooperation, whether one looks at high-level political contacts, trade and economic ties, military cooperation, transfrontier cooperation or people-to-people contacts. The progress of enlargement so far suggests that this pattern will continue, with Central and Eastern European states gaining or choosing differing degrees and forms of integration: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have been invited to join both NATO and the EU; Estonia and Slovenia have so far been invited to join only the EU; the Baltic states may find it easier to join the EU than NATO; Romania may find it easier to join NATO than the EU. The patterns of Central and Eastern European membership in both NATO and the EU are also likely to shift over time.

In short, understood as part of a broader process of integrating the Central and Eastern European states with the West, there is no inherent reason why the enlargement of NATO and the EU should produce sharp divisions within Central and Eastern Europe or undermine cooperation between those states joining NATO and the EU and their neighbours. At the same time, however, the enlargement of NATO and the EU is not a risk-free process. The impact of enlargement will depend on three broad factors: the policies adopted by NATO and the EU to manage relations with those countries on their new eastern and southern neighbours; the willingness and ability of the new Central European members of both organization to maintain and intensify cooperation with their 'left out' neighbours; and the response of those states excluded from NATO and EU membership.

Widespread concern about the potentially negative impact of NATO enlargement has led the Alliance to adopt a comprehensive strategy designed to enhance cooperation with those countries remaining outside its borders and to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines. The elements of this strategy include: the NATO-Russia Founding Act; the NATO-Ukraine Charter; the 'enhanced' Partnership for Peace; the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council; a

commitment that the Alliance has no intention to deploy nuclear weapons or large conventional forces on the territory of new Central European members; agreement to adapt the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty to the new environment; and a commitment to leave the door open to further enlargement, with special reference to Slovenia, Romania and the Baltic states. Additionally, the US has concluded a special charter with the Baltic states and sought to develop a 'strategic partnership' with Romania. By summer 1998, this strategy appeared to have been reasonably successful in mitigating the potential negative consequences of NATO enlargement in the short term. In the long term, however, difficult issues remained to be addressed: whether and in what circumstances further enlargement would take place, particularly the sensitive question of the Baltic states; the longer term future of Russia and Ukraine's relations with the Alliance; and the security status of other Central and Eastern European states (especially the former Yugoslav states) with little prospect of NATO membership.

Less attention has been given to the potentially divisive consequences of EU enlargement. The European Union's non-military character and the absence of any Central and Eastern European or Russian opposition to EU enlargement has led most Western observers to conclude that EU enlargement will be a benign process. Indeed, critics of NATO enlargement have argued that the Central and Eastern European states should be granted EU membership instead of NATO membership. In fact, EU enlargement may be more likely to create new dividing lines in Central and Eastern Europe than NATO enlargement. The five countries invited to begin accession negotiations with the EU have already been asked by the Union to improve border controls on their eastern and southern boundaries. As part of their EU membership, further, they will be required to join the Schengen border regime which, while facilitating free travel amongst its members, also involves the establishment of tight controls on external borders. The new EU members will also have to adopt the EU's common visa arrangements with regard to non-member countries. In combination, these measures may mean the introduction of much stricter border controls and visa regulations on the currently relatively open eastern borders of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia when they join the EU. In these countries and their neighbours there are fears that this will significantly restrict the ability of people in the 'left out' countries to travel to their neighbours when they join the EU and that this will in turn undermine trade, people-to-people contacts and wider political relations.

Other aspects of EU enlargement could also exacerbate divisions between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in Central and Eastern Europe. The EU's common external trade regime will require new Central European members to abandon existing trade arrangements with their

neighbours and adopt the EU's common trade regime. Since states' pre-existing trade arrangements are usually incorporated into the EU's common trade regime when they join, this issue can probably be managed in such a way as to avoid undermining trade within Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, given the relatively slow pace of the EU's current liberalization of trade with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (particularly in the areas most important to these countries, such as steel, textiles and agriculture), there remain fears in the region that countries outside the EU could find their foreign trade undermined by their neighbours' membership of the Union. This issue is of particular concern for those states, such as Ukraine, which do not have Association Agreements with the Union.

More generally, there are also fears that EU enlargement could exacerbate economic divisions between the Central and Eastern European states. Those states which join the Union first will do so in significant part because they are already the most economically successful states in the region and as a result in receipt of the largest share of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The economic and political credibility provided by membership of the EU and the implementation of EU standards in areas such as investment, banking and legal systems is likely to make these countries even more attractive for foreign investors than their 'have not' neighbours. Once inside the EU, further, the first Central and Eastern European members will also begin to receive various forms of internal EU aid to help them develop their economies, infrastructure and social and administrative systems. Increased foreign investment and EU aid is likely to contribute to the general political and social stability of these countries. In combination, these various factors could easily exacerbate existing divisions between the wealthier, more stable Central and Eastern European states who will join the Union first and their poorer and less stable neighbours. Additionally, accession negotiations and measures to facilitate integration once inside with the Union are likely to place very heavy demands on the political, governmental, administrative and legal systems of those states joining - far more so than in the case of NATO enlargement. There is a danger that this will mean that fewer political and administrative resources are available to support cooperation with neighbouring states outside the Union.

In short, there may be a greater risk of new divisions in Central and Eastern Europe resulting from EU enlargement than from NATO enlargement. In both those countries likely to join the EU first and those likely to remain outside there are fears that the tightening of border controls and increasing economic and political disparities could in turn undermine on-going efforts to overcome historic differences and build cooperation in the region.

Poland: The Challenges of Ostpoliti

As NATO and the EU move east, Poland will face a particularly complex situation on its eastern borders, posing difficult challenges for it and the West as a whole. Poland's 800k long border with Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad will be perhaps the most important external border of both NATO and the EU. Kaliningrad and Russia's close ally Belarus will be sensitive zones in the post-enlargement NATO-Russia relationship and the most likely foci of any Russian military response to NATO's expansion. Kaliningrad, in particular, will be one of NATO and the EU's few direct boundaries with Russia and the only new NATO-Russia boundary resulting from enlargement - making it an important test case for relations between the Alliance and Russia. Poland is Ukraine's most important neighbour after Russia. While the two countries are seeking to develop a 'strategic partnership', their relationship remains troubled by historic and practical problems and will be greatly shaped by developments within Ukraine and in Ukrainian-Russian relations. Polish-Belarusian relations are largely frozen because of the increasingly authoritarian character of President Lukashenka's regime, but Poland is more vulnerable than any other state to the consequences of instability in Belarus. Poland's borders with Ukraine and Belarus will also be one of the most important boundaries between the bigger EU and non-Associates with little prospect of membership, making it a major test of how open or closed the new borders of the Union will be. Poland's emerging 'strategic partnership' with Lithuania will also raise questions about how far Poland can and should push for Lithuanian membership of NATO and the EU, the likely Russian reaction and the possible future status of Kaliningrad 'inside' NATO and/or EU territory. For geostrategic and historic reasons, further, Poland's relationship with Russia is both the most important and the most troubled of the Central European states' relationship with the largest neighbour.

Since the early 1990s, Poland has pursued the normalization of relations with its eastern neighbours, concluding bilateral state treaties recognizing existing borders and establishing frameworks for political, economic and security cooperation. Although parts of present-day Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania were incorporated into the pre-eighteenth century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and there are significant ethnic Polish minorities in these countries, Poland has never questioned its current eastern borders and has downplayed minority rights issues (although tensions flared briefly with Lithuania over this issue at the beginning of the 1990s). Poland, however, faces a difficult 'balancing act' in its ostpolitik - one which will continue into the post-enlargement era. The history of conflict between Russia and Poland, the great uncertainties about the future direction of Russian politics and Russia's continuing neo-

imperial pretensions mean that Poland has a clear interest in bolstering the independence of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania as bulwarks against any serious downturn in relations with Russia. The success or failure of Ukraine in consolidating its independence, in particular, will have a significant bearing on how far Russia comes to terms with its post-imperial status and establishes stable, cooperative relations with the rest of Europe. This has led Poland to establish 'strategic partnerships' with Ukraine and Lithuania and to support the democratic opposition in Belarus. Balanced against this, however, Poland also has interests in developing cooperation with Russia. In both the short and long term, Poland will not be secure if it faces confrontation with Russia on its eastern borders. The tension between these two goals - supporting the independence of its immediate neighbours and developing cooperative ties with Russia - has posed an on-going dilemma for Poland. Its action in support of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania have at various times antagonized Russia.

Against this background, Poland has followed a 'dual track' policy, seeking to support the independence of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania while also maintaining normal, cooperative ties with Russia.⁶ Within Poland, while there has been consensus on the basic goal of following a dual track policy, how it should be implemented and the balance between the two goals has been more contentious. The political right, grouped around the Solidarity and post-Solidarity political forces but also including more strongly nationalist groups, have argued that greater emphasis should be given to relations with Ukraine and Lithuania and criticized the post-communist political forces for what they see as 'Russia first' policies. The post-communist SLD and PSL, have argued for paying greater attention to relations with Russia, both in order to avoid antagonizing Poland's most powerful eastern neighbour and because of the potential economic market Russia provides. In practice, these debates have often been driven by domestic politics and the desire on both sides to criticize the other, especially given the continuing and deep Solidarity/former-communist divide within Polish politics.⁷ The new AWS-UW government has committed itself to a more active *ostpolitik*, particularly towards Ukraine and Lithuania. The 'balancing act' of Polish *ostpolitik*, however, is likely to continue and it is notable that Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek's policy has received all-party support in the Sejm (as the previous SLD-PSL policy also did). Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski has also repeatedly argued that as Poland integrates itself with the West it is vital that it intensifies cooperation with its eastern neighbours.⁸

Poland's efforts to establish a 'strategic partnership' with Ukraine have been the centre-piece of its *ostpolitik*. A declaration of friendship and good-neighbourly relations was signed in October 1990, long before Ukraine became independent, and Poland was the first state to formally recognize Ukraine's independence in December 1991. A bilateral friendship

and cooperation treaty was signed in May 1992, confirming the border between the two states and committing them to develop cooperative ties. A special joint Presidential Committee on Polish-Ukrainian Relations was established in May 1993. Regular meetings now occur between Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign and Defence Ministers, as well as at lower working levels. Quite wide ranging military cooperation has been established, including the development of a Polish-Ukrainian peacekeeping battalion. From 1992-93, the two countries talked increasingly in terms of a 'strategic partnership', with Poland viewing Ukraine as its most important eastern partner and Ukraine seeing Poland as its leading advocate in Central Europe and with the West.⁹

Nevertheless, the relationship has not been unproblematic. Historic disputes over the 1947 'Vistula operation' expulsion of Ukrainians from Poland and the wartime killing of tens of thousands of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists were not resolved until May 1997.¹⁰ Ukrainian officials have at various points expressed scepticism about Poland's commitment to supporting Ukraine, while Polish officials have expressed doubts about the willingness or ability of Ukraine to undertake the reforms necessary for closer relations with Central Europe and the West.¹¹ The differing geostrategic positions and goals of the two countries have also made cooperation difficult. While Poland's priority has been membership of NATO and the EU, Ukraine has little prospect of membership of either organization, and this has sometimes produced differing approaches to regional cooperation.¹² More generally, the lack of progress in economic and administrative reform in Ukraine and Poland's own limited resources, limit the potential for cooperation in the areas of state- and democracy-building and economic reform which are perhaps most important to Ukraine's future.¹³

In stark contrast to Russia (and Belarus), Ukraine has not opposed Poland's membership of NATO, nor has the prospect of Poland's integration with NATO disrupted relations between the two countries.¹⁴ While Ukrainian officials are concerned about Russia's possible reaction to NATO's expansion, there is no perception that NATO or Polish membership of the Alliance threatens Poland - as witnessed by the willingness to sign the Ukraine-NATO Charter in July 1997. Both Ukrainian and Polish officials, however, express concern about the potentially negative consequences of EU enlargement. Currently, Ukraine has visa-free travel arrangements with Poland and there is quite extensive cross-border travel and trade. Both countries fear that the EU may insist on Poland introducing a visa regime for Ukrainians and tightening border controls when it joins the Union, thereby limiting freedom of movement and trade. The Ukrainian ambassador to Poland has warned: 'the Berlin Wall was dismantled. Are we going to build a new one in the east from the pieces of the pulled down Berlin Wall'. He suggested that EU-imposed constraints on travel and trade could undermin

reform in Ukraine (because Ukrainians visits to Poland show them the benefits of reform) and convince Ukrainians to pursue closer cooperation with Russia.¹⁵ Foreign Minister Geremek has also said that Poland wants to maintain visa-free travel with Ukraine when it joins the EU.¹⁶ Whether the EU is willing to conclude a visa-free travel regime with Ukraine or some other compromise can be reached will be an important issue in Poland's EU accession negotiations and for the future of Polish-Ukrainian and EU-Ukrainian relations.

Polish-Ukrainian relations will also be significantly affected by developments within Ukraine. The current hiatus in Ukraine politics and the slow progress of economic and administrative reforms constrain the development of relations between the two countries. Both Polish and Ukrainian observers argue that the development of a more substantive 'strategic partnership' now requires more cooperation in the areas of economics, administrative reform and 'people-to-people' contacts.¹⁷ In conjunction with the US, Polish officials are currently exploring how they may support Ukraine in its economic, administrative and state structure reforms.¹⁸ Progress, however, may well depend on the outcome of the Ukrainian Presidential elections. Progress in democratization and economic reform and the consolidation of Ukraine's Western orientation could facilitate the deepening of the Polish-Ukrainian relationship and make Poland a key supporter of Ukraine within NATO and the EU. Alternatively, setbacks to state-building, economic reform and democratization within Ukraine and the development of closer ties with Russia would likely limit future Polish-Ukrainian cooperation.

Poland is also seeking to establish a 'strategic partnership' with Lithuania to parallel its relationship with Ukraine. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Polish-Lithuanian relations were undermined by disputes over the rights of Lithuania's 260,000 strong Polish minority and acknowledgement of Poland's 1920 annexation of Vilnius which delayed the conclusion of a bilateral cooperation treaty.¹⁹ Both countries, however, recognized the dangers of any escalation of the dispute and found common cause in their concern over Russia and their desire for integration with NATO and the EU. The bilateral friendship treaty, which confirms the current border, commits the two states to cooperation and includes guarantees of minority rights was signed in the spring of 1994. Since then, relations between the two states have improved dramatically, with regular high-level and working meetings, cooperation in relation to ties with the West (particularly NATO, where Poland has sought to include Lithuania in its cooperation with Germany and Denmark), substantial military cooperation (including border air defence cooperation, Polish military aid to Lithuania in the form of equipment and the establishment of a joint peacekeeping battalion), a commitment to establish a 'Niemen' border Euro-region (which may also include Belarus and Kaliningrad) and Polish support for Lithuanian membership of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA).²⁰ Vytautas

Landsbergis, Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament and former President, has even gone so far as to suggest that 'Lithuania's security is the security of Poland and vice versa'.²¹

Despite the Baltic states vulnerability to any Russian reaction to NATO's expansion and Lithuania's particular vulnerability to developments in Kaliningrad and Belarus, Lithuania has welcomed the Alliance's 'first wave' enlargement decisions.²² Indeed, Lithuanian officials see their growing ties with Poland and Poland's early integration with NATO and the EU as a means of improving their own prospects of membership of both organizations: Poland's NATO and EU membership will set a precedent and provide Lithuania with a direct land border with and an advocate within NATO and the EU.²³ Like Ukraine, however, Lithuania currently has visa-free travel arrangements with Poland and has expressed concern that Polish membership of the EU could limit travel and trade across the Polish-Lithuanian border.²⁴ As with Ukraine, Foreign Minister Geremek has argued that Polish-Lithuanian visa-free travel should be retained when Poland joins the EU.²⁵ In Lithuania's case, its relatively small size and Association Agreement with the EU make it more likely that the EU will conclude a visa-free travel arrangement with it by the time Poland joins the Union. The issue of the Baltic states membership of NATO may also pose dilemmas for Poland. Poland has stated its support for their membership of NATO (and the EU), but Russia remains strongly opposed to extension of NATO membership to any former Soviet state. Poland may have to be careful in balancing its support for the Baltic states integration with NATO and its relations with Russia. Since the extension of NATO membership to the Baltic states will only be achieved with the support of the United States and other leading NATO members, however, Poland's dilemma will in practice be part of a wider issue for the Alliance, rather than a specifically Polish problem.

In sharp contrast to its relations with Ukraine and Lithuania, Poland's relations with Belarus have been severely limited by developments within that country. Poland recognized Belarus's independence in December 1991 and a June 1992 treaty reaffirmed the border between the two countries and committed them to cooperation. For a short period at the beginning of the 1990s, the coming to power of pro-independence, democratic forces within Belarus and a commitment to international neutrality suggested that there might be good prospects for cooperation between the two countries.²⁶ Since then, the increasingly authoritarian character of President Lukashenka's rule, the absence of economic reforms and Belarus's very close ties with Russia have effectively frozen relations between the two states.²⁷ Relations have also been characterized by disputes over the activities of the Belarusian democratic opposition based in Poland, ties between Polish and Belarusian democratic movements, Belarusian accusations of Polish spying against it, Foreign Minister Geremek's visit to Minsk to open the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) office

there, and delays at border crossings.²⁸ In one case, Solidarity leader Marian Kraklowski, the likely candidate of the centre-right in the next Polish Presidential elections, was forcibly expelled from Belarus after meeting independent trade unionists there.²⁹

Like Russia, Belarus has opposed NATO's enlargement, with President Lukashenka reportedly describing the Alliance as a 'monster'.³⁰ In 1995, Belarus temporarily halted the destruction of military equipment mandated by the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the transferral of nuclear missiles to Russia. Although President Lukashenka suggested these steps were a response to NATO's prospective expansion, they appear in fact to have been driven by the severe financial problems Belarus faces and the prospect of gaining Western aid to implement its disarmament commitments.³¹ NATO's prospective enlargement may also have been a factor behind the April 1996 Russian-Belarusian union treaty, although the treaty appears to have been motivated primarily by the domestic political interests of the two countries' Presidents.³² The various integration agreements between the two states have, however, become infamous for their non-implementation. So far, there has been no substantive Belarusian military reaction to Poland's imminent membership of NATO. The economic constraints facing Belarus and Russia's desire to avoid direct confrontation with NATO are likely to limit any efforts in this direction. Nevertheless, some Belarusian military reaction to NATO enlargement cannot be ruled out. Polish observers already consider the Belarusian armed forces a *de facto* extension of the Russian armed forces. Russian pressure or a maverick decision by President Lukashenka could result, for example, in increased forces near the Polish border, violation of CFE Treaty limits, or, in the worst case, the redeployment of Russian nuclear weapons onto Belarusian territory. In this context, Poland and NATO have strong reasons to exercise maximum restraint militarily, in order to avoid giving Belarus or Russia any excuse for reacting militarily to the Alliance's enlargement.

While Belarus has not reacted negatively to Poland's likely membership of the EU *per se*, the introduction of new border regulations by Poland in preparation for EU membership has created tensions. Under these regulations, introduced at the end of 1997, foreigners from countries with which Poland does not have specific visa-free travel agreements must have an official invitation, a hotel reservation or prove that they have sufficient funds for their stay. Of Poland's immediate neighbours, only Belarus and Russia do not have visa-free travel agreements (because they have been unwilling to sign re-admission agreements committing them to take back illegal immigrants). As a result, from the beginning of 1998 the freedom of Belarusians and Russians to travel to Poland has been significantly constrained (compared to the relatively free travel prior to the new regulations) and such travel and related trade has declined. After the new regulations were introduced, Belarus and Russia lodged official protests

and Belarus withdrew its ambassador from Warsaw. Additionally, Belarusian opposition activists argued that their access to the West was being restricted, further isolating them.³³ These problems may perhaps be solved in the short-to-medium term by the conclusion of Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Russian visa-free travel agreements. They illustrate, however, the issues likely to be faced on Poland's eastern border if its EU membership means the introduction of tighter travel and border restrictions with its non-EU neighbours.

Poland also has interests in supporting democratization within Belarus and the loosening of Belarus's ties with Russia. Towards this end, the Polish government, President and Sejm have criticized the human rights situation within Belarus, taken a liberal attitude towards Belarusian opposition activists based in Poland and supported ties between Belarusian opposition groups and their Polish counterparts (for example, between trades unions and youth groups).³⁴ Poland, however, is likely to continue to face a difficult 'balancing act' between supporting democratic forces in Belarus and actions which might provoke the current Belarusian regime (or Russia) into some form of retaliation (for example, against Poles visiting Belarus or the Polish minority in Belarus).³⁵ Poland also has to consider the possibility of serious crisis in Belarus, resulting from economic collapse, the growth of opposition to Lukashenka's regime or large-scale violence against the democratic opposition. In this case, Poland could be placed in a particularly sensitive position as a result of the activities of Belarusian opposition groups based in Poland or an influx of Belarusian refugees. Such a crisis would certainly require delicate handling by Poland and NATO and the EU as a whole.

Poland's *ostpolitik* is further complicated by the anomalous position of Kaliningrad, an isolated exclave of the Russian Federation, located on the Baltic coast between Poland and Lithuania. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Kaliningrad's geographical separation from the rest of the Russian Federation raised uncertainties about its future status, with speculation about the region's return to Germany (the region having been part of East Prussia before the second World War), its division between Poland and Lithuania or some new form of international status (such as the region's integration with the EU).³⁶ Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Germany have, however, all formally accepted the territorial status quo and there is no serious interest in changing the region's status as part of the Russian Federation. Russia has pressed Poland and Lithuania to accept some form of Russian controlled transit 'corridor' across their territory, but both states have strongly rejected such proposals.³⁷ Severe economic problems and a large Russian military presence have also led to fears of instability emanating from Kaliningrad. Polish officials, however, recognize that the large military presence is primarily a consequence of the redeployment problems facing Russia's military, that the Russian armed forces in the region are weak and not structured or deployed for any offensiv

action and are more concerned about the potential for low-level problems than any imminent 'Russian threat'.³⁸

After the first wave of NATO and EU enlargement, Kaliningrad will constitute the only new NATO-Russia border and one of the EU's few direct borders with Russia. If Lithuania joins NATO and the EU, the region will then be entirely surrounded by NATO and EU territory. This clearly raises significant questions about Russian transit access to and the future military presence in Kaliningrad. Recent reports of the deployment of a new mobile air defence system in Kaliningrad may indicate a Russian military response to Poland's prospective membership of NATO.³⁹ Foreign Minister Geremek has said that Poland is willing to offer Russia 'normal European transit conditions' for Kaliningrad (as opposed to the Russian proposed extra-territorial transit corridor).⁴⁰ Poland is interested in exploring military confidence-building measures in relation to Kaliningrad within NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) and the CFE Treaty adaptation talks, as well as expanding economic ties with the region (including incorporating it in the proposed Niemen cross-border Euro-region with Lithuania and Belarus).⁴¹ Poland, but also NATO and the EU as a whole, have an obvious interest in ensuring that Kaliningrad does not become the focus of any Russian military reaction against NATO enlargement. Military transparency and confidence-building measures should therefore be explored further and economic support should be provided to encourage normal Russian transit to Kaliningrad.

Behind Poland's relations with its immediate eastern neighbours, lies the larger issue of Poland's troubled relations with Russia. Polish-Russian relations were normalized in the 1990s, with the withdrawal of Russian forces from Poland, the conclusion of a bilateral cooperation treaty in 1992 and the resolution of historical disputes such as the infamous 1940 Katyn massacre of Polish officers by Soviet forces.⁴² Relations, however, remain characterized by mutually re-inforcing mistrust.⁴³ Russia's role in the eighteenth and nineteenth century partitions of Poland, in the first and second World Wars, forty years of Soviet rule and Russia's continuing neo-imperial ambitions in the former Soviet states have made Poles understandably wary of their largest neighbour. Memories of inter-war Polish-Russian conflicts in Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, Poland's drive for NATO membership and its active foreign policy towards Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, however, only exacerbated Russian fears of Poland. As the largest and geo-strategically most important new member of NATO, further, Poland will inevitably bear a particular burden in terms of efforts to reassure Russia that NATO enlargement does not threaten it or exclude it from Europe. Despite the mistrust characterizing Polish-Russian relations, however, elements of cooperation have been established. Various high-level bilateral meetings have been held, Russia is still one of Poland's

largest trading partners, Russian gas and oil supplies to Western Europe transit Poland, and bilateral military cooperation has been established, with contacts at various levels and Polish purchasing of spare parts for military equipment from Russian.⁴⁴ As Poland is integrated into NATO and the EU, one of the most difficult foreign policy challenges it faces will be finding ways of expanding cooperation with Russia.

¹ Central Europe is used here to describe Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. How one defines 'Central Europe' is a sensitive question, given the terms association with relative stability and good prospects for early membership of NATO and the EU. Nevertheless, the common geostrategic position of these four countries and Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary's inclusion in the first wave of new NATO and EU members justifies treating the four countries as a reasonably homogenous region.

² Author's interviews in Poland, March 1998.

³ Michael E. Brown, 'The Flawed Logic of NATO Expansion', *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp37-8 and pp46-7.

⁴ The concept of a peaceful 'security community' amongst the countries of Western Europe and North America was developed by Karl Deutsch. See Karl Deutsch et al, Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience, New York: Greenwood Publishers, 1969. On the extension of the Western security community to Central and Eastern Europe see Ian Gambles, Ed., *A Lasting Peace in Central Europe?*, Chaillot Papers 20, Paris: Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, October 1995.

⁵ See, for example, Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler and F. Stephen Larrabee, 'NATO Expansion: The Next Steps', *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp7-33; and, Dana H. Allin, 'Can Containment Work Again?', *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp53-65.

⁶ On Poland's post-Cold War *ostpolitik*, see Anna Sabbat-Swidlicka, 'Senate Calls for Changes in Eastern Policy', *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 39, 28 September 1990, pp21-6; Jan B. de Weydenthal, 'Poland's Eastern Policy', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 3, No. 7, 18 February 1994, pp10-3; Stephen R. Burant and Voytek Zubek, 'Eastern Europe's Old Memories and New Realities: Resurrecting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Spring 1993, pp370-93; Stephen R. Burant, 'International Relations in a Regional Context: Poland and its Eastern Neighbours - Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 1993, pp395-418; Stephen R. Burant, 'Poland's Eastern Policy, 1990-95: The Limits of the Possible', *Problems of Post-Communism*, March/April 1996, pp48-55; and, Ilya Prizel, 'Warsaw's *Ostpolitik*: A New Encounter with Positivism', in Ilya Prizel and Andrew A. Michta, Eds., *Polish Foreign Policy Reconsidered: Challenges of Independence*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995, pp95-128.

⁷ This was most apparent during the controversy in 1996 over reported ties between SLD Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy and a former Soviet spy, which forced Oleksy's resignation. See Matthe Brzezinski, 'Polish PM and the KGB man "just good friends"', *The Guardian*, 12 January 1996.

⁸ Jan de Weydenthal, 'Poland: President Determined to Aid Neighbours', Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty, 9 July 1997 (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1997/07/F.RU.970709145434.html>).

⁹ For details on the emerging Polish-Ukrainian relationship see Jan B. de Weydenthal, 'Polish-Ukrainian Rapprochement', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 9, 28 February 1992, pp25-7; Ian J. Brzezinski, 'Polish-Ukrainian Relations: Europe's Neglected Strategic Axis', *Survival*, Vol. 35, Autumn 1993, pp26-37; Oleksandr Pavliuk, 'Ukrainian-Polish Relations: A Pillar of Regional Stability?', in Monika Wohlfeld, Ed., *The Effects of Enlargement On Bilateral Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Chaillot Papers 26, Paris: Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, June 1997, pp43-62; Aldona Chojnowska, 'Relations with Ukraine', in Barbara Wizimirska, Ed., *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy: 1997*, Warsaw: Services Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997, pp141-9; and Antoni Z. Kaminski and Jerzy Kozakiewicz, Polish-Ukrainian Relations 1992-1996, (Warsaw: Centre for International Relations at the Institute of Public Affairs, 1997).

- ¹⁰ 'Ukraine: Poland's President Arrives for Talks', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 20 May 1997 (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1997/05/N.RU.970520154040.html>).
- ¹¹ Kaminski and Kozakiewicz, Polish-Ukrainian Relations, pp26-34; and, Sherman W. Garnett, *Keystone in the Arch: Ukraine in the Emerging Security Environment of Central and Eastern Europe*, Washington, DC; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997, pp87-90.
- ¹² This was most obvious in the case of Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk's 1993 proposal for a Baltic-Black Sea security zone, which the Poles feared might undermine their prospects for membership of NATO. See Kaminski and Kozakiewicz, Polish-Ukrainian Relations, pp32-3.
- ¹³ On the problems facing Ukraine in these areas, see Stephen B. Heintz and Oleksandr Pavliuk, *Security Sovereignty: Ukraine's First Five Years of Independence*, New York/Prague: Institute for EastWest Studies, March 1997.
- ¹⁴ Pavliuk, 'Ukrainian-Polish Relations', pp52-4.
- ¹⁵ Bogdan Turek, 'Ukraine: Diplomat Appeals to Poland to Keep Border Open', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 11 May 1998 (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/05/F.RU.980511124023.html>).
- ¹⁶ 'Poland wants to keep visa-free regime with Ukraine', *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 39, Part II, 26 February 1998.
- ¹⁷ Pavliuk, 'Ukrainian-Polish Relations', pp55-60; and Kaminski and Kozakiewicz, Polish-Ukrainian Relations, pp44-53.
- ¹⁸ Author's interviews with Polish Foreign Ministry officials, March 1998.
- ¹⁹ Stephen R. Burant, 'Polish-Lithuanian Relations: Past, Present and Future', Problems of Communism, Vol. XL, No. 3, May-June 1991, pp67-84; Saulius Girnius and Anna Sabbat-Swidlicka, 'Current Issues in Polish-Lithuanian Relations', Report on Eastern Europe, Vol. 1, No. 2, 12 January 1990, pp39-50; and Jan B. de Weydenthal, 'The Polish-Lithuanian Dispute', Report on Eastern Europe, Vol. 2, No. 41, 11 October 1991, pp20-3.
- ²⁰ Jan Widacki, 'Relations with Lithuania', in Barbara Wizimirska, Ed., *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy: 1997*, Warsaw: Services Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997, pp150-61; Wojciech Zajackowski, 'Polish-Lithuanian Relations' in Monika Wohlfeld, Ed., *The Effects of Enlargement On Bilateral Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Chaillot Papers 26, Paris: Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, June 1997, pp26-42; Saulius Girnius, 'Polish President Visits Lithuania', *OMRI Daily Digest*, II, No. 47, 6 March 1996; Jakub Karpinski, 'Polish, Lithuanian Prime Ministers Meet', *OMRI Daily Digest*, II, No. 79, 22 April 1996; Christopher Klimiuk, 'Poland: Lithuania's Defense Minister to Visit Today', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2 December 1996, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1996/12/N.RU.961202181920.html>); and author's interviews with Polish Ministry of Defence officials.
- ²¹ Kris Klimiuk, 'Poland: Top Lithuanian Legislator Addresses Parliament', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 21 February 1997, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1997/02/N.RU.970221155557.html>).
- ²² Kestutis Girnius, 'Lithuania: President Positive About NATO's Expansion', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 9 July 1997, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1997/07/N.RU.970709114437.html>).
- ²³ Lithuanian Foreign Minister Algirdas Saudargas has argued that 'integration via Poland would be easier', see Zajackowski, 'Polish-Lithuanian Relations', p31. Also, author's interviews with Lithuanian officials.
- ²⁴ Turek, 'Ukraine: Diplomat Appeals to Poland to Keep Border Open'; Jan de Weydenthal, 'Poland: Visa-Free Travel and Return Rules are Guidelines for Border Control', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 February 1998
- ²⁵ Jan de Weydenthal, 'Poland: Visa-Free Travel and Return Rules are Guidelines for Border Control', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 February 1998, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/02/F.RU.980226140909.html>).
- ²⁶ Stephen R. Burant, 'Polish-Belarusian Relations', RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 37, 18 September 1992, pp41-5.
- ²⁷ For a good summary of developments in Belarus see Ingmar Oldberg, 'Sunset over the Swamp: The Independence and Dependence of Belarus', European Security, Vol. 6, No. 3, Autumn 1997, pp110-30.
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²⁹ Jakub Karpinski, 'Polish Union Leader Deported from Belarus', *OMRI Daily Digest*, II, No. 94, 15 May 1996.

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³¹ Ustina Markus, 'Missed Opportunities in Foreign Policy', *Transition*, Vol. 1, No. 15, 25 August 1995, p63; and Ustina Markus, 'Financial Woes Lead to Halt in Disarmament', *Transition*, Vol. 1, No. 7, 3 November 1995, pp54-7.

³² 'Alexander the Not-So-Great', *The Economist*, 13 April 1996, pp40-1; and Weydenthal, 'Belarus: Minsk Demands NATO Security Guarantees'.

³³ Bogdan Turek, 'Poland: Authorities Implement Stricter Border Regulations', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 12 January 1998 (<http://www.refrl.org/nca/features/1998/01/F.RU.980112135450.html>); Jan de Weydenthal, 'Poland: Tighter Border Controls Comply with EU Demands, But...', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 28 January 1998 (<http://www.refrl.org/nca/features/1998/01/F.RU.980128144017.html>); and Ian Traynor, 'Fortress Europe shuts window to the east', *The Guardian*, 9 February 1998.

³⁴ Walter Stankievich and Joe Schneider, 'Belarus: Lukashenka's Walkout on Poland's President Not a Snub', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 6 December 1996, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1998/12/N.RU.961206173148.html>); 'Poland Grants Asylum to Belarusian Citizen', *RFE/RL Newslines*, No. 190, Part II, 7 January 1998; 'Poland's Solidarity Pledges Humanitarian Aid to Belarus', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 29 May 1996, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1998/05/N.RU.96052917142928.html>); and 'Poland: Polish, Belarus Youth Groups to Sign Cooperation Pact', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 4 December 1996, (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/news/1998/12/N.RU.961204180550.html>).

³⁵ Author's interviews with Polish Foreign Ministry officials, March 1998.

³⁶ On Kaliningrad, see Magdalene Hoff and Heinz Timmerman, 'Kaliningrad: Russia's Future Gateway to Europe?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 36, 10 September 1993, pp37-43; Nicholas H. Redman, *Kaliningrad: Russia's Baltic Exclave*, International Security Programme, Briefing Paper No. 25, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, September 1995; and, Pertti Joenniemi, *Kaliningrad: A Double Periphery?*, Working Papers 17, Denmark: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), 1997.

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³⁸ Author's interviews with Polish Foreign Ministry and Defence Ministry officials.

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⁴⁰ 'Poland Offers Russia Transit to Kaliningrad', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 95, Part II, 20 May 1998.

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