

THE ENLARGEMENT OF NATO AND THE TURKISH PUBLIC

OPINION

Suha Bolukbasioglu

My project aimed at examining how the NATO alliance has been coping with the challenges associated with enlargement and the extension of NATO's strategic sphere of action, both geographically and substantively. I have examined how the Turkish public opinion perceives the benefits and the challenges of enlargement as mentioned above. In addition, I examined how the New Strategic Concept assigning NATO new tasks including crisis management, peacekeeping and peace enforcement is perceived by the Turkish public opinion, and whether or not these new tasks will bring about a lessening of confidence in NATO's traditional role, namely collective self-defense. At the outset of the project, I assumed that factors the Turkish public seem to take into account when evaluating NATO's reliability included: 1) NATO's steadfastness against the Russian threat; 2) the recent indecisiveness in NATO's coping with crises in the Balkans and the Transcaucasus; 3) the perceived ambiguity surrounding NATO's obligations to Partnership for Peace members; 4) Russia's reactions to NATO's expansion, and whether they could harm the Turco-Russian relations.

During the Cold War, most military crises probably would have escalated into a full-scale East-West confrontation and thus they would have inevitably concerned the vital interests of the alliance members. Today, the once for granted taken indivisibility of security interests is not necessarily a given; regional, or more limited conflicts have once again become possible. Hence this means that individual NATO members could adopt independent policies regarding regional crises. At the outset of my project I had assumed that extending NATO rapidly without first building the necessary political support at the NATO members' home countries would lead to commitments for Eastern Europe as empty as the hollow commitments that France and Great Britain made to Poland on the eve of WWII. Given the increasing probability of regional conflicts, my assumption was that enlargement could actually strain NATO's ability to maintain stability. My research showed that the Turkish public had similar reservations about enlargement.

The research I conducted has led me to believe that at least three basic questions regarding NATO's expansion need to be asked. These are:

- a) Is NATO politically willing and able to implement security guarantees to new members in Central and Eastern Europe?
- b) Is it possible to maintain cohesiveness in an enlarged alliance?
- c) What will be the implications of NATO's speedy enlargement for Russia?

Most Turks whom I interviewed said that the post-1991 increase in NATO responsibilities should not replace its key purpose of collective defense and deterrence of the aggressors; rather they argued that NATO should first and foremost focus on its original purpose of defending its members in the event a new, serious threat emerges. Once the traditional defense area the alliance is extended to Central and Eastern Europe, the question arises: Would the current NATO allies actually feel under obligation to commit military forces into conflicts that might arise in this region?

The war in the former Yugoslavia has already demonstrated that NATO members are reluctant to use force to fight aggression in a conflict outside NATO's traditional area. In case a similar conflict arose in Central or Eastern Europe, which resembled the ones in the Balkans by vagueness and ethnic hatred, the alliance's decision-making could experience a paralysis in agreeing to the use of military force and hence creating doubts about Article 5's relevance to the post-Cold War era.

In the post-1991 era all the NATO members have subjected their defense policies to rigorous scrutiny in an effort to adjust to the new realities. Yet there have gradually emerged different views on enlargement as to whom to include or exclude, and whether or not to pursue additional goals other than collective defense.

All these have significantly altered how the member states and their populations view NATO. The addition of new members also led to a

process of political and military redefinition because of these states' recent history would – according to some -- exacerbate NATO's difficulty in arriving at common positions. New members would bring with themselves a bag of new problems, such as historical problems with an expansionist neighbor, Russia. They also have a problem in common, namely an uncertain domestic situation, including socio-economic instability.

The proponents of enlargement often argue that admission of these pro-Western countries into the Euro-Atlantic collective defense framework would help stabilize their democratic institutions. Yet the democratization of Germany and the management of the Greek-Turkish dispute took place when the conditions were not conducive to stability. They took place while the U.S. and the Soviet Union were engaged in a virtual interstate conflict, albeit a contained one. Hence the democratization of Eastern Europe could, by definition, proceed without NATO expanding towards the east.

Actually until quite recently many in the West argued in favor of a "strategic partnership" between Russia and the West. Most of the proponents of this view assumed a compatibility of interests between Russia and the West. This assumption seemed realistic in light of almost total Russian acceptance of Western views in the early 1990s. Yet nationalism with significant anti-Western undertones has trickled down to Russian foreign policymaking which may have accelerated the enlargement process.

In its summit meeting in January 1994, as an interim step, NATO offered military cooperation and consultation to all the states of the former Soviet bloc under the “Partnership for Peace” (PfP). The PFP would enable the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as the former Soviet republics to make their military structures compatible with NATO, an essential condition for future membership.

The former republics of the Soviet Union as well as the Central and Eastern European countries were enthusiastic about the program partly because it seemed to promise these countries’ eventual liberation from Russian heavy-handed influence. Proponents of rapid enlargement (turning the PfP members into full NATO members) talk of NATO’s “exporting stability.” They favor “widening of the community of democracies,” while they count on presenting “visions and incentives for the former foes in the East”. Exactly these two major goals seem to contradict each other. Up until now NATO has not come up with a quick fix.

The proponents of enlargement are not very sure about the characteristics of the new security environment they would like to have. While the former Soviet republics and Central and East European States are hoping for security from Russia encroachment by establishing permanent links with NATO, NATO members – while showing interest in enlargement -- are also are interested in maintaining security and stability in Europe and Eurasia in association with Russia. Moscow, for its part, is

trying to increase its influence in the same region by being recognized by NATO as a major actor. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the alliance has extended its strategic sphere of action, both geographically and substantively. It now includes Central and Eastern Europe and various security and non-security related issues. Moreover, NATO offers the U.N., the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Western European Union (WEU) political and military assistance with peacekeeping efforts and crisis and conflict management. NATO has also aimed at dealing with new risks and threats, whether originating in the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East, or almost any other contingency practically all over the NATO neighborhood. NATO's revised strategy and its enlargement process could either antagonize or win over the individual NATO members within the alliance and weaken or strengthen NATO as a whole.

. The result of this process could be non-intervention on the part of key alliance members and NATO passivity as a consequence, even within NATO's traditional security area. Actually, there is nothing in the NATO treaty prohibiting any member's refusal to act. Under Article 5, NATO members are only obligated to use any means as they consider necessary. As a result the alliance's survival is at stake. Given the fact that it is the problem of ethnic conflicts that is the most important threat to stability in Central and Eastern Europe, enlargement and possible

enlargements in the future could play a significant role in NATO's future viability.

NATO does not enjoy the luxury of choosing a little or a lot in terms of security for its members. There is either a collective defense structure or there is none. Thus, it seems meaningful to attempt to enlarge NATO only after the questions mentioned above have been answered to the satisfaction of all its members.

In order to identify, collect, analyze and interpret the information regarding the perceptions of the Turkish people regarding NATO expansion I conducted interviews with NATO officials, and with almost 200 informed people in Turkey belonging to the bureaucracy, media, universities (professors and students) and civil society organizations. Moreover, I conducted a thorough examination of published materials concerning NATO policies and the recent developments. In short, I collected data through archival research, and interviews. The information acquired from these sources were examined in a systematic and analytical way in order to determine the validity and the criteria of admissibility of evidence collected.

Collective Security

In a 1995 Study on NATO enlargement, the alliance hardly ever refers to collective defense as a goal of NATO. Instead, it refers to consensus building, peacekeeping, and fostering habits of cooperation as means to ensure stability in the Euro-Atlantic region.¹ Since 1991 NATO had adopted the policy of the PfP, aimed at the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the CJTF, the European Security and Defense Identity, the May 1997 Founding Act, the May 1997 Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the July 1997 NATO-Ukrainian Charter, and the enlargement process.

Some respondents (about two-thirds) stated that while NATO still proclaimed to be an instrument of collective defense, it is being gradually transformed into a collective security organization especially in eastern Europe and the Balkans. This transformation process includes such steps as the Partnership for Peace (PfP), NATO-Russia “Founding Act” of May 1997, the NATO commitment to Bosnia’s and Kosovo’s post-War rehabilitation and stabilization.

The transformation of NATO from being solely a collective defense organization in the sense of maintaining the balance of power in the Euro-Atlantic region into being both a collective defense and collective security organization has confused many respondents. Among others they have

stressed that NATO has served as a collective security organization – a United Nations-like function – only in selective cases and sometimes in a “too little too late” fashion. (The delay in Nato’s involvement in Bosnia was repeatedly underlined).

The NATO alliance was established half a century ago in order to enable its members resist aggression and coercion and defeat the aggressors. Although NATO from the start professed to have a multitude of functions, collective defense of *its members* was its paramount task. Since the early 1990s, however, NATO assumed a role of collective security of its members and *non-members*.

This new role perception is not only a consequence of events which forced the alliance to act (as in Bosnia), but it is also clearly stated in NATO statements. NATO, as early as 1992 offered the U.N. and the Organization on Security and Cooperation support concerning peacekeeping operations under *their* authority. Yet some allies, especially the U.S., pointed out that U.N. or OSCE approval is not necessary for NATO to undertake an operation.² Some Turkish respondents pointed out that any dependency on the U.N. or the OSCE for political legitimization could prevent the ability of NATO to act on a timely fashion in times of crises. One major disadvantage of reliance on the U.N. or the OSCE is that these organizations often are incapable of passing resolutions due to political disagreements.

¹ “Study on NATO Enlargement,”(Brussels: NATO Information and Press Office, September 1995).

² See: “Declaration of the Heads of State and Government,” North Atlantic Council, January 10-11, 1994.

One of the new roles is NATO's state-building role. It started in August 1995 when NATO aircraft bombed Serb positions in Bosnia. Today thousands of NATO troops try to preserve the truce between warring parties and contribute to state or nation-building programs in Bosnia and Kosovo. Although NATO terms its role as peacekeeping, it is rather statebuilding.³ Similar to what Alexander Haig is suggesting, the Turkish respondents stated that in Bosnia NATO acted too late, after almost discrediting its credibility as an alliance of deterrence. NATO made a number of demands in Bosnia, which it failed to pursue after the Serbs failed to accept. The not-so-bright record of NATO in Bosnia was perhaps the reason why the Serbs tried to pursue a similar ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, to which NATO had to react more forcefully. In Kosovo, some Turkish respondents argued, the U.S. had initially given the European members of NATO a blank check, and had indicated that it would not commit ground troops there. There was also the confusion with the U.N. as to who would give orders. By 1995, Bosnia had become a symbol of the post-Cold War confusion NATO had found itself in. While the U.S. was only ready to provide air support to the European forces deployed, ethnic cleansing was proceeding in full force in front of the world media.

misaligned.”⁴

³ For a fascinating description of NATO's role in the Balkans see: Alexander M. Haig, Jr., "Correcting the Course of NATO," *Orbis*, Summer 1999, p. 356.

Such operations as “peacekeeping” or “crisis-management” as undertaken in former Yugoslavia could have detrimental effects on the alliance’s solidarity and cohesion. As in Bosnia, disagreements between the allies on how to deal with the various phases of the crisis could erode the alliance’s cohesion, and ultimately its primary purpose of self-defense.

As Yost suggested, another problem related to collective security operations is that the resources available to the NATO member states are finite and any resource spent in a Bosnia-like operation means that an equivalent amount would be deducted from the member states’ budgets dedicated to collective defense. This NATO observer states: “Investments, exercises and revealing statements about priorities have illustrated a shift in emphasis away from an almost exclusive focus on collective defense towards more attention to collective security. The prospective new command structure suggests that the operative function driving military planning and preparations has increasingly become crisis management and intervention beyond NATO’s borders.”⁵ The PfP program, including the various exercises, also means that the allies have fewer resources for conventional NATO expenses.⁶

Some interviewees said that crisis management and peace operations had the advantage of preserving the vitality of the alliance. Forces are tested in battle, and military spending – which is no longer justifiable by the ever looming Soviet threat -- is justified by out-of-area

⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, “History, Grand Strategy and NATO Enlargement,” *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 1998), p. 148.

⁵ See: David S. Yost, “The New NATO and Collective Security,” *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p. 149.

operations and crisis management. The peace operations, for the most part, require the use of the already existing military hardware of NATO, and little additional supplies are needed.

Some respondents suggested that a peace operation, like the one in Bosnia, could lead to a collective defense contingency. They argued that, especially at the earlier stage of the conflict, when the alliance had not fully committed itself to a specific settlement, Russia could have intervened on behalf of the Serbs. The UNPROFOR units made up mostly of the British and French troops could have engaged in a military confrontation with the Russian troops, leading the NATO members to ponder if an Article 5 contingency arose.

Many Turkish respondents stated that NATO's military capabilities have been reduced since the early 1990s, including the closure of bases and facilities, there have been cutbacks in trained personnel and. All these have reduced the capability of NATO to contain a revived and aggressive Russia. They suggested that until Russia once again became a formidable threat there would be sufficient warning time for NATO. Yet to once again to restore NATO to its former strength political will of the leaders would be necessary, and it is not a foregone conclusion now if they would have the political will in the future.

Partnership for Peace

⁶ Ibid., p. 146.

NATO's 1994 undertaking toward some 27 non-member – but PfP -- states concerning consultations on security also diluted the former primacy of the collective defense. Increasingly NATO talked of the “indivisibility of security” in the “*Euro-Atlantic*” area, a vast region including the Balkans, Siberia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. There have been many PfP exercises and other programs aimed at adapting the partner forces to NATO standards and operational abilities. There has been efforts to set up Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs) which – it is hoped – could be employed for peacekeeping and combat operations, as was the case in former Yugoslavia.

Most of the PfP principles seem to have been inspired by Wilsonian ideals. These ideas include transparency concerning military capabilities and plans, civilian control of the military and overall democratization.

PfP aims at intensifying cooperation in the field of security between the alliance and the 27 PfP partners. Most PfP exercises aim at taking action against unexpected crises in the Euro-Atlantic region by increasing readiness to send military forces to crisis regions to serve as peace-makers or peacekeepers. According to a 1997 PfP program of “self-differentiation” some PfP partners may choose a more intensive participation in NATO activities, while some may choose a lower profile. Even Russia is a PfP member, and it took part in the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) and later in the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia

Almost half of the Turkish respondents suggested that Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as prospective members (the Baltic states for instance) were interested in NATO membership at least partly because of the potential Russian threat. Yet NATO was spending less and less on collective defense and more and more on cooperative schemes with Russia. They argued that the so-called “indivisibility of security” idea would mean more military aid to the PfP members and less to long-term NATO members, and suggested that some in the West were actually calling for that.⁷

⁷ See: Michael Ruhle, Nick Williams, “Partnership for Peace after NATO Enlargement,” European Security, Vol. 5 (Winter 1996), p. 523.

Some Turkish respondents sounded alarm at the prospect of diluting and even totally scrapping Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty. They insisted that at least on the theoretical level there were many in the West who called for just that, and demanded the transformation of NATO into a Euro-Atlantic U.N.⁸

Many respondents drew attention to the importance of Art.5 and argued that providing the PfP states with quasi-Art. 5 guarantees might reassure these states for a while, but anything short of Art. 5 and full NATO membership would not be very reliable. They insisted that in a future contingency involving a military attack against a PfP state, the alliance could be torn between the pro- and anti-assistance states. They suggested that no matter how much the current reassurances to PfP members resemble Art. 5, they were, nevertheless, inadequate. Hence they argued that the NATO members should preserve their war-fighting and war-winning potential to have recourse in future to Art. 5, and if any contingency involving a PfP state arises, the alliance could make use of Art.5 as well as other arrangements with the PfP states, including Combined Joint Task Forces. (CJTFs)

The PfP commitment of NATO states that “NATO will consult with any active participant in the Partnership if that partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence or security.”⁹ This clause was supported by many PfP military exercises that created the

⁸ See for instance: Charles A. Kupchan, “Reviving the West,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 75, No.3 (May-June 1996), pp. 97-100.

⁹ See:David S. Yost, “The New NATO and Collective Security,” Survival, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p. 144.

perception that NATO's commitment to the PfP countries' wellbeing is similar to that of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Many Turkish respondents argued that NATO's vague commitment to the PfP members might indeed lead to a military confrontation between NATO and Russia, and that NATO might find it difficult to back down. Quite a few suggested that in a future confrontation between Russia and Ukraine or between Russia and the Baltic states over – lets say – the Russian minority's rights in these former Soviet republics, a possible Russian invasion of parts of the Ukraine or the Baltics could force NATO to react. Although NATO – the respondents said – was under no obligation to come to aid of the PfP states, many of its statements, like the indivisibility of peace, created the perception that NATO would defend them. The “Charter of Partnership” between the U.S. and the Baltic states of January 1998, and the July 1997 NATO-Ukrainian charter, furthermore created the image that NATO was underwriting their independence, although they contained no such clause.¹⁰ These Turkish interviewees suggested that since perceptions are as important as the reality, NATO's failure to stand up to Russia might be perceived as weakness, and -- as it did in Bosnia and Kosovo -- eventually NATO might be forced to react, this time against a more formidable power.

The Turkish interviewees also suggested that if Russia used non-military means to coerce the Baltic states or the Ukraine to do what Russia wants, the alliance could have limited means to respond. Russia

¹⁰ New York Times, 17 January 1998, p.A4.

still enjoys an unequaled status as the major trading partner of these states and it could use its leverage in energy supplies to coerce them.

More importantly, NATO's PfP commitments might encourage PfP states to believe that they have NATO on their side, and convince them to ignore Russian influence attempts. This, for its part, may contribute to the escalation of a crisis because Russia would feel the urge to show that its coercion was more real than perceived by the coerced state.

Enlargement

In its statements on enlargement NATO leaves the door open to all states to join. In March 1997 President Clinton in a speech stated that even Russian membership in NATO could not be ruled out.¹¹ In statements made by other US officials Russia's NATO membership was not ruled out.¹²

The U.S. willingness to even consider Russian membership in NATO was a far cry from the November 1991 Strategic Concept -- which is not yet replaced and was adopted when the USSR was still intact -- which it stresses the Soviet military's then current and potential capability as the most important factor NATO has to take into account in preserving the status quo in Europe.¹³

¹¹ Washington Post, March 8, 1997, p. A 11.

¹² James Goldgeier, "NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision," Washington Quarterly, Vol 21 (Winter 1998), p. 97.

¹³ North Atlantic Council, "The <Alliance's Strategic Concept," NATO Handbook (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, October 1995), pp. 235-248.

In May 1997 NATO signed with Russia the so-called Founding Act which could be characterized as a major tenet of NATO's post-1991 strategy of cooperation with Russia. (The other tenet ironically being enlargement) This act, adopted in Paris, states:

NATO and Russia, based on an enduring political commitment undertaken at the highest political level, will build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security....Proceeding from the principle that the security of all states in the Euro-Atlantic community is indivisible, NATO and Russia will work together to contribute to the establishment in Europe of common and comprehensive security based on the allegiance to shared values, commitments and norms of behavior in the interests of all states.¹⁴

The Founding Act foresees that "NATO and Russia will seek the widest possible cooperation among participating states of the OSCE with the aim of creating in Europe a common space of security and stability, without dividing lines or spheres of influence limiting the sovereignty of any state."¹⁵ Yet the behavior of Russia in various former Soviet republics leads many to conclude that the Russian commitment to stability would last as long as its interests so require. Russian attempts to undermine the Shevarnadze regime in Georgia and the Heidar Aliiev regime in neighboring Azerbaijan indicate that the Russian promises may be just for window dressing purposes.

In my interviews most Turks argued that Russian membership in NATO would eliminate NATO role as provider of collective defense and turn the alliance rather into an ineffective Wilsonian collective security organization. The elimination of its collective defense function could lead

¹⁴ For the Founding Act see: NATO Review, Vol. 45, No. 4, July-August 1997.

– the Turks surmised – to increased individual spending on defense and even more independent foreign policies on the part of such states as the united Germany.

Many of the Turkish respondents argued that Russian membership could turn the alliance into a Russo-American condominium in which the desires of the lesser powers – such as Turkey – would not carry much weight. Many remember the difficult days during 1945-46 when a similar condominium had led Ankara feel helpless regarding the Soviet demands for bases on the Straits and territorial revisions in Moscow's favor.

A few Turks wondered whether Russian membership could lead to a China-NATO confrontation in future, because NATO's frontiers would be extended as far as China. They suggested that Turkey had nothing to gain from such a confrontation, and that it was dangerous and costly, entailing extra commitments in east Asia.

Turkish respondents said that many enlargement advocates state that NATO is now an organization that should preoccupy itself with cooperation and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. The Turkish respondents stated that this preoccupation with cooperation and stability is quite vague, and could lead the alliance to lose its focus on collective defense. They dissented from the argument that NATO was an alliance without an enemy, saying that Russia could restore its former power and the members should take this into account.

¹⁵ "Founding Act on Mutual Relations," in NATO Review, Vol. 45, No.4 (July-August 1997).

Some Turkish respondents suggested that enlargement by taking in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic will be costly. One major study cited by those Turks was the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) study on the costs of the above mentioned three countries' membership. The CBO suggested that depending on NATO's threat perception, NATO could spend over the next 15 years from \$ 61 billion to \$ 125 billion. The lower figure would be spent if NATO were to enable the new members to deal with such threats as border skirmishes and threats posed by a regional power – excluding Russia. If, however, NATO were to assume a more serious danger to these three new states, it could station NATO troops, and move significant amounts of military hardware there. Moreover, a significant portion of the Europe-based NATO air power would have to be relocated to the east with all its logistical support base and manpower. Those that feared that the costs would be close to the larger figure mentioned above suggested that in times of peace, NATO members would not be interested in spending large amounts on defense, especially on the defense of three new and apparently unchallenged member states. If, however, they surmised, NATO were not to spend the required amounts, then the whole rationale of expansion would be questioned and there would be imbalance in the level of security between former members and the new members. This, for its part, could lead to the new members' disgruntlement, and/or the old members' losing interest in enlargement, if not in NATO's relevance in their security.

Only a few Turkish respondents diverged from this line of thought, suggesting that costs would be manageable because NATO's enlargement is not in response to a looming major threat, but it was as part of a strategy to unify Europe and provide stability. They suggested that the addition of three new allies will foster democratic reforms and stability in eastern Europe. When asked how their NATO membership would have such an effect on them the respondents were at a loss to establish a correlation between the two.

Many Turkish respondents wondered if there was a contradiction in NATO's two separate arguments. NATO argues that the alliance has no enemy at the moment. Yet it aims at enlargement. If there are no threats why expand NATO to the east? NATO cites instability as the major challenge facing the alliance. If this is so, one needs to ask who is the cause of instability, or who would benefit from instability?

Turkish respondents also wondered why NATO was expanding to the east, and if in the second and third rounds countries such as Slovenia, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and the Baltic states were going to be accepted as members, wouldn't this show that Russia is the never-mentioned reason for enlargement.

Many Turkish respondents stated that the IMF demands from Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to adhere to tight fiscal programs and focus on spending on economic infrastructure. Given the fact that even without the burdens of NATO membership, these countries

experience budget cuts, many Turkish respondents wondered, how would they set aside funds to finance their NATO obligations.¹⁶ If old NATO members were to pick up the check, the Turks argued, then they – especially those like Turkey who has its own economic problems -- would not be too enthusiastic to spend more than token amounts. This, for its part, could mean the failure of enlargement and even perhaps the demise of NATO as we know it. An American political scientist suggested that to set aside meaningful amounts for their NATO membership Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia need to increase defense spending from the current 2.2 percent of their GDP to 3.6 percent.¹⁷ The same author suggests that opinion polls in these countries show that the majority of their populations are against increased military spending if it involves cut in social programs. The same attitude would be shared by the populations of the old NATO member countries. They would not want to pick up the enlargement check if it involves cuts in their social programs.

This analysis leads one to conclude that eventually the new NATO members – owing to the lack of military spending -- would not be able to enjoy the same protection as other members enjoy. And if this is the case, they would hardly benefit from their membership. Given the fact that Russia resents NATO's eastern thrust, the new members would have unnecessarily drawn Russia's ire onto themselves without adequate protection.

¹⁶ For an eloquent discussion of this subject see: Amos Perlmutter, Ted Galen Carpenter, "Nato's Expensive Trip East: The Folly of Enlargement," *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 1998, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; See also Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Nato's Enlargement vs. American Interests," *Orbis*, Winter 1998, p. 39.

The Turkish respondents claimed that Russia aimed in the long run at subordinating NATO to the OSCE. Given the fact that the U.S. tries to reincorporate Russia into the international community (the Founding Act as being an example of it), the U.S. may be favorably disposed to Russian prodding regarding NATO's role. Hence, the Turks argued, Russia could successfully turn NATO into an organization preoccupied with peace operations and crisis management.

Many Turkish respondents stated that enlargement was not a strategic decision but Clinton's personal decision for domestic political reasons.¹⁸ An American scholar, Alvin Z. Rubinstein suggests that two weeks before the presidential elections Clinton told an audience in Detroit on October 22, 1996 that in 1999, NATO's 50th anniversary, he wanted the first group of the Central and East European countries to join NATO. Rubinstein says that Clinton did this before consulting other NATO leaders. On December 10, 1996 NATO approved Clinton's proposed schedule and brought the matter in front of the prime ministers of the NATO countries.¹⁹

The Turkish respondents argued that the three new members are economically and geographically weak countries, and including them into NATO would not make the alliance any stronger. They added that these three countries were also not in immediate danger of attack.

A political scientist, Michael Mandelbaum suggested that instead of enjoying the peace and stability in Europe since the end of the Cold War, and stringently implementing the arms control agreements, NATO

¹⁸ For the same argument see: Boston Globe, July 11, 1997, p. A 17.

decided to enlarge its membership which will upset the strategic equilibrium on the continent.²⁰ Several Turkish respondents spoke in similar terms about enlargement.

Clinton administration's argument is that their NATO membership will make these states more democratic. One could ask if it would not have been more appropriate if the EU had accepted them as members, because after all the most important challenges facing the Central Europeans are socio-economic problems and their NATO membership is not much relevant to these problems.

A columnist writes that NATO decided to struggle against "terrorism, illegal drugs, nationalist extremism and regional conflict fueled by ethnic, racial and religious hatreds." Yet he says that the means at hand are hardly suitable for such a struggle.²¹ Turkish respondents also suggested that enlargement would not be magic solution to these problems.

When NATO adopted in January 1994 the PfP program it laid down several principles for potential PfP members. These include steps to encourage civilian control of the military, transparency in defense planning, participating in NATO peacekeeping missions and peace operations, and to increase the compatibility of their army with those belonging to NATO. Rubinstein suggests and the Turkish respondents concurred that in almost all criteria the new NATO members would fail the PfP test, yet before waiting for them to improve their standards, NATO

¹⁹ Rubinstein, "Nato's Enlargement vs. American Interests," p. 37.

²⁰ Michael Mandelbaum, The Dawn of Peace in Europe (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1996).

²¹ R. W. Apple Jr., "Clinton's NATO: Keen on Growth, Murky on Mission," The New York Times, July 13, 1997.

invited them to join as full members.²² Many of the Turkish respondents argued that it was a political decision made in Washington that ignored the unsuitability of the new members.

Many Turkish respondents argued that the West European states have no intention to finance the transformation and build up of the three new members's armies. They pointed out that there were many statements made by the Europeans heads of government to that effect. The West Europeans consider the viability of the European Union as far more important than the enlargement of NATO, and any additional resources they would more eagerly pour into the EU than into eastern Europe. The Turkish respondents then concluded that since the U.S. Senate would be unwilling to finance the transition costs for the new members, there would emerge an imbalance in the force and readiness levels between the new and old members of NATO. They suggested that this imbalance would be hardly conducive to the effective functioning of the alliance.

Some Turkish respondents argued that the pre-enlargement NATO kept Germany under control in that it was an American dominated alliance which also required Franco-German good relations. Central and Eastern European membership, where German socio-political, and economic influence would be the greatest among the NATO allies, would destabilize the shaky balance of forces within the alliance.

²² Rubinstein, p.41.

As Rubintein also suggests, Germany is “the most powerful country in Western Europe, the dominant member of the EU, and commercially and financially the most influential actor in the CEEC” (Central and Eastern European Countries).²³ He argues that soon Germany would want to play a political role commensurate with its economic role. He suggests that most Germans are enthusiastic for an active role in central and eastern Europe. As a German scholar stated, Germany will assume its “natural geographical place, which is in the center of Europe, not at an artificial borderline of European subregions.”²⁴

Given the fact that Russia abhors a greater German geopolitical and military role, it could assume an adversarial attitude toward Germany and indirectly at first toward NATO. Some Turkish respondents even claimed that a greater German profile would make members of not only of NATO, but also of the West European Union (WEU), and the OSCE uneasy.

Most Turkish respondents stated that while expecting Russian cooperation against terrorism, drug trafficking, arms control and other issues, enlarging NATO towards the east was a counterproductive step. Enlargement, they said, would make Russia less cooperative and it could even make this country to adopt a xenophobic attitude.

Some Turkish respondents stated that actually non-enlargement would have made the new members more secure in that they would have

²³ Rubinstein, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

²⁴ Reinhardt Rummel, “The German Debate in International Security Institutions,” in Marco Carnovale, ed., European Security and International Institutions After the Cold War (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), p. 188.

spent their scarce resources on their economy, and since Russia would not have been intimidated, it would have pursued better ties with them.

Most Turkish respondents argued that Turkey has security concerns which would not be addressed by enlargement. These security concerns are the Cyprus dispute, bilateral Turkey-Greece issues (including the Aegean Sea disputes), instability in the southern Caucasus (including the Armenian-Azeri conflict, the Abkhazian and the South Ossetian rebellions in Georgia), Russian heavy-handedness in the near abroad (including the southern Caucasus and Central Asia), current and potential conflicts in the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia), Middle Eastern problems (including instability in Iraq, the involvement of the hard-liners in Iran in terrorism, and Syria's – albeit abated – support to Kurdish terrorists.)

Most Turkish respondents argued that the above issues should also be on most NATO members' agenda because any flare up in one of these disputes could involve several NATO allies. Yet, they wondered why NATO (and the U.S. in particular) was not paying sufficient attention to them as it was with respect to acquiring new members in the most peaceful portion of Europe. They suggested that at the moment no single power dominates, or threatens to dominate the European continent. Furthermore, about a dozen independent countries serve as buffers between Russia and Germany, two past contenders for dominating Europe.

They suggested that although NATO purports to struggle against terrorism, illegal immigration, and drug smuggling, it was hard to imagine how enlargement would have any bearing on these issues.

Especially France and Italy were enthusiastic for Romania's and Slovenia's NATO membership, yet many others – including the U.S. – opposed this.²⁵ Although France was opposed to enlargement in principle, it demanded Romanian membership once it became clear that enlargement could not be stopped.²⁶ Italy, for its part desired to balance the alliance's eastern expansion with new members in the south closer to Italy.²⁷ The formula adopted at Madrid was that these and other countries could become members in the future if they were willing and able to “assume the responsibilities of membership.”²⁸ Nordic NATO members favor the membership of the Baltic states, while some even consider Bulgarian membership.

Russia has clearly indicated that it was opposed to the Baltic states' NATO membership because it considers the region as part of its near abroad.²⁹ The Baltic states' membership could destroy the good Russian ties with NATO. At the moment the NATO-Russia Council has provided Moscow with a seat at the NATO table. The Baltic states' membership could destroy NATO's cooperation with Russia.

²⁵ The New York Times, June 26, 1997, p. A6.

²⁶ See: Jonathan Eyal, “NATO's Enlargement: Anatomy of a Decision,” International Affairs, No. 4 (Winter 1997), pp. 695-719.

²⁷ Karl Heinz Kamp, “NATO Entrapped: Debating the Next Enlargement Round,” Survival, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), p.176.

²⁸ See: “Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation,” NATO Press Release, Madrid, July 8, 1997, para. 8. For the text of the Madrid declaration see: www.nato.int.

²⁹ See: James Meek, “Yetsin Tells NATO to keep Out of Baltics,” The Guardian, May 15, 1998.

Denmark and Norway desire Baltic membership because they believe that this would stabilize a region close to them.³⁰ UK is against enlargement because it will be more difficult afterwards for NATO to act as cohesively as possible. (Already it is difficult)

The US Senate in its May 1998 resolution ratifying NATO's enlargement to include Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic clearly stated that "other than Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, the United States has not consented to invite, or committed to invite, any other country to join NATO in future."³¹

The US-Baltic Charter was signed in January 1998 is intended to deepen security cooperation between the two sides. Already in 1995 the two sides had agreed on a "US-Baltic Action Plan". With the Charter both sides will take part in meetings of working groups on economic cooperation, and a "Partnership Commission" chaired by the US Assistant Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

Some Turkish respondents argued that despite Western wishful thinking, Russia is no longer friendly to the West and NATO. After late 1993, when a xenophobic coalition of nationalists and communists came to control the Duma, Russia has been uncooperative. Examples to Russian behavior include the non-ratification of the START II treaty, the pursuit of independent and antagonistic policies in the Balkans and the Middle East, friendship with Saddam, sale of arms to Iran and to Greek Cypriots(which was later cancelled) that could have grave consequences,

³⁰ Kamp, *op. Cit.*, p.176.

Hence, many Turkish respondents criticized the NATO-Russia founding Act which entitles Russia to have a say in the NATO affairs. They cautioned that Russia may be weak today, but it could recover easily, and that NATO should keep Russia at bay, and prevent the reinstatement of a new Soviet Union.

A few Turkish respondents argued that it was a bad idea to treat badly the defeated countries because in the long run their dissatisfaction with their status would lead them to revisionism. These respondents gave the example of the settlements after World War I and World War II. Whereas after World War I Germany was treated harshly by those who won the war, after the second World War, the allies moved quickly to bring back Germany as a full participant of the international community, providing – among others – economic support to make this country economically viable. The respondents pointed out that there was a stark difference in the post war attitude of Germany in these cases. Whereas during the interwar years Germany considered the international system in antagonistic terms and tried to revise it forcefully, in the post-World War II era, the same country made its peace with the status quo.

Some of the Turkish respondents suggested that at the time of the dismemberment of the Soviet Union the U.S. and NATO seemed to have adopted the “treat your former adversary nicely” attitude, but by the mid-

³¹ U.S. Congress, Congressional Record, May 4, 1998 at www.fas.org.

1990s, the U.S. and NATO began to perceive and treat Russia in antagonistic terms.

The Turkish respondents, although in a minority, suggested that a post-war international system should be inclusive as opposed to exclusive toward the former adversaries. They suggested that NATO was a relic of the Cold War era, and once the Cold War was over it should have been abolished or at least transformed into an all-inclusive OSCE-like organization. Instead, they argued, there were only minor changes in NATO's goals, and NATO's enlargement toward the east – yet excluding Russia – was hardly reassuring to Russia that the post-Cold War system was a Russia-friendly one. These respondents suggested that sooner or later Russia will consider the behavior of the U.S. and NATO as detrimental to its security interests, and adopt a revisionist foreign policy.

These Turkish respondents also suggested that the major reason for the short-sightedness of NATO was that President Clinton was preoccupied with NATO and does not have a global and long term perspective.³² Some respondents also claimed that it was also such parochial interests as getting the votes of the ethnic East Europeans that motivates Clinton in his quest for enlargement.

Those who opposed enlargement also suggested that NATO was ill-equipped to deal with the real problem the east Europeans were facing: economic hardships due to the transition from the former command economies to market economies. Perhaps the only organization, these

respondents suggested, that could be of some use to the East Europeans was the European Union, but it was preoccupied with instituting a single currency throughout the union, rather than tackling the major problem the European continent is facing: disparities in living standards between the West and East Europeans. NATO, for its part, seemed to accept the challenge by stating that it aims at integrating and stabilizing Europe as a whole. Yet this organization, some of the Turkish respondents suggested, was using means and methods hardly suitable to socio-economic development. They argued that actually the defense spending the East Europeans have to make in the next decade will hurt their economies rather than revive them. A brilliant historian, John L. Gaddis agrees with this perception and describes the NATO stabilization methods as “roughly comparable to using a monkey wrench to repair a computer.”³³

Those Turkish respondents who were critical of Russia’s exclusion from enlargement (only a small minority of the whole sample) suggested that NATO had actually taken the right steps initially when it had included Russia in the PfP program. This inclusive approach, however, was scuttled by the alliance when enlargement came to dominate NATO’s agenda. Although the PfP is still formally intact, it no longer characterizes NATO’s post-Cold War strategy.³⁴

³² For a similar argument see: Richard N. Haass, “Fatal Distraction: Bill Clinton’s Foreign Policy,” Foreign Policy, No. 108 (Autumn 1997), p. 119.

³³ John Lewis Gaddis, “History, Grand Strategy and NATO Enlargement,” Survival, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 1998), p.147.

³⁴ See: James M. Goldgeier, “NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision,” Washington Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 1(Winter 1998), pp. 85-102.

Some Turkish respondents suggested that the military means of the alliance is not sufficient to meet the expanded goals of the alliance: protecting three additional countries. They suggested that every time the goals outstrip the capabilities, the goals would not be achieved. John L. Gaddis also thinks similarly. He suggested that this insolvency in NATO strategy may be because “either the countries the US is proposing to bring into NATO are not in danger, in which case one wonders why it is necessary to include them. Or they are in danger, in which case we have yet to prepare adequately to protect them. Either way, end and means are

Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty describes the geographical boundaries of the member states’ obligations under Article 5. During the Cold War, NATO members carefully avoided getting involved in conflicts in areas outside of the region outlined in Article 5. In the 1970s, neither in the Middle Eastern nor in Southeast Asia crises did NATO get involved.³⁵ Yet in the post-Cold War era the member states began to consider the so-called out-of-area operations. NATO often stated that it could provide support to such operations as peacekeeping undertaken by the U.N. and even by the OSCE. Examples of NATO’s involvement in out-of-area conflicts include its operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.

In such peacekeeping, restoring law and order and defending democracy operations as those in Bosnia and Kosovo, the NATO presence could be politically manageable as long as casualties are low and the escalation of conflict danger is under control. Many respondents

in my interviews suggested that ethnic conflict contingencies could easily get out of hand, and despite NATO's resolution to keep a low profile the alliance might be forced to make more significant commitments. Many remembered that until 1995 NATO tried to keep a low profile in Bosnia, yet the escalation of the conflict afterwards forced the alliance to fight to preserve its credibility. Although initially NATO's presence was justified by the understanding that fatalities would be low, after 1995 it was the risk of losing the alliance's credibility that led to NATO decision to stay and fight.

Between 1992-1995 NATO could not intervene in Bosnia because the major NATO powers, led by Washington could only agree to do so in 1995. Before doing so Washington acquired Russia's tacit but unwilling acquiescence. Russia also agreed to a U.N. mandate for Bosnia, and then participated in the IFOR and SFOR and the enforcement of the settlement by IFOR and then SFOR. So, before NATO could succeed in the peace operation the major powers needed to agree among themselves on it. Any such operation, hence needs ad hoc agreement (and Russian acquiescence) among the major powers. Many Turkish respondents wondered how reliable this type of decision-making or crisis management is. (NATO's new decision-making guidelines also clearly state that NATO's peace operations – unlike the Wilsonian dictum – would be selective and the merits of each case would be discussed and interventions would take place if there is willingness to do so, and by those who are willing to take part in them.)

³⁵ Douglas Stuart, William Tow, The Limits of Alliance: NATO out of Area Problems Since 1949 (Baltimore,

Some Turkish respondents claimed that Russia aimed in the long run at subordinating NATO to the OSCE. Given the fact that the U.S. tries to reincorporate Russia into the international community (the Founding Act as being an example of it), the U.S. may be favorably disposed to Russian prodding regarding NATO's role. Hence, the Turks argued, Russia could successfully turn NATO into an organization preoccupied with peace operations and crisis management.

Conclusion

The examination of the Turkish public's perception of NATO's Enlargement showed that the Turks are mostly lukewarm to the enlargement issue. Most consider that there are not sufficient reasons for extending NATO's sphere of action so much to the east. Many believe that this geographical extension would also mean stretching the alliance's financial and military resources. Many indicated that the extension of the operational zone could only have been acceptable had there been an imminent security threat to these new members.

Most respondents also argued that enlargement would be counterproductive in that Russia, where nationalism and xenophobia are gradually taking hold, would consider enlargement as directed against itself. Russia's perception of NATO's behavior as such could have

negative consequences for the alliance. Russia could adopt a rearmament policy which could force NATO to do the same. More significantly, Russia could give up its post-1991 “cooperation with the West” policy, withdrawing its reluctant support from NATO’s crisis management in future Bosnia-like crises.

Many also wondered how the financial burden of enlargement would be met. The new members are in the midst of transforming their economies that they are in no position to increase their defense spending. The alliance’s old members are also reluctant to spend on behalf of the new members, especially when many of them too are experiencing financial difficulties. Some respondents said that as a result of the lack of resources there would emerge insolvency between NATO’s goals and means, and that this would be hardly conducive to a viable NATO.

Many Turkish respondents also argued that enlargement -- beside antagonizing Russia – would have no direct bearing on Turkey’s security problems. Many pointed to the existing Turco-Greek problems, conflicts in the southern Caucasus, the Balkans and the Middle East as having no relationship to enlargement. They also wondered how NATO could afford to ignore these more important issues and focus on enlarging NATO to Central and Eastern Europe where there existed stability.

Several Turkish respondents also wondered as to what happened to NATO’s goals of fighting terrorism, democratization, civilian control of the

military establishments, arms control, nuclear nonproliferation, and to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. They suggested that with the recent emphasis on enlargement all these former priorities seem to have been relegated to the back burner. They also questioned how enlargement would positively impact these issues. A few well informed respondents even suggested that enlargement, --which is perceived in very negative terms in Russia -- could put a stop to democratization in this country, bringing to power an ultra-nationalist and autocratic government.