PART VI

THE OPENING UP OF THE ALLIANCE TO NEW MEMBER COUNTRIES

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THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

Provision for the enlargement of NATO is made in Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty. This is the basis of the open door policy adopted by NATO regarding the accession of new member countries. Decisions on the extension of invitations to potential new member countries to begin accession talks are taken jointly by all the existing members.

Enlargement is an ongoing process. While four countries joined the Alliance between 1949 and the early 1980s (Turkey and Greece in 1952, Germany in 1955, Spain in 1982) the accession of new members since the end of the Cold War has been the most spectacular, in terms of numbers and political impact. Ten countries – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – joined NATO in two waves of Alliance enlargement and three countries – Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* – are currently participating in the Membership Action Plan (MAP), a programme that prepares aspirants for NATO membership. NATO’s enlargement process has both responded to the security needs of those countries aspiring to join the Alliance and helped build greater stability throughout Europe.

The beginnings of change

The roots of the changes which transformed the political map of Europe at the end of the 1980s can be traced to a number of developments during the 1960s and 1970s. Three events stand out in particular: the adoption by the Alliance, in December 1967, of the Harmel doctrine based on the parallel policies of maintaining adequate defence while seeking a relaxation of tensions in East-West relations and working towards solutions to the underlying political problems dividing Europe; the introduction by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1969 of Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik, designed to bring about a more positive relationship with Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union within the constraints imposed by their governments’ domestic policies and actions abroad; and the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in August 1975, which established new standards and codes of conduct with regard to human rights issues and introduced measures to increase mutual confidence between East and West.

A series of similarly important events marked the course of East-West relations in the 1980s. These included NATO’s deployment of intermediate-range
nuclear forces (INF) in Europe following the December 1979 double-track decision on nuclear modernisation and arms control; the Washington Treaty, signed in December 1987, which brought about the elimination of US and Soviet land-based INF missiles on a global basis; early signs of change in Eastern Europe associated with the emergence and recognition, despite later setbacks, of the “Solidarity” independent trade union movement in Poland in August 1980; the consequences of the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ultimate withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in February 1989; and, finally, the March 1985 nomination of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, and his bold moves towards perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness).

In March 1989, in the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), promising new arms control negotiations opened in Vienna between the 23 countries of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation on reductions in conventional forces in Europe (CFE). The NATO Summit Meeting held in Brussels against this backdrop at the end of May 1989 was of particular significance. Members recognised the changes that were underway in the Soviet Union as well as in other Eastern European countries and outlined the Alliance’s approach to overcoming the division of Europe and achieving its long-standing objective of shaping a just and peaceful European order. They reiterated the continuing need for credible and effective deterrent forces and an adequate defence, and set forth a broad agenda for expanded East-West cooperation.

Developments of major significance for the entire European continent and for international relations as a whole continued as the year progressed. By the end of 1989 and during the early weeks of 1990, considerable progress was made towards the reform of the political and economic systems of Poland and Hungary. In the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania, steps were taken towards freedom and democracy which went far beyond expectations.

The promise held out for over 40 years to bring an end to the division of Europe, and with it an end to the division of Germany, took on real meaning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Beyond its fundamental symbolism, it opened the path to rapid and dramatic progress in most Central and Eastern European countries. Within less than a year, on 3 October 1990, the unification of the two German states took place with the backing of the international community and the acquiescence of the Soviet government, on the basis of an international treaty and the democratic will of the German people as a whole. Within just a few years, a number of Central and Eastern European countries had established membership of NATO as their principal
foreign policy goal despite the negative image of the Alliance portrayed by the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact governments during the Cold War.

At its July 1990 London Summit, NATO extended the hand of friendship to its former adversaries and initiated a process of dialogue and cooperation. In December 1991, it created a joint forum for multilateral consultation and cooperation in the form of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), and in January 1994 the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme was launched to provide a framework for bilateral cooperation with each country on an individual basis. The NACC was replaced by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in May 1997, which has since provided the overall political framework for cooperation between NATO and its Partner countries.

Within a short space of time, all the countries involved had responded positively to these successive initiatives and had begun participating in practical cooperation programmes. Several countries also began to seek support for their future accession to the North Atlantic Treaty. In 1994, the Alliance recognised the need for a considered response, framed in terms of its overall objectives and long-term intentions for extending cooperation further afield and laying the basis for peace and stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area.

At the January 1994 Brussels Summit, NATO leaders stated that they “expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East”. They reaffirmed that the Alliance was open to membership for other European states in a position to further the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty and contribute to security in the North Atlantic area.

Practical steps were taken to move the process forward in a manner that ensured Alliance goals and policies would not be compromised and also reassured Russia and other countries that the process would pose no threat to them. The Alliance needed to demonstrate that, on the contrary, extending the sphere of stability in the Euro-Atlantic area would enhance their own security and would be in their interests.

**Study on NATO Enlargement**

Accordingly, in 1995, the Alliance undertook a Study on NATO Enlargement to examine the “why and how” of future admissions into the Alliance. The results of the Study were shared with interested Partner countries and made public. With regard to the “why” of NATO enlargement, the study concluded that, with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, there was both a need for and a unique opportunity to build improved security in the whole Euro-Atlantic area, without recreating new dividing lines.
The study further concluded that enlargement of the Alliance would contribute to enhanced stability and security for all countries in the Euro-Atlantic area by encouraging and supporting democratic reforms, including the establishment of civilian and democratic control over military forces, fostering patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation and consensus-building characteristic of relations among members of the Alliance, and promoting good-neighbourly relations. It would increase transparency in defence planning and military budgeting, thereby reinforcing confidence among states, and would reinforce the overall tendency toward closer integration and cooperation in Europe. The study also concluded that enlargement would strengthen the Alliance’s ability to contribute to European and international security.

With regard to the “how” of enlargement, the study confirmed that any future extension of Alliance membership would be through accession of new member states to the North Atlantic Treaty in accordance with its Article 10. Once admitted, new members would enjoy all the rights and assume all the obligations of membership. They would need to accept and conform to the principles, policies and procedures adopted by all the members of the Alliance at the time they joined. The willingness and ability to meet such commitments would be a critical factor in any decision taken by the Alliance to invite a country to join.

Other conditions were stipulated, including the need for candidate countries to settle ethnic disputes or external territorial disputes by peaceful means before they could become members and to treat minority populations in accordance with guidelines established by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The ability of candidate countries to contribute militarily to collective defence and to peacekeeping operations would also be a factor. Ultimately, the study concluded that Allies would decide by consensus whether to invite additional countries to join, basing their decision on their judgement at the time as to whether the membership of a specific country would contribute to security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

**NATO accession**

In order to explore the issues that had been raised in the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement, NATO decided to conduct “intensified dialogues” with each of the countries that had declared their interest in joining the Alliance. Intensified dialogues were first launched with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in early 1997, in the run-up to NATO’s first post-Cold War round of enlargement in 1999. As early as July 1997, Allied heads of state and government were able to invite these three countries to begin accession talks. Accession protocols were signed in December 1997 and were then ratified.
by all 16 NATO countries. The three countries acceded to the Treaty, thereby becoming members of NATO in March 1999.

At the Prague Summit in November 2002, Allied heads of state and government invited Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to begin accession talks. All seven of these countries had previously been participants in the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The procedures followed both by the existing NATO members and by the invited countries during the next twelve months illustrate the accession process that would apply to future member countries.

Protocols of accession were signed by the foreign ministers of the invited countries at NATO Headquarters on 26 March 2003. By the end of April 2004, all Alliance member countries had notified the government of the United States of their acceptance of the protocols, in accordance with the North Atlantic Treaty, and on 2 March 2004, the NATO Secretary General formally invited the seven countries to become members. At a ceremony in Washington, DC, on 29 March 2004, each country deposited its formal instruments of accession, as prescribed by the Treaty, thereby legally and formally becoming a member country of the Alliance.

Between the moment when the seven were invited to start accession talks and the projected signing of accession protocols, ratification and membership, the invited countries were involved to the maximum extent in Alliance activities and continued to benefit from participation in the Membership Action Plan. Each of the invited countries also presented a timetable for necessary reforms to be carried out before and after accession in order to enhance their contribution to the Alliance.

A newly constructed extension to NATO Headquarters in Brussels was inaugurated by the Secretary General on 17 March 2004, providing accommodation for the delegations of the new member countries. On 2 April 2004, following the ceremonial raising of the flags of the new members outside NATO Headquarters, the first formal meeting of the North Atlantic Council with the participation of 26 member countries was held.
CHAPTER 22

THE MEMBERSHIP ACTION PLAN

At the Washington Summit in April 1999, NATO launched a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to assist countries wishing to join the Alliance in their preparations by providing advice, assistance and practical support. Nine countries initially adhered to this plan, namely Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.* Croatia joined in 2001. Seven of these countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – were subsequently invited at the Prague Summit in November 2002 to begin accession talks and formally joined NATO in March 2004.

The MAP initially drew extensively on the experience gained in assisting the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to prepare for membership and from working with the seven members that joined in March 2004. It seeks to help aspirant countries focus their preparations on meeting the goals and priorities set out within it and has continued to provide a range of activities designed to strengthen each country’s candidacy, thereby giving substance to NATO’s commitment to keep the door to membership open. The Plan is not, however, simply a checklist for aspiring countries to fulfil, and participation in the MAP does not guarantee future membership. Decisions to invite aspirants to start accession talks are taken by consensus among NATO member countries and on a case-by-case basis.

The MAP does not replace the Partnership for Peace programme. Full participation in the latter, and in its associated Planning and Review Process (PARP), is also considered essential as it allows aspirant countries to develop interoperability with NATO forces and to prepare their force structures and capabilities for possible future membership. The PARP serves a variety of purposes. It provides a basis for enhancing transparency in defence policy matters, for identifying and evaluating forces and capabilities which might be made available for multinational training, exercises and operations in conjunction with Alliance forces, and for defence reform.

At the beginning of each MAP cycle, aspirants submit an annual national programme on preparations for possible membership, covering political, economic, defence, military, resource, security and legal issues. They set their own objectives, targets and work schedules and update them annually. At the end of the cycle, NATO draws up progress reports for the individual countries participating in the MAP. These form the basis of a discussion between the North Atlantic Council and the country concerned on progress made.
Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* continue to work closely with the Alliance in the MAP framework with a view to meeting the criteria that would enable membership invitations to be extended to them to begin accession talks.