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**Central European Security:
Looking Ahead**

Eleanor B. Sutter

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**The Institute of Land Warfare
ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY**

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Central European Security: Looking Ahead

by Eleanor B. Sutter

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Contents

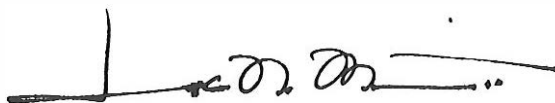
Foreword	v
Introduction	1
Central Europe: History's Residue.....	1
United States: Still Willing to "Buy" Stability?.....	3
The Pendulum Swings Back: Apparent Consensus	4
Emergence of Alternate Views: Challenges to Consensus	4
Likely Near-Term Developments.....	7
Elements of U.S. Policy for the Near Term	10
Conclusion.....	12
Endnotes	13
Bibliography.....	17

Foreword

The United States has an interest in stable security for Central Europe, having been drawn into two major wars in this century stemming from instability there. At the same time, U.S. taxpayers may be less willing to assume a lion's share of the risks and expenditures for European security arrangements, and will increasingly demand solutions that do not strain shrinking American resources.

After 1989, Central European states looked westward for security guarantees — particularly through NATO membership — that would prevent a return to repression. As pointed out in this paper, alternative security mechanisms available to Central European countries will also play an important role in stabilizing the region. Because a benign Russia is the key determinant of the region's security, U.S. policy must focus on strengthening moderates there, as well as in Central Europe itself.

This paper was originally prepared in March 1997 as part of the course requirements met by the author leading to graduation from the U.S. Army War College. Though a number of historic events involving Central European security have since transpired — the Madrid summit where Czech, Hungary and Poland were invited to join NATO; the NATO-Russia Founding Act; and the NATO-Ukraine Charter — this paper provides the reader a clear perspective on historical and more immediate factors which are shaping U.S. and NATO security policy in Central Europe.



JACK N. MERRITT
General, U.S. Army Retired
President

November 1997

Central European Security: Looking Ahead

Introduction

For centuries, the search for a secure haven from invaders has shaped the history of Central Europe.¹ The dilemma has been one of small principalities, later unified into shifting nation-states, unable to defend themselves without assistance against the ravages of the warring empires that swept over their lands. With the 1975 Helsinki Accords, many hoped that the altering of Europe's national borders by force had come to an end, but Bosnia has since called that principle into question. At the same time, the demise of the Warsaw Pact has cast Central Europe's small states adrift in an uneasy security vacuum. Now they are groping their way toward whatever protective umbrella they can find, against perceived threats that are not fully defined.

The United States has a clear interest in the stability of this region, whose struggles have led to U.S. involvement in two world wars in this century. However, the U.S. policy community has yet to arrive at a consensus as to the best path toward that stability.

This paper will examine selected key factors that have shaped U.S. and Central European policies toward the region's security. After opening sections describing the historical context of both Central European and U.S. attitudes, the paper's initial focus will be on the altered situation which U.S. policymakers are now facing as a result of changes since 1989. Next, the paper will turn to likely future developments which could affect the Central European security outlook during the coming years. A final section will outline recommended elements of U.S. policy in this area for the near term.

Central Europe: History's Residue

A detailed historical overview is beyond the scope of this essay, but certain salient factors that have shaped attitudes and policies affecting security in Central Europe are worth noting. The region is a meeting ground of conquests past. For much of the first millenium and well into the second, succeeding waves of Asiatic invader-nomads from the east — Huns, Magyars, Mongols, Turks and others — swept across the plains of southern Russia and Ukraine, westward into the Carpathian mountain range, in search of gold, silver, slaves and tribute. The invaders' local collaborators became agent-intermediators between the conquerors and the hapless population, gathering taxes and tributes, and thereby becoming exploiters and, in a certain sense, protectors of their peoples at the same time. From the north, Scandinavian warrior-traders sailed southward along the rivers from the Baltic to the Black Sea, drawing the more primitive locals into a web of broader commerce and cultural contact, and in some cases, according to legend, remaining to govern. Earlier, from the west and south, Rome had spread a law-based system of governance over an area that extended as far as the Carpathians, pacified and secured by legions recruited from among the locals.²

Gradually, over the second millenium, Central Europe's warrior-chieftains joined forces to resist invaders. Their alliances evolved into nation-states, in which monarchs sought primacy over their former princely peers and then turned to rivalry amongst themselves to consolidate power over greater and greater areas. Again, Central Europe was a meeting ground of conquest, as the new states (aspiring "empires") of Hungary, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, Poland/Lithuania and Austria fought to acquire widening buffer zones to provide the strategic depth and resource base that would secure their centers. Successive new rulers forced local populations to switch religions, learn new languages and serve in the armed forces. For the local people, the only constants were taxation and the struggle to survive the depredations of predatory rulers who were beyond their control. Brief periods of stability occurred only when the local populations were part of a large empire less susceptible to attack.

These trends culminated with the rise and fall of this century's two repressive European empires: the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. While these empires were in their heyday, brutal internal repressions secured Central European stability within their borders; memories of Soviet tanks in 1956 and 1968 are still fresh in Hungary and in the Czech and Slovak republics. Only external counterforce prevented the two empires' further expansion: the Allied offensive in the case of Nazi Germany, and the nuclear stand-off in the case of the Soviet Union. Though the 1975 Helsinki Accords sought to break Europe's age-old pattern by precluding any further border changes on the continent by force, credible deterrents will doubtless be necessary in order for the new principle to hold.

With the post-1989 advent of democracy in Central Europe, for the first time the attitudes of the voters — the common people, rather than their masters — will shape the policy choices of the region's governments. Those attitudes were formed by the bitter residue of the preceding centuries, memorialized in each country's poetry, literature, theater and song, and studied by all children during their formative years. If Central Europe's security arrangements are to succeed in the coming century, they will have to accommodate these attitudes, which include several key elements:

No one's buffer. Peoples in the region share a determination that never again will decisions about their fate be made without their participation ("about us without us"), whether it be in Berlin, Moscow, Washington or Brussels. They seek to be no one's buffer, but rather masters of their own destiny.³ Despite this, paradoxically, many view membership in a larger entity as the only guarantor of their self-determination, and appear willing to accept the decreased autonomy that is the price of this guarantee.

Skepticism. Citizens are deeply wary of power elites, be they domestic or foreign. They tend to see these elites as motivated by self-interest at the expense of the ordinary people — self-proclaimed protectors, but exploiters at the same time.⁴ This can be observed, for example, in the pervasive ridicule of the powerful that permeates the region's literature.⁵ Though Central Europeans may avoid open confrontation by appearing to go along with the policies of their more powerful interlocutors, at heart they often remain skeptical.

Ethnic aspirations. Many of the region's smaller ethnic groups, having been forcefully incorporated into larger political entities, often with a ruthless suppression of their language, religion or culture, see the current era as their chance for self-realization at last.⁶ While in some cases this urge can be satisfied through a liberal scope for cultural identity within a multinational state,⁷ in other cases it may extend to a drive for political sovereignty or the altering of state borders in order to unite with a neighboring ethnic metropole⁸ — a potential threat to stability. Similarly, tensions may arise when the metropole presses for better treatment of its ethnic compatriots living as a minority in a neighboring state.⁹

Settling old scores. As the Bosnian example demonstrates so vividly, revenge for previous suffering is a powerful political force, one that superior police power has sometimes temporarily suppressed but never fully extinguished. Initiatives for the kind of reconciliation that would eliminate this threat to the region's security have barely scratched the surface as of this writing.

United States: Still Willing to “Buy” Stability?

Under successive administrations since the end of World War II, the United States has abandoned its former isolationism and embraced a role as world leader, promoting and defending American values and interests by seeking to influence events around the globe. With most of the world flat on its back economically after the Second World War, the dollar was high. Postwar economic growth made it possible for U.S. taxpayers to foot the bill for their new international role. Beginning with the establishment of the United Nations and the Marshall Plan, the United States embarked on a series of international projects that ranged from military operations to humanitarian assistance programs, following a recognizable pattern. Wherever tensions erupted, U.S. resources were directed at persuading the belligerents (using force where necessary) to cease their hostilities or other undesirable activities, then at establishing military and/or civilian assistance programs to sustain the settlement. Examples include Korea; the Middle East (where assistance to Israel and Egypt continues to draw a lion's share of the U.S. foreign assistance budget); Central America; southern Africa (Angola, Namibia, South Africa); Somalia; Ethiopia; southeast Asia; South Asia (India, Pakistan); the Persian Gulf; Haiti; and, most recently, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Where they could, Americans enlisted the participation of partner nations in their efforts, but in most cases the United States took the initiative and footed the bulk of the bill.

In justifying these international initiatives, advocates have argued that the United States would eventually expend even greater resources to repair the damage if unstable situations were allowed to fester. For years, a majority of Americans supported these activities, persuaded by their leaders that the positive results justified the outlays. More recently, however, many question America's ability to sustain the pattern.¹⁰ Numerous erstwhile beneficiaries of U.S. assistance have become economic tigers and even competitors. The dollar now buys far less; the U.S. budget deficit has soared. Increasingly, American taxpayers are likely to demand that policymakers find self-sustaining international solutions

which do not require ever greater expenditures of U.S. resources with no end in sight. This is the domestic backdrop against which U.S. administrations will be seeking support for their policies to promote security in Central Europe in the coming years.

The Pendulum Swings Back: Apparent Consensus

As communist governments toppled in the aftermath of the Berlin Wall's 1989 collapse, most of the transatlantic community, east and west, breathed a collective sigh of relief. In a natural reaction to decades of repression, the first impulse of Central Europe's newly freed nations was a surge westward, though there was no clear enthusiasm for membership in Western alliances.¹¹ Very soon, however, policymakers realized the implications of a security vacuum in the region.¹² As each of these economically shaky states took steps to provide individually for its own defense, the result could precipitate an arms race they could ill afford. Especially after violent confrontations erupted between the Yeltsin regime and conservative Russian elements in 1993, Central European states saw a need for protection from any attempt by Russia, or by a resurgent Soviet regime, to reassert dominance over them. Momentum built rapidly for NATO membership. NATO, for its part, reached out to its erstwhile adversaries with open arms, establishing new mechanisms for dialogue, cooperation and, ultimately, full membership in the alliance.¹³ In the liberal spirit of the time, Russia initially raised no objections. At one point in the general postcommunist euphoria, even Russia declared a desire to join NATO.¹⁴

On the surface, at least, an appearance of consensus existed. Both East and West shared a widespread impulse to capitalize on the gains of 1989, lest they be rolled back. In the formerly communist countries, where public opposition to government policy was not yet a habit, dissenters kept their views under wraps. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations pushed hard to overcome any caution or skepticism within the NATO alliance, winning agreement on the forthcoming policies embodied in the 1991 Rome Declaration of NATO Summit leaders,¹⁵ the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PFP), and the NATO Enlargement Study.¹⁶

Emergence of Alternate Views: Challenges to Consensus

With the passage of time, however, alternate approaches to Central Europe's security gradually emerged. As the unifying fear of a resurgent communism faded and Russia's military weakness became increasingly apparent, many Western commentators began to question the need for NATO enlargement. Sober analysis replaced euphoria; the pendulum headed back from its extreme position toward an equilibrium point. In the United States, for example, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Lee Hamilton asked how NATO enlargement would advance U.S. interests; what aspiring new members would do for NATO; whether Americans were ready to commit U.S. soldiers and nuclear guarantees to Central Europe's defense; whether taking in some Central and Eastern European countries, but not others, would increase stability and security in Europe.¹⁷ Others questioned whether the admission of new members, with their own

national interests and attitudes, might render policy consensus within NATO virtually impossible, paralyzing the alliance.¹⁸ George Kennan warned that NATO expansion

would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era. . . . [It] could be expected to inflame the nationalistic and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations; and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.¹⁹

A *New York Times* editorial criticized the Clinton administration for responding to the needs of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic at the expense of “the most important issue for European peace and prosperity . . . the consolidation of reform in Russia.”²⁰

On the other side of the spectrum, others criticized the Clinton administration for not moving fast enough with NATO enlargement. “The Clinton administration dithered and missed a golden opportunity for offering a clear timetable for accession of new members, when President Boris Yeltsin and then-Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev were giving the green light,” wrote Rep. Christopher Cox, chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee.²¹

Within NATO, solidarity weakened in the face of a diminished Soviet threat, allowing historic interests and rivalries to emerge. Questions were raised about the mission of the alliance and the U.S. role within it. Some European allies, increasingly resentful of perceived American dominance within the alliance, promoted mechanisms other than NATO (Western European Union [WEU]; European Security Pact; Council of Europe) to bolster European security, moves that would have the effect of elbowing the United States aside.²² Others, citing concern over relations with Russia, advocated delay in NATO enlargement.²³

Scholars’ high cost estimates of NATO enlargement were another factor that threatened to undermine consensus. One study estimated that the U.S. annual share could range from \$420 million to \$1.4 billion over a ten- to fifteen-year period.²⁴ However, a more authoritative Defense Department study submitted to Congress in February 1997 painted a less alarming picture. Based on more modest assumptions, the Pentagon study estimated that the U.S. share (14 percent) of the common-funded direct NATO enlargement bill would average between \$150 million and \$200 million annually over a ten-year period.²⁵

Consensus also faltered in Russia. As the post-1989 reality of free speech set in, critics felt increasingly at liberty to question President Yeltsin’s policies. As often happens when Russia’s Westernizers go too far, reactionary forces pulled Yeltsin back.²⁶ Entrenched economic interests, threatened by reforms, exerted powerful counterpressures that forced the replacement of a reformist prime minister. The conservative military, alarmed over the loss of its Baltic-based early-warning infrastructures and the effect of NATO enlargement on conventional force balances in Europe, suspected a deliberate Western plot to disarm, encircle and take advantage of a weakened Russia.²⁷

Russia's nationalist and left-wing demagogues played on popular feelings of humiliation over the loss of the empire, distress over rampant crime, and desperation due to the disappearance of the social safety net. They portrayed the West as an adversary, author of the failed reforms that had brought on these problems. In part to protect his right and left flanks in the run-up to the June 1996 election, Yeltsin jettisoned his pro-Western foreign minister. Reverting to a hard line against NATO enlargement, Russia mounted a diplomatic and public relations campaign of threats and disinformation in NATO member and prospective member states.²⁸

Meanwhile, alternative views also began to emerge in Central Europe. Public opinion was divided between supporters and detractors of government policies aimed at membership in NATO.²⁹ Though eleven governments pursued the intensified dialogue with NATO that is a prerequisite for an invitation to commence accession talks, many in the region took advantage of security-enhancing alternatives other than NATO membership. These included participation in the Europe-wide security, confidence-building and conflict prevention arrangements available under the auspices of such bodies as NACC (1991), PFP (1994), OSCE (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), and the Council of Europe. They also included participation in existing and proposed arms control and confidence-building agreements such as the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE, 1990); the Open Skies Treaty (1992); the Vienna agreements on confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs, 1990 and 1992); and the web of other confidence-building procedures sponsored by OSCE to avert tensions.

New regional cooperation entities, aimed in part at enhancing security, proliferated. These included the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone (1990); the Visegrad Group (1990); the Central European Initiative (1991); and a number of so-called "Euro-Regions" aimed at trans-border cooperation among local government bodies. All of these fell far short of a full-fledged military alliance, however. As Richard Smoke has noted, "Specialists in the Central European countries concluded quickly after 1989 that anything resembling an alliance might prove a hindrance to their entry into the EC, NATO and other Western European organizations."³⁰ A Ukrainian proposal for a regional security arrangement among former Warsaw Pact states minus Russia found no takers.³¹

Recognizing the West's limited influence³² and uncertain willingness to intervene in particular cases,³³ some Central Europeans advocated alternative security enhancement vehicles. Examples include bilateral arrangements such as security guarantees by Russia and the United States;³⁴ friendship and cooperation treaties with neighboring states (guaranteeing existing borders and the nonuse of territory for aggressive operations against the treaty partner); and military cooperation agreements or the formation of joint brigades with neighboring states as well as more distant partners, including the great powers.³⁵ Other proposed arrangements included demilitarized or neutral zones on the borders with neighboring states; formal neutrality; a formalized bilateral relationship with NATO; or an emphasis on future membership in the WEU, rather than in NATO. Another vehicle for enhanced security took the form of individual senior Central European military officers

maintaining their personal ties with their former Warsaw Pact counterparts, creating an informal security network to cushion against political tensions between governments.³⁶

It is too soon to say how effective the above measures will prove to be as a means of averting conflict. In one example, the use of UN and CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, later OSCE) mechanisms to broker the 1991 establishment of a neutral airspace zone appears to have defused tensions along the Hungarian-Serbian border.³⁷ Numerous bilateral cooperation treaties and agreements were concluded in the 1990s, but have yet to be tested in tense situations. As of this writing, both Russia and Ukraine are still in the process of negotiating formal bilateral relationships with NATO. Membership in the WEU, of course, can come only after a country is an EU member state, so its effectiveness as a security enhancer for the Central Europeans cannot be assessed.

Alongside advocacy of alternative paths to security, challenges to the wisdom of NATO membership also began to surface within Central Europe. Some asked, for example, why it was necessary or desirable to become "subservient" to a new bloc so soon after liberation from the oppressive Warsaw Pact.³⁸ Economists questioned the cost of NATO entry, having been told (falsely) by the Russians and others³⁹ that NATO would force new members to discard all their old Warsaw Pact military equipment and buy Western systems. Security strategists, realizing the limits of PFP, wondered who would protect Central Europeans (against Russia, or against aggressive neighbors) if entry into NATO or the WEU did not pan out.⁴⁰ Russia's threats to rearm and to target its nuclear weapons at Central European countries who joined NATO exacerbated these fears.⁴¹ An additional concern for many of the region's countries was their exclusive dependence on Russia as a source of oil and gas.⁴² Fear of a fuel cut-off was a powerful inhibitor to steps that would antagonize Russia. Though Russia's current buying power was down, its economic potential added to Central Europeans' reluctance to alienate such a huge future market. In arms-exporting countries, there was concern over who would purchase the country's products, and on what terms, if NATO-supported arms export controls were enforced.⁴³ The temptation of better (government-subsidized) deals from Russia or pariah clients beckoned.⁴⁴

The breakdown of consensus and the emergence of so many alternative approaches to Central Europe's security have set the stage for the developments that are likely to ensue in the next few years, addressed in the section below.

Likely Near-Term Developments

On both sides of the Atlantic, a lively public debate is currently in progress over the relative merits of Central Europe's plethora of security options. The intensity of the debate will increase as the decision timetable for NATO enlargement draws closer. There follows a discussion of likely upcoming developments within NATO, the WEU, Russia and Central Europe itself. These developments will form the context for U.S. policy in the near term.

NATO. Intensified dialogues with prospective new members will proceed as public debate continues over the wisdom of enlargement. Barring unforeseen obstacles, the July 1997 NATO summit will invite Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and possibly Slovenia

and Romania to begin accession talks aimed at enlarging the alliance in time for its 50th anniversary in 1999. However, during the course of the talks one or more allied governments or their parliaments may balk in the face of rising counterpressures. For example, some allies may prove reluctant to hamstring alliance decisionmaking by adding newcomers whose views may be incompatible with those of existing members; to accept a treaty obligation to defend Central Europeans; to shoulder the additional cost of admitting new members; or to drive Russian public opinion into a more defensive/aggressive posture. It is not yet clear whether the first group of Central European invitees will clear these hurdles.

While the accession process is ongoing for the first wave of prospective new members, NATO will offer PFP partner countries an enhanced role in planning and decisionmaking within the partnership, establishing the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) to increase their political and consultative participation.⁴⁵

In the best case, the admission of the first wave of new NATO members will proceed without adverse consequences. Second-wave aspirants will continue to strive to meet NATO criteria, while other members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council will feel increasingly empowered by the new partnership arrangements, and thus will have a rising stake in maintaining stability. In the worst case, however, the admission process for the first wave will stall or suffer a serious setback. This would undermine general confidence in NATO and the EAPC, and cause Central Europeans to place greater emphasis on other security alternatives.

EU/WEU.⁴⁶ Throughout 1997, the European Union's Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) will continue the laborious process of establishing procedures and analyzing the costs of further expansion. As true costs become more apparent, resistance to EU enlargement will build in those member countries for whom the strain of subsidizing new, less affluent members proves unacceptable. Another inhibitor of EU enlargement is the prospect of an influx of cheap labor into EU countries whose unemployment rates are already high.⁴⁷ The sheer volume of requirements set forth in the EU's "White Book" and the paucity of technical legal expertise in postcommunist states make it inevitable that prospective new members will be slow in harmonizing their legislation.⁴⁸ Meeting EU economic criteria will be equally daunting for the Central European states in transition. Thus, the accession of new EU members — and, with it, a WEU security alternative for the Central Europeans — is unlikely in the next five years.

Russia. A struggle is currently in progress between moderates and hardliners in Russia over how to respond to the test case of the first wave of Central European NATO members. Which of these two approaches prevails will be the greatest determining factor in the Central European security outlook in the near term. If Yeltsin and other moderates prevail, Russia will realize that too threatening a posture toward prospective NATO enlargement could bring about the very result it seeks to avoid — more rapid enlargement, and a more muscular military posture on the part of NATO. On the other hand, a Russian policy of accommodation to NATO enlargement will enable Russia to gain a voice in NATO deliberations and to extract concessions on its issue of greatest concern: Western military deployments along Russia's western front.

Russian hardliners view NATO enlargement as opportunistic empire-building by the west, a betrayal of previous assurances that this would not occur.⁴⁹ Their bitterness is compounded by a perception that Russia showed its good faith by assenting to the dismantlement of the Warsaw Pact and promptly withdrawing its armed forces from the former satellite countries, thereby creating a vulnerability the West now seeks to exploit.⁵⁰ The hardliners are unpersuaded by NATO's protestations that enlargement is not aimed against anyone. They will press to meet strength with strength. According to Nikolay Ryzhkov, a faction leader in the Russian Duma:

Russia must in every way oppose the expansion of NATO and its eastward movement. Protests are not enough. We must as soon as possible restore our former power and become stronger, because the west does not talk with weaklings.⁵¹

In February 1997, in an attempt to strengthen Russia's moderates and win over the hardliners, NATO presented a package of proposals designed to meet Russia's security concerns: a freeze on conventional force deployments in NATO states bordering Russia; lowered CFE force limits; a NATO-Russia Joint Council to permit joint decisionmaking and planning; and a joint NATO-Russia brigade.⁵² It is not yet clear whether this package will mollify Russia's hard-liners sufficiently to avoid a more aggressive Russian stance.

If the NATO proposals do not succeed in softening Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement, or if Yeltsin is succeeded by an old-style leader with a more belligerent approach to the West as a potential adversary, momentum is likely to build for accelerated NATO enlargement as NATO and Central Europe circle their wagons in response to renewed perceptions of a Russian threat.

Central Europe. As long as Russia remains nonthreatening, rising satisfaction with the results of enhanced PFP and the new EAPC may slow some Central Europeans' momentum for full NATO membership. Other factors that would support this outcome include unwillingness to shoulder the burden of NATO membership costs; the difficulty of meeting NATO standards; and a reluctance to provoke Russia. On the other hand, Central Europeans with a longer historical perspective will remember that sheer calculation of self-interest was not a sufficient motivation for Western countries to come to the rescue when Central European states were threatened in 1938, 1939, 1956 or 1968. This group is likely to insist that only a binding treaty obligation will be sufficient to deter aggression against Central Europe and to ensure Western support in case deterrence fails. Another factor in favor of a continuing push for NATO membership is the belief that only this will overcome western investors' hesitation to enter Central European markets.⁵³ A final and powerful motivator for full NATO membership is the prospect of a Russian recovery from its current state of weakness, driven by its increasingly frustrated and desperate nationalist, economically disadvantaged and military elements. Those who fear a Russian resurgence will want to seal Central Europe's entry into the Western alliance while Russia is still powerless to prevent it.

Elements of U.S. Policy for the Near Term

As the preceding sections demonstrate, Central Europeans currently are pursuing a variety of options, many of them mutually complementary, to enhance prospects for security in the region. The factors outlined above — political, economic, technical — will determine which of these options wins a preponderance of adherents in the coming years. It is already clear that not all the states in the region aspire to NATO membership. Thus, the U.S. government is correct in not putting all its policy eggs into the NATO enlargement basket. The United States should continue to develop other vehicles, such as those elaborated earlier, for reassuring Central and Eastern Europe and for promoting continued stability and security in Europe overall. Key elements of U.S. policy for the near term should include the following:

Russia. Russia will remain the lynchpin of European security for the foreseeable future. The top U.S. priority should be to defuse Russia's threat potential by continuing and strengthening efforts to build a positive track record in the bilateral relationship, giving Russia an increasing incentive to maintain that relationship. This does not mean acceding to every Russian demand; apparent U.S. weakness would only serve to encourage further demands. What it does mean is taking every opportunity to engage Russia's self-interest and allay Russia's fears, as long as U.S. interests are protected in the process. The United States should appeal to Russia's strategic self-interest in a dynamic partnership with NATO that will minimize the threat on its western front. Demonstrating the concrete advantages of cooperation will provide ammunition to Russia's moderates while denying ammunition to its paranoiac nationalists. The United States should focus heavily on the Gore-Chernomyrdin pattern⁵⁴ of constructive, mutually beneficial progress in a variety of spheres — especially economic.

As a sign of its own good faith, the United States should accelerate efforts to eliminate the last vestiges of U.S. legislation or regulations stemming from the Cold War era that hamper free commerce and market access, feeding Russian suspicions.⁵⁵ The United States should strengthen its Foreign and Commercial Service outreach programs and other business facilitation activities that can lead to job creation in both countries. The United States should employ the tools of public diplomacy effectively to ensure that the positive, tangible benefits of cooperation⁵⁶ are uppermost in the public mind in both countries.

The U.S. government should maintain regular, detailed bilateral policy consultations in all areas so the Russians feel that their views and interests are being taken into account. They need to know that they can influence U.S. policy through constructive dialogue, rather than having to resort to threats and obstructionism. U.S. public figures must strictly avoid chest-thumping "we are the only superpower" rhetoric; it only adds fuel to Russian extremist fires. The U.S. government should actively seek opportunities for U.S.-Russian collaboration in areas of common interest, publicizing every success. An important feature of the U.S. approach, in conjunction with our NATO allies and PFP partners, is the updating of arms control arrangements with Russia to reflect the new situation and alleviate concerns on both sides. The March 1997 Clinton-Yeltsin summit laid the groundwork for significant progress toward this goal.⁵⁷

In implementing the above measures to bind Russia's interests in preserving good relations with the United States, it is important to avoid the identification of U.S.-Russian cooperation with only one band of Russia's political spectrum. Given the possibility of future changes of government in Russia, the United States will achieve its goals over the long term only if Russian leaders across the board understand the benefits they can derive from a good bilateral relationship.

Central Europe. The U.S. aim in this region is to demonstrate the advantages of continued close cooperation in the security sphere, even if it does not lead to full NATO membership. The United States should seek to avoid an outcome in which feelings of vulnerability in the absence of Article V NATO guarantees lead Central European countries to seek alternative guarantees in a manner that would divide or destabilize Europe. The United States should continue to strengthen the habits of consultation and cooperation within the framework of PFP, NACC, OSCE and the new EAPC, to foster confidence that these existing structures offer a viable security package even without NATO membership. Through the mechanisms available under those structures, especially the OSCE, the United States should encourage policies that satisfy ethnic aspirations, to avert frustrations that could become a threat to stability. Through educational assistance programs, the United States should encourage school curricula and other activities aimed at raising a more tolerant new generation, one less likely to pass on Central Europe's tradition of revenge for old wrongs. As with Russia, the United States should use instruments of economic cooperation to create a growing web of economic self-interest in pursuing stability. In the near term, the prospect of possible future NATO membership can still serve as a lever to encourage the adherence of Central European countries to policies that enhance regional stability — for example, fair treatment of ethnic, religious and political minorities; peaceful settlement of border disputes; laws that promote cross-border business activity. However, this incentive may fade if it appears that NATO enlargement is unlikely to embrace all states in the region.

NATO. After the first wave of prospective new members has begun the accession process, NATO should proceed very cautiously before initiating a second wave. Sufficient time should elapse for any objections or obstacles to surface, and for unforeseen consequences to take their course, before proceeding further. It would not serve anyone's interests to allow a self-selected, *ad hoc* group of prospective members to proceed at their own pace toward fulfilling the requirements for membership, only to discover eventually that NATO parliaments were not prepared to ratify their accession to the Washington Treaty.

U.S. domestic consensus. Though a recent poll showed that a majority of the U.S. public supports NATO enlargement, it also reflected minority support when respondents were reminded of potential high costs and the obligation to extend the U.S. nuclear umbrella to new NATO members.⁵⁸ Senate ratification of new accessions to the Washington Treaty is not a foregone conclusion; even some senators who voted in favor of the 1996 NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act now have second thoughts.⁵⁹ The creation of a Senate "NATO Observer Group" offers the administration an opportunity to cultivate continued

Senate support for NATO enlargement.⁶⁰ Maintaining U.S. public support for the administration's policy toward security in Central Europe will require administration officials to educate the American public, while ensuring that government policies do not go beyond what the body politic is willing to accept. Senior administration officials should explain regularly why Central Europe's security is essential to U.S. security. The public should understand the importance of U.S. support for the various component parts of the European security architecture and related programs as the most cost-effective way to avoid other, more expensive forms of U.S. involvement that would ensue if these preventive measures were not in effect.

Recently, the U.S. press has tended to focus on NATO enlargement and Russia's response as though this were the only issue that would determine Central European security. The administration should broaden understanding among the press and the public that the U.S. approach to European security does not depend exclusively on NATO enlargement. Without retreating explicitly from the option of enlargement, the administration should ensure that the public realizes there are other vehicles for promoting security in Central Europe that are in place, functioning well, and deserving of U.S. support.

Conclusion

The current era of transition is rich in promise as well as risk. The promise of democracy, prosperity and stability will be at risk if extremists and demagogues pursue destabilizing policies in their quest for power, exploiting popular frustration with the disappearance of old social safety nets and the failure of new ones thus far to mature. The United States and NATO have a paramount interest in countering the forces of instability by strengthening the moderate center, both in Russia and in Central Europe.

The U.S. priority at every decision point should be to achieve an outcome that allows the region's moderates to demonstrate that their policies result in visible benefits for their people. The challenge is to accomplish this without imposing additional strains on U.S. resources. Only this kind of approach will maintain the support of the U.S. public and Congress. Similarly, it will be important to ensure that the measures adopted by the United States — whether they involve the economic, social or military programs mentioned earlier — are within the means of U.S. allies and partners. Fortunately, the governments currently in power in all the countries concerned share a strong common interest in maintaining security without excessive costs, so that resources can be diverted toward economic growth. That common interest offers a sound basis for policy coordination and cooperation between NATO governments and the governments of Central Europe to achieve long-term security for the region.

Endnotes

1. This paper will adopt a loose definition of Central Europe, addressing issues that affect countries between the Baltic and the Black Seas, and between Russia and the NATO states
2. For general histories describing the first and second millenia see, for example, Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Viking Press, 1953) and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 5th ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
3. See, for example, Tadeusz Pieciukiewicz, "Security in Central and Eastern Europe: A View from Warsaw," *Parameters* (Winter 1996-97), pp. 126-128.
4. Based on personal conversations.
5. For example, the satiric portrayal of Austro-Hungarian soldiers as corpulent, effete and bumbling, in contrast to the virile Slovak mountain men in the Slovak musical revue "Painted on Glass" by Ernest Bryll and Katarzyna Gertnerova; the ridicule of Nazi bureaucrats in the Czech film "Closely Watched Trains"; the ridicule of communist secret service operatives in Ladislav Mnacko's "The Purge"; and numerous other works.
6. For example, Russians in Carpathian regions of Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia; ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia.
7. For example, ethnic Germans in Slovakia.
8. For example, many Slovaks fear this is the case with ethnic Hungarians in the country's southern region.
9. For example, as in the case of Estonia's ethnic Russian minority.
10. See, for example, Donald M. Snow, *Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peace-Enforcement: the U.S. Role in the New International Order* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1993).
11. Pieciukiewicz, "Security in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 40. See also Andrew Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in search of security* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 129; and Magda Boguszakova, Ivan Gabal, Endre Hann, Piotr Starzynski and Eva Tracova, "Public attitudes in four Central European countries," in Richard Smoke, ed., *Perceptions of Security: Public opinion and expert assessments in Europe's new democracies* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 52. Further specifics are available in a series of public opinion studies published by the United States Information Agency Office of Research between 1992 and 1995.
12. See, for example, Mark Kramer and Richard Smoke, "Concluding Observations," in Smoke, ed., *Perceptions of Security*, pp. 284-285.
13. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO's Enlargement* (Brussels: NATO Basic Fact Sheet #13, 1996).

14. Ira Strauss, "Russia as an Ally," *The Washington Post*, 31 December 1996, p. 17.
15. *Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation* (Rome, 7-8 November 1991; <gopher://marvin.ne3a.nato.int;70/0...PRESS COMMUNIQUE/1991-1994/004.txt.>).
16. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Study on NATO Enlargement* (Brussels: NATO Publications, 1995).
17. Lee H. Hamilton, "Don't Rush NATO Enlargement," *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 August 1996, p. 20.
18. Josef Joffe, "NATO After Victory: New Products, New Markets, and the Microeconomics of Alliance," in David G. Haglund, ed. *Will NATO Go East?* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1996), pp. 57-68.
19. George F. Kennan, "A Fateful Error," *New York Times*, 5 February 1997, p. 23.
20. "Tinkering with Europe," *New York Times*, 12 December 1996, p. 36.
21. Christopher Cox, "Freedom in Europe for All," *Washington Times*, 4 February 1997, p. 19.
22. Brian Coleman, "U.S. is Expected to Resist Proposal Calling for Greater EU Defense Role," *Wall Street Journal*, 27 March 1997, p. 2.
23. Steven Erlanger, "U.S. Pushes Bigger NATO Despite Qualms on Russia," *New York Times*, 10 October 1996, p. 1/16.
24. Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler and F. Stephen Larrabee, "What Will NATO Enlargement Cost?" *Survival* 38/No.3 (Autumn 1996), pp. 5-26.
25. U.S. Department of State, *Report to the Congress on the Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: Rationale, Benefits, Costs and Implications* (24 February 1996; http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/9702nato_report.html):2. The study assumes a far less demanding standard of technical interoperability for new NATO members, reflecting the current consensus that policy compatibility and an ability to cooperate will be NATO's paramount consideration in evaluating candidate members.
26. Examples include Empress Catherine the Great's withdrawal from initial policies influenced by the Enlightenment; Tsar Alexander I's pullback from a constitution and planned reforms; the repressions of Tsar Alexander III following the reforms of Alexander II; Stalin's crackdowns following Lenin's New Economic Policy; Khrushchev's removal soon after allowing Solzhenitsyn's work to be published; Gorbachev being forced to back away from his ambitious 500-day economic reform plan; and Gorbachev being forced to crack down in the Baltics when they asserted too much independence in response to his liberal policies.
27. Based on conversations with government officials.
28. Based on conversations with politicians and government officials in Slovakia, and press commentaries of the period.

29. For details see the series of country-specific public opinion studies published by the USIA Office of Research during the early to mid-1990s.
30. Richard Smoke, "The security situation of the Central European countries: historical background," in Smoke, ed. *Perceptions of Security*, p. 100.
31. Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War*, p. 46.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
33. The examples that stand out most starkly are the crises of 1938, 1939, 1956 and 1968, when Western countries declined to intervene to preserve Central European states' territorial integrity. Western hesitation over how to deal with territorial conquests and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina offers a more recent example of what can result when there is no treaty obligation to intervene.
34. Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War*, p. 45.
35. For detailed discussion of such treaties, agreements and joint brigades, see Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War*, pp. 36-120. See also Pawel Swieboda, "In NATO's Waiting Room," *Transition*, 19 April 1996, pp. 52-55.
36. Based on personal conversations.
37. Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War*, p. 112.
38. Based on personal conversations.
39. Lars-Erik Nelson, "To understand NATO growth, follow the money," *New York Daily News*, 21 February 1997, p. 15.
40. Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War*, p. 161.
41. See, for example, Russian Defense Minister Rodionov's statement cited in "Yeltsin reiterates 'nyet' to NATO," (no author cited), *Washington Times*, 30 November 1996, p. 1.
42. Based on personal conversations.
43. Based on personal conversations.
44. Bill Gertz, "NATO candidates armed rogue states," *Washington Times*, 19 February 1997, p. 1.
45. Based on interviews with U.S. officials in Brussels and Washington.
46. Membership in the European Union (EU) is a prerequisite for joining the EU's security arm, the Western European Union (WEU).
47. See, for example, Thomas L. Friedman, "NATO or Tomato?" *New York Times*, 22 January 1997, p. 21.
48. Based on personal conversations.

49. Aleksei K. Pushkov, "The West's Leaders Have Not Kept Their Promises," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 March 1997, p. 1-2 (FBIS English translation at <http://fbis.fedworld.gov/cgi-bin/retrieve...clear_fouo;323551;&docname=0e7ryx027t9k0>).
50. Aleksei K. Pushkov, "The Risk of Losing Russia," *New York Times*, 21 January 1997, p. 23.
51. Galina Filippova and Valeriy Asrian, "Deputies React to Primakov Views on NATO," RIA (Moscow) Wire Service, 7 February 1997.
52. Madeleine K. Albright, "Speech to the North Atlantic Council," 18 February 1997 (www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s970218a.htm). See also Michael R. Gordon, "Albright Offers Russia Plan to Ease Fears Over NATO," *New York Times*, 21 February 1997, p. 1/6.
53. See, for example, Miloslav Had and Vladimir Handl, "The Czech Republic," in Smoke, ed., *Perceptions of Security*, p. 139.
54. U.S. Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs, *U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technological Cooperation (Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission)*, 8 July 1996 (<http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nis/gore_chernomyrdin.html>).
55. Some seventy such laws were repealed or revised by the Friendship Act of 22 November 1993. The September 1993 U.S.-Russian agreement on commercial space launch trade and the January 1996 U.S.-Russian Joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on aircraft market access also achieved progress in this area. For additional information see the 1993 U.S. State Department factsheet entitled *Cold War Legislation*.
56. Such as increased investments and higher exports leading to job creation, for example.
57. Thomas W. Lippman, "Clinton, Yeltsin Agree on Broad Arms Cuts," *The Washington Post*, 22 March 1997, p. 1. See also "Joint U.S.-Russian Statement on European Security," 21 March 1997 (<<http://www.usis.fi/whatshap/summit28.htm>>).
58. The Associated Press, "NATO growth favored – poll," *New York Daily News*, 16 February 1997, p. 16.
59. Michael Dobbs, "Clinton Prepares NATO Sales Pitch," *The Washington Post*, 13 March 1997, p. 26.
60. Trent Lott, "The Senate's Role in NATO Enlargement," *The Washington Post*, 21 March 1997, p. 27.

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