

Correspondence

Harvey Waterman
Dessie Zagorcheva

NATO and Democracy

Dan Reiter

To the Editors (Harvey Waterman writes):

In the spring 2001 issue of *International Security*, Dan Reiter argues that NATO enlargement has not and will not “spread democracy” and is therefore not worth the risks and costs that it entails.¹ More intelligently argued and more thorough than the usual polemics on this subject, his thesis deserves careful consideration. Below, I attempt to show that Reiter has nevertheless misconstrued the argument in favor of enlargement and that a different conclusion should be drawn.

There is a mystery about NATO enlargement that Reiter and almost every other opponent² do not address: If its value is so problematic and its costs to new members so high, why do the governments of the applicant states seem so committed to pursuing membership? Opponents of enlargement point to public opinion in the new member states (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) to show that support, though often carrying a majority, was not overwhelming and lagged behind the greater number favoring membership in the European Union (EU). In some of the proposed new member states, the reports are quite different, with support being particularly strong in Latvia and Estonia. But why focus on public opinion? Its importance in the high politics of foreign policy is at least open to question. And it is in any case rarely hostile. What about the governments? What do they think they know that opponents may be missing?

Reiter characterizes proponents of NATO enlargement as arguing that it will “spread democracy.” His quotes and paraphrases of proponents, however, mostly claim that it will “strengthen” or “consolidate” democracy. This is an important, one would have

Harvey Waterman is Associate Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University—New Brunswick. He would like to thank Edward Rhodes for his helpful comments.

Dessie Zagorcheva is a doctoral student in the Political Science Department at Columbia University and is working on her dissertation on U.S. civil-military relations. She wishes to thank Richard Betts, Robert Jervis, and Jack Snyder.

Dan Reiter is Associate and Winship Research Professor of Political Science at Emory University. He thanks Angela Conway for her comments.

1. Dan Reiter, “Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 41–67.

2. See, for example, Michael Mandelbaum, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996); and Ted Galen Carpenter and Barbara Conry, eds., *NATO Enlargement: Illusions and Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 1998). See also the conclusions of a Russo-American panel as reported by Bruce G. Blair, Clifford G. Gaddy, and J. Andrew Spindler, “Project on Problems of Engagement: Russia’s Security, Economic, and Banking Crises,” in Carnegie Corporation, ed., *The Russia Initiative: Reports of the Four Task Forces* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 2001), pp. 5–35.

thought obvious, distinction. It is true that NATO applicants are already democracies, some of them functioning well and apparently secure. But they are very new democracies, with little experience in democratic government, and face serious economic, social, and political problems. They have significant constituencies that are unhappy with the costs of transition and potential leaders drawn from groups with ties to the past. The leaders of these countries still have fresh memories of that past and a worldview in which East and West are dramatically juxtaposed. And some of these states, especially the Baltic countries, still face Russian bullying in the form of overt military threats as well as threats to do economic harm, such as by building alternative port facilities in Russia that would deny important income to Latvia and Estonia. Indeed, for some the failure to achieve NATO membership may itself be a source of destabilization, because they think that membership in Western organizations might help them resist the Russians. These states want all the insurance they can get.

Sure, Reiter might say, but how does NATO membership give them that insurance? They are welcomed by the West, they get help from the World Bank, and they are candidates for membership in the EU. Moreover, NATO has no track record of discouraging political regression among its members—look at Greece and Turkey. Reiter cites Robert Keohane and others to the effect that institutions help to create norms, but then dismisses that argument on the grounds that democracy is so strongly related to gross domestic product that other factors do not matter much. And anyhow NATO has managed to maintain relations with antidemocratic military leaders in member countries, with no apparent effect on their internal behavior, so why expect anything different in the future? Furthermore, if there is any benefit here, it has already been provided by the Partnership for Peace, so why do we need NATO enlargement?

There are two principal problems with the anti-enlargement argument: (1) it overstates the importance of public rhetoric and transitory attitudes, especially in Russia; and (2) it underestimates the importance of institutional commitments. Because these are chronic faults of foreign policy analysis in many spheres, the lessons to be learned may have broad application. Oddly, while the second problem is the usual fault of realism, the first is the transgression that realism was supposed to stamp out.

RHETORIC AND REALITY

Public statements about policy are necessarily crafted to influence the political process, not to persuade academic analysts. In the early rhetoric about NATO enlargement, spokespersons for the Clinton administration talked about strengthening democracy through NATO membership, and opponents talked about the nonexistence of a military threat from Russia. The former emphasized the perceived needs of the applicants and their new democracies, and the latter the fragility of Russia's democratic state. There was little engagement between the two rhetorics, because such engagement would not have served the polemical purposes of either side. In addition, appeals to members of Congress from Polish-American and Hungarian-American groups were based mainly on a putative threat from the East. This in turn gave enlargement opponents a target for their argument that the United States should not unnecessarily upset the Russians, who were anyhow in no condition to attack anyone. And some arguments carried taboos: U.S. policymakers did not want to overemphasize arguments about the fragility of new democracies, nor did they want to display too cynical a response to the warnings about

Russian opinion. As is always the case when public officials speak on matters of policy, they must be concerned with many different audiences. In this case, that meant supporting the new democracies without undermining them with too much talk about their internal vulnerability or too much obvious rhetorical interference in their domestic affairs.

In addition to the problematics of U.S. public rhetoric, there are those of public figures in the affected countries. Much has been made of the noisy opposition in Russia, overwhelmingly and understandably hostile to NATO enlargement. Indeed, in some cases the Russian government or the Duma pointed to the prospect of enlargement (not, interestingly, the fact of enlargement) when postponing actions desired by the United States (such as ratification of SALT II), thus seeming to make the case that relations with an important country were being jeopardized. Democracy in Russia being more vulnerable than in any of the primary beneficiaries of enlargement, this perceived slap by the West was also seen as jeopardizing the internal stability of a major power. This has always been the strongest argument against enlargement: If you set democratic strengthening in Hungary against democratic weakening in Russia, *ceteris paribus* you worry more about Russia.

But rhetoric is just rhetoric. The realists had a point. Carrying on about NATO enlargement was a bargaining tool for the Russians. They did not like it, of course. But there is no evidence that they would have reacted in ways that did not serve their larger national interests, or that there was any major substantive way in which enlargement threatened Russian interests. The issue of enlargement was never central enough to Russian politics to influence major policies beyond some gestures and delays. And so it has proved. Reiter refers to the lack of consequences in Russia as if this were a surprise, but it should not have been, despite the attacks from the Russian leadership.

Indeed, NATO enlargement is not an issue that mattered a great deal to anyone outside the leadership of any of the countries involved, except for the usual commentators and, in the case of the United States, the ethnic lobbies that supported it. And citation of the modest levels of support in public opinion in the first-round countries is somewhat disingenuous, not only because it mattered so little but because the lack of strong public opposition in Russia went largely ignored. It may be true that NATO membership for the Baltic states will matter more to those who care about Russian national identity as a regional power center, but given general Russian dismay over adventures in Afghanistan and Chechnya, it is hard to believe that retreat from national pretensions in Latvia or Estonia will have a great marginal impact.

REALITY AND INSTITUTIONS

Rhetoric and public policy pronouncements should not be confused with the establishment of norms stemming from institutional commitments. Public effusions tend to be ephemeral or incomplete. New norms, however, can put down deep roots that constrain behavior and influence future definitions of interests. This assertion is of course the subject of much controversy in the scholarly literature. What can be said with some confidence is that the importance of institutional commitments has a surface plausibility to many, even more in the political realm than in the academic world. The very process of negotiating the creation or expansion of institutions and agreements affects the beliefs and perceptions of the parties and individuals involved. It also creates obliga-

tions and commitments that the negotiators, policymakers, and legislators take extremely seriously. In NATO enlargement, this process has tended to include many policy, political, and military leaders of the participating countries. And the commitments involved have not been trivial.

In his discussion of Chinese participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF), Alastair Iain Johnston describes an interesting effect of the co-optation of individuals into an institution.³ Here a reluctant China agreed to join the fledgling institution because of the efforts of one small group in the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA). These individuals then developed a “comfort level” within the ARF and brought support of its efforts back to Beijing to influence Chinese policymakers and raise the costs of defection. Johnston writes:

One foreign diplomat in Beijing, who has interacted with these MFA officers extensively, even suggested that their agenda is to tie China gradually and innocuously into regional security institutions so that some day China’s leaders will be bound by the institutions. They see ARF involvement as a process of educating their own government. . . . Over time the character of Chinese obstruction or resistance in its ARF diplomacy “on the ground” has shifted from protecting given Chinese “interests” to protecting Chinese multilateral diplomacy from potential domestic opposition. Tentatively speaking, one could plausibly see this as diplomacy more empathetic with the institution and less empathetic with other PRC constituencies that may have different views of the value of multilateralism. In other words it may reflect an emergent solidarity with the institution and its participants.⁴

In the case of NATO enlargement, the initiative starts at the top and is intended to influence—and commit—those “on the ground,” but the lesson is similar: Institutions co-opt, and the co-opted may change how they think and behave. This is particularly important in the politics of new democracies.

Reiter gives more attention to this process than most critics of enlargement, but only with regard to the argument that a major benefit of enlargement would arise in civil-military relations. He contends that democratic civil-military relations need deeper roots than can be provided by international institutions or agreements, and that therefore this argument does not carry much weight. That democracy and its institutions cannot be supported simply by signing on to NATO is undoubtedly true, but Reiter’s standard seems unreasonably high. Surely one of NATO’s most important early tasks was to reassure Germans and others that the new German military would be a democratic one. Sometimes it is the contribution at the margin that makes the difference.

That clearly is what leaders in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic must have thought—and what leaders in other Central and East European countries must still be thinking. For the military in their countries—and for all those once associated with the exercise of central power, internal security, and intelligence or with the functions of the dominant party or the centrally driven economic institutions—an agreement to join

3. Alastair Iain Johnston, “The Myth of the ASEAN Way? Explaining the Evolution of the ASEAN Regional Forum,” in Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane, and Celeste A. Wallander, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 287–324.

4. *Ibid.* pp. 308–309.

NATO, to adopt its rules and accede to its demands, to be put into regular contact with its officials and its military officers and its institutions and procedures, is to provide pervasive encouragement to reform and a ubiquitous presence of examples of how it is done if you are “Western.” Given the overwhelming support in these countries for becoming “Western,” there has been, and remains, an opportunity to bring in all these carpetbaggers with minimal resentment and even some enthusiasm. And NATO continues to be the available vehicle, and the soonest ready, to make this happen. Even with the approach of EU membership, now at last credible for some of these countries, the NATO presence in their militaries is still a very attractive way to cement what they have achieved since the end of communism.

Formal institutions such as NATO, once they have developed an infrastructure, established norms, and co-opted people into them, are better able than mere promises (or the Partnership for Peace) to enforce those norms. They require constant involvement, including participation in meetings, exercises, celebrations, and consultations. They appoint officers and representatives: positions that tend to acquire a continuity that keeps the flame lit. They produce cooperative activities that strengthen commitments and solidarity. They provide occasions for reinforcing rhetoric and offer direct benefits to participants. And if called upon to act in extraordinary ways (as in Bosnia and Kosovo), they have opportunities to prove—and incentives to increase—their value; indeed they give the military establishments of the new members something to do. No wonder enlargement looked attractive to the leaders of the new democracies.

Reiter points out that during the Cold War, NATO managed to tolerate militaries in Greece and Turkey that had overthrown their own democracies and that NATO has no formal mechanism for ejecting a member for undemocratic behavior (or for any other reason). Indeed NATO might still choose to tolerate a backsliding member, although this is less clear in the post-Cold War world. The point, rather, is that backsliding is less likely to occur in this world, a world in which it would be a defection discouraged by precisely the institutional commitments and ties that NATO affords.

But, say the skeptics, these new members do not need all this insurance. They are democracies and are doing fine—and those that are not will not be let into the alliance until they are. Is there really something to be gained here? Their leaders think there is, and they are in a position to make that judgment. Perhaps they are wrong, and the risks and costs of enlargement cannot be justified in terms of U.S. policy. But they are more likely to be right. In any case, what are the interests that U.S. policy seeks to serve here?

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The opponents of NATO enlargement are right to be concerned with both the internal politics of Russia and U.S. relations with that country. Disorder in Russia poses problems for the United States, with the potential for disruptions in third countries and for U.S. intervention. The security of the large nuclear stockpiles and weaponry in Russia is obviously an important concern as well. And Russian cooperation is often significant to U.S. international efforts, not least in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The only question here is whether further NATO enlargement would do lasting damage to these interests. This does not seem likely, because enlargement is offensive to the Russians much more for its symbolism than for its invasion of a sphere of influence in which Russian influence has greatly waned. Russia’s interests in cooperation with the United

States will remain much more important than its interest in bullying Latvia, while the anger of its nationalists will be ephemeral in its (mostly rhetorical) effects on policy.

But there are other interests as well. The U.S. experience in Bosnia and Kosovo may not be unique. Events in Macedonia now and in Ukraine or Moldova in the future may—despite the profoundest desires of the United States to be left out—draw it in yet again to calm turmoil and restore order. Countries that now look stable, such as Latvia and Slovakia, could become less so without the prophylaxis of NATO or EU membership, or both. “Vital” interest or not, the United States finds it too hard just to stand by in the face of humanitarian disasters created in Europe by political disorder and ethnic strife. And the United States will always have a general interest in improving nearby bad neighborhoods that eventually drain resources and energy from more rewarding pursuits. Should intervention be called for again, a prior commitment to NATO can be expected to facilitate cooperation by the countries of the region.

Even if these countries eventually achieve EU membership, it is likely that U.S. involvement in Europe will still be needed and expected. NATO is the obvious vehicle for that. But it is more important that NATO’s organizational reach extend to the governments and militaries of these countries as soon as possible, to begin the socialization process into Western ways that may forestall problems and tie the United States and Europe together both operationally and normatively. And NATO can do this more easily and more rapidly than the EU (especially in the military sphere), more meaningfully than the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and more profoundly than the Partnership for Peace.

It is for these reasons that the leaders of these countries want to join NATO, the sooner the better—and why the United States should want this too. Indeed, given Russia’s loss of all influence in most of these countries, it is why Russian leaders should tolerate engagement as well: Stability and order can only help Russia recover from its wounds, and it will be a long time before a Russian government can have realistic ambitions for influence beyond its current sphere. The realization must be painful and the protests genuine, but no medium-term Russian interests are served by aggravating relations with the West or refusing cooperation in international affairs. Moreover, Russian economic interests are more threatened by EU membership for these countries than Russian security interests are by their membership in NATO.

In any case, while the United States can provide reassurances to Russians concerned about its intentions and actions in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and can hold out as many olive branches as they are willing and able to grasp, it will do neither the United States nor Russia much good to hold all of their other policies hostage to the rhetorical excesses of Russian politics or the short-term advantages that Russian nationalists may take from U.S. or NATO policies in the region. The United States will certainly not attempt to intervene in Chechnya or Dagestan, and it can tell Russia so. After all, it is the West that has insisted that Latvia back off from restricting the civil liberties of its Russian minority—the United States does not want to rub Russia’s nose in the fact of its needing U.S. help in such matters, but the Russians surely know it.

CONCLUSION

NATO enlargement may not *spread* democracy, but it is perfectly plausible that membership would *strengthen* it. Beyond that, enlargement can promote reform (especially

in the military), contribute to regional political order, and co-opt younger generations into Western norms and perspectives. Enlargement will entail costs, including added burdens to struggling economies and governing and operating headaches for NATO. But some things are worth paying for.

Reiter is correct to focus on the larger issue of NATO's contribution to democratic stability and order in the region, but he focuses too much on creating democracy and too little on maintaining it and establishing a zone of peace. He is right to be concerned about Russia but wrong in failing to see that a zone of peace is just what is needed to avoid issues that pit Russia and the West against each other.

In discussions of the democratic peace, too little is made of the fact that stable democracies do not fall apart, and therefore do not create the occasions for local conflicts that broaden to involve others in war. That is the prize that NATO enlargement may win.

Finally, NATO itself has evolved. Always to some degree a "security management institution,"⁵ it has become almost wholly that, with little left of its collective defense mission. Even early on, that security management function served to assist and control one of its own members (West Germany). Bringing potential problem countries in is likely to be more successful (and less costly) than going "out of area," as NATO has lately felt compelled to do in Bosnia and Kosovo. Enlargement is the logical next step in managing security and the logical commitment to make to keep the United States from abandoning its security interests in the region. What once seemed distant will appear ever closer. Perhaps in its future interventions, NATO will show up on time.

—Harvey Waterman
New Brunswick, New Jersey

To the Editors (Dessie Zagorcheva writes):

In his article "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy,"¹ Dan Reiter maintains that NATO expansion has not and will not advance democratization in East European countries. Reiter is correct that the institutionalist arguments for how and why NATO expansion may spread democracy are underdeveloped (p. 51). He is also right that East European governments and societies would have democratized with or without NATO membership. This does not mean, however, that institutions such as NATO cannot be useful for directing and facilitating democratic reform.

I have five principal disagreements with Reiter's argument. First, by failing to discuss NATO's Membership Action Plans (MAPs),² Reiter discounts NATO's usefulness

5. Celeste A. Wallander and Robert O. Keohane, "Risk, Threat, and Security Institutions," in Haftendorn, Keohane, and Wallander, *Imperfect Unions*, pp. 21–47. See also the interesting discussion in G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

1. Dan Reiter, "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 41–67. Additional references are in parentheses in the text.

2. The Membership Action Plan program was launched at the Washington Summit in April 1999. Under the MAP, countries prepare annual reform programs that address a host of political, eco-

as a guide to state action and its contribution toward accelerating democratic reform. Reiter neglects to mention at least two ways in which NATO has helped advance reform in East European states: (1) it has provided directions and motivation for action—that is, by specifying requirements for membership, NATO has assured that these states make mutually acceptable policy choices and speed their implementation; and (2) through various programs and other initiatives, NATO has helped reformers stay the course. Although, as Reiter states, countries in Eastern Europe began to democratize mainly for domestic political reasons, and although reversal to authoritarian rule in most of these countries is out of the question with or without NATO membership, even when there is a strong political will to democratize, implementing reforms can be very difficult. It requires painful adjustments that can carry high, short-term political costs; international institutions such as NATO help sustain the will to reform.

Second, Reiter does not distinguish East European states according to their level of democratization, and hence fails to allow that NATO membership could influence the reform process differently depending on the country. Countries with no democratic traditions before the fall of communism need greater guidance from international institutions than do those that are more democratically advanced. Most analysts place NATO applicants in one of two tiers: The first includes countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, where democratization has largely been successful; in the second are countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, where reform has been slower and more problematic. The effects of NATO enlargement have varied depending on the country being discussed. True, it was ironic that in the first round of enlargement, NATO accepted those countries requiring the least assistance with their efforts to democratize. This does not nullify the argument, however, that through the MAPs the alliance has helped promote democracy and accelerate economic reform in those countries not accepted in the first round of enlargement. MAPs provide a “road map” to aid these countries in preparing for future membership. By establishing objectives, they help aspirants “to streamline their efforts and to set priorities in the allocation of scarce resources.”³ These countries lack the technical expertise to design the democratic institutions they desire. MAPs are assisting them in finding the quickest and least expensive ways to consolidate their democracies. In this regard, NATO’s role of transferring information as well as rules and norms of behavior continues to be important.

MAPs have been particularly important for countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, both of which had almost no experience with democracy prior to the fall of communism. Under the MAPs, discussions between aspiring members and NATO experts provide valuable feedback in helping them find ways to fulfill their objectives. Could this goal be achieved without such programs? Probably, but at an unnecessarily high cost and at a much slower pace.

conomic, military, legal, and other issues. Aspirants, with the help of NATO members, outline their objectives and establish a timetable for their accomplishment. Based on these individual programs, NATO allies provide political and technical advice and assistance to aspiring members and periodically review their progress.

3. Radu Bogdan, “Romanian Reflections,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2000), pp. 23–25.

Third, Reiter's claim that membership in the European Union (EU) would better serve democratic reform in Eastern Europe, though correct, is somewhat misplaced for two reasons: (1) these countries decided to apply for NATO membership when they realized that joining the EU would not be possible in the near future; and (2) although it is true, as Reiter argues, that the EU can give these countries what they most need—that is, help with strengthening their economies, which would lead to the consolidation of their democracies—this does not rebut the institutionalist claim that institutions have an independent effect on state behavior. Reiter is merely saying that it is the EU, not NATO, that matters for democratization and economic progress. More important, however, the security and economic interests of states cannot be as neatly distinguished as Reiter seems to suggest. As Robert Art put it, "The prime reason NATO was formed was psychological, not military: to make the Europeans feel secure enough against the Soviets so that they will have the political will to rebuild themselves economically."⁴

Fourth, Reiter's analysis does not sufficiently take into account the radical transformation of NATO after the dissolution of the Soviet Union or the profound changes in the international system more generally. NATO, for example, has transformed itself from a defensive military alliance designed to deal with a specific threat (the Soviet Union) into an organization that has declared its former enemies as its newest partners. In addition, NATO has increasingly begun to emphasize its political and diplomatic functions (rather than just its purely military ones). Reiter argues that there is hardly any evidence that NATO membership significantly promoted democracy during the Cold War (p. 56). But NATO's principal aim during that period was not to spread democracy but to deter the Soviet Union. As Reiter himself points out, security concerns were paramount. Also, during the Cold War, democracy was not a prerequisite for membership. We cannot blame the alliance for not doing something it was not intended to do at that time. The international environment has changed radically since then. At present, there is no military threat to the alliance. And today democracy is a requirement for NATO membership. Because the Soviet or any similar threat no longer exists, democracy need not be sacrificed for security. Hence Reiter's argument that during the Cold War NATO membership "exerted only minimal influence on democratization" (p. 58), even if true, does not tell us much about the post-Cold War period or about NATO's more recent potential to influence democratization.

Fifth, Reiter's arguments regarding NATO's lack of positive influence on the civil-military relations of its members are at least partly irrelevant to the problems that East European countries now confront in this area. He argues that NATO membership has largely failed to prevent military coups (e.g., Greece). At present, however, military coups are the least these states and the West fear. Nearly all analysts of Eastern and Central European civil-military relations agree that the likelihood of a military overthrow in any of the states in the region is nonexistent. As David Betz states: "The military coup d'état has not been a factor in post-Communist transitions because a professional military conviction that the armed forces should be the servant of the state

4. Robert J. Art, "American Foreign Policy and the Fungibility of Force," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Summer 1996), p. 28.

was a central feature of the Soviet-type system of civil-military relations.”⁵ In post-communist countries, the problem is how to provide effective public administration and direction to the armed forces, not how to prevent military coups. The MAPs and other NATO initiatives and programs are good instruments for providing the know-how that these countries need to strengthen the democratic, civilian control of their militaries.

—*Dessie Zagorcheva*
New York, New York

The Author Replies:

I would like to thank Dessie Zagorcheva and Harvey Waterman for their thoughtful contributions to the debate over NATO enlargement. At the outset, let me note that it is essential to frame this debate in costs and benefits terms. As I and others have pointed out, NATO enlargement carries real costs: financial costs to the United States and to new members; encumbered NATO decisionmaking, which increases the likelihood of blocking action in future crises; risks to democratization in Russia; destabilization of the U.S.-Russian relationship; and the potential for committing the United States to the use of force under conditions in which public support is unlikely. These costs are not staggering or potentially catastrophic, but they are tangible. As to the advantages of enlargement, aside from potential democratization benefits, they are ephemeral. NATO's ability to reduce conflicts among its members has proven limited. Deterrence of Russian aggression is also an unimpressive benefit: Russian national and military power is low and continues to plummet, and since 1990 Russia has consistently exhibited absolutely no desire to undertake aggression against current or potential NATO members. Waterman mentions the possibility of NATO membership being useful for resisting low-level aggression, such as Russian pressure or bullying against the Baltic states. However, NATO membership provides no means of resistance against such tactics, especially economic moves such as “building alternative port facilities.” Thus, given the costs of enlargement and the absence of democratization benefits, the debate should focus on whether NATO strengthens democracy. If it does, then enlargement may be worth pursuing further, but if it does not, enlargement should not continue.

Zagorcheva makes five points. She first writes that the April 1999 Membership Action Plan (MAP) will help to sustain democratization both by providing “directions and motivation for action” and by helping “reformers stay the course” through programs and initiatives. The MAP is nothing new, in the sense that in the past NATO frequently and publicly linked new membership to domestic reform—the 1995 Perry principles and the 1997 Madrid Declaration being two examples. As I discussed in my article, there are at least two important reasons to believe that such public statements will not significantly hasten or sustain democratization. First, NATO membership carries little

5. David Betz, “The Persistent Problem of Civil-Military Relations in East and Central Europe: A Briefing Note on Democratic Control of Armed Forces,” Fourth International Security Forum, Geneva, Switzerland, November 15–17, 2000, p. 15.

impact as a carrot. There are other, more important factors (such as levels of prosperity, presence of a middle class, and so forth) that will determine whether democracy will emerge and survive. Notably, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic became democratic before they expressed interest in NATO membership. Second, the threat of NATO ejection is hollow. There is no formal means by which a state can be ousted from NATO for any reason, including a collapse of democratic reforms. Further, the unanimity that would probably be required to take such an extraordinary step is politically unlikely, especially given that some NATO members will want certain states to remain in the alliance regardless of their domestic political composition (consider, for example, French support for Romanian membership). The essential impossibility of ejection also undermines the effectiveness of NATO as a carrot, because it means that states could make democratic reforms, acquire admission, and then revert to autocracy without fearing removal from NATO. Notably, because the European Union (EU) explicitly provides for punishing states that backslide from democracy, it is likely to be more effective than NATO at advancing democracy.

Zagorcheva's second point is that MAPs provide a "road map" for democratization, establishing specific objectives to be achieved en route to democratization. I agree with Zagorcheva that transmitting what amounts to technical information about the creation of a stable democracy based on the rule of law is one important function that international and transnational institutions and organizations can perform. I disagree with her, however, that the offer of NATO membership is necessary to relay this information. There are plenty of institutions, organizations, and agencies actively working to promote democracy in Eastern Europe principally through the offer of expert advice. An incomplete list of these groups includes the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Treasury, the Ford Foundation, Freedom House, the Peace Corps, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Soros Foundation, the Council of Europe, the EU, the American Bar Association, the National Democratic Institute, the EastWest Institute, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the German Marshall Fund, the International Executive Service Corps, the International Law Institute, and the Center for Constitutional Law and Policy. Further, regarding Zagorcheva's specific point of civil-military relations, this information can easily be (and is) transmitted through the Partnership for Peace (PfP), an organization that not only includes East European and former Soviet states but continues to take steps to spread domestic reforms within these former communist societies. Working through the PfP has several advantages that NATO enlargement does not: The PfP is not a defense alliance, so it does not expand U.S. security commitments; participation is less expensive; out-of-area NATO actions do not require the accession of PfP members; and PfP does not alienate Russia (as indeed Russia itself is a PfP member).

Third, Zagorcheva argues that my claim that EU membership will expand democracy "does not rebut the institutionalist claim that institutions have an independent effect on state behavior. Reiter is merely saying that it is the EU, not NATO, that matters for democratization and economic progress." I agree with her characterization of my thinking—that some though not all international institutions can spread democracy. I disagree with perhaps the implication of her statement that because EU membership is far off it is not useful as a carrot to induce reforms. There are a number of East European states lined up to join the EU by 2004, with a second group following on not far be-

hind.¹ In the case of Slovakia, as I noted in the article, we might be confident that a desire for EU membership rather than a desire for NATO membership motivated the voting out of Slovakia's strongman, Vladimir Meciar, and the turn toward competitive democracy, because at the time (1998) a majority of Slovaks (70 percent) favored EU membership, though only a minority (48 percent) favored NATO membership. Curiously, on this point Zagorcheva quotes Robert Art, who has argued against further rounds of NATO enlargement.²

She also argues that the political and economic functions of institutions are not distinct, noting for example that in its early days, NATO helped Western Europe to rebuild economically. On this point I disagree. At the most general level, international institutions are not effective at accomplishing all international goals: The North American Free Trade Agreement does not advance arms control; the International Olympic Committee does not reduce global warming; and the Australia-New Zealand-United States alliance does not safeguard human rights. NATO enlargement is unlikely to directly or indirectly increase prosperity in these states for three reasons: (1) it will not advance EU membership; (2) it does not promise trade concessions; (3) and it does not come with economic aid packages. Further, there are only the most passing and vague references to economic reform in the 1999 MAP (applicants must show a commitment to "economic liberty"³). The analogy of Western Europe in the 1940s and 1950s does not apply here, either. Russia is much less of a threat now than the Soviet Union was then, and these societies are not trying to rebuild in the wake of a destructive world war but are rather trying to change economic systems. One might also speculate that economic reconstruction in the 1940s and 1950s was more the result of Marshall Plan aid than it was of NATO membership. In addition, NATO entry may actually undermine economic progress in these states for two reasons. As I noted in the article, it (has and) will require increased defense expenditures on the part of new members, straining government budgets that must perform crucial tasks such as providing social services to ease the painful transition to market economies, reducing taxes to free up capital, offering tax incentives to attract foreign investment, and so forth. The Baltic states in particular may be called on to as much as double the fraction of gross domestic product that each devotes to defense expenditures as a condition of NATO membership.⁴ Also, NATO membership may attract the kind of economic backlash from Russia that Waterman describes in his note, undermining commercial relationships that are important for nations such as the Baltic states.

Zagorcheva's fourth point is that the change in NATO's character after the Cold War makes NATO's inability to democratize during the Cold War irrelevant to the post-Cold War period. I agree that the Cold War period has limited relevance for discussion of whether post-Cold War enlargement will spread or consolidate democracy. The Cold War record on democratization, however, needs to be examined for two reasons. First,

1. Peter Finn, "A Dream of 'Joining Europe': For Former Communist States, Prospect of EU Membership Lifts Hopes," *Washington Post*, August 12, 2001, p. A1.

2. Robert J. Art, "Creating a Disaster: NATO's Open Door Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 383–403.

3. For a description of the MAP, see <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030103.htm>.

4. Thomas S. Szayna, *NATO Enlargement, 2000–2015: Determinants and Implications for Defense Planning and Shaping* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), pp. 53–60.

policymakers and pundits are making the claim that because NATO strengthened democracy during the Cold War, it will do the same after the Cold War. For the sake of public debate, that specious claim needs to be examined more closely. Second, the Cold War experience does provide at least one useful lesson: The pro-democratizing effects of military-to-military contacts may be overstated. One pro-enlargement argument is that NATO membership will produce military-to-military contacts that will facilitate the establishment of norms respecting civilian control of the military. The experiences of Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey during the Cold War cast doubt, however, on the veracity of this claim.

Zagorcheva's last point is that my focus on military coups is beside the point, because coups are unlikely in Eastern Europe. I agree completely. If military coups are unlikely, however, then the advantage of strengthening civilian control over the military is substantially reduced, because the benefit of strengthening civilian control amounts to improving defense decisionmaking. Do we really want to enlarge NATO simply for the sake of improving the Slovenian defense budgeting process? Some might argue that strengthening civilian control would restrain possible militarism in these states. There is, however, a wide array of research that has found that civilian leaders are not necessarily less hawkish than military leaders.⁵ This is likely to be especially true in Eastern Europe, where the greatest dangers of conflict will come from extremist civilian hypernationalists taking power (through elections or otherwise) and inflaming territorial disputes or persecuting minorities for the sake of solidifying their domestic political control.

Waterman also makes a number of interesting points. He notes, for example, the support for NATO membership among East European governments, which implies hidden advantages to enlargement. The expressed preferences of other states, however, ought not to swerve U.S. foreign policymakers from doing what is in the national interest of the United States. Simply because NATO membership may be in the best interests of Romania does not mean that it is in the best interests of the United States. Waterman also posits that NATO membership will consolidate if not spread democracy. As I discussed above, however, NATO is a poor choice of an international institution either to consolidate or to spread democracy: Other factors, such as prosperity, are more significant in determining whether democracy will emerge and thrive. In addition, NATO has no means by which to eject states that backslide away from democracy; NATO membership is unnecessary to disseminate expert information about democracy; NATO failed to spread pro-democracy norms during the Cold War—indeed some democratic NATO members (Greece and Turkey) backslid from democracy; and the pro-democracy effects of military-to-military contacts are as yet unproven.

Waterman then critiques the nature of the NATO enlargement debate, especially in the 1990s. I agree completely with him: The debate needs to continue, most urgently because several more states have applied for membership as early as 2002. This was pre-

5. Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977); David H. Petraeus, "Military Influence and the Post-Vietnam Use of Force," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Summer 1989), pp. 489–505; and Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? The Impact of Veterans on the American Use of Force, 1816–1992," Duke University, 2001.

cisely the motivation for my article, to take one of the more underexamined claims made in the debate—that NATO enlargement would spread democracy—and to explore its theoretical assumptions and empirical basis.

One key rhetorical issue is how much weight to give Russian claims that NATO enlargement will undermine Russian democracy or U.S.-Russian relations, or possibly both. As I noted in the article, the apocalyptic claims made by NATO enlargement critics in the middle and later 1990s about the effects of enlargement on Russian democracy and U.S.-Russian relations were probably overstated. The next round of enlargement carries greater risks than did the first round, however, because it promises to include states that border Russia as well as states that were once Soviet republics. Continuing to take such antagonistic actions raises risks that eventually NATO enlargement will have very real and negative effects, either on Russian democracy or on U.S.-Russian relations, and unfortunately we may not know if we have enlarged NATO too far until it is too late. As for Russian foreign policy, we might not expect anything as drastic as Russian military action against East European states, but we might see Russia drift further away from the West and toward China,⁶ be less willing to accept U.S. ballistic missile defense, offer less cooperation on issues such as global terrorism and the stabilization of the Balkans, and so forth. Should we take such risks? If NATO enlargement promised real benefits and few other costs, then perhaps. Because enlargement promises few such benefits, however, the financial and diplomatic costs and risks are simply not worth taking.

Waterman's next point is that the expansion of institutions can spread norms. The empirical record during the Cold War ought not to encourage us on this score. NATO has been an explicitly democratic organization since its inception. Yet during the Cold War, NATO failed to spread or consolidate democracy, most clearly in Greece, Portugal, and Turkey. Statistical analysis supports this point.⁷ In the aftermath of the Cold War, NATO enlargement is hardly necessary to spread pro-democracy norms. One of the most remarkable effects of the end of the Cold War has been the generation of a consensus throughout Europe on the merits of market-based democracy (and, of course, all of the institutions described above that are attempting to advise East European states about democracy are also spreading pro-democracy norms). All potential NATO members have at least made strides toward democracy, and all remain publicly committed to doing so. This of course does not mean that democratization is completed or assured in these states. It does mean that the barrier to democratization is not a lack of commitment to the value of democracy, something that the spread of norms might be useful toward overcoming. For some countries—such as China, Cuba, and North Korea—spreading pro-democracy norms through international institutions might advance democratization. The real barriers to democratization in Eastern Europe concern areas outside of norms, and include institutionalization issues such as establishing fair election rules and practices, nourishing competitive party systems, protecting minority rights, and so forth. Lastly, the value of military-to-military ties for democratization

6. Bruce M. Russett and Allan C. Stam, "Courting Disaster: An Expanded NATO vs. Russia and China," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 361–382.

7. Dan Reiter, "Does Peace Nurture Democracy?" *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (August 2001), p. 944.

ought not to be exaggerated. The Cold War experience casts doubt on the effects of these ties, and more important, these kinds of connections can be established through the cheaper, less risky PfP.

Waterman next emphasizes the interests of the United States in NATO enlargement, downplaying the importance of Russian alienation and highlighting the advantages of regional stability. Let me make four points beyond what I have already said. First, the article presented my doubts about NATO's ability to dampen conflict between its neighbors, and enlargement advocates have yet to make a clear or compelling argument as to why enlargement would reduce international or internal conflict in Eastern Europe. Second, as I noted in the article, nonmember states can contribute to regional peacekeeping through the PfP, as they did in Bosnia in the early 1990s and Kosovo in 1999.

Third, I disagree with Waterman that "the United States finds it too hard just to stand by in the face of humanitarian disasters created in Europe by political disorder and ethnic strife." The American public does not view Eastern Europe as a vital national interest; one 1998 survey found that only 31 percent of the public agreed that the United States had a vital interest in the largest state in Eastern Europe, Poland. Further, American public opinion has proven to be at most lukewarm in its willingness to send troops on humanitarian missions. The United States was of course very reluctant to deploy troops to Bosnia in the 1990s. Action in Kosovo proceeded only in the context of an operation that promised literally zero American casualties. The unsatisfactory course and outcome of the Kosovo conflict reinforced public hesitance; George W. Bush was elected in 2000 on a foreign policy platform that stood for less military intervention in Europe. Of course, the current American intervention in Afghanistan is motivated by threats to national security; before September 11, Afghanistan was a humanitarian disaster that attracted no U.S. interest. In sum, we should not feel compelled to enlarge NATO under the assumption that the U.S. president will automatically be drawn in to combat humanitarian disasters.

Fourth, NATO enlargement may if anything make humanitarian intervention more rather than less difficult. Adding more members to NATO will make it difficult to reach the wide consensus necessary for military action, as NATO traditionally requires consensus before taking military action, particularly out of area. This is especially likely to be the case for conflicts in Eastern Europe, in which different NATO members will likely feel affinity for different sides. These strains are already appearing, as demonstrated by Czech ambivalence toward the 1999 Kosovo bombing because of lingering attachments to Yugoslavia. The newest members of NATO would be particularly likely to have connections to an oppressive government or violent rebel group, presenting U.S. policymakers with the choice of pushing intervention forward and splitting the alliance or doing nothing while human rights abuses continue.

In short, NATO enlargement will not spread or consolidate democracy in Eastern Europe. Other international institutions such as the EU and PfP are better suited to accomplish those tasks. Given the costs and risks of enlargement, coupled with the absence of benefits, the door to further membership should for now be closed.

—*Dan Reiter*
Atlanta, Georgia