Russia and NATO Expansion: The Uneasy Basis of the Founding Act

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Russia's signature to the Founding Act, which paved the way for NATO expansion, was accompanied by continuing misgivings about Western intentions. Russia, which for decades had pursued the idea of a pan-European security organisation, continues to view NATO expansion as unnecessary and seeks instead to strengthen the OSCE. Reinforcing stability and democracy within its new member states is one of the motivations for NATO expansion, but it is the OSCE which is better designed to encourage stability in these particular states. NATO continues to be seen by Russia as a military organisation, and its expansion may have damaging consequences for future Russian-Western relations.

The historic Madrid Summit of July 1997 confirmed the controversial intention of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders to expand the Alliance eastwards. Almost eight years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO formally offered full membership to former Warsaw Pact members Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic by 1999. Summit statements also made clear that this was the 'first round' of enlargement and that membership will eventually be offered to certain other former Soviet-bloc states and former republics of the Soviet Union. As a precursor to the Madrid Summit, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, together with NATO leaders, had signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation on 27 May 1997, clearing the way for this first step in enlarging the Alliance.¹

Yet despite Yeltsin's formal acquiescence to the process of expansion, represented by his signature to the Founding Act, Russia clearly retains deep misgivings about Western actions, misgivings which have been largely dismissed by the West but which nevertheless have the potential to damage European and international security in the longer term. NATO's decision to expand now appears irreversible, but it has done little to foster good relations between Alliance members and one of the key players in European and international security. This analysis argues that the policy of NATO

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enlargement – including the Madrid commitment to engage in further rounds of enlargement – was poorly conceived and hastily executed and that the potential costs of alienating Russia may come to outweigh the benefits that expanded membership might bring to the organisation or to its new members.

The expansion of what has been one of the most robust institutions in European politics represents a watershed in international relations. It alters the picture of European security in a fundamental way and is a policy which will inevitably influence the manner in which the West seeks to engage its former adversaries and heal the Cold War division of Europe. Perhaps most importantly, it has enormous implications for the West’s fragile relationship with Russia. The decision to expand NATO may, therefore, be seen as one of the most significant developments in international security since the end of the Cold War. Yet it was not a decision which was clearly tied to any logical or compelling rationale. The security motivation, where it was raised, remained largely unconvincing and Alliance policy lacked a clear framework within which the decision to expand and the process of expansion itself could be appropriately located.

Despite these factors, advocates of NATO expansion were determined to proceed even in the face of overwhelming and consistent Russian opposition to such a move. Yeltsin’s performance at the signing of the Founding Act was accompanied by the fact that Moscow has repeatedly voiced grave concerns about expansion of the Alliance. The international acclaim surrounding the signing almost masked the fact that this represented a serious defeat for Russian strategy and that it has angered many segments of the Russian political community. Indeed, Yeltsin’s signature to the Founding Act, even though it represented Russia’s formal dropping of its objections to NATO expansion, carried with it his clear caveat that Russia still views negatively the expansion plans of NATO.

The details of the Founding Act were also of concern to Moscow. Its campaign to achieve the best possible terms from any agreement with NATO can be judged as largely unsuccessful. Instead of a legally binding document which guaranteed a Russian voice in European security, the absence of nuclear weapons in the new member states and a modification of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, all of which Russia sought, the Founding Act shelved the CFE issue and gave only non-binding assurances to Moscow about its future role and the positioning of nuclear weapons in Central/Eastern Europe. Even so, with NATO firmly committed to expansion, Moscow had little choice but to accept the Founding Act.

Western arguments in favour of NATO enlargement have been wide ranging, even if these were not accompanied by any clear organising principle defining the present role or future of the Alliance. These
arguments, made either implicitly or explicitly, could be summed up as follows: that NATO expansion is necessary to deter any possibility of Russian aggression towards Central/Eastern Europe in the future; that expansion of the organisation is vital if the democratic gains and Western orientation of states like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are to be maintained; that the vacuum in Central/Eastern Europe left by the collapse of the Cold War and the retreat of the Soviet Union is best filled by a liberal democratic and benign organisation; that Russia cannot be allowed to exercise a veto against the decisions of the North Atlantic Alliance; that NATO expansion is motivated by the need to create a more integrated Europe then currently exists; and even that Russia itself should welcome the incorporation of these states into NATO as a positive development for its own security.\(^5\)

A number of analysts have pointed to the problems associated with these rationales for expansion,\(^6\) but even if it can be shown that these arguments have some validity, the decision to proceed with enlargement ultimately indicated a failure to give sufficient consideration to deeply held Russian concerns, thereby rendering the whole process of achieving European security through NATO expansion fundamentally flawed. Even George Kennan, the architect of the West’s post-war containment policy has opposed the expansion of NATO, the policy instrument most symbolic of this strategy, warning that NATO expansion will be ‘the most fateful error of American foreign policy in the entire post-Cold War era’.\(^7\) It will be argued here that Kennan is correct and that the Western insistence on NATO expansion regardless of Russian concerns, may bring with it serious consequences for international relations. Even if the strategic, monetary and logistical problems inherent in expansion can be overcome – and it is not clear that all existing NATO members will readily agree to extending collective defence security guarantees Eastward\(^8\) – there is one overriding reason why it would have been more prudent to refrain from hastily expanding the Alliance. Although Moscow had little choice but to accept NATO’s plans, the Russian perception that expansion represents for it a final and unnecessary humiliation leaves Moscow strategically isolated and threatens to create tension and division throughout Europe.\(^9\) This is the very outcome that proponents of expansion claimed they were seeking to avoid.

RUSSIA’S PREFERENCE FOR AN OSCE-BASED SECURITY SYSTEM

There exists a unanimity among Russian political parties – both radical and moderate – that NATO expansion is unnecessary and provocative.\(^10\) Reflecting this, Moscow had asked instead that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE (previously the CSCE, the
Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) be strengthened and endowed with the capability to make it into an effective pan-European security organisation. At the December 1996 OSCE summit in Lisbon, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had emphasised Russia’s wish to promote the OSCE as Europe’s primary security body, a move designed clearly to allow the OSCE to supercede NATO.11

Even after Yeltsin’s agreement to the Founding Act, it was clear that Russia retained strong reservations about plans to develop European security through the NATO organisation. Moscow immediately signalled its preference for the development of a Charter of European Security within the framework of the OSCE: referring to the need to create a ‘single security space’ in the Euro-Atlantic region, with ‘equal security for all states’, an official spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry reiterated that ‘Russia has been consistently calling for the development within the framework of the OSCE – the organisation that is most universal in terms of its makeup – of a model for general and comprehensive security in Europe in the twenty first century.’12

Indeed, Moscow had for decades been calling for a Europe-wide security system. When viewed within the context of this history, the current Russian resistance towards an expanded NATO and its clear favouring of the OSCE can be better understood. For a variety of reasons, Moscow has expressed a preference for the wider OSCE process. At the height of the Cold War this preference was based, among other things, on bald military and strategic calculations aimed at limiting the influence of the Alliance. However it also reflected a more desperate Soviet wish to be actively involved in a pan-European security dialogue – a dialogue which Moscow undoubtedly wished to play a large part in shaping.

Fundamental to Moscow’s early initiatives for the CSCE was the emerging powerful and cohesive Atlantic grouping on the continent in the 1950s and 1960s. As is now the case, the prospect of NATO incorporating new members – at that time West Germany – played a large part in prompting the USSR’s pan-European proposal. The persistence with which Moscow pursued the CSCE idea attests to the priority placed on establishing what it vainly hoped would be an alternative to a strong anti-Soviet alliance in Europe. The USSR was indicating its deeply held resistance to the growth of a unified Western bloc on the continent. The Russian sense of exclusion and perception of encroachment by a group seen as largely hostile to it only served to fuel Moscow’s resistance towards NATO. Limiting the military union of Western Europe and the US had been a primary reason why the USSR originally sought to convene a pan-European security conference – what eventually became the CSCE process launched in 1972.

The CSCE did not, of course, develop into the kind of security system
initially envisaged by Moscow. It was, however, to become the only security dialogue on the European continent which embraced all European states (with the exception of Albania) as well as the US and Canada. Furthermore, it was the only multilateral security dialogue with the West in which Moscow could have any real input. (This remains the case; Russia rightly feels its limited influence in NATO and continues to lobby for that organisation in which it participates as a full and equal member.) The CSCE came to have a mixed record, with Moscow dismayed at the way in which it grew to encompass human rights and other matters considered by the USSR to be issues of internal politics and therefore immune from interference by outside states. Moscow was also disappointed that Western negotiators at the conference refused to give legal recognition to the division of Europe it so eagerly sought in the original Helsinki negotiations and for years the CSCE was little more than a venue at which Cold War hostilities were aired.

Nevertheless, by the late 1980s, with the implementation of Gorbachev’s ‘New Thinking’, Moscow had firmly re-committed itself to the principles of the CSCE process. This commitment was to play a fundamental role in the way that the Cold War ended, with the Soviet political elite viewing CSCE involvement as a means of achieving much needed arms control measures and using the CSCE forum to re-enter European politics by demonstrating Moscow’s reformist credentials. The Charter of Paris of 1990 marked the transformation of the CSCE from a Cold War framework into a pan-European organisation endowed with the tasks of addressing political and security concerns in the post-Cold War era. While not dislodging NATO from its position, this consolidation of the organisation again gave Moscow new hope that it would be the CSCE, and not NATO, which would come to be the premier security forum in Europe.

The reality of course, was very different. NATO members never allowed the Alliance to be subordinated to the CSCE and they reformed NATO to allow for closer involvement with former communist states while retaining its position as the pre-eminent military body on the continent. The CSCE, for its part, was institutionalised and endowed with intrusive capacities for monitoring human rights abuses as well as for formulating and implementing further confidence-building measures on the continent. Yet the United States and Britain, in particular, were careful to ensure that the CSCE’s functions and capabilities were distinctly separate to those of NATO. Despite these limitations, Moscow – unsurprisingly – continued to view the CSCE as the pre-eminent multilateral security body in Europe, because of its pan-European make-up and Moscow’s own participation within it and continued to lobby, largely unsuccessfully, for an expanded CSCE role.
With this history, it is not surprising that at a time when Moscow again perceives that the Western alliance is gathering strength in Europe and excluding Russia from its ranks, it is again calling – however unrealistic this may be – for the OSCE process to be revitalized, including giving it a legal nature and allowing it to coordinate the activities of all European and North Atlantic organisations.\textsuperscript{15} It remains clear, as it did earlier, that the United States and leading West European states will not agree to Russian proposals for giving the organisation a stronger voice in European affairs,\textsuperscript{16} but this only further disappoints Moscow’s hopes that NATO expansion can be curbed or at least checked by a strengthened OSCE.

\textbf{THE IMPACT OF NATO EXPANSION ON RUSSIA AND CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE}

Despite the fact that Moscow’s preference for the OSCE will not be accommodated by the West, the argument can be made that at least one of the primary issues an enlarged NATO seeks to address on the European continent can, in fact, be better addressed by the OSCE. It is not clear that NATO membership is directly necessary for the stable and democratic future of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, a claim which features in most cases made by proponents of expansion. Moreover, and more important from the West’s point of view, expansion could affect vital areas of Russian domestic and international politics. These issues will now be addressed.

\textit{NATO as an Instrument for Promoting Stability in Central/Eastern Europe}

One of the most common reasons cited for including new members into NATO is that membership of the Alliance is seen as necessary for reinforcing the democratic reforms undertaken by these states since the ending of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{17} Undoubtedly, the present contenders for NATO membership would have been gravely disappointed if NATO had decided against expansion. The majority of their populations favour closer integration with the West and view formal participation in NATO as beneficial to their future security and development.

However, there is no clear reason why it is membership of NATO that is the paramount requirement at present. These states already are members of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PFP) program. Although PFP lacks an explicit guarantee of security protection, it nevertheless addresses Europe’s strategic landscape in a generally positive and, to Russia, non-threatening way. Moreover, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have been named as early candidates for membership of the European Union, participation in which will undoubtedly bring about real
and immediate political and economic benefits and an increasingly close alignment with the West. Russia has not objected to these states’ proposals for joining the EU. In light of the Russian animosity that NATO expansion may bring, a less contentious strategy would have seen these states being satisfied for the moment with their current levels of participation in European organisations and the prospect of early incorporation into the EU, realising that membership of NATO introduces a significantly different and potentially destabilising element into the regional equation.

Those favouring expansion point to the beneficial role that NATO played in helping to create a stable political environment in which Western European states, and then later the newer democracies of Spain, Portugal and Greece, could undertake the tasks of economic development and political reform. Similarly, they argue, membership in NATO will now reinforce the stability and reformist credentials of the new democracies in Central/Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly, the institutional presence of the Alliance, as a military organisation in the post-war decades, helped to stabilise relations between its member states and helped to underpin political stability and economic prosperity in Western Europe, even if it contained little by way of direct monitoring of liberal-democratic development. Given the political and institutional developments in Europe since that time, however, it does not follow that the same arguments apply to Europe today.

Since NATO’s formation, other institutions have evolved in Europe which are better placed than NATO to play a stabilising role in the new democracies of Europe in the 1990s. While there may have been a significant reliance on NATO to secure political stability in the 1950s or 1960s, we see today a range of organisations which, at the time that NATO was formed in 1949 were either not in existence (the EEC/EU, the CSCE/OSCE) or barely established (the Council of Europe). The point here is that NATO today is implicitly being packaged, by many advocates of expansion, as a civilian body, one whose tasks will lie not so much in the military sphere as in the arena of overseeing political reform, securing democracy and safeguarding human rights. To market NATO, either implicitly or otherwise, as a civilian body only confuses the issue. No matter how advocates of expansion currently seek to package NATO in order to make it more acceptable to Russia, it is seen, and will continue to be seen in Moscow overwhelmingly as a military organisation. Indeed, it is precisely because it is a military alliance that former Soviet bloc states are seeking to join it. Ultimately, the Eastward expansion shifts the balance of power in Europe and will involve nuclear and military guarantees to NATO’s new members. Assurances to Russia that the organisation is concerned with reinforcing democracy in these states do little to alleviate
Russian objections to the presence of NATO as a military alliance.

Second (and this is directly related to Moscow’s preference for the OSCE noted earlier), Russia firmly views the OSCE as the body which should fulfil the role of a pan-European civilian organisation. It is the OSCE, together with the Council of Europe, which has developed norms and mechanisms aimed at conflict prevention and the protection of democracy, especially the rights of ethnic minorities. This latter point is an issue which is often at the core of Western concerns about sustaining democratic reforms and encouraging political and military stability in the former communist states. Yet it is the OSCE and the Council of Europe, more than NATO, which are endowed with facilities to provide guidance and assistance to former communist states on non-discriminatory electoral and legal systems and the development of fair political institutions.¹⁹

If, indeed, European security concerns have evolved to encompass issues such as ethnic tensions and resultant civil or interstate conflicts, then NATO as a military alliance is limited in the way in which it can forestall or address such issues. This is not to suggest that the OSCE will be able to resolve ethnic conflicts or related instabilities easily; the history of its efforts on the continent since the ending of the Cold War reveals only a few, and limited, successes.²⁰ But the point that the OSCE is expressly constituted to reinforce and oversee political stability and democratic reform, while NATO is not, deserves greater attention by advocates of expansion than it has so far been given.

It should also be noted here that, in any case, it is not the three Visegrad states, to whom membership invitations have been extended, which are most at threat from political instability and the erosion of democracy caused by ethnic tensions. Their democratic orientation towards the West appears confirmed and will most likely continue even in the absence of NATO membership.²¹ Arguing that NATO membership would project stability in these countries misses the point that political instabilities are far more likely to be found in other parts of Europe, notably the Balkan and Baltic states, Ukraine and Moldova. And while the door to NATO membership has not closed for future candidates, none of these states has been accepted for early membership. This makes the ‘exporting stability’ justification for expansion of NATO to include the Visegrad states even more problematic.

The above points suggest that one of the most often cited and clearly articulated motives for NATO expansion rests on a questionable basis. Yet this in itself, the issue of which European institution is best placed to achieve democratic stability, would not matter greatly if it were not for the fact that the decision to expand, in the absence of clear and compelling reasons, may come to have serious and detrimental effects on the West’s relationship with Russia. Much more important than questions of the
relevance of NATO membership to the Westward orientation of its intended new members are the repercussions that enlargement might have on Russia and on Moscow’s external relations. Expansion could have a serious impact in four inter-related areas: psychologically, on Russia’s self-image and its consequent view of the West; domestically, in terms of a nationalist resurgence; militarily, by provoking a strategic realignment; and diplomatically, where continued Russian cooperation with the West in international relations may be jeopardised.

**A Russian Sense of Marginalisation and Betrayal by the West**

A loss of Russian prestige and sense of humiliation may well be the initial effect of NATO’s decision to expand. Yeltsin has argued that such a move ‘will directly threaten [Russia’s] security’ and is ‘motivated by a desire to force Russia out of Europe and secure its strategic isolation’.22 The sense of marginalisation felt by Moscow, together with a perception that Russia’s strategic interests have not been taken into sufficient account, have inevitable consequences for Russia’s perception of itself as a great power within the region and its relationship with the West.

Certainly NATO has not been totally impervious to Russian sensitivities. The Founding Act negotiated with Russia established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council which, while denying Moscow a veto over NATO plans, provides high level consultations with Russia on important strategic issues. NATO has also indicated – although not guaranteed – that it will not place nuclear weapons on the territory of new members. The negotiation of the Founding Act, however, has resulted in different interpretations over how much influence Russia actually will have. Western leaders have been quick to emphasize that Moscow will have no veto over NATO, a response to Yeltsin’s statements which imply that Moscow will have greater influence over NATO decisions than will be the case in reality.23 As one analyst has noted, the issue for Moscow was securing ‘an accord that will guarantee genuine participation for Russia in European affairs and preclude the possibility of our country’s becoming militarily and politically isolated from Europe’.24

Thus while NATO’s assurances of cooperation with Russia place great emphasis on maintaining favourable relations with Moscow, Russian political elites do not see them as providing any real **guarantee** that Russia will be permitted to play a significant role in the military relations of Europe. Moscow’s sense that the West has already betrayed Russia and acted in bad faith colours ongoing negotiations and Western reassurances that NATO does not aim to threaten Russian security interests are increasingly questioned. The very act of expansion itself is taken to be proof that ultimately the West will not accommodate Russian concerns.
It must be remembered that a large proportion of Russians—and especially those from the military—continue to feel aggrieved at the loss of status suffered by Russia with the ending of the Cold War. Added to this is that at the time of German reunification, Moscow relinquished a substantial amount of influence and prestige in agreeing eventually to allow a unified Germany to belong to NATO. Considering its earlier concerns about West German membership in the Alliance, the Soviet Union’s concession to allow unified Germany’s membership of NATO in 1990 is now viewed by Russian policy makers as something which, while the USSR ultimately had little choice in the matter, represented a further loss of power to NATO. Any additional erosion of Russia’s status—and Yeltsin’s signature to the Founding Act has been termed even in the West as a ‘second surrender’—will inevitably kindle resentment. Sergei Karaganov of the Institute of Europe has expressed the Russian sense of humiliation:

For Russians, NATO expansion is a psychological question as much as a strategic one; it involves mutual trust and Western recognition of Russia’s status. Expansion would result in a shift in the whole Russian perception of the West...It would confirm a feeling of having been if not defeated, then at least tricked and framed. In 1990 we were told quite clearly by the West that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and German unification would not lead to NATO expansion.

Proponents of expansion must therefore be prepared to accept that Moscow views Western reassurances about NATO’s intentions and the future role of Russia in European security with scepticism. The Russians are particularly disappointed that the Founding Act will not be a legally binding document and that verbal promises, especially the provision not to base nuclear weapons in the new member states, can easily be broken if the West so chooses. This sense of distrust and marginalisation will impede a healthy, open and cooperative Western relationship with Russia and may well harm future activities and negotiations.

NATO AND RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

In addition to Russia’s sense of isolation and its fears of being unable to play an integral role in European security affairs, NATO expansion may serve to inflame hard-line nationalist sentiments within that country. A consequence of this could be the reorientation of Russian domestic and foreign policy towards a more anti-Western outlook than is now the case. There already exists a unanimity of opinion among all significant Russian parties and political groupings, radical and moderate, against NATO expansion; the
continuation of this trend could well add to the arguments of those clamouring for a harder stance against the West.

Anatoly Chubais, former Deputy Prime Minister and the Russian Federation’s former Chief of Staff, has warned that NATO expansion will particularly offend resurgent communists and other hardline nationalists, the groups which have been most critical of what they perceive to be President Yeltsin’s ‘conciliatory’ foreign policy. And while they may seem exaggerated, the views of nationalist and communist critics are that Yeltsin’s and Foreign Minister Evgeniy Primakov’s agreement to hold talks with NATO was the act of a ‘corrupt and pro-Western government’ whose aim was to ‘lull Russian vigilance’ against a deceptive and domineering West. Expansion could thus see these groups putting pressure on Moscow to secure greater Russian influence at the international level and especially over the Soviet successor states.

While these are real concerns (some of which are addressed more fully below) it seems unlikely that President Yeltsin will be forced into such measures easily. He has rightly attempted to portray his signing of the Founding Act as an unavoidable step. Even so, NATO leaders’ plans will hurt the Russian President’s ability to conduct his policies at a time when problems with economic reforms, military instability and division within Russia’s populations are already running high. A degree of resentment towards the West, as well as towards President Yeltsin, are pervasive features of the current Russian political landscape. Why, Russian policy makers might ask, exacerbate the leadership’s difficulties now by expanding NATO, which will only be seen as provocative and antagonistic by hardline factions and further compound the difficulties of an already beleaguered leader? The point here is that political and economic reforms in Russia, already under serious threat from internal resistance, can better proceed within a climate of overall stability and a relatively favourable predisposition towards the West. The expansion of NATO may have serious repercussions on the way Yeltsin is perceived by his political opponents and will undoubtedly limit his freedom of action in both domestic and external politics.

PROVOKING A MILITARY RESURGENCE

In practical terms, the loss of Russian prestige and perception of marginalisation discussed above may result in the Russian military elite seriously challenging the current government’s legitimacy and forcing tighter control over those states previously within the Soviet Union, especially as it appears, from the Madrid Summit statements, that the second wave of NATO expansion is likely to include former republics of the
USSR. Central to this point is the question of a Russian sphere of influence. Advocates of NATO expansion imply the need for Moscow to understand that any future Russian moves towards re-establishing control over Central/East European states will be resisted by the West. Expansion of the Alliance is seen as the means of providing such protection. Undoubtedly, Western leaders hope that fulfilling security guarantees to these states will never be necessary, but it is implicitly acknowledged that if a threat arises, it is expected to come from Russia. Despite this, other advocates of expansion strongly suggest that expansion is not aimed at a potentially resurgent Russia and that it should not be perceived as such by Moscow. Madeleine Albright has stated categorically that NATO enlargement ‘is not taking place in response to a new Russian threat’ and that, in any case, ‘NATO does not need an enemy.’

This somewhat confused Western representation of the security motivations behind NATO expansion is in any case an inaccurate reading of Russian military concerns. Far from viewing the retaking of Central/Eastern Europe as part of Russia’s strategic doctrine, Moscow is primarily concerned not to lose its sphere of influence in the area of the former Soviet Union. Relinquishing control over Central/Eastern Europe is difficult for Russians to accept if that means these states will be incorporated into a Western bloc receiving American nuclear guarantees. But what is even more worrying for the Russian military elite is that the open-ended nature of NATO enlargement leaves open the possibility of membership for states much closer to Russia, namely the Baltic states and Ukraine.

The Alliance’s current expansion, together with its stated intention to consider former republics in a second round of enlargement, may, therefore, prompt Russian military leaders to suggest establishing Russia’s own counterpart: securing a buffer zone and seeking to rekindle a sphere of influence in those states remaining for the moment outside NATO. A more aggressive Russian posture towards the Baltic states and towards Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova could be precipitated by such developments. Expansion could also prompt the creation of alliances with states sharing an increasingly anti-Western agenda. Russia has recently concluded a pact with China, as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, reducing the number of troops close to their common borders. The occasion was used to articulate a joint statement on foreign policy stating Russia’s and China’s displeasure at what they perceived to be a ‘world dominated by one power’. Yeltsin has used other forums too, notably his 1997 state-of-the-union address and his comments following his meeting with Clinton in Helsinki, to reject the presence of ‘one centre of power’ in international relations and to urge strengthening ties with Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia, India and China. These calls have been a direct response to what Russia
sees as increasing Western encroachment over its sphere of influence.

The danger of NATO enlargement is that while its advocates claim that extending membership will result in a ‘peaceful and undivided Europe’, the reverse may occur. Albright claims that enlargement is ‘motivated by the imperative of creating an integrated Europe – one that includes, not excludes Russia’. In truth it is difficult to see how marginalisation and exclusion of Russia from NATO can be construed by Moscow as ‘inclusion’ in an integrated Europe whose security is guaranteed by Alliance commitments. Enlargement of NATO will more likely be seen in Russia as a fundamental change in the balance of power on the European continent and its military elites could thus be provided with a strong rationale for reviving Russia’s strategic capabilities at all costs. This outcome would discourage any Russian propensity to maintain existing arms control agreements or negotiate new ones. Far from accepting the suggestions implied by advocates of expansion, that Russia will see its own security enhanced if NATO is expanded to incorporate former Warsaw Pact states, the Russian military elite continue to view such moves with suspicion. As Karl-Heinz Kamp notes:

Explaning to a humiliated Russian military establishment that an extension of NATO for the sake of stabilizing Russia’s western periphery would be a net gain for them, not another defeat, would probably exceed the ingenuity of even the most eloquent NATO expansionists.

Reduced Cooperation from Russia in International Forums

As noted above, Russia’s sense of injury in the face of an expanded NATO would certainly affect its current arms control posture. Most at risk will be ratification of the START II Treaty. Expansion may also undermine Russia’s incentive to cooperate in international regimes and forums. In particular, Russian cooperation in the United Nations Security Council may be jeopardised by the rush to enlarge the Alliance. Despite the mixed record of East-West collaboration on security issues since the ending of the Cold War, those gains which have been made – including the recent and highly significant Russian participation in the Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia – will be preserved only if Moscow can be persuaded it is not threatened in Europe. Given the possible impact of expansion on Russian nationalists, the sense of mistrust amongst the military elite and the effects of these factors on the Yeltsin government’s own survival, continued Russian cooperation in international peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy will not be a certainty. The West needs positive Russian participation to achieve favourable outcomes in various issue-areas
in international relations, notably the ongoing Korean Peninsula impasse, the Middle East peace process, nuclear non-proliferation measures and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Losing Russian goodwill now may result in greater costs to the West than those which would have been incurred if NATO expansion had not proceeded.

CONCLUSION

The Founding Act between NATO and Russia was the instrument which enabled NATO expansion to proceed, but the Russian sense of apprehension regarding this development should not be underestimated. There is little doubt that expansion will have significant political and military repercussions for Russia. NATO members would have been better placed to proceed from the concern of how expansion would aggravate Russia's self-perceptions of humiliation and isolation, especially when weighed against the claimed benefits that enlargement of the Alliance promises. Current NATO plans do not adequately incorporate the fears and sensitivities in Russia, let alone take into account fully the effect that enlargement could have on Russian domestic and external politics. The debate on expansion should have demonstrated a greater recognition and acknowledgement of Russian concerns, together with an analysis of what would have caused least harm to the evolving Russia-NATO relationship.

Such a view may well prompt critics to claim that adopting this perspective effectively would have allowed Russia to exercise a veto over NATO policy. Central/Eastern European states would have been denied the right to join an organisation which they see as best guaranteeing their own long term security. But simply claiming that becoming more attuned to Russian sensitivities allows it to exercise an unacceptable veto over NATO misses the point; informal vetoes are a fact of life in international politics and great power sensitivities cannot simply be swept aside in the pursuit of preferred outcomes. This is especially true if the costs of such outcomes are likely to be ultimately more detrimental to Western interests.

Be that as it may, NATO enlargement to include three new members has been approved and Moscow, with little choice, appears resigned to this. The challenge for architects of European security, now that a first round of enlargement will proceed in 1999, is to minimise as far as possible the negative consequences which could result from this decision. Steps can be taken which will help to cushion the impact on Russia and foster a better relationship between Moscow and the West. These include increasing political ties, together with a strengthening of the economic viability of the Russian state through greater Western economic assistance and hastening its integration into the European and international economic and trade systems;
giving greater attention to the ways in which the OSCE can be strengthened to play a more significant role in European security, thus capitalising on the inclusive membership and broad purview of this organisation; and ensuring that meetings of the NATO-Russia Joint Council, established by the Founding Act, are receptive to Russian security concerns.

The Alliance must proceed with greater sensitivity in its relations with Moscow, aware of the considerable consequences that the Madrid decision may have spawned. The most important overall task is gradually to integrate Russia itself into the European landscape, rather than to isolate it further or give it reason to fear greater marginalisation. This will require postponing NATO’s plans to engage in a second round of expansion which could see former republics of the USSR incorporated into the Alliance. While this would leave, for the moment, an uncomfortable zone of states adjoining Russia uneasy about their ‘floating’ security status, refraining from further NATO expansion until European security is addressed from a more comprehensive and less divisive perspective will ultimately provide a more substantial and solid basis for achieving stability than does the Founding Act.

NOTES

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4. Moscow notes that it had ‘neither a carrot nor a stick that it could use to shore up its negotiating position on the question of NATO expansion.’ ‘Clinton, Yeltsin meet in Helsinki: any Russian gains?’ CDSP 49/12, 23 April 1997, p.1.
8. The Founding Act itself will not require ratification by member states’ parliaments. Nevertheless it is expected that there will be some resistance to NATO expansion on the basis

9. As one Russian analyst has noted, ‘moving NATO’s structures closer to Russia’s borders and dividing Europe into “whites”, “blacks” and “grays” will hardly further the cause’ of unifying Europe. Vladimir Lapsky, ‘Summit shows growing rifts in NATO’, *CDSP* 49/28, 13 Aug. 1997, p.3.


15. This was most evident at the 1996 Lisbon OSCE summit (note 11).

16. Moscow’s proposals were emphatically rejected by Britain and the US at the Lisbon summit. ‘OSCE Summit, ibid.

17. For a recent exposition of this view see Albright, ‘Enlarging NATO’ (note 5).

18. It was not surprising that the signing of the Founding Act, with the US again taking a lead role in the development of Europe’s political and security architecture, coincided with the Alliance’s celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan.

19. Jonathan Clarke, for example, in ‘Replacing NATO’, *Foreign Policy* (1993/94), notes that unlike NATO, the CSCE/OSCE’s make-up is suited to meet the needs of conflict prevention and resolution, foreseen by many observers as the primary security challenges facing Europe. He asks, with some justification, whether it is a military alliance such as NATO which is best suited to the purpose of reconciling recent enemies and argues that ‘NATO’s success in devising new relevance for itself’ must not be judged against ‘its ability to duplicate the tasks of more professionally targeted civilian agencies.’ pp.23–4.

20. There is no reason to expect that NATO will fare any better than the OSCE in situations of ethnic conflict arising within the territory of a member state. As a collective defence organisation ostensibly designed to address interstate conflict, and more particularly, conflict emanating from a clearly defined adversary outside the organisation’s membership, it seems fair to question how successful NATO would be in addressing ethnic division and the rights of minorities within a member state along the lines of that seen in, for example, Estonia.


24. Aleksei Puskov, ‘Russia and NATO: Neither Peace Nor War in Relations with the Alliance’,


27. Sergei Karaganov, quoted in Lieven, ‘Russian Opposition’ (note 10), p.198, Moscow’s sense of grievance is worsened by the fact that up until the last two years, the US had continued to indicate to Russia that expansion was unlikely to take place. See Craig R. Whitney, ‘Why Europe is Careful Not to Scold the Bear’, *New York Times*, 2 Jan. 1995, and Kennman, ‘NATO: a Fateful Error’ (note 7).


30. In anticipation of the hostile reaction by the Duma, Yeltsin pointed to the economic concessions promised to Russia in exchange for its signature to the Founding Act. These include political membership of the G7 grouping, the possibility of increased IMF loans and an American pledge to support Russia’s entry into the World Trade Organization next year. ‘A New European Order’ (note 26) p.62.


32. Ibid, p.18.

33. Former Defence Minister Rodionov (note 10) explicitly warned NATO members at the Brussels meeting that expansion would upset the military-strategic equilibrium in Europe and remove Russia’s buffer zone between it and NATO.

34. For an expansion of these views see Kupchan, Kamp and Brown (all note 6) ‘Expand NATO’; Kennan (note 7); and Lieven (note 10). For a view by an analyst of Russian affairs who argues in favour of NATO expansion, but who still warns that mishandling expansion will have serious implications for the centres of power in Moscow, see Richard Kugler, *Enlarging NATO: the Russia Factor* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 1996).


36. See *CDPSP*, 49/10, 9 April 1997, p.5. and 49/13, 30 April 1997, p.27.


38. Ibid.

39. Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘A Plan for Europe’, is one of the very few analysts who has hinted that eventually Russia too might be able to accede to membership of NATO, but he too indicated that this was an unlikely prospect in the foreseeable future.


42. There is, for example, concern at what Moscow perceives to be American domination of policy in Bosnia, and claims that the International Tribunal established to prosecute war criminals is being used to impose American policy in the Balkans, putting NATO-Russian cooperation in the Stabilization Force at risk.