NATO’s post–Cold War enlargement has provoked a heated debate on the wisdom of enlargement and NATO’s eventual composition. The 1999 accession of three new members and NATO’s identification of nine states as on track to membership have led some analysts to caution that NATO’s cohesion is at risk.\(^1\) Although these concerns are real, the fears are probably exaggerated. NATO’s founding document defines the alliance as open to all European states sharing its values, and until NATO’s members modify that clause, it remains in force. But being open to new membership does not in any way oblige NATO to accept new members, especially if current members judge an accession to be damaging to the overall security environment.

As a result, the existence of countries that aspire to NATO membership does not mean that all or even more than a few of them will be admitted to NATO in the foreseeable future. NATO’s elaborate criteria for new members have established a high standard for aspiring states, one that several (at least four) of its pre-1990 members cannot meet. Moreover, NATO explicitly stated in its 1995 enlargement study that it is up to NATO members to decide if and when additional states will be invited. The analysis in this report suggests that

if the current security trends continue, NATO’s membership will grow, because NATO is now institutionally committed to the concept of enlargement, and the enlargement process is one of the pillars of and strengthens the benign security environment that now exists in Europe. However, the pace of enlargement will be gradual and will pose no threat to NATO’s cohesion or its ability to engage in military operations in Europe.

Probably the most significant element of NATO’s post–Cold War adaptation is not its enlargement but its transformation, which entails acceptance of a power projection role and the unilateral assumption of responsibility for European security, broadly defined. This transformation has wide implications for European security. Tellingly, it was NATO’s embracing of new missions, such as Operation Allied Force, that caused a rupture in its relations with Russia—something that several years of debate over enlargement and NATO’s admission of three countries in 1999 had not managed to do.

NATO’s enlargement and its transformation both aim to shape the political environment in Europe. Each has already profoundly and beneficially affected the security environment in Europe’s unintegrated area by establishing incentives for cooperative approaches to security and encouraging democratic reforms. Through the mechanics of enlargement, NATO has established not only a multitude of channels for cooperation with non-members, but also gray-area commitments that, in and of themselves, given the reigning preponderance of NATO military power in Europe, safeguard the sovereignty of some of the smaller and more insecure states in Europe’s unintegrated area without provoking a Russian response and allow their further democratic development.

The enlargement process has, however, created complications for defense planning. During the 1997–99 round of enlargement, NATO extended a membership invitation to Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, the three countries seemingly least in need of its security guarantee. The seeming paradox shows the prominence of the political shaping motivations behind enlargement, NATO’s overall cautious attitude, and the preferences of NATO’s key members. The paradox has remained and indeed has become stronger because of how enlargement has unfolded. Through MAP, NATO has single
out several countries as possible future NATO members, in effect giving them an implicit security guarantee for the interim period. From a defense planning perspective, the current paradox lies in the fact that the MAP countries least in need of such an implicit guarantee are the most likely to be admitted to NATO in the near- and mid-term, while those most in need of NATO’s security guarantee (because they cannot provide much of a deterrent in case of unexpected contingencies) are the least likely to be admitted in the near- or mid-term.

The hypothetical contingencies envisioned are not all catastrophic shocks to the system; they could involve less drastic changes along the lines suggested by the branch points of uncertainty-sensitive planning. Since NATO’s condition of a gray-area commitment is likely to last for a considerable length of time, there is more likelihood that some of the branch-point shifts may come to pass. The complication is that for this decade and perhaps beyond, NATO has provided a “soft” guarantee to countries with little indigenous ability to provide for their own deterrent.

While this problem is generally recognized, the fact that the rationale behind enlargement is primarily political means that the challenges it creates for military planning may be underemphasized. For example, when Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary acceded in 1999, no less than the former chairman of the NATO Military Committee, General Klaus Naumann, informally expressed concerns about extending security guarantees to these countries because of interoperability problems and NATO’s potential lack of military capability for meeting such a commitment.2 The extension of soft security guarantees to the MAP states has intensified the problem, as many of the MAP countries have limited means to defend their territory against any modern adversary. In such conditions, these countries are susceptible to military blackmail, to operations by aggressor units not under governmental authority, or to any number of other contingencies short of a full-scale invasion.

Recognition of these problems should not be construed as an argument against enlargement. The very extension of a soft security

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guarantee may have succeeded—for now—in ensuring the sovereignty of the MAP countries without provoking a Russian response strong enough to affect the overall security environment. However, as stated above, the move does present complications for planning.

From the U.S. Air Force’s perspective, the complication perhaps most relevant is that except for Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria (with their oversized militaries), none of the MAP states has the means even to ensure its own air sovereignty. Nor do they have any near- or even mid-term prospects for acquiring these means—short of NATO countries assuming the role for them. One of the few plausible ways for these states to gain their own air sovereignty capabilities is for them to lease or cascade NATO aircraft, once they are capable of fully operating such aircraft and affording the support packages. However, a better alternative (especially in the case of the emerging militaries) is for them to allocate their resources efficiently by prioritizing near-term investment choices toward well-trained and equipped ground forces (with their own air defense—SAM—capabilities). Such forces would provide a non-provocative credible deterrent and enable these states to make a real contribution to NATO’s peace operations. Moreover, in the unexpected event that the current benign security environment changes for the worse and a MAP state falls into crisis, a fully NATO-interoperable core of ground forces (including ground air controllers) could provide initial defense of the country’s borders, with NATO quickly deploying its air assets to reinforce the MAP state in crisis, and NATO ground forces arriving later.

In an overall sense, none of the MAP states can be expected to contribute in any meaningful fashion to NATO’s air operations for the near- and mid-term. If the oversized militaries proceed with far-reaching military reform, they may—with proper guidance from NATO—be able to contribute some air assets (especially army aviation) to NATO operations in the mid-term. Potentially of greatest use to NATO is access to MAP state airspace and infrastructure, which could be used for NATO operations in the Balkans, potential contingencies, and training.

Under a continuation of the no-surprises security environment in Europe, the challenges inherent to NATO’s enlargement will not
amount to a major problem. It is entirely plausible that over the next 10 to 15 years, the main missions of the U.S. armed forces in Europe will consist primarily of shaping the environment and assisting in the integration of new and potential members and partners, interrupted occasionally by humanitarian missions, peacekeeping, and perhaps even coercive peacemaking (as in Operation Allied Force). However, a benign no-surprises future is in no way guaranteed and cannot be taken for granted in elaborating a shaping strategy. Even without a major shock to the European security environment, NATO’s transformation and enlargement both contain internal logic problems that may change the calculations of a future European security environment in non-trivial ways. NATO’s transformation has led to a heightened collective action problem that reduces NATO’s cohesion, and NATO’s enlargement strategy has assumed that new members will institutionalize its pre-admission criteria and share its need to engage Russia—neither of which may hold true over the long-term. As the formulators of uncertainty-sensitive planning have stated, “Perhaps China will never invade Taiwan and perhaps Russia will never invade Lithuania, but if we consider the long list of strategically plausible events and realize that some of them will occur, then our approach to strategy will be different.”

SHAPING DETERMINANTS

An appropriate shaping policy for the United States and its allies must include a hedging strategy. With this in mind, an effective shaping strategy for MAP states should be individually tailored and should incorporate an understanding of five key issues:

1. The extent of the potential strategic exposure and need for NATO reinforcement that accompany hypothetical threats to a MAP state under crisis conditions.

2. The time frame for a MAP state likely joining NATO.

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3. The severity of the problems a MAP state faces with its armed forces (including the difference between “oversized” and “emerging” militaries, which also indicates how applicable the lessons learned from NATO’s integration of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary will be).

4. The means available to a MAP state for addressing the problems of its armed forces.

5. The likely useful (technologically sophisticated and well-trained) contribution of a MAP state to NATO’s peace operations.

These issues represent the main determinants for a NATO shaping strategy. The information can be presented by way of a “radar chart,” as shown in Figure 6.1, with each country graded on a high-medium-low scale for each issue. Country A presents a case of difficult combinations. It has a high level of strategic exposure and low likelihood of NATO membership in the near-term, severe problems with its armed forces and a low level of resources available to deal with such problems, and a low potential contribution to NATO’s peace operations in the near- and mid-term. In all, country A combines a high level of vulnerability in conditions of a lengthy implied NATO security guarantee with severe military problems and low availability to address those problems on its own. In contrast, country B presents more favorable combinations. It has a low level of strategic exposure and a high likelihood of NATO membership in the near-term, medium-level problems with its armed forces and a medium level of resources available to deal with those problems, and a non-trivial likely contribution to NATO’s peace operations.

The two countries require different types of NATO shaping policies. NATO has to plan with some urgency on assisting country A in building up a minimum deterrence capability so as to decrease the level of strategic exposure in conditions of a continued MAP-like “gray area” security guarantee. In view of the severity of the military problems experienced by country A and its low level of resources, NATO may need to provide equipment and training at low or no cost. Since country A is not going to be a major contributor to NATO’s peace operations, the focus of NATO’s efforts should be on deterrence and home defense, with any contribution to peace operations accruing as a side benefit of building up the MAP military.
In contrast, the low strategic exposure of country B and its likely near-term membership in NATO mean that NATO’s efforts with regard to this country lack the sense of urgency present in its efforts with regard to country A. Moreover, NATO can expect country B to take the primary role in addressing its relatively limited military problems. The focus of the military reform efforts should be on making a contribution to NATO’s peace operations rather than on deterrence and home defense. From the perspective of NATO military planning, country B presents fewer complications. But even though country A presents more complications for NATO military planning, it is more important that its problems be dealt with in a timely fashion, since addressing them reduces the country’s strategic exposure and thus the likelihood of its being involved in a crisis that could necessitate NATO’s intervention.

Figures 6.2 through 6.10 individually portray the position of each MAP country in such a format. The data on which the ratings for each country are based are derived from assessments earlier in the report. Table 6.1 presents the numerical assessments.

As the charts in Figures 6.2 through 6.10 make clear, each of the MAP countries—even those usually lumped together, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—differs from the others to some extent. It is
Figure 6.2—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Albania

Figure 6.3—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Bulgaria
Figure 6.4—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Estonia

Figure 6.5—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Latvia
Figure 6.6—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Lithuania

Figure 6.7—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Macedonia
Figure 6.8—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Romania

Figure 6.9—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Slovakia
Figure 6.10—Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy: Slovenia

Table 6.1
Main Determinants of a NATO Shaping Strategy for the MAP States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Extent of Strategic Exposure</th>
<th>Likelihood of NATO Membership</th>
<th>Severity of Military Problems</th>
<th>Ability to Address Military Problems</th>
<th>Contribution to NATO Peace Ops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Scoring is 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.
aValues derived from overall scores in Table 4.20, inverted.
bValues derived from overall scores in Table 4.26.
cValues derived from military scores in Table 4.16, adjusted to a 1–3 scale and inverted.
dValues derived from overall scores in Table 4.5.
eValues derived from power projection scores in Table 4.22.
important that NATO take these differences into account as it proceeds with a shaping strategy. They are essential to putting together the most effective strategy and thus advancing the no-surprises future in a most efficient fashion.

The oversized militaries of Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria bring with them the problem of their equipment, doctrine, and training levels all being incompatible with those of NATO. Nonetheless, all three of these MAP states have a deterrent force in place and have the means to ensure sovereignty over their airspace. The other six MAP states—Slovenia, Albania, Macedonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—possess armed forces that may be insufficient for deterrence purposes (either because of quality, quantity, or both), and they have only embryonic air forces, meaning that in the event of an unexpected crisis, NATO may need to ensure their air sovereignty. The following recommendations and shaping guidelines take into account the different kinds of problems presented by the MAP militaries:

- To enhance NATO’s air operations over the long-term, the highest priority for MAP states should be fundamental military reform that adapts the military to principles prevalent in current NATO countries. Without such a framework in place, cooperation with and assistance from NATO in force planning and development fail to meet a basic prerequisite for success.

- Defense investments need to be specifically directed at building a small core of well-equipped and trained light-weight and (for the “oversized” militaries) medium-weight ground forces that are fully compatible with NATO. If some recognized uncertainties were to come to pass, such forces would establish the foundation for a quick path to accession and/or NATO cooperation in conditions of crisis-time reinforcement, without committing NATO to such a path in advance.

- Specific priorities for the air forces should be as follows: The oversized MAP militaries should focus on rapidly reducing their inventories, modernizing (and adapting to NATO) their remaining assets, and reassigning their resources to training and readiness improvements. The emerging MAP militaries should focus on preparing the conditions for an eventual air component consisting of army aviation and/or combat-capable jet trainers. In
Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, regional arrangements (along the lines of a “Baltic” air force) would amount to a cost-effective way to ensure air sovereignty. The ability to monitor and control the use of one’s airspace is a virtual prerequisite of sovereignty, and the MAP states will need to maintain a minimum level of credible counter-air capability.

- In both the oversized and emerging militaries, investments in niche areas, such as ground support aircraft (whether rotary- or fixed-wing) and tactical airlift, would be a natural complement to the focus on ground forces. In this context, army aviation and support assets—rather than the combat Soviet-type fixed-wing assets possessed by the new members and MAP states—could be deployed out of their home countries for NATO operations. Eventually, and especially for the oversized MAP militaries, a longer-term objective would be to field NATO-interoperable SAMs capable of posing a threat to aircraft at medium altitude so as to strengthen the air defense deterrent. Of course, a basic prerequisite in all plans is compatibility with NATO doctrine, training, and equipment.

- In all MAP countries, the emphasis must be on infrastructure preparation (including the upgrading of select airbases usable for crisis-time reinforcement or for NATO peace operations) and the completion of an air traffic control and air sovereignty system that allow for full integration of the MAP states into NATO’s air defense network. These two elements would be especially important under conditions of crisis-time reinforcement. For hedging purposes, planning needs to consider the exposure to hypothetical threats that the various MAP countries would face if the security environment were to deteriorate. In and of itself, such preparation increases the deterrent to intimidation and, in a non-provocative fashion, strengthens the chances that NATO will not need to act on its gray-area commitments.

As the 1999 accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary shows, integration of the MAP militaries into NATO will be a long and difficult process, especially in the realm of air forces and air defense. But whatever priorities emerge and whatever their specific order, what is clearly needed is a long-term phased strategy of development and integration for new and potential members. None of the former
communist countries is likely to be a major contributor to NATO’s air operations in the near- or mid-term, but all can play a meaningful role (even in air operations) depending on the contingency. Especially in cases of “coalitions of the willing,” their specific strengths in niche areas may make them disproportionately valuable to the operation. NATO has the leverage and the means of influence to help coordinate the MAP states’ choices and to assist countries in working toward optimal use of their resources and capabilities.