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## SENATE OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN NATO ENLARGEMENT

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Hearings will resume this week in the Senate on admitting Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999. The vote in a few weeks on NATO expansion presents Senators with their most far-reaching foreign policy decision since the end of the Cold War. The decision will shape not only the future of European security, but also the leadership role of the United States in the Atlantic alliance.

The Senate has a constitutional obligation to provide the President with its “advice and consent” on any change to the NATO Treaty. Although it is not necessary to ask the Clinton Administration to renegotiate the expansion agreement, the Senate should predicate its support for NATO enlargement on three conditions that will strengthen the agreement: (1) that the newly created NATO–Russian Council does not compromise the alliance’s decision-making autonomy; (2) that the costs of enlargement are distributed equitably; and (3) that the organization retains its focus as a military alliance. Insisting on such conditionality will improve the agreement and ensure that President Bill Clinton understands the Senate’s interpretation of the enlargement decision before the instruments of ratification are formally deposited for certification.

**Ensuring That Russia’s Role Remains Constructive.** In an attempt to assuage Russian concerns over including former Warsaw Pact members, President Clinton signed the 1997 Founding Act, claiming that it gave Moscow a “voice, not a veto” in NATO matters. The Founding Act created the Permanent Joint Council, a forum for Russia and

NATO to discuss matters of mutual interest. Before approving NATO enlargement, the U.S. Senate should reaffirm the importance of keeping the permanent NATO–Russian Council separate and apart from the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s supreme decision-making body. In other words, a firewall is necessary to guarantee that NATO’s decision-making autonomy remains free from potential meddling by Russia.

One option for achieving this condition is incorporating unequivocal statements made by the Clinton Administration officials responsible for promoting enlargement into the resolution of ratification. Testifying before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations last fall, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright emphasized,

I can assure you that the Permanent Joint Council will never be used to make decisions on NATO doctrine, strategy, or readiness. The North Atlantic Council is NATO’s supreme decisionmaking body, and it is sacrosanct. Russia will not play a part in

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the NAC [North Atlantic Council] or NATO decisionmaking and it will never have a veto over NATO policy.

Similarly, testifying before the Senate Committee on Appropriations last fall, Secretary of Defense William Cohen stressed that NATO's relationship with Russia "does *not* allow Russian participation in internal NATO issues; it does *not* give Russia a voice or a veto over NATO's decisions; and it does *not* give Russia a *de facto* membership in NATO" [emphasis in original]. The Clinton Administration must not be allowed to dilute these explicit assurances. By conditioning its support for enlargement on the understanding that the North Atlantic Council's independence cannot be compromised, the Senate will help preserve NATO's integrity as a military alliance.

**Keeping Enlargement Costs Equitable.** The costs of NATO enlargement have been subject to vigorous debate. Estimates of how much NATO expansion will cost have varied because of their differing assumptions and methodologies. NATO's most recent assessment, concluded in December 1997, projects that expansion will cost the U.S. taxpayer a relatively modest sum—approximately \$2 billion over the next decade.

Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic already have demonstrated their commitment to paying their fair share of the expected enlargement costs by increasing their defense budgets. This is as it should be. No alliance member—new or old—should be tempted to become a "free rider." Support for enlargement should be conditioned on the understanding that enlargement will not increase the U.S. percentage contribution to NATO common funds. More generally, the costs of NATO enlargement must not be allowed to undermine the ability of the United States to honor its security obligations elsewhere in the world. It would not make strategic sense for Washington to enhance Europe's security at the expense of, say, U.S. treaty commitments in the Pacific.

**Enlargement, Not Transformation.** The Senate also must insure that an enlarged NATO does not lose its *raison d'être*. NATO must remain a military alliance. Europe does not need another bureaucratic forum to talk about security; it needs NATO's unique warfighting capabilities to deter aggression. The enlargement process must not

become a subtle campaign to transform NATO into a collective security body or narrowly focused peacekeeping organization. Nor should the North Atlantic Council become, as some have suggested, subservient to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). With 54 members, the OSCE is structurally ill-suited to lead a military alliance, although it sometimes provides a useful platform for member states to discuss generic security issues.

**Moratorium on Further Enlargement?** The debate over admitting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into the alliance has been linked to a possible second round of enlargement. Senator John Warner (R-VA), for example, has signaled his intention to link his support of NATO enlargement to a three-year moratorium on further expansion. Legislating a mandatory pause would be unwise. The admissions process should be driven by strict criteria for membership, not an arbitrary calendar date. As a practical matter, the Senate is unlikely to rush ahead with a second round of NATO enlargement; it will take time—perhaps several years—for the alliance to digest the first round of expansion. An artificial pause, however, would have a chilling effect on non-member states' striving to meet NATO standards. From a constitutional perspective, moreover, a moratorium is unnecessary because the Senate retains its prerogative to review treaties regardless of what the Clinton Administration proposes or other NATO members advocate.

**Bringing the First Round to Closure.** The first round of NATO enlargement offers the Senate the opportunity to improve history's most successful military alliance. Senators can strengthen the enlargement agreements by keeping NATO's decision-making free of Russian influence, the enlargement costs equitable, and the organization focused as a military alliance. Failure to approve enlargement, however, would demoralize the countries invited to join NATO at the July 1997 Madrid summit; reward extremists in Russia for their opposition; and leave a potentially unstable security vacuum in Central Europe.

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