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NATO Enlargement Should Top Obama Agenda in Chicago

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In May, NATO leaders will meet for the annual heads of state and government summit in Chicago. Absent from the summit's agenda is the issue of enlargement—a pillar of the alliance. Since taking office, President Obama has done little to support the membership of qualified candidates. This year's NATO summit provides an opportunity to correct this.

NATO's "open door policy" is critical to mobilizing Europe and its allies around a collective transatlantic defense. According to Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, any European state that fulfills the requirements of the treaty and demonstrates the competency to contribute to the alliance's security is eligible for membership.¹ The U.S. should take steps to make sure that the open door policy is not stifled.

Last week, Congress took a decisive stance on NATO enlargement with the introduction of the "NATO Enhancement Act of 2012," sponsored by Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN). The bill emphasizes America's leadership in expanding the alliance and calls on the State Department to provide a report assessing American commitment to enlargement.² Furthermore, the bill highlights several candidate countries in various stages of accession that would not only benefit from the alliance, but more importantly, would make it stronger.

Macedonia. Upon completing its Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2008, Macedonia anticipated an invitation to join the alliance at the NATO summit in Bucharest. Yet, despite fulfilling all necessary requirements for membership, Macedonia's accession was unilaterally vetoed by Greece, with whom Skopje is engaged in a long-standing dispute regarding its constitutional name.

Greece's veto broke with the NATO convention that bilateral disputes do not preclude an aspiring country's membership in the alliance. As found by the International Court of Justice last December, Greece's veto was in blatant violation

of the 1995 United Nations-brokered Interim Accord, in which Athens agreed not to impair Macedonia's integration into Europe. Despite this, Macedonia's status on membership remains unchanged.

Macedonia has little leverage in urging Greece to come to the bargaining table. Greece is already a NATO member, and Athens's internal political dynamics are likely to delay the negotiation process.³ Recent overtures by Skopje to the Greek government to seek a resolution have been brushed aside as Greece is grappling to form a new government and manage the collapse of its economy. Yet this is no excuse for procrastination. Greece has jeopardized NATO's open door policy and should work with Macedonia to seek reconciliation.

Montenegro. Montenegro is making steady progress in its path toward NATO membership. Having received a MAP in 2009, Montenegro is currently in its second Annual National Program (ANP) cycle. Despite its progress, Montenegro will not be ready to join the alliance by May.

Under its 2011–2012 ANP, Montenegro should continue to implement the conditions and standards of its reform agenda,

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reinforcing institutions for fighting corruption and organized crime, enhancing the rule of law, and human and minority rights. Montenegro must also strengthen interoperability within the NATO framework and continue to develop operational capacity for NATO missions. On a political level, Montenegro's leadership needs to clarify the benefits of NATO membership to its public.⁴

Bosnia and Herzegovina. While several countries aspire to join NATO, some have hurdles they must overcome before they can be considered seriously. Offered its MAP in 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina must make substantial improvements politically and militarily before it can be considered a serious NATO aspirant. Bosnia and Herzegovina has made some progress and has even deployed troops to Afghanistan. However, before its government can begin work on the MAP, it must register all immovable defense properties as state property, for use by the country's defense ministry.⁵ Little progress on this has been made.

Serbia. The atrocities committed by the Serbian government in the 1990s resulted in NATO's 1999

Operation Allied Force bombing campaign. A majority of Serbia's population does not want Serbia to join NATO; the Serbian government's current policy is one of nonmembership, and Serbia is far too close to Russia to become a member.⁶ Currently, NATO does not consider Serbia to be a candidate country, nor does it look like Serbia will realistically become so in the future. Although Serbia maintains its relationship with NATO via the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, cooperation is limited.⁷

Georgia. At the Bucharest Summit in 2008, Georgia was promised NATO membership. However, owing to opposition from France and Germany, the alliance substituted a MAP for the watered-down NATO-Georgia Commission. Georgia has made significant strides toward defense reform and spends approximately 4 percent of GDP on defense, when the NATO average is less than half of that. While many NATO members have announced troop reductions in Afghanistan for 2012, Georgia is the only country committing more troops to the mission this year. By doubling its troops in Helmand Province, Georgia will

become the largest per capita troop contributor in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Georgia has become a serious security actor in recent years. In addition to Afghanistan, Georgia has contributed to peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and, at the time of the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, was the second-largest troop contributor to Iraq after the United States. With 20 percent of Georgia's territory occupied by Russia, Tbilisi still has a long way to go before achieving full membership. Nevertheless, NATO should continue to support and assist with Georgia's reform process and offer a MAP in May.

Ukraine. Once an aspiring NATO ally under the leadership of President Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine's pro-Russia government has blocked membership advancement. In 2010, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich introduced a bill, passed by parliament, that barred Ukraine from committing to "a non-bloc policy which means non-participation in military-political alliances."⁸ Ukraine's previous deepening of relations with NATO outraged Russia, which not only classifies NATO as

1. North Atlantic Treaty, April 4, 1949, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-857936BB-66246E10/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm (March 19, 2012).
2. NATO Enhancement Act of 2012, S. 2177, 112th Congress, 2nd Sess., at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-857936BB-66246E10/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm (March 19, 2012).
3. Antonis Samaras, head of Greece's New Democracy party and the likely choice for prime minister in the upcoming election, was foreign minister at the time when Macedonia became a U.N. member. In 1992, Samaras resigned his post out of anger for Athens's willingness to compromise with Skopje.
4. Government of Montenegro, "Second Annual National Program," September 2011, at http://www.mip.gov.me/en/images/stories/download/NATO/II_ANP_en.pdf (March 19, 2012).
5. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO's Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina," at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49127.htm (March 19, 2012).
6. Center for Civil-Military Relations, "What Do Serbian Citizens Think about Their Own Security and the Security of Serbia?" June 9, 2011, at <http://www.ccmr-bg.org/News/4103/We+have+presented+results+of+public+opinion+poll%3A+What+do+Serbian+citizens+think+about+their+own+security+and+the+security+of+Serbia%3F.shtml> (March 19, 2012).
7. Serbia was invited to join the Partnership for Peace at the Riga Summit in 2006.
8. Valentina Pop, "Ukraine Drops NATO Membership Bid," EU Observer, June 4, 2010, at <http://euobserver.com/13/30212> (March 19, 2012).

a security threat but also considers Ukraine to be within its sphere of influence. No country outside NATO has the right to veto another country's ambition to join the alliance.⁹

American Leadership Needed at the Chicago Summit. The Obama Administration should urge NATO to take the following steps:

- Request that enlargement be added to the 2012 NATO summit agenda, including full NATO membership for Macedonia. The Administration should pressure Greece to resolve its name dispute with Macedonia.
- Ensure that NATO's open door policy is explicitly clear in the 2012 summit's communiqué.
- Seek to improve relations between NATO and the Ukraine but recognize that NATO membership is not a realistic option at present.
- Continue to support progress being made by Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of NATO membership once MAP requirements are completed.
- Urge NATO members to provide Georgia with a MAP and reaffirm NATO's commitment to Georgian membership in the summit's communiqué.

As the Obama Administration shifts its defense priorities from Europe to Asia, America's NATO allies should not be forgotten. NATO

has done more for Europe to promote democracy, peace, and security than any other multilateral organization, including the European Union. It is essential that the United States continue to be an active participant in the alliance's prosperity.

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9. Luke Coffey, "Five Principles That Should Guide U.S. Policy Toward NATO," Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief* No. 3536, March 8, 2012, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/03/5-principles-that-should-guide-us-policy-toward-nato> (March 19, 2012).