



# NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates

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## Summary

At the April 2-4, 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, a principal issue was consideration of the candidacies for membership of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. The allies agreed to extend invitations to Albania and Croatia. Although the alliance determined that Macedonia met the qualifications for NATO membership, Greece blocked the invitation due to an enduring dispute over Macedonia's name. After formal accession talks, on July 9, 2008, the foreign ministers of Albania and Croatia and the permanent representatives of the 26 NATO allies signed accession protocols amending the North Atlantic Treaty to permit Albania and Croatia's membership in NATO. To take effect, the protocols had to be ratified, first by current NATO members, then by Albania and Croatia. On April 1, 2009, the two countries formally became the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> members of the Alliance when the Ambassadors of the two nations deposited the ratified instruments of accession at the State Department. On April 4, 2009, Albania and Croatia were welcomed to the NATO table at a ceremony held at the NATO summit in Strasbourg, France. Both nations are small states with correspondingly small militaries, and their inclusion in NATO cannot be considered militarily strategic. However, it is possible that their membership could play a political role in helping to stabilize southeastern Europe.

Over the past 15 years, Congress has passed legislation indicating its support for NATO enlargement, as long as candidate states meet qualifications for alliance membership. On April 9, 2007, former President Bush signed into law the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-17), expressing support for further NATO enlargement. On September 10, 2008, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the accession of Albania and Croatia as a prelude to Senate ratification. For states to be admitted, the Senate must pass a resolution of ratification by a two-thirds majority to amend NATO's founding treaty and commit the United States to defend new geographic space. On September 25, 2008, the Senate by division vote (Treaty Number 110-20) ratified the accession protocols. The potential cost of enlargement had been a factor in the debate over NATO enlargement in the mid-and late-1990s. However, the costs of the current round were expected to be minimal.

Another issue debated at the Bucharest summit was NATO's future enlargement and the question of offering Membership Action Plans (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine. The MAP is generally viewed by allies and aspiring alliance members as a way station to membership. However, it is not an invitation to join NATO, and it does not formally guarantee future membership. The former Bush Administration supported granting MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine. Both the Senate and House passed resolutions in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress urging NATO to enter into MAPs with Georgia and Ukraine (S.Res. 439 and H.Res. 997, respectively). However, despite strong U.S. support, the allies decided after much debate not to offer MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest. Opponents cited internal separatist conflicts in Georgia, public opposition to membership in Ukraine, and Russia's strong objection to the two countries' membership as factors influencing their opposition. The allies pledged that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become NATO members but did not specify when this might happen. The August 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia seemed to place the membership prospects of Georgia and Ukraine aside for the immediate future.

This report will be updated as needed. See also CRS Report RL31915, *NATO Enlargement: Senate Advice and Consent*, by Michael John Garcia.

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

On April 2-4, 2008, NATO held a summit in Bucharest, Romania. A principal issue was consideration of the candidacies for membership of Albania, Croatia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).<sup>2</sup> The allies issued invitations to join the alliance to Albania and Croatia. Greece blocked an invitation to Macedonia because of a dispute over Macedonia's name. The invitations initiated the third round of enlargement in the post-Cold War era. In 1997, NATO invited Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to join the alliance; they were admitted in 1999. In 2002, the allies invited Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, and Slovakia to join the alliance; they were admitted in 2004. These last two rounds of enlargement were "strategic" in the sense that the new members' territory lay in regions that Russia once deemed critical to its own national interest, and in the sense that the region had been intensely involved in conflict for much of modern European history. In addition, several of these countries are sizeable, with considerable armed forces and significant resources.

Albania and Croatia are small countries, with correspondingly small militaries. Croatia was part of the former Yugoslavia, a communist state that kept the Soviet Union at arms' length and had reasonably friendly relations with the west. Albania, also once a communist state during the Cold War, was for many years the most isolated country in Europe. With the collapse of Yugoslavia and the end of the Cold War, these countries put themselves on the path to democracy and made commitments to join western institutions. The two countries had aspirations to join both the European Union and NATO. Albania and Croatia, in the sense of their military importance and their general resources, would not represent a "strategic" presence in the alliance, although their consistent contributions to NATO operations have been lauded. However, due to the continuing instability in the region, further stirred by Serbia's and Russia's sharply negative reaction to Kosovo's independence, the two countries are a potential factor for stabilization in southeastern Europe.

Today, NATO's purpose extends well beyond the mission of collective defense of the Cold War era. Although collective defense remains a core function, the allies now undertake missions against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A global military reach is necessary for such missions. The former Bush Administration had pressed the allies to develop more mobile forces, ones able to deploy over long distances and sustain themselves. Some smaller member states, such as Albania and Croatia, as NATO members are expected to develop "niche" capabilities, such as special forces or troops able to contain a chemical weapons attack or to participate in NATO collective security missions, such as its stabilization and peacekeeping operation in Kosovo although both have contributed troops to the NATO mission in Afghanistan.

Several allied governments believe that the overall pace of NATO enlargement is too compressed and for the future wish to consider first how to resolve a complex range of issues. These governments tend to argue that other issues—the calming of nationalist emotions in Serbia, an overall improvement in NATO-Russian relations, and coming to grips with the wide-ranging

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<sup>1</sup> This report was originally conceived and coordinated by former CRS analyst Paul Gallis. This and the following section were prepared by Paul Belkin, Analyst in European Affairs, and Vince Morelli, Section Research Manager, Europe and the Americas Section.

<sup>2</sup> The country's name is in dispute. It will henceforth be referred to as "Macedonia" for the sake of simplicity only. The United States government recognizes the country by its official name, the "Republic of Macedonia."

problems in energy security—must first be resolved before considering new countries for membership.<sup>3</sup>

## Process

The Washington Treaty of 1949, NATO's founding instrument, does not describe detailed qualifications for membership. It does require that member states be democracies and follow the rule of law. It also requires that they take steps to strengthen their militaries and refrain from the use of force in settling disputes outside the treaty framework. Article X of the Treaty leaves the door open to any states able to meet the general qualifications for membership, including a contribution to the security of other member states. The process by which governments interested in membership may join has been refined since the end of the Cold War. In 1994 NATO established the Partnership for Peace (PfP), a program in which non-member states might train with NATO forces, participate in peacekeeping or other allied activities, and seek avenues to draw closer to the alliance. Some countries, such as Austria, participate in the PfP program but are not necessarily interested in membership.

In 1995 NATO published a *Study on NATO Enlargement*.<sup>4</sup> The report remains the most detailed public roadmap for governments wishing to enter NATO. It describes the need for candidate states to develop democratic structures and a market economy, respect human rights and the rights of ethnic minorities, and build a military capable of contributing to collective defense. In the 1995 study, NATO included other requirements, principally the need to settle all disputes, such as border demarcations, with neighboring countries. The Balkan conflicts of the 1990s gave this requirement special significance. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO has also become a collective security as well as a collective defense organization. Prospective members must develop military forces trained for peacekeeping and state-building, as well as for collective defense.

After the admission of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary in 1999, the allies, led by the United States, developed a more detailed process for prospective members. This process, called the Membership Action Plan (MAP), lays out in considerable detail specific steps that a government must follow to become a member. Such steps might include laws designating its parliament as having civilian oversight of the military, or the downsizing and professionalization of a large military, or the settlement of a border dispute with a neighbor. Each country's MAP is classified, as is its evaluation by the allies. During the 2003-2004 round of enlargement, the MAP was made available to the United States Senate for review.

Some allies have criticized the MAP process. They contend that it is primarily a creation of the United States and that the ultimate decision on whether MAP requirements are met is made principally in Washington. They say, for example, that the full range of qualifications outlined in the MAP in the 2003 round of enlargement was not adequately assessed for several states that became members of the alliance. They contend, therefore, that designation of candidate states as prospective members is above all a political process and that actual accomplishment of

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews with European officials, January-February 2008.

<sup>4</sup> NATO, *Study on NATO Enlargement*, Brussels, September 1995. Available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9501.htm>.

requirements is secondary to the will of the alliance's leader. U.S. officials dispute this characterization.<sup>5</sup>

For a candidate state to have been invited to join the alliance at Bucharest, consensus among the 26 member governments was necessary to approve an invitation. Each candidate was considered separately. One or more votes against a state would have blocked that state's progress to the next stage in the process of becoming a member. It was Greece's opposition to Macedonia that resulted in Skopje's failure to obtain an invitation. In March 2008, Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis said, "No solution—no invitation."<sup>6</sup> There were other issues under discussion as well. According to some officials in allied states, Albania and Macedonia continued to have problems of governance and issues detrimental to internal political comity. At the same time, the three governments had evidently made considerable progress in military reform, and their populations generally supported NATO membership, although by a somewhat narrow majority in Croatia.

After issuing official invitations to Albania and Croatia at the April Bucharest summit, on July 9, 2008, the allies signed accession protocols for their entry into NATO. The protocols outlined NATO's expectations of the two prospective members. The protocols were deposited with each allied government and member governments began their constitutional processes to amend the Washington Treaty and admit a new state or states.

In some member states, such as the United Kingdom, the government had the authority to determine whether the executive alone may decide to admit a state nominated for entry, or instead, if issues of broad significance are involved, may send the protocol to parliament for approval. At the other end of the spectrum, the Netherlands has a meticulous, time-consuming process involving a parliamentary study and debate before a final vote is taken. NATO hoped to admit prospective candidate states at its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit scheduled to be held on the French-German border on April 4-5, 2009.<sup>7</sup> By the end of March 2009, all 26 member states had ratified the accession protocols. Croatia did have a maritime border dispute with Slovenia and although Slovenia's parliament had ratified the protocols, there had been a movement in the parliament to hold a national referendum on Croatia's accession not only to NATO but also to the EU in response to the unsettled maritime border dispute. That issue was resolved just before the NATO summit.

On April 1, 2009, in a ceremony at the Department of State, the Ambassadors of Albania and Croatia deposited the ratified documents with the United States and officially became the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> members of the Alliance. In a ceremony at the NATO summit in Strasbourg, France on April 4, the two newest members took their seats at the NATO table.

The United States Senate has the constitutional authority to give its advice and consent by a two-thirds majority to the amendment of any treaty. In the case of NATO enlargement, it must decide whether to amend the Washington Treaty to commit the United States to defend additional geographic territory. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is the committee that holds the initial authority to consider the issue.<sup>8</sup> For an enlargement of the NATO treaty, both the Senate

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<sup>5</sup> Interviews with officials from allied governments, 2003-2008.

<sup>6</sup> Statement of Prime Minister Karamanlis, Athens, March 2, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Schefer at the Protocol signing ceremony, July 9, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of Senate action during all the past rounds of enlargement, see CRS Report RL31915, *NATO Enlargement: Senate Advice and Consent*, by Michael John Garcia.

Foreign Relations Committee and the full Senate may decide whether to vote on candidate states separately or all together. During the previous two rounds of enlargement, House and Senate committees held hearings on enlargement. One purpose of the hearings is to create more widespread knowledge of possible pending new obligations of the United States government. In the past, committees have also discussed such issues as the costs of enlargement, the qualifications of the candidate states, regional security implications of enlargement, implications for relations with Russia, and new issues in NATO's future, such as the viability of new missions.

On September 10, 2008, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the accession of Albania and Croatia to NATO. In his opening remarks, Senator Dodd, acting Chairman of the Committee, congratulated both candidates for the progress they had made in attempting to secure NATO membership and stated that both Albania and Croatia would be a force for stability in the Balkans. He reminded the committee that "to undertake a commitment to mutual defense is one of the more serious steps any government can take. Therefore we must consider ... the nature of the allies we are embracing."<sup>9</sup> Senator Dodd was particularly interested in whether both candidates had achieved acceptable levels of reform in the areas of democratic elections, rule of law, treatment of minorities, economic development, civilian control of the military, and the resolution of all territorial disputes with their neighbors. Appearing before the Committee, Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, stated that both Albania and Croatia had made "enormous steps forward in becoming stable democracies and instituting significant reforms" in many of the areas highlighted by Senator Dodd.<sup>10</sup> On September 25, 2008 the Senate, by division vote (Treaty Number 110-20), ratified the accession protocols.

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<sup>9</sup> Opening statement of Senator Dodd, Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing "Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty," September 10, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty," September 10, 2008.



## The New Member States

### Albania<sup>11</sup>

Albania was one of the first countries in central and eastern Europe to seek NATO membership after the fall of communism in the region in 1989-1991. Albania's membership candidacy had been evaluated by the allies using a number of criteria, such as the state of its political and economic reforms, public support for NATO membership, defense reforms and ability to contribute to allied missions, and Albania's role in its region. However, NATO's decision on Albania's candidacy was in the end a political judgment of NATO member states on whether Albania's membership would contribute to their security.

#### Domestic Reforms

Most observers believe that the main challenges to Albania's candidacy were questions about the pace of its political reforms.

Albania's current government is led by the center-right Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), which formed a coalition with several smaller parties after the country's 2005 parliamentary elections. The government is led by longtime DPA leader and Prime Minister Sali Berisha. In the past, Berisha has often been criticized for having a harsh and uncompromising leadership style, although observers have noted that he has tried to moderate this image since the 2005 elections.

Since its first multiparty election in 1991, Albanian politics have been marked by fierce political conflict between parties and factional struggles within them. In Berisha's previous tenure as Prime Minister, public order collapsed completely for several months in 1997 after the failure of financial pyramid schemes. Since 1991, both the DPA and the other chief Albanian party, the Socialist Party of Albania, have lost elections and often refused to concede defeat, charging fraud and other irregularities. Aside from the issue of political civility, Albania has had significant legal and institutional shortcomings. Two key issues cited by U.S., NATO, and Albanian leaders themselves are electoral reform and judicial reform.<sup>12</sup> The Albanian parliament has been drafting new legislation on these issues, but progress has been slow. Moreover, observers note that passing laws is one thing; implementing them effectively is another.

#### Public Support for NATO Membership

Public support in Albania for the country's membership in NATO has been very high, with public opinion polls showing as many as 96% of those polled in favor. All major Albanian political parties across the political spectrum favored NATO membership.

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#### Albania at a Glance

Population: 3.6 million (2007 est.)

Ethnic Composition: 95% Albanian, 3% Greek, 2% others (1989 est.)

Total Area: 28,748 sq. km. (slightly smaller than Maryland)

Gross Domestic Product: \$11.2 billion (2007 est.)

Defense Budget: \$208 million (2007)

Active Duty Armed Forces: 11,020

Sources: 2008 CIA World Factbook; Military Balance 2008; Forecast International

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<sup>11</sup> Prepared by Steven Woehrel, Specialist in European Affairs.

<sup>12</sup> "Further Reform Necessary in Albania, Says NATO Secretary General," October 19, 2007, from the NATO website, <http://www.nato.int>.

## **Defense Reforms and Ability to Contribute to Allied Missions**

Albania has made significant progress in military reforms. However, the country's small size and weakened economy will likely prevent it from making a large contribution to the alliance's military capabilities. With the assistance of the United States and other NATO countries, Albania is trying to develop a small, efficient, well-trained force that can operate effectively with NATO. The current strength of Albania's armed forces is 11,020 troops. By the time the country's restructuring effort is over in 2010, it will comprise about 10,000 men. Albania is devoting a significant share of its meager resources to defense spending. Albania's 2007 defense budget was \$208 million, representing about 1.8% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2008, Albania was projected to spend 2.01% of GDP on defense, just above the 2% recommended by NATO for member states, although achieved by only seven of the 26 allies.<sup>13</sup>

As in the case of the previous rounds of enlargement, NATO has encouraged candidate states to develop "niche" capabilities to assist NATO missions. Albania has focused on creating a Rapid Reaction Brigade, military police, special operations forces, explosive ordnance disposal teams, engineers, and medical support units. Albania says it plans to have 40% of its land forces ready for international missions. Eight percent of the total forces would be deployable at any one time, and the remaining would be available for rotations, according to Albanian officials.<sup>14</sup> Independent assessments of Albania's reform progress note that the country is committed to carrying out these reforms, despite facing severe practical and financial limitations.<sup>15</sup>

Albanian leaders contend that their country has already acted for years as a de facto NATO ally. Albanian forces participated in SFOR, the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia, and are part of the current EU force there. Albania has deployed a company-sized force of about 140 men as part of ISAF, the NATO-led stabilization force in Afghanistan. It has deployed a military medical team to ISAF jointly with Macedonia and Croatia. Albanian troops have also served as part of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq.

Albanian defense officials concede that Albania will continue to need bilateral assistance for some time to be able to participate in international missions. Much of its hardware comes as a result of international donations, and it lacks sufficient logistical capabilities, which require the assistance of allied countries when Albania's forces are deployed abroad.<sup>16</sup>

## **Regional Issues**

Albania has no outstanding territorial issues with its neighbors. Albania was one of the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence after the former Serbian province declared it on February 17, 2008. This has increased tensions in its relations with Serbia. Albanian leaders have repeatedly said that they do not support merging their country with Kosovo and ethnic Albanian-majority parts of Macedonia in a "Greater Albania." Indeed, U.S. and EU officials often praise Albania for its moderate stance on the Kosovo issue.

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<sup>13</sup> Forecast International report on Albania, February 2008; Presentation of Albanian Defense Minister Fatmir Mediu, at the Atlantic Council of the United States, February 19, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Presentation of Albanian Defense Minister Fatmir Mediu at the Atlantic Council, February 19, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: The Balkans, November 15, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *The Three Adriatic Aspirants: Capabilities and Preparations, 2007*, from the NATO Parliamentary Assembly website, <http://www.nato-pa.int>.

Since 2003, Albania has participated with Croatia and Macedonia in the U.S.-sponsored Adriatic Charter, which promotes cooperation among the three countries in defense reforms and other areas in order to boost their NATO membership prospects. Albania participates in other regional fora, including the Southeast Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) and the Southeastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG).

Albanian officials say that their membership in NATO will stabilize the region by anchoring the alliance more firmly in southeastern Europe. Membership would also give pause to extremist forces in Serbia, they say. Moreover, they contend that it will encourage pro-western forces in Serbia, showing that if they follow the course of the Adriatic Charter countries, their country too can be part of the Euro-Atlantic community.

## **Croatia**<sup>17</sup>

NATO countries evaluated Croatia's request to join the alliance using a number of criteria, such as the state of its political and economic reforms, public support for membership, progress on defense reforms and ability to contribute to allied missions, and whether Croatia plays a positive role in its region. In the final analysis, however, NATO member states made a political judgment on whether Croatia's membership will contribute to their security.

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### **Croatia at a Glance**

Population: 4.49 million (2007 est.)

Ethnic Composition: 89.6% Croat, 4.5% Serb, 5.9% other (2001)

Total Area: 56,542 sq. km. (slightly smaller than West Virginia)

Gross Domestic Product: \$50.96 billion (2007 est.)

Military Budget: \$875 million (2007)

Active Duty Armed Forces: 17,660

Sources: 2008 CIA World Factbook; Military Balance 2008; Forecast International

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## **Domestic Reforms**

Croatia's progress on political and economic reforms has been generally considered to be very good and has not been an obstacle to its NATO candidacy. Croatia has been conducting membership negotiations with the European Union since October 2005. In its November 2007 progress report on Croatia's candidacy, the European Commission found that Croatia has met the political criteria for EU membership. The report praised the progress Croatia has made in reforming its judiciary and fighting corruption. Croatia has also made progress in minority rights, and to a lesser extent, the return of Serb refugees to their homes. Over 300,000 Serb refugees fled or were driven from their homes during the 1991-1995 war between Croatian and local Serb forces backed by neighboring Serbia. About half that number have returned, according to the Croatian government. The EU report noted that Croatia is a functioning market economy but stressed the need for further structural reforms, less state interference in the economy, and a better public administration and judicial system.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Prepared by Steven Woehrel, Specialist in European Affairs.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Croatia Progress Report 2007*, from the Commission website,

## **Public Support for NATO Membership**

Public support had been identified as perhaps the biggest weakness of Croatia's candidacy. Public opinion polls from early 2008 showed support for NATO membership barely exceeding 50% of the population, despite active efforts of the Croatian government to boost public awareness of the benefits of NATO membership. After an attack by a Serbian mob on the Croatian embassy in Belgrade following Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in February 2008, this figure increased to over 60%. Those opposing NATO membership believed that it would engage Croatia in international conflicts against its will and that NATO would demand bases in Croatia. Through continuing public relations efforts, the Croatian government had tried to allay these fears and boost public support for NATO membership. Despite the efforts of the Croatian government, it has been reported that the actual accession of Croatia on April 1, 2009 took place with very little fanfare in Croatia.

The largest party in the governing coalition, the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ), strongly supported NATO membership for Croatia. Since the 1999 death of its founder, longtime Croatian strongman Franjo Tudjman, the HDZ has transformed itself from a nationalist, quasi-authoritarian party to a democratically-oriented, pro-European center-right political force. Croatia's leading opposition party, the Social Democratic Party, supports NATO membership, but called for a public referendum on the issue. In any case, Prime Minister Sanader ruled out a referendum on NATO membership during the country's November 2007 parliamentary elections and afterward. The HDZ's coalition partner, the Croatian Peasants' Party-Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSS-HSLS) once supported a NATO referendum, but dropped its demand when it formed a coalition government with the HDZ. An effort by anti-NATO activists to collect enough signatures from Croatian voters to force a referendum failed by a large margin.

## **Defense Reform and Ability to Contribute to Allied Missions**

Croatia has made progress on defense reforms, according to most observers. Croatia is moving from the relatively large, territorially-based conscript army that it had during its war with Serbian forces in the 1990s to a smaller, more professional, more deployable force. Croatia ended conscription at the beginning of 2008. Croatia's active duty armed forces total 17,660 men, of which 12,300 are in the Army.<sup>19</sup> By 2010, Croatia plans to have 8% of its land forces deployed in international forces or ready for such deployments. Croatian defense officials say that it is their goal ultimately to have 40% of their forces able to be deployed for international missions. Croatia's 2008 defense expenditures amounted to 1.81% of GDP. By 2010, Croatia plans to spend 2% of its GDP on defense, the level recommended by NATO for member states, although currently reached by only 7 of the 26 allies.<sup>20</sup>

As noted above, NATO has encouraged candidate states to develop "niche" capabilities to assist NATO missions. To this end, Croatia is developing a special operations platoon, a demining platoon, and plans to acquire two helicopters for NATO-led operations. It also plans to contribute a motorized infantry company, a nuclear, chemical and biological weapons defense platoon, and

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<sup>19</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2007*, from the IISS website, <http://www.iiss.org>.

<sup>20</sup> Forecast International report on Croatia, February 2008.

an engineering platoon.<sup>21</sup> However, some independent assessments question whether Croatia has committed the financial resources necessary to carry out its planned reforms.<sup>22</sup>

Croatia has about 270 troops in Mazar-e-Sharif and Faizabadan in northern Afghanistan, as part of the NATO-led ISAF stabilization force. Croatia heads an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) that trains Afghan army units. Croatia says that its forces in Afghanistan operate free of the caveats that limit the deployment and activities of the ISAF contingents of some other countries. It also participates in a military medical team with Albania and Macedonia. Croatia did not support the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and it has had no troops in the U.S.-led coalition there. Croatia will likely continue to need support from its allies to be able to participate in international missions, in part due to a lack of logistical capabilities that limit its capacity to deploy and sustain its forces.

## **Regional Issues**

Croatia has no major conflicts with its neighbors although a dispute with Slovenia over the maritime boundary between the two countries continued to cloud their relations. In August 2007, the two countries agreed to refer the dispute for arbitration to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Relations with Serbia improved greatly after democratic governments came to power in both countries in 2000. Since then, Croatia has also played a largely positive role in Bosnia and Herzegovina, encouraging ethnic Croats there to work within the Bosnian political system rather than seek intervention by Croatia. On March 19, Croatia extended diplomatic recognition to Kosovo.

Since 2003, Croatia has participated with Albania and Macedonia in the U.S.-sponsored Adriatic Charter, which promotes cooperation among the three countries in defense reforms and other areas in order to boost their NATO membership prospects. Croatia participates in other regional fora, including the Southeast Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) and the Southeastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG).

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<sup>21</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *The Three Adriatic Aspirants: Capabilities and Preparations*, 2007, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: The Balkans, December 14, 2008.

## The Candidate State

### Macedonia<sup>23</sup>

Since joining NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 1999, Macedonia has worked closely with NATO on a broad array of reforms. Macedonia's efforts have been backed by a strong domestic majority (90% by some polls) favoring membership in NATO. In addition to consultative mechanisms under the MAP process, Macedonia hosts a NATO liaison office in Skopje that provides advice on military reforms and support to NATO-led Balkan operations.<sup>24</sup> At a January 2008 meeting to review NATO's progress report on

Macedonia's 9<sup>th</sup> MAP cycle, NATO representatives praised Macedonia's progress in implementing political, economic, and military reforms, but noted that "more needs to be accomplished."<sup>25</sup> Although details of the reports under the MAP process remain classified, media reports, summary analyses, and comments by government officials have indicated a mixed picture for Macedonia but with notable progress achieved in the months and weeks before the Bucharest summit.

### Domestic Political Issues

Among the most important factors that has weighed on Macedonia's NATO candidacy prospects has been the state of its political reforms. NATO has identified reform priorities in Macedonia to include "efforts to meet democratic standards, support for reducing corruption and organized crime, judicial reform, improving public administration, and promoting good-neighborly relations."<sup>26</sup> Throughout much of 2007, political conflict across the spectrum of political parties in Macedonia caused substantial deadlock in parliament, and even led to a physical confrontation in parliament that fall. The net result was stalled progress on passing key reform measures, including bills relating to implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (the 2001 accord that ended a near-civil war in Macedonia). Shortly before the Bucharest summit, the Macedonian

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#### Macedonia at a Glance

Population: 2.06 million (2007 est.)

Ethnic Groups:

Macedonian, 64.2%; Albanian, 25.2%; Turkish, 3.9%; Roma, 2.7%; Serb, 1.8%; other, 2.2% (2002 census)

Total Area: 25,333 sq. km. (slightly larger than Vermont)

Gross Domestic Product: \$6.85 billion (2007 est.)

Military Budget: \$161 million (2007, IISS); \$153.4 million (2007, FI)

Active Duty Armed Forces: 10,890 (Army 9,760; Air Force 1,130) (2007)

Sources: CIA World Factbook; IISS Military Balance 2008; Forecast International

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<sup>23</sup> This section was originally prepared by Julie Kim, Specialist in European Affairs, and updated by Steven Woehrel, Specialist in European Affairs.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on the NATO headquarters presence in Skopje, see "NATO Headquarters Skopje" web page at <http://www.jfcnaples.nato.int/nhq/index.html>.

<sup>25</sup> NATO press release, January 23, 2008.

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"NATO's relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," from NATO's web page at [http://www.nato.int/issues/nato\\_fyrom/index.html](http://www.nato.int/issues/nato_fyrom/index.html).

government nearly fell after an ethnic Albanian party briefly left the coalition. Following the summit, a majority in the Assembly voted to dissolve the parliament and hold snap elections on June 1. The election resulted in a crushing victory for Prime Minister Gruevski and his nationalist VRMO-DPMNE party, which won an absolute majority in the parliament and formed a coalition with an ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration. National elections were again held in early April 2009 that were, according to most observers, better organized and carried out. NATO's political reform priorities identified for Macedonia tracked closely with the country's EU accession prospects as well. Macedonia has been formally designated as an EU candidate country. The European Commission has praised Macedonia's achievements, but expressed concern that political tensions continued to delay important political and legal reforms and undermining the functioning of political institutions.<sup>27</sup> Reflecting these concerns, the EU has not yet set a start date for accession talks. This unfulfilled goal remains a priority for Macedonia.

### **Defense Reform and Capacity to Contribute to Allied Missions**

Macedonia has an extensive track record of implementing broad defense reforms, advancing security cooperation regionally, and contributing to global missions. The Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM) has been undergoing a major restructuring effort toward a smaller, lighter, and fully professional force under a streamlined command structure. From a 2007 strength of about 11,000, Macedonia continues to downsize its forces to reach about 8,000 active troops by the end of 2008, to increase the deployability of its forces, and to eliminate conscription. Macedonia's restructuring effort has focused on developing niche capabilities for use in allied operations such as special forces—including special purpose units for counter-insurgency and unconventional operations—and military police. Macedonia has sustained its contributions to numerous international missions, and has taken measures to reduce limitations, or caveats, on the use of its troops. Its current contributions include a 170-strong infantry unit providing security to the NATO ISAF headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan; about 30 military personnel to the EU force in Bosnia; and a 77-strong special operations unit in Baghdad as part of U.S.-led operations in Iraq. As noted, Macedonia continues to host a NATO headquarters presence in Skopje for the alliance's Balkan operations, mainly in Kosovo. In 2007, it took a leading role in coordinating activities of the U.S.-Adriatic Charter.

### **Name Dispute**

A longstanding unresolved dispute with Greece, a NATO ally, became closely intertwined with Macedonia's prospects for an invitation at the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit. The two countries have been in disagreement over Macedonia's use of the name "Macedonia" since 1991, and have met intermittently with U.N. Special Representatives since 1995 in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. U.N. Envoy and U.S. diplomat Matthew Nimetz has continually hosted talks with Greece and Macedonia since January 2008. With a greater sense of urgency to resolving the dispute, Nimetz floated several new proposals on resolving the dispute but further talks with the parties, however, could not produce an agreement.

While this dispute had long been kept on a separate track from Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, the two issues became inextricably linked in the run-up to the Bucharest summit. Athens maintained that it could not support Macedonia's NATO candidacy if no mutually

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<sup>27</sup> For full text of the 2007 progress reports, see European Commission website, <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement>.

acceptable agreement on the name issue was reached. Since NATO operates by consensus, the Greek position made clear that a veto would be tabled. In contrast, Macedonia's government insisted that it has made numerous concessions already, and that linking its accession prospects to the bilateral name dispute would be unacceptable and would violate an interim accord agreed to by both sides in 1995. After the Bucharest summit, U.S. and other officials continued to urge both parties to engage in the Nimetz process in order to reach a compromise agreement. NATO noted with regret that talks to resolve the Macedonia name issue had not produced a successful outcome. Alliance members agreed to extend an invitation to Macedonia "as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached" and said they expected talks on the name issue to be "concluded as soon as possible."<sup>28</sup> This was again urged at the 2009 NATO summit in Strasbourg/Kehl.

## Enlargement Costs<sup>29</sup>

NATO member states contribute to the activities of the alliance in several ways, the chief of which is through the deployment of their own armed forces, funded by their national budgets. Certain commonly conducted activities, however, are paid for out of three NATO-run budgets. These three accounts—the civil budget, the military budget, and the security investment program—are funded by individual contributions from the member states. The countries' percentage shares of the common funds are negotiated among the members, and are based upon per capita GDP and several other factors.

During the period leading up to first round of enlargement in central and eastern Europe in 1999, analysts estimated the cost of adding new members at between \$10 billion and \$125 billion, depending upon different threat scenarios and accounting techniques. Some Members of Congress expressed concern over these cost projections and were also worried that the United States might be left to shoulder a large share of the expenditures; they questioned whether existing burdensharing arrangements should continue and suggested that the European allies should be encouraged to assume a larger financial share for the security of the continent. However, a NATO study estimated that enlargement would require only \$1.5 billion in common funds expenditures over 10 years, and DOD concurred. It was further forecast that the 2004 round of enlargement would cost a similar amount, "with greater benefits" to U.S. security. In addition, the inclusion of ten new contributors to the NATO common funds actually *reduced* the percentage shares of the established members—including the United States.<sup>30</sup>

In preparation for the NATO summit in April 2009, NATO staff prepared estimates of the total cost and the cost-sharing implications of a new round of enlargement. NATO staff concluded, and allies informally agreed, that the methodologies and assumptions used to estimate costs and cost sharing arrangements in prior rounds of enlargement were still valid, and that the addition of new members in 2009 would not entail significant costs. The main expenses likely to be charged directly to the alliance's common military budget would be for air defense upgrades,

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<sup>28</sup> Bucharest summit communiqué, April 3, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Prepared by Carl Ek, Specialist in European Affairs.

<sup>30</sup> CRS Report 97-668, *NATO Expansion: Cost Issues*, by Carl Ek. U.S. Department of Defense, *Report to the Congress on the Military Requirements and Costs of NATO Enlargement*. Washington, D.C. February 1998. U.S. Congressional Budget Office. *NATO Burdensharing After Enlargement*. Washington, D.C. August 2001. U.S. Department of State. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. *Fact Sheet: The Enlargement of NATO*. Washington, D.C. January 31, 2003.



improvement of in-country facilities, mainly airfields, for deployment, and the procurement of secure communications between NATO headquarters in Brussels and Mons, and capitals of the new member countries. Any other common-funded projects in new member states would be assessed and funded in terms of their contributions to NATO capabilities or support to ongoing missions and are not directly attributable to enlargement. In recent years, the cost issue in general has received relatively little attention from policymakers and the media. The focus has instead been on 1) specialized capabilities that new—and existing—members can bring to the alliance, and 2) member states' willingness to contribute military assets to alliance operations, particularly in Afghanistan.

## **U.S. Policy<sup>31</sup>**

The former Bush Administration, and apparently the new Obama administration, reflected the general NATO view that the door to NATO must remain open to qualified states. Since the Clinton Administration, U.S. officials have supported the idea of a Europe “whole and free.” While NATO remains an organization for the defense of the United States, Canada, and the European allies, it has increasingly developed a political agenda. For example, NATO allies have routinely discussed such matters as energy security, piracy, and disaster relief, and, until August 2008, a range of political issues with Russia through the NATO-Russia Council.<sup>32</sup> The United States designed the MAP process, and takes a leading role in requiring candidate states to develop a professional military, democratic structures, a transparent defense budget process, civilian control of the military, and free market structures. The former Bush Administration also supported the entry of new European NATO member states into the European Union as a means to build stability.

Like the former Administration, the new Obama administration supported invitations to Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. While U.S. officials acknowledged that all three states must continue to improve their militaries and their political institutions, they also believe that each state had made considerable progress over the last several years. U.S. officials also contended that the three governments would contribute to the political stabilization of southeastern Europe.

The former Bush Administration viewed NATO's long-term membership roster in terms broader than that of some allies. For instance, the United States strongly supported the entry of countries such as Georgia and Ukraine and argued that Georgia and Ukraine should be invited to join the MAP process. In the days leading to the Bucharest summit, former President Bush made a highly visible tour of Georgia and Ukraine, where he touted their qualifications for the MAP. While some allies appeared to view Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia and ongoing political instability in Ukraine as cause to further oppose granting the MAP to these countries, the Administration continued to advocate for a MAP for Georgia and Ukraine. Administration officials argued that although both countries faced significant challenges to meeting the requirements for full NATO membership, they should be granted a clear roadmap to membership

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<sup>31</sup> Prepared by Paul Belkin, Analyst in European Affairs and Vince Morelli, Section Research Manager, Europe and the Americas Section.

<sup>32</sup> The NATO-Russia Council was suspended in August 2008 in reaction to the Russian conflict with Georgia. At a March 2009 NATO foreign ministers meeting, the decision was made to restart the Council meetings after the NATO summit in April.

as offered by the MAP.<sup>33</sup> During the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, both candidates expressed their support for Georgia and Ukraine and both candidates expressed the desire to see both nations offered membership action plans at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in December 2008, an action that was not taken by the ministers.

As with the former Administration, the Obama Administration also appears to support the idea of a “NATO with global partners.” This idea does not necessarily imply membership for countries beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. Instead, the former and current Administrations have sought, for example, to engage such countries as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan in the effort to stabilize Afghanistan, but do not actively promote their membership in the alliance.

The allies have extended Partnership for Peace status to a number of central Asian governments, a move that successive U.S. governments have supported. There are several reasons for this policy, even though some of these governments are not democratic: the PfP was originally intended as a mechanism to better integrate former Soviet Republics into the west and the United States and its allies wished to encourage greater respect for human rights and nascent democratic practices in central Asia; these governments have since provided logistical support to allied operations in Afghanistan; and several of these countries are key to the development of greater energy security because of their oil and natural gas resources and the pipelines that cross their territory.

## **Future Candidates for Future Rounds?**

### **Georgia<sup>34</sup>**

After Georgia’s “rose revolution” of late 2003 brought a new reformist government to power, Georgia placed top priority on integration with NATO. Georgia began sending troops to assist NATO forces in Kosovo in 1999 and had pledged to send troops to assist the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In 2007, Georgia became the third largest contributor (behind the United States and Britain) to coalition operations in Iraq, with a deployment of 2,000 troops. Georgia joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace program in 1994. At the NATO Summit in Prague in November 2002, Georgia declared that it aspired to NATO membership. Although some alliance members initially appeared more confident than others that Georgia had made adequate progress, a consensus was reached in September 2006 to offer Georgia an “Intensified Dialogue” of stepped-up consultations to assist the country in furthering its aspirations for alliance membership. On February 14, 2008, the Senate approved S.Res. 439 (sponsored by Senator Lugar), which urged NATO to award a MAP to Georgia and Ukraine as soon as possible.

Until the August 2008 conflict with Russia, Georgia had made progress in creating a free market economy, resulting in GDP growth of 12.4% in 2007. The Russia-Georgia conflict in August 2008, however, reportedly reduced Georgia’s GDP growth for 2008 to 3.5%.<sup>35</sup> In order to increase interoperability with NATO forces and contribute to NATO operations, the Georgian military had

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<sup>33</sup> Testimony of Daniel Fried before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 10, 2008, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Prepared by Jim Nichol, Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs. For additional information, see CRS Report RS22829, *Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement: Issues and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

<sup>35</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Georgia*, March 2009.

undertaken major efforts to re-equip with western-made or upgraded weapons, armor, aviation, and electronic equipment. Georgia's *Strategic Defense Review* suggested that the country eventually might be able to contribute to NATO by developing a niche capability in mountain combat training.<sup>36</sup>

Some observers in Georgia and the west have argued that NATO's failure to offer Georgia a Membership Action Plan at the April 2008 NATO summit emboldened Russia's aggressiveness toward Georgia and may have been an enabling factor in Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia. Others consider that NATO's pledge that Georgia eventually would become a member, as well as Georgia's ongoing movement toward integration with the west, spurred Russian aggression. Georgian President Saakashvili argued on August 10, 2008 that Russia wanted to crush Georgia's independence and end its bid to join NATO. France and Germany, which had voiced reservations at the April 2008 NATO summit about extending a MAP to Georgia, argued even more forcefully against admitting Georgia after the crisis, citing both the higher level of tensions over the separatist regions, Georgia's military incursion into South Ossetia, and the danger of war with Russia. Although the United States strongly supported a MAP for Georgia at the April 2008 NATO summit, the conflict with Russia in August 2008 placed this prospect on indefinite hold.

NATO condemned Russia's August 2008 military incursion into Georgia as disproportionate and the subsequent recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence as violating Georgia's territorial integrity. The alliance announced on August 19, 2008 that it was temporarily suspending meetings of the NATO-Russia Council and that it was forming a NATO-Georgia Council to discuss Georgia's post-conflict democratic, economic, and defense needs.<sup>37</sup> The Council's inaugural meeting was held in Tbilisi on September 15, 2008 as part of a visit by the North Atlantic Council ambassadors and Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. A communique adopted at the inaugural meeting reaffirmed NATO's commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and stressed that NATO would continue to assist Georgia in carrying out the reform program set forth in Georgia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO.

At the December 2008 NATO foreign ministerial meeting, the issue of offering a MAP to Georgia was sidestepped and the members instead offered an Annual National Program of stepped-up assistance to help Georgia move toward eventual NATO membership. A session of the NATO-Georgia Commission also was held, during which the foreign ministers assured Georgia that NATO would provide "further assistance to Georgia in implementing needed reforms as it progresses towards NATO membership." The foreign ministers stated that they were closely watching Georgia's democratic reform progress. In the security realm, the ministers called for Georgia to undertake a "lessons-learned process from the recent conflict," and to incorporate the lessons into a planned "review of security documents." They also urged Georgia to continue reforms in military personnel management, in the transparency of the defense budget, and in the interoperability of its forces with NATO forces. They announced that NATO would increase staffing at its liaison office in Tbilisi.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Georgian Ministry of Defense, *Strategic Defense Review*, January 2008, p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> NATO. *Statement: Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels*, August 19, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> NATO. *Chairman's Statement: Meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers*, Press Release (2008)154, December 3, 2008.

At the February 20, 2009, meeting of the NATO-Georgia commission, NATO and Georgian defense ministers discussed recovery assistance to Georgia and Russia's construction of military bases in the breakaway regions. Addressing an associated meeting of NATO defense ministers, Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated that "we have seen [Russia's] recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We see [Russia's] intention of establishing bases there.... And it is crystal clear that we do not agree with Russia there.... We should use the NATO-Russia Council ... to discuss these things where we fundamentally disagree."<sup>39</sup>

At the NATO foreign ministers' meeting on March 5, 2009, the Alliance agreed to reopen NATO-Russia Council talks, although the communique stressed that the forum would be used to press Russia to abide by the Russia-Georgia ceasefire accords and to rescind its diplomatic recognition and basing arrangements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Secretary of State Clinton stressed that the renewal of dialogue in the NATO-Russia Council did not spell any less commitment by NATO for eventual Alliance membership for Georgian and Ukraine. In associated meetings of the NATO-Georgia and NATO-Ukraine commissions, she "reiterated ... the United States' firm commitment to each of those nations moving toward NATO membership and our equally strong commitment to work with them along with NATO to make clear that they should not be the subject of Russian intimidation or aggression. But I think ... there are benefits to reenergizing the NATO-Russia Council.... I don't think you punish Russia by stopping conversations with them about ... the failure to comply with the requirements set forth by the OSCE and others concerning their actions in Georgia."<sup>40</sup>

Lithuania's foreign minister reportedly argued that the renewal of NATO-Russia Council meetings was premature because Russian behavior had not adequately changed, but conceded that, rather than blocking an Alliance consensus, Lithuania would call for such meetings to address issues of Georgia's territorial integrity.<sup>41</sup> At a meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission the same day, the Alliance discussed progress in developing a Annual National Program for Georgia.

Most Georgians have appeared to support NATO membership. According to a plebiscite held at the same time as the January 2008 presidential election, 77% of Georgian citizens who voted answered affirmatively that Georgia should join NATO. The majority of opposition parties also supports Georgia's eventual accession to NATO. Among those opposing further Georgian moves toward Alliance membership, Irina Sarishvili (who ran as a losing candidate in the January 2008 presidential election) attempted to gain signatures before the August conflict for a voter referendum on proclaiming Georgia a neutral country. She warned that Russia would retaliate against Georgian membership in NATO by never permitting Georgia to peacefully regain authority over Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>42</sup> More recently, Labor Party leader Shalva Natelashvili has called for Georgia to proclaim itself a non-aligned state. Some Georgians oppose joining NATO because they allege that the Alliance will condition membership on Georgia accepting the independence of the separatist regions.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "NATO Ministers Seek To Keep Door Open to Ukraine, Georgia," *Radio Free Europe*, February 20, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Department of State. Media Availability with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton after the NATO Meeting, March 5, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Lithuanian News Agency – ELTA, March 5, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> *CEDR*, January 24, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-358004; BBC Monitoring, January 2, 2008; Interfax, January 15, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> *CEDR*, December 19, 2006, Doc. No. CEP-21002.

Assessing the situation, a Polish “think-tank” asserted that “the conflict ... is the principal, though not the only, cause of the significant slowdown in the process of Georgia’s and Ukraine’s integration with NATO,” so that membership is likely set back for years. The conflict heightened doubts among many NATO members about how Georgia’s degraded armed forces could contribute to Alliance security, about the trustworthiness of the Georgian leadership, given questions about how the conflict escalated, and about providing Alliance security guarantees to a country with unresolved territorial disputes.<sup>44</sup>

The NATO-Georgia Commission has continued to meet on a regular basis to address those issues that Georgia would have otherwise addressed had it been granted a MAP. For now, NATO will continue to work with Georgia through the Commission and is unlikely to raise the MAP or membership issue for Georgia any time soon.

## **Ukraine<sup>45</sup>**

Ukraine participates in NATO’s Partnership for Peace program and has an “Intensified Dialogue” with NATO on possible future membership in NATO and related reforms. On January 15, 2008, President Viktor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko, and parliament speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk sent a letter to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer requesting a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Ukraine at the NATO summit in Bucharest. On March 17, 2008 President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Tymoshenko sent letters to De Hoop Scheffer, German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy reiterating Ukraine’s request for a MAP.

Supporters of a MAP for Ukraine believe that it is important to give the pro-western government in Kiev a strong signal of support for its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. They say that Ukraine’s membership would be a way to incorporate the country more fully into the Euro-Atlantic community of democratic values, as part of the overall U.S. foreign policy goal of creating a Europe “whole and free.” Those who view Russia as a potential threat to European security see Ukraine’s future membership in NATO as a guarantee against possible Russian attempts to revive its “empire.” However, Ukraine’s future MAP candidacy faces several challenges.

## **Ukrainian Public Opinion and NATO Membership**

One key challenge to Ukraine’s desire for a MAP is the current lack of consensus on NATO membership in Ukrainian society. Public opinion polls have shown that less than one-third of the population supports NATO membership at present. Ukrainian public opinion, on this as on other issues, is split largely along regional lines. Persons living in southern and eastern Ukraine tend to oppose NATO membership. People in these regions, whether ethnic Russians or Ukrainians, tend to be Russian-speaking, are suspicious of Ukrainian nationalism, and support close ties with Russia.<sup>46</sup> They are largely opposed to NATO membership because they fear that it will worsen ties with Russia. Many supporters of NATO membership are from western Ukraine, where

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<sup>44</sup> Marek Madej, “NATO after the Georgian Conflict: A New Course or Business as Usual?” Polish Institute of International Affairs, January 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Prepared by Steven Woehrel, Specialist in European Affairs.

<sup>46</sup> Ukraine’s population is 77.8% ethnic Ukrainian, and 17.3% ethnic Russian, with a range of other minorities. “Ukraine,” *CIA World Factbook 2008*, Washington, DC.

Ukrainian-speakers dominate, suspicion of Russia is substantial, and support for a western orientation for Ukraine is high. However, western Ukraine is considerably less populous than eastern Ukraine, where most of the country's industrial capacity is concentrated.

In addition to pro-Russian sentiment, many people in these regions and elsewhere retain bad memories of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in which Ukrainian draftees were forced to participate. They fear that NATO membership could embroil them in Afghanistan again, and in similar conflicts in distant parts of the world. Ukraine's participation in the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq in 2003-2004 was politically unpopular in Ukraine. President Yushchenko withdrew Ukraine's troops from Iraq shortly after taking office in 2005.

President Yushchenko strongly supports NATO membership for Ukraine. Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko often lukewarm in her support for closer ties with NATO, nevertheless joined Yushchenko in signing letters to NATO in January and March 2008 supporting MAP for Ukraine. The Party of Regions, the largest opposition party, and the Communist Party are strongly opposed to NATO membership. After the January 2008 letter, they blocked the Ukrainian parliament from conducting business, in protest against Yatsenyuk's signature of the document. The parliament resumed operations on March 6, 2008, after it passed a resolution stating that the parliament would consider legislation to join NATO only after a public referendum approved NATO membership.

Ukrainian leaders acknowledge that an effective public information campaign is needed to boost support in Ukraine for NATO membership. A lack of domestic consensus on NATO membership could make it difficult for future Ukrainian governments to consistently fulfill the terms of a MAP. In February 2008, perhaps in an effort to defuse domestic and Russian criticism over his decision to seek a MAP, President Yushchenko said that Ukraine will not allow the establishment of NATO bases on Ukrainian soil. He noted that the Ukrainian constitution does not permit the establishment of foreign military bases in Ukraine, with the temporary exception of Russia's current Black Sea naval base, the lease for which runs out in 2017.

### **Lack of Unity Within NATO on a MAP for Ukraine**

Before the January 2008 letter by Ukraine's top three leaders, U.S. officials warned that there must be support for the MAP "across the government spectrum," that Ukraine must continue defense reforms, and that Ukraine needs to conduct a serious information campaign to educate the public on NATO. They warned that Ukraine must "have its act together" on these issues and not make "premature appeals" for membership.<sup>47</sup> The January 2008 letter to the NATO Secretary General appeared to remove this objection for the United States. During a visit to Kiev on April 1 to meet with President Yushchenko, President Bush strongly supported granting a MAP to Ukraine at the Bucharest summit.

Key European NATO allies were reluctant to consider a MAP for Ukraine at Bucharest in part because they felt that Ukraine's qualifications for a MAP were weak, and in part because they are concerned about damaging relations with Russia. On March 6, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said, "I cannot hide my skepticism" about Ukraine's chances for a MAP. At the

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<sup>47</sup> Transcript of remarks by David J. Kramer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, December 7, 2007, from the State Department website <http://www.state.gov>.

NATO foreign ministers' meeting, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and other European leaders stressed the need for maintaining good relations with Moscow.<sup>48</sup>

## **Outcomes, Prospects, and Russia's Reaction<sup>49</sup>**

The allies declined to offer Ukraine a MAP at the Bucharest summit. However, in the Summit communique, the allies praised Georgia's and Ukraine's "valuable contributions to Alliance operations,"<sup>50</sup> and declared that "we support these countries' applications for MAP." In unprecedented language, the alliance pledged that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become members of NATO without specifying when that might happen. The allies also said that the question of MAPs for Kiev and Tbilisi could be revisited at the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in December 2008, a decision that eventually did not take place.

The ambiguous result of the 2008 Bucharest summit caused varying reactions within Ukraine. President Yushchenko and the Ukrainian government hailed the summit as a key stepping-stone on Kiev's path toward NATO membership, pointing in particular to the commitment made to admit Ukraine into the alliance. In contrast, Yanukovich and the opposition applauded the denial of a MAP at the summit, viewing it as a blow to Yushchenko's pro-NATO policy.

European NATO countries that opposed a MAP for Ukraine were even more reluctant to agree to one after the conflict between Russia and Georgia, fearing a sharp deterioration in relations with Moscow and perhaps even being embroiled in a military conflict with Russia. On the other hand, supporters of a MAP for Ukraine believed that a MAP would have sent a strong warning signal to Russia to not repeat the use of such aggressive tactics. It would also have signaled NATO's rejection of Moscow's assertion of a sphere of influence in post-Soviet countries.

Another issue that had an impact on Ukraine's MAP prospects was the instability of Ukraine's government. Between September and December 2008, Ukraine's pro-western government teetered on the verge of collapse. The key problem had been the escalating tension between Prime Minister Tymoshenko and President Yushchenko, due to conflicting political ambitions, divergent policy preferences, and intense personal antipathy. Indeed, Tymoshenko's decision in early 2008 to support a MAP may have been primarily a tactical effort to improve the domestic political climate in Ukraine rather than part of a coherent foreign policy strategy.

On December 2, 2008, NATO foreign ministers again declined to offer a MAP to Ukraine but agreed to work with Ukraine on "Annual National Programs" within the framework of the existing NATO-Ukraine Commission, which assists Ukraine's defense reform efforts. This approach may provide a way for Ukraine to make progress toward its NATO aspirations without calling it a MAP. However, France and Germany have warned strongly against viewing the compromise as a shortcut to NATO membership for the countries, saying that a MAP would still be required for that. On March 5, 2009, the NATO-Ukraine Commission met at the foreign ministers' level to discuss Ukraine's development of its first Annual National Program.

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<sup>48</sup> Lorne Cook, "NATO Considers Balkan Membership, as Greeks Threaten Veto," *Agence France-Presse* wire service, March 6, 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Prepared by Jim Nichol, Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs, and Steven Woehrel, Specialist in European Affairs.

<sup>50</sup> Georgia stressed at the summit that it would contribute troops to peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan.

The issue of NATO membership has faded from Ukraine's political agenda in 2009, due to its failure to secure a MAP and the more urgent problems posed by the global financial crisis. If President Yushchenko is not reelected in elections currently scheduled for October 2009, which appears likely given his current single-digit support levels in opinion polls, the new president may downplay or even renounce the current government's MAP aspirations. Of the two leading candidates, Viktor Yanukovich, head of the Party of Regions is opposed to a MAP, and Prime Minister Tymoshenk advocacy of a MAP has faded as her short-lived political detente with Yushchenko has collapsed.

## **Russia's Reaction**

Russian leaders appeared dissatisfied with the 2008 Bucharest summit outcome, despite the fact that neither Georgia nor Ukraine were offered a MAP. Then-President Putin reacted harshly to NATO's pledge of eventual membership for Ukraine. Russia has viewed the former Soviet republic as lying within its sphere of influence, in which western countries and institutions should play little role. NATO, as a military alliance, is viewed with particular suspicion. On February 14, 2008, in response to a question about possible Ukrainian membership in NATO, then-President Putin warned that Russia might be forced to take military countermeasures, including aiming missiles against Ukraine, if Kiev hosted foreign bases or joined the U.S. missile defense project.<sup>51</sup> On April 11, 2008 Chief of the Russian General Staff General Yuriy Baluyevsky warned that Russia would take military and "other measures" if Ukraine joined NATO.<sup>52</sup>

In his September 10, 2008, testimony on the accession of Albania and Croatia before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary Fried stated that "NATO has unfinished business in Georgia and Ukraine... Neither nation is ready for NATO membership now. The question is whether these countries should have the same prospects to meet NATO's terms for membership as other European nations. This is why the United States supports approving both countries entry into NATO's Membership Action Plan."<sup>53</sup> In his statement, Secretary Fried also noted that "we seek good relations with Russia. We take into account Russia's security concerns. But we also take account of the concerns and aspirations of people who live in the countries around Russia. Free people have the right to choose their own path."<sup>54</sup>

## **Other Countries**

In addition to Georgia and Ukraine, other countries that currently participate in the Partnership for Peace program could seek full membership in NATO in the future. In the western Balkan region, these include Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the Bucharest summit, the alliance invited Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina to begin an Intensified Dialogue with NATO, an interim step relating to membership aspirations. Both countries also agreed to develop concrete relations with the alliance through Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP). At Bucharest, NATO offered to consider an Intensified Dialogue with Serbia, should Belgrade

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<sup>51</sup> Transcript of press conference with President Putin and President Yushchenko, February 14, 2008, from the Johnson's List website, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-32-40.cfm>

<sup>52</sup> Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 14, 2008, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report, April 9, 2008, and *Agence France-Presse* wire dispatch, April 11, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Testimony of Daniel Fried before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 10, 2008, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



request one. However, a lack of political consensus in Serbia over possible NATO membership may delay Serbia's progress. Kosovo is also likely to seek closer ties with NATO, perhaps at first through PfP.

Several allied governments believe that the overall pace of NATO enlargement is too compressed, and wish to consider first how to resolve a complex range of issues. In their view, the next round should go more slowly. These governments tended to oppose placing Georgia and Ukraine in the MAP at Bucharest, and contend that other issues—the calming of nationalist emotions in Serbia, an overall improvement in NATO-Russian relations, and coming to grips with the wide-ranging problems in energy security—must first be resolved before considering new countries for the MAP.<sup>55</sup>

## Policy Considerations<sup>56</sup>

As in previous rounds of enlargement, a range of political factors attends consideration of the candidate states' application for membership. Beyond the qualifications achieved by a candidate state in the MAP process, such matters as the stabilization of southeastern Europe, Russia's voice in European security, and bilateral relations between a member state and a candidate state also come into play.

Stability in southeastern Europe is an issue of great importance both to NATO and the European Union, and current member governments believe that enlargement can serve this goal. NATO's decision to go to war against Serbia in 1999 to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and the alliance's subsequent creation of its Kosovo Force (KFOR) to contribute to Kosovo's stability are evidence of this point. Further evidence is the EU's decision to lead Kosovo's "supervised independence."<sup>57</sup> Both Serbia and Russia reacted strongly against Kosovo's independence, declared on February 17, 2008. The United States and most EU governments recognized Kosovo's independence the following week. On February 21, 2008 the U.S. embassy in Belgrade was attacked, as was the Croatian embassy, and part of the Slovenian embassy was sacked and burned. Serbian police reportedly stood by while mobs carried out these attacks.

Serbian government leaders have vowed never to accept Kosovo's independence, and some may be complicit in stirring up unrest among the Serbian minority in northern Kosovo. Nonetheless, despite strong disagreement with EU and NATO member states over Kosovo, Serbia seeks integration into Europe through EU membership and supports building closer relations with NATO through the Partnership for Peace program. However, as indicated earlier, public opposition within Serbia to full NATO membership means political support for an intensified dialogue with NATO may be lacking.

As discussed earlier, Russia's opposition to the candidacies of Ukraine and Georgia for the MAP has been shrill and threatening. Prime Minister Putin has said that Russia will target nuclear

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<sup>55</sup> Interviews with European officials, January-February 2008.

<sup>56</sup> This and the following section prepared by Paul Belkin, Analyst in European Affairs, and Vince Morelli, Section Research Manager, Europe and the Americas Section.

<sup>57</sup> CRS Report RL31053, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy: Background to Independence*, by Julie Kim and Steven Woehrel; and CRS Report RS21721, *Kosovo: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*, by Steven Woehrel.

weapons on Ukraine should it ever become a member of NATO.<sup>58</sup> Russia has reduced natural gas supplies to Ukraine and Georgia several times in the last several years, ostensibly because the two countries would not agree to pay a market price, but also as a likely act of intimidation. Russia has also posed other obstacles to improved relations with NATO. Estonian officials contend that cyber attacks on computers in Estonian banks and governmental offices in spring 2007 originated from within the Russian government.<sup>59</sup> Georgian officials also allege that cyber attacks on Georgian government websites during the August 2008 conflict originated in Russia.

The August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia has also led to renewed discussion within NATO over the alliance's collective defense clause, enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Article 5, considered by most to be the defining feature of the alliance, obligates allies to defend against an armed attack on NATO soil. Observers disagree as to whether Russia would have invaded Georgian territory had Georgia been a NATO member, and as to how NATO would have responded in the case of such an event. However, the conflict has provoked more serious consideration both of the possibility of armed conflict between NATO and Russia and of NATO's willingness to respond in the event of a similar attack on a NATO ally. The Baltic states and Poland have voiced particular concern regarding the credibility of Article 5 as a guarantor of collective defense. Debate over Article 5 stands to intensify as NATO considers further enlargement within areas considered by Russia as falling within its traditional sphere of influence and as Russia seeks to exert influence in these areas.

## Conclusion

Most allies seem to believe that although Albania's and Croatia's militaries and resources are modest, both countries' membership in the alliance could lead to greater stability in southeastern Europe, especially given the independence of Kosovo and the enduring hostility to NATO of important political factions in Serbia. Additionally, the United States and several other leading governments in the alliance expect new member states to develop niche capabilities to contribute to NATO operations around the world. More broadly, U.S. officials continue to view NATO as the primary institutional mechanism to ensure transatlantic security. They argue that although NATO's primary purpose is the defense of its members, the alliance has become a force for peace throughout Europe.<sup>60</sup>

NATO is facing current and future challenges that may shape any following rounds of enlargement. An ongoing strategic concern of the alliance is the stabilization of Afghanistan, which has become the alliance's most important mission. In addition, NATO faces other issues such as global terrorism, cyber-attacks, and strategically, two of the most important, energy security and relations with Russia. Gazprom, Russia's national energy company, has been making strong efforts to control parts of Europe's oil and natural gas distribution network. Even without such control, much of Europe and the Caucasus depend upon Russia for portions of their energy supply. Gazprom's repeated supply disruptions to customer countries underscore a stark reality: Russia can cut off a vital lifeline if it so desires. Countermeasures—new pipelines skirting Russia and drawing supplies from a range of sources, and conservation—will require years of planning and implementation, probably at great expense. Some allies believe that energy security must be

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<sup>58</sup> "Putin Threatens Ukraine on NATO," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2008.

<sup>59</sup> "An Assertive Russia Sends Chill Through Baltics," *International Herald Tribune*, November 12, 2007.

<sup>60</sup> See testimony of Daniel Fried, September 10, 2008, op. cit.

enhanced before new members in succeeding rounds may be extended invitations to join, particularly if they are vulnerable to Russian pressure. Concurrent efforts to improve relations with Russia are likely to be a centerpiece of European allies' policy during this period.

## Appendix A. Legislation on Enlargement in the 109<sup>th</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Congresses<sup>61</sup>

The Senate has assented to all five rounds of NATO enlargement. Congress has played a particularly active role in shaping the alliance's eastward expansion since the end of the Cold War. In the NATO Participation Act of 1994 (title II of P.L. 103-447), Congress for the first time authorized the president both to assist designated former Soviet Bloc countries to become full NATO members and to provide excess defense articles, international military education and training, and foreign military financing assistance to these countries. In subsequent legislation in 1996, 1998, and 2002, Congress further encouraged and endorsed NATO's eastward enlargement, while outlining the conditions under which such enlargement should take place.<sup>62</sup>

Before ratifying the treaty protocols enabling the alliance's 1998 and 2004 enlargements, the Senate broke with past practice, subjecting its approval of the protocols to several conditions. One such condition, as articulated in the Senate's resolutions of ratification for both enlargements, requires the president to submit to the appropriate congressional committees a detailed report on each country being actively considered for NATO membership before beginning accession talks and to submit updated reports on each country before signing any protocols of accession. Specifically, these reports are to include an evaluation of how a country being actively considered for NATO membership will further the principles of NATO and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area; an evaluation of the country's eligibility for membership, including military readiness; an explanation of how an invitation to the country would affect the national security interests of the United States; a U.S. government analysis of common-funded military requirements and costs associated with integrating the country into NATO and an analysis of the shares of those costs to be borne by NATO members; and a preliminary analysis of the budgetary implications for the United States of integrating that country into NATO.<sup>63</sup>

Members of the 109<sup>th</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Congresses expressed continued support for NATO enlargement. On September 29, 2006, toward the end of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, Senator Richard Lugar introduced S. 4014, the Freedom Consolidation Act of 2006. The bill, expressed support for NATO enlargement and designated Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Macedonia as eligible to receive assistance under the NATO Participation Act of 2004, passed the Senate on November 16, 2006. S. 4014 was referred to the House International Relations Committee but was not taken up before the end of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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<sup>61</sup> Prepared by Paul Belkin, Analyst in European Affairs.

<sup>62</sup> See the NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act of 1996 (title VI of section 101(c) of title I of division A of P.L. 104-208), the European Security Act of 1998 (title XXVII of division G of P.L. 105-277), and the Gerald B.H. Solomon Freedom Consolidation Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-187). For more information, see CRS Report RL30192, *NATO: Congress Addresses Expansion of the Alliance*, by Paul Gallis; Senate Executive Report 108-6, submitted by the Committee on Foreign Relations to accompany Treaty Doc. 108-04 Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, April 30, 2003; and CRS Report RS21055, *NATO Enlargement*, by Paul Gallis.

<sup>63</sup> See Resolution of Ratification of Treaty Document 105-36, Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on Accession of Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic, as agreed to in the Senate on April 30, 1998; and Resolution of Ratification of Treaty Document 108-4, Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, as agreed to in the Senate on May 8, 2003. For a detailed discussion of the Senate's role in NATO enlargement see CRS Report RL31915, *NATO Enlargement: Senate Advice and Consent*, by Michael John Garcia.

In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, both chambers passed successor bills to the bill that passed the Senate in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. The NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007, introduced by Senator Lugar on February 6, 2007, passed the Senate by unanimous consent on March 15, 2007. A companion bill, H.R. 987, introduced by Representative John Tanner in the House on February 12, 2007, passed the House on March 6. President Bush signed it into law (P.L. 110-17) April 9, 2007. The NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007 reaffirmed the United States' "commitment to further enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to include European democracies that are able and willing to meet the responsibilities of membership..."<sup>64</sup> The act called for the "timely admission" of Albania, Croatia, Georgia, the "Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)," and Ukraine to NATO, recognizes progress made by Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia on their Membership Action Plans (MAPs), and applauds political and military advances made by Georgia and Ukraine while signaling regret that the alliance has not entered into a MAP with either country. Congress also affirms that admission of these five countries into NATO should be "contingent upon their continued implementation of democratic, defense, and economic reform, and their willingness and ability to meet the responsibilities of membership in [NATO] and a clear expression of national intent to do so."<sup>65</sup>

In addition to expressing support for the candidacies and potential candidacies of Albania, Croatia, Georgia, Macedonia, and Ukraine, the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007 authorized FY2008 appropriations for security assistance to each of these countries. This assistance would be consistent with the conditions set by the NATO Participation Act of 1994, which limit the types of security assistance offered by the United States to prospective NATO member states to the transfer of excess defense articles (as determined under section 516 and 519 of the Foreign Assistance Act), international military education and training (as determined under chapter 5 of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act), and foreign military financing assistance (as determined under section 23 of the Arms Export Control Act). According to the NATO Participation Act, security assistance should encourage joint planning, training, and military exercises with NATO forces, greater interoperability, and conformity of military doctrine.<sup>66</sup>

Both the Senate and House expressed further support for a strengthening of Allied relations with Georgia and Ukraine, passing companion resolutions expressing strong support "for [NATO] to enter into a Membership Action Plan with Georgia and Ukraine."<sup>67</sup> The resolutions drew attention to contributions made by Georgia and Ukraine to the collective security of the alliance, and highlighted progress made in each country towards a stronger relationship with NATO. In what could have been an effort to address some European allies' concern that a MAP would be understood as a guarantee of future NATO membership, the resolutions explicitly stated that a MAP did not ensure membership. On September 9, 2008, in response to the August conflict between Russia and Georgia, Representative John Shimkus (IL) introduced H.Con.Res. 409, expressing the support of the Congress for awarding a membership action plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in December 2008. Although the U.S. government continued to express its support for such a decision, some European allies reinforced their position that it would not be an appropriate time to extend such an invitation. They cited the

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<sup>64</sup> NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-17), 3(2). See also Senate Foreign Relations Committee, S.Rept. 110-34 on the NATO Freedom and Consolidation Act of 2007. March 9, 2007.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* Sec 2(22).

<sup>66</sup> NATO Participation Act of 1994, Sec. 203.

<sup>67</sup> S.Res. 439, introduced by Senator Lugar, passed the Senate on February 14, 2008. H.Res. 997, introduced by Representative Robert Wexler, passed the House on April 1, 2008.

uncertainty over the Georgian political situation as well as the internal political turmoil within the government coalition in Ukraine. As noted earlier, a MAP was not extended to either Georgia or Ukraine in 2008 and is not on the agenda for NATO thus far in 2009.

Neither the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act nor the accompanying Senate Foreign Relations Committee Report directly addressed potential concerns regarding burden-sharing within the alliance or the effect a further round of enlargement might have on relations with Russia. However, Members of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress had expressed such concerns in several congressional hearings, and Members on the United States congressional delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly are said to have discussed these issues with their European counterparts, as well as with officials in Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Members of Congress expressed some concerns as to an expanded alliance and the effect of enlargement on NATO and U.S. relations with Russia during a July 2007 House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing on central and eastern Europe, a March 4, 2008 Helsinki Commission hearing on NATO enlargement, and March 11 and September 10, 2008 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on NATO enlargement.

Figure I. Europe



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