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Weighing Macedonia's Entry into NATO

Scott N. Siegel

The eastward enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization continues unabated. In 2009 the alliance welcomed Croatia and Albania into the fold. Discussions over possible membership continue with the Republic of Georgia and Ukraine. Current NATO policy is also in favor of Montenegro's and Bosnia-Herzegovina's joining some day. However, recent international events and continued shortcomings in these countries' domestic political institutions preclude entry any time soon. In contrast, the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) ranks high among the countries that have supposedly made the most significant progress in the reforms necessary to secure membership. If the Greek government had not vetoed inclusion of FYROM in the latest round of expansion with the rest of the Adriatic-3 (FYROM with Croatia and Albania), NATO would most likely have admitted it in January 2009 as its twenty-ninth member.

Although not a member yet, the government in Skopje has already contributed its armed forces and other resources to the alliance's international missions. In turn, the NATO alliance has directed significant amounts of aid and attention to reforming Macedonia's political and economic institutions. But an overall review of the process so far shows that neither NATO nor FYROM has enjoyed the benefits of the latter's possible membership. They are also unlikely to materialize in the near or medium term.

FYROM's decade-long journey toward NATO membership serves as a good case study for evaluating whether NATO expansion should continue. Since NATO's first expansion eastward to include Hungary, the Czech Republic,

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and Poland, the debate over expanding NATO further has abated significantly in the past few years. For example, there is little discussion whether expansion advances NATO's key purpose, that is, to provide collective security for its members. Instead of defending its members from possible attack by conventional forces, chiefly from an attack by the then-Soviet Union, NATO has been "transformed" into an institution responsible for providing broadly defined security to its members.¹ This includes destroying terrorist networks, intervening militarily in failed states and rebuilding them, and combating international piracy. I argue that little evidence exists to show that Macedonia's participation in these missions significantly affects the success of NATO's missions or will do so in the future. Given the small size of its military and limited resources, FYROM's participation in Afghanistan, Iraq (a non-NATO mission), and in other areas fails to show that its membership in NATO would be a substantial boon to the alliance.

FYROM does benefit from NATO involvement to some extent by obtaining NATO's assistance in solving its own domestic civil conflicts and by deterring possible aggression from its neighbors. It also signifies that FYROM has either returned to or joined "Europe," broadly defined. But even those gains should not be overestimated compared to ongoing disputes that are stalling that process. For example, the long-running dispute with Greece over FYROM's name and the subsequent veto of its membership application illustrates NATO's inability to solve one, if not the key, interstate dispute between Skopje and one of its neighbors.

In brief, my findings show that FYROM's membership in NATO will generate few tangible benefits for the alliance given the contributions it has made so far. Its membership is actually likely to produce more rather than fewer security risks for both the alliance and FYROM. Including it in the alliance also has not produced what some anticipated would be the beneficial side effects, namely, strengthening the country's nascent democratic and free market institutions. Whatever improvements have been made to its democratic institutions cannot be directly attributed to the process of join-

1. David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999).

ing NATO. The economic gains that should have theoretically ensued from NATO membership have not materialized.

NATO expansion to the east and south is proceeding without seemingly any attention to these issues. Major opposition from either NATO member states or their publics, or from within the candidate countries themselves, has not emerged. The lack of debate over continued expansion also shows that governments, both among current members and in Skopje, are ignoring the possible negative security consequences for the candidate states themselves. In this essay I seek to reopen the debate over current and future plans to expand NATO by examining the candidacy of Macedonia, the country that is most likely next in line to join.

What's in It for NATO?

The future of the newly independent FYROM was uncertain after it seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991. Unlike several other states in the Balkans, it was never an independent country. As a result, the rights and protections afforded a newly sovereign state under international law were comparatively fragile. The country also faced a rather inhospitable security environment along all of its borders. The former Yugoslavia and FYROM had serious disputes over their international borders, and the Serbian as well as Bulgarian Orthodox churches refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and allow it its own archbishopric. Bulgaria continues to deny Macedonia's claims that Macedonian is a distinct language from Bulgarian.² Greece also refused to recognize Macedonia's independence from the former Yugoslavia and imposed a trade embargo on the small, landlocked country in 1994. This, combined with economic sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia during the civil war in Bosnia, produced seriously deleterious effects for its economy. The civil war in Bosnia also foreshadowed possible ethnic conflict within Macedonia's own borders. The collapse of the Albanian government after the implosion of a giant Ponzi scheme only exacerbated concerns that ethnic tensions between the Macedonian and Albanian communities would

2. Christopher Chivvis, "The Making of Macedonia," *Survival* 50, no. 2 (2008): 141–62.

worsen if there were a large influx of refugees. The outbreak of war in Kosovo in 1999 would be the first conflict to directly involve and threaten the security of the FYROM state.

Instability in the Balkans was the prime motivation for NATO involvement in the region. Troops from NATO member states—Norway and the United States—were stationed in Macedonia as early as 1992 as part of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) to monitor the security situation between it, Albania, and the former Yugoslavia. Additional NATO troops were stationed shortly before war broke out in 1998 to support logistical operations and aid in the humanitarian mission. In 2001, when the European Union took over peacekeeping activities in Bosnia, a Macedonian troop contingent was sent under Operation Althea, and a small contingent remains to monitor the border between Kosovo and FYROM.

Efforts to stem the spread of ethnic conflict failed with the outbreak of violent conflict within FYROM. There is little evidence to support the claim that the Albanian irredentist National Liberation Army (NLA) was responsible for initiating the violence. Instead, the revolt by Albania minorities can be attributed to the severe crackdown by ultranationalists in Skopje.³ Once violence escalated and the NLA seized villages outside the capital, NATO and EU representatives succeeded in averting a larger conflict or even a civil war through diplomatic negotiations, leading to the Lake Ohrid agreement in 2001. As a consequence, NATO troops were then deployed under Operation Essential Harvest to disarm the rebels. The NATO mission was replaced by EU forces, in the first mission under the European Security and Defense Policy, in Operation Concordia, which included the use of NATO resources. Since the end of Operation Concordia, all foreign troops have been removed from Macedonian territory with the exception of a small contingent monitoring the border with Kosovo and a unit of NATO headquarters in Skopje to assist in implementing the country's NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Just as NATO involvement in Macedonia accelerated, the FYROM government increased its own involvement in NATO and non-NATO missions outside its region. In August 2002 the parliament approved the deployment of soldiers to Afghanistan under the International Stabilization Force (ISAF). It

3. Ibid.

quickly grew from just two soldiers to an entire infantry brigade and medical support team, which in 2009 numbered 165 total troops. With the exception of Australia and New Zealand, this is the largest contribution from a non-NATO member state. Almost all Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM) troops are stationed at the airport in Kabul and rarely take part in missions outside of the Kabul area, aside from medical support staff sent to the relatively stable, but increasingly volatile, northern provinces of Afghanistan. Given that most of the conflict in Afghanistan is in its southern and eastern provinces, questions can be raised about how beneficial Macedonian participation really is to the ISAF mission. At the same time, because FYROM has few national caveats on the use of force, its army could be more useful in that fight compared to the forces of other NATO allies as the Obama administration revises its strategy and sends more troops to militarily engage Taliban and al Qaeda forces. As a result, ARM participation could increase, specifically through the use of its special army unit, the Skorpions, whose members are trained in counterinsurgency tactics.

Macedonia also showed its willingness to serve as a loyal ally when it sent troops to Iraq under Operation Enduring Freedom in June 2003, despite widespread opposition in most of the rest of Europe. In Iraq, Macedonia deployed two platoons of soldiers. One included an infantry security platoon attached to the US 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment. It was responsible for manning gates and entry points at Combined Operating Base Taji. A second Macedonian Ranger platoon was embedded with the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons" and engaged in combat operations with them. After completing eleven rotations of a small platoon, the government removed all of its troops from Iraq in 2008. The United States government expressed its gratitude for Macedonia's participation when President George W. Bush called on Greece to refrain from vetoing FYROM's entry into NATO at the Bucharest summit in 2008. One can be relatively sure that Macedonia was among the countries then secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld was referring to as part of the "New Europe." This New Europe consisted of countries from Central and Eastern Europe who consistently demonstrated a foreign policy that was more pro-American and supportive of unilateral action than that of the US allies in Western Europe, who were staunchly opposed to US intervention in Iraq, with the exception of

the British, Spanish, and Portuguese governments. The Skopje government seemed ready to join coalitions of the willing when called on to engage in international operations abroad, mainly to demonstrate its bona fides as a loyal and trustworthy ally.⁴ So far, its military has not suffered any casualties in its military operations abroad, although three civilians were taken hostage and killed in Iraq by Islamic militants.

Thus, FYROM is likely to choose to continue participating in military missions outside its territory and region irrespective of the costs for its government. It also hosts various military exercises for Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries. NATO allies have praised the quality of FYROM's participation, yet there are difficulties integrating a military that is still being built from scratch and does not have the technology to operate effectively in the field. The small size of the military precludes its providing substantial assistance to ISAF. Without a navy, FYROM cannot assist in combating piracy around the Horn of Africa. FYROM does possess a few attack helicopters that can assist in counterinsurgency operations, but there are also serious gaps in its military's ability to integrate itself into NATO's advanced communications and logistical infrastructure. While helpful to the missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Macedonia's assistance is only a tiny amount compared to the demands of the security tasks at hand.

FYROM participation so far with NATO shows that its membership is only marginally beneficial. Stability in the Balkans, provided by both NATO and Macedonian forces, is certainly in the interest of both sides. NATO intervention in the Balkans helped keep ethnic conflict from spreading across the entire southern Balkans, engulfing Albania, Greece, and even Bulgaria and Romania. Aggressive diplomacy by both EU and NATO officials certainly averted a civil war in Macedonia. NATO also gains a reliable ally in terms of its contribution to future missions, irrespective of the limited capabilities of its military.

However, NATO involvement in the southern Balkans has not alleviated or solved key sources of conflict in the region. Despite pressure from the United States and other NATO members, Greece has not changed its position on

4. FYROM's participation in overseas missions also included one officer as part of UNIFIL in Lebanon.

its name dispute with FYROM. This is only one example of how integration into institutional organizations does not always ameliorate ongoing disputes within or between states when they join.⁵ The future of Kosovo, which voted for independence in 2008, could still have unintended effects for the rest of this turbulent region in terms of strengthening separatist movements in other states, including FYROM, Bosnia, and the rest of the former Yugoslavia, plunging the region back into open conflict.⁶ Western European countries could experience renewed streams of refugees from the region while they are developing new policies to accommodate current immigrants and limit future ones. Given that NATO resources are stretched thin already and its attention is focused on the conflict in Afghanistan and other issues, it is unlikely that NATO officials will either have the time or energy to devote themselves to these issues if they arise. Furthermore, conflict in the region would only exacerbate the difficulties NATO has in creating consensus on strategies to address current and future conflicts outside NATO territory. There is also historical evidence to support the hypothesis that military alliances can actually engulf larger member states and lead them into conflicts that are not in their direct national interest, both inside and outside the alliance. In some cases, including countries that are already at odds with each other in an alliance can threaten its cohesion, especially when it is a peacetime alliance.⁷ Inclusion of FYROM into NATO does not necessarily prevent other allies within the alliance, such as Greece, Albania, or other Balkan countries, from waging war on each other.⁸

Realistically, the only gains for NATO, stability and economic growth in the southern Balkans, are far into the future and quite minimal. The alliance's members certainly are interested in reducing tensions among the various ethnic groups and states in the region. NATO intervention in Bosnia, Kosovo, and FYROM reflects a key national interest in maintaining peace

5. EU membership for Cyprus, despite the continued division of the island between the Greek south and Turkish north, is another illustration.

6. Ted Galen Carpenter, "A New Era of Turbulence in the Balkans?" *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2008): 6–22.

7. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

8. Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

in this volatile region. However, unless NATO devotes far more diplomatic and economic resources to the region, there is a high risk that violence could flare up once again. In addition, if NATO membership strengthens democracy and these countries' newly created capitalist markets, then both the rest of Europe and the Balkans would benefit from increased trade and larger markets for each other's goods and services. But these gains pale in comparison to current costs of welcoming these new, poorer members into the alliance. Foreign aid has come in the form of direct financial assistance as well as advice to make military reforms. NATO assists Macedonia in restructuring its military as the government receives multiple grants to improve its crisis management systems and counterterrorism activities. Most foreign aid comes from the United States and totaled more than \$400 million between 1990 and 2008 through the Support for East European Democracy Act. US Aid for International Development operations include small infrastructure projects and efforts to reduce corruption and enhance the rule of law. These funds are certainly a tiny sliver of the total US foreign aid budget. But if the United States or other NATO countries were to be credibly committed to developing Macedonia, millions of dollars more would be required.

The Costs and Benefits for FYROM

Given the comparative costs NATO bears bringing FYROM into the alliance's fold versus the relatively few benefits of doing so, the next question that requires answering is whether the benefits for FYROM itself are likely to occur at all. The most generous evaluation of Macedonia's progress in terms of democratic and economic transition shows that it made significant steps in securing democracy, reforming its economy, and, most important, transforming its military to meet NATO standards. However, much more progress is necessary. Some events show that the government in Skopje even moved backward in some respects. Finally, it is doubtful that NATO membership can produce real change in Macedonia, especially compared to other measures such as EU accession or, simply, direct diplomatic pressure.

The Marginal Effects on Democratization

Securing a working democracy in FYROM clearly starts with settling and ameliorating ethnic tensions between the Slavic and Albanian communities. The Lake Ohrid agreement of 2001 set the framework for inclusion of the Albanian minority in political affairs and addressing existing social inequalities. The newly drafted constitution now requires a double majority for certain legislative proposals, effectively providing Albanian ethnic parties with a veto over proposed legislation, but also slowing down the reform process. Albanian is also now recognized as an official language. More steps are being taken to include ethnic minorities within the public administration as well as in the military. Elections, however, still do not run smoothly. After the Greek veto on FYROM membership in NATO, snap elections were called in March 2008. Numerous incidents of violence and voter fraud followed, primarily in the Albanian-minority regions of the country. While the government in Skopje has made significant steps in implementing the Ohrid agreement, passing numerous pieces of legislation is not enough. Enforcement of the provisions and real change on the ground is still necessary.

One of the key conditions for FYROM membership in NATO is the transformation of civil-military relations. Beginning with the PfP programs, the MAP and Strategic Defense Review each contributed to the reform of the FYROM military. First, its size was reduced from sixteen thousand in 2002 to less than eight thousand in 2009, of which approximately six hundred are civilians in the Ministry of Defense (MoD). The MoD still strives for representation of the Albanian minority to reach 25 percent of its total staff. The ARM has quickly moved away from a conscript-based force to one consisting mainly of professionals and with a relatively rigorous training program and postgraduate education. As a result, the ARM is becoming a military force that may fulfill particular niches of military combat. This includes a special platoon of paratroopers, known as the Falcons, and a rapid reaction force, the Skorpions, which can be quickly deployed for international humanitarian and peacekeeping missions.

The ARM's military budget, approximately 2.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), is large compared to most current NATO members. Yet it is unclear how much civilian control of the defense budget process exists.

The Macedonian National Assembly, the Sobranie, has little input in the final budget. The president and the prime minister prepare it in consultation with the ARM's chiefs of staff. Moreover, the chain of command still remains unclear because of confusing lines of authority among the minister of defense, the president, and the prime minister, which was illustrated during the 2001 civil conflict. It is also unclear to whom the chief of staff reports and under what conditions he can be dismissed. Therefore, key elements for defense reform, transparency and civilian control of the military, are still incomplete.

Reform of Macedonia's security institutions does not end with its military. The internal use of force must also be democratically controlled and follow the rule of law. Yet regular abuse of human rights, specifically of the ethnic Albanian minority, by the police force is still widely reported.⁹ In response, the police academy was shut down in 2001 and replaced with a new police school in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the US International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, and the Council of Europe.

But FYROM's zeal to join NATO has also led to some disturbing situations that show that it sometimes favors unrestrained alliance cooperation over the protection of human rights. In March 2002, a police patrol shot to death seven Pakistanis as they were being arrested in the suburbs of Skopje, accusing them of being "foreign militants" and planning attacks on vital installations and foreign embassies. The interior minister Ljube Boskovski claimed that the arrests were made to demonstrate to the United States that it was a loyal ally in the "war on terror." But in 2004 an investigation discovered that Boskovski had fabricated the entire incident and sanctioned the execution of these unarmed illegal immigrants, who were promised easy transport to other parts of Europe. Boskovski was charged, put on trial in 2005, and subsequently acquitted. Boskovski was also later tried at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia for war crimes committed during the 2001 conflict. Acquitted in 2007, he returned to Macedonia and started his own political party, United for Macedonia, in 2009, a party far to the right of the governing coalition led by the center-right Internal Macedonian Revolution-

9. See Suzette R. Grillot, "Policing Via Principles: Reforming the Use of Force in the Western Balkans," *East European Politics and Societies* 22, no. 2 (2008): 319–46.

ary Organization—Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). Support for his party is still extremely weak, but the presence of such a far-right nationalist figure in party politics as well as the ability to carry out such a heinous act while in government raises at least concerns about the quality of democracy and the rule of law. Far-right nationalist parties are not unique to FYROM. They exist in current NATO countries as well. The Front National in France and Vlaams Belang in Belgium are also on the fringe of the national political spectrum and espouse openly racist party programs. My argument here is only that one should be doubtful of the ability of NATO to democratize its members or improve its own quality, whether among new or old members.

In another case of human rights abuse, Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen of Lebanese descent, recently filed a lawsuit against the government in Skopje for violating the European Convention on Human Rights. At the end of 2003, in a case of misidentification, the Central Intelligence Agency requested that Macedonian police in Skopje to detain el-Masri under suspicion that he was a high-ranking member of el Qaeda. CIA agents then flew to Skopje, interrogated him, and tortured him for twenty-four days. Later, he was sent to Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan under the CIA's program of extraordinary rendition in early 2003 but released in May 2004.

FYROM's NATO candidacy continues despite shortcomings in the rule of law. This confirms the claim that the degree to which a country has effective operating democratic institutions has never been a qualification for membership. During the Cold War, Greece, Turkey, and Portugal were all autocratic regimes or suffered democratic breakdown while NATO members. Like FYROM, all other new members from Central Europe were committed to democratization before entering.¹⁰ There is some evidence that the carrots and sticks associated with NATO membership talks accelerated changes in civilian-military relations.¹¹ Whether effective democratic institutions is even a necessary condition for membership is further questioned by NATO's

10. Dan Reiter, "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001): 41–67.

11. Timothy Edmunds, "NATO and Its New Members," *Survival* 45, no. 3 (2003): 145–66; Marian Zulean, "Changing Patterns of Civil-Military Relations in Southeastern Europe," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (2004): 58–82.

interest in having Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia join, although not in the near term. Among NATO's new members, democracy is still fragile in Albania, and Croatia is not fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. Thus, the evidence so far strongly indicates that a candidate country's stage or quality of democracy does not affect the probability of future NATO membership. Therefore, a key benefit for NATO, a stable democracy in the southern Balkans, is still not yet fully realized. Moreover, it is unlikely that NATO membership has a significant effect in pushing FYROM further along these lines. Finally, if the breaches in human rights protections occur because the government hopes to demonstrate its credibility as an alliance partner, then further caution with Macedonia's application might be in order.

The Marginal Effects on the Economy

The democratization effects of NATO expansion on FYROM are questionable. What of the economic benefits for FYROM? In the long term, the Macedonian government believes that NATO membership signals to foreign investors that the security situation is stable and there are effective free market institutions. But continued stagnant economic growth and other problems raise doubts about whether significant foreign investment will take place, even if FYROM joins NATO. Since 2001, Macedonia has experienced stable economic growth, an average 3.2 percent annual increase in GDP, but it lags behind all of its peers in the region. Foreign investment climbed to 4.2 percent of GDP in 2008, below the regional average of 6.2 percent. As its trade and current account deficit climb to 30 percent and 15 percent of GDP, respectively, the country's unemployment rate stubbornly remains at approximately 35 percent.¹²

The government remains committed to a fiscal austerity program to lower the budget deficit over the short term. Most of the budget cuts will affect social security contributions and payments and are not in the defense sector. It is hoped that reducing labor costs will stimulate further foreign invest-

12. International Monetary Fund, "IMF Country Report: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Selected Issues" (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2009).

ment. However, other factors that shape the Macedonian business environment still discourage such investment. Its telecommunications and electricity infrastructure desperately needs improvement, and its customs procedures are notoriously complicated, corrupt, and inefficient.¹³ Finally, the protection of private property is weak, and FYROM continues to have comparatively high levels of corruption. It ranks 84th out of 179 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Index. Among the World Bank's six indicators of good governance, FYROM does not rank higher than the 60th percentile.¹⁴

It is unlikely that NATO membership will have a significant impact on FYROM's macroeconomic situation or the functioning of its market institutions. It does signal that a new member meets some basic levels of democracy and has a semifunctioning free market economy. The active involvement of NATO and European officials could hinder the further explosions of ethnic conflict. Yet there is little reason to suspect that membership will have anything but a marginal effect on the decision of a foreign investor to invest in Macedonia.

Not only are there questionable economic benefits, there is also the likelihood of increased security threats for Macedonia itself. These threats may include the spread of radical Islam. According to Christopher Deliso, numerous Islamic fundamentalists from Pakistan and members of the Wahhabi sect of Islam have entered FYROM, settled in villages in the southern and eastern parts of the country, and began converting the local Muslim population to their ultraconservative version of Islam.¹⁵ Members of Tablighi Jamaat, a Pakistani missionary and charity organization with suspected ties to terrorist networks, are interfering in the governance of established Muslim organizations in Skopje and elsewhere in Macedonia. Deliso argues that Islamic fundamentalists see a generally illiterate, marginalized, and significantly large Muslim community ripe for radicalization. He makes a—somewhat exaggerated—case for the radicalization of the Muslim communities not

13. World Bank, "Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia: Trade Brief" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2008).

14. World Bank, "Country Data Report for Macedonia, 1996–2008" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009).

15. Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007).

only in Macedonia but also across the Balkans. The secular nature of the Muslim communities, the fact that political mobilization is along ethnic and not religious lines, and the acceptance of NATO's presence means the spread of fundamentalist Islam is not likely to occur.¹⁶ Instead, the threat of a terrorist attack by Muslim extremists is more likely to come from outside. FYROM could be targeted because of its participation in the Iraq and Afghan conflicts. This is not to imply that it should refrain from participation in international missions because of an increased terrorist threat. Instead, the government should take into account the unintended consequences of participation in NATO missions and take the necessary measures to secure its population from an attack or prepare for one without violating the rule of law or conventions on human rights.

Public Opinion

Despite the many costs and marginal benefits of NATO membership, little domestic opposition has surfaced in Macedonia. Approximately 85 percent of the population still supports NATO membership, and this support cuts across ethnic lines. Along with the government, the general population believes that NATO membership lays down the foundations for long-term stability and economic prosperity. More important, NATO membership signifies to them that they have joined or rejoined Europe. As for most other new, post-Cold War members of NATO, these countries strongly desire to be identified with Europe rather than with the "East." They feel that their separation from Europe was "artificial" and imposed upon them by foreign autocracies. Therefore, whatever opposition exists to FYROM's application or obstacles to progress lies mainly with the government's general inertia and incapacity to make the necessary changes swiftly in a political culture still steeped in postsocialist tradition, rather than any unwillingness to join the alliance.

Among NATO countries, opposition to FYROM's membership has not

16. Gordon N. Bardos, "Balkan Blowback? Osama bin Laden and Southeastern Europe," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (2002): 44–53.

emerged, except for that of Greece. In contrast to the EU, there appears little enlargement exhaustion. Admission of the Baltic states and other Central and Eastern European countries took place in 2004 and was followed by the admission of Albania and Croatia in early 2009. The relatively scant attention their admission received by the media or among European governments demonstrates how unimportant their inclusion in the alliance proved to be. In addition, NATO has extended formal invitations to Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia, but recent conflicts in the region and the poor relations these countries have with Russia certainly will delay their entry. Yet over the long term, negotiations will continue with these countries despite even more serious concerns about the quality of their democracies and the strength of their market economies. In the meantime, no serious objections to the expansion of the alliance have developed as it faces one of its most serious tests: bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Enlargement of NATO continues almost without objection. If Greece had not exercised its veto, FYROM would be a member of the alliance already. Yet little discussion has taken place to assess what the costs and benefits of Macedonia's inclusion would be, either for itself or for the alliance. Instead, national governments proceed on an unaltered and almost unstoppable course toward increasing the size of NATO. It proceeds without a thorough analysis of what the impact will be for the alliance or the new member state. First, the inclusion of Macedonia will not substantially affect the probability that NATO will achieve mission success, either in Afghanistan or elsewhere. Second, the benefits for NATO and for Macedonia, in terms of securing democracy, maintaining stability in the region, and increasing foreign investment, are unlikely to occur, especially compared to membership in other international institutions, such as the EU. NATO entry could be seen as step toward EU entry, but they are two distinct institutions with entirely different purposes. The qualifications for NATO membership are separate from those related to joining the EU. Third, Macedonian entry could actually put NATO in greater risk, in terms of involving it in additional conflicts, at a time it can ill afford

to be so. Despite these concerns, FYROM still seems likely to join NATO in the next few years, given strong support within the country and the alliance. If so, more attention is needed to monitor the possible threats that its entry could create and consider strengthening the mechanisms NATO uses to secure democracy in member candidates, especially before it moves further eastward to include even more problematic country cases.