

ENLARGEMENT OF NATO. THE NEW YORK TIMES' REACTION TO ENLARGEMENT AND TO ROMANIA'S CANDIDACY

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Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) witnessed a profound process of adaptation and change. In conjunction with the pursuit of new missions, one of the key elements of the alliance's transformation has been the enlargement to the East. This paper examines the issue of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement in the broader context of its adaptation to the new particularities of the international security environment. The paper suggests that changes in the alliance's mission and in the U.S. interests influenced the politics of enlargement and, consequently, the policy toward candidate countries. Romania's unexpected admission into NATO in the second round illustrates this aspect. A content analysis performed on The New York Times reveals that this newspaper's attitude toward enlargement has changed from negative in the first round to positive in the second round and that it portrayed Romania negatively in both rounds. In addition, the NYT coverage of the candidate countries was not always objective but reflected the U.S. official policy.

Since the end of the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has undergone a major process of adaptation and change. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the communist governments in Central Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and of the Warsaw Pact obliged the allies, led by the United States, to redefine NATO's purpose and mission in order to justify its relevance in a radically different strategic context. In addition, with the new changes in the security environment brought by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, NATO is once again in a process of substantive transformation. The alliance is moving now in new directions: from “promoting democracy and stability in Europe” to “coalitions of the willing” to fighting against terrorism and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

In conjunction with the pursuit of new missions (i.e. crisis management, peacekeeping operations, combating terrorism), one of the key elements of the alliance's transformation has been the enlargement to the East. Despite the widespread pessimism of those who, in the 1990's, pointed out the weakening of NATO once the Soviet threat disappeared, the alliance has survived the end of the Cold War and enlarged twice in the last decade: first, at the Madrid summit, in 1997; and second, at the 2002 Prague summit.

Although a number of key political factors proved crucial in shaping the enlargement process, the decision to expand the alliance membership was seen