NATO EXPANSION COMMITS U.S. TO WARS

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The current Republican Congress has a duty to save us from Bill Clinton's blunder in trying to lock America into an expansion of NATO. The 105th Congress has shown a notable lack of courage about confronting Clinton on anything, but NATO would be a popular place to start.

All during the Cold War, NATO had a precise mission: to prevent the Soviets from invading Western Europe. NATO's job is finished; the Berlin Wall is history; all hands should be awarded medals and retired.

NATO is now a bureaucracy in search of a new mission. A deafening drumbeat is now demanding that NATO be put on life support by admitting the former Warsaw Pact countries to membership.

This provokes so many questions that haven't been answered; many are probably unanswerable. Who will we be protecting the NATO countries from? Why admit some Warsaw Pact countries but not others? How much is it going to cost us? (Estimates range from $5 to $61 billion.)

The biggest question is, why should Americans commit to defend faraway European borders that have been the locus of ethnic, nationalist and religious disputes for hundreds of years? Make no mistake: NATO is a life-and-death U.S. promise to go to war to protect any of the other members.

None of Clinton's arguments makes sense. Democracy isn't threatened in the countries invited to join NATO; it's only threatened in the countries that are excluded. NATO expansion doesn't erase the dividing line in Europe; it creates a new one.

Our best chance for a peaceful future is to encourage Russia toward democracy and the free market. NATO expansion will alienate Russia, empower the hard-line Communists and ex-KGBers seeking a return to former glory, and drive Russia toward an alliance with China.

Of course, Western Europe favors NATO expansion. A U.S. presence assures a steady flow of U.S. cash

into their economies, and it is a useful "cover" for not letting Eastern European countries into the European Union (EU).

Western Europeans are no longer worried about the Red Army invading, but they are mighty worried about Eastern Europeans invading with low-priced products and emigrants willing to work for low wages. NATO is a clever ploy; let the Eastern European countries into NATO and don't feel guilty about excluding them from the EU.

Bill Clinton announced his NATO commitment long enough before the 1996 election to make sure that it was known by the Polish, Hungarian, Czech and Croatian voters whose conservatism might have led them to vote for Bob Dole. That smacks of a Dick Morris ploy.

We are now seeing a powerful push to keep America on an interventionist course despite the opposition of the American people. It's called "global leadership," which means that our armed services will serve as global policemen and global social workers, while the U.S. taxpayers will play global sugar daddy.

The interventionists are well aware that the United Nations is no longer popular with the American people because of impudent demands that we pay alleged back "dues," as well as the embarrassments of Somalia, Haiti, and Rwanda. The flap about Army Specialist Michael New being court-martialed for refusing to wear a UN uniform didn't help, either.

That's why NATO was chosen, rather than the UN, to sponsor the Bosnian expedition. Now, NATO expansion is promoted in order to legitimize the President's ability to continue to engage American troops in foreign quarrels without ever asking permission from Congress. It's a sort of "back-door internationalism."

The chief advocate for NATO expansion is Strobe Talbott, Clinton's personal foreign policy adviser and Rhodes scholar roommate. The recipient of the 1993 Norman Cousin Global Governance Award, Talbott's world view calls for birthing what he calls "the global nation" to replace national sovereignty.

Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, is described by Time Magazine as having a "passion for American activism." Colin Powell relates in his autobiography that, when he was JCS Chairman, she said, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"

Clinton's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, said on April 3, 1996: "I'm absolutely convinced that America will not participate with military forces in Bosnia after the conclusion of this year. I cannot imagine circumstances changing in such a way that we would remain in Bosnia."

Since we are now in the ninth month after "the conclusion" of the year he was talking about, we wonder whether Shalikashvili's military foresight is absolutely unreliable, or he is just one of those who thinks that it's no big deal to keep Americans in perpetual "peacekeeping" expeditions.

Since NATO expansion is a treaty that will require Senate ratification, the interventionists are trying to line up Republican support through a new front called New Atlantic Initiative. Its second annual conference was held in Phoenix on May 16-18 in order to coopt one of the Senate's rising conservative stars, Jon Kyl, as a featured speaker in his home state.