



## **NATO and Democracy:**

A study of NATO Expansion's Effect on  
Democratisation

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Democratisation

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## Abstract

The issue of NATO enlargement is one which has been a topic of intense debate since its foundation in the aftermath of World War II. Upon the fall of the Soviet Union NATO, the alliance set out to become the primary actor in consolidating democracy through expansion of its borders. In this study I set out to build on Dan Reiter's 2001 study *Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy* to evaluate if, over a decade of expansion, Reiter's conclusion remains sound or if indeed NATO has become a force of democratisation. Through the analysis of the organisations impact on democracy throughout the membership process, the effect on developing democratic civil-military relations, and the ability to prevent democratic backsliding in full member states through the lens of the 2004 and 2009 rounds of expansion, the use of various democracy indices, predominantly V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index, I come to the conclusion that while Reiter holds NATO to a perhaps unrealistic standard of creating democracy from scratch, the alliances effects on democratisation are indeed spread very unevenly. The organisation only succeeds in consolidation of regime change in potential states when accompanied by the EU, suggesting the economic organisations holds the true democratic power. The alliance sees some success in the creation of civil-military relations but is helpless in the face of democratic backsliding in full states, rendering any positive work it has done in the membership process futile.

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## Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this project is entirely my own work, in my own words, and that all sources used in researching it are fully acknowledged and all quotations properly identified. It has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or another person, for the purpose of obtaining any other credit / grade. I understand the ethical implications of my research, and this work meets the requirements of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Signed: Brian Manning

Date: 15/02/2023

## List of Abbreviations

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
IO	International Organisation
EU	European Union
MAP	Membership Action Plan
PfP	Partnership for Peace
OAS	Organisation of American States
WEU	Western European Union
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
BALTBAT	Baltic Battalion
CSAT	Supreme Defence Council (Romania)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
PiS	Law and Justice Party (Poland)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

## Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) policy of enlargement has long been a source of debate since its foundation in 1949. The question of the alliances ability to spread and consolidate democracy is one such sub-section of this debate and is the topic of focus in this dissertation. The idea that NATO holds powers of democratisation began to take hold around the 1980's. A document outlining NATO's strategic priorities known as the 'Strategic Concepts' is updated on a periodic basis. The 1968 copy contains no reference to democracy, however circa 1991, we begin to see mention of the term throughout the document, increasing over time. Since then, the conversation has arisen over the effectiveness of the alliance in this field and whether they truly aid the development of democracy in potential member states. This study sets out to analyse the ways in which NATO has used its platform to encourage the transition to democracy in Eastern European, and its potential effect on future member states. Several pieces of literature have attempted to carry out this analysis, but I shall go further by including data from both the 2004 and 2009 rounds of NATO expansion and evaluating the potential effect the membership process could have on states such as Ireland, Ukraine and Georgia. The basis of the study shall be Dan Reiter's 2001 study *Why NATO Enlargement does not Spread Democracy*. Given this piece was written only a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, I shall use the twelve years of extra data and multiple further rounds of expansion to continue Reiter's study and see if his conclusions remain valid.

The first chapter shall consist of a comprehensive review of the pre-existing literature relating to NATO expansions effect on democracy. Through the comparison of various viewpoints, opinions and era's it will be possible to build an efficient foundation of knowledge and data upon which to conduct my own analysis. In this review I shall evaluate the literature and identify the merits and failings of each and outline how my research shall build on these. The

second chapter shall give an outline of the three mechanisms for democratisation that Reiter used in his original piece, which in the interest of continuity and fairness I too will be using. Following this will be a brief historical outline of NATO's history regarding democratisation pre-2001 and the contents of Reiter's study. The third and most substantial chapter will contain my own research, using the three mechanisms to evaluate if indeed the alliance is an effective actor in democratisation, or if the results seen since 2001 mirror the original findings. I will also in this section look at how effective NATO could be in consolidating democracy in potential states given the results of the study of past expansions. Upon completion of these chapters I will be in a position to reach a conclusion on the question of whether or not NATO plays an effective, if any, role in the development and consolidation of democracy in European states, or if their self-proclaimed democracy skills are far less effective than their International Organisation (IO) counterparts such as the EU, and if potential member states can look to the alliance in search of a helping hand on their journey of transition.



## Chapter One: Literature Review

In this chapter I shall review the already existing literature pertaining to NATO enlargement and its effect on democratisation, the consolidation of democracy and democratic backsliding in members and potential member states, in order to grasp an understanding of the concept before carrying out my own study.

Dan Reiter (2001a) examines the results of NATO expansion on democratisation in both the Cold War and post-Cold War eras in his article in the *International Security* journal. Reiter claims that there is very little evidence to say that NATO membership aided the process of democratisation during the Cold War. The author outlines three methods for how NATO can introduce democratisation and then evaluates how successful these have been. The first is that the prospect of NATO membership theoretically will lead to states introducing democratisation in order to reap the rewards of membership. The second is the idea that once a state is a member the threat of ejection is enough to stop any democratic backsliding, while the third is regarding civil- military relations and how civilian control over said military can prevent events such as anti-democratic coups. This theory is outlined in Samuel Huntington (1957). Nelson (2000) suggests democracy is fostered through collective security. The protection of democratic regimes means the ideology is secure from erosion and free to build on its ideals. However, Reiter (2001b) counters this by showing that the empirical evidence indicates that only a very high level of conflict will have a significant effect on a state's likelihood to transition to democracy, findings which are consistent with other studies such as Oneal and Russett (2000) and Pevehouse (1999). Because of this I will be focusing on the same three mechanisms used in Reiter's original study, with which he concluded that the cross-governmental effects on civil-military relations were mixed, the threat of ejection from NATO was never enforced with regards to states that slipped back into some autocratic regime traits and non-democratic

systems, and there is no available evidence that the allure of NATO membership caused any states to begin or further the process of democratisation.

In 2002, Harvey Waterman and Dessie Zagorcheva published a response to Reiter in the same journal. While Waterman was complimentary to Reiter in one sense, crediting Reiter with writing a more intelligent and well thought out piece than most on the topic, he also pointed out Reiter had, along with everyone else, missed a crucial aspect. Waterman questions why states seem so intent on joining NATO if the rewards are so little according to anti-expansionists. He questions Reiter's claims that expansion proponents say that NATO spreads democracy whereas the reality is that they merely claim the alliance helps to consolidate and strengthen already existing democracy. The two inherent problems with anti-enlargement arguments are that they overestimate the importance of public rhetoric, particularly in relation to Russia, and that it does not appreciate the magnitude of institutional commitments. Waterman expresses how Russia attacking one of its neighbours is vastly unlikely and its objection to expansion is merely a bargaining tool. Russia would never act in a way that would not continue to serve their larger interests. However, it seems that is exactly what Putin is doing with his actions in Ukraine since February 2022 which the Kremlin has indeed partly blamed on NATO expansion and the prospect of Ukrainian ascension. Waterman reaches the conclusion that while NATO expansion may not directly cause democratisation it can strengthen and consolidate it. He claims Reiter places too much emphasis on the actual creation of democracy from scratch and not maintaining it. Reviewing this literature in 2022, while one can understand Waterman's conclusion, his two main arguments regarding the overestimation of the importance of rhetoric and the importance of institutional commitment can be called into question. Russian rhetoric ceased to be rhetorical the second they invaded Ukraine. As long as Putin is behind the wheel in the Kremlin one would be foolish to underestimate his 'rhetoric'. On the topic of institutional commitment, this can run both ways. NATO have an institutional

commitment to adhere to its values and criteria, something which it has failed to do on numerous occasions as democratic backsliding has taken hold in more and more member states such as Turkey, Hungary and Poland. However, something Reiter, Waterman and Zagorcheva have in common is the fact they discuss relations between NATO, Russia and Eastern Europe under the rationale that Russian aggression is more of a political tactic than a serious threat and genuine attack or full-scale invasion is very unlikely. This has proved to be unequivocally false and has a huge impact on the way in which the idea of Russia's concerns and the security concerns in Eastern Europe can be approached, especially with regards to the potential membership of Georgia and Ukraine, something which will be considered in this study.

In the cases of Spain, Portugal and Greece, NATO membership also played a minimal role in the creation of democracy in the Cold War Era. Coming into the Post-Cold War era, Reiter discusses the cases of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. The conclusion is that these nations were already committed to the democratisation process before the process of NATO membership. They had already made great progress towards democracy when the 'NATO carrot was dangled before them'. They chose the system because it was the wish of the majority, not because of NATO. In a similar sense the failure of nations such as Romania and Slovakia can also be seen as at least a part failure of the 'NATO promotes democracy' argument as they failed to reach the qualifications necessary for membership in 1997, signalling their desire for membership was not strong enough for them to undergo any significant political and economic reforms. In the years after the 2001 article, seven states were admitted in 2004, all functioning democracies, including Romania and Slovakia who had at this stage taken the necessary reforms, although questionable if this was because of the NATO carrot. This questionable influence of NATO supports the idea put forward by Mearsheimer in his well-known piece *The False Promise of International Institutions* (1994), also referenced by Reiter. Mearsheimer states that the ability of NATO to exert power and create stability is not due to the strength of

the institution itself but due to the bipolar balance of power that existed within Europe over the Cold War period, Given the end of the Cold War, Mearsheimer claimed that if NATO wished to continue to establish stability and promote democratisation in Europe it must change based on the new distribution of power. Whether this ever happened is questionable and many claim the continued holding of Russia at arm's length politically, while geographically encroaching may be a factor in the 2014 - present conflict in Ukraine. Both Mearsheimer and Reiter's pieces are limited however through no fault of their own, by the fact they were written only a decade after the end of the Cold War, and so data and events were still unfolding. Now, with twelve additional years of information, four expansion rounds and eleven new member states there is a vast amount of new information to be considered. Reiter also fails to go into any depth on the introduction of Membership Action Plans (MAPs) and how NATO may use them to consolidate democracy. Given MAPs followed the PfP as one of the alliances key tools for setting potential members on the road to stability and democratisation and in many ways signalled the beginning of states road to membership, they are something which will be examined to a greater extent in this study.

In contrast to Reiter, Rachel A. Epstein (2005) argues that the NATO alliance does contribute to the spread of democracy in Europe. She states that while Reiter is correct in claiming membership does not create the distinction between the presence of free elections on one side and authoritarianism on the other side, however, free elections are not the only indicator of democracy. Another key step is ensuring that the armed forces are democratically controlled, and in this area, NATO can significantly raise the standard of democratic institutions. Epstein analyses the countries that gained membership in 2004, reviewing their military and political conditions in the run up to membership status and predicting how it will be affected. The author suggests that states which are policy novices find it far easier to enact external reforms and policies, and hence are more successful at implementing democratisation. In the context of

Romania, Epstein believed it would pose the hardest challenge for NATO to democratise and denationalise the armed forces due to lack of political opposition under the previous communist rule. However due to staunch support for joining the alliance, it was predicted NATO would possess enough power to gain at least minimal levels of compliance. Looking back on this it appears such problems were indeed faced. After three decades of reform, it can be argued that most reforms implemented either by NATO or to gain NATO membership have been merely superficial and the democratisation of military and intelligence in Romania needs further work (Zulean 2018), implying the inherent failure of NATO to bring the state true democracy. The lingering Soviet influence in the military of states such as Bulgaria led to officers being sceptical of NATO's reforms and slow to adapt to them. Epstein points to great strides made by Bulgaria to democratise and introduce civilian control over the military power, yet almost two decades on Bulgaria has a score of 0.672 on the Quality of Democracy index (Universität Würzburg 2022), placing it at 60<sup>th</sup> in the world and qualifying as only a 'Deficient Democracy', once again alluding to the failure of Epstein's hopes that NATO membership would spur great reform. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, having had no autonomous military prior to independence in the 1990's allowed NATO reforms to easily take effect and are classed as 'Working Democracies' and are ranked within the top 33 (Universität Würzburg 2022). It seems from this study that NATO's powers can work well if given a blank canvas but can struggle when faced with any sort of lingering loyalty or institutional structure. Epstein says herself in the opening paragraphs of her piece that NATO by no means is successful in all its efforts to consolidate democracy but is successful in the civil-military aspect. While this may yet be found to be still true, is this good enough for an organisation priding itself on its powers of democratisation? Epstein's focus on one aspect of democratisation limits her study and is a contributing factor in this study exploring multiple mechanisms of democratisation.

Zoltan Barany (2002), in a piece written shortly after Reiter's article and referenced in Epstein's work, sides with Reiter. Zoltan brands NATO expansion as a 'mistake', one which the alliance seems set on continuing. Barany makes the argument that NATO's open-door policy should be discarded and instead only extend invitations to fully qualified states. He points to the fact that at the time of writing, around nine of the countries being considered for ascension into the alliance were by their own assessment unprepared and did not fit the criteria yet were still being considered. This admission of unqualified states would lead to instability within the organisation. Barany references Reiter and Mandelbaum (1995) when posing the question that if NATO was truly concerned with or had any effect on democratisation. These objectors make the point that the portrayal of NATO membership as some sort of reward for democratisation is obsolete as the actual reward is democracy itself. They also state that if NATO had real commitment to democratisation it would put forward invitations to states with the least democratic consolidation such as Russia, Ukraine, or Albania. This however seems contradictory to Barany's initial claims that enlargement should only take place when the state is completely ready in the eyes of NATO's criteria.

Barany found that Slovakia and Romania, who at the time of writing were two years away from ascension to NATO and were struggling with the consolidation of democracy, with corruption and scandal rife in both governments in the early 2000's. Alternatively, Slovenia was one of the most democratically successful of the countries studied by Barany. When it comes to the issue of civil-military relations, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria all failed to implement effective and regulated relations between the public and their military, with politicians and elites maintaining a high level of control and corruption rampant, right up to the time of their NATO membership. This study, like Reiter's, suffers from having a short-term perspective on the fallout of the end of the Cold War and the effect of NATO's expansionist policies.

Gibler and Sewel (2006) focuses on fourteen ex-Soviet states in the aftermath of the Cold War to analyse the relationship between alliance and democracy. Each of these states became independent at the same time but each handled their situation differently. Six states were already democratic, three began the process of democratisation, with one succeeding. The piece references studies done by Simon and Gartzke (1996), Lai and Reiter (2000) and Gibler and Wolford (2006) when making the claim that democracies ally only in war and immediate post-war situations, and are largely limited to three alliances, NATO, the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Western European Union (WEU). Gibler and Sewel draw on arguments that peace and freedom from external threat is directly linked to successful state building and democratisation (Hintze 1906; Rasler and Thompson 1989; Tilly 1990). Internal military threat is also a path to political domination and lack of state development, further pointing to the importance of NATO's role in harnessing civil-military relations. Diminishing the political power of the military opens the path for the transition to democracy. While the study finds that NATO is not the direct cause of democratisation, member states did experience an increase in security. The amount of militarised interstate disputes was twice as much in autocratic states than it was in democracies. The study no doubt shows that there was less conflict in the states that came out of the cold war already democratic but does not do much to prove if NATO has been a strong influence in maintaining this and the development of it in other states. The main takeaway from this piece is that regime type was correlated to the level of threat present in the country. However, this fails to explain the existence of democratic backsliding within member states, the 'stick' of Reiter's argument. He points to Turkey as an example, a nation which has struggled in maintaining its democracy, with a number of breakdowns in 1960, 1971 and 1980, despite joining NATO in 1952. This has since then risen its head again, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Since gaining office in 2002 Erdoğan has introduced a very militaristic style of foreign policy and is in many senses a one-man rule disguised as democracy

(Bechev 2022). This can be seen as a reiteration of points made by Reiter, bringing into question whether NATO has done anything to fix these issues or still merely turns a blind eye. This democratic backsliding is something which will be explored further in this study to evaluate if NATO has any effect on preventing it and upholding democracy.

In more recent studies, effects of the 2004 round of expansion have had time to take effect and Poast and Chinchilla (2020) undertook the empirical and quantitative analysis of the NATO member states to examine if the levels of democracy had increased. By encouraging military and civilian officials from governments applying for membership to maintain democratic standards, the authors believe NATO may have a subtle democratic influence on prospective member states. Gheicu (2005b) is referenced heavily throughout the study due to its focus on the effects of NATO socialisation of military and civilian leaders within states pursuing membership. Gheicu, Poast and Chinchilla recognised that in addition to a nation's formal institutions, democracy also depends on whether elites are ready to submit to democratic restrictions on their power rather than undermine or destroy them. NATO could nevertheless have a democratic influence by educating military and civilian elites to accept democratic changes, especially civilian control of the military even when democratic reforms were already in place before NATO's engagement. This reiterates points made by Epstein. The article demonstrates that NATO membership and the prospect of joining NATO are not connected with higher democracy scores. It achieved this result through using quantitative analysis of democracy scores from nations in the 2004 wave of NATO expansion. When EU membership was taken away the scores dropped significantly. The findings do not rule out the idea that NATO may have had a minor impact on the democracy scores of potential and new members. They do, however, point out that NATO membership was not a requirement for democratic survival and show that NATO membership could not have been the only factor in the significant gains in prospective members' democracy rankings (Poast and Chinchilla 2020).



This points to the fact that NATO is still a military organization and is committed to strengthening the defence institutions of new member states despite its stated desire to promote democracy. NATO's place appears to be in overseeing transfer norms like civilian control of the military. The research has shown that security regimes and international organizations may not always have a favourable impact on domestic governance, even when the membership incentives and funding are at their best. Powers such as the U.S would do well to remember deepening security relations with partner states will not likely result in significant and long-lasting improvements in the levels of democracy in those governments. The studies of Reiter, Epstein, Barany and Poast and Chinchilla all point to NATO's effect on civil-military relations being an important tool for democratisation. Poast and Chinchilla deliver a comprehensive study on the 2004 round of expansion, more comprehensive than perhaps Epstein or Barany as they include the Baltic states during which they make interesting use of empirical data, however do not consider potential member states, only current ones. I however shall go further to include data on the 2009 expansion as well and begin to look at how Montenegro and North Macedonia have been influenced by their recent membership, and what effects the prospect of membership has had on the levels of democracy in states such as Georgia and Ukraine who face long term tensions with Russia.

In conclusion, the literature on the effects of NATO enlargement on democracy comes to mixed findings. Studies such as Reiter (2001a) and Barany (2002) find no link between expansion and democratisation, while Gibler and Sewel (2006), and Poast and Chinchilla (2020) find subtle links. Epstein (2006) and Waterman and Zagorcheva (2001) disagree with Reiter and claim that NATO has been a positive force for democratisation Europe. While all studies raise valid arguments and opinions, to conduct my own study I shall be basing my research off a continuation of Reiter's 2001 study, using the extra twelve years and four rounds of expansion to re-evaluate his conclusion using the same standards of evidence in my own research.

## Chapter Two: Overview

### Mechanisms for Democratisation

Reiter outlines three mechanisms for how NATO could possibly use the alliance to consolidate democracy among members and potential members. For continuity I will be using these same mechanisms to continue his study with the new information gathered over the past twelve years since the original study. The first two mechanisms are linked through the carrot and stick argument. The proverbial carrot in this instance is the idea that democracy is one of NATO's core criteria for entry, as outlined by the Study on Enlargement in 1995, which became known as the Perry Principles (NATO 1995; Perry 1995). These principles indicated a renewed focus on democratisation and free markets as well as collective security. This, combined with the open-door nature of the Article 10 policy means that if a state makes the necessary effort to spur the development of democracy and commits to uphold it then it can ascend into the alliance and reap the benefits that come with it. This in turn is how NATO membership potentially becomes a carrot to entice democratisation.

The second of Reiter's mechanisms, the stick, is the idea that once a state becomes a member of the alliance the threat of ejection is sufficient to make members enforce and uphold the democratic criterion that allowed them to join in the first place, henceforth both upholding and consolidating democracy. Without the threat of ejection there is no real leverage for NATO to prevent the reverting of states into autocratic tendencies. The main flaw here is that there is no legal basis for the expulsion of members from the alliance in the event of democratic backsliding or any other divergence from key values. Neither Perry (1995) or the Madrid declaration (1997) provide sanctions or punishment for full members that revert on their promises upon joining. Other alliances and unions such as Mercosur, the OAS and the EU all have provisions for such an event but it seems an oversight from NATO to not have included

such a policy. While there is precedent for involuntary expulsion, such as the severance of ties with New Zealand by the U.S in the 1980's (Hanson 1987), this does not inspire major confidence in the stick debate given that this threat did not motivate New Zealand to comply with U.S demands. These first two mechanisms in theory should work in tandem to encourage and develop democratisation in potential members before upholding and consolidating it in full member states. The carrot and stick argument is a common one in the NATO expansion and further IO debate, used in studies by authors such as Talbott (1995); Thies *et. al.* (2005); Smith (2005) but is criticised by Gheicu (2005) as she claims that the argument fails to consider the constraints within which the expansion occurred.

Thirdly, is the case of civil-military relations within states. Military intervention in politics is a sure-fire way to find yourself in a case of democratic backsliding and to ensure that military power is kept in check there must be a system of civilian control put in place. The Center for Strategic and International Studies describe civil-military relations as essential for democracy to continue to thrive and the public engagement with pivotal to a healthy society (Williams 2019). This topic is particularly poignant in new eastern European democracies where centuries of instability, autocracy and war has created an environment of civil-military tension. Lombardi (1999) puts forth suggestions for these regions to develop stable relations such as avoiding Ministers of Defence with military backgrounds, legislative supervision of military spending and keeping military personnel out of partisan politics. The main idea of how NATO itself can aid relations is through the transgovernmental links an alliance can create. New and developing democracies can study, experience and learn from established democracies through the new relationships within the alliance and establish these norms within their own state, providing stability and reducing the threat of military dominance or coup's. The idea that forming civil-military relations is a key step in the consolidation of democracy is also a common theme in the literature surrounding the issue. Simon (1996); Burk (2002); Cizre (2004) and Simon

(2004) all in various ways evaluate civil-military relations in NATO expansion and its effect on democracy.

Through these three mechanisms' we can continue to evaluate how states are performing and in what capacity NATO is effectively utilising these tools to consolidate democracy and tackle democratic backsliding.

### Democratisation in NATO: Pre-2001

During the Cold War NATO placed the importance of democratic consolidation on the backburner and most focus was on simply upholding the allied unity in the face of the communist threat. This in turn means that there is very minimal empirical evidence to argue for the alliances positive impact on democracy but nevertheless it is an important period to cover (Reiter 2001a). In fact, many argued that the fact NATO even had small amounts of success in establishing democratic regime types during the period signalled a positive future. Madeline Albright, U.S Secretary of State at the time described NATO as the 'linchpin' that held Europe together from a 'robustly democratic' Ukraine to the Russia which had made a choice for democracy (Albright 1997). However, by the three forementioned mechanisms the scene was bleak for the alliance. The NATO's 'stick' of enforcement was never more than an empty threat to states such as Turkey and Greece who reverted to many autocratic tendencies. The state of civil-military relations was mixed at best. Turkey had three military interventions between 1952 and 1980, all resulting in a loss of democracy (Turan 2015). NATO did not take any action against Turkey over the course of these three separate breakdowns. Spain's ascension into NATO was opposed by many other states such as Norway, Denmark and Holland due to its autocratic past. One of the major factors pushing for NATO membership from within Spain was not to do with collective security but the pursuit of EU membership. The failed coup

of 1981 was a turning point for the debate in the country. Faced with the threat of military control of the government support for NATO grew (Carothers 1981) yet moves to improve civil-military relation remained relatively surface level. Of the leaders of the 1981 attempted coup, many had studied at American military academies, ironically to complete security agreements between the U.S and Spain, bringing into disrepute the idea that alliance creates transgovernmental links to improve civil-military relations (Alba 1985). The same can be said again for Greece who were in no way reprimanded or sanctioned for the democratic backsliding seen in 1967 in the form of military seizure of government. One of the reasons for this coup was in fact tensions between Greece and Turkey, both NATO members committed to protecting each other (McDonald 1990). This military rule lasted until 1974 when democracy was restored to Greece largely without the help of NATO, with a referendum voting almost 70% in favour of the establishment of a republic.

The effectiveness of the carrot argument can be analysed through the study of the countries admitted into NATO in 1999; Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, and if in their preparation to join the alliance they made any real moves to further democracy. It was made clear by the United States in 1994 that NATO expansion was inevitable and to examine if the carrot of membership was the causation for democratisation in these countries or merely happened alongside a developing region. Reiter examines the path the states were on pre-1994 and post-1994, to see if the rate of democratisation increases with the prospect of joining the alliance. Working electoral systems and democratic elections had already taken place in all three states by 1990, and no democratic breakdowns occurred over the early or later periods, suggesting that the countries were already committed to democracy before the opportunity of alliance presented itself (Puddington 2019). While this does not directly contradict the carrot hypothesis, it calls into question the implication that NATO membership would speed up democratisation and reforms (Reiter 2001a).

When it comes to civil-military relations in these states, Hungary and Poland both took the necessary steps to develop a civilian control over the military before 1994. Poland had introduced civilian defence ministers before 1990 and under President Walesa the military moved even further under civilian control, with power over threat assessment and doctrine along with the prevention of military personnel taking part in elections (Coughlan 1999). These are methods included in the suggestions made by Lombardi (1999) to improve civil-military relations, all undertaken before the idea of NATO membership was suggested and exhibits a consistent willingness of the Polish military to accept democratic processes. Similarly in Hungary there was democratic civilian control over the military by 1989 and the only dispute was over which branch of the civilian government would control what (Barany and Deak 1999). Overall, among the three states the risk of military uprising was always very low, particularly in the Czech Republic where they had the opposite problem of the military not being respected enough (Reiter 2001a). One example of the NATO carrot working could perhaps be seen in Slovakia who corrected their democratic backsliding after the government realised they were not being included in the 1999 round of expansion. However more people point to EU membership as being Slovakia's carrot in this instance, with polls showing nearly 80% support for the EU but only 48% for NATO (Pridham 1999; Reiter 2001a).

So overall there is little evidence for NATO's contribution to democracy in the Cold War – 2001 period. It as an institution never used its stick enforcing its values on democratic backsliding, even on repeat offenders. The effectiveness of transgovernmental links was limited, failing to instil democratic civil-military norms throughout Europe, leading to multiple military coups, and failed attempts. In the aftermath of the cold War it is difficult to credit the alliance with the creation or consolidation of democracy in the run up to the 1999 round of expansion as studies shows all states were already fully and effectively committed to democracy and one of the only few instances of the potential for NATO membership resulting

in democratic reforms are attributable to potential EU membership, something which is a common theme in this study.

## Chapter Three: Post 2001 Democratisation

In this chapter we will use the mechanisms of democratisation outlined in the previous chapter to analyse the NATO's effect on democratisation across Europe from the 2004 and 2009 rounds of expansion and the alliances' ability to uphold democracy in full member states, before briefly examining the potential for democratisation in prospective members such as Ireland, Georgia and Ukraine.

### The 'Carrot'

To imply that the prospect of NATO membership, the 'carrot', definitively creates or consolidates democracy in states then there must be evidence that they made purposeful and meaning changes and reforms from before membership was on the table to afterwards. The Partnership for Peace programme was announced in 1994 and is viewed by some as the beginning of the road for membership. If this was to be the case however then the entire argument of potential membership spreading democracy is placed in serious jeopardy given the fact Russia engaged in the PfP and has made little progress on its democratic journey to say the least. The real first step is more likely the MAP. When Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic ascended to NATO in 1999 the rest of the aspiring states began on the MAP, many of which would achieve full membership in the 2004 round of expansion. For this reason, it is the engagement with the MAP process that I consider the starting point of the membership process. The programme allowed for the sharing of advice in relation to attaining membership. This was crucial for the growth of democracy because it included help with the military's supreme command and civil-military relations. In the situation of the Baltic states, embarking on a formal path to NATO membership also granted their democratic regimes legitimacy by allowing them to guarantee the external security of their states. In other words, NATO provided the security shield essential for the enduring growth of democracy.



Waterman and Zagorcheva believe that the alliance has aided in promoting democracy and accelerating economic transformation in those nations rejected in the first round of enlargement through the MAPs (2001). MAPs offer a road plan to help these nations get ready for potential membership. Setting goals enables hopefuls to focus their efforts and identify priorities for the distribution of limited resources. The technical know-how needed by these nations to create the democratic institutions they aspire to does not pre-exist within the state and so they receive help from MAPs in determining the simplest and most affordable ways to strengthen their democracies. For nations like Bulgaria and Romania, both of which had little to no experience with democracy before the fall of communism, MAPs have been especially crucial according to Zagorcheva, who believes that under the action plans discussions between prospective members and NATO specialists give them useful feedback that enables them to identify strategies to accomplish their goals.

Given these apparent benefits offered by the MAP system in promoting democratisation the empirical studies should reflect this in democracy levels. Poast and Chinchilla (2020) concluded that the most accurate method of measuring democratisation was the *Liberal Democracy Index*, as it considers things such as women's suffrage and civil liberties and provides a much higher level of measurement validity. Upon the analysis of the Liberal Democracy Index for the states included in the 2004 round of enlargement, from a period of 1994 to 2004, there is very little improvement across the nations. Latvia sees a small increase from 0.68 to 0.72, as does Romania from 0.40 to 0.45. Slovakia see's the largest jump from 0.57 to 0.76 and is a case study we shall examine closer, along with Latvia. The other four nations saw little increase and Slovenia even dropped from 0.77 to 0.74 (V-Dem Project 2023). So at least by the metric of this index NATO's membership carrot spreads its results very unevenly across regions, even ones such as the Baltic's which entered the MAP system largely in similar situations.

To examine democratisation further we will look closer at Latvia and Slovakia. Latvia held its first democratic elections in 1993 and while these elections were by many considered a success of democracy, the issue of ethnically Russian citizens being unable to vote poses an asterisk beside this (Alijeva 2017). Latvia introduced strict citizenship rules that stated one needed to be born within the states before 1940 or be a direct relative of someone under this condition to achieve citizenship (Winner *et al.*). Latvia's elections in 1994 and 1998 were however praised for their freeness and fairness, despite continued criticism over their citizenship laws, viewed by many outsiders as a way of keeping ethnically Russian minorities in a stateless limbo (Human Rights Watch 1995). Through democratic referendum over the course of the late 1990's, and under pressure from NATO, the EU and the OSCE, Latvia reformed its process of citizenship to meet the required standards. NATO Ambassador Alexander Vershbow indicated that this reform was a yardstick of democracy and a key criterion for Latvia's integration into the West (Theis *et al.* 2006). Another key issue for NATO was Latvia's law which prevented non-Latvian speakers standing for election. The Court of Human Rights branded this unequivocally undemocratic and NATO demanded change. While this law was reformed it was replaced with legislations making Latvian the only language to be used in government, bringing into question the validity of the initial democratisation effort (Nation 2003).

By far the largest jump in democracy score was seen in Slovakia. This is largely due to the Meciar government which introduced a semi-authoritarian regime, capitalising on the newly independent Slovakia's weak institutions, economy and lack of democratic history. Meciar was elected democratically but began to backslide on this immediately. Political factionalism allowed him to form a right-wing cabinet and his second term in office from 1994 to 1998 became even more violent and ultranationalist than the first (Thies *et al.* 2006). NATO's criteria for democracy acted to give legitimacy to the opposition in Slovakia, causing Meciar to further revert democracy by attempting control media and spread propaganda. Despite the

government's attempts to stir up anti-NATO sentiment, polls showed over 70% support for membership of the alliance. In 1995 under pressure from the international community and NATO there were resolutions in border disputes and discrimination against minorities, while protests in 1998 resulted in the loosening of government grip on the media. These all contribute to the gradually increasing democracy index. Refusal by Meciar to cave to Madeline Alright and NATO's pressure led to them being excluded from the 1997 Madrid summit. This can ultimately be partly attributed to Meciar's fall. The exclusion from the 1999 round of expansion, in combination with economic instability and increased protest led to Meciar being defeated in election in 1998 and a democratic government installed. From the 2004 round of expansion, it's clear that the carrot of NATO membership effected Eastern Europe quite unevenly. It appears to have been a success in Slovakia with pressure from NATO and the EU helping to drive out the autocratic leader and perhaps helped to instil some democratic reforms in Latvia, however the empirical results throughout the rest of the region were minimal, if not negative.

The next round of enlargement took place in 2009, with Croatia and Albania achieving full membership. Here we will analysis Croatia's road to the alliance. Croatia in the 1990's was closer to an autocratic state than a liberal democracy, ran by the fascist President Tudjman. While Tudjman was democratically elected, there was international consensus that these elections were not fairly conducted and results were rigged or interfered with (Waters 2000). Upon the Presidents death in 1999, the country was freed from its autocratic shackles and immediately began to democratise, with opposition parties now fairly heard and the prospect of NATO and EU membership now possible. The new Foreign Prime Minister Tonino Picula made clear that membership to these international organisations was a top priority. The nation joined the PfP in 2000 and the MAP in 2002. After passing through seven MAP stages, engaging in Accession Talks in Bucharest, 2008, Croatia became a full NATO member in 2009.

This process ran in parallel to EU accession (Šimunović 2015). It seems that the prospect of NATO membership helped to stir democratic reforms in Croatia. Or did it? If engagement in the PfP is not a real indicator of being considered for actual NATO membership, but the MAP is, then Croatia only became a candidate in 2002, three years after it began democratic reforms. This raises the question of whether the state was already committed to its reforms when NATO came along, an argument like that which Reiter made regarding the 1999 round. Croatia expressed interest in joining PfP in the mid-90's, but the alliance declined, only changing their mind after 'the democratic changes in Croatia after the recent landmark parliamentary and presidential elections' following Tudjman's death. While it is hard to evaluate if these changes would have taken place if the idea of NATO membership was not there, if the alliance was truly committed to democratisation would it not have tried to intervene when the interest was first expressed?

One thing these nations all have in common is that they participated in two ascension processes simultaneously, to both NATO and the EU. This has been the subject of debate as to which of these had the real democratisation effect. EU membership was on the table for the Baltic states as early 1994 when they signed the application for ascension. Talbot (2019) suggests that NATO expansion was a pre-condition for EU expansion, and that true integration would only happen in Europe with these processes happening together, with NATO providing the security aspect and the EU providing the real democratisation factor. The study conducted in Poast and Chinchilla (2020) provided damning results for proponents of NATO's powers of democratisation. This study revealed a clear difference between the democracy index score of states and membership status. Six states applied for EU membership in 1995 plus Slovenia in 1996 and NATO membership in 1999. This means they would have had three to four years of democratisation under the guidance of the EU before applying to NATO and all had reasonably high democracy scores ranging from 0.80 to 0.71, bar Bulgaria and Romania. These two states

with the lowest democracy scores were the two states which did not ascend to the EU in 2004 and had to wait till 2007. Conversely, Albania and Macedonia, the states which applied for NATO membership before EU membership, had quite poor scores of 0.40. This shows the impact of EU membership preceding NATO membership and adds to the argument that the economic organisations are the real democratiser over the political/military organisation. This is a point which reflects the findings of Mansfield and Pevehouse's (2008) empirical study on regime type and international organisations, which supports the idea that an economic organisation such as the EU is the most important driver of democratisation rather than a political/military organisation such as NATO. The findings displayed that states with a genuine interest in democratisation were far more likely to join an economic organisation as a sign of their commitment to respecting the rule of law and liberal economic principles. The results of this 2008 study are shown in Fig.1.

**The Effects of Regime Type and Regime Change on Changes in International Organization (IO) Membership with Alternative Models, 1965–2000**

Variable	Economic IOs	Political IOs	Standards IOs	Economic IOs	Political IOs	Standards IOs
Democratization	0.133* (0.084)	0.022 (0.030)	0.106** (0.059)	0.206*** (0.058)	0.254** (0.115)	0.211*** (0.073)
Autocratization	-0.156** (0.067)	0.027 (0.028)	0.002 (0.043)	-0.182** (0.092)	0.178 (0.178)	0.032 (0.105)
Stable Democracy	0.031 (0.077)	0.022 (0.029)	0.004 (0.044)	0.055 (0.058)	0.381*** (0.088)	0.190*** (0.073)
Polity	0.003 (0.005)	0.004** (0.002)	0.007** (0.003)	—	—	—
Constant	99.973*** (27.888)	10.744 (9.615)	15.361 (23.932)	111.170*** (8.080)	54.841*** (17.507)	8.050 (12.805)
$R^2$	0.05	0.03	0.06	—	—	—
$\ln(\alpha)$	—	—	—	-1.843***	-28.252***	-2.142***
$N$	4,665	4,665	4,665	4,665	4,665	4,665

Note: The coefficient estimates for the control variables in equation (1) are not presented to conserve space. Entries in columns 1–3 are ordinary least squares estimates, with panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses. Entries in columns 4–6 are negative binomial count model estimates, with standard errors clustered on country in parentheses.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ . One-tailed tests of statistical significance are conducted for the coefficient estimate of *Democratization* because its sign is specified by the model. Two-tailed tests are conducted for the remaining coefficient estimates.

Fig. 1 (Mansfield and Pevehouse 2008)

Poast and Chinchilla (2020) found that the average Liberal Democracy Index in EU-only applicants was 0.68, as opposed to 0.41 for NATO only applicants. While the highest level of democratisation is exhibited where a state applies for membership of both organisations, the addition of NATO provides only a marginal difference. NATO-only application comes in last in the combinations of variables. The graph below, adapted from the study shows similar results.

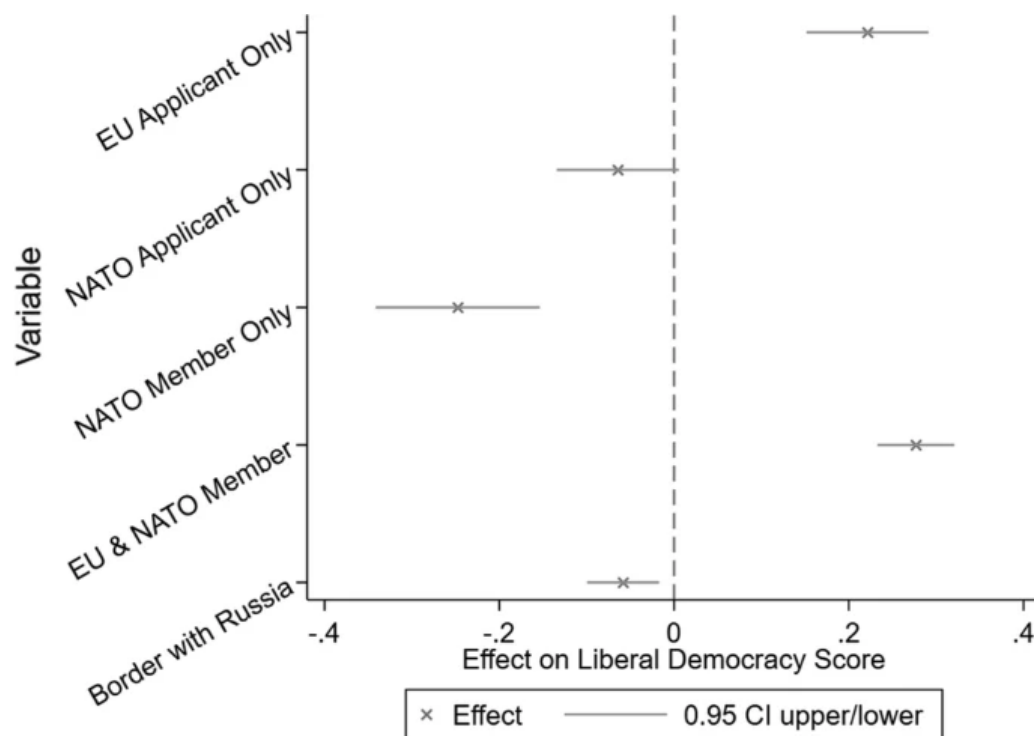


Fig. 2 (Poast and Chinchilla 2020)

If we consider states that have joined NATO in the time since the 1999 round, which are not members of the EU: Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, we find a group which have all struggled to employ effective democratisation. None of these states Liberal Democracy score have had any major increase in the run up to or during NATO membership with all remaining under 0.50. In Albania between 1997 to its ascension in 2009 there was not a single election which met the standards for a free and fair election. The elections in the very year the

state joined NATO were marred with allegations of voter irregularities and fraud (Danopoulos and Skandalis 2011), coming in at a score of 0.45 on V-Dem's Free and Fair Election index. The standard for a liberal democracy would lie in the 0.90's such as The Nordic states, the United Kingdom and the U.S. To put Albania's level of electoral democracy into perspective, in 2009 they fell somewhere between Iraq and Russia at 0.46 and 0.40 respectively. Neither of these states would be perceived to be shining beacons of liberal democracy, yet it was deemed that NATO had aided Albania far enough in their road of democratisation that they were deserving of alliance membership (V-Dem Project 2023).

### Civil-Military Relations

One of Reiter's outlined mechanisms for democratisation is that of developing civilian control over the military. In this section I shall analysis to what effect the states in pursuit of NATO membership achieved this and how much effect the alliance itself had on this. I shall focus on the cases of the Baltic countries and Romania from the 2004 round and Albania from the 2009 round.

The Baltic states faired quite well in terms of civil-military relations. These states provided essentially a blank canvas for NATO to demonstrate its democratisation powers, given that the security forces of the region were virtually non-existent given its occupation by the Soviets and needed extensive retraining. They had also already joined the United Nations in 1991 and had partaken in peacekeeping on a small level but have some exposure nonetheless. Gundars Zalkan in 1999 stated that Latvia had absolutely no plan or method when it came to defence analysis or budgeting (Zalkan 1999), while the Lithuanian military was labelled a mess. The Baltic states formed their own international alliance 'BALTBAT' and used this to enter negotiations with NATO. The transgovernmental links formed using this IO allowed for the development of civil-military relations in the region (Poast and Urpelainen 2018). However, as

will be discussed in the next section, upon ascension the alliances' 'stick' failed to keep these relations in line, something we have seen in more than one occasion.

Romania before the fall of the regime in the late 1980's was one of the most autocratic and oppressive rules of the region. Due to this intense relationship between military and government, drastic action was required to improve civil-military relations. In 1990 the Supreme Defence Council (CSAT) was formed. This council was made of up of ten members such as the president, prime minister, minister of defence and foreign affairs. While it was not an entire separation of military and government, it created a situation whereby the civilian government was crucial to the making of national security decisions (Born *et al.* 2006). The reform of military spending was crucial for Romanian membership to NATO but was an issue they struggled to effectively change. Individual interests as well as other pre-existing budget systems from the by-gone era meant that it was not until a new Minister for Defence was elected in 2001 that the state made effective ground on reforms. Ioan Mircea Pascu came into office and began to push for the decentralisation, depoliticization and civilian control of the military and by 2002 had introduced several measures such as HR policy which laid out career paths and promotion routes which were overseen by civil-military advisors from NATO as well as new budget controls under civilian oversight. From 2001 on, all high-ranking positions in the Ministry of Defence were to be taken by non-military personnel (Watts 2006). When evaluating the timeline, Romania appears to be one of NATO's real success stories when it comes to improving civil-military relations. While the state independently formed the CSAT, it had failed to make effective reform to rid itself of autocratic traits within the military system until 2001, from where it made real progress and created transgovernmental NATO ties This lines up with Romania entering the MAP system in 1999.

By the late 1990's, civil-military control in Albania was in disarray. The previous government was overthrown in a rebellion, in which the military had refused to step in, and a socialist



government was voted into power. The state engaged with the MAP in 1999 along with the other states, however as discussed before democratisation struggled to take hold. The state of civil-military relations reinforced the unstable nature of the society. From 2002 to 2007 a former military officer was elected to the presidency of the republic. While the military reduced in size and was better trained than in previous years, the idea of democratic civilian control was still not achieved by 2009. Signs of transgovernmental links beginning to form through intellectual studies of policy and national security can be seen in 2005, however any knowledge gained from these links was rarely used to any real degree and so had little effect on the state of the relations (Danopoulos and Skandalis 2011).

So the creation of civil-military relations in the 2004 round of expansion had some positive results, at least for a certain length of time. The Baltics fared well and while Romania had a rocky start, the state succeeded in forming some key aspects to successful relations. When reviewing Reiter's criteria the question arises of how much these states had already done to help themselves before NATO arrived. The Baltics had joined the UN and created their own international organisation and received assistance in the early 1990's from the Nordic states. While Romania did receive much help from NATO, they did take steps to create CSAT independently and saw the nation's largest jump in liberal democracy score from 0.03 in 1989 to 0.44 in 1998, during the period of reforms independent of NATO (V-Dem Project 2023). When it came to the 2009 round and NATO inherited Balkan states with no previous progress in a region still being plagued with violence it seems as though the alliances' effect on civil-military relations is not as strong. This reiterates perhaps Zagorcheva's view that Reiter expects too much of NATO to create democracy from scratch in its reforms and that the position in which NATO inherits the state will have a large effect on its ability to introduce and consolidate democratisation. It also reiterates the benefit of EU ascension running parallel and again indicates that perhaps NATO is not the true democratiser in these situations.

## The ‘Stick’

The creation or consolidation of democracy throughout the membership process is all well and good, but if the organisation in question cannot enforce the maintenance of this democracy in its member states then creating the illusion of reform can merely become an arbitrary step in achieving membership and its benefits before sliding back into autocracy.

Turkey is a state which holds great importance in Europe. As a strong power, and a gateway to Asia, it is a state which Eldem (2021) refers to as a swing state, one which has the potential to wield great influence but has not yet fully decided which side of the fence it sits. However one thing is for certain, it has not upheld the democratic values it agreed upon when joining NATO and neither has NATO succeeded in enforcing them. Turkey was once portrayed as a model of how to implement democracy in a tumultuous region, a beacon of hope for those attempting to instil democratisation (Akyol 2011). Since 2011, when the AKP party was elected to government for its third term this began to come into question with violent police crackdowns on protests emerging, such as the Gezi Park protests. In 2016 there was a failed military coup which saw tanks and military in the streets of the capital to seize power from AKP resulting in the deaths of almost 300 people. Following this in 2017 the country voted to expand President Erdoğan’s power. This consolidation effectively turned the Turkish system into a one-man government and could be seen as the pinnacle of Turkey’s slip back into autocracy (Li 2022). Turkey has continued to create anti-LGBT sentiment and diminish the rights of women in the state (Arat 2022). From 2004 to 2021, Turkey’s Liberal Democracy Score has fallen from 0.53 to 0.12, exhibiting an extreme democratic backslide and a complete failure from NATO in preventing it (V-Dem Project 2023).

In September of 2022, the European Parliament officially downgraded Hungary from a democracy to an electoral autocracy (European Parliament 2022). When Hungary ascended to

NATO in 2004, the coalition government of the Free Democrats and the Hungarian Socialist Party garnered the support of a pro-democratic, alliance and integration voter populous. However, the rise to power in 2010 of Victor Orbán and the Fidesz party marked the beginning of the state's autocratic slide (Henault 2022). Orbán introduced electoral reforms that manipulated the voter areas to decrease the power of voters in left-wing regions and increased the power of voters in right-wing regions. By expanding the left-w areas and shrinking the right-wing areas, the government increased the weight of urban-rural areas in which workers were reliant on Fidesz ran work programmes for income. The number of members in parliament was also reduced to strengthen Orbán power (Kovács and Vida 2015). In the 2018 election there was international concern about the use of fake political parties being used to fracture the opposition to Orbán, meaning that organised action to restore democracy proved difficult (von Notz 2018) Orbán used Covid-19 to further consolidate his autocratic power, introducing emergency bills that allow him to rule by decree. The concern for Hungary's backsliding does not cease at simply stoking nationalist sentiment. Hungary's transition away from democracy and adoption of dictatorial illiberalism has aided its ties with China and Russia. According to reports, Russian intelligence has significantly increased its presence in the nation and is utilizing Hungary as a backdoor into the European Union. A significant Belt and Road Initiative project connecting the capital of Hungary to Belgrade has helped China strengthen its economic and political ties to Budapest (Bergman and Cicarelli 2020). There has also been breaches of human rights with the introduction of anti-LGBTQ legislation, banning the teaching of any educational material regarding transgender issues or homosexuality. Overall, with little more than verbal criticism from NATO Hungary has slipped from a democratic score of 0.77 to 0.36 since ascending to the alliance.

Poland ascended to NATO as part of the 1999 round of expansion but has recently found itself democratically backsliding at one of the fastest rates in the world. The rise of the Law and

Justice Party to power in 2015 can be seen as the turning point for Polish democracy. The PiS party quickly made moves to delegitimise opposition and strip them of power, increase control of media and journalists and establishing a strong control on propaganda as well as introducing strict reforms to the judicial system. These judicial reforms allowed the opening of old cases up to 20 years old and created provisions for the persecution of the opposition to these reforms (Abramowitz and Puddington 2020). The 2020 election saw the consolidation of this democratic backsliding through the emphasising of societal cleavages by the ruling party, stirring up class divisions and inciting radical populist sentiment, and like other examples, an increased anti-LGBTQ line (Tworzeck 2019). Poland has, since the election of the PiS in 2015, fallen from a 0.8 to 0.41 on the Liberal democracy Index (V-Dem Project 2023)

In essence all these cases tend to follow the same script, one which Tworzecki sums up as a top-down process, whereby the political class use or attempt to use the guise of radical-populism and anti-establishmentarianism to garner the popular support and win an election, before enacting constitutional reforms to consolidate their power (2019). The theme of democratic backsliding in NATO states is not limited to these three states. Over the course of the past 20 years this can also be seen in Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to name but a few more. All the while NATO appear to be helpless to stop it with no legal precedent or apparent will to use their stick and enforce the ejection of these states from the alliance. The most poignant example of NATO's inherent failure to enforce democracy within its member states may be the democratic backsliding seen within the ultimate powerhouse of the alliance, the one state which often claims to be home of the free, the United States. The 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 saw one the largest and most important events of democratic backsliding in the nation's history when rioters stormed the Capitol Hill buildings on the apparent command of Trump himself, looting and assaulting worders, reporters and police. In examining Eastern Europe's democracy scores, it is only fair we take a look at the United States'. In 2010, the US had a

score of 0.86, in 2021: 0.71. The inability of NATO's most powerful country to prevent democratic backsliding does not bode well for its ability to inspire consolidation elsewhere.

### Potential Member States

The 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces has once again brought the topic of NATO enlargement to the forefront of international relations debate. Nordic states Finland and Sweden applied for membership and completed accession talks in the wake of the invasion, fearing for their security given their proximity to Russia. Debate regarding the abandonment of neutrality has risen in states such as Ireland and Switzerland also. However, these are states which have independently committed themselves to instilling and upholding democracy long before thinking about NATO membership and are bar Switzerland, EU members. This also explains how quickly the Nordic states were able to complete their membership processes. It is difficult to see how alliance membership would help to further consolidate democracy further. Even though this may technically be a failure in its ability to *spread* democracy it may be able to provide these states the security to uphold it. Either way it is hard to fault NATO for this given that the situation in which these states have sought or may seek membership are somewhat extra-ordinary.

The states in which NATO's ability to spread and consolidate democracy is relevant would be the cases of Ukraine and Georgia, which have both been on the receiving end of aggressions from Russia. Both these states have expressed a desire to join the alliance and engage with the PfP programme but neither have been granted a MAP. As seen through the analysis of previous cases the inclusion of states in the MAP process can, while sometimes limited, have a positive effect with regards spurring democratisation in potential states and would be the first step in placing these countries on the road to membership. In terms of the NATO 'carrot', the elimination of corruption and the creation of fair elections are crucial for democratisation, and

are areas Ukraine has struggled in. The country has so far been prevented from achieving the outcomes of the higher-performing post-communist states in the region due to the combined effects of slow progress in the establishment of democratic institutions, poor economic performance, inadequately mitigated corruption, and war in eastern Ukraine (Ulrich 2021). While steadily rising since the mid-1990's, the Absence of Corruption index from International IDEA (2022) still only lay at 0.42 by 2020, while Social Group Equality is heading in the opposite direction, falling to 0.51 from the mid 0.60's. Corruption is entrenched in the country stemming from the reign of the oligarchs. With regards to this corruption, Ukraine and Georgia have been working with the EU in the last decade to enact important ant-corruption reforms necessary to allow them to join the union and integrate into the West (Temnycky 2022). Temnycky states that to achieve EU membership they would have to continue improving on these reforms and that accession to the EU would have massive positive impact on their NATO application. This is undoubtedly true but would surely go down as an example of the EU's powers of democratisation rather than NATO's. In terms of elections, both Ukraine and Georgia have some chequered pasts. Georgia entered the century with a rating of 0.19 but has done well to reform itself to a level of 0.60 and has not fallen below 0.50 since 2015. Ukraine on the other hand still struggles with creating fair elections with ratings as low as 0.37 in 2016 (V-Dem Project 2023). The 2014 elections were marred with accusations of a coup, which Mearsheimer (2014) brands as rightly so, when the pro-Russian president Yankovych was ousted from power. The fact that this coup was supported by the U.S and other Western powers does not necessarily mean it is not just that, a coup. This instability of elections does not bode well for NATO's ability to consolidate democracy in Ukraine when compared to their success in states such as Albania as previously discussed.

In terms of civil-military relations Ukraine and Georgia suffer from a similar level of underdevelopment. Since this Ukraine and Georgia have both in the past taken part in military

training exercises with NATO and are recognised as NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners and spend the required amount of GDP annually on their defence budget, which stands as a positive NATO's effect on their civil-military relations. The civil-military relationship in Ukraine is still evolving toward democracy despite the country's continuous confrontation with Russia. The nation has made some progress, but it has been constrained by the legacy of Soviet-era bureaucracy, a poor political culture, and inadequate resources. Significant civilian control within the relevant organizations and parliamentary defence bodies are among the essential components of democratic civil-military relations that are currently lacking. However in a certain sense the increased interaction between the Ukrainian military and Western governments may aid the formation of transgovernmental ties. This tends to be one of NATO's more influential aspects of democratisation as seen in states such as Romania and the Baltics, yet the pre-existing violence means that many steps to form transgovernmental ties and form civil-military relations are already in place.

Transitology, the study of states as they attempt to move from authoritarianism to democracy, is composed of four stages: (1) political liberalisations under the autocratic rule, (2) the fall of the autocratic regime, (3) the creation of a democratic regime and finally, (4) democratic consolidation. Many states pass through the initial three stages with relative ease but become stuck on the fourth, democratic consolidation. States stuck in the limbo of the 'Hybrid regime' classification can often be left susceptible to democratic backsliding (Caruthers 2002). Freedom House data from 1997 to 2018 indicates that Ukraine have been stuck in the limits of the hybrid classifications for over two decades.

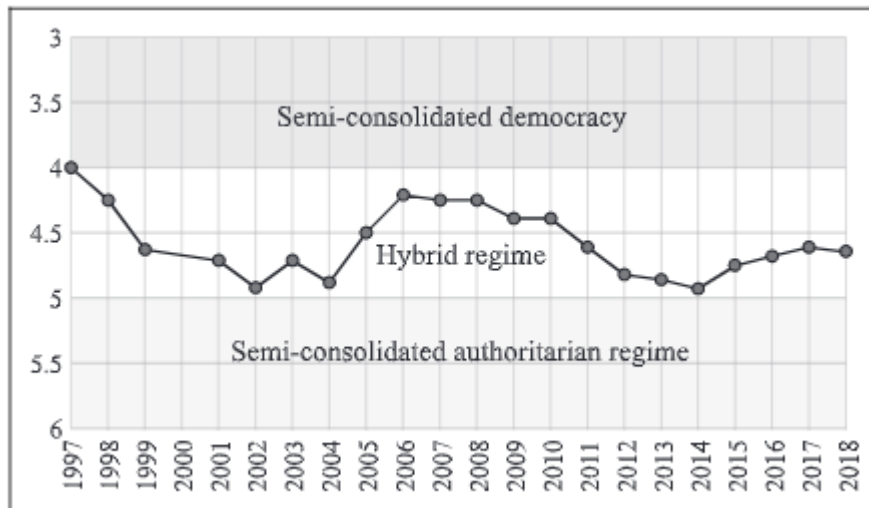


Fig.3 (Turchyn *et. al.* 2020)

Factors contributing to states struggling to progress past this fourth stage include a range of internal factors such as historical experience, the quality of political institutions, sociocultural, and external factors such as the behaviours of neighbours and influence of external actors. For states such as Ukraine and Georgia this does not bode well as they seem to possess almost all of these. The lingering Soviet legacy is visible in the culture and political institutions, while Russia looms aggressively to their east, this sets the stage perfectly for the presence of democratic backsliding which NATO has consistently proven almost helpless to prevent (Turchyn *et. al.* 2020).

The other question is does NATO have the power to implement democratisation in these states while the autocratic Russia illegally occupies regions within them? The 1995 Study on Enlargement states that territorial conflicts must be solved peacefully in accordance with OSCE guidelines. However, it also states that while the resolution of these conflicts will be a factor in membership, it will not be the deciding factor. Russia has occupied Georgian territories since 2008, and Ukrainian territories since 2014. If the states were to ascend to NATO while these regions were still occupied, it would be a failure of democratisation given legal regions and citizens of the state are still under autocratic rule. The occupation of territories would mean a



failure on all three of Reiter's mechanisms, the carrot, stick and civil-military relations. Alternatively, if the states used violence and force to remove the occupier, it would go against the 1995 guidelines on expansion, but would probably be forgiven due to the circumstances and the fact it states that the method of settlement would not be the deciding factor. Either way it is unlikely Russia would give up these territories peacefully unless there were some cataclysmic ideological changes in the Kremlin. On top of this, there is the fact that many of the citizens of Crimea see themselves as Russian. In the most recent census in 2014, there was a majority 67.9% Russian to 15.7% Ukrainian response (Federation Council 2014). In 2018 Putin held an 80% approval rating in the region (Greene and Robertson 2020). While much of this can likely be attributed to Russian propaganda and the majority of ethnic Russians does not give the Russian state legitimacy in the region, it certainly adds to the idea that the likelihood of a full and peaceful return of occupied regions to Georgia and Ukraine is unlikely. So, while NATO and the EU can interact with Georgia and Ukraine, implementing the groundwork of reforms, form trans-governmental links and create civil-military relations, it is hard to envisage how effective their powers of democratisation can be until the states in question are unified under a democratic government, which cannot happen while regions are under Russian occupation.

## Conclusion

Through the analysis of NATO expansion throughout the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is possible to reach a conclusion on the alliances effect on democratisation. Of the studies conducted previously, Dan Reiter along with Poast and Chinchilla come to the conclusion that NATO do not possess the powers of democratisation they so often claim, while Waterman, Zagorcheva and Epstein claim that these writers overestimate the level of democracy that NATO should be able to create and they exist more so to consolidate already existing democracy and have been successful in doing so. Here we used the additional time and date since these studies to develop this argument further through the lens of three mechanisms, the carrot, stick and civil-military relations.

The carrot of NATO membership was applied rather unevenly across the run-up to the 2004 and 2009 rounds of expansion. By using the entry into the MAPs process as the start point on the road to membership, we can see that states respond in differing ways. Latvia and Romania see a small increase in democratisation, while Slovakia saw the biggest jump in the aftermath of the fall of Meciar. The Liberal Democracy \index of Slovenia on the other hand fell during the course of its membership process, yet still ascended to the alliance. Latvia was praised for its fair elections yet concurrently was criticised for its oppression of non-ethnically Latvian citizens, bringing into disrepute its progress of democracy. In the 2009 round Croatia made impressive jumps in democratisation yet began these independently before entry into MAPs. When examining the similarities between all these cases it seems obvious that the common theme is EU membership running parallel. The figures from Poast and Chinchilla (2020) support this claim and pose as damning evidence to the effectiveness of the NATO carrot. The democracy score for EU only applicants is significantly higher than NATO only applicants, and the combination of the two gives only a marginally higher score than EU alone, meaning

it is no huge leap to say that the organisation with the most power of democratisation in the run up to membership is the EU.

Civil-military relations appears to be the area in which the alliance has most success in consolidating democracy, which comes as no surprise given it primarily exists as a military and security organisation. NATO had a relatively successful effect over relations in the Baltic states as they had a blank canvas on which to imprint on. Romania managed to progress from one of the most autocratic rules in the world to a make real transgovernmental ties, implement budgetary controls under civilian oversight and plan NATO approved career paths, which line up with the state joining the MAP process. The question is raised however how much of this progress was made independently. The Baltic states formed their own IO years before starting their NATO journey and Romania created the CSAT nine years before entering MAPs and saw its highest jump in democracy score during these years. To say that NATO's positive effects are void because of this would be unfair and reflect Zagorchevca's claim that Reiter expects too much of NATO to create democracy from scratch in every instance. Therefore, we recognise civil-military relations and the formation of transgovernmental links as perhaps the most successful area of NATO's democratisation since 2001 yet states still need to take action and initiate the process themselves and use this as a springboard into NATO cooperation.

The stick, or the ability of NATO to prevent democratic backsliding, is perhaps the area where there has been the most failure since 2001. Over the last two decades there have been numerous cases of rising radical ideals gaining traction with states sliding backwards into autocracy, with NATO seemingly helpless to stop it. Hungary, Poland and Turkey all present a catastrophic failure of the alliances power of democracy and render any previous effect next to useless. In effect these three mechanisms are all spread patchily across member states, with all three rarely present in the one place. In the absence of the EU, NATO struggles to enact serious effective reforms and seems to allow the ascension regardless of significant results. This leads to the

conclusion that while useful in certain circumstances, NATO is not the most important or effective actor in the spread or consolidation of democracy and is unable to uphold the democratic ideals within its own member states. Economic organisations such as the EU are vital to the success of NATO's democratic mission, proving them to be the real drivers of democratisation. In terms of potential future members, it seems NATO's prospects have a similar outlook. They can through no real fault of their own, have little effect on states such as the Nordic countries, Switzerland or Ireland, and as long as Russia occupies land in Ukraine and Georgia then I struggle to see a path to effective democratic reforms in these states. The mission of democratisation will have failed as long as any part of the land lies under autocratic control and prospect for the peaceful or even willing return of these territories, at this moment in time, seem bleak.

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