

<https://transnational.live/2022/07/13/opposition-to-nato-expansion-already-in-1997/>

Opposition to NATO Expansion – already in 1997



Arms Control Today

June 30, 2022

On June 26, 1997, a group of 50 prominent foreign policy experts that included former senators, retired military officers, diplomats and academicians, sent an open letter to President Clinton outlining their opposition to NATO expansion. Stanley Resor, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arms Control Association, spoke at the press conference announcing the letter, focusing on the arms control implications of expansion. Resor's remarks and the group's letter are printed below.

Remarks by Stan Resor:

A key, if not the key, U.S. interest in Russia is a rapid and substantial reduction in the tens of thousands of Russian strategic and tactical nuclear weapons and the hundreds of tons of nuclear material which are still deployed or stored throughout that nation some six years after the end of the Cold War.

Progress towards these goals will require comprehensive and sustained cooperation between the U.S. and Russia and a strengthening of mutual trust and confidence. The Clinton Administration's plan for NATO expansion has already undermined, and its implementation will raise further obstacles to, the establishment of the kind of relationship that is critical to success in arms control.

The START II Treaty, which would reduce Russian deployed strategic nuclear weapons to 3000-3500 is awaiting ratification by the Russian Parliament. The parliament is dominated by members of communist and nationalist Parties who are hostile to President Yeltsin and suspicious of Western intentions. They have responded to NATO expansion by opposing ratification of START II.

These conservative Duma members see NATO expansion toward the Russian borders as coming at a time when Russian conventional forces are in deep trouble, badly in need of reform, poorly paid and demoralized. This is forcing Russia to consider placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons to assure its security and has raised the question of whether Russia should retain its most powerful, multi-warhead land-based missiles which START II is designed to eliminate.

At Helsinki, President Clinton sought to address some of the substantive problems Russia had raised with respect to START II by agreeing with President Yeltsin

—on a framework for START III which would limit both sides to 2000-2500 warheads each by December 2007; and

—by extending by five years the deadline for reaching START II levels.

While a primary reason for lower levels and the extended deadline was to lower Russian costs, the five-year extension also gives Russia time to evaluate the impact on its security of NATO expansion and U.S. theatre missile defence deployments before it has to eliminate its multi-warhead ICBMs.

General Rokhlin, Chairman of the Russian Duma's Defense Committee, has expressed concern that ratifying START II substantially prior to completion of the terms of START III involves risk to Russia and reliance on U.S. good faith. In this context he has asserted that NATO expansion constituted reneging on assurances given to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze at the time Russian consent was obtained to German reunification and to membership of a reunified Germany in NATO.

Interesting too? WikiLeaks reveals how the US aggressively pursued regime change in Syria, igniting a bloodbath

Helsinki also laid out an ambitious agenda of nuclear infrastructure transparency and potential tactical nuclear weapons constraints. NATO expansion will make it much more difficult to establish the atmosphere of trust required for Moscow to agree to additional transparency measures for its stockpile and to abandon its increasing reliance on nuclear weapons to balance NATO's approach to its borders.

To delink START II ratification from NATO expansion and to show that NATO does not intend to isolate Russia and in fact recognizes that it must be part of an effective European security system, the United States helped design and President Clinton signed The Russia-NATO Founding Act in Paris on May 27.

The Act contains within it the potential for alienating Russia as much as integrating it into a European security system. The Act does not address two aspects of expansion which cause the greatest concern to the Russians, namely the scope and pace of expansion.

NATO's current plan is open-ended. It clearly contemplates inclusion of the Baltic states. But Russia has made clear that inclusion in NATO of any members of the former Soviet Union is unacceptable. Both Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin have already given conflicting interpretations of The Act.

It is already clear that NATO expansion has seriously delayed START II ratification and that, unless the process is suspended, it will continue to jeopardize major arms reduction treaties as well as other vital arms control goals which we have traditionally pursued.

The letter

June 26, 1997

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned, believe that the current U.S.-led effort to expand NATO, the focus of the recent Helsinki and Paris Summits, is a policy error of historic proportions. We believe that NATO expansion will decrease allied security and unsettle European stability for the following reasons:

In Russia, NATO expansion, which continues to be opposed across the entire political spectrum, will strengthen the nondemocratic opposition, undercut those who favor reform and cooperation with the West, bring the Russians to question the entire post-Cold War settlement, and galvanize resistance in the Duma to the START II and III treaties. In Europe, NATO expansion will draw a new line of division between the "ins" and the "outs," foster instability, and ultimately diminish the sense of security of those countries which are not included;

Interesting too? 65+ Orgs: Cold War with China is a dangerous and self-defeating strategy

In NATO, expansion, which the Alliance has indicated is open-ended, will inevitably degrade NATO's ability to carry out its primary mission and will involve U.S. security guarantees to countries with serious border and national minority problems, and unevenly developed systems of democratic government;

In the U.S., NATO expansion will trigger an extended debate over its indeterminate, but certainly high, cost and will call into question the U.S. commitment to the Alliance, traditionally and rightly regarded as a centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy.

Because of these serious objections, and in the absence of any reason for rapid decision, we strongly urge that the NATO expansion process be suspended while alternative actions are pursued. These include:

- opening the economic and political doors of the European Union to Central and Eastern Europe;
- developing an enhanced Partnership for Peace program;
- supporting a cooperative NATO-Russian relationship; and
- continuing the arms reduction and transparency process, particularly with respect to nuclear weapons and materials, the major threat to U.S. security, and with respect to conventional military forces in Europe.

Russia does not now pose a threat to its western neighbors and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe are not in danger. For this reason, and the others cited above, we believe that NATO expansion is neither necessary nor desirable and that this ill-conceived policy can and should be put on hold.

Sincerely,

George Bunn	Townsend Hoopes	Sam Nunn
Robert Bowie	Gordon Humphrey	Herbert S. Okun
Bill Bradley	Fred Ikle	W.K.H. Panofsky
David Calleo	Bennett Johnston	Christian Patte
Richard T. Davies	Carl Kaysen	Richard Pipes
Jonathan Dean	Spurgeon Keeny	Robert E. Pursley
Paul Doty	James Leonard	George Rathjens
Susan Eisenhower	Edward Luttwak	Stanley Resor
David M. Evans	Michael Mandelbaum	John Rhineland
David Fischer	Jack F. Matlock Jr.	John J. Shanahan
Raymond Garthoff	C. William Maynes	Marshall Shulman
Morton H. Halperin	Richard McCormack	John Steinbruner
Owen Harries	David McGiffert	Stansfield Turner
Gary Hart	Robert McNamara	Richard Viets
Arthur Hartman	Jack Mendelsohn	Paul Warnke
Mark Hatfield	Philip Merrill	James D. Watkins
John P. Holdren	Paul H. Nitze	

Originally published at [Arms Control Association](#)