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# Trends. Against a Moratorium on Further NATO Expansion: The US Secretary of State's Shaky

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Rationale

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In recent testimony before the United States (US) Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Secretary of State advocated against a temporary moratorium on North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion beyond the addition of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. However, this advocacy is problematic.

The Secretary stated that a moratorium would diminish the incentive of other nations to cooperate with their neighbors and with NATO. Yet surely if it is in the interests of other nations to cooperate, they will do so regardless of membership in an alliance. And if these nations need help in a crisis, NATO will help if it is in its interests regardless of the membership status of other nations.

The Secretary stated that a moratorium would be a vote of no confidence in reform-minded governments. But surely NATO's public policy is to support and manifest confidence towards reform-minded countries everywhere that are attempting to develop democratic processes, break from command economies (unless agricultural and other competitive products are involved), and nurture cooperative, peaceful interactions. A moratorium can reasonably be publicized as a time-out to assess initial efforts at expansion.

The Secretary stated that a moratorium would fracture the NATO consensus for expansion. But surely the speed of expansion does not necessarily suggest the strength of consensus. In fact, high speeds and low speeds can both suggest a strengthening or weakening of consensus.

The Secretary also stated that a moratorium would be unnecessary, because the Senate has to approve the admission of new NATO allies. But surely if there were a problem with a candidate for expansion, a moratorium is usually a less noxious intervention than an outright rejection--an exception being, perhaps, Turkey and its quest for membership in the European Union.

It is possible to surmise that the Secretary believes that there is a strong case to be made against NATO expansion altogether. A moratorium might induce a critical momentum towards this case. (See Berzonszky, M.D. (1995). Public self-presentations and self-conceptions: The moderating role of identity status. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 135, 737-745; Kroger, J., & Green, K.E. (1996). Events associated with identity status change. *Journal of Adolescence*, 19, 477-490; NATO expansion: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. (July 4, 1997). *IBPP*, 2(10); NATO expansion: The ins and outs of it. (July 11, 1997). *IBPP*, 2(11); Shenon, P. (February 25, 1998). Senate moves closer to approval of NATO expansion. *The New York Times*, (<http://www.nytimes.com>.)