

NEW AMERICAN CENTURY

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November 9, 2001

MEMORANDUM TO: OPINION LEADERS

FROM: TOM DONNELLY, Deputy Executive Director

SUBJECT: NATO Enlargement

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives passed by an overwhelming 372-to-46 vote a bill, aptly named "The Gerald B.H. Solomon Freedom Consolidation Act of 2001," for the late chairman of the House Rules Committee and tireless champion of American political ideals and power. The bill endorses further expansion of the NATO alliance and authorized \$55 million in security assistance to seven former Warsaw Pact nations who now seek to be American allies. Although the current war on terrorism has rightly become the principal focus of our national security concerns, NATO's enlargement is still a matter of importance to the long-term security of the United States. In passing this measure, the House has wisely reminded us this fact, and done so at a crucial time.

It has also shown strategic vision: the largest amounts of security assistance are earmarked for Romania and Bulgaria. While these two countries may be less economically and politically developed than other NATO candidates like the Baltic states, they are of enormous importance for the future security of southeastern Europe. Building on today's hard-won and uncertain success in the Balkans would be easier were Romania and Bulgaria full, stable members of the alliance

Moreover, southeastern Europe will play an even larger role in U.S. and NATO missions in the Caspian, Caucasus and Central Asia, crucial regions in President Bush's war on terrorism. This broader region, often called the "arc of instability," is certain to play a key role in U.S. security policy through the coming century. It is a region in which democratic allies, formally committed to the NATO alliance, will be precious commodities.

The House has also sent a strong signal to the other side of Capitol Hill. The Senate, and in particular the Foreign Relations Committee, has begun to waver in its commitment to NATO enlargement. Even Russian President Vladimir Putin now grasps that a stable and democratic southeastern Europe, in NATO, is not a threat to Moscow and indeed is in Russia's interest. The Senate should take up and pass the Solomon Act, and begin the push for broad NATO expansion in 2002.