



## ATLANTIC MEMO # 6

**NATO and Russia: Relationship Must be Redefined**

Members of the Atlantic Community are convinced that NATO needs to redefine its future role and relationship with Russia. Fundamental change, however, is unlikely to occur in the near future and the NATO-Russian relationship may worsen. The Bucharest Summit dispute about NATO enlargement and the appropriateness of Membership Action Plans (MAPs) for Georgia and Ukraine renewed the long postponed debate on NATO-Russian relations. How should NATO deal with Russia's desire for great power status? Could NATO enlargement to Eastern Europe succeed without alienating Russia?

With regard to the upcoming work on NATO's New Strategic Concept, the three main arguments concerning NATO-Russia relations from the authors and commenters on Atlantic Community should be kept in mind:

**1. Is enlargement worth the trouble with Russia?**

Most Atlantic Community members agree that in a post Cold War world, NATO faces global security issues. As [Dr. Andre Kelleners](#) points out, NATO's focus has shifted from power-balancing to questions of world terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and totalitarian regimes. Global intergovernmental cooperation is crucial to successfully dealing with these threats and NATO enlargement is therefore necessary. The majority of Atlantic Community Members agree with this assessment and in the recent Atlantic Community survey, European and US Foreign Policy analysts and Atlantic Community members expressed strong support for Ukraine's NATO aspiration. Furthermore, most survey participants from Eastern Europe voted in favor of a swift enlargement process. [Dr. Tomas Ehler](#) argues that offering MAPs to former Warsaw Pact countries would support their reform activity and draw them closer to western democratic values. [Andris Spruds](#) also emphasizes the potentially stabilizing role which MAPs could play.

**2. The need for a special partnership with Russia.**

From a Russian perspective, both NATO itself and NATO expansion are threats. As Dr. [Andreas Umland](#) explains: "the roots of Russian statehood lie in Kyiv and Crimea hosts a major Russian naval base." Russia will therefore not be willing to give up this region. [Dr. Hans Giessmann](#) emphasizes that we must "prevent the East-West ice age" from returning and strongly suggests including Russia in the enlargement debate. Alienating Russia by expanding NATO to its borders is not wise at a time when Europe and the US "hope to move on from the Putin era of confrontation" says [Dr. Kelleners](#). Other Atlantic Community members emphasize that Europeans need Russia as a partner. [Hans-Ulrich Klose](#) stresses that Europe longs for Russian cooperation in security matters and depends on Russian energy reserves. [Kelleners](#) therefore suggests that NATO should seek to "carve out a special role of some other sort for Russia" in which Russia would have more than its current partnership status, but would not be integrated into NATO's military command structures.

**3. Russia's desire for great power status.**

While most commenters believe a special partnership with Russia is needed, they also point out that "Russia is doing everything that it can to reemerge as a major world player" and would therefore likely reject such a partnership. [Lukas Vitalius](#) further elaborates and writes: "Russia has no intention [of] joining NATO or the EU. It is a power of its own." [Ilyas Mohsin](#) suggests that Russia is too suspicious of western countries trying to gain influence over Russian energy reserves to consider integration. [Donald Stadler](#) also fears that although integrating Russia into NATO structures would ease the Russian perception of being threatened, the alliance would become meaningless if its former reason for creation vanished. [Stadler](#) additionally points to the problem of NATO's *raison d'être* after the end of the Cold War by asking if US participation in NATO is still necessary.

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