

**THE NATO-RUSSIA PARTNERSHIP:
A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE
OR A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP?**

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013-5244.

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FOREWORD

Soon after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged Russian support to the U.S. campaign against terrorism. Putin's actions triggered a process that also led to a Russo-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) rapprochement and Russian membership in a newly formed NATO-Russia Council created by the Treaty of Rome in 2002. However, since then this partnership has been a rocky and ambivalent one. And as East-West relations deteriorate, as they have over the last four years, the stresses in this partnership bid fair to outweigh the benefits to the players involved. Accordingly, this monograph focuses on the Russian side of this relationship and seeks to uncover, as well as analyze, the reasons for Russia's growing ambivalence toward NATO and the growing sense of estrangement between these two key actors in Eurasian security.

Professor Stephen J. Blank's monograph grew out of a paper prepared for a 2005 Paris conference of Franco-American diplomats. It was then updated and revised for a subsequent conference, which took place in Washington, DC, from April 24-26, 2006, and was jointly sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI); the Ellison Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies at the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington; the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's Pacific Northwest Center for Global Studies; and the Institute for Global and Regional Security Studies.

This monograph is the first in a series of studies on aspects of Russian defense and foreign policy that derived the Washington conference. As such, it

represents a fusion of SSI's core mission of providing timely and informed analyses of current and topical issues in international security to governments, professional experts, and interested laymen, as well as SSI's ongoing efforts to reach out to major academic centers and think tanks here and abroad.


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STEPHEN J. BLANK has served as the Strategic Studies Institute's expert on the Soviet bloc and the post-Soviet world since 1989. Prior to that he was Associate Professor of Soviet Studies at the Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, Maxwell Air Force Base, and taught at the University of Texas, San Antonio, and at the University of California, Riverside. Dr. Blank is the editor of *Imperial Decline: Russia's Changing Position in Asia*, coeditor of *Soviet Military and the Future*, and author of *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin's Commissariat of Nationalities, 1917-1924*. He has also written many articles and conference papers on Russian, Commonwealth of Independent States, and Eastern European security issues. Dr. Blank's current research deals with proliferation and the revolution in military affairs, and energy and security in Eurasia. His two most recent books are *Russo-Chinese Energy Relations: Politics in Command*, London: Global Markets Briefing, 2006 and *Natural Allies?: Regional Security in Asia and Prospects for Indo-American Strategic Cooperation*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005. He holds a B.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, and a M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago.

SUMMARY

Four years after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Russia Council came into being, it represents a picture in ambivalence and incomplete realization of partnership. This monograph focuses on the Russian side of this growing estrangement. It finds the Russian roots of this ambivalence in the increasingly visible manifestations of an autocratic and neo-imperial Russian state and foreign and defense policy. These strong trends in Russian policy inhibit the formation of a genuine security partnership that can provide for Eurasian security in the face of multiple contemporary threats.

It is debatable whether Russia really wants a comprehensive partnership with NATO. Its military-political elite still views NATO and the United States in adversarial terms, even though its leadership speaks positively about the value of this partnership. Recent U.S. military initiatives like missile defense or the wars in Kosovo and Iraq are leading Russia to entertain thoughts of withdrawing from many of the existing European arms control treaties. Another cause of estrangement is to be found in that, as Russia regenerates its autocratic imperial model of state building, it aspires to the goal of a free hand in creating an exclusive Eurasian security bloc from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. This effort is incompatible, not only with the democratic choice of many of those peoples, but also with European security as a whole. We can see this, for example, in Moscow's refusal to evacuate the Trans-Dniestrian territory it effectively has annexed from Moldova and its demands for a 20-year base there. Another example is Russia's attempt to block

Ukrainian and Georgian efforts to join NATO at some point. Thus the tendency to demand a free hand in creating a kind of exclusive bloc in Eurasia, buttressed by an approach to security which still remains mired in zero-sum categories, precludes Russia's effective integration with NATO and the maximum benefit that could accrue to it from partnership with NATO.

Russia's ambition to form an exclusive military-economic bloc with its Commonwealth of Independent States neighbors also inhibits it from fully using the possibilities for partnership with NATO in the economic sphere as it relates to defense industrial cooperation. Although NATO is actively pursuing Russian participation in many projects, Russian officials and firms either cannot or will not make the best use of such opportunities. These problems similarly appear in regard to military operations and exercises.

Even though numerous exercises involving NATO and Russian forces take place, the atmosphere remains one of mistrust. Plans for a joint theater missile defense remain just that—plans. Russian military and political leaders express growing concern about Washington's desire to build missile defense bases in Eastern Europe. They dislike the possibilities often discussed in the United States of using nuclear weapons as warfighting weapons, or of using non-nuclear warheads on intercontinental ballistic missiles, or of space-based weapons. Leading Russian military men have trouble understanding how it is that NATO still functions, and they are reluctant to participate in NATO peace operations either in Afghanistan or potentially in Iraq. Indeed, Russia is creating its own peacekeeping brigade for such operations. On the one hand, this brigade is supposed to be interoperable with NATO. On the other, it may be earmarked for use in

and around Russia's borders. In either case, it is highly unlikely that Russia will acquiesce to its own forces being placed under NATO command and control.

If one adds to this geopolitical mistrust and rivalry for influence in and around the former borders of the Soviet Union the absence of either a strong economic basis for East-West cooperation or popular support for it, it becomes clear that the opportunities for partnership are limited intrinsically. Even naval operations to counter terrorism and proliferation on the high seas have now become an issue because NATO wants to conduct exercises in the Black Sea, and Russia is resolutely opposed to any exercise there. Although the naval dimension has been the most productive one for NATO-Russian joint exercises, this dimension of partnership also now is coming under increasing strain and mistrust.

Accordingly, we may observe that, in the ambivalent partnership between NATO and Russia, the inhibiting factors consist of both the so-called values gap and the continuing geopolitical rivalry that never fully went away. Russia's demands for a sphere of influence based upon its autocratic form of rule are intrinsic challenges to the Eurasian security order, not just because the success of that project is predicated upon freezing instability in Moldova and the Caucasus. Rather, the real problem is that Russia has neither the resources nor the capacity to formulate adequate and enduring solutions to regional security issues, and its desires are resisted by key players in Ukraine and Georgia. Russia's attempts to impose its preferences, absent genuine democratization, mean that it necessarily will add to the security burdens of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Eurasia in general, leaving those areas vulnerable to a series of potential

threats that Europe and the United States ultimately cannot permit to flourish. As long as the political will to maximize the benefits of partnership—enhanced security, democracy, and prosperity for all of Eurasia—is lacking, this ambivalence will remain and, with it, enduring stresses and tensions between East and West.

THE NATO-RUSSIA PARTNERSHIP: A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE OR A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP?

Introduction.

Ambivalence, if not tension, remains the key operating word in the Russo-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) relationship. For example, on November 1, 2005, General Yuri Baluevsky, Chief of Staff of Russia's armed forces, said that conflict with NATO is now impossible and that the two sides should cooperate to solve their common problems.¹ One month later, Baluevsky further observed: "as the chief of the General Staff, I do not see a potential enemy as a specific country. We have long since stopped preparing for large-scale nuclear or conventional wars."² However, on November 7, 2005, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov stated that he saw no areas where Russo-NATO cooperation was possible.

Cooperating with Iraq is out of the question. Cooperating in Afghanistan is out of the question too, for historical reasons although we provide military assistance to the country. . . . The progress that we have reached seemed impossible five years ago. At the same time, I do not think our military potentials can be united.³

Ivanov was not just speaking for himself but instead clearly represented a composite view. Thus Lieutenant General Alexander Voronin wrote in the General Staff's journal, *Voyennaya Mysl'* (Military Thought), that,

The question arises: Can Russia participate in a joint operation with NATO countries outside Europe? The answer is yes and no. Today, it is not easy to identify

a geographic area beyond Europe where Russian and NATO interests and priorities would coincide to such a degree as to make it possible to talk not only about the possibility of conducting peacekeeping operations but also interaction between rapid response forces in the foreseeable future.⁴

Voronin's strictures against cooperation applied specifically in a discussion of the possibilities of interoperability between Russian and NATO forces. Yet 6 months earlier, in June 2005, Ivanov, clearly with President Vladimir Putin's support, successfully called upon NATO to increase programs for interoperability of NATO and Russian forces.⁵ Since then, Baluevsky and Ivanov have confirmed that interoperability will refer exclusively to peacekeeping forces and antiterrorist operations, nothing else.⁶ In February 2006, for example, the Russian media reported on Moscow's efforts to seek a Russian air base in Belarus, ostensibly against the threat of a NATO air offensive.⁷ Ivanov's most recent remarks on interoperability show clearly that not only will Russia not be able to cooperate fully with NATO in a crisis, but also that he and his colleagues regard the NATO insistence on democratizing civil-military affairs as destabilizing, if not worse.⁸

Such contradictions are typical. Earlier in 2005 Putin hailed Russia's partnership with NATO as having justified its correctness and as forging a new relationship between the two sides. Yet he also indicated Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement and said that Russia could not join NATO because doing so would threaten its sovereignty and restrict Russia's freedom of action.⁹ Again, on October 31, 2005, Putin stated, ". . . we do not perceive NATO as a hostile organization and develop cooperation with it." Indeed, Putin called for greater activity to enhance the

operational compatibility between Russian and NATO forces, yet Ivanov's November 2005 statement seems to repudiate that cooperation, also undoubtedly with Putin's authority.¹⁰

This ambivalence undercuts any NATO effort or opportunity to respond to Russian proposals for an agenda of cooperation. For example, Ivanov in 2004 said that Russia and NATO could collaborate on exchanging technologies to help secure nuclear facilities.¹¹ Similarly, Russia's Foreign Ministry stated in April 2005 that Russia wanted greater cooperation with NATO, even though some elements of NATO policies (i.e., continuing enlargement and the so-called fabrication of reasons not to bring the Conventional Forces in Europe [CFE] Treaty into force) concerned Moscow. Specifically, Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko called for,

A more advanced level of partnership with the alliance, through closer cooperation in reacting to the threats and challenges of general security [terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, human trafficking], the development of military technological cooperation, and joint participation in handling the aftermath of man-made and natural disasters.¹²

Yakovenko also said that Russia wanted more effort put into creating,

The optimal mechanism for exchanging intelligence information, into developing cooperation in the fight against terror by developing technology jointly and into holding joint exercises and training of subdivisions countering terrorism [i.e., probably special forces—author].¹³

While Moscow has pushed this agenda, in fact its cooperation with NATO evidently has slowed, and there is no sign of major improvement in these areas.¹⁴ Indeed, as seen from more recent developments, tension with NATO, and East-West tension in general, seems to be growing, especially over the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Recognizing this, some Russian commentators state that this cooperation has been “virtual” rather than actual, and that, increasingly, Russian interests either are ignored by NATO or are at risk due to this unequal cooperation.¹⁵ In light of the current rhetorical and political clashes between Moscow and the West, i.e., not just Washington, clearly the ambivalence might evolve into an end of the previous efforts to build a strategic partnership between East and West.¹⁶ Under those conditions, every issue on the current Eurasian security agenda will immediately become much harder to resolve, such as the current crisis over Iranian nuclearization suggests. Thus Russian ties to NATO are not only important by themselves, but also as a barometer of the broader Eurasian security agenda.

Arms Control Treaties.

From the barrage of Russian attacks upon one or another aspect of NATO policy, we can see that this continuing ambivalence relates particularly strongly to the following issues: NATO enlargement, which in the current CIS context means not only the potential membership of states like Ukraine and Georgia, but also out-of-area cooperation with NATO, such as cooperation beyond the established borders of alliance members; issues of defense interoperability and reform beyond a carefully restricted limit of possible

cooperation on antiterrorist measures and possibly peacekeeping; and continuation of the arms control treaties in Europe that ended the Cold War such as the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) in Europe Treaty and the 1990 CFE Treaty.

The Russian debate over these treaties is closely linked to the issue of NATO's enlargement, and the treaties' impact and continuation are seen in the context of that expansion. This debate also reveals the persistence of Cold War thinking in Moscow. Much evidence suggests that various political forces in Russia, particularly in the military community, are urging withdrawal from those treaties, not least because of NATO enlargement towards the CIS and U.S. foreign and military policy in those areas. In March 2005, Ivanov raised the question with the Pentagon of withdrawal from the INF Treaty.¹⁷ Since then, Russian general Vladimir Vasilenko has raised it again more recently, though it is difficult to see what Russia gains from withdrawal from that treaty.¹⁸ Withdrawal from the treaty makes no sense unless one believes that Russia is threatened by NATO and especially U.S. superior conventional military power and cannot meet that threat except by returning to the classical Cold War strategy of holding Europe hostage to nuclear attack to deter Washington and NATO. At least some of the interest in withdrawing from the INF Treaty is connected to Vasilenko's statement that the nature and composition of any future U.S./NATO missile defense would determine the nature and number of future Russian missile forces and systems, even though any such missile defense system could only defend against a few missiles at a time. Thus he said:

Russia should give priority to high-survivable mobile ground and naval missile systems when planning the

development of the force in the near and far future. . . . The quality of the strategic nuclear forces of Russia will have to be significantly improved in terms of adding to their capability of penetrating [missile defense] barriers and increasing the survivability of combat elements and enhancing the properties of surveillance and control systems.¹⁹

In that case, Russia's government and military are postulating an inherent East-West enmity buttressed by mutual deterrence that makes no sense in today's strategic climate, especially when nearly every Russian military leader proclaims, as did Baluevsky above, that no plan for war with NATO is under consideration and that the main threat to Russia is terrorism, not NATO and not America.²⁰ Nonetheless, Russian generals do not raise the issue of withdrawal from the INF Treaty unless directed to do so. These facts suggest that a fundamental problem in the Russo-NATO relationship is the unyielding opposition of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to genuine defense reform and strategic cooperation.

As of 2003, the General Staff stated its opposition to joint Russian-NATO exercises allegedly on the grounds of NATO enlargement and the improvement of missiles.²¹ At the same time, both Ivanov and Baluyevsky made it clear that if NATO remained a military organization, this could force Russia to make changes in its overall military doctrine and nuclear policies.²² Baluyevsky further stated that, "If the anti-terrorist direction of NATO continues, the threshold for using nuclear weapons will become lower and this will require a change of the principle for military planning of the Russian armed forces, including a change of military strategy."²³ In fact, the military's enmity to NATO is due to the alliance's very existence.

As the Ministry stated in the so-called Ivanov doctrine or White Paper of October 2003,

Russia . . . expects NATO member states to put a complete end to direct and indirect elements of its anti-Russian policy, both from military planning and from the political declarations of NATO member states. . . . Should NATO remain a military alliance with its current offensive military doctrine, a fundamental reassessment of Russia's military planning and arms procurement is needed, including a change in Russia's nuclear strategy.²⁴

Alexander Golts, one of Russia's most prominent defense commentators observes that the military must continue to have NATO as a "primordial enemy" for otherwise its ability to mobilize millions of men and huge amounts of Russian material resources would be exposed as unjustified.²⁵ Similarly, Western observers, including this author, have noted the resistance of the military to a genuine reform, even though the forces are being reorganized.²⁶ The problem here, and the Russian military knows it well, is that genuine reform is a precondition for effective partnership with NATO. More precisely, genuine cooperation with NATO entails pressures for internal reform and democratization within the Russian defense structure that are unacceptable to the military-political leadership. Correspondingly, the resistance to reform, in particular the democratization of defense policy, inhibits cooperation with NATO and is deliberately created within the military and political system.²⁷ Evidently Russian leaders no longer perceive democratization as a mere ritual for the White House as they once did, but as a threat to the foundations of Russian statehood.²⁸ That includes a threat to the structure of the armed forces and its top command organizations. Therefore, in spite

of the Russian claims about NATO's inherently anti-Russian essence, questions about why Russia, and especially its national security apparatus, sees the same organization with which it wants partnership as an inherent enemy might better be directed at Moscow.²⁹

Opposition to NATO also is evident in the growing resistance to continuing to observe the CFE Treaty. From the start of the bilateral partnership with NATO, Russian officials made clear their belief that if the Baltic States remained outside the treaty, its future would be at issue along with Europe's overall security, of which it is a key part.³⁰ For example, Ivanov frequently has written that Russia has fundamental differences with NATO over the treaty and that NATO's insistence upon Russia withdrawing from Moldovan and Georgian bases as promised in 1999 at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Istanbul summit is a "farfetched" pretext for not ratifying the treaty or for forcing the Baltic States to sign it. As a result, the Baltic States form "a gray zone" with regard to arms control agreements that could in the future serve as a basis for first-strikes, mainly by air, upon nearby Russian targets.³¹ This sums up many of the military arguments used by Moscow against the CFE Treaty.

Ivanov and other officials, like Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizhov, linked the CFE to the realignment of U.S. forces and bases in Europe.³² Likewise, speaking of the connection between the CFE Treaty and enlargement, Voronin writes that Russia's opposition to CIS members' joining NATO is immutable and that NATO's failure to take Russia's interests into account is very troubling.

Russia should fully take into account the alliance's strategy of spreading its influence to countries neighboring

Russia in the west, south, and southeast, uphold its interests, show strong will, make no concessions, and pursue a pragmatic and effective foreign policy. This raises a number of questions: *First, why do we have to cooperate with NATO at all? Second, what could be the practical payoff from this interaction? And finally in what areas is it expedient to develop military cooperation with the alliance?*³³ (Italics in the original)

Voronin's answer to these rhetorical questions is that it all depends on how soon NATO overcomes Cold War inertia to meet new challenges and threats. In this respect, his approach merely confirms earlier military arguments against the CFE Treaty. Voronin's attitude toward NATO evidently now has become the official line; at a cabinet meeting on May 2, 2006, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Putin that he informed the NATO-Russia Council the previous week that Russia would build its relations with NATO,

Depending on where and how the process of NATO transformation and expansion will go as well as how principles of international law will be observed. Relations will be built, taking into account Russia's interests in the context of a change in the geopolitical situation in the world.³⁴

Those interests to which Lavrov referred are, *inter alia*, no NATO expansion to Ukraine and Georgia, no NATO military bases in the vicinity of Russia even where intended for antiterrorist operations in Afghanistan or the Middle East, and the subordination of NATO's capacity for military action to the United Nations (UN), something it refuses to accept for itself. In short, Russia wants to be able to dominate the former Soviet Union, except for the Baltic States, and have a free hand in doing so militarily as well as in other

domains. That this imperial demand contradicts the interests and openly expressed policies of sovereign states like Georgia and Ukraine seems not to have resonated in Moscow. Neither does Moscow seem to understand that its own fits of petulance, including sanctions and repeated economic blackmail directed against these states, are what drives them to the West because Russian policies give them very good reason to fear for their security. Indeed Russia's zero-sum and archaic, even imperial, view of world politics is almost an ingrained reflex. For example, a newspaper account of recent ties with NATO complained that "NATO plans to absorb post-Soviet countries," as if it is taking away their independence.³⁵

We see the disagreement over NATO enlargement and its linkage to arms control issues very clearly in the struggle over the CFE Treaty. In 2004, Baluevsky stated that the Baltic States' membership in NATO would doom the treaty.³⁶ In 2005, Colonel-General Anatoly Mazurkevich, Chief of the Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation in the Russian Ministry of Defense, complained that the CFE Treaty has been ignored since it was revised in 1999 and that it is slowly "expiring." Allegedly the treaty can no longer uphold the interests of the parties or stability in Europe and now in a strategic region adjacent to Russia and under NATO's full responsibility – the Baltic – the region is absolutely free of all treaty restrictions. This creates the gray zone where no restrictions apply.³⁷ Thus Mazurkevich threatened that,

As things stand, observance of provisions of the treaty have for years been restricted to fulfillment of only one parameter (ground force – author), and not exactly the most important one from the point of view of the whole treaty. It has been restricted to fulfillment of its flanking

commitments by Russia alone. All of that is happening when the international community is fighting terror, the danger that originates—among other areas—in the Caucasus and therefore requires substantial military presence in the region. We are convinced that the second wave of NATO expansion that disrupts the flanking limitations altogether is making observance of its pledges by Russia an absurdity. Even worse, it is making it an unprecedented episode of discrimination in the history of international arms control. And that's how we end up in a situation where NATO expands eastward and the Accord on Adaptation is not working. A situation, in other words, that makes the treaty absolutely unviable. The Russian Federation is not going to pretend that the treaty is working fine and dandy. Unless progress is made, we will initiate a serious discussion of the future of the Treaty at the 3rd Conference scheduled to take place in Vienna in May 2006.³⁸

On January 24, 2006, Ivanov similarly raised the possibility of withdrawing from the CFE Treaty as had Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov a month earlier.³⁹ Russian spokesmen appear to regard this treaty as an obstacle to Western redeployment around its borders, but they fear that NATO is not taking Russian interests seriously by putting airplanes in the Baltic, discussion about setting up missile defense bases in Poland, thus expanding to the Black Sea and towards the CIS.⁴⁰ The General Staff also sees a rising threat to Russia in Washington's and Brussels' interest in emplacing these missile defense bases in Eastern Europe against what they perceive as a rising missile threat, allegedly from North Korea, Iran, or China. Instead, Russian spokesmen, civilian and military alike, view those arguments as pretexts for bases designed against Russian forces.⁴¹ Therefore they view these new bases and missions as a threat to Russian interests, especially as NATO makes clear that it takes issues like pipeline security in the Caucasus very seriously.⁴²

Those projected missile defenses will preclude the use of Russia's tactical or other nuclear missiles in a first-strike mode, as required by current Russian doctrine and strategy against conventional threats. Given Moscow's conventional inferiority vis-à-vis NATO, those missiles are essentially Moscow's sole deterrent and its most effective instrument for controlling intrawar escalation.⁴³ Assuming NATO builds missile defenses to counter those tactical nuclear weapons (TNW), NATO could then threaten a military action to impose political concessions upon Moscow, e.g., democratization somewhere in the CIS, if not Russia itself.

This is hardly a "farfetched" scenario for Moscow. After all, Ivanov recently stated that Russia regards threats to the constitutional order of CIS regimes as the main threat to its security.⁴⁴ In July 2005, Konstantin Sivkov of the General Staff's Center of Military Strategic Studies stated that,

The Alliance has achieved strategic depth of operations in Russia, U.S. tactical aircraft operating from NATO airfields may now reach Moscow, Tula, Kursk, and other cities of Central European Russia. This is an important factor from a geostrategic point of view. . . . It means that there are no more strategic barriers between Russia and NATO. What may it lead to? It may lead to escalation of border disputes with NATO countries (say because of certain territorial claims, or problems with oil production at sea, and fishing matters) into armed conflicts. Dangers of this sort exist in the Baltic region (Estonia claims the Pyatlov District of the Pskov Region) and in North Europe. . . . The situation is such that a local conflict may promptly become international. When it happens, it will be the alliance as such or the United States that will be putting forth demands, not the initiator of the conflict. Weapons may be used if Russia refuses to make concessions—space weapons first and foremost.⁴⁵

Alternatively informational weapons (weapons used to disorient enemy decisionmakers and forces psychologically and even physiologically) that were once thought of as science fiction but are now usable, might be deployed.⁴⁶ In any case Russia must be prepared because it sees the threats to overturn the constitutional order in CIS states as its biggest threat, and those efforts, as Sivkov warned, could then escalate.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, Ivanov demands full transparency from NATO about its actions and plans and raises the issue, or has his subordinates raise the issue, of withdrawal from these arms control treaties.⁴⁸

Russian leaders insist that the Baltic States sign the CFE Treaty; otherwise NATO risks Russia's withdrawal from it, if not the INF Treaty, and the subsequent overturning of the current strategic status quo.⁴⁹ NATO insists that Russia first fulfill its agreement made at the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul to withdraw its forces from bases in Georgia and Moldova. Although it appears the Georgian bases will be vacated by 2008-09, Moscow still refuses to leave Moldova. High-ranking officials like Lavrov and Chizhov still deny that Russia has any legal obligation to withdraw its troops despite those agreements;⁵⁰ or, like Ivanov, they call such demands "farfetched";⁵¹ or, like Voronin, they falsely claim that neither Georgia nor Moldova has raised the issue of these bases!⁵² Moscow not only invokes the unsettled situation due to the original conflict that led to military intervention in Moldova in 1992, it also says that Igor Smirnov's rump government in Trans-Dniestria must approve their withdrawal, thus giving it a "veto" over Russian troop movements.⁵³ Moscow claims that the Smirnov "government" and the citizenry of Trans-Dniestria, the rump region occupied by its troops, will resort to civil disobedience which prevents

them from withdrawing from Moldova.⁵⁴ Therefore it will not withdraw its forces, ammunition, and supplies from Moldova until there is an agreement in place, an agreement which it deliberately prevents from coming into being.

Moscow also raises the following preposterous arguments: Moldova's changing relations with NATO (its request for an Individual Partnership Action Plan [IPAP] from NATO that should be finalized in 2006); Moldova's role in the GUAM organization comprising it, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine, which it now chairs and is helping to revive; and its attitude towards the OSCE (Moldova's lack of support for Russia's plans for reforming the OSCE and weakening its democracy building capability).⁵⁵ However, the real reason may be found in Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin's declaration to NATO upon presenting the request for an IPAP where he said that Moldova seeks to "join a European and Euro-Atlantic security space, never to be part of a post-Soviet security space."⁵⁶ Even if one argues that Russian policy is defensive, striving to fight off a transformation that began in 1989 and which has not yet run its course, that defensive stance still employs the tactics and rhetoric of autocracy and empire.⁵⁷ Thus Moscow tried to implement the 2003 Kozak plan as a basis for a settlement there.

Moldova in many ways represents the most pristine example of the abiding continuities of Russian imperial policy. Not only is this because of the original military intervention but also because, in its attempts to effectuate conflict resolution by leaving Moldova a permanently divided state subject at all times to secession backed by Russian arms, as in Kozak's plan of 2003 for ending the conflict there, Moscow openly replicates Tsarist and Soviet imperial precedents. As one assessment of the Kozak plan observed, its:

... [I]nstitutional features were designed to provide Trans-Dniestria a veto over any legislation that would threaten the leadership. Ultimately these multiple loci of vetoes would make it impossible for the federal government to operate. In addition, the Kozak Memorandum included clauses that could be interpreted to easily dissolve the federation. For example, the Kozak Memorandum allowed for subjects of the federation to have the right “to leave the federation in case a decision is taken to unite the federation with another state and (or) in connection with the federation’s full loss of sovereignty. . . . [thus] Moldovan integration with international organizations such as the EU [European Union] could be used as a basis for the dissolution of the federation under this clause.”⁵⁸

Here Moscow has followed the same pattern as did Tsarist statesmen who also favored divided states subject at all time to Russian military force and corroded from within by internal divisions promoted by Moscow and its local agents.⁵⁹ Indeed, Russia’s justifications for its policies in Moldova hearken back to those of Catherine the Great and her “solicitude” for the Polish Christian minorities in 1768-74. For example, in Moldova, as well as in Ukraine, the Baltic, and even in the Middle East, Putin has invoked the Russian diaspora to justify efforts to obtain more influence. Unfortunately, these tactics evoke Hitler and the Sudeten Deutsche, or Catherine the Great and Polish minorities. Thus Putin told Moldova that,

Russia is interested in Moldova being a territorially whole, independent state. But this cannot be achieved unless the interests of all population groups, including the Transdnister population, are observed. Russia is prepared to participate in creating the conditions in which all residents will feel secure in Moldova. The political treaty must firmly ensure the rights of all those who reside on the territory of Moldova and who consider that Russia can be a guarantor of their rights.⁶⁰

These remarks also betray Putin's intention to employ vigorously all the instruments of power, including the army, allegedly to defend Russians in CIS member countries. Stalin justified his conquests in the same way. Meanwhile, Putin constantly threatens the Baltic states with retaliation for essentially imaginary "repressions" against Russians. And, just as in earlier imperial periods, Moscow has sought a 20-year lease on a base in Moldova.⁶¹ Obviously not only NATO seeks Eurasian military bases.

So rather than observe the 1999 Istanbul accords, Russia repeatedly issues warnings, namely from the military-political elite, about the future of the CFE Treaty. Its opposition to withdrawal from Moldova due to the Voronin government's flirtation with NATO suggests the prominence of the NATO enlargement issue in Moscow's calculations. On December 2, 2005, Baluevsky noted that the NATO refusal to sign the treaty or get the Baltic States to do so is connected directly not with the failure to observe the 1999 Istanbul agreements, but rather with the projected changes in U.S. military presence on the European continent.⁶² Four days later, on December 6, 2005, Lavrov opposed the OSCE's participation in the Moldova issue and insisted that it be resolved bilaterally, i.e., between Smirnov's and Voronin's governments, a clear effort to legitimate forcible annexation and invasion of Trans-Dniestria.⁶³ The Foreign Ministry also rejected the linkage of the Istanbul agreements to those bases and the adoption of the adapted version of the CFE Treaty that would incorporate the Baltic states, claiming that the issue of agreements of withdrawal from Moldova and Georgia "are of a bilateral nature and do not create any obligations on the part of Russia in relation to third countries."⁶⁴

And on December 7, 2005, Lavrov raised the issue of how the U.S.-Romanian agreement on bases for deployment of U.S. forces there affected the adapted CFE Treaty.⁶⁵ Ivanov also stated that this treaty might be threatened by U.S. bases in Romania and warned that unless other states signed the adapted CFE Treaty, Moscow would raise the issue of withdrawing from it. Specifically he said that,

The advancement of the U.S. and NATO infrastructure towards Russian borders raises the question of the future of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Everyone has signed it, but only four states, including Russia, have ratified it. If the treaty is not ratified by all the other signatories, the question arises of whether such a mechanism, which envisages the transparency of military activities within greater Europe, is needed at all. Russia has to date been fully observing all the restrictions imposed on it by the treaty, but if we see that other countries are ignoring the treaty, we will, of course, draw the relevant conclusions.⁶⁶

These examples show how closely and consistently entangled the arms control treaties are with the issues of NATO expansion, interoperability of Russian and NATO forces, and Russia's belief that it is entitled to maintain an exclusive sphere of influence in the CIS. Those three issues—arms control treaties, NATO enlargement, and military transformation—as a basis for cooperation define the parameters of this ambivalent relationship. For example, Russian military analysts and officials regard the expansion of the American network of bases along side of NATO's expansion as representing twin or linked processes to encircle and threaten Russia directly if necessary. Already in 2003, if not earlier, they also professed to regard the U.S. and/or expansion processes as a

direct violation of international law as embodied in the NATO-Russia treaty signed in Paris in 1997 which stipulated no major bases in the territories of the new NATO members at that time: Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland.⁶⁷

This is still a vital issue for Russia. Lavrov recently told the Bulgarian authorities that,

It is for Bulgaria to decide under what conditions foreign bases may be present on its territory. But it is certainly the case that this whole process must take full account of the international legal obligations of the North Atlantic alliance, which, among other things, imply the necessity of holding back the establishment of significant armed forces on the territory of new NATO members.⁶⁸

This continuing and rising ambivalence, if not tension, caused by the reaction to NATO expansion, confirms two key Russian military-political perceptions. First, NATO still refuses to accept the legitimacy of Russia's definition of its interests, and, second, that it remains essentially an anti-Russian military alliance whose capabilities, the facts to the contrary, are growing. Thus, regardless of intentions and of the drawdown of NATO and U.S. forces in Europe since 1991, the Russian military and much of the political class still sees Western capabilities as an inherent or existential threat, defines NATO as an inherently adversarial organization, and perceives it, even as its analysts admit that NATO does not look very effective, as posing a growing threat due to its expansion.⁶⁹ Naturally at no point in this perception of capabilities over intentions and of multiplying threats do any of the Russian protagonists ever consider that Moscow's visibly neo-imperial and unilateral rhetoric and behavior continues to justify this expansion, even as Moscow complains about it.

So along with multiplying threats of withdrawal from existing treaties and demands for a free Russian hand in Eurasia, the tensions over these issues arguably are growing and worsening. Leading Russian spokesmen: Sergei Ivanov; Igor Ivanov, Secretary of the Security Council (no relation); Lavrov; Sergei Lebedev, Director of the SVR, Russian Foreign Intelligence; and Nikolai Bordyuzha, Secretary of The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)—Moscow's effort to organize a CIS-wide defense and security organization under its auspices—all state or have stated that U.S. and NATO advancement, bases, and meddling on behalf of democratization constitute threats to stability, security, and Russian interests in the North Caucasus, and to the Russian federation and the CIS as a whole, as well as in its component regions, the Caucasus, Ukraine, Black Sea, and Central Asia.⁷⁰ Naturally the Russo-Ukrainian energy crisis of 2006 has heightened further mutual suspicions of all sides, including Ukraine and other CIS regimes.

Consequently, in contemporary East-West relations insofar as they pertain to NATO (but the same can be demonstrated for Russo-EU relations), there is a continuing, and possibly even strengthening, strategic-military rivalry, as well as a normative or ideological rivalry over political values in contemporary world politics, the so-called values gap. And both of these trends impede genuine cooperation either among states like the United States and Russia or between organizations like NATO and the EU on the one hand and Russia on the other.⁷¹

The Values Gap and Its Sources.

The following Chinese normative critique of U.S. policy also is shared by Russians. Shaolei Fang of the East China Normal University recently wrote that,

The problem with U.S. unilateralism lies in its ideological character. Put simply, the Bush Administration's unilateralism is an "ideologized" form of power politics. United States unilateralism asserts that government's actions are designed to promote the principles of democracy and freedom. Of course, democracy and freedom are highly desirable. However, what is left unsaid is that the national interest of the United States informs its pro-democracy and pro-freedom rhetoric. Indeed, Western notions of liberalism are inseparable from nationalism.⁷²

Putin gave rise to exactly the same sentiments in his recent address of May 10, 2006, to the Russian Federal Assembly where he sarcastically observed:

We see, after all, what is going on in the world. The wolf knows who to eat, as the saying goes. It knows who to eat and is not about to listen to anyone, it seems. How quickly all the pathos of the need to fight for human rights and democracy is laid aside the moment the need to realize one's own interests comes to the fore. In the name of one's own interests everything is possible, it turns out, and there are no limits.⁷³

Undoubtedly perceptions of American unilateralism and the linked evangelisms of democratization, intervention, and coercive diplomacy have created numerous global tensions on key strategic issues. Furthermore, the United States certainly is not above sustained criticism of its conduct abroad, as any student of contemporary international relations knows

well. Nevertheless, this critique omits the fact that the concepts or values under attack are equally inseparable from NATO members' interests and values, as well as from the interests of those who wish to join NATO and the EU.

In other words, the normative and strategic issues under dispute in Eurasia are not uniquely American. They do not translate merely into a U.S. versus the rest framework. Rather, these issues are the consolidated, legally validated, and institutionalized manifestations of what has come to be called the "good governance" paradigm as it applies to issues of national defense as well as internal politics. In any case, Russia fully subscribed to the treaties, insisting on more democratic standards of conduct in domestic and foreign policies, including defense policies. These treaties, starting with the Helsinki Treaty of 1975 and continuing with the Moscow Accords of 1991 and subsequent agreements, make it clear that the domestic practices of the signatory governments can be subjected legally to the scrutiny and justified criticism of their international treaty partners.⁷⁴ Thus Russian complaints that criticism of Russian deficiencies with regard to democracy are somehow unacceptable because they allegedly are intended to threaten the regime are not only rehashes of old and stale Soviet lines, they have no legal ground to stand on.⁷⁵

But it is precisely because those issues are at the center of disputes that we can see that the tense NATO-Russo relationship stems from both sides' preexisting ambivalence to each other. To the extent that Russia is regressing on democracy and on cooperation with Europe and the United States and that cooperation with the West is in some danger, this ambivalence will persist and even grow.⁷⁶ Therefore this mutual mixed

feeling relates not just to contrasting policies of both parties, but also to fundamental differences in values.

NATO and the EU represent and uphold a normative posture and community that fundamentally clashes with Russia's vision and values—hence the so-called values gap between Moscow and most of Europe and North America. Russia's relationships with European security organizations—the EU, OSCE, and NATO—embody that gap both in terms of politics and in terms of values and norms. Indeed, Russia's ambivalence about being both a part of Europe and about being subjected to its institutional and normative consensus is quite obvious. Russian scholars admit that Russia remains a “risk factor” in European security.⁷⁷ This is not just because Russia's regression to autocracy revives Europe's political-ideological division or because this regression also leads Moscow to espouse a retrogressive and archaic foreign policy outlook based on an agenda of spheres of influence and zero-sum games.

Rather, this regression also endangers European security because of Russian autocracy's inherent foreign policy implications. Autocracy in Russian history logically entails empire, an autarchic and patrimonial concept of the Russian state that is owned by the Tsar, controlled by his servitors, and which can only survive by expansion.⁷⁸ Analysts of Russia know this well. Russian political scientist Egor Kholmogorov more recently has observed:

“Empire” is the main category of any strategic political analysis in the Russian language. Whenever we start to ponder a full-scale, long-term construction of the Russian state, we begin to think of empire and in terms of empire. Russians are inherently imperialists.⁷⁹

Similarly, Dmitri Trenin of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace recently observed that “Russia’s leaders have given up on becoming part of the West and have started creating their own Moscow-centered system.”⁸⁰

But beyond this fact, just as autocracy means that the autocrat is not bound by or answerable to any institution or principle at home, it also means that, in foreign policy, as often happened under the Tsars, Russia feels free not to be bound by its own prior treaties and agreements.⁸¹ The struggle to obtain Moscow’s adherence to the 1999 OSCE Summit Accords it signed as well as the Russo-Ukrainian energy crisis of 2006 fully confirm that point for, whatever else happened in both cases, Moscow has broken its own contract with the OSCE since 1999 and with Kyiv in 2006. Similarly, Lavrov recently said that Russia refuses to be bound by foreign standards or conform to them.⁸² Lavrov also insists that the West respect Russian interests in the CIS but makes no reciprocal statement of respect for the treaties Russia has signed and violated.⁸³ Thus he confirms the warnings of analysts like Trenin that Russia does not want to *belong* to a larger institutional grouping.⁸⁴

Lavrov here speaks for a consolidated elite mentality that sees Russia as an independent, revisionist, even autarchic actor in world affairs that merits recognition as a self-sufficient pole, even empire, in Eurasia. Other analysts, too, have discerned the ideational elements of this stance in the “peculiar conviction” that Russia is a separate civilization, neither wholly Western nor Eastern, and therefore merits a special role in Eurasia as a great power. This concept also insists that neither Ukraine nor Belarus, not to mention the other former Soviet republics, genuinely are capable of being self-

standing, truly independent states. While the Slavic states are tied to Moscow particularly, the others also should be because otherwise they cannot stand on their own and inevitably will become objects of interest from externally threatening powers—a classically Soviet formulation.

Finally, any bloc including those states is a threat to Russia and a stalking horse for NATO and the EU and their supposedly openly anti-Russian policy.⁸⁵ The idea that these states might choose NATO of their own volition is never even considered. Not surprisingly, Russian spokesmen decry the formation of any such blocs and state that without Russia, they inevitably will fail. Alternatively, they look forward to the reunification of the former Soviet republics of the CIS under Moscow's auspices.⁸⁶ Thus Chizhov and Putin's aide, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, have stated publicly that Russia is economically, politically, and militarily self-sufficient.⁸⁷ Chizhov argued further that:

Russia has full rights and counts on participation in European affairs as an equal partner. It should not be isolated from the remaining part of the continent by new dividing lines and should not be the object of "civilizing influence" on the part of other countries or their unions but should be equal among equals.⁸⁸

But obviously Russia cannot be recognized simultaneously as both a state equal to other states and an equal of the EU or NATO without elevating its status and interests above those of other states. This Russian objective is incompatible fundamentally with European security. Thus it is not surprising that key figures like ex-Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, former Security Council Secretary Andrei Kokoshin, and other less well-known figures frequently and

publicly have espoused a revisionist foreign policy that aims to “augment” Russia’s borders and undo the post-1989 status quo.⁸⁹ These statements are only part of a unified elite opinion that has “found it impossible to accept the Russian Federation, in its present form as a *fait accompli*.”⁹⁰

The implications of Russia’s unilateralist and imperial attitude are discernible in ongoing demands for bases throughout the CIS, obstruction in CIS frozen conflicts, and the energy crisis with Ukraine. All these episodes are unmistakably imperial in consequence, and betoken a belief that Russia is an empire sufficient unto itself and thus above all of the other rules of international life, precisely what it criticizes Washington for being.⁹¹ Certainly, Russian scholars know that Russia’s elite and political class have long continued to see the Russian state in imperial terms. As Alexei Malashenko observed in 2000, Russia’s war in Chechnya is logical only if Russia continues to regard itself as an empire.⁹² Along with that insight, we have the aforementioned citations by Kholomogorov, Trenin, and Ivan Ivanov to confirm this point.⁹³

And if Russia is an empire of this sort, then it becomes clear why membership in NATO or the EU becomes a threat to Russian sovereignty. As Deputy Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov stated 1999:

Our country is not in need of affiliation with the EU. This would entail loss of its unique Euro-Asian specifics, the role of the center of attraction of the re-integration of the CIS, independence in foreign economic and defense policies, and complete restructuring (once more) of all Russian statehood based on the requirements of the European Union. Finally great powers (and it is too soon to abandon calling ourselves such) do not dissolve in international unions—they create them around themselves.⁹⁴

Similarly, in Russia's presentation to the EU in 1999, then Prime Minister Putin stated:

As a world power situated on two continents, Russia should retain its freedom to determine and implement its foreign and domestic policies, its status and advantages of a Euro-Asian state and largest country of the CIS. [The] development of partnership with the EU should contribute to consolidating Russia's role as the leading power in shaping a new system of interstate political and economic relations in the CIS area. . . . Russia would oppose any attempts to hamper economic integration in the CIS [that may be made by the EU], including through "special relations" with individual CIS member states to the detriment of Russia's interests.⁹⁵

One cannot imagine a more forthright statement of the classical imperial doctrine of a protectorate and closed sphere of influence over states whose economic sovereignty would therefore be compromised and limited from outside.

It is noteworthy that, in Ivanov's list of reasons for not joining the EU and in Putin's submission, the aspiration for empire preceded integration with or into Europe and is regarded as a necessary condition for the independence and great power status of Russia, two things that are linked inextricably in elite perspectives. This order of preferences suggests the deeply-rooted belief among Russian elites that if Russia is not an empire, it is not a state. Indeed, in pursuit of this mirage of being a great power that can act unconstrainedly in world affairs, the Putin regime has sought to copy the Bush administration's doctrine of preemption or preventive war to justify its unlimited right to military intervention in the CIS. Putin has rather less justification than did President Bush because there have been no foreign-based attacks upon Russia.⁹⁶

Many reasons exist for this trend towards autocracy and neo-imperialism, but, in Russia's case, the reassertion of empire is very much at the heart of the opposition to reform. As often has happened, Russian reform foundered on the rock of empire and the demand of elites for the role of a great power—empire in Eurasia.

Much of the general rejection of the MFA's [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – author] foreign policy direction on the former Soviet Union was caused by the general difficulty in accepting the collapse of empire by the imperialists and even some liberal-democrats.⁹⁷

By placing the priority on empire, Russia is prepared to renounce in advance the advantages it gains from partnership with NATO and/or the EU. As Yuri Borko writes:

It is widely believed among Russia's political, business, and intellectual circles that a policy toward integration with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is incompatible with a policy toward a strategic partnership with the EU, toward integration into the Common European Economic Space and close coordination of foreign-policy and security activities. These circles will hardly cause the Russian president to give up his European policy, yet their efforts may prove enough for sinking the idea of concluding a new PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement).⁹⁸

Similarly, a recent article published in the General Staff's journal, *Military Thought*, states: "Russia's geopolitical situation enables it not only to effectively develop its own national economy but also to form a kind of geo-economic region comprising the world's largest nations—Japan, China, India, and other countries."⁹⁹

Likewise, Alexei Pushkov wrote in 2000 that Russian independence as a great power is tied to its rejection of Europe, the West, America, and thus of democracy in both economics and politics.¹⁰⁰ Empire and unreformed autocracy, with all that it entails, are necessary to stabilize Russia internally and to realize its destiny as a great power – an empire and an independent actor in world politics.¹⁰¹ Neither is this opinion about Russian policy confined to analysts in or out of Russia. We saw Deputy Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov's 1999 standpoint above. In 2002 he told an American-European-Russian forum:

At the same time, Russia is a global and Eurasian power and obviously cannot concentrate its attention exclusively on Europe. Therefore, while stressing our European identity, we prefer to have a free hand in our policy towards and cooperation with all regions, including Asia, the United States, and, above all the CIS. Thus our relations with the EU can be expected to be only contractual, and not institutional, i.e., involving membership or association. This is not a limitation, however, as a recent treaty such as the PCA [Partnership Cooperation Agreement – Author] still offers many untapped opportunities for cooperation—at least 64 of its norms still await implementation.¹⁰²

Moreover, Russia officially insists that Europe recognize this imperial primacy in the CIS as a condition of doing business with it, a doctrine that helps explain the concurrent and parallel stagnation of Russo-EU relations. Thus we have seen above that Putin's submission to the EU in 1999 insisted on a special and exclusive role for Russia in the CIS in order that the EU recognize Russia as a great power. Empire and great power, as well as a free hand in Eurasia, are linked extricably in Russian thinking and policy.¹⁰³

In other words, hegemony in the CIS is essential to the system of internal Russian governance even if it endangers Russia's relations with Europe and future integration into a European system. Although many Russian elites believe that without empire Russia would fall apart into medieval appanage principedoms or become the subject of rival powers' territorial demands, if the conditions of Russia's survival are autocracy and empire, then conditions such as those outlined above that would give rise to withdrawal from the INF Treaty would return. In other words, the price of empire is not just perpetual autocracy, but also perpetual insecurity and the militarization of Russia's foreign relations. Whether such militarization originates with the state or with the armed forces who captured the state (and among them we may count the intelligence and Ministry of Interior "Siloviki," which are now ruling Russia), the outcome is the same—autocracy, empire, insecurity, and economic stagnation under the best of circumstances. Then Russia and its people would have neither security, prosperity, nor freedom.

Yuri Borko's analysis of the clash between demands for a free hand in the CIS and for cooperation with Europe, cited above, is obviously even starker than Ivanov's.¹⁰⁴ However, it shows the foreign policy price paid for chasing the mirage of what Tsarist Minister of Interior Count P. A. Valuev called, "the lure of something erotic in the borderlands." A clash with NATO over both interests and values is inherent in Russia's present self-determination, hence the continuing tension and ambivalence in the Russo-NATO relationship from which nobody benefits.

Being the stronger partner, NATO can afford to be uncertain of its overall direction in a new strategic environment or ambivalent about Russia. But NATO

is not confused about what it represents. Indeed, the overwhelming European support for and consensus about its norms legitimizes the extension of its influence and membership. Russia's case is different. Precisely because its imperial policies in the CIS are not legitimized by anything but force, if its commitment to partnership with NATO basically is instrumental and not strategic or principled, it will fail to gain all the potential benefits that reside in this partnership, i.e., full integration with Europe. Instead, it will be perpetually on guard against NATO and the other members of the CIS, a condition that it simply cannot afford. It generally is acknowledged that only on the basis of full integration with Europe will Russia be treated as a full partner with it.¹⁰⁵ Absent a genuine reconciliation on both sides, mutual suspicion will remain. For now, however, there is good reason to suspect that this purely instrumental or tactical outlook is what drives Russia's partnership.

Russia and NATO.

As Dmitry Polikanov observes, Russia has learned four lessons from NATO. The first is that NATO contains inherent anti-Russian and aggressive predilections, even if this is not by any means the whole story. The second is that Russia still is afflicted with a superpower syndrome and constantly tries "to punch above its weight." Thus Russia opposes any notion of a NATO-centric Europe which comprises NATO as the main security provider and manager of Europe and which entails the irreversible march of democracy and free markets, including in defense policy.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, Russia steadily has sought to subordinate the European alliance systems to an undivided European

security structure where its voice would equal that of NATO or it with the United States (which it regards as NATO's leader). Then either the OSCE or some sort of bipolar structure led by the two superpowers, the United States and Russia, would "crown the edifice."¹⁰⁷ However, since more recently Russia has perceived the OSCE as an organization seeking to challenge its legitimacy and interests in the name of democracy, it now demands reform, i.e., the weakening of the OSCE and its exclusion from key issues like Moldova.¹⁰⁸ In that case, all that remains is a superpower duopoly, which is hardly a viable strategy for enhancing East-West ties.

Polikanov's third lesson is that Russia simultaneously sought to use this partnership to get inside NATO, preserve Russia's special status, and pursue what he calls a "Trojan horse strategy", exploiting NATO to strengthen Russia's overall global position.¹⁰⁹ Finally, a fourth, post-September 11, 2001 (9/11), lesson that he discerns in Russia's policy community is that NATO's current failure to find its way has made it in some sense irrelevant to Russia, even though NATO's failure to define new missions fuels apprehensions that it still retains its anti-Russian purpose.¹¹⁰

Obviously cooperation on such a basis will be strained at best. Partnership with NATO cannot have as its purpose merely keeping restraints on that major geopolitical factor so that Russia can entertain better relations with its key members than with the EU or NATO. Yet this is what A. Kelin, Deputy Director of the Department of General European Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, openly postulates as Russia's purposes. And he did so in the ministry's journal, *International Affairs*.¹¹¹ Thus, as Kelin writes, Russia's fundamental objection to NATO's enlargement or expansion is:

That our European neighbors will be increasingly dependent, both politically and militarily, on NATO's decision-making mechanism. In practice, the dependence will be in force on a much broader range of issues than defense against outside aggression, as recorded in the 1949 Washington Treaty.¹¹²

In other words, NATO expansion really does not threaten invasion but rather the further enlargement of the sphere of Eurasian democracy which Russian leaders regard as an intrinsic threat to their security, stability, sovereignty, and status. This confirms the observations of many Western scholars that what is at stake in NATO enlargement is not a military or political threat to Russian security. Instead, "the fundamental issues involve status and perception, rather than structure and power."¹¹³

But if expansion takes place (as it did after publication of Kelin's article), "Russian foreign policy tasks come to minimizing the likely damage."¹¹⁴ It is hard to imagine how the expansion of a zone of democracy, peace, and free markets buttressed by years of a major international consensus on supra-national restrictions on the use of force beyond the cause of self-defense constitutes damage to anyone's interests unless that party is a priori hostile to those principles and their embodiment in NATO. But Kelin's argument clearly suggests that what is at stake for Russia is continuation of its autocratic form of state power which can only be maintained as an empire. NATO enlargement based on democratic principles, not least among them being democratic and civilian control of the military, represents a mortal threat to both the imperial and autocratic systems. Consequently, Russian strategy aims to limit the damage to Russia from those actions and principles, suggesting that Moscow views them as a priori threats or at least as challenges to its security.

This damage limitation posture is inherently revisionist and ultimately opposes the pacification of Europe that is the greatest product and triumph of our times.

Damage limitation is a strategy that postpones Russia's European engagement. Underlying this argument is a long-term strategic consideration aimed at the new European balance of the twenty-first century. Russia, currently in a phase of geopolitical and economic decline, must prevent the fixation of this unfavorable status quo by any treaty, agreement or security system. Russia is objectively interested in maintaining the current uncertain and unstructured security arrangement that took shape in Europe in the wake of the Cold War as long as possible—preferably until the economic upsurge in Russia expected by the middle of the next decade. Russia is therefore instinctively opposed to any institutional upgrade of European security, NATO enlargement included; it would prefer to see European security not as an institution, but as an open-ended process (much like the former CSCE; hence the current impact of Moscow on the OSCE) and would like to dissolve it in various pan-European collective security proposals, reminiscent of old Soviet designs of the 1930s.¹¹⁵

This is ultimately unacceptable to Europe, not to mention Washington, and is incompatible with any enduring notion of European security. It also means that Russia sees itself as perpetually at risk and under siege—as would be the case for and justification for withdrawing from the INF Treaty—because it will not conform to the good governance paradigm, or because it has no faith in it. Adhesion to this posture betrays Russia's inability to escape from old thinking and notions of imperial blocs and precludes genuine security cooperation beyond a very limited range of issues. Even its vaunted concept of multipolarity, which

its foreign policy is intended to serve, is ultimately a recipe for conflict, not for peace. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said,

Multipolarity was never a unifying idea. It represented a necessary evil and supported a condition without war, but it never contributed to the victory of peace. Multipolarity is a theory of competition, a theory of competing interests—and worse still—competing values.¹¹⁶

In fact, studies of Russia's leading concept of its foreign policy objectives—multipolarity—dating back to the inception of the term nearly a decade ago, demonstrate that it presumes an exclusive Russian sphere of influence or neo-imperial hegemony in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) which is neither sustainable nor acceptable to those states and their peoples, or to Europe. Thus it represents the antithesis of partnership, namely rival and competing blocs, as Secretary Rice suggests.¹¹⁷

Russo-NATO Cooperation.

Paradoxically, and at the same time, one of the most innovative trends in world politics since 9/11 continues to be the NATO-Russian partnership as embodied in the NATO-Russian Council (NRC). The NRC replaced the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) that was established when NATO enlarged in 1997, but which failed to perform as a viable mechanism for partnership. NATO and the NRC generally bypassed Russia which, to be sure, had little constructive to offer to it, and especially with regard to Kosovo. So the entire history of the PJC left a bitter taste in Moscow's mouth, leading it to withdraw from partnership in 1999.¹¹⁸ In

contrary fashion to this unhappy experience, every observer, foreign or Russian, recognizes that the NRC functions as a real working partnership and that this partnership has actually been established.¹¹⁹ Therefore a mechanism exists both for continuous consultation and resolution of problems, as well as for regular high-level consultations between the Russian government and NATO's leadership. Russia has a voice like other NATO members, and the Council operates by consensus, giving each member a veto.

While tensions remain in this relationship, Putin, Ivanov, and Baluevsky generally profess satisfaction with what has been achieved as their quotes above show.¹²⁰ Indeed, Putin stated in January 2005 that experience had proven that it was the right choice to enter into partnership and dialogue with NATO and, despite Russia's opposition to NATO expansion, wanted to deepen its defense and defense industry collaboration with NATO. Moreover, this partnership had become a major force for global stability.¹²¹ Numerous working groups and organizations have been set up, regular dialogues occur, and lead to agreements covering 12 major areas. The particularly important issues covered by these discussions and/or agreements are antiterrorism, antiproliferation, crisis management, intelligence-sharing against those threats, naval search and rescue, theater missile defense, and efforts to hammer out key documents that will govern future Russo-NATO activities which foster greater cooperation and interoperability among them; in 2005 some 50 cooperative military activities took place.¹²²

Russia also has joined the provisional weapons standardization agreement of NATO, making it easier for Russia to gain access to new foreign weapons markets.¹²³ Indeed, this action suggests that key sectors

of the Russian economy, in this case the defense industry, benefit from having an active, working connection to NATO. NATO's eastward expansion that bypassed Russia led former Soviet customers to opt for European and U.S. weapons systems to meet those standardization requirements and gain political favor in Western capitals and with influential lobbyists who now had contracts with these states to defend. This expansion also coincided with the consolidation of the Euro-Atlantic arms market around transnational mega-alliances and internal liberalization, again processes that largely excluded Russia and meant lost profits for it.

For example, Israel, not Russia, upgraded Romania's Mig-21s to make them compatible with NATO requirements. More recently, thanks to the ties to NATO, Russia was able to upgrade Slovakia's Mig-29s to NATO standards, so such opportunities can be a lucrative source of income for Russia's defense sector.¹²⁴ As the following 2001 essay indicated, the consequences of Russia's continued estrangement from the Western arms market by staying aloof from Western agreements soon would have made themselves felt to Russia's lasting disadvantage.

Geopolitically, this means a shift of Russia's most advanced technological sector toward the Third World. Since the Russian military industrial complex does not have an opportunity to realize its material interests in the West, it has become NATO's normative adversary. Moreover, Russia's isolation from military-technological integration within the Euro-Atlantic alliance is fraught with the growth of technological backwardness in advanced sectors of Russian industry. This may result in marginalization of Russia's great-power status. Therefore, the most rational means to preserve Russia's top international ranking may be found in cohesion with

NATO and integration into the Euro-Atlantic space both politically and militarily-economically.¹²⁵

Clearly Russia has compelling material and strategic interests at stake which can only be secured through practical and principled interaction with NATO. For example, Russia has been involved in a variety of programs with NATO's Research and Technology Organization (RTO), attending the Research and Technology Board (RTB) meetings that are open to Partnership for Peace (PfP) members. Approximately 60 percent of RTO activities are open to Russia, but Russian participation only has been significant when these activities are held in Russia; otherwise it has been notably less significant. Moreover, those activities that are growing and open to Russia like Task Groups have not been the scene of major Russian participation. Instead, Russia evidently limits its participation mainly to symposia and educational activities.¹²⁶

Given the self-evident benefits to both sides from robust military-technical collaboration, Russia's failure to exploit the opportunities open to it may be due to the following reasons:

Russia still does not trust NATO and member nations, and the eastward expansion of NATO exacerbated Russian concerns. Conversely, the newest members do not trust Russia and show little interest in being more involved with it under an RTO umbrella. The Russian economic situation also continues to be an obstacle to increased cooperation; the costs associated with almost all RTO activities are funded directly by member nations, which presents a particular problem for Russia. Finally, Russian concerns over intellectual property rights and NATO's lack of understanding of complex Russian laws, rules, and regulations in regard to exchanging pre-competitive scientific information can be stumbling blocks that require education of, and by, all parties involved.¹²⁷

Other dangers to the Russian defense industry exist if it does not work more closely with NATO: one is that it will not be able to compete with NATO as CIS states start to buy their own weapons systems. By 2001, it was clear that two of Putin's most critical policy initiatives were to reintegrate the CIS around Russia and to reorganize the defense industry. Russia pursues a decisive sphere of influence within CIS economies through defense-economic integration as in Ukraine's, Belarus', and Kyrgyzstan's cases. By reintegrating the former Soviet defense industrial network's conventional and nuclear capabilities, Moscow regains access to skills that had been lost, e.g., the aerial leg of its strategic nuclear triad through the TU-95s and TU-160s that it obtained from Ukraine in return for energy supplies. Moscow pursues this reintegration because the lack of an integrated system within the CIS means that it cannot strike deals that would otherwise have benefitted its military-industrial complex industries that are on the verge of bankruptcy, i.e., those that cannot compete. It also is true that Moscow cannot produce crucial weapons systems like nuclear powered submarines, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles cannot be produced without the participation of a host of contractors spread out across the CIS.¹²⁸ To the extent that CIS members deal with NATO in buying systems, they deprive Russia of markets and of further opportunities to restore the "All-Union" defense industrial plant. And such trends already are underway and noticed in Moscow.¹²⁹ Thus both Putin and Ivanov have observed that if Ukraine joined NATO, it would have to end defense industrial collaboration with Moscow. This would be a burden to both Moscow and to Ukraine's defense industry.¹³⁰ So there is a veiled threat here to Ukraine as well as a realization that

to compete in the CIS, Russia must keep pace with NATO.

Nevertheless, the real issue is whether Russia truly wants to be involved intimately with NATO. As the authors of the study on Russo-NATO scientific-technological cooperation observe, "It is clearly fundamental that NATO wants to cooperate with Russia across a broad front. One only has to consider the Alliance's near-continuous outreach."¹³¹ Otherwise, if Russia's defense industry and its state masters believe NATO is an enemy as stated above, that attitude will dominate military policy even more strongly than is now the case. But until now, for many reasons: historical legacies, differing economic structures, financing, and interoperability issues, military-technical cooperation with Russia has "basically been limited to the conceptual level."¹³²

This particular failure reinforces one of the main problems underlying East-West relations and particularly Russo-American relations, namely that no sound economic basis exists for cooperation or interest groups to champion. Nevertheless Russian figures like Vladimir Rubanov, Vice-President of the League of Assistance for Defense Enterprises, maintain that Russian defense industry is ready, and more importantly able to cooperate with NATO to implement joint projects on the basis of Russian technologies to create technological tools for combatting terrorism.¹³³ Given the state of the Russian defense industry, which does not satisfy Moscow, this may be wishful thinking.¹³⁴ Other figures argue that the real place for cooperation is in information technologies.¹³⁵ Be that as it may, in view of the regression of the Russian economy, particularly in sectors like energy, to ever more statism and attacks upon foreign investment, such cooperation becomes even less likely.¹³⁶

Such interaction is or could be equally valuable in the purely military arena, as well. Based on the original Russo-NATO agreement of 2002, the NRC serves as the principal structure and venue for cooperation of both sides. Its work focuses on the following six areas to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation: The struggle against terrorism, including intelligence-sharing; crisis management and peacekeeping; non-proliferation; arms control and confidence-building with reference to arms control treaties; theater missile defense; search and rescue at sea; military-to-military cooperation and defense reform; civil emergencies and consequence management; and new threats and challenges.¹³⁷

Consequently, an increasing number of exercises and activities embrace both sides. These can give the armed forces of all the participants valuable experiences on which to build genuine cooperation in future operations. Thus, in 2005 and 2006, some 50 Russo-NATO exercises are being planned on an annual basis.¹³⁸ At the same time, NATO is working with Russia to draft plans for reforming Russia's armed forces.¹³⁹ This last point probably refers to Putin's earlier request for such help. That assistance, if realized and accepted as a basis for genuine defense reform of Russia's armed forces, ultimately may result in the most productive, consequential, and enduring aspect of this relationship given the failure of Russian defense reform to date.¹⁴⁰

Putin also has replaced defense cadres, placing men with greater willingness to cooperate with NATO in key positions and appointing an ambassador with a staff to NATO. A Russian branch office now functions at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), and parts of the Russian mission to NATO have moved into NATO headquarters,

enhancing daily cooperation among the parties.¹⁴¹ Indeed, Western writers openly discuss a possible NATO-Russia contingency command.¹⁴² Some Western writers believe that the culture of interaction that now reigns at the NRC has had positive effects on Russian decisionmaking to the point where they consider the mission to NATO “a veritable model of interagency decisionmaking” (something that would surprise most Russians). Thus, “if anything, then, the Russian representatives in Brussels have improved upon NATO Headquarters’ civil-military model,” and at least one member expressed envy at the Russians’ “close-knit cooperation.”¹⁴³

There is great scope for cooperation but the ongoing ambivalence threatens it. For instance, Russia strongly has pushed the idea of cooperation on theater missile defenses, but if Washington installs its own systems in Poland and elsewhere in Europe, that will negate any chance for Russia to gain a hearing for its defenses, regardless of issues of quality of these differing systems. First, such deployments suggest to Moscow that Russian missiles are regarded as a threat to Europe.¹⁴⁴ Second, Russia also would be discomfited by rejection of its systems even though NATO’s defense systems have worked together and become quite integrated among themselves, making the question of compatibility with Russian systems an issue that is difficult to resolve in practical terms. This is because Russia eagerly wants NATO to buy its s-300 and forthcoming s-400 anti-air missiles which it claims are among the best in the world.¹⁴⁵

Third, Baluevsky has warned that the new U.S. military doctrine, “provides for the probable use of nuclear arms for political purposes and also lowers the threshold for the use of nuclear arms.”¹⁴⁶ Therefore,

failure to achieve progress on missile defense suggests to Russian leaders that this is an accurate reflection of American and thus NATO strategy. Fortunately, at least as of March 2005, Baluevsky was satisfied with the progress attained on this issue. As he then observed:

Cooperation in this area has the ultimate goal of creating future Russian and NATO mobile air/missile defense force elements which could be employed in the course of peacekeeping or antiterrorist operations and other crisis response operations. The present priorities are to study the compatibility of air defense assets having a missile defense potential and prepare and hold joint command and staff exercises and drills. On the whole, we assess positively the progress and results of Russian and NATO cooperation in the theater missile defense area. In particular, rules have been worked out for organizing coordination between Russian and NATO theater missile defense groupings in conducting a crisis response operation. Experts are discussing the procedure and the goals of joint command and staff exercises and are assessing the possibility of compatibility of specific types of arms.¹⁴⁷

Yet by June 2005, new Russian anxieties arose regarding this issue.

What puts us on our guard is that the Americans are keen to deploy missile interceptors in space. Russia has already opposed such steps of the United States as undermining the foundations of global security. Were the NATO members to support the Pentagon's steps involving the deployment of components of missile defense arms in space, this would manifestly pose a threat to the security not only of Russia but of all countries also. The deployment of a European theater missile defense thus has to do with problems of global security, and the alienation from the process of Russia points to a policy of double standards that the NATO countries and the United States are continuing to attempt to pursue.¹⁴⁸

Even so, reflecting the progress to date, in April 2005 NATO and Russia signed a status of forces agreement for NATO forces that may be operating in Russia.¹⁴⁹ At that time, Russia and NATO also were pointing regularly to significant and greater mutual cooperation between them, not least with regard to antiterrorist operations.¹⁵⁰ Russian leaders consistently and repeatedly were espousing military cooperation with NATO along these and other lines.¹⁵¹ Both sides also have reached agreement on a document containing political understandings that should govern future joint peace operations.¹⁵² This last point might prove to be particularly meaningful, given the existence of so many “frozen conflicts” in and around Russia’s territories and the Chechen war’s spread into the North Caucasus.

On the other hand, Russian officials visibly cannot understand how or why NATO continues to function.¹⁵³ Consequently, they often openly say that it should or will soon disappear, and that its effectiveness already has been greatly diminished. Yet they also still fear its military-political potential. These contradictory impulses indicate their own unresolved ambivalence. For example, Baluevsky has stated that NATO’s command and control structure intrinsically is inefficient, and NATO is no longer necessary as a military-political body.¹⁵⁴ Of course, in that case, enlargement is unjustified and senseless. He made this statement despite his open recognition of the successes in the partnership to date and support for enhanced cooperation. Other commentators seem to gloat that due to the Iraq invasion—with which NATO had nothing to do—it is “coming apart at the seams.”¹⁵⁵ This ambivalence colors every aspect of this “zebra-like” relationship with alternating light and dark stripes

despite the universal recognition of the NRC's advance over previous efforts at Russo-NATO partnership.¹⁵⁶

Many factors make for this zebra-like quality. For example, as one might suspect, given Russian reluctance to expand its scope, the "deliverables" from this new found interoperability actually are quite thin when assessed in substantive terms. Most of the NRC's work has been on agenda-setting, feasibility studies, and preliminary consultations.¹⁵⁷ Little actual joint action has occurred. In the Balkans, joint activity actually has diminished as Russia has withdrawn its forces. Neither will Russia send either regular or peacekeeping forces into Iraq or Afghanistan.¹⁵⁸ Nor is progress on conventional arms control likely anytime soon, as we have seen.¹⁵⁹ Worse, the Russian military continues to sabotage cooperation.¹⁶⁰

Similar problems can be seen with regard to tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) in Europe. Despite the progress in reducing the number of deployed TNW in Europe since 1991, NATO analysts still want Moscow to consider bringing those weapons into the Combined Threat Reduction program (CTR). Congress also has urged the U.S. Government to make a greater effort to secure these weapons, whose small size, dispersion, mobility, and weaker security and safety features continue to cause concern.¹⁶¹ However, Russian officials show little desire to discuss this issue, leading Washington to claim that they are stalling.¹⁶² As a recent analysis of this issue observes,

Russian officials have resisted extending threat-reduction activities to their TNW because they believe that their opacity contributes to deterring a preemptive NATO attack. Uncertainties regarding the number and location of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons mean that NATO planners cannot be sure of destroying them in a first

strike. Such considerations weigh against proposals to consolidate Russia's TNW, even if dispersal makes them more vulnerable to terrorists. Russian analysts also note that TNW represent one of the few areas where Russia enjoys military superiority over NATO.¹⁶³

Russian leaders also claim that the remaining U.S. air-delivered TNW in Europe could be used in a first-strike attack of a strategic nature against Russia, targeting command and control or strategic nuclear centers. Therefore Ivanov stated in 2005 that Russia was prepared to start talks on TNW only when all countries having them would keep them on their own territory. This led to the U.S. complaints about Russian stalling since both Russia and America could quickly redeploy their missiles or use them immediately in the Russian case.¹⁶⁴ Obviously this suggests Moscow's concern that Washington does not want to discuss this issue seriously so that it can threaten Russia with its own TNW or conventional missiles. Thus, as a result of NATO enlargement, Russia is now strengthening Moscow's air defenses as well as those in Central Asia and the Caucasus.¹⁶⁵ But this issue also suggests that Russia, if not NATO and Washington, still see each other through a deterrence prism—one of potential threat, not a lens of cooperation and cooperative security.

Beyond that, as Polikanov noted, there is little constituency in Russia for further cooperation with NATO or public interest in it. Russian policy depends upon personalities and is driven by changes in internal politics, such as the growing state nationalism of the Putin period. Russian military quality has declined steadily since 1990, and no interest exists in genuine large-scale cooperation, as there is in such cooperation with China and India such as occurred in 2005. Instead,

the army would be happy to confine itself to staff games on maps or small scale compatibility of specialized forces for example, peacekeeping forces which are only now getting off the ground. And, of course, NATO expansion fuels all the preexisting Russian resentments and fears.¹⁶⁶ Neither do these factors encompass all the observed shortcomings of the relationship.¹⁶⁷

Peace Operations and Peacekeeping Forces.

Russia stood up a peacekeeping brigade in 2005 whose missions would take place, first of all, in the CIS.¹⁶⁸ This decision may have grown out of NATO-Russian discussions in the NRC.¹⁶⁹ Ivanov also observed that Russian forces must be trained so that they can conduct peacetime operations to defend Russian economic, political, and security interests, including UN or CIS sanctioned peace operations.¹⁷⁰ The Russian Ministry of Defense also is reportedly,

Working on the issue of setting up a new force—the Special Designation Forces, which will be formed from Spetsnaz brigades; each military district and the navy has one Spetsnaz brigade. They are expected to have air, ground, and marine components, and be involved in peacekeeping and counterterrorist operations. The new force would be immediately subordinate to the Defense Minister.¹⁷¹

This peacekeeping brigade also will be interoperable with NATO, i.e., English-speaking, and perform missions within Russia and/or adjacent hot spots or with the UN and NATO.

Yet prospects for its deployment with NATO are not going to be easy to resolve. Certainly, it will not go to Iraq or Afghanistan as the United States allegedly

was hoping, according to Russian sources.¹⁷² One aspect of NATO expansion that alarms Russian leaders is the increasing possibility of NATO's presence in and around the former Soviet Union due to an expansion of its remit to include potential peace support missions in the former Soviet Union. NATO already is looking for ways to develop means of securing the pipelines that bring Russian oil and gas to Europe and that could entail interventions in the CIS.¹⁷³ Thanks to the energy crisis of 2006 with Ukraine, the possibility of NATO intervention on behalf of its members' energy interests is growing. Poland has now proposed a European energy treaty for all members of both the EU and NATO, and thus excluding Russia, that would contain among other provisions a mutual energy security clause resembling NATO's Article V where signatories would support each other "in the event of a threat to their energy security from natural or political causes." Countries outside the treaty could join it later provided that they would assist any member states in need to build and develop the technical infrastructure necessary for such cooperation.¹⁷⁴ Poland's proposal would oblige the parties to act in concert in the face of any energy threat provoked by either a cut or a diminution of supply sources that may occur because of natural disasters, disruption of wide distribution and supply systems, or political decisions by suppliers.¹⁷⁵ Moscow's reaction to such possible missions easily is imaginable.

Since the projection of power through peace support operations has become a primary means of acquiring spheres of influence in what Europe and Russia increasingly regard as key strategic peripheries, it is understandable that, in the event of future peace support operations in those countries under EU or NATO auspices, Russia would demand participation

as an equal operator, not necessarily under NATO command.¹⁷⁶ For example, Russian officials have told the EU that, should there be an EU peace operation anywhere within the CIS, Russia demands formal equality with it in joint operations or even Russian command.¹⁷⁷

Undoubtedly should NATO try to mount a similar operation in the CIS, Russia will make the same demand. As a Polish assessment of Russia's relationship to NATO observes,

The Russian standpoint on peacekeeping is quite clear-cut. Moscow is no longer interested in participating in NATO-led peacekeeping operations, i.e., as an ordinary contributor (it has shown this by withdrawing its troops from the Balkans among other actions); instead it wants NRC-led operations (co-deciding on every stage and participation in operational planning). It is not clear where such an operation could potentially be conducted. Russia has so far been skeptical about the idea of potentially conducting such operations in the NIS (although it has not explicitly rejected such a possibility). On the other hand, the Russian proposals to support NATO-led operations in Afghanistan have only been accepted to a limited extent (mainly exchange of intelligence information and supporting efforts to combat drug smuggling, cooperation on border security is being considered).¹⁷⁸

Western assessments also concur with this analysis. For example,

Russians rightly argue that the legitimacy of unmandated NATO action beyond the alliance's collective defense role is questionable on legal grounds. More to the point, situating such functions in NATO excludes not only Russia, but also the other non-NATO EAPC (Europe-America Political Council) members. Russians believe they have a formal right to a say in the management

of crises on their periphery and in the region between Russia and the West. They are concerned that Russia is excluded from an institution that “is gradually turning into the central element in the organization of the European political space.”¹⁷⁹

Ivanov’s remarks cited above suggest the accuracy of this proposal. While it is unclear if Russian opposition could prevent a CIS state from applying to NATO for such an operation as it would most likely be against Russian supported secessionist forces as in Georgia and Moldova, one cannot easily expect Russian support despite the agreements on political conditions governing them and anti-terror operations cited above.¹⁸⁰

Such forms of peace support operations inherently are dubious in the CIS for other reasons as well. For example, Russia is a patron of at least one side in each of these conflicts, as well as a participant through the use of its forces in many of them. Allowing it to direct any potential peace operation in question openly yields to Moscow’s conflict of interests and represents an a priori degradation of the other party’s authority, standing, and sovereignty. Indeed, recent research suggests that the premature dispatch of troops in the guise of peacemakers in such conflicts, as Russia has done, actually makes it harder to mediate a solution to the conflict at hand.¹⁸¹ Russian stonewalling in Moldova and Georgia’s conflicts and its earlier support for Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh make its participation as a peace support force in a post-conflict phase dubious. And in any case, it is well-known that the formula being discussed for Nagorno-Karabakh is that any peacekeeping forces there would be from neither neighboring states nor from members of the Minsk group: Russia, France, and the United States.¹⁸² Thus it

is difficult to see where this peacekeeping force could work together with NATO inside the CIS. And since Ivanov recently has ruled out cooperation beyond its borders, future prospects for its joint deployment with NATO are clouded at best. So in any case, yielding to this Russian demand for command equality benefits neither NATO's or Russia's larger interest in peace or democracy, nor is it practicable anytime soon.

Moreover, Russia obviously is building the forces needed to conduct such operations on its own or with its "allies" in the CIS, i.e., CSTO. Then it will have the forces with which to carry out peace support or stability operations in Eurasia either with or without NATO, although the currently stated intention is to deploy these forces on the basis of interoperability with NATO.¹⁸³

Notwithstanding the political obstacles to joint deployment discussed above, other difficulties also beset this relationship. Should this Russian force reach a satisfactory level of interoperability with NATO regarding mastery of English, identification of friend or foe (IFF) signatures for aircraft, and compatible operating procedures and equipment – all of which are formidable, long-term, and expensive undertakings – strategic political issues which have yet to be resolved then will make themselves felt. Thus despite the fact that both sides have discussed compatibility of antiterror military units and joint training for special forces in 2005, the extent of actual military cooperation remains to be seen.¹⁸⁴

This does not mean that such operations cannot or will not be mounted. Indeed, Russian analyst Sergei Oznobishchev has suggested that it would be good if all parties concerned – NATO, Russia, and the Baltic states – would conduct peacekeeping exercises jointly

in the Baltic states, because doing so could help reduce mutual suspicion among these parties.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Russian leaders have urged increased cooperation in counterdrug operations, which could conceivably employ joint antiterrorist or special forces.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, Russian aircraft could provide airlift for NATO forces and missions.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, joint exercises will continue throughout 2006 and beyond in the fields of theater missile defense, counterterrorism, peace operations, and, most of all, naval operations.¹⁸⁸

Naval Issues.

Indeed, naval operations represent the most promising area in joint exercises as numerous opportunities exist for meaningful cooperation on common tasks and missions. Nevertheless, strains have been felt in regard to naval exercises of an antiterrorist nature because NATO wants to exercise not only in the Mediterranean—an idea to which Russia has agreed—but also in the Black Sea. And when the issue becomes one of NATO exercising, not even actually operating in and around Russia, Russia's military-political opposition to genuine cooperation throughout Europe, including the areas it claims as its sphere of influence, reiterates itself. This opposition rises even though Russian and Western analysts concur about the tremendous field of activity open to enhanced Russo-NATO naval cooperation.¹⁸⁹

As we noted above, the General Staff opposed exercises with NATO well into 2003-04.¹⁹⁰ Yet NATO members like Poland, the Baltic states, and Russia have been able to conduct exercises in the Baltic Sea.¹⁹¹ And the Russian military surprisingly was enthusiastic about participating in Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOR

in the Mediterranean.¹⁹² Nonetheless, this enthusiasm only appeared after Russia sought to impose special conditions on its participation in this exercise, which has been a highly successful centerpiece of NATO members' antiterrorist naval cooperation since 2001.

Russia had wanted to exempt its own commercial vessels from mutual inspection procedures; the lynchpin of the operation. Then it demanded that "Active Endeavor" be governed by the NATO-Russia Council, even as it asked the alliance to pay for Russian participation. NATO rejected all these, but finally elaborated an awkward arrangement whereby the Russian Navy operates in conjunction with NATO, but not under its command.¹⁹³

Russia also reserved the right to use weapons during the exercise as it will be operating jointly with, but not as part of, the NATO AF South forces.¹⁹⁴

But when the other littoral states except Turkey proposed conducting this exercise in the Black Sea, Moscow flatly refused to support it.¹⁹⁵ While these states' request made sense, given the centrality of security issues to the Black Sea region as a whole, Moscow's attitude is not surprising. When NATO conducted exercises with Ukraine along the Black Sea coast in 2003, the Russian press reported Russia's opposition on the grounds that Russian military men could not accept "alien" NATO naval vessels in what they considered to be their lake. Worse, since those operations' scenario postulated an antiseparatist operation, Russian officials saw this as an intimation of future NATO assistance to Georgia or Ukraine against Moscow-backed separatists in Abkhazia or Crimea.¹⁹⁶ Once Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOR raised the issue of the Black Sea, the same concerns came to the fore: the potential for internationalization of the Georgian-

Abkhazian conflict, in which maritime gun running, smuggling, and other crimes are rife, and are protected by the Russian forces, and tensions with Ukraine over the future disposition of the Black Sea Fleet and boundaries along the Sea of Azov.¹⁹⁷

Consequently, we cannot doubt that alongside the real cooperation with NATO there exists an intensifying military-political rivalry with NATO and the EU for dominance in the CIS. Fortunately for Russia, Turkey also has opposed holding this exercise in the Black Sea, ostensibly to uphold the Montreux Convention, even though warships have gone through the Straits since 1992, and Turkey is more likely to maintain the existing naval duopoly in the Black Sea with Russia.¹⁹⁸

NATO in the Baltic and CIS.

If naval cooperation is the most promising venue for bilateral strategic cooperation with NATO, this case shows how limited that cooperation is and how limited are prospects for genuine cooperation in the future. Here, for example, we not only see the reluctance to expose Russian forces to NATO operating procedures and culture, but also the fact that rivalry over the CIS and Russia's continuing effort to maintain an imperial private preserve there contradict the larger drives of European security. This rivalry inhibits all efforts at progress in effectuating genuine East-West security and defense cooperation and inhibits the stabilization of Eurasia.

Although Russian commentators announce regularly that the United States or NATO is building a base or seeking one somewhere in the CIS, in fact NATO has renounced any official participation in any of the frozen conflicts along the Russian periphery or

the pursuit of bases in that same periphery.¹⁹⁹ What NATO is doing in building up local governments' defense and overall security capability and through the PfP and similar programs is responding to the requests of these governments for a greater or lesser degree of partnership. Those governments themselves do not wish to depend exclusively upon Russia, even though they acknowledge vital Russian interest in their development. And some, like Ukraine and Georgia, clearly want to be in NATO. Moscow's problem is that it cannot and will not acknowledge that its policies are a major cause of regional instability in these areas, or that these states are truly fully sovereign states who can fashion their defense and security policies as they see fit. Therefore it cannot accept that they are asking for NATO's assistance against it. As a 2005 commentary observed,

The goals of Russia and the North Atlantic alliance thus largely continue to be at odds. This applies primarily to the post-Soviet territory. Russia is unhappy when Moldova wants to see NATO observers in the Dniester region, Azerbaijan is expecting from the alliance military assistance and protection of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and Ukraine and Georgia are seeking admittance to NATO, and their acceptance is just a matter of time. The RF does not care for a possible NATO presence in the Black Sea and the United States' aspiration to establish itself on the Caspian. From the viewpoint of the interests of the state, this is evidently justified. But the question is: why should Moscow be so actively making friends with NATO if there is little practical benefit from this, particularly on the territory of the CIS?²⁰⁰

Although Moscow's preferred international posture condemns Eurasia to neo-colonialism as a sphere of Russian influence, Russia cannot police that sphere effectively, and even if it could do so, the conditions

necessary for accepting that outcome undermine any hope of stabilizing Europe. Thus, in May 2005, Ivanov insisted that Moscow could not soon withdraw its forces from Georgia because it could not afford to build bases for them back home. Instead, Georgia had to bear the cost of maintaining them.²⁰¹ Russia defines its security as requiring its neighbors' perpetual insecurity and subsidies, as well as their ensuing and unending vulnerability to failed state symptoms. But this also means their ongoing vulnerability to too many of the pathologies associated with terrorism, crime, proliferation, and ethnic war. Since peace does not protect itself, excessive complacency about European security under conditions of this rivalry, notwithstanding the genuine cooperation with Russia, is unwarranted. In fact, at least some governments and militaries reject this complacency, even if they defend against their anxieties *sotto voce*.

Although never voiced publicly by elected European officials, there is concern about Russia. It is rarely announced as policy, but the force structure of the Bundeswehr—still, all these years after the end of the Cold War, organized to defend the homeland against tanks coming from the east—makes it obvious. In a way that frustrates and confounds its NATO partners, Germany still *de facto* prioritizes conventional territorial defense even it pledges allegiance to the Petersburg tasks which presume force projection capabilities.²⁰²

Similarly, the Russian military not only fulminates against NATO's expansion of its remit and geographical scope of its operations and its enlargement, its exercises still are focused on anti-NATO and anti-American large-scale operations, even if it proclaims terrorism to be the main threat. As I have written elsewhere, this inability to distinguish between priority threats, terrorists, or

the West underscores Moscow's continuing difficulties in modernizing, let alone reforming its armed forces or subjecting them to democratic control.²⁰³ But these difficulties, added to the imperial thrust of its policies, makes Russia, as admitted by Russian analysts, an international risk factor.²⁰⁴

As both the EU and NATO inexorably, if haltingly, are increasing their interest in, capability to act, and participation in efforts to resolve these conflicts, the matter of operations "out of area," and particularly along the perimeter of the Russian Federation, will become an ever more salient political and strategic issue.²⁰⁵ This issue already causes considerable mutual distrust between Russia and the EU or NATO.²⁰⁶ Should this rivalry over influence in the CIS continue to grow, it could cause even greater mutual distrust than presently exists. Russia increasingly sees the EU and NATO not only as partners, but also as rivals threatening its primary strategic objective of hegemony throughout the CIS and former Soviet Union.²⁰⁷ Russian officials particularly are alarmed at NATO's territorial expansion because that could lead as well to an expansion of its missions and/or physical presence in the former Soviet Union. This anxiety has grown even though Russia welcomed NATO's decision to participate in the war in Afghanistan in 2003, and leading Russian officials publicly have advocated NATO consultations and cooperation with CSTO, the Russian-sponsored defense alliance in Central Asia.²⁰⁸

Here, too, we can discern the same ambivalence cited above. In 2005 Russia called repeatedly for CSTO-NATO cooperation, culminating in a December report saying that Moscow would insist more strongly on gaining such cooperation.²⁰⁹ However, in February 2006, Bordyuzha stated that, "Cooperation with NATO

is not a major priority or an end in itself for us. [Such cooperation] is desirable, but it is not so important to the CSTO which is a self-sufficient organization seeking cooperation with many international organizations.”²¹⁰

Not surprisingly, despite the calls for such cooperation, Russian officials repeatedly have stated that they oppose all foreign bases in Central Asia and implicitly in the CIS as a whole.²¹¹ Echoing this view of the CIS members’ inability to stand as fully sovereign independent states, Russian diplomats still cannot accept former Soviet republics as genuinely sovereign who can stand alone or make such decisions on their own. If they do so, it means that they have been subordinated to an anti-Russian bloc and have not chosen to do so of their own free will. This long-standing Tsarist and notably Soviet standpoint evidently is ingrained deeply among Russian diplomats who, at an OSCE meeting, called Georgia “some province.”²¹² Neither was this an accidental one-time affair. Instead, it represents deeply-held views in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²¹³

On September 15, 2005, Ivanov further stated that if Georgia and/or Ukraine join NATO, Moscow will reassess its relations with them “and not just in the defense and security realm.”²¹⁴ Here Ivanov reversed his earlier stance; on June 10, he had reiterated Moscow’s position that it viewed NATO bases in the Baltic as a threat (another sign of its unwillingness to accept Baltic freedom of action in defense and foreign policy), and that concern for Middle Eastern security did not justify a new U.S. or NATO base in Georgia. But he then added that he accepted that some CIS countries might become NATO members by 2015 and that there is nothing Russia can do to stop Ukraine

or Georgia from joining NATO “and perhaps there is no need for that,” because what they really want is to leverage membership in NATO in order to join the EU.²¹⁵ Interestingly, Ukrainian officials stated that NATO membership will not be a threat to Russia, and Belarus’ Defense Minister concurred that Belarus views this calmly.²¹⁶

Obviously the real issue is a Western military-political presence in Russia’s borderlands which Russian officials now increasingly attack as a threat that will lead to “military-political pressure” deployed against Russia and Russian interests.²¹⁷ However, the presence of Russian forces in Moldova and Georgia evokes no such sense that those states’ interests are jeopardized thereby. Meanwhile, Russian diplomats claim that Russia has no legal obligation to withdraw these troops, and attempts to prolong their presence there only further illustrates how Russia strives to remain unbound by outside forces in pursuit of empire.²¹⁸

NATO expansion takes several forms which disturb Russia greatly. One is the placement of NATO forces in the Baltic and Poland. The apparently accidental recent crash of an SU-27 fighter in Lithuania illustrated that both NATO and Russian air and air defense forces are vigilantly, if unobtrusively monitoring the strained political situation between Russia and the Baltic states. On November 7, 2005, Russian sources in Kaliningrad charged that NATO had revised its aerial posture in the Baltic to include offensive strike aircraft rather than exclusively air defense forces. These F-16CJ aircraft allegedly are capable of penetrating Russia’s airspace and suppressing its air defenses.²¹⁹ Given those continuing levels of high tension between Russia and the three Baltic states, such vigilance evidently still is

needed on both sides to prevent a further deterioration of the tense Russo-Baltic relationship. Indeed, although Russia punished those responsible for the crash, i.e., for their negligence in letting it happen, Russia's Air Force Chief, General Vladimir Mikhailov, ridiculed NATO's air defense capabilities for its allegedly slow response to the fighter jet's intrusion.²²⁰ Lithuania's initial response showed its hostility to and suspicion of Russia.²²¹

Meanwhile, in innumerable ways Russia also continues to wage an undeclared political and economic war against the Baltic states that shows its refusal to integrate into Europe.²²² Russian politicians still refuse to admit that the USSR occupied the independent Baltic states after 1940.²²³ Moscow also seeks to compel its neighbors to institute pro-Russian cultural and educational policies based on its professed solicitude for the Russian diaspora. This concern for that diaspora has been invoked steadily over the last decade to undermine the security and legitimacy of the Baltic states and of European security organizations like the OSCE, even as it wages an economic war against those states.²²⁴ Thus in 2002 Putin actually compared them to Macedonia and demanded that Europe supervise their minority policies, an explicit derogation of their sovereignty.²²⁵ After urging partnership with NATO and saying that he did not oppose the Baltic states' membership in NATO, Putin publicly urged Russian residents to agitate against Baltic governments.²²⁶

In response to Russian refusal to admit that the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic states, Estonian Parliamentarian Marko Mikhelson, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee observed that, "If Moscow thinks that the occupation of the Baltic states did not exist, there is no reason to believe that

Russia belongs to the cultural space.”²²⁷ Indeed, that observation also holds true for the European political space. Neither is the Baltic a unique case. In Moldova, Russia also has played the diaspora card and subjected the region to what Moldova’s Foreign and Prime Ministers call a military occupation and humiliation that violates every European treaty Moscow has signed since 1975.²²⁸

Likewise, Russian officials fear that East European countries beyond the Baltic reaching all the way to the Black Sea, despite the Paris agreements of 1997, may become bases for NATO and American military forces aiming at Russia. Although the U.S. Global Posture Review was briefed to Ivanov in 2004 and accepted as nonthreatening, no doubt the possibility of bases, not only in the Baltic states, Poland, and Romania, but also possibly in the Caucasus and Ukraine, alarms Russia greatly.²²⁹ This is despite Ivanov’s public statement that he understands the reasons behind America’s realignment of its forces and global basing structure.²³⁰ Even though NATO states regularly that it cooperates with Russia in the South Caucasus, does not see that area as one of conflict or competition with Russia, and U.S. officials repeatedly have made clear that they are not seeking bases there, Russia either chooses not to believe them, or worse, to fabricate stories about such bases to justify its own imperial activities across the CIS such as seeking bases in Moldova and Uzbekistan.²³¹

Indeed, any sign of a CIS state cooperating with NATO triggers an immediate response that indicates that the Russian political elite still sees NATO as being at bottom an enemy of Russia. For this reason, it makes sense to interpret the many Russian calls for NATO cooperation with CSTO, such as Putin’s in January 2005, as an attempt to forestall NATO’s

direct cooperation with Central Asian governments and control that interaction, thereby curtailing their full defense sovereignty.²³² For example, in April 2004, the Kuchma government of Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with NATO. This MoU mentioned the movement of alliance vessels through Ukrainian territorial waters, including the Sea of Azov and Kerch Straits. It also stated that Ukraine promised “To supply NATO with all required technical, informational, medical, and other assistance for the conduct of training exercises, as well as full-fledged military or peacekeeping operations under the Partnership for Peace program.”²³³

The Russian response was predictable. Russia charged that the accord violated the 2003 Russo-Ukrainian agreement on those waters stating that no third party vessels could navigate them without both parties’ specific agreement, a statement missing from the MoU.²³⁴ Furthermore, unnamed sources in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that,

Ukraine’s readiness to allow its territory to be used for unspecified NATO operations without Russian permission does not accord with Article 6 of [our treaty] . . . that stipulates, specifically, that neither side may allow its territory to be used in any way that jeopardizes the security of the other.²³⁵

Subsequently, Russian writers cast this issue in the light of a potential Russo-Ukrainian armed conflict.

The document gives NATO forces so called “rapid access” to the territory of Ukraine not only during military exercises, but also when conducting military operations. This means that Ukraine could become a beachhead for waging any NATO operations, including those not sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Under

these circumstances rapid reaction forces of the North Atlantic alliance could be activated across the entire expanse of the European portion of Russia, and even blockade the RF Black Sea Fleet based in the Crimea until the basing term there expires [in 2017 – author].²³⁶

This analysis goes on to cite Russian concerns about future Ukrainian pressure on the Black Sea Fleet and the eventual transformation of the Black Sea into a NATO lake, greatly enhancing NATO's aerial and naval reconnaissance capabilities, undermining the entire concept of a strategic rear for Russia, as well as any meaningful Russian capability in the Sea of Azov or Black Sea.²³⁷ As Ukraine has now made clear that it wants the Russian Black Sea Fleet out of its current bases in Sevastopol when the Russo-Ukrainian treaty expires in 2017, Russo-Ukrainian tensions, already strained over energy and other issues, almost certainly will grow over the future disposition of that fleet and its assets and infrastructures. Thus this analysis of Russian fear of any NATO military presence in the Black Sea area of the CIS or of Ukraine's membership in NATO clearly is predicated on the assumption of continuing Russo-NATO military-strategic rivalry, especially for the CIS borderlands. Under present circumstances, it remains to be seen how NATO exercises in Ukraine jeopardize Russian security when Russia has proclaimed its partnership with NATO and how Ukraine could be a base for hostile activity against Russia, but this shows the ruling outlook in the Foreign and Defense Ministries and Russian government. Therefore, any sign of Ukrainian adhesion to or cooperation with NATO or the EU inevitably will provoke a storm in Moscow.

Ukraine is not an isolated case. Indeed, Moscow essentially contends that no state can be allies with it

and with NATO. Moreover, in its sphere of influence, it claims that Russia alone ultimately has full authority over the members' defense policies. Thus Ivanov openly updated the Brezhnev doctrine's concept of diminished sovereignty for Central Asian states, specifically as regards NATO or American bases.

The countries of the region are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). And [if the countries of the region are] making a decision about hosting new bases on their territory, they should take into account the interests of Russia and coordinate this decision with our country.²³⁸

Ivanov also said that these states should take preliminary consultations with other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This would give China rights of veto over these states' defense policies and tie them up by obliging them to seek collective permission to conduct an independent defense policy.²³⁹ Echoing this view of the CIS members' inability to stand as fully sovereign independent states, Russian diplomats still cannot accept former Soviet republics as genuine states, e.g., diplomats at an OSCE meeting calling Georgia "some province."²⁴⁰ This was no accident, as this represents a deeply-held attitude in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁴¹

Recommendations.

Under the circumstances, what should NATO and the U.S. Government and armed forces do or not do? Obviously, there is no interest in provoking or threatening Russia and NATO's capacity. But on the other hand, both NATO and its sister organizations, the EU and OSCE, long since have accepted that security in

the CIS is of growing importance to European security. Clearly, the democratization of all of these states would be a powerful contribution to Eurasian security and to Russia's return to more democratic security norms. Previous examples reported by this author and other observers show that both in the military sphere and in terms of overall political governance, the attraction of the EU and of NATO are key factors in democratizing, stabilizing, and pacifying volatile areas like the Balkans and Central Europe.²⁴² Therefore, it is very much in the interests of NATO and those states themselves, as it is arguably in the interests of the Russian people who do not need more rumors of war on their doorstep or in their own territory, to move forward on the entire program of integrating CIS members with NATO.

Obviously, this integration can proceed only at the pace requested by those governments. But a sharper focus and emphasis on encouraging Georgia and Ukraine, as well as any other state that wishes to follow in their path, to continue reforms dedicated to the democratizing of their defense establishments and overall security policies must continue. Although the difficulties in encouraging reform are substantial, it must be done, and it must be understood that when these and other states conform to NATO's desiderata, they will be invited to join, regardless of Moscow's protests. This process need not be connected to a specific timeline, e.g., the NATO summit of November 28-29, 2006, in Riga, Latvia. However, the promise of membership in return for compliance with those conditions spelled out by NATO (and no less importantly the EU); plus encouragement and support for those actions is the only way to ensure that the dream of a Europe whole and free does not disappear or fade. Given Moscow's efforts to subvert regimes from the Baltic to the Black

Sea, its meddling in Ukraine in 2004 and 2006, support for dictatorship in Belarus, and its efforts to impose a new status quo on Georgia and Moldova, it is urgent to overcome the lethargy that has characterized Western policy in the CIS as soon as possible. The stakes are enormous.

Tesmur Basilia, Special Assistant to former Georgian President Edvard Shevarnadze for economic issues, wrote that, for CIS governments, trade, investment, and security issues are intertwined. He also pointed to the local perception of Russia as security threat.

Nowadays there are many in the West who believe that Russia has changed – and, having reformed, seeks to interact with neighboring countries in conformity with international norms. Some Eurasian countries would disagree with this opinion, and believe instead that the Russian mentality has not changed much, and that Russia continues to deem the “near abroad” as its sphere of social influence. After the second war with Chechnya, many think that Russia regards violence as its major tool for resolving social and political problems, especially with regard to non-Russian peoples from the former empire. Thus integration into the international community should be viewed as a guarantee for security and further development.²⁴³

Basilia similarly observed that in many CIS states, e.g., Georgia and Ukraine, “the acute issue of choosing between alignment with Russia and the West is associated with the choice between two models of social development.”²⁴⁴ Alignment with the West is regarded as constituting a threat in itself so that Russia’s ambassador to Kiev, former Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin, publicly decried Ukraine’s policy of nonalignment with NATO and Russia, calling for a public choice on behalf of Moscow.²⁴⁵

Therefore, both Washington and Brussels must continue to exhort, cajole, and encourage those states who wish to associate with NATO to do so to the limits of their desire and capability. NATO also must commit sufficient resources in Afghanistan, which is the main test of its functionality today. Finally, as noted above, the entire range of possibilities of cooperation must be offered continually to Moscow, but done so in a way which does not impose conditions on who may participate in these multilateral programs or where they may occur. Under no circumstances can any of the European security organizations or Washington, not to mention individual capitals, concede to Moscow that the CIS is somehow its private preserve or that Russia can be exempted from the democratizing requirements inherent in the treaties it has pledged to adopt. This stricture must apply with particular force to efforts to rewrite the map of otherwise sovereign states by force, e.g., Moldova and Georgia; activities that directly violate the Helsinki treaty and its subsequent amendments in Moscow in 1991.

Essentially a policy of no annexations and incorporations is as valid now as it has been in the past. NATO must make clear to Moscow that its efforts to punish Georgia for reasons which boil down to spite, as Lenin realized as he was dying, "in general, play the very worst role in politics." Neither Russia, nor its neighbors, nor its interlocutors need or can afford to revisit his legacy. Thus, if NATO follows the guideline that its democratic expansion and enlargement are the true foundations of Eurasian security and stability and that a recrudescing Russian empire constitutes a major threat, if not the major threat, to that stability and security, even as it offers Russia the benefits of genuine partnership, it will succeed in realizing its

new vocation to be the security manager of Europe. A democratized and secure Russia will be able to play a role befitting its importance in that scheme as well. Indeed, only in this fashion can Russia play or even afford to play such a role because otherwise its actions, like the projected annexation of South Ossetia, can only entail further war and conflict along its borders.

Conclusions.

Many commentators who have analyzed the NATO-Russia relationship have offered suggestions for deepening and enrooting this relationship in a durable form.²⁴⁶ All of these suggestions have merit. But in the end, they all depend upon the political will of the parties involved. For all its achievements, this partnership remains limited and is in danger of stagnating. Western uncertainty and ambivalence about Russia is reciprocated by Russia's continuing belief that NATO and the West is both a military-strategic enemy and threat, as well as a normative and ideological adversary. Furthermore, recent Russian suggestions that it is interested in somehow incorporating South Ossetia into Russia, or the incitement of anti-NATO demonstrations in Ukraine and the continuing efforts to undermine pro-Western regimes in Georgia and Ukraine, and pressures to develop its military with a view toward scenarios clearly aimed at NATO or America suggest a ratcheting up of a more overtly anti-NATO policy.²⁴⁷

Strategic cooperation on this basis is not possible beyond a very limited range of shared experiences because interests still really cannot be defined as common nor can threats be seen as shared. The strategic issues in the Russo-NATO relationship go to the heart

of the values gap and the ensuing normative rivalry between Russia and NATO that is seen in every study of the increasingly difficult Russia-EU relationship, for example.²⁴⁸ Moreover, as noted above, “It is clearly fundamental that NATO wants to cooperate with Russia across a broad front. One only has to consider the Alliance’s near-continuous outreach.”²⁴⁹ NATO Secretary-General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer said as much in a speech to the Institute of Europe in Moscow on June 24, 2005, where he stated:

NATO is Russia’s partner in security, and this partnership can go as far as the Russian government, and ultimately the Russian people, are prepared to take it. If you doubt this, consider the fact that NATO is currently conducting five ongoing missions—to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo and Afghanistan, to build the capabilities of Iraqi security forces, to promote defense reform, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to help defend, deter, and protect against terrorism through maritime operations in the Mediterranean. All five of these missions enjoy the active support of the Russian Federation, whether through votes in the UN Security Council or through the active contribution of military forces or logistical support. Our interests coincide more than ever before. And I am sure that NATO’s support to the African Union in Darfur also will meet with active Russian approval. But in broader, strategic terms, NATO’s overall objective to expand security and stability, based upon shared democratic values, throughout the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond, is difficult without robust cooperation with Russia. Effective responses to Russia’s real national security threats are equally impossible without cooperation with NATO Allies, using mechanisms like the NATO-Russia council. The future is in your hands and the hands of your political leadership.²⁵⁰

Russia, on the other hand, clearly still cannot decide whether to cooperate seriously with NATO or to impose

restrictions upon this cooperation that undermine its potential benefits for all concerned parties.

In 2002, Russian, American, and European elites claimed to have agreed upon the goal of reuniting Russia with the West.²⁵¹ They also understood that realizing that goal would oblige the West to make Russia a full partner within the Euro-Atlantic world and duly take its interests into account.²⁵² Yet that concord has been dashed, and trends point in the other direction with partnership as far away as ever. This is not merely a matter of Russian estrangement from America. In fact, mutual EU-Russian skepticism and tension on economic, political, and military issues is pervasive and probably growing.²⁵³ Russia visibly has renounced the strategic course towards integration proclaimed by President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in 2001-02. Both sides seem to be trapped in a spiral of mutual estrangement. As Dmitry Trenin recently wrote,

Western relations with Russia can no longer be described in terms of integration, as it is traditionally understood, that is gradually drawing Russia into the Western institutional orbit. For that there is neither particular demand on the part of Russia nor sufficient supply on the part of the United States or NATO and the EU.²⁵⁴

Indeed, Trenin argues that Russia does not want to *belong* to a larger institutional grouping.²⁵⁵ Consequently, these are trying times for those who want Russia fully to reclaim what Putin called its European vocation and Europe's consequent reunification. Ultimately this is not only a recipe for the frustration of partnership and for remaining stuck in the mire of a bifurcated Europe, it also is a recipe for the further erosion of Russian security.

Russia can have security, prosperity, and democracy, or it can have insecurity, conflict, violence, and authoritarian poverty that insists on chasing after the wrecks of empire even as the country's demographic and other crises gallop out of control. As we saw above, partnership or true cohesion with NATO actually benefits its key defense industrial sectors.²⁵⁶ It also certainly reduces the dangers to Russia from terrorism and all the other security threats of our time. Moreover, as De Hoop Scheffer's speech indicates, NATO will not be found wanting if Russia seeks to expand the parameters of this partnership.

Nevertheless, the defense industrial sectors and the government still seem bewitched by empire and its autocratic and autarchic prerequisites. Russia can have a partner if it wants one, but it has to return to reality, for it cannot afford this empire and, in fact, despite its rhetoric to the contrary, it needs NATO and the EU more than they need it. More importantly, NATO, for all its reservations about Russia, is prepared to go as far to meet Russia as Russia wants it to go.

First, Russia's current military reforms, despite seven strong years of growth, clearly indicate that its armed forces are still too large to be supported and must be reconfigured even more for domestic tasks of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism.²⁵⁷ Their performance in Chechnya does not inspire one with confidence that they could perform well in an imperial mission.²⁵⁸ Second, in fact, Europe and America subsidize Russia and its empire which could not otherwise exist. Russia can only maintain its empire by hidden and overt subsidies to CIS governments in energy or in the sale of Russian weapons at below market prices. It can afford to do this only by charging its European energy customers full market prices even as it refuses

to charge those prices at home, despite EU pressures to do so. Thus the EU and NATO membership now subsidizes the Russian empire which otherwise would become totally insupportable. The same may be said of U.S. funding for the Nunn-Lugar or Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Despite its value, if Russia had to pay for all those programs on its own, it could not afford the rising outlays on its armed forces or their current bloated size.

Moscow fully understands this quandary. It even uses its inability to fund its own internal military requirements fully as a justification for imperialism and shifting the burden of maintaining Russian forces onto neighboring states like Georgia, as Ivanov's May 2005 remarks on that subject indicate.²⁵⁹ Yet the Russian leadership refuses to learn the full lesson emerging from these facts.

If Russia wants what it needs and what Europe has, peace, prosperity, and democracy, it has no choice but to embrace what James Sherr called its European choice.²⁶⁰ There is no other way, no Russian *Sonderweg* or *Osobyi Put'*. The last such attempts died in Berlin, one in 1945 and the other in 1989, and Russia no longer has the means or the will to resurrect a new version. The West, however, does have such a vision; it is called democracy, no matter how many crimes and follies are committed in its name. NATO and the EU, each in their own way, embody that vision. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Europe's people increasingly want those values and policies and not those of failed empires. There is good reason to believe that the Russian people not only want peace but its blessings, including democracy, even if they have their own particular definition of the term. Ultimately only this partnership, if allowed to flourish, can give it to them.

For that to happen, the ambivalence that now inhibits its realization must give way to genuine partnership. NATO does and must continue keep the door open to partnership, but it can only do so on its terms.

Whether Russia likes it or not, it neither can nor should be able to dictate the terms of that partnership because, as we saw above, its terms at best will freeze existing conflicts and bring neither peace, nor prosperity, nor security, not to mention democracy. But if Moscow insists on empire and autocracy as the condition of its partnership with Europe, e.g., a free hand to annex South Ossetia, Trans-Dniester, or Abkhazia, it is only repaving the road to the past. Therefore, what Moscow's terms might represent at worst is a possibility too awful to contemplate.

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