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Hannes Adomeit

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INSIDE OR OUTSIDE? RUSSIA'S POLICIES TOWARDS NATO

“Russia closely follows the process of NATO transformation and counts on the complete removal of direct and indirect components of its anti-Russian orientation from military planning and the political declarations of the member countries of the alliance.” (Russian Defense Ministry.)¹

“We are concerned over the process of NATO expansion. This organization has been and remains a military and political bloc with all the set of threats that any formation of this type involves.” (Putin.)²

“Is it possible that Russia will ever join NATO?” Putin: “Why not? I do not rule out such a possibility. I repeat, on condition that Russia's interests are going to be taken into account, if Russia becomes a full-fledged partner.”³

The problem at issue can be stated very simply: Can Russia's policies towards and role in NATO be regarded as part of a comprehensive transformation of Russian foreign policy away from policies of confrontation and competition to cooperation with the West? Is it correct to consider Russia's relationship with NATO a convincing example of “multilateralism” in the sense of that country working constructively both with and within established Western institutions?

Judging from official pronouncements at NATO headquarters in Brussels and some in Moscow, the answer to both questions is an unambiguous yes. The two actors point out that since the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, which until today provides the formal basis for NATO-Russia relations, Russia's status and role in NATO have significantly changed. That country is no longer a *partner* of NATO in the bilateral framework of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) but an ordinary *member* of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), in which 26 NATO countries and Russia meet as equals (NATO “at 27”), that is, have the same rights and responsibilities.

The latter body is described as the main mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision, and joint action between the two entities. A constructive political dialogue is said to be taking place there. Issues discussed are said include the situation in Afghanistan, Serbia (Kosovo) and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the southern Caucasus, notably Georgia, and the “Greater Middle East”.

¹ Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Aktual'nye zadachi razvitiia Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moscow, October 2003, <<http://www.mil.ru/articles/article5005.shtml>>. This document is often referred to in Western discussion as “military doctrine” or “defense white book.” A note on transliteration: the popular or journalistic version has been adopted in the text (e.g. Yeltsin, Sergey, and Izvestiya), the scientific in the footnotes (coorspondingly El'tsin, Sergei, and Izvestiia).

² Interview with the *Financial Times*, December 11, 1999.

³ President Putin on March 13, 2000, in an interview with the BBC; <http://www.gazeta.ru/2001/02/28/putin_i_bbc.shtml>.

Practical cooperation, directed by the NRC and developed through various subordinate working groups and committees, is regarded to have generated benefits for all participant countries in a number of important areas. These include the fight against terrorism, crisis management, non-proliferation, arms control and confidence-building measures, theatre missile defense, logistics, military-to-military cooperation, defense reform, and civil emergencies.⁴ Yet unofficially at NATO and, at crucial moments in Russian relations with the West, officially in Moscow, different and less favorable views of the relationship obtain.

At NATO, there is disappointment that much of the cooperation has remained at the *technical* and “low-politics” level, that it has assumed a largely symbolic quality, and that it has failed to change the relationship at the “high politics” and strategic levels. After the foundation of the NRC in 2002, there were hopes at NATO that cooperation would produce “spillover” effects to the domestic political realm in Russia, strengthen military reform efforts, enhance transparency of defense decision-making, contribute to the creation of a civil society, and internationally help to solve “frozen” conflicts. Such hopes were dashed. Current perceptions are that Russia has become a much more difficult partner, that the Kremlin, riding high on a wave of apparent domestic political stability, high oil prices, and attendant high economic growth rates, is pursuing “great power” policies in ever more problematic and unacceptable ways. Whereas Russia could no longer be considered an adversary, it could also not be regarded as a strategic partner.

In Russia, conversely, the foreign and defense establishment still appears to suffer from the trauma of the collapse of both the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union and to resent that the Western alliance has not been dissolved, too, but has attracted ever more members. At the very least, in its view, the basic character of NATO as a military alliance should have been changed to become more of a “political organization.” Resentment is running particularly high when it comes to the issue of NATO enlargement – “expansion” in Russian terminology. In the negotiations on German unification in 1990, so the argument runs, American negotiators had given binding assurances that NATO would not expand “one inch to the east” of unified Germany. Yet NATO had expanded nevertheless, first to include three former members of the Warsaw Pact and then four more East-central and South-eastern European countries plus three former republics of the Soviet Union, thus bringing NATO and its military infrastructure “right up to the Russian borders” and using it as an instrument for rolling back Russian influence in the neighboring countries.

In December 2006, the Russian foreign minister named some of the disappointments in a speech at Moscow State University when he said that, indeed, “in the Russia-NATO

⁴ According to NATO’s home page, the section on “NATO-Russia Relations: Building a Lasting and Inclusive Peace in the Euro-Atlantic Area,” <<http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/index.html>>.

Council, we are accumulating the potential for practical cooperation in the struggle against common security threats and challenges.” But at the same time, he continued, “we firmly raise questions about the transformation of NATO, the alliance’s plans for enlargement, the reconfiguration of the US military presence in Europe, the deployment of elements of the American missile defense system here, NATO’s refusal to ratify the CFE Treaty ... and we would like to see how Brussels will react to our proposal on logical engagement with the CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] in regard to the threats emanating from the territory of Afghanistan.”⁵

In order to assess the current and likely future extent of NATO-Russian cooperation and competition, first, the *evolution* of the relationship will be traced from the president Yeltsin’s December 20, 1991, letter to NATO on Russian membership in NATO as a long-term goal of Russian foreign policy to the role Russia played at the NATO summit in Riga on November 27-28, 2006. Second, on that basis, the main *forum* of NATO-Russian multilateralism, the NRC, will be described as well as the most important current dimensions or *key areas* of cooperation. Third, a critical assessment is to follow as to the actual significance of the various declarations, agreements, and projects and the likely *future direction* of the relationship.

The Evolution of Russia’s Relationship with NATO

A few days before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union and the first ever meeting between NATO foreign ministers and those of the former Warsaw Pact, president Yeltsin of Russia wrote a letter to the secretary general of NATO. Russia, he wrote, wished to develop a dialogue between former adversaries “both on the political and military levels.” He continued: “Today, we are raising the question of Russia’s membership in NATO regarding it, however, as a long-term political aim.”⁶

The then Russian, foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev, explained in a radio interview that Russia no longer regard NATO “as an aggressive military bloc” but viewed it “as one of the mechanisms of stability in Europe and in the world as a whole. Our desire to cooperate with this mechanism and to join it is therefore natural.” He advocated the creation of a “zone of security and cooperation from Vancouver to Vladivostok” in which NATO would “play a role that is positive and by no means insignificant.”⁷

⁵ “Tezisy vystupleniia Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V. Lavrova na vstreche so studentami Fakulteta mirovoi politiki MGU im. M.V. Lomonosova,” December 11, 2006
<http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/C75D6169BC7444D6C3257241005B6517>.

⁶ Yeltsin’s letter of December 20, 1991, *Pravda*, December 23, 1991. At the Brussels meeting, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was created, later renamed Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

⁷ Andrei Kozyrev, on Radio Mayak (Moscow), in Russian, on 23 December 1991, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report*, Soviet Union, FBIS-SOV-91-247, December 24, 1991, p. 41.

Academic specialists provided further arguments in support of such views. Thus, according to Sergei Karaganov, a weathervane of the Russian security and defense establishment, the danger of Russia's "military-political isolation" in Europe had to be avoided. Such a danger existed since the new democracies of East-Central Europe were gradually aligning themselves with NATO. Until quite recently, Russian policies designed to suppress the extension of [NATO] guarantees and bloc structures to Central and Eastern Europe had been quite appropriate. But today such measures of demarcation were neither possible nor necessary. Furthermore, like Spain after Franco, Russia after the coup had an interest in "including the [Russian] military in common European security structures."⁸ Some academic specialists even went as far as to assert that "The North Atlantic alliance is now the guarantor of our security. And if we could now join it, this would be the best way for us to ensure that security."⁹

Even before political developments in Russia undercut the basis of such dreams, more sober voices raised questions about the country's relations with NATO that are pertinent even at present. Alexei Arbatov, another academic specialist, pointed out that a simple question had to be asked: "In what capacity does Russia intend to join NATO?" He distinguished three possibilities. First, Russia could join as a *guarantor of the security* of Western Europe. The West Europeans, however, would most likely say: "No, thanks." For the foreseeable time it suited Western Europe perfectly well to have the United States rather than an unstable Russia as their defender. Second, it had been said that NATO was set up not only to deter the Soviet Union but also to *control Germany*. So why not involve Russia in this task? This idea, too, was unrealistic, because the West "will probably reach some kind of modus vivendi with Germany." Furthermore, it might be appropriate "to ask the Germans whether they would mind being controlled with the help of Russia, which receives most of its economic aid from Germany." Third, "if one supposes that the United States or Western Europe would *guarantee Russia's security*, this too is unrealistic. "With its armed forces of three million men and tens of thousands of nuclear warheads, Russia faces no serious military threat from the outside, neither from the Muslim world, nor China, nor the Ukraine or any other CIS state, nor any other country."¹⁰

But in any case, Atlanticism à la Kozyrev was not to last. As early as the fall of 1992, it was swept away by a confluence of powerful forces and currents of all sorts – "Eurasianist," conservative, nationalist-chauvinist, and orthodox-communist. President Yeltsin failed to counteract these currents. He himself proclaimed that "Russia was and

⁸ Sergei A. Karaganov, "Die Aussenpolitik Russlands nach dem Putsch," Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung (Bonn/Sankt Augustin), *Auslandsinformationen*, No. 11 (1991), p. 14.

⁹ Sergei Blagovolin in an interview conducted by Sergei Guk, "NATO mozhet byt' garant bezopaznosti Rossii," *Izvestiia*, January 22, 1992.

¹⁰ Aleksei Arbatov, "Rossiya i NATO," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, March 11, 1992. At the time of writing the author was director of the Center for Disarmament and Strategic Stability at Russia's Foreign Policy Association.

continues to be a great world power” that should not “shy way from defending our own interests” even if such action were to be criticized as “imperialist.”¹¹

Anti-NATO Rhetoric and Campaigns under Yeltsin. As part of the shift away from Atlanticism, the Russian government revised its attitudes and policies towards NATO. In November 1993, a widely publicized study by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), then headed by the later foreign and prime minister Evgenii Primakov, characterized NATO as the “biggest military grouping in the world that possesses an enormous offensive potential.”¹² It called the alliance an organization still wedded “to the stereotypes of bloc thinking.” And it charged that NATO wanted to remain a “military alliance” rather than embark on the “creation of a mechanism for the support of international security.” The intelligence service's preference was clear: a system of “collective security that would somehow range between NATO on the one hand and the CSCE and the United Nations on the other.” The authors of the study were emphatic in their opposition to NATO membership of the Central and Eastern European countries. Yeltsin's press spokesman, reacting to Lithuania's official request for membership in NATO, even warned that the expansion of NATO into areas in “direct proximity to the Russian border” would lead to “military-political destabilization of the region.”¹³

As for Russia's possible participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP), Russia's stance was characterized by ambiguities and contradictions. Thus, on March 31, 1994, the president's press spokesman stated that Russia would not be ready to sign on to PfP for at least six or seven months. This was flatly denied by Kozyrev who said that PfP would be signed later in the month. But he reversed that announcement after demonstrative NATO air strikes against selected Bosnian Serb gun positions near Gorazde. In June 1994, Russia did finally sign on to PfP.¹⁴ But more serious than the oscillations concerning PfP were the massive verbal attacks against NATO in connection with its role in the Balkans.

In September 1995, NATO had conducted air strikes against Bosnian-Serb positions after the mortar shell explosions in the Sarajevo market the preceding month. Reinforcing the currents of pro-Serb, pan-Slav, and pan-orthodox agitation in Russia, Yeltsin went as far as accusing NATO of conducting a campaign of “genocide against

¹¹ Yeltsin in a speech to the collegium of the defense ministry, *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 25, 1992, and in an address to foreign ministry officials, Interfax (Moscow), October 28, 1992.

¹² The text (30 pages) of the study was distributed to journalists at a press conference in Moscow and published in full or in excerpts in all the major national newspapers; quotes here are from “Perspektivy rasshireniia NATO i interesy Rossii. Doklad sluzhby vneshnei razvedki,” *Izvestiia*, November 26, 1993.

¹³ ITAR-TASS (in Russian), January 5, 1994.

¹⁴ On these contradictory statements and attitudes see Interfax (in Russian), April 6, 1994, and John Lloyd, “Russian Government in State of Disarray,” *Financial Times*, April 8, 1994.

the Serbs” and “conjuring up the flames of a new world war in Europe.”¹⁵ The diatribes, however, did not prevent Russia from endorsing the Dayton peace accords. Starting from 1996, it even actively helped in their implementation by participating in the NATO-led Implementation (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and from 1999 in the Kosovo Force (KFOR). Russian peacekeepers deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted the largest non-NATO contingent, and according to NATO as well as independent reports, served well alongside the allied counterparts.

Cooperation coincided with domestic political changes, i.e. the assumption of power positions by the “oligarchs” and their participation in domestic and foreign policy decision-making to change the Kremlin’s approach to NATO. Yeltsin’s new entourage recognized more clearly the counterproductive nature of the campaign against NATO enlargement and the necessity to come to a *modus vivendi* with the alliance. As a result of these developments, on May 27, 1997, the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security was signed, providing until this very day the formal basis for NATO-Russia relations. It expressed the common goal of building a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area and set up the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as a forum for regular consultation on security issues of common concern, aimed at helping to build mutual confidence through dialogue.

This approach, however, was abruptly abandoned during the resurgence of violence in the Balkans in 1998. In the controversy over Kosovo, Russia again sided with Serbia and refused to sign the Rambouillet accords arguing that Belgrade would not consent to their implementation by a NATO-led force. Following the NATO air attacks against Yugoslavia on March 25, 1999, Moscow suspended its participation in the PJC and reverted to anti-NATO hyperbole. Standard phraseology was that of NATO “aggression in violation of international law.” Russian officials asserted yet again that the alliance was committing “genocide” against the Serbs; the defense ministry announced that the Russian forces were being brought up to combat readiness; and the president was reported to have said that Russian nuclear warheads were being reprogrammed to cover again targets in NATO countries.

Yet the pattern of Russian behavior and its consequences basically followed that of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Moscow voted for UN Security Council resolution 1244 thereby *ex post facto* sanctioning the “illegal aggression” against Yugoslavia. It decided yet again to participate in an international stabilization force (KFOR).

As with the first round of enlargement, the vitriolic Russian anti-NATO rhetoric had served to accelerate rather than break the momentum towards the second round of enlargement. The Kremlin’s recognition of its inability to stop the process reinforced the argument that “if you can’t beat them, join them.” President Putin turned out to be

¹⁵ Sergei Dardynkin, “Serbov, konechno, zhalko, no eto eshche ne povod gotovit’sia k tret’ei mirovoi voine,” *Izvestiia*, September 15, 1995, p. 1.

the foremost advocate of this practical argument, often coming up against recalcitrance and opposition among security and defense officials and officers. In the self-proclaimed spirit of “professionalism” and “pragmatism,” he set out to review five major positions on the Western alliance.

Review and Revisions Under Putin. First, the *utilization of imagined or real differences between the United States and Europe* as a foreign policy principle was abandoned. This principle had been a basic feature of Soviet foreign policy (“utilization of contradictions between the power centers of imperialism”) and, in essence, had been continued by Yeltsin after he had turned his back on Kozyrev’s Atlanticist approach. Russia’s “medium-term strategy” for the development of relations with the EU, a document that was handed by Putin in his then capacity as prime minister to the EU-“Troika” in Helsinki in October 1999, still contained the traditional approach. Russia, it is stated there, welcomed the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) so as to limit “the United States and NATO and their dominance on the continent” and “to counterbalance NATO-centrism in Europe.”¹⁶ But even before the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, president Putin signaled a desire to improve Russian-American relations. The attacks gave him the opportunity to do so and in that context to abandon the policy of attempting to drive wedges between the United States and Europe inside and outside NATO.

A second Soviet argument repeated (as noted) by Yeltsin’s Russia after 1992-93 was the idea that after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact NATO *basically had no reason and no right to exist*. With the signing of the Founding Act and Russia’s participation in the Permanent Joint Council and then, under Putin, in the NATO-Russia Council, that argument has faded into oblivion.

The third component of Russian attitudes concerned the *geopolitical reach of NATO*. The air campaign against Yugoslavia had clarified that NATO was prepared to engage itself “*out of area*.” In that context, Russian diplomats had conveyed the notion that NATO’s “aggression” was illegal not only because NATO had violated the UN Charter but also its own treaty provisions. Yeltsin, however, as noted, had *de facto* ratified NATO’s intervention in Yugoslavia by endorsing the UN mandates for peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and Putin, in the interest of fighting “international terrorism,” had consented to a US military presence in Central Asia and the leading role of NATO in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The Russian foreign ministry even welcomed the “decisive role that NATO is playing in

¹⁶ The Medium-term Strategy for the Development of Relations Between the Russian Federation and the European Union for the period 2000-2010 constitutes the Russian reply to the EU’s Common Strategy towards Russia of June 1999. Above quotes are from “Strategiia razvitiia otnoshenii Rossiiskoi Federatsii s Evropeiskim Soiuom na srednesrochnuiu perspektivu,” *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* (November 1999; italics mine). Although the document was compiled in 1999, it is valid not only technically (until 2010) but also in terms of conceptual approach – with one major exception, however, the attitude towards NATO.

Afghan affairs.”¹⁷ Thus, for Russia under Putin, the “out of area” problem, too, was relegated to history. Russian opposition to “humanitarian intervention” without a UN mandate, however, has remained unchanged.

A fourth component concerned and concerns NATO *enlargement*. On this issue, there have only been changes at the surface. Publicly stated resentment regarding entry of previous Warsaw Pact members and former Soviet republics into NATO is often muted. Obviously, Russian spokesmen realize that raising the issue in strong terms can only refuel suspicion among the new members and rub in the point about previous Russian failures to prevent their accession to the alliance. But enlargement is still being regarded by the security and defense establishment as „a big historic mistake.”¹⁸ As Russian attitudes and policies vis-à-vis Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia clearly underline, resentment against NATO moving ever “closer to Russian borders” and “encircling” the country is still strong. Enlargement, encirclement, and the creation of new US or NATO bases in East-central and South-eastern Europe are regarded in Moscow as part of strategic design by Washington to roll back Russian influence in the neighboring countries. Logic would have it that any member of an international organization should have an interest in its viability, effectiveness, improvement, and enlargement of its functional and geographic scope. But Russia is not a member of NATO, only through the NRC associated with it. Limitation rather than expansion of its relevance, scope, and functions appears to be one of the goals of Russian participation in the NRC.

This is true also concerning a fifth issue and one intimately related to enlargement, that of the very *character and purpose of NATO*. Disregarding the fact that NATO has always been both a military and a political alliance, Moscow continues to call for a change of NATO’s structure from a military alliance to a political organization. The Kremlin’s operative term for such a process is that of “transformation.” Gorbachev’s consent to unified Germany’s was, among others, predicated on such a demand. Yeltsin tied it to his grudging acceptance of enlargement. And so did Putin. If NATO became “more political than military,” he claimed before the accession of the seven new members in the second round of enlargement, “that would change things considerably.” If NATO took on “a different shape and were to become a political organization, of course, we would reconsider our position with regard to [NATO’s] expansion.”¹⁹ This change was not to take place. Therefore, after the second round, the foreign ministry lamented the “mechanistic” character of the enlargement process. It would have been better if NATO had „transformed“ itself first and only then enlarged. The reversal of the sequence had contributed to the fact that the relationship between

¹⁷ Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizov at a press conference on June 24, 2004, <<http://www.fednews.ru>>; see also RIA Novosti (in Russian), June 25, 2004.

¹⁸ Deputy Foreign Minister Chizov, Press Conference.

¹⁹ Putin at NATO Headquarters, October 4, 2001.

NATO continued to be associated with „negative images” in Russia.²⁰ Putin has agreed with such assessments and stated apodictically: “The manner in which the Baltic States joined NATO is sheer boorishness.”²¹

The problem, of course, with „transformation“ Russian style is that if it were put into practice, the character of NATO would be changed from a military alliance to something akin to a debating club without military clout, perhaps another collective security organization along the lines of the OSCE. Russia’s preferred model or vision of common security, thus, appears to be based on three convergent processes: “transformation” of NATO; development of ESDP; and deepening of US and European cooperation with Russia.²²

Russia has failed thus far to achieve these objectives. Although NATO prepared and held its summit in Riga in November 2006 with a primary focus on “transformation,” that term means something entirely different than that used by Russian representatives. In fact, it is the very *opposite* of what Russian officials have in mind. Transformation in NATO’s understanding should contribute to increase in *military effectiveness* of the alliance. It envisages further improvements in NATO’s command structure and more flexible, more interoperable, more technologically advanced and more readily deployable forces such as, for instance, the now constituted NATO Response Force (NRF). Russia failed in its purposes also because the new members wanted the “old” NATO, that is, a military alliance with military muscle and safeguard against any resurgence of Russian “great power” and neoimperialist ambitions.

What, to summarize, are the likely reasons for Putin’s shift towards a more cooperative stance towards the Western alliance? In NATO portrayals, they are to be found in the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001.²³ As evidence, NATO sources point to the fact that Russia opened its airspace for the international coalition’s campaign against the Taliban and Al-Quaida in Afghanistan and that it shared intelligence to support the war as well as anti-terrorist operations world-wide. Such facts, however, testify to the manifestations of the shift, not its rationale. The latter can rather be found in decisions taken *prior* to September 11 to reorient Russian policies towards the West – towards both the United States and European countries and, institutionally, towards NATO as well as the EU. The terror attacks merely *reinforced* a policy shift already decided upon in order to spur the modernization of the

²⁰ Deputy Foreign Minister Chizov, Press Conference.

²¹ On September 6, 2004, at a meeting in Novo-Ogarovo with foreign participants in the forum “Russia at the Eve of the New Millenium“, as quoted by one of the participants, Nikolai Zlobin, Director of Russian and Asian Programs at the Center for Defense Information (CDI); *Izvestiia* (online), September 10, 2004. The term Putin used was that of *khamstvo*.

²² This view has been attributed to Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov; “Moscow Sends Foreign Minister Lavrov to NATO Summit,” RIA „Novosti“ Hotline, June 25, 2004.

²³ “NATO-Russia Relations,” <<http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/index.html>>.

Russian economy and increase the country's status, prestige, and role in international affairs. The likelihood of success of the new course appeared high given US perceptions that Russia was sorely needed in the struggle against "international terrorism" and (vain) hopes that Russia in the UN security council would endorse coercive measures against Iraq or at least abstain on the issue in the UN security council.

There is also a Western – US and European – rationale for the joint declaration on NATO-Russia Relations of May 28, 2002, and the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council. This is encapsulated in a term used for obvious reasons primarily for internal consumption rather than in negotiations with Russian diplomats, namely that of "*compensation*." Western negotiators realized that a face-saving device had to be found so as to make it possible for Putin domestically and internationally to abandon the "red line" argument, the seemingly inalienable opposition to NATO enlargement across the borders of the former Soviet Union. "Participation" with NATO in a "joint" format on an "equal basis" was the rationale found to justify the end of Russia's open opposition to enlargement.

What, then, are the new institutional arrangements, how do they work, and what are their achievements?

NATO-Russia Institutional Links: Roles and Rationales

Formalized institutional ties beyond Russia's participation in PFP programs began in April 1994 when Russia opened a diplomatic representation in Brussels in the form of the Russian ambassador to Belgium acting simultaneously as "liaison ambassador" to NATO. Vitaly Churkin of the Russian foreign ministry was the first Russian representative, followed by Sergey Kislyak, another Russian foreign ministry official; the appointment of Lieutenant-General and head of the border guard service, Konstantin Totsky, in March 2003 increased rather than decreased the status of the representation since the appointment conformed to the pattern in the Putin era of *siloviki* (members of the power ministries and agencies) being elevated to important positions in government and the economy.

The second major institutional arrangement is in the military sphere. Since 1996, the Russians have had a permanent military delegation at SHAPE headquarters in Mons (Belgium). The same year saw the first major example of close military *cooperation* in the form of Russian participation in the NATO implementation and stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. SACEUR maintained operational control through a Russian general who served as his deputy at SHAPE but was empowered only to "advise" the supreme commander on all operational matters pertaining to the employment of Russian forces in SFOR. Within the theatre to which the brigade was allocated the US commander had exclusive tactical control.

As for the Kosovo starting in 1999, on the surface modalities concerning the participation of Russian forces were less restrictive. SACEUR was not empowered directly to assign tasks and missions to the Russian peacekeeping contingent; Russian soldiers came under the tactical control of the KFOR commander and the respective brigade commanders with whom they were deployed. The Russian commander could be requested to perform a mission but he could decline. Yet in practice little changed since, as in SFOR, the Russian peacekeepers accepted to work under the NATO operational plan.

For over seven years, until their withdrawal from SFOR and KFOR in summer 2003, Russia provided for a time the largest non-NATO contingents to the peacekeeping forces in the Balkans – at the peak of strength 4,200 troops, in SFOR about 1,200 and in KFOR about 2,000 officers and men.

The third and, according to NATO's official portrayal, the principal structure and venue for advancing the relationship between NATO and Russia has been the NATO-Russia Council. It is described as a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision, and joint action, in which the individual NATO member states and Russia work as equal partners on a wide spectrum of security issues of

common interest.²⁴ The NRC, established at the NATO-Russia summit in Rome on May, 28, 2002, replaced the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) created by the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security. Under the NRC, Russia and NATO member states meet as equals “at 27” – instead of in the bilateral “NATO+1” format under the PJC. Meetings of the NRC are chaired by the NATO’s General Secretary and are held at least monthly at the level of ambassadors and military representatives; twice yearly at the level of foreign and defense ministers and chiefs of staff; and occasionally at summit level. One important institutional innovation has been the creation of a preparatory committee, at the level of political counselors, which meets at least twice a month; it provides a forum for regular, relatively informal exchanges of views on political issues and practical cooperation. A total of 17 subordinate committees, working groups, and expert groups, as compared with only two for the PJC, has been formed – a fact that testifies to the breadth of issues addressed by the NRC.²⁵ The spirit of meetings, in NATO portrayal, too, had “dramatically changed” to the better.²⁶

What, then, are the issues that are being addressed in the NRC working groups and committees? To follow the description by NATO, the areas of cooperation include the following:²⁷

- *Struggle against terrorism and new security threats.* Joint assessments of specific terrorist threats in the Euro-Atlantic area are being developed and kept under review. Three high-level conferences – in Rome and Moscow in 2002 and in Norfolk in April 2004 – have explored the role of the military in combating terrorism, generating recommendations for ways to develop practical military cooperation in this area. Specific aspects of combating terrorism are a key focus of activities in many areas of cooperation under the NRC, such as civil emergency planning, non-proliferation, airspace management, theatre missile defense, defense reform and scientific cooperation.
- *Non-proliferation.* Cooperation against proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and the spread of ballistic missile technology has intensified. A joint assessment of global trends in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is being prepared. Opportunities for practical cooperation in the protection against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents are also being explored.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Robert E. Hunter and Sergey M. Rogov, *Engaging Russia as Partner and Participant: The Next Stage of NATO-Russia Relations*, Rand National Security Research Division, Conference Proceedings (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2004), p. 7.

²⁶ “NATO-Russia Relations ” <<http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/index.html>>.

²⁷ Ibid.

- *Theatre Missile Defense.* Cooperation in theatre missile defense (TMD) is addressing the unprecedented threat posed by the increasing availability of ever more accurate ballistic missiles. A study was launched in 2003 to assess possible levels of interoperability among the theatre missile defense systems of Russia and NATO member states. A TMD Command Post Exercise was held from 8 to 12 March 2004 in Colorado Springs, United States, where a computer-simulated situation allowed NATO and Russian staffs to exercise, examine and test their jointly developed, experimental TMD Concept of Operations.
- *Airspace Management.* The Cooperative Airspace Initiative is one of the first major cooperation programs to have been launched in the NRC framework. The fundamental objective of the initiative is to foster cooperation on air-traffic management and air surveillance. Underlying goals are to enhance air safety and transparency, while seeking to counter the threat of the potential use of civilian aircraft for terrorist purposes. Methods and procedures are being developed for the reciprocal exchange of situation data on civil and military air-traffic pictures between Russia and NATO member countries. The aim is for this to lead to the implementation of an appropriate capability in Russia to allow a seamless flow of relevant air-situation data to and from NATO systems in compliance with international standards.
- *Military-to-Military Cooperation.* Since modern militaries must be able to operate within multinational command and force structures when called upon to work together in peace-support or crisis-management operations, the main objective of military cooperation is to improve interoperability. A substantial exercise and training program is being implemented. Intensified cooperation in search and rescue at sea was initiated after the August 2000 sinking of the Russian nuclear submarine, Kursk, and the loss of its 118 crewmen. A framework agreement between NATO and Russia on submarine crew escape and rescue was signed in February 2003. A framework for reciprocal naval exchanges and port visits is being developed, and possible activities to enhance exercises between NATO and Russian naval formations are being explored.
- *Crisis Management.* Building on the experience of cooperation in peacekeeping in the Balkans, a generic concept for joint peacekeeping operations is being developed, which would serve as a basis for joint NATO-Russia peacekeeping operations and should provide a detailed scheme of joint work aimed at ensuring smooth, constructive and predictable cooperation between NATO allies and Russia in case of such an operation. The planning and conduct of joint peacekeeping operations would be a complex enterprise and requires careful preparation. To that end, procedural exercises are planned to examine, test and,

where necessary, further refine the procedures for consultation, planning and decision-making during an emerging crisis.

- *Defense Reform.* Russia and NATO countries need armed forces that are appropriately sized, trained and equipped to deal with the full spectrum of 21st century threats, so defense reform is a key area of shared interest. Cooperation has been launched on different aspects of defense reform, such as the management of human and financial resources; macro-economic, financial and social issues; and force-planning. Exploratory work on how to improve the interoperability of Russian and Allied forces is also underway. A NATO-Russia Information, Consultation and Training Centre for the retraining of retired Russian military personnel was set up in Moscow in July 2002; its activities have since been expanded into the regions. Two fellowships for Russian scholars have been set up at the NATO Defense College in Rome to promote research on defense reform.
- *Logistics.* Logistics form the backbone of any military operation and in today's security environment, the need for more mobile forces and multinational operations calls for improved coordination and the pooling of resources, wherever possible. Various initiatives are pursuing logistic cooperation on both the civilian and the military side. Meetings and seminars have focused on establishing a sound foundation of mutual understanding in the field of logistics by promoting information sharing in areas such as logistic policies, doctrine, structures and lessons learned. Opportunities for practical cooperation are being explored in areas such as air transport and air-to-air refueling.
- *Status of Forces.* In April 2005, NATO and Russia signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) under PfP auspices, another sign of normalization of the relationship since all NATO countries have such agreements with each other to govern the presence of their soldiers on the host nation's territory, their legal status, the arrangements for financing and taxes, and the judicial protection they may have. The agreement will make it easier to conduct joint training exercises in Russia or in NATO countries and for NATO to transport troops, equipment, and supplies to Afghanistan.
- *Civil Emergencies.* Work in the area of civil emergency planning is concentrating on improving interoperability, procedures and the exchange of information and experience. Various seminars and disaster-relief exercises – such as Exercise “Bogorodsk 2002” and Exercise “Kaliningrad 2004” – often including participants from other Partner countries, help develop civil-military cooperation. A Russian-Hungarian initiative to develop a rapid response capability to assist in the case of an emergency involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents was launched in November 2002.

- *Science.* Scientific cooperation with Russia dates back to 1998, when a Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific and Technological Cooperation was signed. Moreover, more scientists from Russia than from any other Partner country have benefited from fellowships and grants under NATO's science programs. A key focus of current scientific cooperative activities is the application of civil science to defense against terrorism and new threats, such as in explosives detection, examining the social and psychological impact of terrorism, protection against chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents, cyber security and transport security. Another area of collaboration is the forecasting and prevention of catastrophes.
- *Challenges of Modern Society.* Environmental protection problems arising from civilian and military activities are another important area of cooperation. Current activities focus on two main areas: the prevention and elimination of the consequences of nature ecosystem pollution with oil products, and the provision of advanced retraining courses for military and civil environmentalists on environmental protection and safety.

The list of activities is impressive. It covers the most important security problems from terrorism to environmental protection. "Hardly a day goes by without an NRC meeting at one level or another," surfers on NATO's home page are told. But sober questions need to be asked: For instance: Is there a *gap* between conferences, meetings and seminars on the one hand and practical results on the other? Are there no *discrepancies* between plans, projects and programs and their realization? And what is the *trend* line: Is Russia's participation and integration in NATO, the promotion of mutual trust, and the importance of the relationship for European security increasing or decreasing?

The Riga Summit Declaration of November 29, 2006 provides some answers. The "NATO-Russia partnership" is mentioned behind the "NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership" and the "Intensified Dialogue with Georgia" as item number 40 (of 46) in the enumeration of the document. The signatories, it is stated there, "believe that the cooperative agenda set forth in the May 2002 Rome Declaration has not yet achieved its full potential. Much work remains to be done to this end, and we call on Russia to join us in enhancing our cooperation on key security issues ..."²⁸

The assessment of the Russian dimension and its placement after Ukraine and Georgia is an indication of the fact that, after some promising beginnings, the establishment of trust has given way to disappointment and new suspicions. Between Russia and NATO, a widening gap has developed between the pragmatic and professional attitudes, pleasant atmosphere and the solution of some practical problems at the NRC level ("low politics") and the general political and diplomatic

²⁸ Riga Summit Declaration <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm>>.

levels (“high politics”). Furthermore, looking at the “key areas of cooperation” more closely yields the conclusion that the results achieved thus far are more marginal and symbolic rather than substantive and significant. This can be demonstrated by looking at some of the important areas as listed.

- *Struggle against terrorism and new security threats.* Joint assessments of terrorist threats in the Euro-Atlantic area are fine but central questions remain as to the role the *military* rather than law enforcement agencies ought to have in combating them. If a military role, where are the geographic regions or specific countries where NATO and Russia could conceivably act jointly? The initial cooperation in the war on Afghan soil in all likelihood ran its course shortly after the defeat of the Taliban. Furthermore, neither Russia nor NATO share the US interpretation that the war in Iraq is part of the struggle against international terrorism.

A specific example of military-to-military cooperation in the struggle against international terrorism, however, is Russian participation in *Operation Active Endeavour*. Formally, NATO’s operation began on 26 October 2001, and ever since then there had been talk about Russian participation. Yet only as late as 28 April 2006, at a press conference following the “informal” NRC meeting at the foreign ministers’ level in Sofia, was NATO secretary general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer able to announce that “we are now reaching the final, what I would call, pre-deployment stage for the Russian contribution to the operation” and that a Russian ship was “about to undergo interoperability tests with NATO ships”.²⁹ On 15 September 2006 NATO “authorized” the Russian frigate *Pitliviy* to participate in *Operation Active Endeavour* but as of December 31, 2006, no information had been posted on the Command’s website that the vessel was now participating in the operation.³⁰

As for new security threats, *energy security* certainly is considered to be one of them. NATO and Russia, however, are at loggerheads over this issue. This was clearly reflected in Senator Richard Lugar’s opening speech at the Riga Summit. “NATO must determine what steps it is willing to take if Poland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, or another member state is threatened as Ukraine was,” he said in obvious reference to Russia. An attack using energy as a weapon, in his view,

²⁹ See <<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2006/0604-sofia/060427-sofia.htm>>. Previously, the talk had been about two ships.

³⁰ See <http://www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN_Operations/ActiveEndeavour/Endeavour.htm>. Informally, NATO sources have stated that the *Pitliviy* had sailed with the NATO task force for about a week and then left the operation.

could “devastate a nation's economy and yield hundreds or even thousands of casualties.” For this reason, the Alliance should “avow that defending against such attacks is an Article Five commitment.”³¹ Although the summit declaration did not take up Lugar’s allusions to Russia as a threat to NATO’s energy security, many participants in the hallways of the conference agreed with their thrust.³²

- *Non-proliferation.* Cooperation between the Western alliance and Russia against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the spread of ballistic missile technology had intensified, according to NATO. The biggest danger in that respect, as both NATO and Russia verbally agree, is *Iran*. Yet, first, that country does not appear to figure in the NRC deliberations; at least there is no public record to that effect. Second, there are significant differences in approach between the US and some European countries on the one hand and Russia on the other as to how to deal with Iranian nuclear ambitions. Russia is prepared to exert a modest amount of diplomatic pressure on Teheran and might even agree to some symbolic sanctions. It will not, however, be party to a stiff sanctions’ regime that might be able to persuade president Ahmadinezhad to change course. Third, the common position with the West notwithstanding, Russia is cooperating with Iran in the economic and civilian nuclear spheres and continuing to supply the country with weapons.
- *Theatre Missile Defense.* The working group on TMD has explored prospects of interoperability among the theatre missile defense systems of Russia and NATO member states. Three command post exercises have been held, the last of which in Moscow in October 2006, to examine and test by means of computer simulation a jointly developed, experimental TMD concept of operations. Obviously, Russia, would like to see NATO use Russian missile defense systems (S-300, S-400) that it considers not only to be on a par with but superior to the most advanced US systems (Patriot PAC-3). Such hopes or expectations may turn out to be unfounded. Neither are American military-industrial corporations willing to yield significant parts of the business on the Euro-Atlantic arms market to Russia nor has the degree of trust among NATO members in Putin’s Russia and the likely successor system developed far enough to contemplate any sort of dependency on Russian components in NATO weaponry, let alone whole weapons complexes such as TMD. Ample proof of this was provided, for instance, by the stir created among defense officials and the arms lobby when it was

³¹ “Lugar: Attack on Allies' Energy Supplies is Attack on NATO Alliance. Senator invokes Article V in opening speech of Riga Conference” <<http://www.rigasummit.lv/en/id/newsin/nid/239/>>.

³² Personal impressions of the author at the conference.

reported that Russia, through its Vneshtorgbank, had been quietly buying stock in the European Aeronautic Defense & Space company – despite the fact that the share purchase amounts to only 5.02 percent of the total stock, does not entitle Vneshtorgbank to board representation and thus does not give the Bank a voice in EADS company policy.

- ***Military-to-Military Cooperation.*** Since modern militaries must be able to operate within multinational command and force structures when called upon to work together in peace-support or crisis-management operations, the main objective of military cooperation is to improve interoperability. A substantial exercise and training program is being implemented. Intensified cooperation in search and rescue at sea was initiated after the August 2000 sinking of the Russian nuclear submarine, Kursk, and the loss of its 118 crewmen. A framework agreement between NATO and Russia on submarine crew escape and rescue was signed in February 2003. A framework for reciprocal naval exchanges and port visits is being developed, and possible activities to enhance exercises between NATO and Russian naval formations are being explored.
- ***Defense Reform.*** Despite 15 years of talking about it and, until 1998, substantial reductions in the size of the Russian armed forces, military reform has only scratched the surface. With its 1.1 million men in the forces of defense ministry and another 600,000 in “other” forces (*drugie voiska*), the military is still too big to be well trained and equipped with modern weaponry. Its force structure is still wedded to fighting a large-scale conventional war. It is also badly led since it lacks a corps of experienced non-commissioned officers. Hazing shows no signs of abatement, and the quality of a shrinking pool of conscripts is ever declining. Service is to be cut from 24 months to 12 months by the end of 2007 but how this is to be achieved by sticking to the goal of 1.1 million men is a mystery that will have to be cleared up. Hundreds of Russian military officers have since the foundation of the Russian army participated in various NATO and individual NATO member countries’ “exchange” (essentially on-way) programs, training courses and exercises. Yet the impact on their consciousness and the armed forces appears to have been marginal. To this day, the military in Russia remains a closed system, and one that cares just as little about transparency as the political institutions created under Yeltsin and Putin.
- ***Russian Elite Perceptions, Public Opinion, and NATO.*** In the period from May 11-26, 2006, took place what NATO general secretary de Hoop Scheffer called a “NATO-Russia Rally,” a series of public events in Russia from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad

so as to “increase awareness about the new reality of partnership and cooperation.”³³ This was predicated on public opinion polls indicating that up to 80-85% of Russians were negatively disposed towards the Atlantic alliance.³⁴ It is doubtful that the “rally” changed much of that sentiment given the ambiguous statements about NATO that continue to emanate from the Russian security and defense establishment.

- *Military-to-Military Cooperation, Joint Maneuvers, and the Status of Forces Agreement.* According to NATO portrayals, substantial exercise and training programs are being implemented. Indeed, several NATO-Russia maneuvers were held, including one naval maneuver, and some between Russia and individual NATO countries. Furthermore, in April 2005, NATO and Russia signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) under PfP auspices, and this was considered to be another sign of progress in the relationship since the agreement makes it easier to conduct joint training exercises in Russia or in NATO countries and for NATO to transport troops, equipment, and supplies to Afghanistan. It was also heralded as a sign of normalization of the relationship since all NATO countries have such agreements with each other. The Duma, however, despite its character as an acclamation body for the policies laid down by the presidential administration, has yet to ratify the agreement. At the Munich International Security Conference on February 5, 2006, defense minister Ivanov believed that the Status of Forces Agreement “will lend additional impetus to further cooperation in joint training and exercising, to command-staff and troops field exercises to be held at training centers located upon national territories,”³⁵ but he did not say when ratification might occur. Two months later, in Sofia, “allied ministers were stressing how important it is that we’ll see ratification of the so-called SOFA agreements by the Russian Duma,”³⁶ but the NATO appeal, too, went unheard. Furthermore, the “Torgau” US-Russian military maneuvers, scheduled for the end of September 2006, were cancelled by the Russian defense ministry. The Americans were asked to consent to a later date for the maneuvers until after ratification of the Status of Forces Agreement by the Duma. No date, however, was provided as to when

³³ At the informal NRC meeting at the foreign ministers’ level in Sofia on April 27-28, 2006 (op. cit., fn.).

³⁴ Igor’ Plugatar, “Atlantisty proigryvaiut v Kieve, no torzhestvuiut v Tbilisi,” *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, September 29, 2006.

³⁵ See

<http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=de&id=171&>.

³⁶ At the informal NRC meeting at the foreign ministers’ level in Sofia on April 27-28, 2006.

ratification might be expected.³⁷ The cancellation, Russian defense experts thought, were related to the anti-NATO demonstration on the Crimea against the “Sea Breeze” exercises (see below).³⁸ SOFA, thus, is yet another example of how difficult it is to negotiate agreements with Russia on military issues, see them ratified, and implemented effectively.

- *Crisis Management.* Under this heading, in NATO’s enumeration of cooperative ventures with Russia, the two actors want to develop “a generic concept for joint peacekeeping operations ... aimed at ensuring smooth, constructive and predictable cooperation between NATO allies and Russia in case of such an operation.” But peacekeeping is something entirely different from crisis management. Focusing on the former rather than the latter, the positive experience of NATO-Russian peacekeeping in the Balkans (SFOR, KFOR) is unlikely soon to be repeated: The 1990s under Yeltsin were a period of Russian disorientation and weakness; the current period under Putin, in contrast, is characterized by genuine or staged self-confidence of the “energy superpower” that objects to “integration” and refuses to surrender its “freedom of action” and “sovereign” decision-making. Thus, it is hardly conceivable that Russia would agree to a repetition to the thinly veiled subordination to NATO as evident in the Balkan peacekeeping operations in the 1990s. Corroborating evidence for this proposition can be found in the fact that Russia has refused to form part of the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, sending instead a battalion of sappers from the 13th peacekeeping brigade in Samara for a limited period and under their own flag.

The same skepticism is warranted concerning prospects for crisis management in the true sense of the word. For instance, the “frozen conflicts” in Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) can be considered to be latent crises that need to be addressed and solved. The likelihood of that occurring under NATO-Russian auspices, i.e. consent by Russia to NATO taking an active role in the solution of these conflicts, is practically non-existent. This has much to do with the fact that the post-Soviet geopolitical space is primarily an area of Russian-NATO (and Russian-EU) competition rather than cooperation – a fact that deserves to be analyzed in some more detail.

³⁷ “Rossiisko-amerikanskii voennye ucheniia v sentiabre ne sostoiatsia,” RBK.ru (online), September 5, 2006, <http://top.rbc.ru/index.shtml?/news/daythemes/2006/09/05/05195101_bod.shtml>.

³⁸ Ibid.

NATO-Russia Rivalry on Post-Soviet Geopolitical Space

A major factor limiting Russian multilateralism in NATO (and EU) are persistent Russian notions of international relations as a zero-sum game (the gain of one side is the loss of the other) and the unmitigated importance of competition, conflict, and the “balance of power” in international affairs. On this basis, Putin like Yeltsin before him has advanced the claim that the post-Soviet space is or should be a Russian sphere of influence. This is reflected, for instance, in his statement that „no vacuum“ could exist in international relations and that if „Russia were to abstain from an active policy in the CIS or even embark on an unwarranted pause, this would inevitably lead to nothing else but other, more active states resolutely filling this political space.”³⁹

Putin also has called the dissolution of the Soviet Union a “national tragedy of immense proportions” and the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.”⁴⁰ Although he hastens to add that this does not mean that Russian policies are directed towards the reconstitution of the USSR, he nevertheless has proclaimed the deepening of integration in the CIS, in the framework of the Common Economic Space (CES), and the Eurasian Economic Community to have “top priority” in Russian foreign policy.⁴¹ Not only economic but also military integration on post-Soviet space remains an important goal in Russian foreign policy. This is underlined, for instance, in the April 2003 upgrading of the treaty on collective security to the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty (OCST), a “Eurasian NATO” of sorts.⁴²

As postulated above, integration in Western institutions in the sense of voluntarily yielding portions of sovereignty to supranational bodies has explicitly been rejected in Moscow. Thus, Russia’s “medium-term strategy” for the development of relations with the EU accepts European integration only “with a view to consolidating and developing integration processes *in the Commonwealth of Independent States*.” A warning is, therefore, issued to the EU to tread carefully on post-Soviet territory so as “not to hamper [CIS] economic integration.” For those who still did not get the point, the document states that Moscow wants to “retain its freedom to determine and implement its domestic

³⁹ Putin’s speech to a conference of Russian ambassadors on July 12, 2004, in Moscow, <<http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/07/74399.shtml>>.

⁴⁰ “Putin schitaet raspad SSSR obshchenatsional’noi tragediei,” *Nasledie otechestva*, February 12, 2004; „Khotel uspokoit’ liudeji,” *Gazeta*, February 13, 2004; and “Poslanie Federal’nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” April 25, 2005, <www.kremlin.ru/sdocs/appears.shtml>.

⁴¹ Thus, in his annual addresses to the federal assembly in April 2005 <www.kremlin.ru/sdocs/appears.shtml>. In his annual address in April 2006 Putin said: “The relations with our closest neighbors were and are the most important part of Russia’s foreign policy.”

⁴² The „Eurasian NATO“ label is that of Belarus’s president Lukaschenko; see Ivan *Safronov*, “Presidenty prevratili dogovor w organizatsiiu,” *Kommersant* (online), May 15, 2002.

and foreign policies, its status and advantages as a Eurasian state and largest country of the CIS, and *independence of its position and activities in international organizations.*"⁴³

What all this amounts to is the fact that American and NATO ideas of a "Europe whole and free," the EU's concept of Wider Europe and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), and the Common Vision of the countries loosely allied in the Community of Democratic Choice are in conflict with notions of a Wider Russia.⁴⁴ Western, including NATO, and Russian perceptions and policies are at odds with each other in the whole area stretching from the Baltic States via Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova to the northern and southern Caucasus. For this reason, both past and possible future NATO "expansion" remains a big issue in the NATO-Russian relationship. Furthermore, given Russia's deviation from universal principles of democracy and its tendency to extend the principles of "managed democracy" to the neighboring countries, the resolution of the "frozen" and other conflicts appears to be a difficult proposition.⁴⁵

The validity of these theses can be illustrated by the clash of NATO positions and policies in each of the countries and subregions from the Baltic to the Black and the Caspian Sea.

The Baltic States.

After the Russian foreign and security establishment had grudgingly come to accept the planned accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO, president Yeltsin at the Birmingham summit in May 1998 drew a "red line" on the geopolitical map of Europe which NATO was not supposed to overstep. That line ran along the borders of the former Soviet Union. In the then circumstances, it meant that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania should be prevented from joining NATO.⁴⁶ After the three Baltic countries nevertheless were invited at the Prague summit in November 2002 to join and became members in February 2004, the Russian foreign and defense establishment refused to reconcile itself to that fact. Russian deputy foreign minister Vladimir Chizov lamented: "I can tell you quite frankly and unmistakably that this [the accession of the Baltic States to NATO] does not please us."⁴⁷ Putin, too, could not hide his

⁴³ "Strategiia razvitiia otnoshenii Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

⁴⁴ "Common Vision for a Common European Neighbourhood" was the title of the conference held in Vilnius in May 2006, at which not only the presidents of Central, Eastern and South-east European countries spoke but also, notoriously and odiously from the Russian perspective, U.S. vice president Richard Cheney.

⁴⁵ See above, "crisis management" as one of the "key areas" of NATO-Russian cooperation.

⁴⁶ Yeltsin was asked what steps if any Russia would take if Ukraine and the Baltic states were invited to join NATO. Yeltsin said he hoped the West would be "realistic" enough not to embark on such a step. "In NATO Expansion, There is a Red Line for Russia Which Should Not Be Crossed," *Guardian* (Manchester), May 1, 1998.

⁴⁷ Deputy foreign minister Vladimir Chizov at a press conference on June 24, 2004 <<http://www.fednews.ru>>; see also RIA Novosti (in Russian), June 25, 2004.

disappointment and complained, as quoted above, that “The manner in which the Baltic States joined NATO is sheer boorishness.”⁴⁸

Russian displeasure about the Baltic States’ NATO membership continues to manifest time and again.

- It would be “very negative”, Russian government officials, presidential advisors, Duma deputies, and military leaders have stated, if *NATO forces or equipment* were to be stationed in the Baltic states. In fact, “any footprint, as small as it may be” were unacceptable.⁴⁹
- In particular, the Russian defense ministry and the general staff are strictly against integration of the three countries into the NATO’S *common air defense*. They have, for that reason, opposed NATO’s F-16 air patrols over Baltic territory which were begun at the end of March 2004 from the former Soviet air base Zakniai in Lithuania. They also have criticized NATO’s E-3A Sentry (AWACS) reconnaissance flights over Baltic air space. Yury Baluevsky, in his then position of deputy chief of general staff, even hinted at “adequate countermeasures” if NATO were to “exacerbate the situation in the proximity of Russia’s borders.”⁵⁰ Another military spokesman alluded to such possible countermeasures, stating that Russia would station S-300 air defense missiles at the western borders of Belarus so as to bolster the joint Russian-Belarus air defense.⁵¹
- Part of the Russian opposition to NATO footprints in the Baltic is the demand that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania accede to and ratify the adapted conventional forces in Europe (CFE) treaty adopted at the Istanbul OSCE summit in November 1999 and ratified by Russia in June 2004. Russian spokesmen demand that the NATO countries, too, ratify the treaty, including the three Baltic states (and Slovenia). Failure to ratify, the argument continues, would create some sort of “strategic grey area” which theoretically and under international law allows NATO to station aircraft, tanks, artillery, and nuclear weapons there without any verification rights for Russian inspectors.
- The Russian government has also complained about the transit regime between the Russian mainland and the Kaliningrad exclave, including military transit, which it considers to be too restrictive and cumbersome.⁵²

⁴⁸ On September 6, 2004, at a meeting in Novo-Ogarovo with foreign participants of the forum “Russia at the Eve of the New Millennium”, as quoted by one of the participants, Nikolai Zlobin, Director of Russian and Asian Programs at the Center for Defense Information (CDI), *Izvestiia* (online), September 10, 2004. The term Putin used was that of *khamstvo*.

⁴⁹ Thus, for instance, the then special advisor to the president on foreign policy, Sergei Iastrzhemskii, in March 2004 in an interview with the *Financial Times* during a visit at NATO HQ; see Judy Dempsey, “Moscow Warns Nato Away From the Baltics,” *Financial Times*, March 1, 2004, p. 2.

⁵⁰ “Russia Warns U.S. on Baltic Deployment,” IHT, 19.3.2004, p. 3.

⁵¹ „Russische Raketen Richtung Westen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 3, 2004, p. 12.

⁵² Thus, for instance, defense minister Ivanov at the Munich International Security Conference on February 5, 2006.

Belarus

The threat of stationing S-300 air defense missiles in Belarus mentioned above points to the fact of close Russian-Belarusian military cooperation, first and foremost in the air defense area but also in border protection. Russian interests in the past years have extended also the military-industrial complex with attempts made to gain control of the viable parts of the Belarusian defense industry. Cooperation in the military sphere is but one indication of the support the Russia is giving to Belarus notwithstanding fact that Lukashenko is *persona non grata* in the NATO area and his regime regarded by NATO members as the “last dictatorship in Europe.”⁵³ Russia’s failure to work jointly with the United States and Europe, inside or outside of NATO, to embark on changes in the direction of democracy, a law-based state, a market economy with free and fair competition, and a civil based society is yet one more example of the value gap that exists between NATO and Russia. It is also one of the reasons why lack of trust and suspicion of Russia continues to abound among NATO countries and officials.

Moldova and Transnistria

After the rejection of the plan by president Voronin of the so-called Kozak plan of November 2003, which, among other things, had provided for Russia's continued military presence in Transnistria in a reunited Moldovan state, the country has adopted a clear stance towards integration into Western institutions. Given constitutional restrictions, Moldova is not aiming at NATO membership yet it has actively been cooperating with NATO under the Partnership for Peace Program. The rejection of the Kozak plan and Moldova’s foreign policy reorientation have visibly angered Moscow. Gazprom, its foreign policy arm, cut off the gas supply to the Moldova (as to Ukraine; see below) in January 2006 to gain acceptance of its price demands, and starting from March 2006 (as in the relationship with Georgia; see below) stopped the import of wine and spirits and certain agricultural products. In the controversies over the certification of exports of commodities from Transnistria, it stood firmly on the side of the authorities in the break-away entity. To repeat the point made earlier about the difficulties of crisis management: Russia rejects firmly any role that NATO might conceivably play to supplant the role of the country as “guarantor” of peace or to embark on a joint peacekeeping operation.

Top Russian officials stringently deny that they are exerting any sort of pressure on Moldova and that they cling to spheres-of-influence notions but representatives at

⁵³ As one of the many signs of NATO’s attempt at isolating Belarus, in November 2002 Czech authorities denied a visa to Lukashenko to attend the Prague NATO summit because of the country’s human rights record. Lukashenko apparently assumed that he had a right to attend since Belarus is a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).

lower levels of the establishment are less discrete. Thus, one of them writes with disarming frankness:

The Russian army will remain in the region as a stability factor. Moscow needs guarantees that the Moldovan leaders sincerely want to become a strategic partner within the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Moldovan position, however, has changed little ... *Chisinau does not realize that if it tries to sit on two chairs – European and Russian – it will fall to the ground.*⁵⁴

In other words, Moldova faces a stark choice: It either gives up its NATO (and EU) orientation or it will continue to suffer economic and political consequences.

Ukraine

Prior to the March 2006 parliamentary elections in Ukraine, there was a realistic possibility that NATO, at its summit in Riga, would go beyond the existing Intensified Dialogue, cooperation in the NATO-Ukraine Commission, the Joint Working Group on Defense Reform, the Partnership for Peace Program, and the Trust Fund and, through a Membership Action Plan (MAP), set the course firmly towards full Ukrainian membership in NATO. Even then this goal appeared unrealistic as public opinion polls before the elections revealed that only 22% of the population supported NATO membership and none of the political parties campaigned on a platform of accession.⁵⁵ The outcome of the elections with the significant losses for the political parties that could be expected to work with NATO to ensure changes in public opinion more favorable to NATO and the later appointment of the loser in the 2004 fraudulent elections, Viktor Yanukovich, to the post of prime minister dealt a blow to any early MAP plans for Ukraine. Thus, shortly before the Riga summit, the NATO general secretary was able only to state blandly and vaguely that “NATO allies will soon begin drafting exact language on a signal we want to send to countries who aspire to NATO membership. How exactly that signal will look like is a bit difficult to say, but I think I'm not far off the mark if I say it will be an encouraging signal to them.”⁵⁶ The Riga summit declaration was equally non-committal: “We reaffirm that the Alliance will continue with Georgia and Ukraine its Intensified Dialogues which cover the full range of political, military, financial, and security issues relating to those countries’ aspirations to membership, without prejudice to any eventual Alliance decision.” The

⁵⁴ Vasily Zubkov, “Russia-Moldova: Kremlin Wands Deeds, Not Words,” RIA Novosti, August 28, 2006 (italics mine). Zubkov is RIA Novosti’s economic editor.

⁵⁵ The results of opinion polls were reported in *Den’* (Kiev), No. 48 (March 24, 2006), p. 3.

⁵⁶ At a press conference on October 9, 2006 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2006/s061009a.htm>>.

alliance would “meet next in Spring 2008 in order to assess progress, and give further direction to NATO’s ongoing transformation, including our enlargement process.”⁵⁷

The transfer of the Ukrainian membership issue to the indefinite future serves Russian interests and policies as seen by the Russian security and defense establishment. As the defense minister has pointed out, yes, Ukraine, did have the right to join NATO. However, “for Russia, the accession of Ukraine ... would be especially sensitive.” This is because Ukraine “has formed a single whole with Russia for centuries” and because “shared historical and cultural values, the unity of interests, and numerous family ties give a special character to relations between our peoples. The attempt at a sharp and hardly justified switchover to Western values may become a serious destabilizing factor [sic], primarily for Ukrainian society itself.” Furthermore, “the majority of Ukrainians do not want to integrate with NATO, while part of the political elite does not wish to exacerbate relations with Russia.”⁵⁸ Russia, in other words, is decidedly against membership of Ukraine in NATO.

Moscow has made it abundantly clear to Kiev that this is the case. To quote the defense minister again: "In the event of accession to the North Atlantic alliance, Kiev would, in addition to everything else, have to annul its commitments concerning the [Russian] Black Sea Fleet based in [the Ukrainian port of] Sevastopol until 2017,"⁵⁹ the implication being that Russia would not agree to such a step. In fact, on the very contrary, Moscow is attempting to prolong the basing rights until after the projected end of the lease and perhaps using the gas price as a lever persuade the Yanukovich government to agree to the extension.

Other warning signals to supporters of Ukrainian NATO membership are the developments in the Crimea in May and June 2006 in connection with NATO’s “Sea Breeze” maneuvers. In the March 2006 parliamentary elections, the predominantly Russian electorate in Crimea had voted overwhelmingly for Yankukovich’s anti-NATO Party of the Regions. In a well-organized campaign, members of that party together with Ukrainian, Transnistrian, and Russian national-patriotic “Great Russian” and “Eurasianist” activists, imitating one of the features of the Orange Revolution in Kiev, erected tents in the port city of Feodosia and prevented the unloading of a US vessel sailing under the NATO flag. Later, about 2,000 people joined a “victory march” over NATO in Feodosia. And on June 5, 2006, the Crimean parliament met to declare the

⁵⁷ Riga Summit Declaration, November 29, 2006 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm>>.

⁵⁸ Thus the portrayal by Russian defense minister Sergei Ivanov in an interview with *La Stampa*, posted on the Russian defense ministry’s website on February 9, 2006; see also Interfax (in Russian), February 9, 2006. The notion that Western values may be “*a serious destabilizing factor*” can be derived from Russian policies after the Orange Revolution but it is not too often that high-ranking officials so frankly admit to that fact.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Ivanov added: “It is one of the rules of the alliance that a country that has joined it has no right to host the armed forces of other states that are not members of the bloc on its territory.”

peninsula a “NATO-free zone.”⁶⁰ Whereas incontrovertible proof of Moscow’s role in all of this, and whose role and which institutions, cannot be provided, it is reasonable to assume that there is a Moscow connection. Certainly, the events serve the Kremlin’s perceived interest to prevent NATO enlargement. The same applies to Russian attitudes and policies concerning Georgia.

Georgia

At the September 21, 2006, meeting of NATO foreign in New York, Georgia was formally offered the instrument of Intensified Dialogue.⁶¹ Russian interpretations and reactions to that invitation clearly demonstrate that Georgia’s membership aspirations are as much anathema to the Russian foreign and military establishment today as previously the desire of the Baltic States to join the alliance. Thus, when defense minister Ivanov was asked on September 22 about the NATO step and how Russia was going to react, he replied that he was “bored by the Georgian question”. The “impression is being conveyed that Georgia is of great importance for Russia in international politics.” The impression did not conform to fact, he implied. Yet belying this interpretation, he went on to say that two brigades of Russian forces had been deployed at the borders with Georgia, who would “operate in the mountains, at great heights.” As a result, the accession of the country to NATO would not be detrimental to Russia’s military security.⁶²

Less than a week later, NATO defense ministers met in the seaside town of Portorož in Slovenia for what was described as an informal meeting to discuss NATO transformation and its operations as well as to prepare the alliance’s summit in Riga. Participants from 34 countries were taking part, including delegations from the 26 alliance members, the EU, and Russia. The latter country’s delegation was led by defense minister Ivanov who attended a formal session of the NATO-Russia Council.

The council meeting was overshadowed by the crisis in Russian-Georgian relations prompted by the arrest of Russian officers of the GRU military intelligence and Georgian nationals on September 27, 2006. Conveying the notion of informality rather than the quality of a formal meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, the alliance’s official report casually mentioned that NATO defense ministers “also met with their counterpart from Russia, Sergei Ivanov.” Euphemistically, it continued that “the

⁶⁰ “Krymchanam ne ponravilos’ pribytie v Feodosiiu voennogo korablia amerikantsev,” *Korrespondent* (online), May 29, 2006 <<http://www.korrespondent.net/main/154923>>.

⁶¹ “NATO to Offer Intensified Dialogue to Georgia,” NATO Update, September 29, 2006 <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/09-september/e0921c.htm>>. The formula of Intensified Dialogue has its roots in the 1997 Madrid summit, at which NATO heads of state and government decided “to continue the alliance’s intensified dialogues with those nations that aspire to NATO membership or that otherwise wish to pursue a dialogue with NATO on membership questions.” The dialogues “cover the full range of political, military, financial and security issues relating to possible NATO membership, without prejudice to any eventual Alliance decision.”

⁶² Plugatar, “Atlantisty proigryvaiut v Kieve.”

meeting focused on two main issues: NATO-Russia practical cooperation, which is going well; and the current tensions in Georgia, where information was shared by minister Ivanov on this bilateral issue between Russia and Georgia.”⁶³ Nothing was said about the main underlying issue of Russian objections to Georgia’s membership aspirations, and the reference to “current tensions in Georgia” ignored the point of a severe crisis in Russian-Georgian relations and the gravity of Moscow’s reaction.

Thus, before his departure to Portorož, Ivanov said that “banditry” in Georgia had become government policy; the situation in the country were “reminiscent of 1937.”⁶⁴ Putin took up this theme and charged that that the Georgian leaders, were adopting a policy of “state terrorism”⁶⁵ and, “both inside the country and in the international arena, are following the policy of [Stalin’s secret police chief] Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria.”⁶⁶ In rapid succession, Russia was taking steps and adopting postures usually associated with impending military intervention, including the withdrawal of embassy staff; closure of the state borders; severing road, rail, sea, and air communications; stop of postal services and money transfers; orders of “shoot to kill” to Russia’s remaining military forces in the country; and the announcement of large-scale naval maneuvers off the Georgian coast.

Significantly for the present inquiry, Russian foreign minister Lavrov linked the Georgian moves to NATO, saying that “the latest [Georgian] provocation and latest statements with regard to the Kodori Gorge, which are in conflict with all existing accords, followed close on the heels after the NATO countries’ endorsement of the policy of intensified cooperation with Georgia.”⁶⁷ He also has voiced suspicion that Georgia wants to instrumentalize NATO for a military solution to end the “frozen conflicts” in its breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: “A lot of questions arise over the matter,” he said. “For example, who is the threat to Ukraine or Georgia? Why does Tbilisi aspire to accede to NATO as soon as possible: to contribute to NATO activity in regional security or to solve present-day tasks in bilateral relations with Russia?”⁶⁸

⁶³ “NATO Transformation in Focus at Portorož Meeting,” NATO Update, September 29, 2006
<<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/09-september/e0927a.htm>>.

⁶⁴ “Rossiia trebuet osvobodzheniia voennykh v Gruzii i vvodit otvetnye mery,” *Agentstvo natsionalnykh novostei*, September 28, 2006.

⁶⁵ “Moskva i Tbilisi na poroge kholodnoi voiny,” *Pervyi kanal – novosti*, October 1, 2006. Putin’s charge of “state terrorism” was carried by the First Channel of Russian TV but deleted on the Kremlin’s website.

⁶⁶ At a session of the Russian national security council on 1 October 2006,
<http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/10/01/0000_type63378_111833.shtml>.

⁶⁷ Quoted by Yuri Simonian *et al.*, “Tbilisi proshel tochku vozvrata,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, September 29-30, 2006. The Kodori Gorge separates Georgia from Abkhazia. Earlier in the summer, Tbilisi had successfully dislodged a local militia leader who dominated the gorge and installed an Abkhaz government in exile there. Georgian president Saakashvili said that the gorge would henceforth be known as Upper Abkhazia and that the restoration of central power there would lead to the return of Abkhazia proper to Georgian control.

⁶⁸ In an interview the defense ministry’s newspaper, *Krasnaia zvezda* (online), December 12, 2006.

The Russo-Georgian controversy raises several issues touching on Russia's relations with NATO. The first is the insinuation that Tbilisi would not have acted without prior consultation and coordination with the United States, NATO's mainstay. Putin, for instance, warned at a Russian national security council meeting on October 1: "These people [the Georgian leadership] think that they can feel at ease, safe and secure under the protection of their foreign sponsors, but is this really so?"⁶⁹ In a telephone conversation with president Bush on the following day, he reiterated this position and warned the U.S. president against any "third countries" taking steps that could encourage Georgia to embark on "destructive" conduct.⁷⁰

A second issue concerned weapons purchases by Georgia. In obvious to the new alliance members, Ivanov claimed at Portorož: "Some members of NATO – shall we call them the younger generation? – are supplying Georgia with arms and ammunition of Soviet production." He went on to say that Soviet arms exports to the region were made with the understanding they would not get into the hands of third parties. The transactions were, therefore, illegal. "This is piracy," he concluded.⁷¹

A third issue is that of the Adapted Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). The CFE treaty establishes limits on military hardware and troop numbers for all countries from the Atlantic to the Urals, and aims to establish a military balance on the European continent. The Istanbul Commitments, signed along with the Adapted CFE treaty in Istanbul in 1999, limit Russia's military presence on its southern flank and rule out Russian bases. Defense minister Ivanov, at the NRC meeting at Portorož, professed to be "worried by the reconfiguration of NATO's infrastructure without prospects for the ratification of the Adapted [CFE] Treaty."⁷² Yet ratification is tied by NATO to Russia's closure of its bases and withdrawal of its forces from Georgia (and Moldova).

⁶⁹ "Zaiavlenie na soveshchaniy s postoiannymi chlenami Soveta Bezopasnosti," October 1, 2006, <http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/10/01/0000_type63378type82634_111833.shtml>.

⁷⁰ According to the Kremlin's press service, as quoted by Bloomberg news service, October 3, 2006.

⁷¹ "Russia Worried by NATO Expansion," *RIA Novosti*, September 29, 2006, <<http://en.rian.ru/world/20060929/54376256.html>>. Ivanov did not specify *which* of the new NATO members he had in mind. In 2004, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia acceded to NATO. The term "re-export" implies that countries *imported* weapons from the Soviet Union. This leaves out the Baltic States which were in Soviet perspectives constituent entities of the USSR. As weapons importers from the USSR this leaves as possible violators of agreements Warsaw Pact members Bulgaria and Romania, Slovakia as part of Warsaw Pact member Czechoslovakia, and Slovenia as a constituent republic of the former Yugoslavia. The accusations came as a surprise to NATO defense ministers as the issue had not been raised in the NRC. According to one report, both NATO General Secretary Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld failed to respond to the charges; *RIA Novosti* (in Russian), September 29, 2006. Another report claimed that Scheffer had refuted the Russian argument, saying that since no embargo against Georgia existed, arms exports to that country were legal; "Russland wirft dem Westen Hilfe für Georgien vor," *Financial Times Deutschland*, 2 October 2006.

⁷² "Russia Worried by NATO Expansion," *RIA Novosti*, September 29, 2006, <<http://en.rian.ru/world/20060929/54376256.html>>.

Conclusions

- *Evolution of the Relationship.* Russian attitudes and policies towards NATO after the creation of the Russian foreign ministry in June 1990 have evolved in three phases. A first phase, ranging from June 1990 to fall 1992 or spring 1993, was characterized by “Atlanticist” approaches under foreign minister Kozyrev. Membership in NATO was proclaimed to be a long-term objective of Russian foreign policy. A second phase extends from 1993 through the 1990s. This is a period in which nationalist, communist, chauvinist, “Great Power” and “Eurasianist” forces combined to dismantle the Euro-Atlantic orientation and portray NATO and NATO’s eastward enlargement as threats to Russian security. The third, current phase under Putin consists of contradictions between

Russia’s participation in NATO and *decreasing trust* in the country’s political evolution;

the Kremlin’s verbal adherence to European or Western values and its *deviation* from these values in practice – in fact, the consideration of these values as a potentially “serious destabilizing factor;”

the conceptual and the *operational* level in the NATO-Russia Council – or, put differently, between the many NRC conferences, meetings, seminars, plans, and projects on the one hand, and practical results on the other;

the congenial atmosphere at the NRC, the constructive attitude, and professional engagement of Russian officers and officials in the numerous working groups and expert committees of the NATO-Russia Council, on the one hand, and significant *disagreements* between NATO and the Russian government on major international issues, first and foremost, concerning ordering principles in the post-Soviet geopolitical space, on the other.

- *Multilateralism à la Russe.* The multilateralism practiced by Russia inside and in relation to NATO is not one that aims at constant improvement of organizational viability and effectiveness and supports broadening of its membership and geographic scope of activity. Russia wants to have a voice in NATO deliberations and, to the extent possible, influence NATO decisions. But as these are often prejudged outside NATO and the alliance has built up some

kind of protective wall around its core, invisible to the uninitiated observer but real and effective nevertheless in insulating NATO decision-making on important issues from Russian influence, Russian multilateralism for the most part has a *symbolic and demonstrative* rather than substantive quality. Its purposes would seem to be, first, to underline that Russia should not and cannot be excluded from any important international organization and, second, to support the claim advanced by the Kremlin administration and the government that Russia is a responsible partner in international affairs. To the extent that the cooperation is substantive, it is *à la carte*. It pertains to matters where Russia has a material interest as, for instance, on theater missiles defense if it were able to persuade NATO to buy and use Russian TMD technology.

- *No “Entirely New Quality”*. What follows from the previous proposition is that characterizations to the effect that pursuant to the 2002 NATO-Russia summit in Rome a “dramatic breakthrough” in the relationship had occurred and an “entirely new quality” been achieved are premature. Particularly in compassion with the second of the three periods outlined above, changes *have* occurred. However, Putin’s Euro-Atlanticism is of a different quality than that of the first phase under Kozyrev. Putin’s objective is not that of rapid integration with Western institutions, including NATO. He deals with them, certainly with NATO, as a fact of international life that cannot be ignored. And since Yeltsin-style attacks against the Western alliance had led nowhere and even, concerning NATO enlargement, proven counterproductive, the operative principle appears to be the notion that it is better to be associated with that institution and to work with and within it rather than to confront it. Thus, in addition to its symbolic quality, Russian multilateralism also has a *tactical* dimension.
- *Enlargement*. One of the reasons why it is safe to conclude that Russia’s relationship with NATO has as yet not assumed an “entirely new quality” as compared with the Yeltsin era is the fact that the Kremlin under Putin, too, remains *opposed* to any third round including countries of the post-Soviet geopolitical space. This stance was reiterated clearly by the Russian foreign minister in December 2006: “We remain convinced,” he stated, “that the inertial expansion does not have any just reason and does not promote the strengthening of security in any of the states entering NATO, the organization

itself or, of course, Russia. In other words, NATO expansion is a huge mistake by those who invented and implement it.”⁷³

- *The Significance of “Practical Cooperation.”* NATO and some Soviet portrayals have it that there may be differences at the political level, still to be ironed out through an increase in “dialogue,” but that “practical cooperation” has not only significantly increased in volume but also in quality so that the differences at the political level will narrow over time. A critical assessment of that cooperation, however, still reveals many shortcomings. Much has remained at the level of dialogue (e.g. TMD, Challenges of Modern Society). Other practicalities have not been implemented despite the fact that they have long been agreed upon (e.g. SOFA, still lacking Duma ratification; cancellations of maneuvers for that reason). Other practicalities were implemented in diluted form and then rescinded (the participation of Russian vessels in Operation Active Endeavour). Many other practical steps founder on the rock of Russian domestic politics (defense reform) and diametrically opposed NATO and Russian interests (resolution of “frozen conflicts” and NATO-Russian joint peacekeeping on post-Soviet geopolitical space).

- *Change through Rapprochement?* Extending the previous argument, according to one of the strands of integration theory the increase of “low-politics” communication and cooperation will ultimately affect the “high-politics” level. Applied to the problem at hand, it is the idea that the many projects and programs agreed upon with Russia and notably the work of the NRC in various working groups and at various levels, with by now hundreds of Russian officers and officials from various ministries and agencies who have been exposed to NATO practices and procedures, will eventually lead to transforming Russia from a difficult interlocutor to a strategic partner. (The EU has labored along similar lines and so has the planning staff of the German foreign ministry with its concept of *Annäherung durch Verflechtung*.) The validity of that assumption thus far, however, has not been borne out. Russia under Putin, as not just the Council on Foreign Relations has concluded, has taken the “wrong direction” in domestic and foreign policy.⁷⁴

⁷³ Lavrov interview, *Krasnaia zvezda* (online), December 12, 2006.

⁷⁴ This is the major message, for instance, of the Council on Foreign Relations Report, *Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, March 2006) <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Russia_TaskForce.pdf>.

- *Perceptions and Mutual Trust.* As a result, expectations connected with “change through rapprochement,” i.e. that the Russian engagement in NATO would contribute to the development of mutual trust, also turned out to be unfounded or at least premature. The kind of “managed” and “sovereign democracy” practiced at home and the pretensions of “energy superpower” abroad have refuelled suspicion among the NATO members. Conversely, suspicion is unabated in the Russian foreign and defense establishment that NATO and the United States allegedly behind it are aiming, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the weakening of Russia and a roll-back of Russian influence on post-Soviet space.