

The Agenda before NATO and Russia

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The tragic events of 11 September 2001 unexpectedly brought greatly improved Russia-U.S. and, by extension, Russia-NATO relations. Within weeks of the attacks, a U.S.-led multinational counterterrorist coalition emerged with Russia as a prominent player. The coalition quickly enmeshed Moscow and the allied governments in intelligence and military cooperation whose breadth and depth far exceeded all previous efforts conducted under the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) auspices.

Before the terrorist attacks, the question before NATO and Russia was how to *initiate* a process of rapprochement with Russia. Despite a number of joint initiatives and consultative bodies, the relations could better be described as a stand-off, not a partnership. The PJC, launched by NATO and Russia in 1997 to provide a platform for improved relations, instead came to symbolize the gulf still dividing the two sides through its inability to facilitate progress on any significant divisive point. But after Moscow sided with Washington and its allies over the military response to the 11 September attacks, the question suddenly turned to finding ways of steering the newfound political will in Russia and NATO into a productive relationship. The success of the counterterrorist coalition inevitably spawned efforts to find a new arrangement and new issues for the NATO-Russia cooperation. By summer 2002, outlines of a new institutional framework emerged: The two sides agreed to create a new NATO-Russia Council that would involve Moscow in NATO deliberations from their very inception rather than after the alliance had worked out a consensus decision. In the bureaucratic sense at least, Russia-NATO relations since 11 September have been an unqualified success. The framework for a potentially fruitful cooperation is in place.

Yet the success must be put in context. Russia-NATO rapprochement coincided with an apparent decline of NATO as a priority in U.S. foreign policy and military planning. Combat and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan are conducted under the U.S. flag, despite the fact that a majority of the allies are in fact NATO members. (The Kabul peacekeeping mission in particular is almost entirely a NATO affair.) The gap between Washington and its allies in both military

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capabilities and—perhaps even more important—threat perception and preferred response to those threats is widening, as I will discuss in more detail below. One possible explanation for the relative enthusiasm with which the Bush administration has embraced both NATO-Russia rapprochement and NATO enlargement is that Washington no longer views the alliance as primarily a fighting vehicle but rather as a political and security organization. A more political NATO would find it easier to incorporate Russia. But without the military foundation, NATO may find it difficult to maintain allied interest in continued cooperation. Its role as a united front for the Western allies on military and security issues would fade. In short, NATO-Russia cooperation would become much more seamless but also less relevant to relations between Moscow and the West, which would come to be dominated by direct diplomatic links with Washington, London, Berlin, Paris, and so forth.

In the near-term, the emphasis must be on improving the relations between NATO and Russia. Even if the alliance dynamic is not meant to be the main vehicle for either Russia's integration in the West or Washington's dealings with Moscow, at the least NATO-Russia relations should not stand in the way of the other processes. Hence, a new look at the cooperation between the two is required, as well as a new agenda and a new format. The format issues have largely been hammered out. At a meeting in Rome in May 2002, President Vladimir Putin and NATO heads of state signed an agreement creating a new NATO-Russia council.¹ In this article I propose a new agenda that will maximize chances for an improvement of NATO-Russia relations, and that will, at the same time, use the comparative advantages that NATO possesses in terms of its expertise. The proposed points are unrelated to either the Permanent Joint Council's work or the agenda to be tackled by the NATO-Russia Council.

The issues presented in this article are a mixture of what is desirable and what is possible. Russia's participation is essential to making counterterrorism, non-proliferation and arms control measures work. NATO countries could probably build a theater missile defense system by themselves, but Moscow expressed interest in cooperating and may have unique technology to contribute. Issues on which NATO and Russia are most likely to disagree—Article V planning, NATO's nuclear policy or enlargement—were left off the agenda. And while the final list partly overlaps with that proposed for the NATO-Russia Council, it is based on a unique set of criteria.

The Alliance

In its efforts to move closer to NATO, Russia is trying to hit a moving target. The alliance's missions are constantly changing; NATO had three very different Strategic Concepts in the past eleven years. It may be on the verge of another remake, which would make it into a tool for counterterrorist operations and significantly strengthen the intelligence and economic aspects of alliance cooperation. Or it may fade into irrelevance, as many observers suggested after 11 September.²

The range of options for NATO's involvement in terrorism is a topic for another article, but several possibilities appear. NATO could keep its current focus on

peacekeeping, transformation of the former Warsaw Pact militaries, and common military planning and standardization among the allies. It would not play an active role in terrorism, so in effect Article V would be understood to cover only the improbable case of a conventional military attack against a NATO country. Under this scenario, as one British analyst pointed out, NATO would be unlikely to ever direct a major shooting war.³ The major role for America's European allies and Canada in the short- to medium-term future would be to simply alleviate the strain on U.S. forces by taking over a larger portion of peacekeeping operations, as suggested by U.S. Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns.⁴

Others see a very active role for NATO in counterterrorism, but one that focuses

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on a very specific threat or mission. U.S. Senator Richard Lugar recently proposed that NATO serve as a global cop, overseeing the storage and trade of weapons of mass destruction, including the use of force to prevent such weapons from falling in the hands of terrorists or governments linked to them.⁵ Stanley Sloan of the Atlantic Commu-

nity Initiative called on NATO to create special joint counterterrorism units and headquarters.⁶

U.S. defense officials tend to view NATO's role in the fight against terrorism skeptically, as expressed in repeated statements by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that “the mission will define the coalition, the coalition must not determine the mission . . . otherwise, the mission will be reduced to the lowest common denominator.” However, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz opened the door to a new option for NATO. In a speech to the Wehrkunde conference in Germany on 2 February 2002, Wolfowitz said that NATO must revamp its command structures to make them leaner and more flexible.⁷ What precisely such transformation would entail is unclear, but it is possible that it would involve a limited move away from the alliance-wide consensus principle. Decisions would be made only by states actually participating in the specific operation rather than by a consensus of all member states, as is currently the rule. This new flexible command structure would allay U.S. fears of NATO allies binding Washington's hands, and possibly make NATO again a “shooting” coalition.

The United States Is Disengaging from NATO

The United States has historically been the driving force behind all major decisions in NATO. However, by all signs, U.S. interest in NATO is waning. The 11 September attacks temporarily slowed down the process but are unlikely to reverse it completely. NATO's principal focus today lies with the peacekeeping missions in the Balkans. The current U.S. administration has little or no interest

in peacekeeping and seems happy to limit its involvement in the Balkans to keeping al Qaeda terrorists from using Bosnia or Kosovo as a launch pad for operations in the West. U.S. presence in the Balkan missions, in proportion to total NATO forces, dropped with each successive peacekeeping operation—from 30 percent of all troops in the Bosnia Stabilization Force, to only about 15 percent in the Kosovo force, to virtually zero in the Macedonia mission. A portion of the limited U.S. assets in the Balkans has already been redeployed to Afghanistan.

The shift away from Europe toward the East predates 11 September. The 2001 U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), largely written before the attacks on New York and Washington, notes that “Europe is largely at peace” but highlights Asia as a region “susceptible to large-scale military competition.”⁸ The QDR, one of the key documents defining U.S. force structure and military plans, recommends a substantive expansion of U.S. military infrastructure—carrier presence, land bases—in the region stretching from the Middle East to the Western Pacific.⁹ The deployment pattern of the army’s new Interim Brigade Combat Teams is also heavily slanted toward the Pacific and away from the Atlantic theater.¹⁰

The 1999 air war against Serbia cooled the Pentagon’s interest in fighting wars through NATO’s command structures. The new operating principle—the mission will define the coalition, the coalition must not undermine the mission—leaves little room for NATO to command operations in the future, at least in missions where vital U.S. interests are at stake (this could change if Washington succeeds in making NATO’s command structures more flexible, as proposed at the Wehrkunde conference).

In fact, one explanation for the newfound willingness in Washington for enlargement and for greater Russian involvement in NATO is that Washington may have no interest in maintaining NATO as a fighting alliance. If so, the impact on NATO cohesion and military capability of enlargement and Russia’s involvement in decision-making has become relatively less important.

U.S., European Differences Are Deepening

The growing schism is evident in political, security, and military realms. Politically, different agendas have come to dominate in Europe and the United States. At the same time, the will to compromise and seek common solutions is weaker. As one expert, Jessica Matthews of the Carnegie Endowment, wrote in a recent article, “the end of the Cold War meant the loss of the automatic deference to the United States. . . . The absence of an external enemy, in turn, allowed domestic politics to acquire a much larger role in foreign policy on both sides of the Atlantic.”¹¹ In the span of the past twelve months, the allies disagreed on the Kyoto protocol, the landmines ban, and the International Criminal Court. More ominously for NATO, the European allies and the United States do not see eye-to-eye on such important security issues as missile defense, Chechnya, or the Middle East conflict. Many in Europe view Washington’s tendency toward unilateral action as a security problem in itself.

In military terms, the technological differences between the armed forces of Europe and Canada on one hand and the U.S. military on the other are straining

the allies' ability to work with each other. The recent increases in the U.S. defense budget, which is scheduled to reach \$451 billion in 2007, will only exacerbate the differences. As one major newspaper pointed out, the \$49 billion *increase* in the Fiscal Year 2003 defense budget is more than the *entire* defense budget of the vast majority of European allies.¹²

Consequently, in the not-so-distant future, the debate in NATO between the United States and Europe may become just as essential—and just as contentious—as the dialogue between Russia and NATO. As the United States and its European allies grow apart, NATO will become a forum for patching up their differences on foreign policy and military issues and that may have a profound impact on Russia's role vis-à-vis NATO. It is possible that the more divergent the positions of the United States and Europe become, the more leverage Russia gains. That is one of the strongest arguments against Russia's inclusion in alliance decision making used by opponents of the "NATO at 20" concept. But one cannot rule out the possibility that infighting will so weaken NATO as to render it ineffective and irrelevant, eroding any benefits derived from Russia's rapprochement with it.

Russia

The post-11 September period brought a new degree of clarity and consolidation to Russia's foreign and security policies. The foreign policy travails of independent Russia are well known to most observers of international relations. But since the tragic attacks of 11 September 2001, President Vladimir Putin has held the country on a more-or-less pro-Western course, at least vis-à-vis the European Union and, to a lesser extent, the United States. As some observers point out, the wave of pro-American sentiments that swept Europe after the attacks allowed President Putin to make a resolute turn toward Europe, if not the United States.¹³ But the relative ease with which Putin shed the Yeltsin-era baggage of strained Russia-U.S. and Russia-NATO relations masks more important questions: How durable is the new course? Is the latest change of heart rooted in ideology and philosophy or is it merely opportunistic? And could it survive a change of government in Moscow? These concerns have already caused the new allies—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic—to question NATO's recent rapprochement Russia.¹⁴

Russia's ostensibly pro-Western course is still marred in contradictions and major policy differences with the United States and the EU. One of the thorniest issues dividing Russia and the West—Chechnya—seems to have been laid to rest, not because of any changes to Russia's policy but for fear in the West of drawing attention to uncomfortable parallels with the U.S. military action in Afghanistan. The categorical moral imperatives invoked by President Bush to justify the U.S.-led campaign against terrorism simply left no room for questioning the behavior of Russian troops in Chechnya (or, for that matter, Israel's actions in Palestine). But Chechnya continues to raise eyebrows in the European Union, whose members have taken a far more nuanced approach to fighting terrorism.

Moscow's recent actions in Ukraine and Belarus continue to give pause to

many proponents of NATO-Russia rapprochement. In Ukraine, the Kremlin threw its political and media power behind incumbent President Leonid Kuchma in a campaign to deny Western-leaning former prime minister Viktor Yushchenko a victory in parliamentary elections in March (Yushchenko's party was a close second). Russia's actions prompted one election observer to remark that "Moscow's intervention in Ukraine's electoral process, on behalf of the pro-Russian politicians, was unparalleled in its unscrupulousness."¹⁵ Economic interests, not foreign policy issues, were at stake. Yushchenko threatened to break up the Russian-controlled energy monopolies controlling his country's economy. But curiously enough for a new Western ally, the Kremlin's spin meisters accused Yushchenko of "anti-Russian" (read pro-Western) political orientation, and circulated dark rumors about U.S. money funding the candidate's campaign.

In neighboring Belarus, the Kremlin continues to give unwavering support to Alexander Lukashenka, despite evidence that the strongman is selling arms to countries on the U.S. list of state sponsors of

terrorism. Belarus's deals with Iraq and Iran have already led to threats of an economic embargo from an irate Washington.¹⁶ Lukashenka can afford to laugh off the threats (his country's moribund economy does little business with the West and virtually none with the United States) but Belarus's actions may yet provoke a controversy between Washington and Moscow, Lukashenka's principal backer and the only actor with enough influence to stop the arms sales.

Russia's pro-Western policy course is full of deviations. National security priorities, economic issues, domestic politics, and concern about ethnic Russians living in neighboring countries all play a role—as they would in any other normal country. But for the most Western-leaning among former Soviet satellites, Moscow too often equates pro-U.S. and pro-EU policies with anti-Russian sentiments. This "zero-sum" mentality is wholly inconsistent with Moscow's own declared foreign policy course. So is the Kremlin's tolerance of Belarus's sales of weapons and weapons technology to countries sponsoring terrorism.

Inconsistency aside, durability is another issue—will Putin's current policy course survive for the long term? There is no easy answer to that question but a few useful indications and guidelines do exist.

Putin's first few years in power were almost wholly devoted to consolidating domestic political power. The process reached a dramatic new height with the sudden and swift removal of Communist Party deputies from positions of influence in the Russian Duma. This, combined with reforms drastically reducing powers of regional governors and the assertion by Kremlin of control over electronic media gave the Russian president an unprecedented degree of control over

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Russia's political life. No doubt it will be viewed by many in the West as a convenience—after years of watching Boris Yeltsin gradually lose control over his bureaucracy, Russia is again led by a man who can make deals that stick.

The downside is that Russia's foreign and security policies are still based on the whims of the ruling circles rather than a durable countrywide consensus on national security issues that could survive the test of political plurality and a democratic change of power. Absent those features, there is no guarantee that future Russian governments will not return to the anti-NATO policies of the past but this time exploiting their new positions of influence within the alliance. Already some NATO members, mostly the new allies in Central Europe, object to closer Russian involvement in NATO on the grounds that it constitutes a potential Trojan horse.

The pro-Western political consensus in Russia may yet turn out to be short-lived. The extremist parties have already dissented (Zhirinovskiy, for example). The disaffection is now moving closer to the center of the political spectrum and spreading among the public as more mundane issues such as trade or even sports return to the agenda.¹⁷ Counterterrorism as a point of binding interest has clear limits. As Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution points out, "Putin does not view terrorism in the same way as Bush Russians do not see the state as under attack from the outside, but from the inside, as a result of its military, political, and economic weakness."¹⁸ This divergent trend is bound to accelerate when and if the United States expands the war on terrorism to the three countries of the "axis of evil." As Hill wrote, "Russian leaders think they know their enemy and it is certainly not in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea."¹⁹

The other unknown variable is support for Putin himself. Would the high performance ratings last if the recent Russian economic boom fizzles? Oil and gas fueled the growth in recent years, accounting for 90 percent of the rise in Russia's GDP in 1999 and 2000.²⁰ These gains, in turn, are a product of the devaluation of the ruble and the rising prices of oil. But neither of these factors will last forever. Oil experts argue that Russia's oil production has reached its limits, and without substantial structural reforms and investment gas production will not grow to its full potential either.²¹ If energy stops feeding the growth, what else will? The boom cannot be sustained unless Russia strengthens performance in other sectors of the economy. That presumes changes on a much more elementary level—banking sector reforms, cutting government bureaucracy, more transparency—which have eluded all Russian leaders so far.

In short, Russia's bid for membership in the Western community is very much a work in progress. The foreign policy direction could yet change, as could the driving forces behind Moscow's policies. As one observer, Ivan Safranchuk, of CDI Moscow, pointed out:

If oil prices fell markedly and the structural inefficiencies of the Russian economy were exposed, the Putin administration would have to react in one of two ways. The first would be to resort to the traditional trick of running a hawkish foreign policy to compensate for, and distract attention from, domestic political failure. In this connection, NATO would represent an obvious and easy target.²²

Russia-NATO rapprochement thus needs to walk a fine line between extending an open hand and hedging against possible future reversals in relations with NATO. This imperative, in turn, will define the quality and the extent of issues to be tackled jointly by the two sides.

The Criteria

Devising a list of meaningful points for NATO-Russia cooperation under these circumstances is not simple, but certain constants apply. First, the limitations: NATO and Russia must steer clear of “existentialist” issues—ones where a failure by NATO allies to agree (whether or not this failure is instigated by Moscow) would threaten the survival of the alliance. This would rule out Russia’s role in Article V (mutual defense) contingencies as well as in any votes defining NATO’s decision-making procedures or command structures.

Now, the possibilities: First, both parties must have expressed interest in cooperation on these points. Therefore, the list below was composed on the basis of key documents defining the security and strategic perceptions of the two participants involved, Russia and NATO. The key sources were NATO’s 1999 Strategic Concept, the 1997 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, the 2000 National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, and the 2000 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Overlap between interests cited in these documents does not guarantee success because, as discussed in more detail below, Russia and NATO often agree on the gravity of a problem but differ on either its interpretation or the approach to solving the problem on hand. In some cases, the United States disagrees with its allies. Note also that the list does not include issues that are usually addressed on direct state-to-state level rather than through the alliance. Plans for nuclear arms reductions, for example, appear high on both the Russian and U.S. priority lists. However, the process does not involve NATO directly and was thus excluded from the proposed list.

The issues were also chosen because of their potential to bring tangible and concrete results. One of the problems plaguing NATO-Russia relations is the emphasis on lofty political issues and the neglect of substantive—even if relatively minor—areas of cooperation that define the daily consultations among the NATO allies. Past NATO-Russia agreements were often designed to obscure real political differences rather than to resolve them. The 1997 creation of the Permanent Joint Council, for example, was largely motivated by the desire in NATO to claim progress on improving relations with Russia. This, in turn, allowed the alliance to silence critics of NATO enlargement by seemingly dismissing worries about the impact of expansion on Russia. But while enlargement proceeded, NATO-Russia relations floundered. Not surprisingly, the agreement produced for agreement’s sake brought few dividends. In fact, as Celeste Wallander of CSIS pointed out, “ambiguity that made agreement possible was the basis for Russian accusations of betrayal and threat arising from NATO’s growing size and role.”²³ This was particularly true in NATO’s 1999 war on Serbia, launched without UN

Security Council approval. Russia temporarily cut off relations with NATO after the war broke out, accusing the alliance of violating provisions of the Founding Act binding both parties to refrain from unauthorized use of force against any other state. NATO claimed that it had followed the agreement by consulting with (in fact merely informing) Russia in advance of its actions.

To avoid past mistakes, the list emphasizes projects that would require regular and frequent cooperation, and that are designed to yield concrete benefits and products. As Wallander observed, “the ongoing nature of NATO’s joint planning and operations puts the focus on practical issues and process, rather than on high stakes and difficult obstacles.”²⁴ Through these regular contact, Wallander concludes, “NATO itself built [a] community and trust.” Similarly, engaging Russian officials in NATO’s day-to-day work on issues such as theater missile defenses or reform of Russia’s conventional forces is meant to facilitate the same form of regular contact that led to the high level of trust and transparency among NATO members.

The Agenda

Missile Defenses

The differences between the United States and Russia on missile defense issues have not translated to tensions in NATO-Russia relations. Unlike the United States with its global missile umbrella aspirations, NATO’s interest in missile defenses is limited to plans for an extended range theater missile defense system. In 2001, the alliance issued two contracts for feasibility studies, which will lay ground for a potential deployment of a NATO-wide theater missile defense (TMD) system by 2010. Separate from the NATO TMD requirement, a number of allied countries formed a group to explore the possibility of building a joint naval theater missile defense system. A number of allied countries have already established a mechanism for developing an international TMD system: the United States, Germany, and Italy are jointly developing the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) based on the U.S.-manufactured PAC-3 missile.

Moscow has repeatedly expressed interest in joint pursuit of TMD with NATO.²⁵ On 20 February 2001, then-Russian minister of defense Igor Sergeev presented NATO with Moscow’s proposal for an ambitious Europe-wide missile defense system.²⁶ At this stage, formal cooperation has yet to begin, and Russia is not involved in NATO’s exploratory work on TMD.

On missile defenses the differences between the United States and its allies eclipse the gap between NATO and Russia itself. America’s allies have consistently expressed disagreement with the threat assumptions underlying U.S. missile defense programs and with Washington’s emphasis on a technological, rather than a diplomatic, solution. The events of 11 September quieted the dispute but did little to change the overall picture. The disagreement cuts both ways—U.S. defense officials criticized NATO’s TMD plans as insufficiently integrated with the U.S.-proposed global missile defense system.²⁷

Russia’s concerns about U.S. plans run even deeper than those of the European allies. As the Pentagon’s missile defense plans mature, the divisions are set

to grow. On 2 January 2002 U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld outlined Washington's new missile defense strategy in a memorandum that drops all references to the original "limited" nature of the U.S. missile defense program. Instead, it sketches a picture of a global missile defense umbrella, including concepts tried and abandoned during the Reagan years such as space-based interceptors. The plans inevitably caused concern in Russia about the proposed system's potential ability to weaken or completely negate Russia's nuclear weapons capability.

But will America's differences with Europe and Russia prevent NATO-Russia cooperation on missile defenses? Much depends on whether the United States can reconcile its contradictory position on NATO TMD.

Washington has found itself in the position of opposing a program over whose progress it has presided since conception, and which is being carried out almost entirely by U.S. companies.²⁸ European allies are unlikely to pursue NATO TMD in the face of U.S. opposition given NATO's established consensus principle. If allies fail to resolve their difference, NATO TMD could flounder. If it proceeds, the development decision expected in 2004 could entail some form of industrial participation by Russia.

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Terrorism

Russia already actively cooperates on counterterrorist operations with a number of NATO countries involved in the coalition fighting in Afghanistan. However, NATO's formal role in that operation is limited. The extent and nature of NATO-Russian cooperation on counterterrorism will thus be determined by the alliance's ability to carve out a role for itself in the future counterterrorist operations.

The alliance could take on several active roles, all of which may entail substantive Russian cooperation. Intelligence-sharing among NATO allies, done mostly on a bilateral basis, may soon be institutionalized at the NATO level according to some proposals approved by NATO allies.²⁹ If so, Russia, which has already played an important intelligence role in the Afghanistan campaign, would be a natural participant.

Russia's participation in any adjustment's to NATO's force structure is a more sensitive proposition, bound as it is to cause concerns about NATO's encroachment into Russia's traditional areas of responsibility. But a future role for Russia is possible should the two parties overcome concerns about each other's intentions.

NATO has no formal involvement in commanding counterterrorist operations currently under way in Afghanistan. However, this state of affairs may change

should U.S. proposals to make the alliance's command structure more flexible prevail. The same reforms could also lead to Russia's active participation in NATO operations against terrorism. A precedent already exists in Bosnia and Kosovo, where Russian troops participate in NATO-led peacekeeping missions (albeit formally under U.S. command).

WMD Nonproliferation

The spread of weapons of mass destruction is a multilateral problem by nature, but NATO's role in this field to date has been limited. Existing nonproliferation regimes such as the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Missile Technology Control Regime were established outside NATO auspices and with no formal alliance participation. There are indications, however, that WMD may become NATO's priority in the future.

The 11 September terrorist attacks put nonproliferation high on NATO member states' agenda. Since the attacks, U.S. government officials have consistently pointed to the danger of WMD in the hands of terrorist groups.³⁰ More recently, U.S. Senator Richard Lugar proposed that NATO adopt an aggressive role in policing the safeguarding of and trade with WMD.³¹ The January 2002 Lugar proposal even called for the use of NATO's military forces to prevent states associated with terror from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

The problem with the potential NATO-Russia cooperation on WMD nonproliferation is that many NATO states, including the United States, have implicated Moscow itself in WMD proliferation to countries of concern. Disagreements persist about which countries constitute genuine concern to Russia and the Western world, and which technologies could be used for developing weapons of mass destruction.

The goal of NATO-Russia WMD proliferation could be nothing less than a new system for cataloguing and safeguarding weapons of mass destruction in NATO member states and Russia. The allies could explore the possibility for a NATO-wide version of the U.S. Nunn-Lugar program, increasing the program's reach and dividing up its cost.

Reform of Russia's Conventional Forces

The issue is likely to be the hardest sell to Russia but it is also one that holds the most potential for improving relations between Moscow and allied countries, and as such it deserves particular attention.

Russian military reform, although much heralded during the early 1990s, did not really begin until 1997. The first defense minister of independent Russia, General Pavel Grachev, wished to preserve a Soviet-style army. Thus the reform plan that was published by the General Staff in 1992 was a hasty construct to satisfy the public demand for radical changes, and thereafter the General Staff became a bastion of military conservatism, which would result in problems later. The only real action was a steady trickle of division disbandments; even Grachev realized that he could not sustain the force at its Soviet levels.

General Grachev was replaced in June 1996 by Army General Igor Rodionov.

However Rodionov lasted only eleven months as defense minister and was dismissed after he resisted unit disbandment without proper compensation to redundant personnel. Then-president Boris Yeltsin specifically cited Rodionov's failure to reform the military as a reason for the dismissal.³² Former Strategic Missile Forces chief Igor Sergeyev was then appointed, and did begin to make some reform progress, such as forming "permanently ready" formations, along with the procurement of new Topol-M (SS-27) ballistic missiles. However, by March 2001 Sergeyev became engaged in a bitter dispute with Chief of the General Staff General Anatoly Kvashnin over whether reform priority should be accorded to conventional or nuclear forces, and was eventually fired as a result. Sergei Ivanov, Putin's closest lieutenant, was named as a replacement and has made some progress by cutting forces in the Far East. However, no plan has been unveiled that would change the army into a competent, effective force; NCO training remains a special difficulty.

Nevertheless, there are signals that Moscow's interest in real reform is intensifying. The issue figured prominently in Putin's April 2002 State of the Nation speech. "The transfer to a professional army, along with a reduction of the length of conscript service, is a clear priority," the Russian president said.³³ Putin ordered that some units be made fully professional as a pilot project and instructed the military to draw up detailed plans for the transition.

The *Financial Times* reported on 26 October 2001, that President Putin has asked NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson to restructure the Russian defense ministry and the armed forces.³⁴ NATO's participation in Russia's reform of conventional forces will no doubt be controversial. It is certain to cause examination of assumptions underlying the Russian foreign policy, national security, and military doctrines. For example, should the alliance's assistance include standardization of Russian military equipment with NATO's (as is done with most Central and Eastern European countries)? What implications would that have for Russia's military plans, particularly its readiness to deter an outside invasion, which, as the Russian military doctrine implies, may come from NATO countries?³⁵ Should the military continue to emphasize nuclear weapons? Against what targets? And are the costs of maintaining a superpower-sized nuclear force on a third-world defense budget not jeopardizing Russia's real military priorities? As Dmitri Trenin of the Carnegie Center in Moscow wrote:

If Russia . . . does not see America as an enemy, that paves the way for modernizing the country's military organization to enable it to meet the real challenges, risks and threats in the new historical era. If the answer is, after all, positive—yes, America is a potential enemy or may be a potential enemy—then Russia's military policy and security policy will not meet the present-day and future strategic requirements and the situation around Russia.³⁶

Clearly, reform of conventional forces would allow the Russian government to reduce military expenditures in the long run (even though it may be expensive in the short- to medium-term) while actually increasing its capabilities against new threats.

NATO's Role in Conventional Force Reforms in Russia

Assistance with conventional force reforms has become one of NATO's greatest strengths. Prompted in large part by the need to integrate former Warsaw Pact countries, the alliance has been working for the past ten years with nearly a dozen Central and Eastern European states on modernizing their militaries. It has developed funding and consultative mechanisms that help candidate countries identify their military needs and the force structure required to meet potential threats. The alliance financed a number of the studies as well as actual physical improvement projects from NATO's common funds. At NATO's prodding—and with assistance by think tanks and security experts from allied countries—applicant countries created civilian structures to oversee the work of uniformed members of the armed forces. NATO helped to make the countries' military budgets more responsive to actual defense needs as well as to the societies' economic means. The alliance also reduced the burden on postcommunist economies by encouraging a reform of the personnel- and armor-heavy Warsaw Pact armies. NATO played an indispensable role in this reform process. Teams of military specialists from the United States and other countries were deployed in the partner countries to provide advice and guidance. The U.S. Congress funded studies covering the whole process, from the size of the armed forces to creating a sensible defense budget planning process.

NATO-Russia cooperation on reforming the latter's armed forces could yield benefits in multiple levels. It could change both parties' perception of each other by forcing an examination of their threat assumptions. It would create a level of transparency that would greatly help to satisfy the concerns in a number of new and potential NATO member countries about Russia's conventional strength and posture. This dialogue would cut down on any misunderstanding about issues such as the growing size of Russia's Caspian Sea fleet or new NATO radar stations near Russia's borders.

Limitations

The cooperation would not be without risks. Aside from the technical expertise that could flow from NATO to Russia, the greatest single benefit of any such cooperation would be transparency, and the changes transparency would encourage. But transparency works by illuminating policies, with the hope that the exposition engenders positive changes. In real life, this approach does not always work. "Knowing that someone is watching you does not necessarily make you change your behavior," noted one expert. "Transparency merely raises the costs of delinquency; it does not render such behavior impossible."³⁷ In the NATO-Russia context, revealing the assumptions underlying Moscow's defense plans could just as easily aggravate relations with the alliance if it is not accompanied by constructive policies in other areas.

Nevertheless, allied involvement in Russia's conventional forces reform could help separate plans from intentions. A number of other measures—foremost among them the Conventional Forces Treaty (CFE)—already have shed a great deal of light on Russian force structure and deployment. Other intelligence

sources, mostly electronic (satellites, surveillance aircraft), fill in most of the remaining gaps. But the information itself is of limited use if Russia's neighbors lack understanding of Moscow's *intent*. Knowing that the Caspian Sea Fleet is growing is not nearly as important as understanding *why* it is growing and what *purpose* it is meant to serve. This is where NATO involvement can help—an extensive allied role in the reform process, along the lines of the model implemented in other Central and Eastern European countries, would require extensive discussion of the assumptions underlying Moscow's military plans. As such, it can help dispel fears where they are groundless—but it can also illuminate truly dangerous trends in both NATO's and Russia's military planning, with the hope of consultation leading to eventual peaceful resolution.

Conclusion

Russia's relations with NATO have gone a full circle from initial tentative rapprochement to grandiose plans for cooperation to open arguments and disillusion back to a cautious examination of potential for cooperation. Both parties emerged from the process more realistic about the potential gains as well as the limitations inherent in their cooperation. Unfortunately, neither Russia's foreign and security policy nor NATO's future direction are any more clear and firm today than they were five years ago, when a formal NATO-Russia partnership first began. The two partners explore the agenda for cooperation knowing full well that Russia's relations with the alliance could sour at any time in the future, and that NATO itself may cease to be an important factor in either U.S. or European decision making.

Under these circumstances, is a new effort to restart cooperation worth the time and the energy? The answer is yes. At the very least, NATO should not come in the way of improving Russia's relations with the West. The alliance itself will certainly continue to function for the near future, whether by design or by momentum, and as long as it exists both sides need to work on removing the residual fears and suspicions. The imperative to cooperate is even stronger in the areas outlined above, where NATO's skills and assets put to use either in Russia or in partnership with Moscow can directly serve to strengthen security in Europe. Such collaboration promises not only to improve the mutual relationship but also to create concrete, durable benefits that would outlast any changes to Moscow's ties with the alliance.

NOTES

1. As expected, the new council involves Russia in the entire process of NATO's deliberations leading up to decisions, from informal expert discussions up. The agenda before the council, as specified in the Rome Statement, is: struggle against terrorism, crisis management, nonproliferation, arms control and confidence-building measures, theater missile defense, search and rescue at sea, military-to-military cooperation, and civil emergencies. "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality," Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation, Rome, Italy, 28 May 2002, <www.nato.int>.

2. For example, see Celeste A. Wallander, "The Russia-NATO Relationship: Is It Worth

- Another Try?" PONARS Policy Memos Nos. 210-242, Washington, DC, 25 2002.
3. Charles Grant, "A More Political NATO, a More European Russia," *Europe After September 11*, Centre for European Reform, London, December 2001.
 4. R. Nicholas Burns, "NATO Is Vital for the Challenges for the New Century," *International Herald Tribune*, 10 November 2001. See also Anthony Foster and William Wallace, "What is NATO for?" *Survival* 43, no. 4 (winter 2001-2002): 107-22.
 5. "Senator Lugar Urges NATO Transformation," Washington File, 18 January 2002.
 6. Stanley R. Sloan, "Give NATO a Combined Task Force Against Terrorism," *International Herald Tribune*, 13 November 2001.
 7. Speech at the 38th Munich Conference on Security Policy, 2 February 2002, <www.securityconference.de>
 8. Quadrennial Defense Review Report, U.S. Department of Defense, Sept. 30, 2001, <www.defenselink.mil/pubs/qdr2001.pdf>, 4.
 9. *Ibid.*, 27.
 10. "New Army brigades demonstrate Pentagon's emphasis on Pacific," *Stars and Stripes*, 14 July 2001.
 11. Jessica T. Matthews, "U.S. & Europe: Estranged Partners," *Foreign Policy* (November/December 2001).
 12. "Pentagon in the League of Its Own," *International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2002.
 13. See Ivan Safranchuk, "Russia and NATO: Looking Beyond Expansion," *Growing Pains: The Debate on the Next Round of NATO Enlargement*, Tomas Valasek and Theresa Hitchens, eds. (Washington, DC: Center for Defense Information, May 2002).
 14. Martin Walker, "Russia's 'Big Step' to NATO Worries Poles," UPI, 25 November 2001; Daniel Williams, "NATO Explores Giving Moscow Expanded Role: Partnership Would Upend Old Rivalry," *Washington Post*, 24 November 2001.
 15. Quoted in Vladimir Socor, "Putin's Easy Pickings, So Far," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 19-21 April 2002.
 16. Jeffrey Donovan, "Belarus: U.S. Considers Sanctions for Alleged Illegal Arms Sales," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines*, 1 March 2002.
 17. See "Russians drastically changed their attitude on the U.S. in March," *Interfax*, 4 April 2002.
 18. Fiona Hill, "Extremists and Bandits: How Russia Views the War against Terrorism," *PONARS Policy Memo* 246, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., April 2002.
 19. *Ibid.*
 20. Fiona Hill, "Russia: The 21st Century's Energy Superpower?" *Brookings Review* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2002).
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. Ivan Safranchuk, "Russia and NATO: Looking Beyond Expansion," *Growing Pains*.
 23. "The Russia-NATO Relationship: Is It Worth Another Try?" 55.
 24. Celeste A. Wallander, "Repairing Relations with Russia Through NATO," *PONARS Policy Memo* 127, Harvard University, April 2000.
 25. "TMD: NATO Starts the Countdown," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 3 January 2001.
 26. For more information see Nikolai Sokov, "Russian Missile Defense For Europe: The February 20 Proposal Is More Serious Than It Seems," Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies, 14 March 2001, <<http://cns.miis.edu>>.
 27. "As NATO awards missile defense study contracts, Pentagon balks at NATO-only system," *Aerospace Daily*, 8 June 2001.
 28. The two contracts for a NATO TMD feasibility study were awarded to two U.S. consortia, one led by Science Application International Corporation and the other led by Lockheed Martin.
 29. For example, see "Statement on Combating Terrorism: Adapting the Alliance's Defence Capabilities," NATO Defense Ministers meeting, Brussels, 18-19 December 2001, <www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-173e.htm>.

30. For examples, see President Bush's 29 January 2002 State of the Union Speech, or remarks by U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz at the 38th Munich Conference on Security Policy, Wehrkunde, 2 February 2002.

31. "Lugar Says NATO Must Join Fight Against Terrorism," press release, office of Sen. Richard Lugar, 17 January 2002, <<http://www.senate.gov/~lugar/011702.html>>.

32. "Yeltsin fires defense minister over stalled reforms," CNN.com, 22 May 1997, <www.cnn.com/WORLD/9705/22/russia/>.

33. Vladimir Isachenkov, "Putin Confirms Military Reforms Needed," AP, 18 April 2002.

34. "Moscow asks Nato for help in restructuring," *Financial Times*, 26 October 2001.

35. The 2000 Military Doctrine projects several kinds of convention military threats, two of which appear to be directly inspired by NATO and its enlargement. The document warns of "the buildup of troops near the state borders of Russia and its allies," and "the bringing of foreign troops into the territory of countries bordering on Russia, without a UN Security Council sanction." Source: Anatoly Klimenko, "The Content of Russia's Military Doctrine," *Military Parade 2000*, <www.milparade.com>.

36. Press conference with Carnegie Moscow Center deputy director Dmitry Trenin on Russia-NATO Relations, 20 December 2001.

37. Ann M. Florini, "The End of Secrecy," *Foreign Policy* (summer 1998).