

# The Future of Russo-American Partnership

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**T**he Russo-American and Russia-NATO agreements of May 2002 have transformed the strategic landscape in innumerable ways. For the first time since 1945 the operational effectiveness of Russia's military forces is in the West's vital interests. Thus administration officials, commenting on the emerging Bush strategy of preemptive military actions, stated that they are fine-tuning that policy to show that America has options beyond armed intervention, including joint operations with Russia and other powers.<sup>1</sup> Despite such U.S. plans, in fact the Russian armed forces' internal debilities, and cognitive dissonance with Western notions of war, all but preclude effective cooperation with the West. Without such cooperation, however, their already weakened capability will continue to decline, placing Russian democracy and security at ever-greater risk. And while the new accords also create new opportunities for deeper, sustained, and regular cooperation on arms control, proliferation, the war on terrorism, and Eurasian regional security, there are potential traps ahead in those relationships.

Many Russians, including the vast majority of the military-political elite, view the 2002 agreements as very one-sided in favor of the West. Thus first deputy Chief of Staff General Yuri Baluyevsky openly stated that the May 2002 Moscow treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms Reduction (SORT) was unacceptable because it allowed the United States to store warheads that would not be counted in the signatories' total arsenals.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the West's victory has already become a target that domestic opponents of reform can attack. Although Washington and NATO seemingly got all they wanted, Russia apparently gained only access to a more institutionalized framework of partnership and a potential end to the structure of strategic hostility implicit in the mutual deterrence paradigm. So while a genuine Russo-American partnership is within reach, America's withdrawal from the ABM treaty, retention of a sizable reserve offensive nuclear force, differences over regional security in Eurasia, trade disputes, Russia's continuing support for Iran's nuclearization, and Russia's persisting democratic deficit make it harder to realize that partnership than would otherwise be the case.

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Furthermore, as Russia's economy slows down or even returns to recession, as is now widely expected, and given the continuing trend to curtail democratic reforms, a backlash could entwine foreign and defense policy in Russia's domestic politics and obstruct the realization of this new partnership's potential. We could soon return to a situation like that in the 1990s, in which Putin will always be on the defensive in foreign policy, as Boris Yeltsin was, and thus will be unable to advance reform and democratization. And as reforms sputter, Russia's internal cohesion is at some risk.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Dimensions of East-West Partnership**

The new East-West relationship's multiple dimensions include arms control, regional security in Eurasia, economics, and democratization. Arms control comprises reductions of offensive weapons, construction of strategic defenses, and nonproliferation. Regional security includes Russia's future relationship with NATO (and the EU); the extent and nature of joint partnership in the war on terrorism; the extent and nature of both sides' approach to issues of regional security in Ukraine, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia; regional security in the Middle East—an issue having special resonance because of the urgency of proliferation questions there—and the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the Far East no current or urgent issues irrevocably divide Moscow and Washington. But certainly the nature of each government's relationship to China and Russian military assistance to China are constant concerns of policymakers in Washington and in Moscow. As Lilya Shevtsova observes, the specter of a rising China and declining Russia severely constrains the policy perspectives and policy space available to Russian leaders.<sup>4</sup> The future of the Korean peninsula is another Asian area where both Russia and the United States (along with Japan, China, and both Koreas) have vital interests at stake and somewhat different perspectives.<sup>5</sup> We must also ascertain whether Russia's recent talk of imposing a settlement in the Middle East is for real and whether it is or is not aligned with U.S. efforts to fashion an enduring and stable settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.<sup>6</sup>

The United States, by ending the long-term bilateral suspicion embodied in the mutual deterrence relationship and mutual distrust over the entire range of security issues, has gained military flexibility regarding missile defenses, reductions in strategic offensive forces, and reorientation of U.S. military forces, as well as opportunities for making real progress on issues of European security and on four other key issues of the post-11 September security agenda. Specifically,

On the U.S. side, the basis for a new U.S.-Russian partnership rests on a reconfiguration of U.S. foreign and security policy goals, which include (1) successfully conducting the war on international terrorism, (2) a new urgency to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, (3) peacefully managing the rise of China as a great power, and (4) achieving a stable global energy supply. This is obviously not an exhaustive list, but no one would seriously question the weight of these items or that they can be pursued effectively only with Russian cooperation. In fact, no country except Russia could possibly bring as much to the table on these four goals. Russia—uniquely endowed with geography and natural resources—can potentially be extraordinarily important in helping the United States realize these key goals.<sup>7</sup>

The growing bilateral economic relationship goes beyond energy supplies to comprise freer bilateral trade and removal of obstacles to it, Jackson-Vanik legislation that is no longer pertinent, settlement of Russian debts, and official recognition of Russia as a market state by interested governments and international financial organizations, the last a goal eagerly sought by Moscow. There is also the issue of U.S. investment in Russia, especially in its energy sector. Yet despite political agreements and optimistic or even bullish reports, U.S. investors remain skeptical about Russia's progress toward becoming a viable outlet for foreign direct investment. Probably the most critical economic issue is Russia's rising capability to become an alternative source of energy for the United States and the West, which would then reduce OPEC's power on the world market. If that were to occur it would create a strategic earthquake with profound implications for international relations and security.

Finally, the fourth dimension to this relationship pertains to Russia's democratization. Clearly that process has greatly regressed as civil and human rights have come under increasing pressure, defense reform has stalled, constitutional reform is stagnating, suppression of the media and of religious freedom is growing more overt and pervasive, and police power is striving to shake off what checks on it exist.<sup>8</sup> The war in Chechnya, now in its fourth year, is both a major cause and a reflection of these negative trends. Chechnya must be addressed regularly in bilateral exchanges because it underscores the negative implications of the lack of democracy and transparency in national security decision making and has dangerous consequences for Russia while it continues. Those undemocratic features of national security policy ensure that for their duration Russia runs the constant danger and temptation of using force to solve all manner of challenges to security. Antidemocratic trends carry an equally dangerous implication for Russia's defense and foreign policies with the United States and Europe. Certainly Chechnya impedes Russia's lasting and full integration with Europe. As Quentin Peel of the *Financial Times* wrote,

But the real problem remains Chechnya and all it represents. Unless Mr. Putin can find a peaceful solution to the confrontation in that remote mountainous enclave, he cannot and should not be embraced by the rest of Europe. It represents a continuing affront to basic human rights.<sup>9</sup>

This is not an isolated view; the distinguished Finnish historian and diplomat Max Jakobson made similar observations about the first war with Chechnya in 1994–96.<sup>10</sup>

Thus European commentators identify a values gap between Europe and Russia concerning national security policies and perspectives.<sup>11</sup> Consequently neither partnership nor alliance with Russia is truly possible or enduring either for the United States or for Europe until and unless substantial democratic reform accompanies it. Moreover, failure to insist on adherence to the international conventions that Moscow has accepted, including military agreements, only encourages antidemocratic factions to undermine partnership with the United States and Europe, regional security in and around Russia, and Russian democracy, thereby

generating a vicious and unending spiral. We cannot have a truly effective or enduring partnership with an undemocratic Russia, and unless we make democratization the cost of integration with the West, neither integration nor democratization will succeed.<sup>12</sup>

The vociferous antagonism of the military, diplomatic, and foreign policy elite against the United States and partnership in general underscores the urgency of democratization. Since this opposition regularly appears in official media (increasingly the only kind of media), it generates the most cynical expectations concerning Russia's true policies. It also confirms the observation of former defense minister, now presidential adviser, Marshal Igor Sergeev (Ret.) that Putin's program since 11 September far outstrips the government's ability to keep up with him.<sup>13</sup> This overtly strident opposition also leads observers such as Vladimir Kulagin of the State Institute of International Relations to write that,

In short, the emerging picture with regard to our international activity is one of a "diarchy" of sorts. [The elite's] boldness in its thinly veiled opposition to the Kremlin's new foreign policy strategy, in contrast to its almost servile submissiveness to efforts to strengthen the vertical chain of command in domestic affairs, suggests that the elite has valid hopes that it will once again be able to convince the country—and subsequently the president as well—of the "naiveté" of the current policy of normalizing relations with the West. *Needless to say, traitors will eventually be identified as well*<sup>14</sup> (author's emphasis).

The presence and size of this opposition underscore the continuing absence of a social-economic constituency in Russia for improved relations.<sup>15</sup> As long as bilateral economic ties remain minimal, few if any economic interest groups will willingly invest political capital in them. This lack of elite support means that Putin's policies could quickly be reversed because Russia's democratization remains incomplete and vulnerable to sustained attack. This widespread but misguided and interest-driven Russian elite opposition to partnership also has adherents in the West in jaundiced analysts who dislike administration policy.<sup>16</sup> In reply, U.S. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow recently insisted on the existence of common strategic interests regarding regional security, nonproliferation, energy exploration, especially in the Far East, and issues such as the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline.<sup>17</sup> But Vershbow and presumably his superiors realize that without the necessary economic-political foundation partnership will remain inherently precarious and fragile.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Threats to Partnership**

Certainly alarmists in Moscow are ever ready to warn of a breakdown in the relationship and to make all sorts of exaggerated and false claims to that effect. For example, by January 2002 Sergei Rogov, director of the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada, complained that partnership had become "a slogan without substance."<sup>19</sup> In April, when negotiations on arms control, energy, and NATO were moving forward. He claimed that "no considerable progress had been made in any area of the relationship."<sup>20</sup> Although Putin had expressed unhappiness with American positions on strategic weapons and NATO's relationship with Moscow,

that problem had clearly passed by then. Instead, Mikhail Margelov, a Putin ally and chairman of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, told Jim Hoagland of the *Washington Post*, "We should look at a new military alliance that would include the United States, Russia, Turkey, maybe India, maybe for Central Asia."<sup>21</sup> This gambit omitted China, Russia's ally in Central Asia through the Shanghai Cooperative Organization. Meanwhile in Washington the European Union and U.S. government evidently have given their backing for Russia's new strategic position, at least regarding organizing a Middle Eastern peace conference.<sup>22</sup>

Those developments show how groundless Rogov's accusations were and the extent of Western actions to integrate Russia. They also show that the Russian political class is searching for a so-called hypercompensation to account for the setbacks in reforming the country and for economic failure. The arousal of nationalist great power rhetoric and the language of military threats is an integral tactic here; it also reflects the arrested development of economic, social, military, and political institutions that could successfully meet Russia's contemporary challenges. Thus nationalism and great-power rhetoric substitute for, and are intended to divert politics away from, tangible political and other failures.<sup>23</sup>

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Therefore either the unconcealed animosity of the Russian elite or the appearance (or even the reality) of a highhanded U.S. unilateralism could provoke those elites and potential allies to join hands against partnership to undermine it.<sup>24</sup> Because Europe estimates the success of U.S. policy toward Russia as the criterion of the degree of its support for U.S. leadership of the Atlantic alliance, the stakes in allowing a sense of excessive unilateralism to prevail are very high.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the charge of unilateral U.S. gains made by unregenerate Russian figures frequently galvanizes them and obstructs realization of the policy goals of those Russians who seek partnership. Thus Washington's decisions to withdraw from the ABM treaty, retain a large reserve of strategic offensive weapons, and station military forces in the CIS, even if those are correct decisions for the defense of U.S. interests, entail certain risks and costs for U.S. policy.

For example, in April 2002, it became clear that the Russian military was carrying out a bitter and protracted rear-guard operation to postpone an arms control treaty and frustrate the summit. It particularly stressed the U.S. desire to retain a large nuclear reserve force and U.S. deployments to Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. However, this opposition shows that Russia's antidemocratic domestic policies, support for proliferation, and excessively militarized policies in Europe and the CIS—all parts of the agenda of those opposing partnership—entail greater risks and costs for Russia than does the prospect of genuine partnership. This oppo-

sition leads nowhere and has nothing to offer Russia. Indeed, Russia's alternatives to partnership are either junior partnership with China or complete isolation.<sup>26</sup> But this opposition and the determination to play a military-strategic role beyond Russia's capacities demonstrate the continuing urgency of a thorough reform of Russia's national security system, including its economic industrial base.

Although the breadth of the bilateral agenda ensures that real and lasting partnership would transform much of today's international relations—arms control, regional security across Eurasia, the war against terrorism, proliferation, international economic relations and Russia's place within those relations, and energy issues—the main precondition for lasting and thus genuinely productive partnership is Russia's visible and irrevocable commitment to economic-political-military democratization. That democratization includes and entails a substantial transformation in the mechanisms, institutions, and mentality of policymaking, particularly in Russia's national security policies, and will certainly occur at the expense of the opponents of partnership and reform, hence their opposition. But precisely for that reason reform enhances Russia's security and its chances for peace and prosperity, while their program goes nowhere. Lasting democratization would also surely engender fundamental and positive changes in Russia and a positive reaction abroad that would give Russia more ability to influence world affairs rather than merely reacting to external events and decisions or being an isolated figure as it now is.

While enduring partnership regarding arms control, NATO, and so forth, will reduce the power of the anti-partnership opposition, because it remains incomplete it remains in question and vulnerable to domestic upheavals in Russia. Moreover, the inconsistency with which the Bush administration has reacted to issues of suppression of democracy at home and the war in Chechnya suggests that it may not fully grasp the centrality of a lasting transformation of Russia's internal conditions to attainment of a genuine partnership and to the achievement of vital American interests. As some anonymous officials complained to the press, the White House and the National Security Council, which apparently are driving the partnership, remain "in denial" about Russia's "unlovely" policies.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore partnership faces many obstacles in both countries because important American, Russian, and international constituencies oppose or are wary of it. Some, such as the U.S. Strategic Command, earlier opposed key administration goals, specifically deep cuts in strategic offensive weapons to approximately 1,800–2,000 strategic warheads.<sup>28</sup> The Pentagon, under Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, also strongly opposed any binding limits on the nuclear reserve forces that it has projected in its Nuclear Posture Review. Indeed, it argues that no dismantlement or destruction of nuclear weapons can be irreversible and so strongly argued its case that its view prevailed and no agreement on the point was reached. Nor does it seem interested in pursuing the issue of counting rules for dismantling nuclear weapons with Moscow since the SORT treaty was signed.<sup>29</sup> Still, the treaty was signed; the State Department and Senate pushed for and won a binding accord, that is, a treaty, because that would give Putin ammunition with

which to silence his critics.<sup>30</sup> But while the Pentagon lost on the issue of the treaty, it prevailed on the issue of the reserve force and on the U.S. ability to retain virtually absolute freedom of action in shaping its deterrent—much more critical issues. However, the United States potentially pays a considerable price for this victory. Russia, too, can structure its forces with absolute flexibility relative to its real capabilities.<sup>31</sup> As Russia has now repudiated the START II treaty, it evidently will—as it threatened to do and as some analysts foretold—once again equip its existing and future land- and sea-based strategic forces with MIRVs, and move more military investment to space-based assets. It can thereby retain more weapons at cheaper cost than would otherwise be the case, accelerating the overall weaponization of space.<sup>32</sup> This outcome represents some of the alternatives that military and political leaders raised as a countermeasure and threat to the deployment of missile defenses.<sup>33</sup>

Since the canons of arms control have historically cited land-based MIRVs as potentially the most destabilizing weapons, this permission suggests either of two conclusions. According to canonical arms control approaches, it introduces a destabilizing factor. If one is more critical of this canon and assumes that what really drives strategic policies is the nature of U.S.-Russian relationships, then Russia's flexibility is no threat because we are now partners, or even close to allies. Or as Jack Mendelsohn writes, as long as relationships between Russia, America, and China are based on deterrence, missile defenses will be destabilizing. But if the U.S.-Russian relationship is no longer based on deterrence, what then? This is the question posed by the new treaty.<sup>34</sup> From the administration's standpoint the answer is obvious, as stated by Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy J. D. Crouch:

Had we perpetuated the [ABM] treaty, the intention of which was to codify a balance of terror in U.S.-Russian relations, we would have signaled the expectation that our strategic relationship, at heart, would remain one of mutual threats and animosity, not our desire for a more amicable relationship. Withdrawing from the ABM Treaty and moving simultaneously toward important offensive reductions demonstrated in real terms that we are on the road toward a fundamentally more cooperative relationship with Russia.<sup>35</sup>

Viewed in this light, the likely force structures that will now emerge will probably confirm the essentially political impetus behind the postures and strategies. Therefore we are probably moving from a deterrence-dominated relationship to one dominated by defenses based on this mutual partnership. What characterizes this new strategic relationship is a parallel process of unilateral arms control measures, initiated by the United States, that is simultaneously accompanied by a robust verification and inspection regime based on START I, as is the case with the new SORT treaty.<sup>36</sup> Today both sides can deploy new, advanced, conventional, and space-based systems as well as new, upgraded, but smaller nuclear postures. Thus Russia, like the United States, is moving to build its own space-based infrastructure and architecture for a future generation of space-based missile defenses and strike weapons.<sup>37</sup>

But if that principle applies to conventional systems too, it also means that the

political imperatives of partnership can and should influence future Russian threat assessment and procurement decisions, and thus materially affect the future course of Russia's overall defense and general national security policy. If that is the case, that factor should reduce the earlier opposition, or at least hesitation, about the partnership that emerged within the Pentagon and some European governments, particularly the new members of NATO, candidates for membership, and smaller European states. They feared that Russia's demands for equal decision making with NATO, which expressly included the power of a veto over future activities, might convert NATO into a collective security organization that cannot provide security or that Moscow will then try to veto further NATO enlargement. Similarly Eurasia's small states and former Soviet republics fear that a deal might be made over their heads and at their expense.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Moscow could return to priority spending on space and nuclear assets, thereby reversing the course of Chief of Staff General Anatoly Kvashnin that was adopted almost two years ago. That course of action argues for a reduced threat from the West and holds the line on conventional forces' modernization to meet terrorist and other threats to Russia's south. Some are now advocating this new turn in strategy and policy.

Nevertheless almost all of Russia's national security elites oppose virtually every position adopted by Putin since 11 September 2001. Public statements by members of the government, including Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov (no relation), and Kvashnin often diverge quite strongly from Putin's remarks. Indeed, they and their subordinates often seem to stand publicly in opposition to him, thereby confirming Sergeev's observations. Certainly those ministers and their ministries still betray maximum suspicion of U.S. goals and are widely believed by knowledgeable Russian and Western experts alike to be congenitally obstructive and unreformed institutions.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, military writers have more than once attacked Putin personally in the guise of articles by prominent retired generals decrying his policies, and many have privately called him a traitor or accused him of betraying the voters.<sup>40</sup> Disaffected military elites, conspiring with the Duma, have not only attacked Putin's policies but have urged an alliance with China that would center around nuclear weapons, missiles, and space weapons.<sup>41</sup> And there has been a rising chorus of criticism of the American position and implied attacks on Putin for letting Washington intervene in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, for concessions on missile defenses, and so forth.

While both governments must therefore spend political capital to cement the partnership, Putin's challenge is incomparably greater since the only lasting basis for such a partnership and Russia's democratization is a fundamental transformation of Russia's political and military mentalities and structures. As analyses of Russia's overall foreign relations indicate, those structures and mentalities create numerous traps for policymakers, who cannot or will not conduct predictable long-term relationships because they are constantly seeking short-term gains and "rents" from their interlocutors.<sup>42</sup> This rent-seeking behavior maximizes short-term tactical and sectoral gains at the expense of a predictable, long-term, and



strategic policy and triggers great suspicion abroad concerning Russian objectives and policies. The elites are also inherently prone to viewing U.S. policies and objectives in the worst possible light, as merely an adjunct of crass material or realpolitik interests.<sup>43</sup> Therefore they and their policies constitute obstacles to a partnership on specific policies and to an overall partnership and integration with the West in which foreign and defense policies would have to meet Western standards and abandon Leninism and realpolitik.

Western and Russian observers acknowledge that democratization in general, and especially with regard to the formulation and implementation of national security policy, is essential to an enduring and successful partnership. But that democratization, in turn, obliges Putin gradually to yield many of his tacit and statutory powers to other power centers so that they and he can become more responsible and accountable actors, while curtailing the powers of the blocs upon which he has based his power—the secret police forces, the military, the defense industry, and the anti-Western coalition in Moscow.

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There is still no sign of this happening inside Russia. Although real democratization is ultimately the only way to reconcile those processes, its success remains uncertain. Gorbachev and Yeltsin failed at that task, and based on his record to date, it is unclear if Putin fully grasps or accepts the magnitude of his challenge and its clear lesson. Moreover, the fact that he alone decided to make the change toward partnership underscores the possibility that he alone, or others acting in an equally unaccountable manner, could reverse that decision at little cost and with little difficulty.<sup>44</sup>

Admittedly Putin's moves since 11 September are in some respects quite astonishing. They include supporting a U.S. military presence in Central Asia, limited but substantive military and intelligence collaboration with Washington against terrorism, joint efforts to oust the Taliban and support the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, closure of bases and intelligence facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Lourdes, partnership with NATO and an appeal to NATO to help reform and restructure Russia's armed forces and Ministry of Defense, the start of negotiations with the Chechens and announcement of troop cuts there, reports of support for the U.S. projected Baku-Ceyhan pipelines, refusal to cut energy production and suggestions that Russia can supplant OPEC as energy supplier to the West, an apparent abstention from overt pressure on states such as Georgia and Ukraine, willingness to accept with equanimity the presence of U.S. forces in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, and the earlier willingness to modify the ABM treaty. Moreover, Putin has steadfastly reiterated that those moves are not merely tactical gambits but rather a serious long-term policy and that those who think otherwise— a large number of Russian military and political elites—“are deeply deluded.”<sup>45</sup>

According to Duma member Alexei Arbatov, the cooperation with Washington went even further. Arbatov contends,

The turning point [of the war in Afghanistan] came in late October [2001] during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shanghai, which provided an opportunity for the U.S. and Russian leaders to discuss the operation in Afghanistan and improve their cooperative tactics. An indication of this was an unplanned visit by President Putin to Dushanbe on the way back from Shanghai, in parallel with visits by high-level U.S. officials—including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—to Central Asia. The U.S. and Russia started joint political, military, and post-war settlement planning; Russia began massive arms and materiel deliveries to the Northern Alliance along with (according to a common view in Russia) the dispatch of Russian technicians and advisors. Americans deployed fighter aircraft and combat helicopters in Uzbekistan and started close air support of Northern Alliance troops; Uzbeks and Tajiks were made to work together, as were the units of General Rashid Dostum and General Mohammad Fahim in Northern Afghanistan. It is quite possible that the agreed scope of actual U.S.-Russian cooperation was broader than publicly admitted and that secret agreements were made that will only come to light in the future. These developments produced a breakthrough by the middle of November.<sup>46</sup>

Apparently the Pentagon also funneled money to Russia for the Northern Alliance with which to buy weapons from Moscow.<sup>47</sup> Secretary of State Colin Powell echoed this assessment in recent testimony to the Senate:

Russia has been a key member of the antiterrorist coalition. It has played a crucial role in our success in Afghanistan, by providing intelligence, bolstering the Northern Alliance, and assisting our entry into Central Asia. . . . In fact, the way we are approaching Central Asia is symbolic of the way we are approaching the relationship as a whole and of the growing trust between our two countries.<sup>48</sup>

Those actions, therefore, could be taken to represent potentially major transformations of Russian foreign and defense policy. However, in many cases, for example, the closure of the bases at Lourdes and Cam Ranh Bay, they reflect or carry forward previous policies that were repackaged for the occasion.<sup>49</sup> Or, like many previous Russian proposals for partnership with NATO, they represent the same policies that Moscow advocated before 11 September and are clearly no more acceptable to NATO than they were before that.<sup>50</sup> Sergei Ivanov's and Igor Ivanov's claims that partnership with NATO merely represents an effort to alter the existence of security blocs in Europe to some undefined new order are more than a little disingenuous.<sup>51</sup> And the agreement between Russia and NATO reflects NATO's rejection of that stance.

In other cases also there apparently is less here than meets the eye. The Ministry of Defense announced that troops in the North Caucasus, but not in Chechnya, will be cut. Indeed, it launched a winter offensive immediately after Putin called for negotiations to produce a decisive victory, indicating that the army still pursues the will-o'-the-wisp of victory there. And it continues to wreak unspeakable havoc in Chechnya. As Kvashnin said for the umpteenth time, the army had crushed the last units of Islamic rebels and that only insignificant pockets of militants now remain.<sup>52</sup> Kvashnin further announced (also for the umpteenth time) that, "there will be no more mistakes. Our position is clear, no more concessions

to bandits.” Not surprisingly, by January 2002 the negotiations had broken down once again, and by February Putin was openly expressing his dissatisfaction with Russian progress or the lack thereof in Chechnya.<sup>53</sup> Although Putin now says that the military phase of the war is over, that is merely another example of an endlessly repeated but false mantra; nothing could be further from the truth.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, rebellious troops who, disobeying orders on rules of engagement, desecrated a mosque and committed other atrocities claim that their orders came direct from Putin!<sup>55</sup> This is hardly a sign of truly democratic control over the armed forces or something that should reassure Russia’s neighbors and partners. Chechnya, like the other instances of supposedly transformed Russian policies, domestic democratization, and military reform, shows that the real test will come in the implementation phase when the opposition seeks to obstruct the reforms and fulfillment of the requirements of partnership agreements. But in the meantime, to use Strobe Talbott’s analogy, Chechnya continues to be a cancer that is metastasizing throughout Russia’s body politic. Its course must be arrested, reversed, and ended.<sup>56</sup>

Another example of the continuity of policy is the repeated use of the military arm, bombings, sudden interventions by “peacemakers,” and so forth, against Georgia in early 2002. Georgia remains a particular target of Russia’s regime. Since the inception of the Chechen war Moscow has pressured Georgia for the right to intervene militarily there, continues to support the Abkhaz insurgents, and shows no desire to abandon its bases there even though it is pledged to do so. Indeed, Russian generals publicly maintain that they have not put enough pressure on President Edward Shevardnadze of Georgia.<sup>57</sup> Not surprisingly this pressure, along with Georgia’s own comparable failures to ensure security at home, has led to the assignment of U.S. forces to train, advise, and equip Georgian forces to deal with the terrorist threat that has grown thanks to Chechen movements into border areas (Pankisi and Kodori Gorges) and the establishment of links between the Chechens and Al-Qaeda. This episode and Russia’s continuing military probes against Georgia exemplify the process by which unsustainable military-political adventurism invites new wars or a perhaps unpalatable foreign presence in areas vital to Russia.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever their shortcomings may be, Putin’s actions have created pressure on Washington and its allies to reciprocate meaningfully and tangibly so that Putin, unlike Yeltsin and Gorbachev, does not appear to have made unilateral, unreciprocated concessions to the West. The charge that Russia has made concession after concession only to receive nothing is the most common refrain in the litany brought against Putin or U.S. policy. But it is unfounded given today’s power realities. Still, this charge, if believed—and it is endlessly reiterated in Russia’s media—has dangerous political potential. Accordingly, Washington and NATO responded at least in part to that charge. The Bush administration agreed to cut strategic offensive weapons and sign a treaty to that effect, was willing earlier to negotiate over counting rules for removing strategic weapons from a deployed status, included Russia in the “quartet” that is trying to organize a Middle East peace conference, declared Russia a market economy so that it can qualify for

membership in international financial and economic institutions, and has acted to open Western markets to Russian trade and terminate trade barriers, such as the Jackson-Vanik amendment, that no longer pertain to current realities. And NATO has forged new mechanisms for genuine partnership with Russia on topics of common concern.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusions

Putin's actions and policies since 11 September highlight the close link between Russia's domestic politics and national security policy. They also outline and reflect the enduring four-part agenda of U.S.-Russian relations: strategic and arms control issues; regional security in Eurasia; Westernization, which includes the war on terrorism, economic reform, and integration with the West; and internal democratization. Since reduced tensions with other states, especially the United States, surely facilitate Russia's liberalization and democratization, we must remember that U.S. actions decisively affect Russian domestic debates over foreign policy as well as policymaking. Indeed, because of the structures and mentalities of the elites in Russia, the influence that U.S. defense and foreign policies exert and the threat that elite members perceive to their positions are probably far greater than is understood in the United States. But at the same time the positive potential of that influence for reform is therefore comparably greater than is imagined here at present. While our actions can materially help or hinder Russia's democratization, the latter remains the only sure guarantee of lasting partnership. As Russian analysts realize, Russia's transformation into a stable, democratic state that accepts the status quo as legitimate is ultimately a task that Russia must accomplish largely by its own efforts.

### NOTES

1. David E. Sanger, "Bush to Formalize a Defense Policy of Hitting First," *New York Times*, 17 June 2002.

2. This refers to the U.S. concept of "operationally deployed warheads" under which stored warheads would not be counted in total arsenals. "U.S. Arms Deal Faces Growing Russian Opposition," *ABC Online*, <[www.abc.net.au/new/newsitems/s558682.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/new/newsitems/s558682.htm)>, 20 May 2002; Ron Popieski, "Military Man Says Russia Unhappy With Pact Terms," *Reuters.com*, 18 May 2002.

3. Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002). Talbott makes this point about Yeltsin always being on the defensive in foreign policy on page 9 but the theme pervades the book. As to fears for Russia's internal cohesion see Pavel K. Baev, *Russia in 2015: Could the Former Super-Power Turn into a Battle-Ground?* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, IFS Info3/02); Thomas E. Graham Jr., *Russia's Decline and Uncertain Recovery* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

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