

NATO: The Only West That Russia Has?

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A year ago, Leonid Radzikhovsky, one of Russia's more thoughtful journalists, wrote that Russia should put aside its reservations and make the most of its chances for cooperation with the real, existing West. The point was to stop waiting for the West to become nicer to Russia; the reason was that Russia needs the West, strategically as well as economically. And whatever kind of West Russia might like to have in an ideal world, the one that is out there right now is the only West that Russia has.

That real, existing West organizes its common strategic affairs through NATO. Radzikhovsky's advice to his country, thus, would seem to be reducible to this: make your peace with NATO, do everything to make cooperation with NATO effective, bend every diplomatic effort to build this relationship into a real alliance because in security affairs, NATO is the only West we have.

Is that what Radzikhovsky's advice really boils down to? Does the Russian elite agree that NATO is, in a basic sense, the only West it has? To a great extent it does. However, the path to that conclusion has been tortuous and the result remains largely an abstraction. It is not yet in a definitive, stabilized form; it remains a dependent function of the further development of Russia-NATO relations.

When President Putin came to office in 1999, the Russian elite certainly did not accept NATO as "its" West. It was fed up with NATO. It saw no prospect for Russia's entry into the alliance. It saw no prospect, either, for a meaningful partnership based on mutual attentiveness; quite the opposite, it was given to depicting the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Permanent Joint Council as a fraud and a deception. Its mindset was deeply affected by the Kosovo war and by its own rhetorical campaign against NATO's role in that war. Some in the new Putin government were blaming the country's problems in Chechnya on a supposed U.S.-NATO strategy of driving Russia out of the Caucasus.

Putin himself, while speaking more carefully and proclaiming Russia's European credentials, did so not in a language of Euro-Atlanticism, but in the name

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of a non-Atlantic Europe, one potentially compatible with Eurasianism. Even after a year in power, when Putin spoke of eventually joining the EU and of meanwhile supporting the euro and joining a new EU defense force, it was with the transparent intention of damaging the dollar and displacing NATO.

It was reminiscent of the Brezhnev years in the early 1970s, when a "Common European Home" was a slogan that meant a home from the Atlantic to the Urals, excluding America as an unwelcome guest. It was as if the elite had forgotten everything it had learned in the meantime, during the years of glasnost.

The Learning Experience in Russia, 1985–91

In the intermediate years after 1985, Russia had begun a more serious and honest pursuit of a "Common European Home." It quickly discovered that it could not afford to try to exclude America from that home or there would be no space for Russia either. The only options were (a) a Little Europe, "from Brest to Brest," or (b) a Greater Europe, a "Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok." Gorbachev began polemicizing after 1989 against the formulations of the Little Europe of the EU, which stopped at Brest, and welcoming the formulations of James Baker on the Greater Europe, the one from Vancouver to Vladivostok. That Greater Europe was labeled by Baker a "New Atlanticism."¹ Russians took note: their only prospective home was in the Atlantic world.

By 1990, there was discussion in the Moscow media on NATO becoming one of the permanent foundations of the Common Home. The East Bloc home of the Warsaw Pact was coming apart at the seams, and the inner Soviet home was threatened with the same fate; but no real, common, all-European home was yet on the horizon. Chaos was feared. Late 1990 saw a *pro forma* institutionalization of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); due to Western suspicions it was kept in a weak form and did nothing to alleviate the concern for getting a roof over the head of the emerging countries. Civil wars were already starting at the core of Yugoslavia and in peripheral areas of the Soviet Union.

By 1991, there was discussion in Moscow of joining NATO, which would have provided a common home of real substance, one with a real roof (the NATO "security umbrella") and walls strong enough to steady Russia in its new identity as a Western ally. On 20 December 1991, the Russian government, in one of its first acts as a fully sovereign subject of international relations, sent a letter to NATO "raising the question" of Russia's membership in the alliance.

In preceding months, the same Russian government, as an intra-USSR entity, had sent out feelers to NATO. Nevertheless NATO had not readied its thinking and failed to give a response to the overture in December. Within a short time, the Russian government withdrew the letter, saying that it was a mistranslation and was supposed to have read, "we are NOT raising the question of Russia's membership in NATO, but we are prepared to regard this as a long-term objective."² The reality was that the government had immediately come under attack for this letter from powerful communist and nationalist oppositions at home. It was accused of having sold Russia out to NATO, offering up the Russian people as cannon fodder for the imperialist wars of the West against the Third World—and all this for the favor

of a NATO that did not want Russia anyway. The Russian democratic elite had to retreat. The elites of other Eastern European countries, where there was a pro-Western consensus, could afford the humiliation of being ignored by NATO when they knocked on its door; the elite of Russia could not.

Out-of-Sync Learning Curves in East and West

It had been a steep learning curve for the Russian elite after 1985. The elite was riding on the wave of a unique process of regime transformation, at once jolting and cumulative: the unraveling of a mentocracy.³ After decades of repression, layer upon layer of falsehood had piled up in the official ideological version of the truth. The opening up to freer speech in those conditions meant deeper and deeper layers of memory bubbling to the surface, each one affecting the very identity of the state; it led to sharper and sharper changes in outlook, as the country navigated a series of turns in the road, each of them opening on a broad new horizon. In the space of half a dozen years the country went up to and over the edge of a political overturn. And since it was a global ideology that was being overturned, the transformation brought with it a reversal of global perspectives.

In the West, however, there had been no such steep learning curve. The response of the West, at the end of 1991 on NATO as in 1990 on CSCE, was essentially to wait and see: not just to wait and see before acting, but to wait and see before even talking about it. No hope was held out, no perspective to anchor the identity. For those in the East who needed answers for shaping their new state identity, this translated as a negative response.

December 1991 was the beginning of the Russian elite's re-disillusionment with NATO. The disillusionment continued step by step after 1991 until it came to the edge of a full rupture and military confrontation in 1999. Then, after an uncertain two years, Russia came up against a new global reality on 11 September 2001, superimposing a new dynamic on top of the old one.

The Imbalance of Suspicion over Hope in Western Elites

To be sure, not everyone in the West had been learning so slowly. Even before Gorbachev came to power, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher took him seriously as an agent of change and someone with whom to do business. President Reagan quickly did the same: he believed that it was only natural that people would want to have elemental freedoms and that communism would come to an end.

However, Reagan was distrusted by many of his own advisers on this point: they believed in a pessimistic brand of conservatism and a centrist *realpolitik*, not a brash, optimistic anti-communism. In the 1988 presidential campaign, most of the Republican candidates, including Vice President Bush, took the view that Reagan had become naive about Gorbachev and it would be necessary to proceed more cautiously.

In NATO, that view had been thrown out the front door when Manfred Woerner became secretary-general in 1988: his signature line was that the opportunities from the changes were greater than the dangers. In 1989 it came back in the

side window when Reagan was replaced by Bush as president. Once again, it came to seem daring, in Western elites, to argue for taking Gorbachev at face value, and it was simply out of the picture to talk about building a Common Home or a strong CSCE, much less about Russia joining NATO.

Gorbachev's reforms were often described as merely cosmetic, a fraud meant to get aid and money from the West to tide communism over its mounting troubles, a peace offensive meant to sow trouble in the Western alliance; or in sum, a plot to "divide and deceive the West." In 1985 nothing had yet changed in Moscow except the rhetoric. After 1987 there was evidence of an inability of some Western elites to welcome change, or take "yes" for an answer. In the CIA culture, the theory reflected a professional fear of being deceived; in the NATO culture, a professional fear of being divided. The theory was implicitly rejected at the top of NATO when Secretary-General Woerner made the commonsense observation that the opportunities were greater than the dangers. But it was brought back by Brent Scowcroft in January 1989 when he became national security adviser to President Bush. In his first interview on nationwide TV, he warned that the changes were a "peace offensive," meant for "making trouble within the Western alliance," and the light at the end of the tunnel could be that of an "oncoming locomotive."⁴ Coming from a person on the sidelines, it would have been a magnificent rejection of public common sense; coming from a person just catapulted back into authority, it was a threat to obstruct all the progress that could be made during the critical period when everything was in flux.

The "Common Home" motif of Gorbachev was treated as exhibit A in the compendium of arguments for viewing his reforms as a scheme to divide the West. The Common European Home meant instinctively to Scowcroft—as to his longtime colleagues from the 1970s, Lawrence Eagleburger and Henry Kissinger, and many others of their generation—the old Brezhnev strategy of trying to join Russia with Europe and drive America out.⁵ They had fought against that strategy when Brezhnev tried to get a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe formed without America. And they had defeated it: when the CSCE was inaugurated in Helsinki in 1975, the United States was a full participant. Yet they still feared it. In their minds, any suggestion of strengthening the CSCE was indelibly tinged with a Red-Green hue. It did not help matters that, in 1989, it was still Greens and cold war neutralists—the bitterest personal enemies of the Nixon-Kissinger crowd—who were the loudest proponents in the West of turning CSCE into a basis for a new security system for all Europe. Memories of past quarrels within the West seemed to override the present perception of changes in the East. A suspicious fixation on old enemies in the West stood in the way of forming a realistic picture of the intentions of the new historical actors in the East.

By the end of 1989, the terms of the debate had shifted. Communism had collapsed and been replaced by democratically oriented regimes in nearly all of Eastern Europe; everyone had to admit that the changes in the Soviet bloc were not just cosmetic. The question inside the White House became whether to look for ways to help along the process of change, as Secretary Baker argued, or to avoid "euphoria," be "cautious," and "wait and see," as Scowcroft argued.⁶ It was still

sometimes said that a Common Home was a trick to undermine the Western alliance, but even more, it was now warned that it was a trick to prop up the Soviet empire. The Soviets didn't seem as hopeful as in the past about making trouble for NATO, but now they were trying to get a Common Home for shelter against the trouble the West might make for the Warsaw Pact. The conclusion seemed simple: give them no help; build no Common Home; offer no shelter.

Many in the West thought otherwise. Active intervention in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus was widely advocated to stop the civil wars that were impending. Some went further, suggesting that a strong Common Home, if constructed quickly, could help ease the way out of communism in Moscow and Belgrade, the homes of the last two surviving core communist apparats. The idea was to provide a receivership into which those apparats could feel that it was safe to give up power—safer than turning it over to their own people unaided and unqualified, or to the subject peoples of their empire. Beyond that, it was to get a start on building the future Europe: for it was no

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longer enough just to think about winning the endgame of the cold war. In a Common Home boasting serious institutions, the various nations in the Soviet empire could have found a venue for maintaining their transnational connections with one another, many of which were rooted in a natural interdependence, even as they gave up the imposed connective tissues of the communist era.

However, neither step was taken: no proactive measures on Yugoslavia, much less the Caucasus, nor formation of institutions for a common home of any substance. Economic aid was given, but on a piecemeal basis, country by country, focusing on national structural adjustment plans, encouraging rupture rather than maintenance of joint economic links. There was none of the encouragement of joint planning or a joint currency clearinghouse, such as had been used in Marshall Plan days, to turn aid into a force for leveraging regional economic connections in face of the withdrawal of empire.

The critical years thus passed with the West essentially in a holding pattern. The chance for building a strong CSCE passed in 1990. The prospects for building a common home around NATO were put on hold throughout 1990 and 1991, when the Eastern European countries began knocking on the door and the emerging Russian Republic government began putting out feelers to the alliance. There was no formal response to Russia's public offer to join NATO at the end of 1991, when everything was in flux and the moral energy was present for making a radical change work; and the informal responses were mostly negative. In Moscow, the offer was viewed as a reversal of polarities placing Russia on the side of the West (and by the opposition, as a sell-out to the West). Inside NATO, however,

it was still perceived as a disruptive scheme, a threat to the peace of the alliance, a disturbance to its consensus.

The Fundamental Obstacle: Fear That the NATO Consensus Is Fragile

A forward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as an innovation.

—Francis Bacon

Fear for the consensus of the alliance has been the fundamental obstacle to a new Russia-NATO relationship. In the cold war period the Soviet Union was an enemy and wanted to disrupt the alliance. Yet the fear remains influential in NATO discourse even today, when the Soviet Union is long gone and a new global configuration of threats has made the development of strategic collaboration with Russia a matter of urgency.

A clue to the endurance of this fear may be found in the fact that, even during the cold war, it had a second foundation: a feeling that any turbulence might disrupt the alliance consensus. The consensus was treated as something very fragile that might not survive a major change. A friendly Russia would be a major change; it could be disruptive. The West did not want to take responsibility for the fragility of its consensus; instead, responsibility was projected onto the external changes, and intentions of disrupting the alliance were attributed to Russia.

Taking responsibility for itself would have meant for NATO to undertake to overcome the internal causes of fragility. In the 1950s this had been discussed, in the form of a need to reduce NATO's vulnerability to a "Soviet peace offensive." The proposed solution was to diversify allied cooperation into the political and economic spheres. It was a legitimate concern, since "peace offensives" had in fact been conducted as instruments of Soviet strategy and disruption, but was already formulated in a one-sided way, projecting too much of the blame externally. As the years went on, talk of a cure was dropped; all that remained was the warning of vulnerability to a "Soviet peace offensive" and the projection of the blame. A real cure would have had to go beyond diversification of the subject matter of cooperation; it would have required reform of NATO decision-making methods and operational procedures, so that the very ability of the alliance to function would not seem dependent on a fragile daily consensus on every issue that arises.

Projecting responsibility meant, by contrast, considering Gorbachev to be at fault for the danger to consensus, because he dangled a promise of change—and even worse, he actually made changes. It meant considering Yeltsin at fault for disrupting NATO with the idea of Russia's joining the alliance. The allies were not certain what would be the purpose of NATO in the absence of animity with Russia. What could be more disruptive than for Russia to offer to join? To be sure, NATO's conscience could not say that it was deliberately perpetuating some relics of the cold war to save itself, but by accusing Russia of bad intentions and projecting the blame, the conscience could be quieted.

From a standpoint of outer-directed attention to global needs, it would seem inevitable that, after 1989, NATO would have to face the question of what its pur-

pose might be apart from enmity to Russia. There was nothing disruptive in Russia's putting it directly to NATO: it was helping NATO face the future.

But from a standpoint of inner-directed attention to a long-developed and slowly evolving consensus, there was something terribly disruptive in Russia's impertinence. Russia would instead be asked to wait for cooperation to develop gradually, on NATO's own schedule, consulting with NATO on the subject and proceeding forward only when and to the extent that the allies developed consensus on the idea. Any suggestions from Russia for anything more could be depicted as anti-NATO. And so, in a strange inversion of language and logic, Russia's offers did come to be depicted in the course of the 1990s.

The second inner-directed standpoint had roots in the multiplication-of-consultations school of Atlantic integration theory.⁷ It undermined the natural sense of responsibility to the external world or to the external pace of developments. Such an approach seemed safe as long as the cold war seemed perpetual and stagnant; but it was on collision course with reality as soon as the Soviet leadership developed a desire to get out of the cold war and out of stagnation. The West acted as if concerned primarily about the cost to its internal NATO consensus; for the sake of postponing and trying to minimize this cost, it ignored far greater costs to external Russia-West relations and to the development of Russia's new conception of its international identity. The risk of re-alienating Russia greatly exceeded the risk of disruption of NATO: the likelihood was greater and the consequences more severe. Nor did putting off the internal adaptation of the alliance really help in minimizing the internal risk; rather it reinforced the doubts about the relevance of the alliance to the new era. For the sake of caution about facing the internal risk, the external risk was given free rein.

Stages of Re-alienation

In the last months of 1991 and the first half of 1992, Russia was re-alienated not by the action but by the inaction of the West, from which it had expected a warm embrace on the dissolution of the communist regime. Westernizing enthusiasm, which had been on an ascending curve from 1985 to 1991, took a dramatic plunge from which it has never recovered. The communists and nationalists came out of their deep demoralization and went back on the public offensive.

The shift was palpable in the parliamentary debates and votes in the Supreme Soviet. Yeltsin and the westernizers, who had risen to power democratically at the head of a broad public and elite tide, were left isolated, controlling only the presidency. Yeltsin's early downfall was frequently predicted in leaks from the Bush administration.

The shift was also palpable in Russia's military and security structures. The window of opening to the West during the period of regime transition had been wider in the military than the West realized; indeed, it largely closed before the West took notice of it. Left on its own, the Russian national security establishment had no choice but to develop a new conception of the national interest and a new national security strategy separate from the West.

The military had shown leanings in the NATO direction in the period when

everything was in flux. It was anxious to salvage regional security and stability in conditions of political collapse; substantial parts of it were ready to look to the West for co-insurance. The military knew that Russia could not maintain its empire by force. It understood that it cost Russia too much to rule over other peoples who were suspicious of it. Nevertheless there was a chance of holding the post-Soviet space together on the military-security level by a loose CIS command under the reformist leadership of General Shaposhnikov, if it could have worked in an interlocking arrangement with NATO, an alliance that the minority nationalities of the Russian empire viewed with trust. That hope ended in the winter of 1991–92. Defense was renationalized, or rather nationalized for the first time, in each of the fifteen new nation-states. Russia had to pursue its interests and a common strategic space through bilateral relations and pressures, with the inherent cost of reviving the minorities' suspicions of Russia. The West at first avoided doing active harm: it did not push for independence beyond the Baltic states, and it supported Russia's demands to recover all nuclear weapons from Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. But soon, the West became interested in the independence of the Newly Independent States and aligning itself with those states against Russia. The dynamic of mutual suspicions thus came back into play between Russian and Western militaries. It was a natural instinct of power politics among separate entities; one could go back to Hobbes for the explanation, or to Thucydides. It could have been averted only if there had been early, innovative steps for integration between Russia and NATO.

Russia's subsequent re-alienation is well known, but I will review it briefly. The radical westernizing Gaydar government fell and was replaced by Chernomyrdin. A moderate westernizer in practice, Chernomyrdin spoke a formal language of Eurasianism, which was necessary to maintain credibility and avoid being written off as a fool ready to be used by the West. Yeltsin overcame a hostile Supreme Soviet by disbanding it, but his supporters lost the elections to its replacement body, the State Duma. Ultranationalist and communist parties gained the most votes; Yeltsin remained vulnerable. Andrei Kozyrev, the pro-Western foreign minister, was weakened greatly; he had to make compromises to cope with political reality. In response, Western analysts, far from speaking of a need to exercise caution and shore him up, mostly dismissed him as useless and said his replacement could not be any worse. When the Communists won a plurality in the second Duma elections, Yeltsin decided Kozyrev had become too great a political liability. He was replaced by Yevgeny Primakov. The West discovered that the replacement could indeed be worse.

NATO moved inadvertently from passive to active damage in the course of 1993, when it first began seriously to debate expansion of the alliance. The new Clinton administration opened the door to this. It was looking for a venue for constructively engaging Russia along with its former subject states. At first it looked to CSCE and hoped to strengthen it, but quickly realized that little could be done with CSCE and turned to NATO. However, Russia was no longer at all enthusiastic about NATO. The time had passed when it could have been expanded easily. Russians were no longer ready to believe the explanation that, although other countries would

be allowed to join NATO first, with the immediate result of reducing Russia's influence and diplomatic capabilities, the door would be held open for Russia to join later. Russians felt they had been tricked too many times by the West since 1985; they did not want to pay more costs for vague promises of future benefits.

NATO was still not ready to think about how to include Russia in the alliance; in this sense, Russians were right in believing the promises insincere. The character flaws of the new American president took their toll: he had promised in his campaign to be a domestic president and in his first years did not want to put too much effort into foreign affairs. He opened the door for NATO expansion, but did not fight hard for a coherent vision of it. Expansion went on to take its own course, which became a course of least resistance. The compromises made in NATO in the debates on expansion led to turning from an initiative for engagement with Russia and its neighbors, into a plan for peeling off Russia's neighbors and leaving Russia alone on the outside. The United States prevented the NATO expansion plan of 1995 from formally declaring Russia forever excluded; but arguments against its ever joining were openly made by the German defense minister, and later by Clinton's own secretary of state, Madeleine Albright.

In the Russian media and elite, the reaction to the initial discussion on NATO expansion in 1993 was extremely negative, verging on panic. NATO once again took on the odor of an enemy, plotting to exploit Russia's weakness and expand its writ to Russia's border. Yeltsin continued to say that NATO expansion would be acceptable if Russia were to be included at the same time as the other Eastern Europeans, but that option was never developed.

The Russian elite was mollified by the announcement of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) in January 1994, which Russia was invited to join from the start. Russians interpreted PFP as a substitute for expansion, underestimating the fact that, at the same time, NATO also adopted the goal of expansion, in a form open to all PFP participants. It was a misinterpretation, but one that was shared by many Westerners, particularly political opponents of the U.S. administration, who attacked PFP as a concession to Russia and began pushing for a form of expansion that would be explicitly at Russia's expense. The latter constituency was, in turn, mollified by NATO's "Study on NATO Expansion"; commissioned by a NATO summit in December 1994 and released in September 1995, it was NATO's official plan for expansion. The Russian political elite and media in turn went into new rounds of panic in December 1994 and September 1995 over this study.

When Yeltsin, on Russian national TV, was presented with the comment, "Bill Clinton said today that NATO is open to everyone," he retorted sharply, "Yes, but he omitted to say: except Russia. And this is the whole crux of the matter. But to us, in a narrower circle, he said this. And so, it is not the same thing."⁸

Repeatedly Yeltsin paid the price for NATO expansion. Each time it was brought up for debate or action in the West, the communists and nationalists made political capital out of it. He had nothing to answer when they asked why his friend Bill and his much-idealized West were doing this to Russia. He had nothing to answer when they said that his policy of smiling and yielding to the West was encouraging a more aggressive Western policy. But each time, he absorbed the price and insulated the

West from any immediate consequences. It was only through the cumulative alienation of the Russian elite that the consequences were felt.

It was Yeltsin, not NATO, that guaranteed the Eastern European states against a return of communism to power in the 1990s. Half-reformed communist parties were elected back to power in most of Eastern Europe and the Baltics during the 1990s. However, their return was rendered innocuous by the exclusion of communist elements from power in the old Moscow center. Thanks to that, the awesome charisma of communist authority was gone, the hardline workerist elements in the other post-communist parties were left stranded, bereft of the prospect of "going back home," and the reformist elements prevailed.

"The Russian elite and media proclaimed with one voice that NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia was aggression; that it was a brazen violation of international law; that it showed contempt for the UN."

When the Russian Communist Party came in first by a wide margin in the December 1995 elections for the Duma, the West worried that the Communists might return to power in the Russian presidential elections of 1996. Yeltsin was lagging far behind Zyuganov, the Communist candidate, in the polls. A wise moratorium ensued on any discussion of

NATO expansion. A major IMF loan was for the first time given to Russia, to keep the ruble stable. It worked: With the help of a couple mistakes on the part of Zyuganov, Yeltsin came from behind and won re-election. He proceeded to re-establish radical westernizers in nearly all positions in the government, except the Foreign Ministry where he retained Primakov. It was a sad commentary on what he had learned to expect: that there might be prospects for major successes with westernization on the economic front, but not on the foreign policy front where he was dealing directly with the West.

And in fact, rather than take the occasion to think afresh about integration of a Russia that was once again moving along a sharply westernizing curve, the West immediately resumed discussion of NATO expansion on the terms of the 1995 plan. NATO decided in December 1996 on a two-track policy: to determine in July 1997 which Eastern European countries to invite to join as members and to negotiate a "NATO-Russia Charter" to regulate mutual relations and create structures for consultation and cooperation.

Russia reluctantly agreed to negotiate this charter. Security Council secretary Rybkin, Defense Council secretary Baturin, and prime minister Chernomyrdin all spoke in favor of becoming a "political member" of NATO. However, the West simply went ahead and negotiated the charter with Primakov, the one major figure in the government who was against joining NATO. The charter was signed, creating a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC). In this council, Russia would be able to consult with NATO on a monthly basis. Meanwhile, the real NATO Council, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), would meet separately.

Consultation as an external partner was treated as an ideal solution: Russia would have “a voice not a veto.” Secretary of Defense Cohen added on one occasion that it would have “a voice, not a vote or a veto.” Russians complained that NATO would pay no attention to their voice, since Russia would lack the voting or vetoing rights of every single member of NATO including the smallest. When NATO proceeded to take in three new members and simultaneously launch the intervention in Kosovo, they felt proven right in their complaint.

Some Russian democrats such as Alexei Arbatov and Sergei Kortunov, frustrated at the lack of real progress with NATO, proposed submitting an application to join NATO. This was sometimes explained tactically, as a way of testing the sincerity of the West; although the tactical gloss may itself have been a way of avoiding accusations of pro-Western idealism. In any case, Primakov responded that it would be a mistake: it would make Russia more vulnerable to NATO pressure while depriving Russia of a basis for diplomatic argument vis-à-vis NATO. Others elaborated that NATO would be free to set the terms for joining while ignoring Russian interests, Russia would be asked to follow NATO policy for an indefinite probation period and give up its own interests, and in the end NATO would simply use Russia’s application as an excuse for admitting everyone else and then forget about it.

The answer effectively discredited the idea of applying to join. Arbatov abandoned the idea and soon was saying that the initiative for any further steps would have to come from NATO. Russian democrats were left with no option but to sit quietly in their dissatisfaction.

The PJC’s structure, as an external consultative arrangement, made it natural to pay insufficient attention to Russia’s voice, but the problem was considerably worsened by the old NATO culture, in which any Russian influence was feared as disruptive. That culture was reaffirmed and re-entrenched by an institutional step backward within the PJC.

From the moment the PJC was proposed, Henry Kissinger attacked it as something that would disrupt the ability of NATO to reach consensus and give Russia a de facto veto over NATO decisions. He recommended that a reservation be attached requiring that on each issue NATO must reach its own consensus or “common position” in the NAC prior to starting to talk with Russia in the PJC. The Senate, under Republican control, adopted such a reservation. The administration obligingly accepted it as compatible with its own conception of the PJC.

The impact of the procedural-institutional restriction was profound. Once NATO had gone to the effort of forming a consensus on an issue, it was not going to want to re-open its conclusion for new inputs, approaches, interests, or compromises, especially not when the new inputs were coming from a country that was suspected of trying to disrupt the consensus.

NATO Expands and Goes to War—The Double Shock of 1999

In due course, the first three central European states were invited to join NATO. Russians reacted quite negatively, to the surprise of some in the West who believed they had solved their problem with Russia by forming the PJC. The first

round of expansion was completed in 1999. Simultaneously, NATO launched an intervention in Kosovo—its first actual war.

The intervention compounded the reaction in Moscow, which went beyond panic to a war scare. The West had been reassuring Russia that it had nothing to fear from NATO and that the expansion of the alliance could not possibly hurt Russia, or at least not an unaggressive Russia, since NATO was purely defensive. Now NATO looked the opposite of defensive. It was bombing a country, Yugoslavia, that considered itself an ally of Russia. What, apart from nuclear weapons, was to stop it from bombing Russia next?

Further compounding the problem, in 1999 NATO adopted a new strategic doctrine of “projecting stability.” This meant both expanding its borders and performing peacemaking tasks beyond its borders (“out of area”). NATO expected the new doctrine to reassure Russia, since it was an idealistic mission for a “new NATO,” unrelated to the cold war tasks of the “old NATO.” However, in reality it was the opposite of reassuring. Russia saw it as a charter for new aggressive actions by a NATO that was still, in its core structures and mentality, the same old one. For the first time, NATO had authorized itself to act beyond its defensive borders, in the name of universal values that could be invoked any time the United States or CNN got worked up about a country.

The Russian elite and media proclaimed with one voice that NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia was aggression; that it was a brazen violation of international law; that it showed contempt for the UN; that NATO was giving itself a warrant to intervene in any and every country’s internal affairs at its own discretion; that NATO was violating its own charter; that the United States and NATO were becoming global tyrants—they were bombing Belgrade now and would be bombing Moscow next; they were intervening now to help the KLA guerrillas break up Yugoslavia and would be intervening next to help the Chechen guerrillas break up the Russian Federation.

Russians knew that in reality the atomic bomb guaranteed them against any direct NATO attack, but in their polemical fervor, they added that this only proved how hypocritical were NATO’s pretensions to be enforcing law and morality. They began to develop scenarios of creeping NATO aggression against Russia: NATO encircles Russia; one after another of Russia’s neighbors joins the alliance; NATO gets greater ability to exert pressure on Russia while Russia loses its ability to exert pressure on anyone; the West buys off the Russian elite; the Western mass media exert powerful psychological influence on the Russian elite and mass media, who lull the country to acquiesce; Western-supported Islamic regimes infiltrate Russia with rebels such as the Chechens; the West develops business and political connections with regional bosses inside Russia, it preaches a never-ending process of decentralization of Russia and independence from Moscow, treating autonomy from Moscow as if it were the same thing as democracy when in fact it was often the opposite, and finally leads Russia up to and over the edge of break-up.

This nightmare scenario was not meant as a joke; to many Russians, it seemed to be in process of coming true. Some prominent westerners seemed to favor

break-up. Paul Goble, head of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, spoke of the possible benefits of break-up. Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote of the benefits of Russia's devolving into a confederation of three or more parts, each of which would drift under the influence of external great powers. And there was the fact that processes of disintegration had already twice come to fruition—first the collapse of the outer empire in Eastern Europe, then the collapse of the inner empire that was the Soviet Union—with pro-Western figures in the elite always fostering acquiescence. A third stage seemed to be on its way. In a November 1999 poll, 37.5 percent of respondents said the West wanted to break the Russian Federation into pieces.⁹ Putin said the goal of the campaign in Chechnya was “to bring about the end of the breakup of Russia.”¹⁰

In reality, when Chechen militants invaded Dagestan in 1999, the Clinton administration supported Russia's military response and spoke for the first time of a concrete alliance with Russia against terrorism. However, when Russia carried the war back into Chechnya and the Western mass media swung against Russia, the administration backed off its public posture, supporting Russia's goals and territorial integrity, criticizing its methods although not loudly enough to satisfy the media, and protecting Russia against those who wanted to punish it in international organizations such as the G-8. The Russian public heard little of this official policy; instead it heard the anti-Russian speeches in the Western mass media, and heard its own elite and media portraying the West as being behind the Chechen rebels.

The arguments about NATO intervening to support the Chechens and break apart Russia were abandoned in later years, but in 1999 they were taken very seriously. They played a role in political developments inside Russia, particularly the decision to respond to the Chechen attacks on Dagestan with an all-out war to suppress the Maskhadov regime along with the radical Chechen rebels, who were described as agents of the alleged Western interest in breaking apart Russia.¹¹ The more detailed arguments about NATO violating international law in Kosovo and becoming a global aggressor were never abandoned or refuted by the Russian media or elite but were only relegated to the back of the mind.¹² They remain there, entrenched like a sedimentary deposit, a layer of anti-NATO feeling and conviction that is ever available to be trotted out as an obstacle to better relations.¹³

It is intriguing that Russia and NATO have both committed some of their worst mistakes when they have fallen into a wildly suspicious language about the other. In Russia's case, it is a language about a NATO plot to break apart the Russian Federation; in NATO's, it is a language about a Russian plot to break apart the alliance. The one has led Russia to respond to non-existent plots with extreme counter-measures; the other has led NATO to delay on developing an alliance with Russia and facing the new strategic dangers. The two sides cannot conduct a reasoned dialogue and influence one another toward cooperation if each fears the other's every influence as a threat to its own existence. Further, this fear has been used as an argument for going ahead with unnecessary and provocative steps, such as the Kosovo intervention and the expansion into the Baltics, lest NATO give in to Russia's “veto”¹⁴ and become “gelded”¹⁵

To be sure, no mirror image is precise (unless the images are formed digitally). It would be hard to deny that Russia after 1999, unlike NATO, had reasons for its fears. It was incumbent on the West to show greater maturity. No one has a right to be irrational, but a need for humoring is more understandable on the part of a weak, defeated Russia than of a powerful, victorious NATO.

It was predictable, in light of the persistently negative evolution of Russian feelings concerning the Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s, that the Russia political mind would lose its balance and fall off the edge if NATO proceeded to bomb Serbia. What was not predictable was how the loss of balance would play out and where it would lead. In practice it went through two phases: the predictable phase one of anti-NATO speeches and support for Serbian resistance, and an unanticipated phase two of political reversal, which helped NATO end the war on its own terms.

The two phases coincided with a domestic Russian struggle for power. In phase one, Prime Minister Primakov took up the role of lawyer for Serbia, setting Russia against NATO, while the media and the Duma ran a massive campaign of blackening NATO and its "aggression." In phase two, Yeltsin made a surprise comeback, deposing Primakov. That saved the day for NATO, which otherwise might have had to resort to a ground war in Kosovo with potentially ruinous consequences for alliance cohesion. And it saved the day for Russia-West relations.

Primakov had become powerful in domestic politics because he spoke of pursuing Russian "national interests," understood as being distinct from Western interests and from Yeltsin, who was accused of yielding to Western interests. A large majority of the Duma supported Primakov, but hated Yeltsin and tried to impeach him. That formed a curious symmetry to the American political scene of the time: a weak president, Bill Clinton, hated and impeached by Congress, which saw him as too soft and idealistic and pro-Russian; and a strong secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, who talked abrasively about American "national interests" and was popular with Congress. Primakov and Albright played symbiotic roles; they reportedly liked one another and enjoyed bargaining as adversaries. Their mutual dynamic was akin to that of Brezhnev and Nixon several decades earlier, but with one big difference: in the 1970s, Brezhnev and Nixon were taking risks for ameliorating relations; in the 1990s, Primakov and Albright were doing the opposite, pushing aside the relation of Yeltsin and Clinton, who understood mutual cooperation as the fundamental interest of their countries and were willing to take risks for it. Brezhnev and Nixon had been realists mostly out of necessity, bargaining from the opposing interests of socio-political systems that bore opposing projects for the future of the world. Primakov and Albright were realists as a kind of sentimentality, ignoring the realities, playing out a cold-war-style *realpolitik* drama long after the time had passed for it.

Under Albright's tenure, NATO issued an ultimatum to Serbia. It resolved to go to war if Serbia failed to yield. Once it had reached a consensus on this approach, it did not want to compromise in any way on the ultimatum: otherwise the intra-NATO consensus for action might dissipate and the Milosevic regime in Serbia might once again weasel out of the situation and resume its campaign of

ethnic cleansing. At Rambouillet, the cards were stacked for war: no compromises with Serbia were entertained, but when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) rejected NATO's terms, it was allowed extra time to sign on. Rather than take the opportunity to wash its hands of the KLA, NATO bent its rules to save the ultimatum and preserve the either-or choice for Serbia: either submit in toto or else face war.

The war came.

It was the turn of Primakov and Milosevic to be intransigent. Primakov, to tremendous public applause, turned his plane back from a flight to Washington. He went to Belgrade and announced that he had gotten Milosevic to agree to reasonable terms, thus placing the onus for the war on NATO. Serbia, sensing strong moral backing from the Russian media and elite, held out week after week.¹⁶ NATO went into despair as nearly a million Kosovar Albanians fled into the mountains. Winter neared. It seemed that a ground war would be necessary, but the NATO consensus was unprepared for one.

“As prime minister and subsequently president, Putin moved quickly to establish a reputation as a tough nationalist. He carried the war in Dagestan back into the heart of Chechnya.”

Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin: A Change in Russia-West Relations

Then came a break in Moscow. Yeltsin, no matter how weak he seemed, still held tremendous formal power and used it to push Primakov aside. Perhaps he had been waiting for a chance to do this: the Duma had forced Primakov on him as prime minister, and he had always feared Primakov's ambitions and good relations with the Communist Party. The slide toward Russia-West enmity during the war in Kosovo gave Yeltsin his chance. His supporters accused Primakov of sacrificing Russia's national interests and damaging relations with the West for the sake of personal feelings. They hinted that Primakov's realism was fake, that his concern for “Russian national interests” was a cover for nationalist sentimentality—for trying to be different and feel proud of it. The result of the attempt to be different was damage to Russia's actual interests, which lay in expanding cooperation with the leading powers and economies of the world. Primakov was reported to be demoralized by the attack on his professionalism. Yeltsin appointed Victor Chernomyrdin to lead a diplomatic effort for ending the war, brusquely pushing Primakov to the side. Shortly afterward he fired Primakov.

Chernomyrdin soon secured Milosevic's signature to NATO's peace terms. The G-8 and the Contact Group provided space for Russia to bargain with the West over the terms with some dignity, but the West was scarcely willing to bargain for fear of an unraveling of the consensus in NATO,¹⁷ and the venue for implementation was not G-8 but NATO, to which Russia did not belong. In the

end Chernomyrdin was widely seen as having been used by NATO for securing its victory, which eliminated any chance he had for a political comeback.¹⁸

With Yugoslavia's acquiescence obtained, Russia and NATO were supposed to work out terms to cooperate in enforcing the settlement. But in the absence of an agreement, both sides moved toward unilateral action. Russia took the opportunity to be the more unilateral, trying to pre-empt the NATO presence. The Russians arrived first at the airport of Pristina, and a tense standoff ensued. However, the superior ground and air presence of the West, ensured when NATO candidate countries closed their airspace to Russia, enabled NATO to win and impose its enforcement system. Russia was given an inferior, subordinate role in the interstices of the NATO national sectors of Kosovo, not even a co-equal subordinate role alongside the other national sectors, much less the autonomous role it wanted in running a sector. NATO insisted on this as a matter of principle: Serbs might gravitate to a Russian sector, putting an end to the goal of a multiethnic Kosovo and paving the way for partition. Given the so-called ethnic cleansing of Serbs, it may have been better for them to have had a sector to flee to, and for the Albanians to have to reckon with a prospect of partition as a reason to restrain themselves. Nevertheless, for the sake of this principle, NATO refused any compromise with Russia.

The confrontation at Pristina was the most dangerous moment in the entire war, one when there was a risk of a superpower conflict. The Russian military was, to all appearances, out of control. Its rush to the airport ran contrary to the assurances given to the West by Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and others. Subsequently, Ivanov admitted that he had not been informed of the action. Yeltsin put out a cover story saying that he had authorized the action, but threats of disobedience were openly made by military leaders. When Yeltsin dropped Stepashin—his initial replacement for Primakov—and nominated Vladimir Putin as prime minister, one of the more plausible explanations was that Putin was the only person in Yeltsin's entourage whom the military would reliably obey.

The Putin Years

As prime minister and subsequently president, Putin moved quickly to establish a reputation as a tough nationalist. He carried the war in Dagestan back into the heart of Chechnya. He spoke of wiping out Chechen rebels in the toilet. He blamed Russia's vulnerabilities on foreign influences and on the media. He began a vendetta against NTV, the only major independent channel. All this did little to solve Russia's objective problems, but it did a lot to overcome the subjective sense of helplessness and expectations of disintegration, which by 1999 had grown so widespread as to risk becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. It also ensured his easy re-election as president. And it gave him the realist credentials to proceed with a pro-Western policy.

The initial regional focus for Putin's relations with the West, the Caucasus and Central Asia, was not a promising one. It was the area where Russian suspicions of the West were worst. But by the end of 2001 it too led to a turnabout in relations, no less unanticipated than the one that had occurred in the midst of the war in Kosovo, a turnabout that revolved around Afghanistan.

The Central Asian Front and the Taliban

U.S. policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus went through three main stages in the 1990s:

1991–92. The United States saw the independence of the new states as a nuisance, one that was exacerbating nationalism, worsening ethnic conflict (Armenia-Azerbaijan, Georgia-Abkhazia, Georgia-Ossetia), and creating a new nuclear power (Kazakhstan) that should return all its nuclear weapons to Russia.

1992–93. The United States established diplomatic ties with the new states, developed interests in trade and security relations with them, worked on a basis of their independence to further those interests, and gradually discovered (or came to believe) it had an interest in the independence of these states.

After 1993. The United States acted in the name of “strengthening the independence” of the new states. That policy was described as promoting freedom and democracy. Here the Jeffersonian idealism of William Jefferson Clinton found its most damaging application, merging with the anti-Russian *realpolitik* of his most extreme critics in Congress. The two logics could converge, cold war-style, in promoting independence from Russia, by equating that independence with being in the Free World. The independence that the United States was trying to strengthen was only from Russia, not from alternative regional influences—Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, China. A glance at those alternative sources might have given pause about the merits of undermining Russian influence.

The realities quickly proved to be opposite from the equation of freedom with independence from Russia. The countries in Central Asia that were “closest” to Russia—friendliest to Russia, most under Russian influence, and containing the most ethnic Russians—were the most liberal (Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan); those “farthest” and most “independent” from Russia were the most autocratic (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). The same pattern roughly applied in the Caucasus, despite the greater complexity of the region. Armenia, the most pro-Russian, was the least far from democracy, while Georgia and Azerbaijan were considerably more undemocratic. And it applied even inside the Russian Federation, where regions developed democratic and pluralistic practices in proportion to their subordination to Moscow.¹⁹ Nevertheless, for a long time, the entire policy milieu in Washington, including governmental and NGO institutions devoted to the spread of democracy, ignored the facts and continued to speak of “strengthening independence” and “promoting democracy” in the same breath. American policy had veered off along an ideological path.

The wrong turn was reinforced, but not created, by oil interests. Bringing the oil of the new countries to market was a natural interest of the West. That could have been done in major part through Russia and in cooperation with Russia. However, it was noticed that if it was done through pipelines that ran completely outside Russia, it would strengthen economic independence from Russia. The “pipeline wars” began, setting American and Russian policies at loggerheads. Anti-Russian writers and members of Congress promoted a “new Silk Road”

strategy. Central Asia, relegated to a backwater in the world economy five hundred years ago, when Atlantic coast Europeans found sea routes to the East, once again come to the forefront with pipelines for gas and oil.

The administration went along with the plan with some enthusiasm. It doubled as democratic idealism and as a way of mollifying the anti-Russian element in Congress. Politically, this compensated for Clinton's policy on NATO, which was still regarded in Congress as too pro-Russian despite being regarded the opposite way in Russia itself. Indirectly, thus, the politics of NATO expansion damaged Russia-West relations in as distant a front as Central Asia; whence the consequences ultimately boomeranged on America itself on 11 September.

There were several main potential pipeline routes outside of Russia:

- Through Iran. This was rejected on political grounds.
- Through Turkey (from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Ceyhan, Turkey, and thence to the Mediterranean). This cost far more to build, and faced political unreliability in Azerbaijan and Georgia, and arguably Turkey as well, where Islamic parties have twice been elected to power. Nevertheless, it came to be favored politically.
- Through Afghanistan (from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and thence to India).

The Afghanistan option was widely favored in the mid-1990s. It faced one great obstacle, the instability of Afghanistan, dominated since Soviet withdrawal by mujahhedins warlords who would not stop fighting one another. Pakistani intelligence, backed by Saudi Arabian money, offered a solution to the problem: the Taliban. They were to create a Sunni fundamentalist regime like the one in Saudi Arabia, be friendly to the West, subdue the warlords, and establish stability so that the pipeline could go through. They would be totally independent of Russia and Iran, since based on the southern Pashtun ethnic group and on Sunni Islam, and—what Pakistan did not bother to add in its explanations to Washington—intimately bound to Pakistan through the same ethnic group, elevating Pakistan to the status of leading Islamic power in the newly independent Islamic world of Central Asia.

Washington went along with Pakistan's plan, expecting it to "strengthen the independence" of the entire Central Asian and Caucasus area. It was still thinking only of independence from Russia, the question of independence from Islamic fundamentalism and from terrorism not yet having risen to critical mass. With Pakistani promotion and American passive acquiescence, the Taliban swept quickly across Afghanistan and into power.

After the Taliban entered Kabul, Washington realized that it had made a mistake and that the Taliban was not a reliable partner. The actual consequences were opposite to those advertised: a fundamentalism so extreme that it promoted suspicion of foreigners and contempt for international norms of immunity; continued civil war; the driving of many Afghans in the northern Uzbek and Tajik zones into the arms of Russia and Iran, the only countries willing to help them defend themselves against the Taliban; use of Afghanistan as a base for Islamist militants who were spreading instability throughout Central Asia; destabilization and semi-Talibanization of Pakistan itself; and the turning of Afghanistan into a secure haven and training ground for the al-Qaeda terrorist network.

Gradually, Washington distanced itself from the Taliban. To its good fortune, it was dissuaded by feminists from ever recognizing the Taliban regime (to this day, supporters of the Taliban-based strategy blame the feminist movement for ruining a good plan). By the late 1990s, al Qaeda attacks on American targets led the United States to bomb their training camps in Afghanistan, while making careful public apologies and assurances to the Taliban that this was not directed against their regime in any way. The Taliban rejected all U.S. requests to extradite bin Laden, except under conditions they were sure the United States would reject in turn. Reluctantly, the United States called for sanctions against the Taliban regime for its harboring of bin Laden. Russia joined the United States in voting for sanctions at the UN Security Council, but the United States rejected Russia's call for sanctions aimed at broader anti-Taliban goals, not only the extradition of bin Laden.

In 1999-2000, the United States and Russia were unable to reach agreement on any form of military action in dealing with the problem; each rather tended to stand in the way of the other. The United States would not join Russia in supporting the Northern Alliance, which alone was protecting a fraction of the Afghan people from the Taliban. When the United States asked Russia for use of regional bases for air strikes in Afghanistan, Russia refused: it feared both a creeping U.S. military presence in Central Asia, and another brief, feel-good strike against bin Laden's camps that would only invite the retaliation of the Taliban on Central Asia. Russia threatened military strikes of its own against the Taliban, but the American media and Russia-watching community reacted with uniform hostility to the prospect, deriding the Russian military as incompetent and warning that the only result would be to incite the Taliban to retaliate. Up to the summer of 2001, American pundits would recount the story of how Russian militarists had threatened such an adventure but "fortunately" in the end "cooler heads prevailed." Then in September Americans were given reason to wonder whether Russia's inaction had really been fortunate for the United States.

In 1999 and 2000, the two great powers still reacted with instinctive suspicion to anything that might be done by the other's military. Unable to agree on active measures, they were left with passive economic sanctions. Meanwhile, bin Laden went ahead with his own active measures. He struck first.

On 11 September 2001 America was hit. After that, the scales began to lift from the eyes of the two governments. They began to see the need for getting on with strategic collaboration in this era, not in some distant future when Russia might have become a perfect democracy or the mutual habits of distrust all died.

After 9-11: New Thinking in the West

The story of the aftermath of 11 September has been told many times elsewhere: how Russia, after brief continuation of a negative posture, reversed field to accept U.S. bases in Central Asia; how Russia provided indispensable military-intelligence collaboration with the United States in the anti-Taliban war; how the United States, with its military-technological prowess, proceeded to sweep the Taliban from power and solve Russia's own worst security problem in the process.

Here it is necessary only to supplement this common knowledge with three points, all of them commonly neglected, perhaps because they are points on which it was America that reversed field and embraced Russia's position:

- First, that the campaign was to be against the Taliban regime, not only the bin Laden terrorist entourage
- Second, that the war was to continue until the regime was changed, not to strike it and leave it in a position to retaliate against Russia and its neighbors
- Third, that the Northern Alliance was to be helped as an ally

Those points were accepted only belatedly by the United States, even after 11 September, and they proved to be key to the success of the campaign. A campaign against al Qaeda alone would have been a half-measure, leaving al-Qaeda's protective Taliban shell intact, and would have invited retaliation in Central Asia. The United States talked in the first stage of the war of working with "moderate Taliban" elements and attempted a Pashtun-based strategy; it was reluctant to support the Northern Alliance effectively. However, this brought the United States to a point where there was serious speculation that it was losing the war: the Taliban was not crumbling but rather ridiculing Americans for not even being able to hit Afghanistan as hard as the Soviets had. A crucial anti-Taliban agent in the Pashtun area was captured and killed, and with winter nearing and refugees fleeing the bombing into the hills, a potential loomed for a humanitarian disaster that the world would have blamed on America and that Western societies might not have been able to stomach. Finally the United States started to coordinate its bombing with the forces of the Northern Alliance. Immediately alliance forces broke through the Taliban lines and sent the Taliban into a rout. There was a brief pause when the United States insisted on delaying the entrance of Northern Alliance forces into Kabul on the ground that such entry would cause the Pashtun tribes to consolidate around the Taliban, but the entry occurred and accelerated the rout of the Taliban. Americans who had advocated a pro-Taliban strategy proceeded to put up a rearguard battle of their own, with articles in major American newspapers expressing outrage at the Northern Alliance for entering Kabul. But after years in which their strategy had prevailed and brought disaster on America, they had finally lost the ear of the government.

Today, the pitched-battle phase of the Afghan war has long since ended, but American forces remain in Central Asia. The Russian elite remains of mixed mind about the American presence. Part of the elite views it as an enemy presence. The bulk of the elite has accommodated to it, viewing it on the whole as a benign factor bringing stability to the region and helping to mop up the Taliban, despite possibly having an anti-Russian aspect.

A sober yet hopeful view of the current relationship in Central Asia has been presented in the respected centrist newspaper *Izvestiya*:

There is indeed a power vacuum in the region. . . . Russia does not have enough resources to restore its hegemony in Central Asia, while the US and Europe have shown a lack of interest in establishing dominance there. . . .

Russia could play a key role in Central Asia: Russia remains the sole influential

cultural force in the region. There are hundreds of thousands of ethnic Russians living there. Many of the region's intelligentsia were educated in Russia and speak Russian. If Russia should withdraw from this cultural territory, it would quickly be replaced by imported varieties of Islam, including radical varieties. . . .

For a few months, there were discussions in senior political circles in Washington about whether to include the Central Asian states in the U.S. sphere of responsibility. The outcome of the debate was that the United States acknowledged that Russia had priority for influence in Central Asia, wisely understanding that links that go back decades can play a greater role than low-interest loans for re-equipping armed forces. Russia is currently being offered the role of "junior partner" in the new world order (and appears ready to accept); but in Central Asia, the United States itself is prepared to play that role. Both Washington and Moscow realize that if the leaders of Central Asian nations associate with pro-European states (including the United States and Russia), it will mean that radical forms of Islam will not penetrate the Central Asian nations. And Central Asia itself will become a kind of civilizational barrier between the radicalizing world of instability and the European brotherhood of developed nations.²⁰

That is an optimal view of the situation. There has in fact been a convergence of thinking on the two sides along the lines indicated in *Izvestiya*, but there is no evidence of an agreement to share influence in the region or support one another's influence. In the absence of a deliberate agreement on these lines, an element of mutual suspicion and competition inevitably remains. In Moscow there are many who are still suspicious of the American presence. In December 2002, Russia augmented its forces in Tadjikistan, an act that was almost invariably interpreted as a way of reasserting its presence and avoiding cession of the region to American domination. In Washington, there are some who still believe that America could solve the problems of the region, ensure democratization, and cause Islamism to fade away; or who still believe that Russian domination is the root cause of the problems of the region and its removal is the solution. The result of such a competitive approach is to undermine the remaining constructive influence that Russia has, without solving any of the problems of the region. In Moscow, on the other hand, the formula for counteracting American influence is simple: since America uses money as its lure but imposes strictures against dictatorial practices, Russian can sell security on easier terms, without moral lectures or threats to the regimes. The result is to undermine whatever strategy America has for promoting reform. The victors in such competition are the local dictators, who are able to play the two sides against each other, and of course the Islamists.

Despite this factor, the main trend since 11 September has been for each side to recognize the primarily constructive role of the other's influence in Central Asia, and accordingly to welcome the other's influence as a reinforcement of its own.²¹ It is a conception that would be worth formalizing: it would allay suspicions and solidify the sense of alliance.²² Until that happens, the military deployments in Central Asia will remain mutually supplementary and mutually competitive. The exercises of influence will have a symbiotic element as well as an element of synthesis. Symbiosis can be a useful preparation for synthesis, enabling both sides to build up their forces in the region without arousing local

suspicions, since it is assumed that they are directed against each other. However, it can also be a prelude to friction and confrontation, if the effort is never made to reduce it to a synthesis.

In the Caucasus, the exercise of influence is still primarily symbiotic, not synthetic. American influence in Georgia, although exercised with a modicum of Russian consent and in the name of stabilization and struggle against terrorism, continues to be exercised against Russian influence. The United States has made moves to preemptively confound some suspected impending Russian exercises of influence. Georgia and Azerbaijan are applying to join NATO out of anti-Russian motives. In light of this, Russian pundits frequently remark that Putin and the

“Three bilateral working groups were formed for dealing with shared problems of terrorism and extremism—U.S.-Russia, Russia-India, India-U.S.”

government of Russia have done their new thinking, as seen in the acceptance of Western forces in Central Asia, but that it does not seem that NATO and the United States have done so as well.

A more thorough rethinking on the part of the West—a policy of shared influence in the Caucasus—could lead to an upgrading of the interests

of both sides and greater stability in the region—joint U.S. and Russian influence in Georgia; moderating the oppressive nationalism and corruption of the Georgian regime; making space for compromises on national minority areas inside Georgia and reintegration of the country’s territory; joint Russian-Georgian anti-terrorist operations and border patrols; more effective anti-terrorist action throughout the region; mutual support in building pipelines. An obstacle to a settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan would be removed, as the OSCE and Russia would no longer be undermining each other and competing for the lead role in making the settlement. And prospects for a settlement in Chechnya, while still slim, would nevertheless improve. The rebels would be in a weaker position and no longer have the illusion of global support, and Russians would no longer fear a compromise as a step toward losing the entire Caucasus to Western influence.

India-Russia-America 1999: An Alternative Semi-West for Russia?

In 1999, a prospect opened up for a U.S.-Russia-India alliance against Islamist extremism and terrorism. Chechen militant aggression in Dagestan and Pakistani aggression in the Kargil war led America, briefly but clearly, to side with both Russia and India. The alliance was never formally consummated but emerged in pieces on a practical level. Three bilateral working groups were formed for dealing with shared problems of terrorism and extremism—U.S.-Russia, Russia-India, India-U.S. The three groups have never met together; they meet bilaterally along all three connecting links.

Fear of irritating Pakistan has been the main reason for the failure to consummate the triangular alliance. That fear could be overcome only by regarding the alliance in a broad, long-term perspective, in two respects:

1. As a grouping that needs to orchestrate reformative pressures on Pakistan for a long time to come. That would make it worth risking the temporary turbulence of upsetting Pakistan.
2. As a grouping that symbolically represents the whole world, uniting as it does the leading powers of the former First, Second, and Third Worlds. As such it could present a perspective on global development that would carry a measure of global authority—something that would not be directed against Pakistan.

Would this be the “other West” that Russia could join instead of joining NATO? It would not be exactly a “West” at all, India being decidedly “South.” It would serve Russia as a way of obtaining multilateral alliance with America on terms that avoid humiliation and instead respect the tradition of Russian diplomacy, which has had a close link with India for half a century. What makes it semi-West is India’s half-century of democracy, its two centuries of British rule, and its use of English language and law. But it cannot by itself resolve the basic questions of Russia-West relations; it can never be more for Russia than a supplementary step toward the growth of direct links with the West proper.

Autumn 2001: Back to NATO: The Only West That’s around for Russia

Meanwhile the war in Afghanistan led Russia back to NATO as “the only West Russia has” and led to the creation of a new NATO-Russia Council designed to do better than the old PJC.

During the preparations for the war in Afghanistan, it became apparent that Russia was the European ally that America needed most—more than any of the old NATO allies, and more than any of the new candidates for NATO membership. Moreover, during the active phase of the war, Russia turned out to be the European country that was helping America the most—more than all the others in the extended NATO orbit combined.

For America, the main security issue became one of defending against terrorism and Islamist extremism. The danger was clear and present; the ghosts of cold war enmities could no longer hold their own against it. Perhaps for some of the Eastern Europeans (and for Henry Kissinger) the basic purpose of NATO remained one of defending against Russia, but not for most Americans. It became impossible for Americans to continue viewing Russia primarily as an adversary, or to let their main security alliance, NATO, stay focused on anti-Russian work. Rather, Russia had to be viewed as an ally, even if a difficult one that could be accused of many mistakes—including a habit of making trouble for the West in Iraq and Iran.

For Russia, too, the central security issue was one of defense against terrorism and Islamist extremism. To the extent that Russia oversimplified in presenting the Chechen war in terms of terrorism and Islamism, it committed itself further to viewing this as the main threat. It became impossible for Russia to

continue viewing America or NATO primarily as a threat to Russia. Rather, the West had to be viewed as an ally, even if a difficult one that could be accused of many mistakes—including a habit of making trouble for Russia along its southern frontiers.

When Putin decided to support the United States in the war on terrorism, he chose to do so “unconditionally”; that is, he rejected the advice of much of the Russian elite, which held that he should extract a list of concessions in return. He preferred to gain the reputation of being a good ally and to hope for support in return. He was not without thoughts on what Russia needed from the West. It needed many things in the economic realm, such as recognition of market economy status and accession to the World Trade Organization. However, what Putin wanted most from the West was the moral equivalent of a security alliance: mutual support against terrorism and Islamist extremism; mutual support for one another’s security interests, including security for Russia’s southern frontier regions; and two-way dialogue in developing the strategy for security, so that Russia’s experience and interests would get their fair full share of attention in the joint Western strategy. This again brought the question back to NATO, where the Western countries guaranteed one another’s borders and held their dialogue on the strategy for defending their borders and interests.

There was a flurry of speculation in Russia and the West about whether Russia might join NATO. A little more than a year earlier, Putin had said “why not” to the question of whether Russia might someday join, but NATO had responded dismissively. Lord Robertson at first said that it was “not on the agenda,” and later, trying to soften his comment, added that maybe it could be discussed “in the next two decades.”²³ In the space of a year, those two decades seemed to have dissolved. Prior to 11 September, NATO simply urged on Russia a happier acquiescence in the status quo of the PJC and of continued NATO expansion. After 11 September, it began to look for something more than the status quo and less than membership.

From PJC to NRC: New Hopes, New Road Bumps in Eastern Europe

The debate in NATO began to take a clearer shape when Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain proposed bringing Russia into the strategic planning dialogue of NATO as a participant, joining in the discussion of problems as an equal, even if without membership rights or legally binding status. His proposal won support from many of the allies and was encouraged from the White House. For a brief period it seemed that Russia would become a sort of semi-member of NATO, or an “associate member” or “de facto member” as it was often worded.

NATO officials still felt a need to push the question of Russian membership off the table. They circulated misleading assertions—which still confuse people today—that Russia had renounced the goal of joining the alliance.²⁴ The prospect of Russian membership still aroused fears inside NATO and was used as a bogeyman by those who were opposed to a closer relation with Russia.

In Moscow at the time the elite was opening up to the full range of options on alliance with the West, then closing itself off when it found the West unreceptive.

Members of the elite were feeling out the range of what was “safe”—safe not so much in relation to the Russian powers-that-be as to the Western ones. They hoped that this time, unlike 1991, there could be a major breakthrough, since in face of 11 September, windows seemed to be opening up in the West too, not only in Russia. They found out that still not much was safe when talking with NATO circles: hopes would still be met with humiliating forms of rejection, which the Russian authorities could not bear; initiatives for closer relations would be met with reactions often so suspicious as to render them counterproductive. They quickly narrowed their discourse back down to the rather thin bandwidth that turned out to be safe in NATO circles. Once again, as in 1991, a window had opened up before the eyes of the West, and once again, the West, far from entering, actually prodded it to close.²⁵

The Blair proposal in fact aroused opposition from the three new Central-East European members of NATO and from their close American associates such as Zbigniew Brzezinski. They in turn encouraged doubters in the Pentagon and in Germany. They appealed to all the old fears about Russia—that it would be given a “veto” or “de facto veto,” that it would be a disruptive influence, would “come between” the allies and “drive a wedge” between them, would “play upon their differences” and destroy the ability of the alliance to reach consensus.

As a young British diplomat observed, there was a sort of phobia at work about Russia engaging in normal politics. The behavior of the Central European three could be described in the same negative terms as their own accusations concerning Russia: they drove a wedge between Germany and Britain, they played on the differences between the Pentagon and the State Department, and they blackmailed NATO with threats not to go along unless they were given a veto over every stage of the process.

In the end, the internal ruckus made it impossible for NATO to proceed unless it whittled down the proposal to a much weaker form. The decision was originally scheduled to be made by the end of 2001, during the dramatic early phase of the war in Afghanistan, when Russia and America were active allies and there was genuine enthusiasm for the relationship. Instead it came in May 2002, long after the active phase had died down. By then, the momentum of the new Russia-West alliance had been lost. Some old suspicions had revived, particularly the suspicion that Russia had let itself be used once again by a West that would simply take the geopolitical gifts and not reciprocate. The chance for a running start on the new relationship—one where the new structure could have expedited joint planning and action on terrorist and WMD threats from Afghanistan to Pakistan to Iraq to Saudi Arabia and beyond—had been lost.

The three new NATO members had in this way done real damage to the development of the antiterrorist alliance and to America’s security interests. They had put their own interests first—not their real interests, but their psychological interest in always gaining another reassurance at the expense of Russia. It was a normal exercise in politicking, but it was as inappropriate as anything that Russia was accused of wanting to do. It showed that risks of harmful behavior needed to be evaluated empirically rather than prejudicially, for the small states and Russia alike.

It also vindicated Russia's old argument against NATO's expansion—that if NATO gave priority to letting in small anti-Russian states rather than first developing close collaboration with Russia, the result would be to damage NATO's ability to work with Russia. It showed that this had not been a threat of Russian retaliation—as was often said in the West—but rather an objective point, which the West ignored at its own risk. It suggested that the problem would be considerably worsened if NATO went on in 1999 to invite in the Baltic states, whose feelings toward Russia made those of the other Eastern Europeans seem mild by comparison.

The problem nevertheless went unremarked in NATO. Many people were still in a habit of thinking of Russia-friendly steps as humanitarian gestures for peace, not as strategic steps; this made it difficult to think in terms of the new strategic needs for dealing with global terrorism. There was still a habit of equating anti-Russian attitudes with support for alliance solidarity, making it difficult to perceive when those attitudes were themselves disrupting alliance solidarity and effectiveness.²⁶

In its final form, the Blair initiative created a NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to replace PJC. The council with authority over NATO, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), would as before meet separately, without Russia attending: To prevent Russia from “coming between” the allies, any issue could at any time be withdrawn from the NRC at the request of any NATO country for the exclusive consideration by the NAC.

Nevertheless, the NRC was an improvement on the PJC in two major respects:

1. It began with a broader and deeper agenda, including threat assessment and strategy planning. In other words, it might do the work of reconciling the threat perceptions and strategic concepts of Russia and the West. This is a task that the PJC and NATO had neglected in the 1997–2000 period, when the two sides had developed strategic concepts and doctrines separately. The new concept on each side had ended up a source of suspicion for the other.

2. It was to operate on a format of “twenty” discussing as equals, whereas PJC operated as “nineteen plus one.” When the NATO “nineteen” had come into PJC meetings with a “common position,” it would not want to deviate from its hard-won consensus, leaving little space for dialogue and compromise with the final “one,” Russia. In the NRC, by contrast, the dialogue at twenty was supposed to begin from the bottom up on new security issues, with all twenty trying to reach consensus from the start and at every subsequent stage.

In reality not everything had been pre-cooked in the old PJC, and pro-cooking could not always be precluded from the new NRC since the NATO nineteen would continue to meet in the NAC without Russia. Nevertheless, the NRC was a step forward, nullifying the step backward with which the PJC had originally been hobbled when the reservation had been attached that NATO must reach its own common position in advance of PJC discussions. The NRC opened the door to finally operating the way the PJC should have operated from the start. It might be seen as the end of a five-year delay in proper functioning of the PJC.²⁷

Even this modest step forward was compromised by a new half-step backward.

Every NATO member was given a right to pull any issue off the NRC agenda at any time and remand it to the exclusive attention of the NAC. That revealed the suspicion that persisted in many NATO circles toward Russia. A more moderate measure would have required a majority to kill a discussion with Russia, and the need even for that seems questionable, since NATO could proceed in the NAC with discussion and action on the subject, irrespective of the NRC discussion.²⁸

Back to the Fundamental Obstacle: Fear for NATO Consensus

And so we come back to the fear of some kind of “veto” from Russia, cum “inserting itself between the allies,” cum “undermining the NATO consensus”—identified earlier as the central obstacle to developing an alliance with Russia through NATO. At the end of the negotiations for the NRC in 2002, it remains as much an obstacle as at the beginning of the new Russia in 1991.

Since the root of the problem lies not in Russian behavior but in fear for the internal fragility of the NATO consensus, the solution cannot be achieved primarily by changes in Russia but would require changes in NATO. As long as NATO has been unwilling to contemplate internal reforms, it has tended to project onto Russia the blame for its own sense of fragility. That has led to a fear that Russia is trying cleverly to disrupt NATO whenever Russia tries to be friendly to NATO, a kind of inverse logic structurally similar to that of paranoia, which has interposed itself every time there is a prospect for improvement in relations. It has also led to a projection of ever-greater demands onto Russia for alleviating NATO’s suspicions.

There is no legal right of veto by NATO members, nor any formal obligation for NATO to reach consensus in its day-to-day decisions.²⁹ Yet NATO usually speaks as if there were both the right and the obligation. And, in the absence of regular, formal arrangements for making nonconsensus decisions, there is cause, even if expressed in an inverted causal form, for the fear of disruption.

This fear was perhaps not harmful when there was little to be done but prosecute the cold war; when it did its harm was when there were prospects for ending the cold war and for entente. It was this fear that gave an element of plausibility to the formulation of Kissinger—that NATO could not continue to exist without keeping Russia as the permanent enemy against which to organize its cohesion. This formulation befit not the realism of Hans Morgenthau but that of Carl Schmitt and the “conservative revolutionaries” of Weimar Germany, who defined the enemy-relation as the basis of politics. The feeling of a need for an external enemy to maintain internal cohesion is an indicator of an immature polity and an unstable condition, such as led Germany to make an enemy of the entire world; it is not a normal condition of a mature democratic society. The presence of this fear in NATO is a warning sign, indicating the persistence of elements of immaturity in the NATO “society” that the West will have to overcome. At the same time, the fact of multiple generations of the development of the Atlantic Alliance since 1900 is evidence that there is a greater basis for maturity in the alliance and more space for further evolution than most writers, looking back only to 1949, have realized.

During the Gorbachev era, the fear for consensus caused a basic misunderstanding of what was happening, largely wasting the critical years of 1989–91. During the Yeltsin era, it obstructed the consolidation of a new partnership relationship in 1991–92 and encouraged a slide back toward adversarial dispositions. In the first Putin years, it remained the central obstacle. Even in the aftermath of 11 September, when minds began to focus on the urgent question of forging an effective alliance with Russia, the fear for intra-NATO consensus soon overshadowed the external issues and undermined the new prospects.

Is this doomed to remain the permanent sticking point in NATO-Russia relations? Not if NATO decision making can be sufficiently reformed. And reform (modernization) of NATO decision making was finally placed on the agenda by Lord Robertson at the beginning of 2002. This was done in the name of enabling NATO to handle small new member states without loss of decision-making efficiency. The question had been avoided and put off for later when the first round of expansion was discussed from 1994–99. In 2002 it was faced belatedly, and still inadequately. Madeleine Albright, a guiding spirit in the first round of expansion, wrote in 2002 that NATO needed to consider nonconsensus procedures for decision making. Some spoke of consensus minus one, others of weighted voting in the NAC.³⁰ But in the event, NATO invited a new members in November, without adopting any new decision procedures. The reforms it made were marginal, involving little more than bureaucratic reshuffling; they were not sufficient for preventing degradation of decision-making capabilities. They were also insufficient for enabling the alliance to normalize its attitudes toward dialogue with Russia. Serious reform is once again postponed to the future, when the incentive may be lacking.

The End of NATO?

There are many Russian analysts who are ready once again to give up on NATO. Many argue that NATO is becoming insignificant. Some predict its demise, much as they had when the cold war was coming to an end. This time, the argument is based on NATO's military irrelevance in the war in Afghanistan, or the irrelevance of its classical military structure for the war on terrorism, or its long tradition of avoiding out-of-area actions. All this suggests the marginalization of NATO from the contemporary security concerns of the Western countries, and thus its demise.

Here Russians can cite numerous Western analysts who predict the same things. However, Western writers have been speculating on NATO's demise for several decades. The source of it has probably been simply a distaste for NATO, flowing from the equation of NATO with the cold war, which grew unpopular in the media and academia after the 1960s. Atlanticism was seen, rightly, as establishment idealism, and the establishment was seen as discredited by Vietnam. Distaste has proved a poor counselor; the speculations on NATO's demise have always proved wrong.

In the Gorbachev years Russian analysts gradually came to understand that Russia would mislead itself if it took at face value the deprecation of NATO by

Western writers. The Russia elite learned that it could not divide the West and that it was counterproductive to try to do so. All this has had to be forgotten in the last year by those who have again wished to predict NATO's demise. Here, too, we see some regression in Russia to pre-Gorbachev habits.

In reality, the NATO-West is unlikely to divide: the historical-civilizational roots of its unity are deep, as is the convergence of its core members on democratic political systems and concomitant global perspectives. The foundations of NATO go back not simply to the cold war, but to the Atlantic Alliance of the World Wars and to the Anglo-American and Anglo-French rapprochements of 1890–1910. The roots of the alliance go back farther, to the North Atlantic civilization that started with the colonization of the 1600s and grew jointly until 1776, then grew separately but in parallel for the next century, then came back together in a new form after 1890. None of those roots ever depended on the cold war. They were not going to disappear with the end of the cold war, nor with a bump in the road of military preparedness in 2001 for a new challenge.

Suicide of NATO through Expansion of NATO?

A more interesting argument used by Russians, and one less dependent on Western pundits, is that NATO could ruin itself through overextension of its membership. Since all decisions in NATO are said to require consensus, more members have to be corralled day after day into a consensus. A dozen small new members in Eastern Europe could be the death of NATO. Russians can thus take consolation for NATO expansion: this very expansion might deprive NATO of its effectiveness.

However, the consolation is likely to prove illusory. It is true that NATO, by taking on members faster than reforms, is risking its effectiveness in facing new issues. Nevertheless, as we have seen, NATO decision making is not as dependent on consensus in reality as in its rhetoric. And on two points the new members will reinforce consensus: support for American leadership and opposition to Russia. Whenever the French attack American leadership, the Eastern Europeans will support America. Wherever there is Russian power and influence, the Eastern Europeans will join those elements within the West whose instinct is to oppose it. Those elements exist within the NATO bureaucracy and within each NATO country's national military and diplomatic establishment (for the same reason that there are those in Russia who instinctively oppose NATO power and influence). The new members, thus, will help NATO cohere better in its American-led imbalance and will make it easier for NATO to reach consensus on perpetuating its old anti-Russian line of work. It may well be that NATO will have a harder time reaching consensus on new tasks that are relevant for future security, but that will be cold comfort for Russia if NATO instead reverts to spending more time on tasks with an anti-Russian flavor.

What Allies Does Russia Need? The Anglo-Americans instead of NATO?

It is symptomatic of the Russian frustration with NATO a few months after 11 September that one of the most staunchly pro-Western of Russian analysts, Andrei Piontkovski, joined the trend of giving up on NATO. Instead, he advo-

cated, Russia should seek an alliance with Britain and America. Those, he said, were the only allies that Russia needs: they were Russia's main allies in the two World Wars, they have global interests, and they could help Russia defend its borders against Islamists and against China. The small European states will not be bothered with this task, which is far removed from their interests; and why, he asked, should they? Better to sign a treaty of alliance with America, or with America and Britain, than to seek membership in NATO.

It was easy to see that Piontkovski was repeating arguments he was given in NATO circles against letting Russia join the alliance. It has been said in NATO since 1991 that (a) "we don't want to defend Russia against China," and since

"Joining NATO remains the only adequate goal for Russia; treaties with the United States would be a stand-in along the way to this goal."

1996 that (b) "Russia's southern borders are too long, the alliance cannot defend them, it would get lost in all the problems." Vaclav Havel has for several years been one of the more open public exponents of this argument. Piontkovski is thus correct to the extent that the Central Europeans have become supporters of the argument, but not in thinking that

they were its originators. It was from a British Atlanticist that I first heard argument *a*, back in 1992 when the Central Europeans were still friendly to Russia and to a Common Home. And it was from an American senator that I first heard argument *b*. The distinction between Anglo-Americans and Europeans on this question will not hold. The heartland for the argument in NATO against alliance with Russia is not Central Europe but a faction within Anglo-America. The argument will fade away if Anglo-Americans clearly favor such an alliance. And Russia will not get consistent help from the Anglo-Americans except by becoming part of the broader Atlantic Alliance.

Mr. Piontkovski himself hoped at times for Russia to join the NATO-West but kept hearing arguments against it from Western countries, particularly when he visited NATO. It appears that he finally internalized their arguments. Many other Russian democrats have done the same.³¹

The idea of a U.S.-Russia pact is useful as a step toward and supplement to a NATO-Russia convergence, not a substitute for it. America might sign particular security agreements with Russia, but a general U.S.-Russia mutual security treaty could be signed only if Russia meanwhile solved all of its problems with NATO countries, and that would be more likely to be done through NATO membership anyway. It is through NATO, not bilaterally, that America makes alliances with European countries nowadays.

The small Continental countries will accept global commitments through NATO. They have already done so at NATO's Prague Summit in November 2002, and the commitments were considerably more far-reaching than the borders of

Russia. NATO, far from being daunted by the length of Russia's southern periphery, has become involved all along that periphery in Central Asia and the Caucasus. It would be doing so more smoothly and effectively if Russia were a member of NATO. Russia would then be in a position of sufficient influence in NATO that it could trust that, in helping NATO move into positions in the region, it would not be harming itself, since NATO would be unlikely to proceed someday to use those positions at Russia's expense.

That is not to say that there would be no use in Russia seeking a bilateral security treaty with the United States. In principle such a treaty could be consummated faster with the United States than with NATO as a whole and might help pave the way for Russian membership in NATO.

However, security treaties with the United States would not by themselves solve Russia's problems with NATO, which are inescapable because of the proximity of NATO members and military forces to Russia's borders. And a new treaty would face political obstacles of its own and would risk running into all the limitations suffered by most new treaties. Considerable willpower and initiative are needed to give an alliance real substance. NATO is one of the few in recent history that has gained real substance, and the reason is that it emerged out of several generations of trans-Atlantic alliances. If it lost, it would be hard to re-create: there is less of an innovative internationalist spirit in the United States today than in 1949. NATO has the benefit of being a tried and true alliance. It has a depth of sentiment and a breadth of organizational capability that is not to be found elsewhere. The member states feel a real commitment to it. It has provided considerable add-on value to the security, the military culture, the identity, and even the investment climate of its members. Joining NATO remains the only adequate goal for Russia; treaties with the United States would be a stand-in along the way to this goal.

It is worth noting that, at the Prague summit, Mr. Havel reiterated his argument for never including Russia in the alliance; but that time, he skipped the geographical part of the argument—which had become outmoded now that American and NATO forces were in Central Asia—and limited himself to his broader cultural theme, which consists of saying that Russia is a different universe and a different civilization. For many Westerners and for Russian democrats, it is disappointing to hear this from Havel. It was not so long ago that he had been a part of the universe of dissidents in the communist world, a universe that included Moscow as one of its central locations. More recently, he had seen Gorbachev's regime play the role of midwife in overturning the communist government in Prague and guaranteeing the velvet character of the Velvet Revolution. He was the beneficiary of the international reformism that was centered at that time in Moscow. And in his first official address at NATO, he had appealed for accession of all the Eastern European countries, speaking of a warm welcome rather than a cold exclusion of the democratic confederation that he expected to replace the Soviet Union. In the intervening years, what was it that changed? Russia? Yes, but in becoming more democratic, according to Havel's statements, and also by becoming a smaller, more national state, as Havel would seem to prefer. None of

this helps explain why Havel has changed his position at Russia's expense. However, something else meanwhile changed that may be more relevant for solving the puzzle: Russian troops withdrew from his country. NATO moved in instead. The Central Europeans felt they didn't need Russia anymore. It would seem that it was not Russia but rather Czech politics that had moved into a different universe, one in which anti-Russian rhetoric was found to be cost-free. The parochial prejudices of Central-East Europeans, long pent up, could be given free rein in this new universe. A certain portion of the old NATO milieu was ready to encourage those prejudices. Meanwhile the West as a whole, which needs collaboration with Russia, pays the price.

Other Wests: The Europeans instead of NATO?

In a long-standing Russian view, the alternative to NATO is an alliance with the Europeans, which would serve to divide NATO. The EU is the locus of hope in this perspective. It is a very poor locus of hope indeed for Russia. Neither the Western Europeans at the core of the EU, nor the Eastern Europeans who are now being invited to join the EU will ever trust the Russians without including the Americans at the same time for balance. Everything that has been said in the CSCE about the implausibility of driving America out of Europe applies equally to the implausibility of including Russia in the EU in the absence of America. The fragile political balance of the EU forbids it. In addition, there is the implausibility of including Russia economically, or of opening the EU borders to free movement of people from Russia. Those are obstacles that will endure for a few generations, not just a few years.³² And it seems that, for a long time to come, the EU will remain secondary to NATO in security affairs. There are preparations for a modest EU peacekeeping competence, but in the further aftermath of 11 September it is NATO that moved faster for revitalization for new defense missions. It is NATO that remains the most relevant institutional partner for Russia in this era. And it is NATO for which Russia is relevant as a partner: Russia could be useful for NATO, while it would be a burden for the EU and for other Western institutions.

The G-8: An Alternative West or a Supplementary West?

Another approach is to make more of the G-8. This has been one of the most plausible Soviet and Russian strategies since the late 1980s. Its plausibility derives from several facts: it is constructive; it is complementary rather than contradictory to coming closer to NATO; and it builds on the informality of the G-7, which in its political aspect is not an institution or treaty requiring any formalities to be completed before introducing a new member, but is simply a summit meeting of leaders. It was nearly a decade from the first serious discussions on including Russia in the G-7, until Western leaders agreed to speak of Russia as a member; in the interim it hobbled along as 7 + 1. Russia spent much of its diplomatic effort on claiming the status as a "full" member of the G-8.

Now that Russia is a full political member, it would be in Russia's interest for the G-8 to play a bigger role in the world. Thus turning the G-8 into an alliance

for dealing with global issues would give Russia a more satisfactory standing for the interim period until Russia might be accepted into NATO.

Sergei Karaganov, chairman of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, has become an exponent of a multistage process of entering the world system, starting with the G-8. He hopes for entry into the EU after a decade or two; he sees membership in NATO as something that could be accomplished now but probably will suffer continued delays because of Western political unreadiness; and he sees the G-8, among those venues where Russia is already present, as the one that has the best chance of being built into something substantial in the immediate future. Together with Karl Kaiser, director of the German Council on Foreign Relations, and Graham Allison of Harvard, he has proposed turning G-8 into an alliance with rapid-reaction capabilities to battle terrorism, contain proliferation, and mediate conflicts.³³ I have suggested a more gradual approach to building up the G-8, focusing on expanding its institutional structures and agenda.³⁴

For Russia, putting itself forward as a proponent of a stronger G-8 would serve also as a way to show itself to be a constructive actor in Western institutional development. That would give it a chance to overcome its reputation as a spoiler, interested in West-West institutions only for the sake of blocking them, dividing them, or pursuing its own special interests in them. The fact that it is already a member of the G-8 gives it a chance to step forward as a proponent of the institution without inordinate fear that it is building something that might be used against it.

The West That Exists; The West That Russia Has to Have

It turns out that NATO is the main “West” that Russia has, but not the only one; and its immediate prospects with NATO leave it with a need for other supplementary “Wests”: the G-8, which could be strengthened, the Russian-American special relation that could be extended, and relations with American allies such as Europe, India, and Japan that could be triangulated.

However, those supplemental Wests—the ones Russia can hope to “have” more quickly in this period—are not all that it needs. At minimum, Russia needs a West of which it can be an organic part strategically and in its international identity. This means that it needs the NATO-West, and it needs it in a form that is open to inclusion of Russia as a full partner and, after a modest interim period, a full member.

The Bolsheviks conjured up an image of a utopian future Revolutionary West as the home for their Russia. Today what a westernizing Russia must conjure up is the image of the only “sufficient” West that it has—NATO—adapting modestly to make possible a realistic “membership action plan” or MAP aimed at getting Russia integrated in this era.³⁶ Every expansion of NATO has been done on a unique basis in terms of the adaptations required and the standards used. The same would apply to Russia, the most unique of all the cases and the one that brings the greatest strategic advantages.³⁷

Tremendous rapprochement has occurred between Russian and Western security conceptions since 1985, but there is still a long way to go. If one remembers back to the Russia of 1985, the domestic transformation is mind-boggling, and

awaits its full international complement. Russia expected to become part of a common home and, because the realistic choices for a home of substance were limited, became willing to accept the common Western home, the "West that Russia has." However, this too has faced a problem of realism: the "West that Russia has" has not yet become one that is comfortable with having Russia inside its walls. We come back to where we started in this article: Russian and Western evolution have not been in sync. Russia has gone through a political overturn; the West has had the benefit of stability. That gives the West the luxury of adapting at its own pace and the temptation of exporting all the burdens of adjustment onto Russia. The West does not see why it should adjust to Russia, since it "won." But adjustments are needed on both sides, victor as well as vanquished, if the victor is to enjoy the fruits of victory. It is not only Russia that pays the price for the West's slowness in facing the new realities. The West also pays a terrible price, as was seen, indirectly but clearly enough to those who have followed the causal connections, on 11 September. Since that date, the rapprochement has accelerated.

NATO is at the core of the only West that Russia can have, but it cannot be simply the empirically existing NATO; it will have to be a somewhat teleological NATO. There is room in NATO for teleology: the alliance has a history of a hundred years of evolution and there is no reason to expect it to stop now. The evolution has been nonrevolutionary since it builds on stable countries, yet has included qualitative leaps and has engendered radical transformations in the international system. The ideas at the base of the alliance looked forward to substantial evolution beyond where NATO is today. The empirical and teleological NATO will in all likelihood continue gradually to converge. If they converge sufficiently then Russia and NATO will also have converged, and the question will finally be answered, in a definitive present tense, as to which West is the West that Russia has.

NOTES

1. Baker also called it a "Europe whole and free." He never called it a "Common European Home," but the meaning was largely the same; it was like the same product being advertised under two competing brand names. Of the two names, Gorbachev's was more appropriate: it implied an architectural construction reaching far into the third dimension above the European ground level, and a concern for physical shelter. Baker too perceived the need for a new architecture but, limited to a more ethereal, passive, two-dimensional, ground-level slogan, he was unable to mobilize energy for building it.

2. A few Russian officials have told me that the original version was just a mistranslation. Others have said they don't know. One, however, who was the closest to the event, told me that the original version was authentic, and in his view was a diplomatic and political mistake; and that new instructions came soon afterward to change the policy and insert the "not."

3. Mentocracy, "regime of the lie." I owe the term to a conversation with Lewis Feuer, who related it to Freud's explanation of how repressed memories are recovered layer by layer as mental blocks are overcome.

4. Brent Scowcroft, on "This Week with David Brinkley," 22 January 1989.

5. Even in this, its most anti-Western version, the "European Home" had a second meaning that its Western opponents overlooked. It stood for a Europeanist strategy and for ending the cold war, not a strategy of aligning with the Third World and sharpening the struggle against the European world. In this meaning, it was a further step along the path

of realignment toward Europe begun under Khrushchev, who broke the nuclear alliance with China. Khrushchev made a partial reorientation—away from class struggle, back to a primacy of universal values shared with the West. At the same time, the early exponents of the Common Home spoke about how it would serve communist strategy, strike a blow at America, and divide NATO—otherwise they would have been accused of treason. Gorbachev's "Common Home" carried the realignment farther, growing more consistent in its westernism and dropping the subtheme of trying to damage America and NATO. Was that subtheme the essence or the wrapping of the Common Home? In the early stages, it played a role in the ideological shadow-boxing that went on inside the Communist Party, but in the end it turned out to be a disposable wrapping. Those in the West who took the "divide and deceive" theme too literally ended up badly deceived, and in their refusal to deal with the pressing new realities of 1985–91, sowed a lot of unnecessary division in NATO.

6. That division—which amounted to a debate carried on in public—has been obscured by the subsequent memoir literature, although some journalistic histories of the period have accurately recorded it. After 1993, Republicans united in saying that the former Bush administration had done everything well and expertly, in contrast to a bumbling amateurish Clinton. Baker and his aides, in their memoirs and retrospective articles, downplayed the differences with Scowcroft; meanwhile Bush and Scowcroft wrote a joint memoir. Clinton, who had run on a platform of doing more to help a democratic Russia but also of being a domestic policy president, did not entirely mind being portrayed as an amateur in foreign policy. In the subsequent ups and downs of relations with Russia and the floodtide of criticism of Clinton, the widespread intra-Republican differences with Bush and Scowcroft were forgotten. Their years came to be recalled nostalgically as the good years in Russia-West relations. After Clinton left office, Strobe Talbott in his memoirs argued, defensively, that all U.S. administrations have done pretty much the same thing on Russia and that it could not have been done much differently [Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002), final chapter, "Transition and Continuity," especially final page, 421]. That too was misleading. Where Clinton deliberately diverged from Bush, he made a substantial difference, usually in the way intended; where he tried only enough to set things into motion, as in the case of NATO expansion, but did not try hard enough to reach a coherent outcome, he made a difference, but arguably for the worse; where he did not try at all, things continued as before. It would seem that different policies were indeed possible in Washington and they had huge effects in Moscow. In a sense, Talbott in his memoirs belatedly accepted part of the Scowcroft line, which the Clinton of 1992 had run against: that the United States can make only a marginal difference in the evolution of Russia. In the other Eastern European countries, NATO expansion could make a huge difference for the better.

7. The basic exposition of this theory was Karl W. Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). This was one of the founding works of integration theory. It favored a minimalist approach of multiplying consultative communications, giving friendly signals, and each country solving its internal problems and being strong, stable and predictable. In EC and EU studies and discourse, this approach, which might be called "consultationism," was quickly replaced by neo-functionalism, which took a more balanced approach of building common institutions and authority going well beyond mere communications channels. However, consultationism continued to hold sway in Atlantic discourse. Mr. Scowcroft generally followed the consultationist approach, and the concomitant extreme gradualism and projection of blame for disruption. That could be seen in his comments in the late 1980s about the course of U.S. foreign policy: it had swung too far to the soft side under Jimmy Carter; then Reagan had pushed it too far to a hard line in the early 1980s; now Reagan was going too far in the other direction, welcoming Gorbachev too warmly. All of those swings, he argued, were confusing to the allies, who needed to see America leading in a single clear direction so they could follow and the alliance would hold together better. Lost here was the fact that

presidents and alliances have responsibility for dealing with an external reality where changes take place. That reality underwent fundamental changes in the 1980s, from a Soviet regime that was largely disruptive of the world order to one that was seeking an unprecedented accommodation.

8. Russian Public Television (ORT), 10 December 1994.

9. ROMIR poll of 1,500 people in forty regions of Russia, reported by Reuters, 23 November 1999. Actual Western sentiment was opposed to a break-up of Russia; far more Russians gave evidence of hoping for a break-up than Westerners. Nevertheless, Western policies and rhetoric in many ways encouraged the mistaken Russian conclusion about Western intentions.

10. 1 January 2000, cited negatively in a commentary by Paul Goble, RFE/RL, 3 January 2000

11. Two comments may serve as examples of this. One, from Aslan Maskhadov, president of Chechnya, who spoke of himself as the only person in the region who supported Russian interests, the others by implication serving Western interests. The second, from Igor Sergeev, then defense minister, who spoke of a Western effort to transfer the Caucasus and Central Asia from the Russian sphere of influence to its own. One might be tempted to dismiss both comments, given their extreme misunderstanding of Western policy—except for the prominence of their authors, which reminds us that this kind of discourse was common currency in the Russian Federation during the early stages of the second Chechen war. “Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov says the West is trying to push Russia out of the North Caucasus as it has done so from the South Caucasus. . . . ‘It is their purpose to undermine Russia from the inside and later oust it from the Caucasus,’ Maskhadov said.” (Interfax report, “Maskhadov: West Tries To Push Russia Out of N. Caucasus,” 30 July 1999). And, in an interview in the newspaper *Liberation*, 6 November 1999, Maskhadov depicted himself as the only Chechen still loyal to Russia but threatened to switch to defending the West’s interests. “Do the Russians not realize that I am probably the only Chechen that remains loyal to them? . . . I am willing to defend Russia’s interests in the Caucasus. . . . If it continues, I will simply decide to start defending the West’s interests in the Caucasus. I will become the defender of its interests, and Russia will have no more allies in this region.”

12. Not counting here my own effort at refuting them, “Mify i mistifikatsii o NATO i mezhdunarodnom prave” (“Myths and mystifications about NATO and international law”), *Moskovskii zhurnal mezhdunarodnogo prava (Moscow Journal of International Law)* 46, no. 2 (2002).

13. In a November 2002 poll, 48 percent of Russians said NATO was an aggressive military bloc, 26 percent said it was defensive. (Public Opinion Foundation poll, 1,500 respondents, Interfax report, 6 December 2002). This is a legacy of Kosovo, which revived the old cold war fears about NATO aggressiveness and seemingly validated them for the first time ever.

14. In the case of expansion into the Baltics, the danger of yielding to Russia’s “veto” was used, at the beginning of the second Bush administration, as the crux of the argument. It was said that it was a “NATO principle” to admit the Baltics once they satisfied the MAP, and that failure to admit them promptly would mean subjecting NATO’s principles to a Russian veto, thereby undermining the credibility of the alliance and encouraging the Russians to think they could get away with anything. It was as if NATO were still in the 1960s, when it was genuinely worried about maintaining the credibility of its military guarantees to Germany and deterring the Russians from attack, and about the confidence of Germans in the West’s commitment to the eventual freedom of East Germany.

15. Kissinger used the word “gelded” in an earlier context to refer to what he thought the PJC would do to NATO.

16. Each day in the early stages of the war, Serbian TV devoted a major portion of its news program to rebroadcasting the Russian national TV news program. As moral support, it enabled Serbs to feel they had Russian power behind them and might be able to

win somehow; as propaganda support, it had greater credibility with the Serbian people than their own tightly controlled TV.

17. The fear of an unraveling of NATO consensus was pervasive in comments during the entire period of the Kosovo conflict. A glaring case in point can be seen in Strobe Talbott's memoirs, *The Russia Hand* (NY, Random House, 2002). On 307 we learn that any pause in the bombing "would be tantamount to surrender" because, "given the skittishness within the alliance, turning the air strikes back on would be all but impossible." On 308 we read that a NATO summit would be "the test of allied unity," and Yeltsin is attributed a "hop[e] that the allies would fall out among themselves." No evidence is given for attributing this ill will to Yeltsin, but it is repeated several times on 309 and 310. On 323, we read of a request from Stepashin for an interlocutor on a higher level than Talbott, who could make adjustments in NATO's terms. Understandably, Talbott is personally upset, but fails to see that Russia has a right to be frustrated with "talks" in which one partner cannot adjust its terms, and that it is the fear for NATO cohesion that has left him in this lurch. Overall one gets an impression that his own thought process has at points been maimed by the constrictions of the joint-decision trap and by the milieu around him, with its habits of blaming Russia for the risk of disruption.

18. Chernomyrdin published a bitter op-ed in the Western press about how Russia would not let itself be used. To his nationalist critics, he tried to answer by playing on their own exaggerations about how terrible the NATO bombing was. He said the all-important thing was to end the bombing. But the nationalists understood the instrumental purpose of their rhetoric about the bombing: they would not let their rhetoric be "used."

19. Two surveys have shown the negative correlation inside Russia between democracy (genuinely competitive elections and media pluralism) and regional autonomy from Moscow: Alfred Stepan, "Russian Federalism," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, ed. by George Breslauer (Columbia, MD: Winston & Son, Bellweather Publishing, 2002), vol. 16; and M. Steven Fish, "Democratization's Requisites: The Postcommunist Experience," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 3 (July-September 1998); also see M. Steven Fish, "Postcommunist Subversion: Social Science and Democratization in East Europe and Eurasia," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 4 (Winter 1999). Internews developed a map of media pluralism that confirmed the same pattern. See also the materials collected in my series under the title, "Small Is Ugly," Johnson's Russia List <www.cdi.org/russia/johnson>, nos. 4136, 4202, 4268. There were three logical causal explanations for regional patterns of regression from democracy: autonomy from Moscow, "distance" from ethnic Russian and European influence, and Islamic heritage. None of those conclusions has been widely drawn in the West. In Western policy circles, the discussion on Russia and Central Asia continued, as if in an ideological trance, in a language in which promotion of decentralization and independence equated with promotion of democracy.

20. Valery Volkov and Nikolai Khorunzhii, "Sharing Central Asia with America: Russia maintains its presence in Central Asia," *Izvestiya*, 5 December 2002 [from WPS Monitoring Agency, <www.wps.ru/e_index.html>, translation by P. Pikhnovsky].

21. The duality of Russian views has been shown in some detail by Ariel Cohen, "Outside View: U.S.-Russian-Asian Teamwork," UPI commentary, <www.upi.com>, 16 December 2002. Both competitive and cooperative strands are shown to exist in Moscow, but the practical balance ends up supporting complementarity of U.S. and Russian roles. The same duality of views exists on the American side, with the same balance.

22. It could also serve as a starting point for a joint doctrine on the flow of influence; that is, a doctrine that states agreement on the main directions in which Russia and America want to see influence flowing in the world and on the complementarity of their influence in most regions of the world. Such a doctrine would require preparatory work, reconciling strategic conceptions region by region around the world. The objective foundations for such reconciliation would be the fact that both Russia and America want to see influence flowing more from north to south than vice versa, and particularly from the European world to the Islamic world. In the north, Russia would like more influence

for itself in forming the joint strategic goals of the northern countries, but this would emerge naturally out of a closer alliance relationship; meanwhile Russia accepts the reality that the main direction of economic and democratizing influence must flow from west to east—from the stable prosperous Western democracies to the fledgling ex-communist states.

23. "NATO Chief Hasn't Ruled out Russia's Membership," Associated Press, Moscow, 28 May 2000.

24. When the Blair initiative came into play, its opponents attacked it as a back door for Russia to get a quasi-membership and a veto over NATO actions. When a journalist asked whether Russia would be getting a veto like all the other members, Lord Robertson fumbled and seemed to answer that it would. A firestorm ensued; the proposal was attacked as the death of NATO. Robertson and others hurried to explain, quite truthfully, that no veto was involved, but it was too late: given the faulty premise that every NATO member has a right to veto every decision, it was hard to explain how there could be inclusion of Russia on an "equal" basis in the discussion unless it "also" had a veto. And Robertson was not ready to disabuse people of that premise, long encouraged by NATO public information; it was only some months later that he began to speak of "modernizing" NATO's decision making. To salvage the Blair initiative, Robertson desperately needed to reassure and consolidate his home front. For this purpose, he got Putin to say that Russia was not going to use Blair as a "back door" into NATO and was not seeking any kind of veto over NATO's internal decisions. Robertson also asked Putin to shut up about joining NATO, unless Russia were willing to submit an application for membership and stand in queue. Putin reiterated the standing Russian formula—that Russia was not going to stand in queue for NATO membership—adding only that Russia was however prepared to go as far with cooperation as NATO was ready for; a proposition that presumably included membership if NATO were ready for that. Robertson seized upon this to say that Putin had assured him that Russia wouldn't try to get into NATO, not through the front door and not through the back door. It was a clever play on words, but not an accurate one. Robertson added, equally misleadingly, that submitting an application and standing in queue was the only way to get into NATO.

It became one of Robertson's *bon mots*, repeated over and over again and finding its way into all the major Western media. E.g.: "in an apparent effort to ease concerns that the plan might give Russia a free hand to block NATO actions, the secretary general, Lord Robertson, stressed that Mr. Putin was not seeking either full NATO membership for Russia or a veto over major decisions. 'He said this was not some backdoor method of Russia getting membership in NATO, and he already ruled out going in the front door,' Lord Robertson said after meeting with Mr. Putin, who as recently as last week reiterated that Moscow would not seek full membership" (Michael Wines, "Putin says Russia to study plans for broader NATO role," *New York Times*, 24 November 2001). And "We aren't talking at all today about Russia's joining NATO. President Putin made it unequivocally clear to me at the meeting in Brussels that Russia does not intend to wait in line and submit an application to NATO. There is only one way to join. An application must be submitted and NATO's military and civil standards must be adopted in one's own country. But this question is not on the agenda right now." *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 24 November 2001, interview with Robertson by Vladimir Bogdanov.

The reality was quite different. The current queuing process was invented in 1995, long after most NATO countries had joined. No significant European power ever joined the Atlantic Alliance by way of this queue; they all entered through other doors. The only legal "door" is in Article X of the treaty, which establishes no queue and simply leaves it to NATO to invite a country to join. Nevertheless, the Robertson *bon mot* was allowed to pass as if true. Russians were in effect bound to silence on it, while Western officials of all stripes found it convenient to be done with the question of Russian membership in this way: for some, to minimize the fears about the Blair proposal and restricting the discussion to relatively easy questions; for others, to ensure that Russia would never be taken

seriously for membership.

On Putin's side, there was little new in his formula, certainly nothing that amounted to a renunciation of membership aspirations. After weathering the initial putdown from Robertson about NATO membership in spring 2000, Putin had employed on various occasions prior to September 2001 the following cautious formula: Russia would not stand in queue with the likes of Estonia for NATO membership, but could consider joining NATO if Russia were treated as an equal partner and her interests were equitably taken into account in NATO. This formula was never withdrawn. The caution was to avoid further humiliation and diplomatic disadvantaging in the course of trying to join. Those considerations were discussed explicitly in Moscow when arriving at the conclusion of the need to speak cautiously. The idea of unilaterally submitting an application for membership had been discredited earlier on similar grounds, as we have seen. Nothing was renounced in his later comments to Robertson; if anything, those comments differed only by underlining more clearly Russia's willingness to go as far with cooperation as NATO was ready to consider.

Pavel Felgenhauer, one of the most serious and independent analysts of Russian military affairs, was also one of the few to refute the spin Robertson put on Putin's words; see his "Putin Serious about NATO," *Moscow Times*, 29 November 2001. See also my "Russia Joins NATO. Putin Says Russia Will Never Join NATO. Which headline is right?" *Russia Journal*, 31 May 2002.

Lord Robertson has been probably the most forthcoming interlocutor the new Russia has ever dealt with in NATO. Since there have been gross shortcomings nevertheless, it would seem sensible to attribute them to the pressures of his milieu and of intra-NATO politics.

25. Some Western circles have spoken with pride in the way Robertson got Putin to shut up about joining NATO. Their feeling of victory comes at a high cost: self-deception, loss of opportunity, and re-depression of the westernizers in the Russian political elite. A process of internalization has taken place in that elite, like the fox in Aesop's fable who decided that he didn't like chicken anyway; it has led some Russians to renounce the idea of joining NATO.

26. A few Eastern Europeans admitted that their countrymen were sometimes irrational about Russia, for historical reasons. However, the only solution they could suggest was for Russia to reassure their countrymen still further by supporting the entrance into NATO of the Baltic states. The illogic was breathtaking, yet sincere. It implied that all the practical reassurances over a course of fifteen years, from the Gorbachev reforms to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union to the withdrawal of Russian troops, were not enough, nor was the reassurance from membership in NATO itself. Indeed, membership seemed to give them space for freer exercise of their resentments toward Russia. And so they asked Russia to humor their irrationality by encouraging NATO to expand further and encompass a group that was bound to be even more anti-Russian. A more logical conclusion might have been to call on NATO to exercise a firmer pressure and requirement on the Eastern Europeans to stop harping on fears of Russia if they wished to be taken seriously. This in turn might have entailed reform of NATO decision making to render the alliance less susceptible to blackmail by its newest members.

27. For two evaluations of the NRC in the context of previous steps in NATO-Russia relations, one concentrating on its steps forward, the other on its shortcomings, see my "Sblizhenie Rossii i NATO ne dolzhno ostanovit'sya posle sozdaniya 'dvadtsatki'" ("The reconciliation of Russia and NATO must not stop with the creation of the '20'") <www.strana.ru>, 25 May 2002, and "Nyneshnyaya 'dvadtsatka' – daleko ne to, o chem snachala govoril Blair" ("Today's '20'—far from what Blair originally proposed"), <www.strana.ru>, 23 May 2002 (also in English on <www.RussianObserver.com>).

28. Celeste Wallander of CSIS wrote of this: "one has to wonder, why not a consensus basis for retrieving issues from the council: who is it the members do not trust if they require a unilateral veto, Russia or the allies?" Wallander added, with a logical rigor that

leaves one hoping for nonlogical behavior: "It is easy to foresee that any meaningful issue that requires hard work and compromise is likely to be pulled away from the council's competence, meaning the NATO-Russia Council will ultimately suffer the same fate of irrelevance as the Permanent Joint Council that preceded it." (Celeste A. Wallander, "The NATO-Russia Council," *Russia Watch*, <<http://ksnotes1.harvard.edu/BCSIA/Library.nsf/pubs/RussWatch8>>). To avoid that fate in practice, greater political determination to support cooperation would have to be shown in the daily functioning of the NRC than was shown in its creation. In theory, there is another way out: NATO could at any point, by decision of the NAC, replace the NRC with yet another NATO-Russia council, this one without the reservations. In practice, such an action is unlikely in the near term, but the possibility of it could help discipline some states that might otherwise want to kill the discussion with Russia.

29. For discussion of this, see Dirk U. Stikker (former NATO secretary-general), *Men of Responsibility* (New York, Harper & Row, 1966), 291–95. It was Theodore Achilles, the main U.S. author of the NATO treaty in the State Department, who first told me that the treaty deliberately leaves the NAC free to set whatever rules it finds necessary for making decisions. For a alternative and potential supplemental procedures for NATO, see *Bringing Eastern Europe and Russia into NATO*, Report of the Committee on Eastern Europe and Russia in NATO, 1994, Pt. B, "Plans and Scenarios," Ch. 11, "Decision-making with More Members," <www.fas.org/man/nato/ceern>.

30. The Stanley Foundation and Woodrow Wilson International Center's "Euro-Atlantic Initiatives" project stated that "NATO should revise its decision-making process to replace the current consensus-based approach. . . . [It] might have to consider reforms such as weighted voting or even majority voting on less urgent issues." (September 2002 Policy Bulletin: findings of the Budapest conference.)

31. On the other hand, when he more recently got a more encouraging response from the U.S. ambassador, he seemed open to changing his views again. "In December, US Ambassador to Russia Alexander Vershbow said that in order to make the closing between Russia and the West more dynamic and irreversible, it is necessary to pose brave and creative objectives. . . . I asked him, 'In terms of development of ally relations between Russia and the West, do you think it is possible in the near future to extend the security guarantees stipulated by clause five of NATO Charter to the borders of the Russian Federation, including its borders in the Far East?' The answer of the US ambassador was very interesting. . . . In short, yes. . . . The US has always believed that Russia can aim to participate in NATO which will mean collective security guarantees for its national borders. Some of our European friends doubt it, but the US considers this development of events realistic, though it will take some time.'" Andrei Piontkovsky, "Vershbow's List: The US Believes Russia Could Become a NATO Member," *Novaya Gazeta*, 23 December 2002 [from WPS Monitoring Agency, <www.wps.ru/e_index.html>], translated by Arina Yevtikhova. That is indicative of the importance of the Western responses for shaping the hopes and thinking of even the most hard-headed and innovative Russian analysts.

32. I have analyzed those obstacles earlier and will not go into detail here. Ira Straus, "Russia's Potential Futures in the Euro-Atlantic-OECD World," *Demokratizatsiya* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 492–96, and Ira Straus, "Western Common Homes and Russian National Identities: How Far East Can the EU and NATO Go, and Where Does That Leave Russia?" *European Security* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 22–30.

33. "Russia Needs an Alliance of Its Own," *Moscow Times*, 21 November 2002.

34. Ira Straus, "A Strategy for Russia's Next Steps in the G-8: Russia Should Make Itself a Leader in Building up the G-8, as a Way of Enhancing Its Role in the World," <strana.ru>, 27 June 2002.

35. For a brief summary of procedures tested in simulations for a two-way reconciliation of strategic concepts and the resulting outline of a joint strategic concept, see my "Students show the way for Russia, West," *Russia Journal*, 23 August 2002.

36. "A MAP for Russia," will be in the forthcoming volume on NATO and the EU edit-

ed by Hall Gardner for Ashgate publishers, spring 2003. For the basic building blocks that would have to go into any version of a such a MAP, see *Bringing Eastern Europe and Russia into NATO*, Report of the Committee on Eastern Europe and Russia in NATO, 1994, Pt. B, "Plans and Scenarios," <www.fas.org/man/nato/ccern>, which gives a menu of the options on the various issues relevant to Russian accession.

37. It is necessary to underline this point. Some Western diplomats have argued that it would be difficult to give Russia a Membership Action Plan different than the MAP for the present group of invitees, since that would be "controversial with the Baltic states." The statement shows a dangerous imbalance of sensitivities in the West. It was made an official posture in NATO that no attention was to be paid to what is controversial in Russia when it came to the question of the Baltic states' membership; yet attention is paid immediately to what is controversial in the Baltics when it comes to the question of Russian membership. Those in the Baltics and Eastern Europe who have scores to settle with Russia insist on the same MAP for Russia as for the Baltic states. In this context, there has been a case of misplaced sarcasm from two Russia-watchers: "Criteria for entry into NATO will not be changed just to please the Kremlin." Actually, the criteria for entry into NATO will inevitably be changed, as it always has been in the past, based on a dialogue among present members and with the potential entrant in order to deal with the relevant issues at stake. This is done every time that NATO becomes serious about an expansion. The mistake of the two Russia experts is understandable, though; an impression has been left among the public that there are detailed membership criteria that are a fixture in NATO whose change would amount to an overhaul in the institution. See my "Does Russia Meet the Standards for NATO?" *Russia Journal*, 21 June 2002.