

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**FROM CONFRONTATION TO COOPERATION:  
EXAMINING THE DUALITY OF U.S.-RUSSIAN  
SECURITY COOPERATION AS THE FULCRUM  
OF U.S.- RUSSIAN RELATIONS**

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# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>18 MAR 2005</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>From Confrontation to Cooperation Examining the Duality of US-Russian Security Cooperation as the Fulcrum of US-Russian Relations</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>Kenneth Chance</b>				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Distribution authorized to US Government agencies only</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>See attached.</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>1</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>35</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			



## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: LTC Kenneth A. Chance  
TITLE: From Confrontation to Cooperation: Examining the Duality of U.S.-Russian Security Cooperation as the Fulcrum of U.S.- Russian Relations  
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project  
DATE: 15 April 2005 PAGES: 29 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

In an era where asymmetric threats have caused the United States to create new and correspondingly asymmetric partnerships, the U.S. military often finds itself in the *de facto* lead of the effort to protect the nation and its interests, as well as those of its allies and partners. Russia, once an avowed enemy, is now an avowed partner in this struggle against this global insurgency. Even in the absence of political harmony with Russia, the United States must look to proven mechanisms of practical, effective cooperation that can serve to prevent future crises affecting our respective countries or our interests. For the indefinite future, those mechanisms will be found in the shared experiences of security cooperation between our two militaries in combined peace support operations in the late 1990s, and the subsequent programs of enhanced military cooperation that grew from that extensive collaboration. Given the nature of today's threat to individual nations and the international order, the instability within and the disturbing political developments in the Russian Federation, and the sense of urgency needed to address them, the most readily available tool we have is the U.S.-Russian military relationship. That relationship can provide the foundation from which we can expand our collaborative relationship, one which for time being will constitute the fulcrum of overall U.S.-Russian relations.



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## FROM CONFRONTATION TO COOPERATION: EXAMINING THE DUALITY OF U.S.-RUSSIAN SECURITY COOPERATION AS THE FULCRUM OF U.S. - RUSSIAN RELATIONS

*Then-Secretary of Defense William Perry believed that the U.S. military relationship with Russia could be treated separately from the larger political one and that 'there was the possibility that the military-to-military relationship would become truly meaningful and indeed [lead] in some sense ... the U.S.-Russian ... relationship,' helping both the United States and Russia to prevent crises.<sup>1</sup>*

Having a military relationship constitute the hallmark of strategic relationship between two sovereign nations may run counter to the traditional sense of a democratic relationship. Yet, in today's high-threat environment where the U.S. military often finds itself in the *de facto* lead of the effort to protect the nation and its interests, as well as those of its allies and partners, the asymmetric threat has forced the United States to create new and correspondingly asymmetric associations to combat the multitude of external threats. Russia, representing at the times the political antithesis of the United States, is one country that shares a special relationship founded on shared interaction of our respective armed forces.

This paper will examine three issues: first, how the methodology used to explain the complexities of our Soviet adversaries shortly after World War II remains valid today; second, how after the end of the Cold War the United States military bridged the gap of political understanding and acceptance with its Russian counterparts through the means of peace support operations in the Balkans; and third, that the 'possibility' former Secretary of Defense Perry spoke of is today a reality, and the practicalities of the U.S.- Russian military relationship – given the nature of today's shared threat – constitute the fulcrum of U.S.-Russian relations.

In moving from *militarized confrontation* to *militarized cooperation*, once avowed enemies of the Cold War and now declared partners in the global war on terror (GWOT) have grown to better understand one another, as well as learn to tolerate our respective differences. Even in the absence of a formal political or strategic alliance, our two militaries have learned, through shared experiences in crises of the past, how to adapt to and meet the unique challenges posed by our shared threats of the future.

Russia today has the unique distinction of being the only country capable of destroying the United States; fortunately, while the capability is still present, the intent and desire to do so are not. Therefore, though at present no longer posing a direct threat to the survival of the United States, Russia's increasing domestic instability, emerging nationalism, and declining democratic pluralism – exacerbated by its vulnerable arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) - pose a serious liability for the United States and its allies.



The Russian armed forces are bearing the physical and psychological brunt of Russia's problems. Domestic strife, an ongoing conflict in Chechnya, as well as concerns of a growing international terrorist threat have all put considerable strain on the this former global superpower as it attempts to modernize and reform to Western standards to meet these challenges. Of equal, if not greater, importance is the Kremlin's concern about maintaining the image of being a key player in the world affairs, most notably the war on terror. Caught in the middle of this is Russia's military which must now not only be prepared to protect its homeland from external attack but also contain the instability that threatens to spill over into its periphery. On its shoulders rests the burden of preserving this proud yet fragile country.

### **DEFINING THE PROBLEM**

The President of the United States has stated formally that "the biggest threat facing this country is weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist network."<sup>2</sup> As recently as January 2005, the Minister of Defense of Russia stated that "combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one the clearest and most obvious lines of U.S.-Russian cooperation. Here we have no disagreements."<sup>3</sup> Since 9/11, the U.S. has taken the lead in countering this ominous threat, one that also endangers the interests of our allies and partners. Fortunately, the shared values and interests of many of our allies and partners have facilitated our lead in this effort. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation – a key participant in the struggle against terrorism – has had continued difficulty presenting itself as a consistent and dependable partner in this effort. With the world's largest and arguably least secure stockpiles of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and materiel – coupled with its growing political and socio-economic unrest, as well as increased security concerns along its southern borders – Russia is emerging as a potentially inadvertent source of our greatest danger.

This is not the first time the United States has faced a dilemma of this proportion with Russia. Not long after the end of World War II, after having collaborated in the defeat of Fascist Germany, the United States found itself in a similar predicament when President Truman was faced with an intransigent, critical, and seemingly unstable Stalin who appeared to be drawing an iron curtain around Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

### **THE LONG TELEGRAM**

*In summary, we have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the U.S. there can be no permanent modus vivendi. . . [the] problem of how to cope with this force in [is] [sic] undoubtedly the greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably greatest it will ever have to face....<sup>4</sup>*

George Frost Kennan, Charge d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, drafted what would become his "long telegram" in February 1946 in response to an urgent request by the State Department for clarification of Soviet conduct. In his 8,000-word response, Kennan addressed three issues: the principal motivating factors behind Soviet foreign policy and the historical and ideological background of the post-war Soviet perception of international relations; the attainment of both at the official and unofficial level; and, finally, the far-reaching repercussions for U.S. foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> The cable is known not only for its length, but also for Kennan's astute observations about the Russian culture, mindset, and the traits of Soviet leadership following the end of World War II. At the end of his message, he laid out a five-point approach to "deal with Russia"<sup>6</sup> and ultimately for managing this looming challenge to the West, the result of which ultimately would be the militarized version of Kennan's foundational concept of containment, manifested in the National Security Memorandum No. 68 (NSC-68) on "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" (NSC 68), the bedrock of the U.S. containment strategy during the Cold War.<sup>7</sup>

The five points Kennan suggested (paraphrased) are the following:

- I. Recognize the nature of the problem
- II. Educate the public to the realities of Russia
- III. Preserve the democratic ideals we hold
- IV. Create a positive vision for the future
- V. Do not let our enemy define who we are<sup>8</sup>

Although written almost 60 years ago, Kennan's methodology remains valid today as a tool to help decipher Russia's current behavior, which is reminiscent of what Kennan faced not long after World War II. While Russia itself may not pose a direct threat to the United States, the liability it poses to us and our Allies warrants our efforts to "recast our relations with Russia,"<sup>9</sup> and to find innovative ways to decipher Russia's seemingly errant behavior.

Revisiting the fundamentals Kennan outlined presents the opportunity to re-examine the Russia Problem through a different lens, one that provides insight and wisdom into the perplexing nature of our former adversary. While understanding Russians is important, of equal significance is understanding ourselves as we look for ways to fix this "problem."

***Our first step must be to apprehend, and recognize for what it is, the nature of the movement with which we are dealing ...***<sup>10</sup>

At the time, Kennan's term "movement" connoted the direction the Soviet Union was taking with regard to following not only the path of Communism, but one leading to direct confrontation with the West. According to Kennan, to truly understand the threat, Washington needed to "study [the movement] with the same courage, detachment, and objectivity, and same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with which a doctor studies an unruly and unreasonable individual."<sup>11</sup> Today, the nature of Russia's movement is more discrete. Russia no longer espouses Communism, no longer seeks world domination, nor does it openly seek direct confrontation with the West or the United States. In essence, what Russia seeks is a paradox: to insulate itself from external influence and yet be a major player in global affairs.

Kennan explains in his "long telegram" that at the bottom of the Kremlin's "neurotic view of world affairs is a traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity."<sup>12</sup> This acute sense of vulnerability came not only from centuries of invasion,

*but from continual exposure to advanced Western societies who appeared more competent, powerful, and more highly organized. The resulting insecurity afflicted not so much the people but the Russian rulers who invariably sensed that their rule was relatively archaic in form, fragile and artificial in its psychological foundation, and unable to stand comparison or contact with political systems of Western countries.*<sup>13</sup>

It is for this reason, explains Kennan, that Russia has always feared foreign invasion or cultural cross-fertilization. Direct contact between the Russian world and that of the West would only reveal Russia's weaknesses and the West's strengths. In other words, "[Russian leadership] feared what would happen if Russians learned the truth about the world without, or if foreigners learned the truth about the world within." Therefore, the Soviet Union's basis for post-World War II foreign interaction (manifested in its policies) was zero-sum in fashion, offering no room for a powerful rival, and "never seeking security ... in compacts or compromises."<sup>14</sup>

Even with isolationist tendencies, post-Cold War Russia has consistently sought out strategic associations, not so much as a means to adapt to or assimilate features of other cultures, but to (1) search for inherent weaknesses or flaws in competing systems in order to (2) validate its own domestic agenda, with the ultimate goal of convincing its own population that it was better off than their Western counterparts. Today, with its permanent seat on the United

Nations Security Council, an active role in Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, a special status as an equal at the NATO-Russia Council, vast energy resources and production potential, associate membership in the Group of Eight, and a *de facto* seat at the table for any non-proliferation issues, Russia – by virtue of its geo-strategic history and future potential – enjoys privileges not normally afforded a country of its political, economic, or military stature or track record.

The ‘movement with which we are dealing’ now is, for the Russians, one of perpetual catch-up. In many ways, the ‘movement’ hasn’t changed for Russia in 60 years. The insecurities remain, the inferiority complex caused by its socio-economic backwardness haunts the leadership, and the country continues to regard its former satellites - now independent nations - as part of its empire. Russia still sees itself as a major superpower and correspondingly expects to be treated as such. Its leadership feels entitled to what the West has to offer, and feels no obligation of reciprocity.

Russia recognizes its inferior position as “second-fiddle” (at best) to the United States, and it desperately seeks ways to leverage itself to a position of greater prestige, without overtly irritating the United States or drawing attention to the many harsh realities it faces domestically. The United States recognizes Russia’s plight, but fails to understand the ramifications of letting Russia backslide into conditions that could be irreversible for the country, and catastrophic for the free world.

## II

***We must see that our public is educated to the realities of the Russian situation*<sup>15</sup>.**

Kennan was convinced that what drove the anti-Soviet hysteria was the adage “There is nothing as dangerous or as terrifying as the unknown.”<sup>16</sup> At the time, Kennan believed we had no social, cultural, or economic “vital interests” to protect in Russia, and therefore had little to lose by revealing to the public what constituted the “Communist threat.”<sup>17</sup> Kennan’s ultimate goal was to diffuse the tension being generated in both camps in favor of more constructive interaction.

The “known[s]” today in Russia are just as ambiguous and daunting as they were in 1946 when the United States and the Soviet began to square off militarily. Equally disconcerting, however, are several known trends that highlight Russia’s declining social condition, revealing Russia increasingly as a failing state. Whether it is Russia’s alarming demographic crisis, growing HIV/AIDs incidence rate, declining birthrate, severe environmental contamination, the ongoing Chechen war, or crumbling public health and welfare system,

indicators in Russia point to a Russia headed for rapid socio-economic decline. Since last year alone, the world witnessed the horror of the terrorist attack at the middle school in Beslan, and President Putin's reactionary attempts to reassert control by clamping down on certain civil liberties, primarily in the areas of regulating the media and election of the country's governors.

On the international stage, Europe and the United States are ever more troubled by Moscow's almost defiant stance with regard to its position on supporting Iran in the construction of that country's Bushehr nuclear power facility, as well as by Moscow's reluctance to allow U.S. personnel controlled access to some of its supposed less secure nuclear weapons and storage facilities as part of the U.S.-funded efforts to improve security at these facilities. Lastly, the ranks of Russia's armed forces – the protectors of the Motherland, the guarantors of Russia's stature as a nuclear superpower, and currently Russia's only means of guarding its borders against external attack – are rife with corruption and ineptitude, pointing out Russia's inability not only to protect its borders, but to keep the worst of Russia from spilling over into its periphery and beyond.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, one area where a resurgent Russia has demonstrated its potential is in providing prospective energy security for the West. Though not yet true allies in this field, Russia – which is not a member of OPEC – has the potential, as the world's second largest oil exporter and holder of the world's largest natural gas reserves, to provide the U.S. with a means of diversifying by importing from Russia.<sup>19</sup> However, one danger in Russia wielding so much influence in hydrocarbon production is the possibility of following the example of Nigeria and becoming an unstable, and therefore potentially unreliable "petro-state."<sup>20</sup> Though clearly surpassing Nigeria in terms of having a relatively diversified economy, a highly educated population, and a relatively strong technological base, the country still is a fledgling democracy at risk of falling into the category of those "petro-states" that are "oil [and gas] rich countries plagued by weak democratic institutions, a poorly functioning public sector, and a high concentration of power and wealth."<sup>21</sup>

Yet another risk is that an energy-rich Russia - out of desperation or in the event of a major policy dispute with the United States - could use its energy supplies as political leverage against Western Europe as a way of influencing Europe's relationship with the United States. The world may recognize the need for energy resource diversification, but the reality is that Western Europe already is heavily dependent on Russia for its growing hydrocarbon demands. And because Russia is not on the short-list to becoming a member of the EU, the Kremlin understands that for the indefinite future Russia's vast energy resources provide the country a means to leverage international influence, even if with limited, short-term effects.

To educate the public to these realities, Kennan emphasized that the government, in conjunction with the Press, should play the lead role in educating our public to these realities because it is “more experienced and better informed on practical problems” involving Russia<sup>22</sup>. This same assertion holds true today. Most recently, the Department of Defense instituted a study on the role of “strategic communications” as a national element of power. Strategic communication, according to the study, “is vital to the U.S. national security and foreign policy ... and [c]ollaboration between government and the private sector media and academic communities on an unprecedented scale is imperative.”<sup>23</sup>

The “war of ideas” we are struggling with now with the U.S. public and international community in GWOT is similar in magnitude to what we faced shortly after World War II with the Soviets and subsequently throughout the Cold War. Educating the American people, and in turn our Allies and partners, will aid in gaining appreciation for what Russia is experiencing, and what future challenges it faces as it attempts to transform to meet its own internal and external challenges. In contrast to Kennan’s assessment concerning the absence of ‘U.S. vital interests’ in Russia, today the very stability and survival of Russia constitute a vital interest for our nation, given Russia’s unique status as the world’s second nuclear superpower.

### III

***Much depends on the health and vigor of our own society . . . If we cannot abandon fatalism and indifference in the face of deficiencies of our own society, Moscow will profit – Moscow cannot help profiting by them in its foreign policies.***<sup>24</sup>

In explaining the essence of the Soviet mentality and Communist system, Kennan emphasized that first and foremost the American public must believe firmly in its own system of government and those who represent us in government. In an open, pluralistic, self-correcting, and freedom-based system represented by our Democracy, the American public feels more of a sense of ownership and empowerment when it comes to having an effect on its government, than is the case in a country like Russia, where much or even most of the population resides in a seemingly paralyzed state, afflicted by endemic apathy to all that happens in its country. In comparison, however, the Russian people, according to Boris Nemtsov, the leader of Russia’s Union of Right Forces and former Governor of Nizhni-Novgorod, don’t understand the value of freedom, because they never had to pay dearly for it.

*We didn’t shed enough blood for liberty... If we had paid a high price for our freedom, we would value it. Since we paid almost nothing, that’s reflected in our attitudes ... the whole problem is that Russian society has turned out to be*

*'genetically unprepared to abandon state paternalism,' since Russia's thousand-year history is a history of slavery.<sup>25</sup>*

American society, unlike that of Russia, continually regenerates itself, demonstrating, according to Kennan, that "every courageous and incisive measure to solve our internal problems ... is a diplomatic victory in Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués."<sup>26</sup>

After fifteen years, Russia still suffers greatly from the legacy of 70 years of Soviet rule and correspondingly exhibits many signs that the 'health and vigor' of Russia's own society is now at risk. As the leader of the free-world, the United States has undergone its own evolutionary process since the end of the Cold War, shaping and reacting to the conditions that the new world order presents. And while we, too, have changed, "change" has only made us stronger and more able to adapt. Using Kennan's health metaphor, our overall 'health' may fluctuate, but our built-in immune system – manifested in our democratic process -- protects us from becoming debilitated by a grave illness. Russia, on the other hand, suffers from an auto-immune deficiency, and therefore is susceptible to the smallest of infections.

The United States now finds itself in an awkward position: as the only remaining true superpower, we find ourselves faced with the problem of devoting our own resources to keeping Russia whole, preventing it from slipping into a critical state. Any new strategic partnership with Russia will therefore have to consider the costs of both dealing with the effects of Russia's liability for the West, as well as those associated with helping Russia grow and develop into a secure and prosperous global partner. In other words, we need to help them help themselves -- whether they like it or not.

#### IV

***We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of the sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in the past ... [the nations] are less interested in abstract freedom than in security.<sup>27</sup>***

Speaking about the political vacuum following World War II in Europe, Kennan, having recognized the Soviets' "imperviousness to external influences,"<sup>28</sup> emphasized the need to counter the Soviet propaganda campaign by redirecting our efforts and focusing on the rest of the world, delivering those struggling, less developed countries from the perils of Communism. After the end of World War II, Kennan realized that "it is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own."<sup>29</sup> Foremost in the minds of those war-weary countries were peace, stability, and security from exploitative political forces. The United States, according to Kennan, was not the only country capable of capitalizing on this opportunity, and

he believed that “we should be better able than the Russians to give them this. And unless we do, the Russians certainly will.”<sup>30</sup>

Today, we find ourselves in a situation that both resembles and differs from the immediate post-World War II era. The similarity is seen in the collapse of a major power (then Nazi Germany and currently the Soviet Union); the difference stems from the fact that there is no competition between two powers for followers. The Soviet Union’s former satellites are gradually integrating themselves into the West. Further, not only does the old and failed Soviet economic model have no appeal in these countries, it is largely recognized as dysfunctional in the Russian Federation. Though Russia retains cultural ties with these peripheral countries, “Russia’s appeal as an attractive socio-economic or political model is waning.”<sup>31</sup>

Not only are these countries searching for alternatives, but so, too, is Russia. The Russian leadership understands that in the eyes of its neighbors and fellow Russian citizens, Russia is “unable to offer something understandable and attractive” to those countries in need of democratic and economic reform.<sup>32</sup> This lack of political or economic leverage is frustrating for Russian leadership, and only serves to further alienate Russia from its regional and global partners.

According to one Russian columnist addressing the issue of struggling to provide positive alternatives for the post-Soviet space amidst a Russian identity crisis, “Historical traditions that somehow prevent this [post-Soviet] space from being torn apart are currently saving [Russia] ...we have nothing which would be equal in ideological might to Soviet Communism or Western Liberalism.”<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically, what currently unites Russia with its former subordinate nations is the threat of instability caused, in many ways, by Russia itself as it struggles with its own identity.

The ‘sort of world we would like to see’ that Kennan speaks of is one which today is globally integrated with Russia as an accepted, empowered, and an exemplary member. In his recent address at the Investors’ Conference of the American Chamber of Commerce, Alexander Vershbow, U.S. Ambassador to Russia remarked that

*A democratically thriving Russia will stave off instability in the region, and be more reliable international partner in meeting global challenges. An economically thriving Russia will take more of our exports and accept more U.S.-sourced direct investment. Equally important, more economic linkages with Russia will bring increased cooperation in all spheres of our relationship. This is a “win-win” proposition, not a zero-sum game ... and a Russia that is stronger democratically and economically will be a good neighbor and a model for other states in the region.*<sup>34</sup>



President Putin and many of Russia's more progressive thinkers may well understand the challenges of a country struggling to share in the economic gains of a globalized economy, but for now Russia is in some ways still viewed as an outcast. More daunting for Putin and his key subordinates is the task of convincing the Russian people that having a stable, peaceful, and economically thriving periphery – with assistance from the United States – is in the best interest of Russian security and that of the region.

## V

### ***Finally, we must have the courage and self-confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society.***<sup>35</sup>

Kennan's premise in his final dictum is that the greatest danger that faced the United States at the outset of the Cold War was that the U.S. would allow itself to "become like those with whom we are coping."<sup>36</sup> While there is little chance of Americans becoming Sovietized or Russified in their societal or cultural beliefs, a 'greatest danger' we potentially face today – along with our Russian counterparts – is one where we lose sight of those uniquely American attributes that make us the nation we are today. As a "government of, by, and for the people" that enjoys unparalleled economic freedoms coupled with the sanctity of private property, we face a danger that is so apocalyptically frightening for some, that we are forced to consider the fact that there is potentially no prospect of final victory because the threat is rooted in the eternal facts of human nature. In an attempt to combat or eliminate this perceived overwhelming threat, an automatic, disproportionately military response against this enemy could be self-defeating, given that it could undermine the very same democratic values and principles of capitalism that we would fight to preserve.<sup>37</sup>

The risks notwithstanding, Kennan understood that the struggle with Communist Russia would be a long one, and that there was no pure military solution to resolve it. In many ways, Kennan's "long telegram," as the precursor to his strategy of containment, played a key a role in defining the role the United States saw for itself in addressing the long-term challenge posed by the Soviet Union. Unlike the Soviet Union which believed that 'with the U.S. there can be no permanent modus vivendi,' the U.S. policy Kennan espoused in his message to Washington was one where

*. . . there would be a possibility of mutual gain from cooperation with the Soviets, since the world politics was not a "zero-sum" game. In this sense, the Long Telegram maintained that the most effective way of controlling the Soviet Union was by exercising indirect, or soft, power both upon the Western nations and the Soviet Union, in order to get them to do what U.S. wanted.*<sup>38</sup>

Kennan's approach, although conceived nearly 60 years ago, remains applicable today as we look for ways to increase cooperation with Russia to meet common threats, even though we are dealing with a Russia that is increasingly resistant to U.S. and European influence.

Understandably, Russia's sense of insecurity has risen as a result of recent terrorist attacks on its homeland, most notably the hostage massacre in Beslan, Russia, in September 2004. This event, much like 9/11 in this country, raised the ire of the population but also was cause for serious introspection surrounding the legitimacy of current policies in Southern Russia. Like Russia, as we attempt to confront the asymmetric threat we face today we cannot help but call into question the degree to which our society is willing and committed to defend, not only the territory, but also the values and interests of that define us as a singular nation and international partner.

'Clinging to our own methods and concepts of humanity' may not be enough to successfully "contain" the threats we face today. Unlike any other time in our history, unconventional, unorthodox, or "asymmetric" approaches to combat these dangers require healthy, reliable, stable, and capable alliances and partnerships in order to form effective anti/counter-terrorist coalitions. Ironically, the United States needs a stable and reliable Russia as much as Russia needs a powerful, omnipotent United States. As difficult as it would be, we should overcome any lingering sense of victory in the Cold War and "with charity towards all" offer our wholehearted assistance to Russia. We are in this fight together, irrespective of our political, economic, or cultural aspirations.

In his memoirs, Kennan recognized that in the end, "the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation."<sup>39</sup> This axiom may have been appropriate in a bipolar world order, and it could be relevant today for aspiring democracies. But for countries like Russia 'measuring up to its own [antiquated] best traditions' is not desirable. Irrespective of intent, many moves by Russia are perceived as a counterbalance to all-things-American in the world, making the challenge to find commonalities where overlap of national interests exist increasing remote. The adage "we're only as strong as our weakest link" may be germane to the issue and importance of international coalitions as we look for relationships and experiences where the sum of our parts is greater than the whole. Of our 'best traditions,' reaching out to and accommodating other countries in need is certainly one of them; and Russia – in particular its armed forces – is a prime candidate for this intercession, not only for the sake of Russia, but the welfare of the global community.

Kennan's "long telegram" - his instinctual, unadulterated proposal for containing the Soviet threat - provides us with an approach to better understand Russia, and to explore ways to make Russia a much stronger "link" in the chain of international partners. With this renewed understanding, we begin to understand and appreciate the enduring causes and symptoms of many of Russia's greatest dilemmas. What also becomes evident, however, is that while Russia no longer poses a grave and immediate threat to the United States, Russia's internal domestic instability and perceived security threats along its borders – combined with Russia's newly-expressed willingness to use military force anywhere on the globe – are cause for serious concern in the United States and among our Allies. The danger now lies in Russia taking unilateral military action against a country where the United States has a direct national interest, thereby risking armed confrontation.

#### **A RENEWED "SECURITY DILEMMA"**

A review of Kennan's writings on the Cold War reveals a pronounced concern over heightened tensions, or the "security dilemma," in the American-Soviet relationship. Kennan's views were clearly encapsulated by Richard Russell, who wrote that "The pursuit of power causes a spiral of insecurity referred to in international relations theory literature as the security dilemma."<sup>40</sup> It is this 'spiral of insecurity,' or acute escalation in dealing with the Soviets that Kennan sought to avoid when, in his "long telegram," he began his final list of recommended approaches to coping with Russia by saying, "I think we may approach calmly and with good heart the problem of how to deal with Russia."<sup>41</sup>

Just as Kennan recognized this problem as manageable, so too is the current situation manageable. U.S. foreign policy towards Russia should be crafted in such a way as to convey the following message to the Kremlin:

While we do not approve of the direction that you have chosen for Russia, we do appreciate and respect the uniqueness of your problems. As ever, we stand prepared - both bilaterally and as a member of the international community - to assist in those areas where we share common strategic interests. Above all else, in the event of a crisis we must never abdicate our responsibility to preserve our strategic dialogue, backed up by our proven capabilities of close cooperation in averting crises, preventing escalation, or, if necessary, mitigating the effects of a crisis through decisive, crisis management action.

At the political level, we must recognize that Russia will choose its own political path, one that will often differ, at times dramatically, from U.S. policy. Irrespective of our inevitable political or economic disparities, the United States and Russia are, for the indefinite future, destined as the sole nuclear superpowers to attain some form of strategic symbiosis, whereby we can agree to

disagree on globally substantive issues without infringing on one another's interests. By recognizing this, we reduce the level of volatility that feeds the rhetoric and anti-American sentiments of many of the more nationalistic circles in Russia. In other words, by adopting a more cooperative or conciliatory approach, we give neither the nationalists nor the President the fuel they would need to stoke the flames of negative propaganda directed at perceived U.S. efforts to make Russia more democratic in its behavior.

As long as we remain consistent in our own actions and convey our expectations to Russia as listed above in the message, Russia will be forced to hold itself to a higher standard in order to maintain its global stature in an increasingly globalized and interdependent economy. For President Putin, or more importantly for a future Russian president who may be more progressive and reform-minded, this seemingly *laissez-faire* stance can provide the conditions for continued gradual reforms at a pace commensurate with a fragile political climate. Ultimately, such an approach would keep the door open for managing a multifaceted, multidimensional interaction that could provide for enhanced future cooperation in areas heretofore unattainable in U.S.-Russian affairs.

By continually discounting Russia's distinctiveness, combined with seeking to impose our own templates for democratic reform, we could risk further alienating Russia, pushing it into a corner where its options for progress are diminished. Perceived political or economic isolation on the part of Russian leadership could very well result in another "security dilemma," and is something the United States should preclude either from within Russia, or by external forces.

Choosing the right mechanisms, therefore, is critical to managing this potentially volatile environment. In 1947, the policy mechanisms used in the run up to the Cold War were primarily military in nature, designed to counter and defeat an aggressively postured Soviet power. In contrast, today there is almost no military element of military competition, other than our continued bargaining to lower the levels of our respective nuclear arsenals. Ironically, while the mechanisms in place today have military roots, they can be used for non-military purposes.

In an effort to preclude geo-strategic miscalculations with Russia that could have disastrous effects, we should treat Russia like no other country, primarily because, in the words of John Gaddis, "... the means we choose ...could wind up undermining the ends we seek. It is also possible, though, that the ends we seek, given the new threats we face, can be achieved only by means different from those that won World War II and the Cold War."<sup>42</sup>

Ironically, the ends Kennan sought to avoid – *militarized confrontation* – between the United States and the USSR became in the post-Cold War era a means – in the form of *militarized cooperation*- to enhance strategic dialogue and collaboration with Russia. Avoiding

a renewed “security dilemma” hinges on advanced security cooperation to combat our shared threats and to preserve our shared interests – even in the absence of political harmony.

### **FROM CONFRONTATION TO COOPERATION**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the reordering of political relationships in north-central Europe were followed closely by civil war and ethnic conflict in the Balkans. The United States and its NATO allies along with Russia quickly realized the significance of this crisis, and all recognized that it would require a combined effort to resolve the Balkans conflict. While in past the preferred tactic in such a situation had been bluffing and deceiving one another as to the other’s military capabilities or intentions, strategic ambiguity no longer was effective in tackling a problem jointly, particularly when it came to solving a regional crisis. “Containment” was no longer a tool directed against Russia, but one to use in cooperation with Russia in crisis management. NATO’s goal, in concert with Russia, was to somehow militarily contain the violence that was mounting on Europe’s southern borders.

In the past, the conventions for regulating the strategic rivalry revolved around the context of “negative rules of the game” (i.e., agreements on what must not be done) with the goal of preventing a catastrophic crisis; today the context is more one of “positive rules” (i.e., agreements on what should be done) used to regulate how we can jointly address and act to meet an emerging threat.<sup>43</sup> The first opportunity to apply these new rules would come exactly 48 years to the month after the historic link up on the Elbe River by U.S. and Soviet militaries near the end of World War II.

At the Vancouver Summit of April 1993, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin set in motion a strategic dialogue, declaring their first intention to form a “strategic partnership” between the two nations. This declaration marked the first major step towards improving military cooperation in the area of peacemaking and peacekeeping, under the auspices of the United Nations.<sup>44</sup>

Not long after the summit, the U.S. and Russian armed forces jointly developed a peacekeeping program, aptly named “Peacekeeper,” designed to familiarize each other with our respective tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in the field of peace support operations. Perhaps not by coincidence, the early to mid-1990s would present another opportunity to put to test the new “rules of the game,” but it was to be no exercise. Civil war and ethnic conflict in the Balkans were to be Europe’s first post-Cold War challenge to the vision of a peaceful, democratic Europe, whole and free.<sup>45</sup>

In 1995, solving the crisis in the Balkans required new forms of political and military cooperation. At the forefront of these new forms of cooperation in the areas of crisis management and crisis resolution was the United States with its NATO allies, alongside their Russian military counterparts, in combined peacekeeping operations. The unprecedented Implementation Force (IFOR) operation united NATO and Russian troops under a special system of command, facilitated the conduct of missions and tasks in accordance with a single Operational Plan (OPLAN), and kept them united by a common purpose, common mission, and common rules of engagement. This was a fundamentally new phenomenon in military relations, forged at a time when the all the formal political institutions and mechanisms of the NATO-Russia dialogue we enjoy today (e.g., NATO-Russia Founding Act, NATO-Russia Council ) were non-existent. Moreover, there had been little to no practical cooperation between NATO-Russian armed forces, let alone any measurable degree of tactical interoperability.<sup>46</sup>

Beginning with the unprecedented command and control structure for the new military relationship created by U.S., NATO and Russian leadership in November 1995, NATO and Russia laid the groundwork for practical cooperation in the areas of theater deployment planning, combined patrolling, Soldier/NCO training, Officer Professional Development, weapons search/collection operations, air assault operations, and even one joint/combined-arms live-fire exercise. Cited often as one of the premier examples of future combined operations potential, Russian motorized forces - supported by U.S. attack helicopters and British artillery - conducted a attack against a suspected terrorist camp in the mountains of the Glamoc Training Range in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 1997 exercise was a resounding success, and laid the groundwork for similar exercises and real-world operations which were to challenge the coalition of NATO and Russian peacekeeping forces throughout the Balkans region.

After nearly eight years – 24/7, 365 days per year, and amidst the harshest of political rhetoric that occurred during the Kosovo crisis of 1999 – Allied and Russian militaries in August 2003 closed the chapter on an unparalleled demonstration of combined peacekeeping operations, “ending the civil war in the Balkans, and spark[ing] the development of new, broader, special partnership in Europe.”<sup>47</sup>

While the achievements at the political, strategic, and operational levels of NATO-Russia interaction during this crisis were noteworthy, the actual success of the endeavor fell upon the shoulders of the NATO and Russian service members operating at the tactical level.<sup>48</sup> What once was foreign is now, for thousands of service members in many countries, routine when it comes to multinational/coalition operations.

As a means of capturing the lessons-learned from the combined NATO-Russian operations in the Balkans, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe - in cooperation with the Russian Chief of the General Staff - instituted the *NATO-Russia Interoperability Framework Activities Program*, a program designed to develop a military-to-military effort focused on initial Interoperability Framework Activities; a step-by-step, functional approach ultimately to support the overall objective of enhancing military-to-military interoperability between NATO and Russia for a variety of military operations.<sup>49</sup>

This program, unprecedented in nature and heretofore unparalleled in scope, continues to serve as the model for building the necessary mechanisms to prepare our armed forces – whether as part of a NATO coalition or bilaterally – to operate in combined/joint environment with the aim of protecting the shared strategic interests NATO and Russia have developed in the almost ten years of political, strategic, operational, and tactical interaction.

From our combined experience in the Balkans, many shared lessons were learned. Perhaps the most important lesson that came from our joint efforts was the recognition that *asymmetric problems require asymmetric solutions*. The risk we took together and success we enjoyed in southeastern Europe engendered mutual trust and confidence at the tactical, operational, strategic, and even to some degree political level, further providing the foundation for taking risk together in the future. Out of our experience from the Cold War, now complemented by our combined operations in the Balkans, we have recognized that past rivals look for ways to cooperate; dedicated partners do what is necessary to be operationally compatible. The NATO-Russia operations in the Balkans provided an opportunity for our militaries to move beyond being rivals, drew attention to the what was attainable as partners, and highlighted was possible for the future.

#### **MAKING ENDS MEET**

Today, as noted earlier, ‘the biggest threat facing this country’ is weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist network,‘ for which there are no clear assurances of an effective deterrent. The enemy’s tactic of choice is terror, and there is no politically acceptable strategy to eradicate it. Given this ominous challenge, national survival becomes a higher priority, not just for the United States but for any country that is subjected to this threat. In many ways, terrorism has become the ultimate political equalizer: irrespective of a country’s political orientation, terrorist acts ? whether random, highly organized, or systematically driven ? serve only to incite national panic, disrupt economic activities, and discredit the senior leadership’s ability to protect a nation. The United States and Russian Federation may not share national

strategies in the area of politics or economics, but in the area of national security these two countries share two key elements: they share an enemy and the will to protect their nations against this enemy by any means necessary. Our next step should be to refine the practical mechanisms both countries have used successfully in past crises as a way to help each achieve its respective strategic ends.

The enemy has the ability to strike globally, not only against our respective homelands, but also our respective allies and interests. Our common enemy knows he cannot defeat us militarily; he does, however, know that if he can cause partners to turn on one another, his mission will be all that much easier to accomplish. In view of the enemy's potential, the goal of a U.S.-Russian coalition to combat this threat must be solidified before our shared enemy succeeds in pitting us against one another in an effort to divide our forces. Russia is an exceptionally important ? and fragile ? member of the international community's effort at combating terrorism, it is imperative that we reach out to Moscow with an equally unique approach to assist Russia in protecting itself, and in the process ourselves, without flagrantly infringing upon their interests, or risking our own.

Owing to the sense of urgency, it should be recognized that security cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation has produced exceptional advantages based on the experiences of past combined military operations. These shared experiences should constitute the foundation for enhanced full-spectrum security cooperation in the war on terrorism until such time that the Russian Federation is a stable, sovereign, peaceful, economically viable, globally integrated nation-state whose market economy actively pursues democratic institutional reforms, whose territorial integrity is unthreatened by rogue separatists or international terrorism, and retains positive control of its security/military services and the WMD stockpiles they safeguard.

Achieving this desired end state will be a long-term, complex and generational process. It is worthy of investment and pursuit, but the United States must have a series of practical and concrete measures in place to support this process along the way, as well as to protect our individual and shared interests. Based on the capabilities and intent of today's threat, a strong military relationship between the United States and Russia, reinforced with practical mechanisms and demonstrated combined capabilities for security cooperation, is vital to the United States and to the Russian Federation. While this military relationship might be the foundation and centerpiece of current U.S.-Russian relations, it could prove to be the role model for developing closer relations in a broad range of activities.



## STRATEGIC LINKAGE

The United States has already made steps in the direction of increased security cooperation, as indicated in the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, where the President outlines the following U.S. priorities with regard to Russia, as well as other areas of common and emerging interests.<sup>50</sup>

- Counterterrorism
- Missile defense
- Future World Trade Organization membership
- Strategic Arms Reductions (Moscow Treaty)
- NATO-Russia Council (NRC) forum
- Independence/prosperity of former Soviet Union states

Bilaterally, the Camp David U.S.-Russia Presidential Summit of September 2003 produced pledges from both Presidents to expand security cooperation between our militaries in the following areas:<sup>51</sup>

- Combating Terrorism
- Peace support operations
- Missile defense
- Search and Rescue
- Creation of corps Training and Planning Cadre for future combined operations
- A bilateral military cooperation plan that is complementary to the NATO-Russia Interoperability Framework Activities Program

Most recently at the Presidential meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, in 2005, security cooperation dominated the discussions, with emphasis placed on the areas of Nuclear Security Cooperation and Counterterrorism.<sup>52</sup>

And at the NATO level, starting in 2002 up through the present we have seen the following program areas of enhanced interaction, education, and cooperation:<sup>53</sup>

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ? Aerospace management          | ? Environmental security            |
| ? Civil emergencies             | ? Logistics                         |
| ? Combating terrorism           | ? Military-to-military cooperation  |
| ? Crisis/consequence management | ? NATO-Russian Peacekeeping Brigade |
| ? Defense reform                | ? Non-proliferation                 |

All these ongoing initiatives demonstrate a remarkable trend in U.S./NATO-Russian relations that the experiences of U.S./NATO-Russian military collaboration are directly transferable to non-

military programs, programs which cover a broad spectrum of security-related activities. Equally noteworthy is success the United States has enjoyed by using NATO Alliance as an alternate and sometimes more effective bridge for engaging our Russian military counterparts. These and other developmental programs for security cooperation have grown from the experience our two militaries first shared in the Balkans. Tactical interoperability achieved through numerous techniques, tactics, and procedures were important, but the true barriers that were overcome were in the area of *human interoperability*. "Impervious to the logic of reason, and highly sensitive to the logic of force" is how Kennan described Soviet power in 1946.<sup>54</sup> Today, however, after almost fourteen years of interaction and collaboration, both military cultures have grown to understand, better appreciate, and, most importantly, trust our respective 'versions of logic' and 'the use of force' when it comes to addressing an issue where we share interests, particularly those surrounding national security and the war on terror.

Kennan's 1946 assessment that the 'Soviet political force [believes] that with the U.S. there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*' may still be valid solely in terms of "permanence," but with our shared threats and capabilities to address those challenges, we will for the indefinite future have a robust *ad hoc modus vivendi* found in the strategic relationship between our armed forces, as well as in those emerging areas made accessible by that military cooperation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The United States and its NATO Allies spent the better part of fifty years containing what George F. Kennan perceived originally as a political threat to the United States. As mentioned in his memoirs, Kennan did not envision a militarized policy of containment; rather, he viewed his insights into the Soviet Russian system as what we might call today the "ways and means" to reach the "ends" of containment, or a constructive mechanism for engaging an otherwise unapproachable, obstinate global rival whose "expansive tendencies" (i.e., Soviet expansion depended on military force) threatened the good order and discipline of the global community following WWII. Ironically, it was this very militarization that brought the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union and Communism as we know it.

Today, with the Cold War over and now a newly declared global war on terror underway, we once again search for the ways and means to confront new threats and achieve the desired end of a secure future. Our new, vulnerable partner in this ambitious and noble effort is the Russian Federation. Crafting a new engagement policy that serves the interests of the U.S. and its allies first and those of Russia's second will continue to be a potentially divisive issue as

Russia looks for ways to contain our primacy in the countries of the former Soviet Union, even amidst the bonding effect of our shared interest in combating global terrorism.

We once shared the title of “superpower” with Soviet Russia. There was a time when, all things considered, we were perceived as strategic equals. Today, however, Russia is in the awkward position of being in what might be termed a “limited partnership” with the preeminent world power that refers to Russia as its “strategic partner.” The Russians recognize, however, that for the most part they will be relegated to “second fiddle.” With the title of “strategic partner,” we accommodate the Kremlin with enough prestige to keep it from feeling isolated. However, by focusing on security cooperation, we send the message that our shared strategic interests may take precedence over politics, and that we will do what is necessary to protect those interests. Publicly, the international community will make no mistake in understanding that the relationship the United States has with Russia is two-way when it comes to nuclear security, but in all other facets the United States is in the lead, or is *primes inter pares*.

Being “first among equals” is readily quantifiable; assessing the complexities of the Russian Condition, however, are less so, certainly not without thorough analysis of the root causes of Russia’s current social and security dilemmas. Kennan’s five-point approach in this “long telegram” offers an effective methodology for, as Henry Kissinger says, taking a “philosophical deepening” of our approach to crafting foreign policy towards Russia. Whether we like it or not, Russia has a place in this order, and the sooner we help the Kremlin assume this position the better we will be able to cope with direct and indirect threats to our national security and shared strategic interests around the globe.

Our preeminence in this relationship is irrefutable. We have witnessed, however, over the last 15 years a radical shift from an adversarial relationship to one of limited cooperation, with the potential for enhanced collaboration in many areas, both military and non-military. Ironically, the military area is one in which we competed historically; today it serves as the role model for other forms of interaction, all of which serve to help bridge the cultural and political gaps of understanding between our two countries. Even amidst the most severe political disagreements, there is always the realization that there is much to be gained by our mutual support. Agreeing to disagree allows us to relax somewhat from our rigid political stances, and focus on those areas of commonality that enhance the security, stability, and ultimately prosperity of our countries. The bi-product of our broadened relationship will assist the Russian Federation as it establishes itself as a reliable partner in the new world order, but more importantly as moves toward global economic integration, a freer market economy, and an

advanced democratic system of government - one that focuses on the good of all through government of, by, and for the people of Russia.

To cope with what President Bush considers our country's greatest danger, we are best served by ensuring that Russia evolves into an active, reliable partner, and that it does not regress into a political-military entity that is antithetical to all things Western. For if Russia does relapse, we may be forced to devote more resources to de-polarizing a nation already fraught with myriad socio-economic crises that threaten Eurasian regional stability, many for which the U.S. has already been blamed.

During the Cold War, our nations and our militaries had no alternative to facing off with conventional and nuclear forces; today with regional crises where our interests meet and with our national survival at stake, the 'logic of reason' for the Russians has become acutely clear. During his tour as the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe's Deputy for Russian Forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, General-Lieutenant Anatoly G. Krivolapov had the following to say about the U.S./NATO-Russia military relationship:

The combined operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina has created a precedent of close cooperation between. . .Russia and the U.S. that has proved that when there is a will, there is a way for two former enemies to work together and achieve peaceful objectives together for the benefit of all peoples who live on this earth . . . We simply have no alternative.<sup>55</sup>

The alternative General Krivolapov spoke of represents a monumental shift in thinking from the legacies of the past. This change is even more noteworthy because the Russian military is generally recognized as the most hidebound of Russian institutions. In many ways, however, this thinking has surpassed the thinking of many political elites who remain mired in the rhetoric of the past.

Whether the U.S.-Russian military relationship has transcended the larger political one - as former Secretary of Defense Perry once believed - is immaterial. What is important is the fact that over the last 14 years the military-to-military relationship has become 'truly meaningful,' whether we meant for it to or not. The U.S. military has the mission of protecting this nation from all enemies, foreign and domestic, and it has recognized a partner in the Russian military with whom it is best served to share this duty both in the defense of the homeland and our shared interests abroad.

WORD COUNT= 10,289



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>9</sup> George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington DC.: The White House, February 2003), 20.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 559.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 558.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Kennan, *Memoirs*, p.558.

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<sup>25</sup> WPS Monitoring Agency, Political Forecasts, "The Results of the President's First Five Years: Vladimir Putin is Going out of Fashion," 18 March 2005, available from <<http://www.davidjohnson@erols.com>>, accessed 18 March 2005.

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<sup>29</sup> Kennan, *Long Telegram* .

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Igor Torbakov, "Russia Faces Foreign Policy Debate for 2005," available from <[http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insights/articles/eav011805\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insights/articles/eav011805_pr.shtml)> Internet; accessed 19 January 2005

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<sup>43</sup> Arthur Blinov, "Moscow and Washington Should Sign a New Mutual Security Treaty," *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie No. 43 (403)*, (Moscow: 12-18 November 2004), available from <<http://www.davidjohnson@erols.com>>, accessed 12 November 2004.

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