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STOP THE INSANITY:
HALT NATO ENLARGEMENT TO
SALVAGE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

by

Paul E. Wade, Lt Col, USAF

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Wade is a student at the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. He entered the Air Force in 1987 as a graduate of the Air Force Academy, earning a Bachelor of Science degree with an emphasis in General Engineering and Latin American Area Studies. He then attended the Basic Intelligence and Imagery Intelligence Officer courses at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. He has served in a variety of intelligence jobs in Korea, Hawaii, Germany, Texas and Washington, DC. He holds a Masters Degree in Russian and East European Studies from the University of Kansas and is a graduate of the Spanish-language Command and General Staff Course at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning, Georgia. Prior to arriving at Maxwell Air Force Base, he served as the deputy commander of the 548th Intelligence Group at Beale Air Force Base, California, leading the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations of over 1000 personnel directly supporting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Before arriving at Beale, he commanded both the 381st Intelligence Squadron and the National Security Agency's Alaska Mission Operations Center at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, providing actionable Signals Intelligence to national decision makers, Alaska Command, and 11th Air Force.

Introduction

When Russian troops rolled into Georgia on 8 August 2008, it marked Russia's first offensive operations outside its territory since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1989.¹ Proponents of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement saw this as proof that only NATO membership can stop Russian aggression. More thoughtful observers countered that had Georgia already joined the alliance, NATO would have faced the stark choice of confronting the Russian military virtually on its home court or admitting that the organization's security guarantee did not apply equally to all members. NATO should call a temporary halt to enlargement, using the ensuing pause to develop a meaningful partnership with Russia. Further expansion simply risks dangerous conflict with Russia for very little gain.

Proponents for NATO enlargement argue NATO membership should be open to all European nations. After all, Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty states the organization "may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty."² They fail to understand how differently Russians perceive this peaceful expansion of the alliance to other democratic nations. Even before Russia's Georgia incursion and the subsequent backlash from the West, strong anti-NATO feelings predominated among Russians. In April 2008, over 90 percent of the studio audience for a popular Russian TV talk show believed NATO threatened Russia. During the discussion about NATO expansion, one political

¹ Richard Giragosian, "Georgian Planning Flaws Led to Failure," *Asia Times Online*, 20 August 2008, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/JH20Ag01.html (accessed 14 December 2008).

² *The North Atlantic Treaty*, 4 April 1949, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/treaty.htm> (accessed 5 February 2009).

analyst asserted “NATO’s strategy is to encircle Russia,” while a member of Russia’s parliament stated “NATO’s goal is to prevent Russia from growing stronger.”³

This paper argues that a temporary halt to enlargement provides the best opportunity to optimize NATO’s relationship with Russia without compromising on its fundamental beliefs and strengths. First it will broadly examine the lasting impact of Russia’s history on the nation’s psyche, with a particular focus on events since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, in order to broaden the understanding of Russia’s perspective on NATO and the West. Then it will demonstrate why Russia still matters to NATO, even if its relative military and economic power has declined. The paper concludes by evaluating various approaches on further NATO enlargement in terms of the organization’s relationship with Russia.

Russian History

History does not define the future, but it certainly plays an important role in shaping it. One cannot possibly understand Russian attitudes today or, more importantly, effectively influence those attitudes, without first gaining a basic appreciation of the major events in Russian history. This section will explore some of the more important themes across Russian history. It will then focus on the most significant Soviet and Russian setbacks in recent years before concluding with a look at Russia’s views of recent NATO actions.

Major Themes in Russian History

Most historians date the origin of Russia to the medieval state of Kievan Rus, established in the 9th century in modern Ukraine, Belarus and southwestern Russia.⁴ While a thorough discussion of Russian history is well beyond the scope of this paper, three broad themes have

³“Majority of Russians Believe NATO Is Threat—TV Studio Audience Poll,” *Channel One TV*, Moscow, 3 April 2008, in BBC Worldwide Monitoring, International Reports, 5 April 2008, LexisNexis® Academic (accessed 26 August 2008).

⁴Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23-28.

helped shape modern Russian attitudes towards the rest of the world: invasions, expansion of the empire and backwardness.⁵ All three play a large role in Russia's relationship with NATO.

Invasion. Like its successor nations, Kievan Rus lacked significant natural defenses. This lack of geographical borders has permitted several devastating invasions through the centuries. For Kievan Rus, the invader came from the East in the form of the Mongol Horde. Historian Nicholas Riasanovsky explains that the Mongol invasion from 1237-1240 brought "wholesale devastation and massacre," noting the invaders completely exterminated numerous towns and ultimately ruled much of Kievan Rus for about 250 years. Perhaps most importantly, the occupation drove many of the survivors to the more wooded northern territories.⁶ Russia would therefore develop its national identity in relative isolation from the rest of the world.

Russia has not experienced such an extended occupation since the Mongols, but it has not been spared brutal invasions either. In 1812, Napoleon's forces succeeded in occupying an empty, burned-down Moscow, although they suffered harrowing losses on their winter retreat back to France.⁷ After disastrous losses at the hands of the Germans in World War I and the subsequent Bolshevik revolution, several nations including the United States, France, and Great Britain entered Russian territory in a forlorn attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks. In fact, the last American troops did not leave Russia until early 1920.⁸

The most significant invasion in recent memory occurred on 22 June 1941, when Nazi forces invaded the Soviet Union.⁹ Although historians will never know the exact number of

⁵ For a broad overview of Russian history, see Riasanovsky's *A History of Russia*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) or John T. Lawrence's *A History of Russia*, 7th ed. (New York: Meridian, 1993). For a detailed account of the Soviet Union, see Michael Kort's *The Soviet Colossus: History And Aftermath*, 5th ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

⁶ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 72.

⁷ For a detailed account of Napoleon's Russian invasion, see Adam Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).

⁸ Robert L. Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War, 1918-1920* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, 2003), xxxiii.

⁹ For further discussion of Nazi operations within Russia, see Colonel (ret) David A. Glantz, *Barbarossa: Hitler's Invasion of Russia, 1941* (Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2001).

Soviet war deaths, recent estimates put the total as high as 27 million. Riasanovsky notes that this total actually underestimates the total population impact, since some 20 million more children were not born in the decade of the 1940s as a result of the decimation of the child-rearing age cohorts. He also points out that the economic and environmental toll was equally devastating, as both the Red Army and the Germans employed scorched earth practices to deny any benefit to their adversary when they withdrew.¹⁰ Like Napoleon before him, Hitler ultimately failed in his attempt to conquer Russia, but the sheer magnitude of destruction is difficult to comprehend even today.

Today Russians tend to view the West with suspicion, knowing the horrors of invasions either first hand or through history. Not surprisingly, when Russians look at NATO's enlargement, they do not see an expanding group of peaceful democracies. They see an inexorable march of former foes to the east, placing a powerful military alliance on their immediate border. More importantly, that alliance for years focused exclusively on defeating the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Russians might be forgiven for wondering if NATO enlargement might presage another invasion from the West.

Expansion of the Empire. While Russia has certainly suffered more invasions than most nations, it has also aggressively expanded its empire, believing in a manifest destiny similar to that expressed by many Americans in the 1800s.¹¹ Within a few years of the start of the Romanov dynasty in 1613, Russia had consolidated control over lands covering much of present day Russia west of the Ural Mountains, and territory stretching some 400 miles to the east of the Urals (See Figure 1).¹² The empire experienced dramatic growth throughout the rest of the 17th

¹⁰ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 528.

¹¹ For a thorough treatment of the expansion of the Russian Empire, see William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹² Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 176.

century. Between 1618 and 1648, Russian explorers and fur traders pushed through the sparsely populated lands of Siberia, advancing over 3000 miles to reach the Pacific Ocean.¹³ Expansion also occurred to the west, where several years of war with Poland ultimately earned Russia control of Ukrainian lands east of the Dnieper River.¹⁴

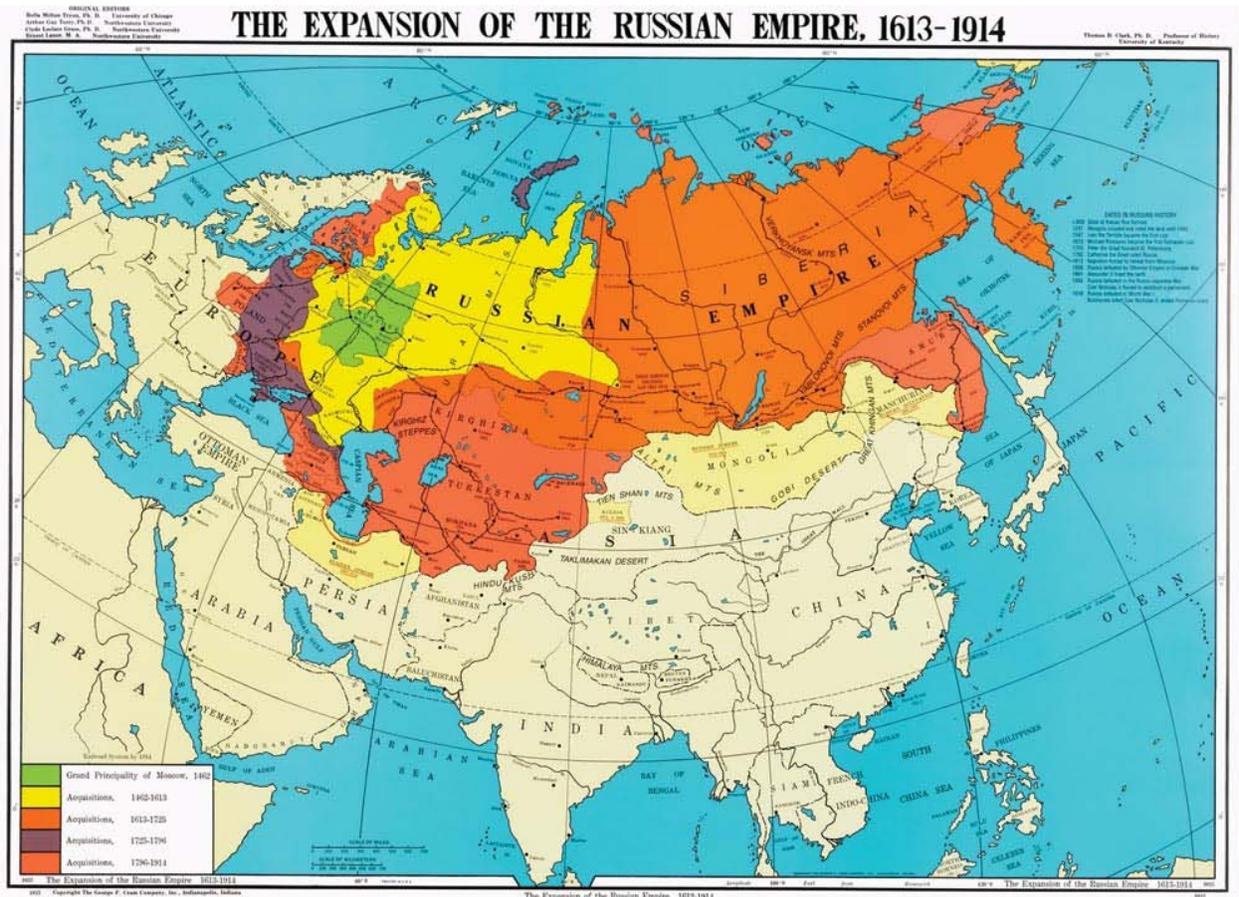


Figure 1. Expansion of the Russian Empire, 1613-1914¹⁵

Russia continued to fight numerous wars in the following century which led to further territorial expansion. After years of conflict with Sweden, Peter the Great ultimately ceded control of Finland to Sweden, but gained the vital territories of Estonia and Livonia (modern-day

¹³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 192-194.

¹⁴ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 180-181.

¹⁵ *The Expansion of the Russian Empire, 1613-1914* (Indianapolis, IN: George F. Cram, 1933), <http://www.worldmapsonline.com/expansionrussianemp.htm> (accessed 11 February 2009).

Latvia).¹⁶ Russian expansionism slowed for a few decades after his death, but began anew during the reign of that other “Great” tsar, Catherine. By the end of the century, successive victories against the Ottoman Turks resulted in Russia’s annexation of the Crimea and control of the Black Sea coast up to the mouth of the Dniester River, the present southwest border of Ukraine.¹⁷ Catherine also prevailed in the west, winning several battles against the Poles and ultimately gaining over half of Polish territory (including modern Lithuania, Belarus and western Ukraine) through the partition of Poland with Austria and Prussia.¹⁸

Having expanded in most directions to the oceans or the borders of powerful neighbors, Russian expansion in the 19th century focused primarily on the Caucasus and Central Asia. Although Russia began the century with extensive possessions in North America, it withdrew to continental Asia by famously selling Alaska to the United States in 1867.¹⁹ In the west, a victory over Sweden returned Finland to Russian control, while on its southwest frontier Russia completed the annexation of Georgia by 1810.²⁰ By 1830 Russia controlled much of present day Azerbaijan and Armenia, along with parts of the Persian coast of the Caspian Sea.²¹ In the late 1800s, Russia drove south, occupying all of Central Asia up to the Tien Shan and Pamir mountains in what historian William C. Fuller calls Russia’s “quest for defensible frontiers.”²²

World War I left Russia with significantly less territory and invaders or rebels on several fronts. The new Soviet leaders managed to restore some of the empire by emerging victorious in their five-year civil war.²³ However, the Soviet Union did not regain control of the Baltic countries and some of its westernmost land until after World War II. The victorious Soviets

¹⁶ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 221-226.

¹⁷ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 265-267.

¹⁸ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 267-270.

¹⁹ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 308, 389.

²⁰ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 308.

²¹ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 316, 389.

²² William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 290-291.

²³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 479-483.

pushed their borders to the west, justifying this as appropriate repayment for the losses inflicted by Nazi Germany. In subsequent years, the Soviet Union also established a buffer zone of independent nations which demonstrated almost vassal-like loyalty to the Soviet state. The Soviet sphere of influence now stretched from the Bering Sea to West Germany.

In the span of less than a generation, beginning in 1989, almost all of the gains of the empire withered away. Today Russia controls territory similar to that of the Russian empire under Peter the Great, minus the Baltic nations, while several former “vassals” are now NATO members. This does not mean Russia has given up on a sphere of influence worthy of a great power. Russia may have lost its empire, but Russians and their leaders have not lost their desire to reclaim Russia’s “greatness.” Few Russians express satisfaction with the current state of affairs; in fact Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly labeled the dissolution of the Soviet Union a tragedy.²⁴ Against this background, NATO enlargement will remain a tough sell in Russia.

Backwardness. Although not entirely unrelated to the scourge of invasions, the third broad historical theme involves almost an inferiority complex with regard to Western nations. As Fuller emphasizes, “frequently from 1600 to 1914 Russia found itself confronted by potential adversaries whose governments, societies and economies were relatively more modern than its own.”²⁵ Russia’s backwardness led to contradictory desires to catch up to the West while maintaining its uniqueness. This struggle between modernizing and conserving the empire produced an almost schizophrenic love-hate relationship with the West that continues to plague Russia today.

²⁴ Vladimir Putin, interview with *Time*, 18 December 2007, http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753_1690757_1695787,00.html (accessed 17 November 2008).

²⁵ Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, xvii.

Peter the Great was the first tsar to travel to Europe, beginning his 18-month Grand Embassy in March 1697.²⁶ He returned with an unquenchable drive to westernize, addressing all facets of Russian life in the process. He forced the nobility to shave their beards and dress in European style.²⁷ With the help of European shipbuilders, he created the Russian navy virtually from scratch.²⁸ Most famously, he built a new national capital, St. Petersburg, Russia's Window to the West. Peter did not, however, address the key social and governmental challenges of autocracy, serfdom and poverty. Fuller argues that these very issues ironically served as the foundation for his military successes: "the ruthless application of autocratic power could mobilize the Russian economy for war...because rural Russia was so unfree it could be tapped for money and, most important, for men."²⁹

Although Peter strove mightily, Russia still remained far behind the West at his death. Catherine the Great next took up the challenge of modernizing Russia, courting both Western scientists and cultural leaders. She maintained a 15-year correspondence with Voltaire, an icon of the Enlightenment, but stopped short of embracing the revolutionary ideas emerging from America and France due to their implicit threat to her autocratic regime.³⁰ Her successors continued to fear the ideas of the West, yet those very ideas powered the rapid development in Europe. While the splendor of the Russian court inspired awe, Russia's embarrassing loss to the combined French and British forces in the Crimean War (1853-1855) shook the very core of the Russian empire.³¹

²⁶ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 220.

²⁷ Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 35.

²⁸ Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 60.

²⁹ Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 83.

³⁰ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 176

³¹ Clive Ponting's *The Crimean War* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2004) provides a thorough, updated study of this historic conflict.

Despite serving at the far reaches of very long supply chains, the allied forces defeated Russia on its home turf, eventually forcing the surrender of Sevastopol, home of the Black Sea Fleet. Fuller asserts that allied technological superiority proved the difference, and left Russia facing “a new paradigm of vulnerability... Russia was particularly endangered by coalitions, especially coalitions of wealthier and more industrialized states.”³² In the wake of the defeat, Tsar Alexander II undertook significant reforms aimed at modernizing his country, including abolishing serfdom in 1861.³³

Despite Alexander’s well-intentioned reforms, he and his successors proved incapable of overcoming the numerous debilitating weaknesses within the empire. At the start of World War I, Russia’s backwardness placed it in a precarious position that quickly eroded. As Michael Kort describes the situation in 1914, “Russia’s semi-industrialized economy, pushed beyond its limits by the skyrocketing demands of modern warfare and the demoralization caused by military defeats, began to fall apart.”³⁴ Russia’s humiliating World War I losses played a key role in the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, but also signaled just how far Russia remained behind the West.³⁵

Shortly after Joseph Stalin finally consolidated power, he announced the first Five-Year Plan, what Kort calls “a comprehensive attempt to coordinate an entire economy to promote rapid industrialization and economic growth.”³⁶ Stalin’s efforts to force the Soviet Union into the 20th century mirrored Peter the Great’s attempt to modernize 18th century Russia, and met with mixed success as well. Forced industrialization took a staggering toll in lives, while

³² Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 260-267.

³³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 369-378.

³⁴ Michael Kort, *The Soviet Colossus: History And Aftermath*, 5th ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 82.

³⁵ For details on the Bolshevik Revolution, see Richard Pipes’ *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

³⁶ Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 186, 190.

collectivization of farms led to massive famine. Nonetheless, Kort notes that “Soviet Russia, despite the suffering and waste, built a viable modern industrial base in a decade.”³⁷

The incredible Soviet losses in World War II and the American atomic bomb once again left the Soviets behind the West. And once again, the Soviet leaders ruthlessly drove their nation to make up the difference. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, like the tsars before them their failure to reform the communist system ultimately caused them to fall further behind, as a centrally controlled economy simply couldn’t keep pace with the innovation of capitalism and a free society. As the Soviet Union neared its surprisingly rapid final collapse, its citizens and its rulers slowly came to understand how far behind they had fallen.

Playing catch up for centuries eventually takes a toll on the psyche. Marvel at Western innovations can easily change to envy and eventually anger that Westerners do not deserve their riches, their peace, or even their happiness. Many Russians maintain what journalist James Meek once called “the cherished conviction that they, virtually alone, saved the world from fascism,” that Europe only survived the Nazis because Russians bore the brunt of Hitler’s assaults.³⁸ In Russian eyes, without this challenge and others before it much of today’s territorial loss and backwardness might never have happened. Russia’s history works to prevent Russians from embracing the West, although improved relations are precisely the key to overcoming its backwardness. That history also makes the enlargement of NATO a bitter pill indeed.

Russian Setbacks Since 1989

The year 1989 marked the beginning of a decade of several colossal setbacks for the Soviet Union. Although the fall of the Berlin Wall most visibly signaled a popular revolution

³⁷ Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 200.

³⁸ James Meek, “Keeping up a Front: Russians are Dismayed that the Western Allies Overlook the Proportionately Greater Sacrifice Made by the Old USSR,” *The Guardian* (London), 7 June 1994, Lexis-Nexis® Academic (accessed 12 February 2009).

against communist authority, by the year's end Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania had joined East Germany in overthrowing their communist governments. Within a few short years, both the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union dissolved, leaving Russia to face the daunting economic challenges left by the Soviets without several potential partners. The staggering Soviet political, territorial and economic losses have inevitably generated bitterness and a sense of relative weakness toward NATO and the West.

Dissolution of Warsaw Pact. During the 1990 negotiations about German reunification, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev expressed the belief that regardless of Germany's final status, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact would continue to play a role in ensuring European stability for at least the foreseeable future.³⁹ Instead, the newly formed governments in Eastern Europe quickly turned their focus away from Moscow and toward the West. On 26 February 1991, the Warsaw Pact agreed to dissolve the alliance by 31 March 1991.⁴⁰ In addition to terminating a military bloc which provided the Soviets with a security buffer zone, the end of the Warsaw Pact logically mandated the return of hundreds of thousands of troops to the Soviet Union.

Through 1980, the Soviet Union maintained 31 to 32 divisions in east-central Europe, ostensibly poised to respond to NATO aggression. The famed Group of Soviet Forces Germany alone consisted of over 370,000 troops, some 7,000 tanks and almost 1000 aircraft.⁴¹ Although minor reductions in forces occurred through the 1980s and early 1990s, over 350,000 Soviet troops remained in East Germany in 1994. Their final withdrawal involved the return of mountains of equipment in addition to the soldiers, including 4,200 tanks, 8,200 armored

³⁹ Hanness Adomeit, "Gorbachev's Consent to Unified Germany's Membership in NATO," Working paper, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, 11 December 2006, 8 http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?asset_id=3559 (accessed 10 February 2009).

⁴⁰ Celestine Bohlen, "Warsaw Pact Agrees to Dissolve Its Military Alliance by March 31," *New York Times*, 26 February 1991, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE2D6143DF935A15751C0A967958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all> (accessed 23 December 2008).

⁴¹ Ray Bonds, ed., *Russian Military Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 237.

personnel carriers, 3,600 artillery pieces and 1,350 planes and helicopters from East Germany alone.⁴² With every additional arrival of equipment to the Soviet Union, Soviet citizens would have been hard pressed to assess the events as anything but a terrible defeat.

From the Soviet and Russian perspective, these forces originally arrived in the Warsaw Pact nations as liberators from the Nazis and remained in place to prevent NATO aggression. It is hard to overestimate the emotional toll and humiliation felt by the Red Army as it departed in a near retreat. Adding insult to injury, many of the officers returned to discover construction had not yet been completed on the housing which Germany contractors were supposed to provide, leaving tens of thousands to live in tents while they waited. As one bitter Soviet officer remarked before his train ride to Moscow, “the Germans killed millions of our people and burned a third of our country, and now they're all rich and we're being kicked out like dogs.”⁴³ Any NATO expansion into one of the former Warsaw Pact nations would merely add insult to injury.

Dissolution of Soviet Union. According to former Czech President Vaclav Havel, Gorbachev stayed away from the final Warsaw Pact meeting announcing its dissolution because he knew he could no longer control the process: "Gorbachev knew it was not possible to keep things boiling under a lid forever, so he wanted to lift the lid...But the steam was so strong that it tore the lid out of his hands."⁴⁴ When Gorbachev went to Yalta for a vacation in August of 1991, few realized the impending end of the Soviet Union. Yet a few short days later, Boris Yeltsin had successfully defied a Communist Party coup from atop a tank in Moscow to the cheers of thousands, effectively ending the 74-year experiment in a communist state.⁴⁵ The underlying

⁴² Stephen Kinzer, “Bitter Goodbye: Russians Leave Germany,” *New York Times*, 4 March 1994, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E03E1DD103AF937A35750C0A962958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all> (accessed 23 December 2008).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ George Jahn, “Czech President Reflects on Pact,” *Associated Press Online*, 28 July 2001, LexisNexis® Academic, (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁴⁵ Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 375-376.

causes of the events that summer include a mixture of economic challenges, rising nationalism among the separate socialist republics, and the permission to exercise new freedoms under glasnost, most notably the freedom to ask uncomfortable questions about the Soviet Union.⁴⁶

Despite the losses associated with the demise of the Soviet Union, Russians take perverse pride in noting that they chose this dissolution. As Putin stated after a 2005 meeting with President Bush, “Russia has made its choice in favor of democracy 14 years ago, independently without pressure from the outside.”⁴⁷ Few things irritate Russian leaders more than the Western myth that NATO, in particular the Reagan administration, won the Cold War on their own. Russia itself voted to end its participation in the Soviet Union, along with the other members of what on paper had always been a voluntary union. As Dimitri Simes explained in a 2007 *Foreign Affairs* article, the Soviet reformers deserve much of the credit as well: “They gradually concluded that communism was bad for the Soviet Union, and especially Russia. In their view, they did not need outside pressure in order to act in their country’s best interest.”⁴⁸

Nonetheless, the sheer calamity of the loss is hard to imagine. Virtually overnight the country lost nearly one-fourth of its total land.⁴⁹ The much-vaunted Black Sea Fleet now lay moored in a port outside of Russian control. Perhaps more traumatically, over 25 million Russians suddenly found themselves outside their own country. According to Soviet census figures, more than 17 percent of all Russians now lived in independent countries.⁵⁰ Although many of these involuntary expatriates have since moved back to Russia, they have no doubt

⁴⁶ For a thorough assessment of the causes of the demise of the Soviet Union, see David R. Marples, *The Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1985-1991* (New York: Longman, 2007).

⁴⁷ “Bush, Putin Agree to Fight Spread of Nuclear Arms,” *CNN.com*, 24 February 2005, <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/02/24/bush.europe/> (accessed 11 February 2009).

⁴⁸ Dimitri K. Simes, “Losing Russia: The Costs of Renewed Confrontation,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20071101faessay86603/dimitri-k-simes/losing-russia.html> (accessed 2 October 2008).

⁴⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Russia,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia> and s.v. “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics> (accessed 23 December 2008).

⁵⁰ Aadne Aasland, “Russians Outside Russia: The New Russian Diaspora,” in *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, ed. Graham Smith (New York: Longman, 1996), 480.

struggled to understand how the places they once called home are now outside their homeland. They have even more difficulty accepting the former Soviet republics in which they lived as NATO members.

Economic Disaster. While most observers of the demise of the Soviet Union naturally focus on the international political impact it caused, the economic disaster that followed it had a devastating impact on the Russian people. When Gorbachev took over the reins of power, he inherited a dismal economy headed in the wrong direction. It only sank further during the high-tech boom of the 1990's. As Riasanovsky explains, "the entire industrial establishment, a direct inheritance from the initial five-year plans, failed to respond competitively to the new age of computers and electronics."⁵¹ According to a 2006 report by the Council on Foreign Relations, "from 1991 to 1998, the contraction of Russia's gross domestic product (GDP) was almost 40 percent (and by some estimates, was even greater than that)."⁵²

For Russian citizens, the social and psychological pain hurt as much as the economic decline, with more long-lasting effects. Admittedly, the Soviet economy in the late 1980's merited little praise, but at least the government still provided some basic services. Russia's version of capitalism eliminated that security net while offering few legal opportunities in return. Disease, alcoholism, poverty and suicide skyrocketed, while the birth rate and the overall population plummeted.⁵³ For a lucky few, however, the 1990's offered a chance to make millions, usually through illegal means, government connections, or both. Not surprisingly, the

⁵¹ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 589.

⁵² John Edwards, Jack Kemp, and Stephen Sestanovich, *Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do*, independent task force report no. 57 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006), 10, <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&vid=ISBN0876093527&q=enlargement#PPA10,M1> (accessed 18 December 2008).

⁵³ Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 417.

average Russian's view of capitalism, and by extension, NATO and the West, fell significantly.⁵⁴

As Putin noted in late 2007, "the theft of billions of dollars was described as the free market and the theft of enormous assets belonging to the people were [sic] declared privatization."⁵⁵

While the economic disaster of post-Soviet Russia had no direct tie to NATO enlargement, it has understandably added fuel to the country's generally anti-Western mood. In the span of a decade, Russians watched their world unravel at a breathtaking pace. The Warsaw Pact dissolved, but its arch rival NATO emerged stronger than ever. Berlin became the capital of a united Germany, while Kyiv, the ancestral home of Russia itself, now lay in a foreign country along with millions of Russians. Having nurtured a centuries-old suspicion of the West, Russians did not need to stretch their imagination too far to conclude that their economic demise resulted from continued efforts by the West to weaken Russia. Russians could also easily imagine NATO cheering, if not directly supporting, the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. From this perspective, NATO enlargement becomes just the latest drive to prevent Russia from assuming its rightful place in the world.

NATO's Offenses in Russian Eyes

When the Warsaw Pact dissolved in 1991, many in the Soviet Union expected NATO to follow suit. Instead, it expanded twice, growing from its 1991 membership of 16 to the current 26 (see Figure 2). It also conducted its first-ever offensive operations against Russia's Slavic brethren in Serbia. NATO can rightly explain the very noble motivations behind these moves, but Russians generally see them in a much more negative light. Russia also remains frustrated by a host of smaller issues, including the United States' unilateral rejection of the Anti-Ballistic

⁵⁴ Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 169.

⁵⁵ Vladimir Putin, interview with *Time*, 18 December 2007, http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753_1690757_1695787,00.html (accessed 17 November 2008).

Missile Treaty⁵⁶ and US efforts to put missile defense assets in Eastern Europe.⁵⁷ However, all of these offenses pale in comparison to NATO overtures of membership for Ukraine and Georgia. Russia simply cannot abide this latest list of NATO candidates.

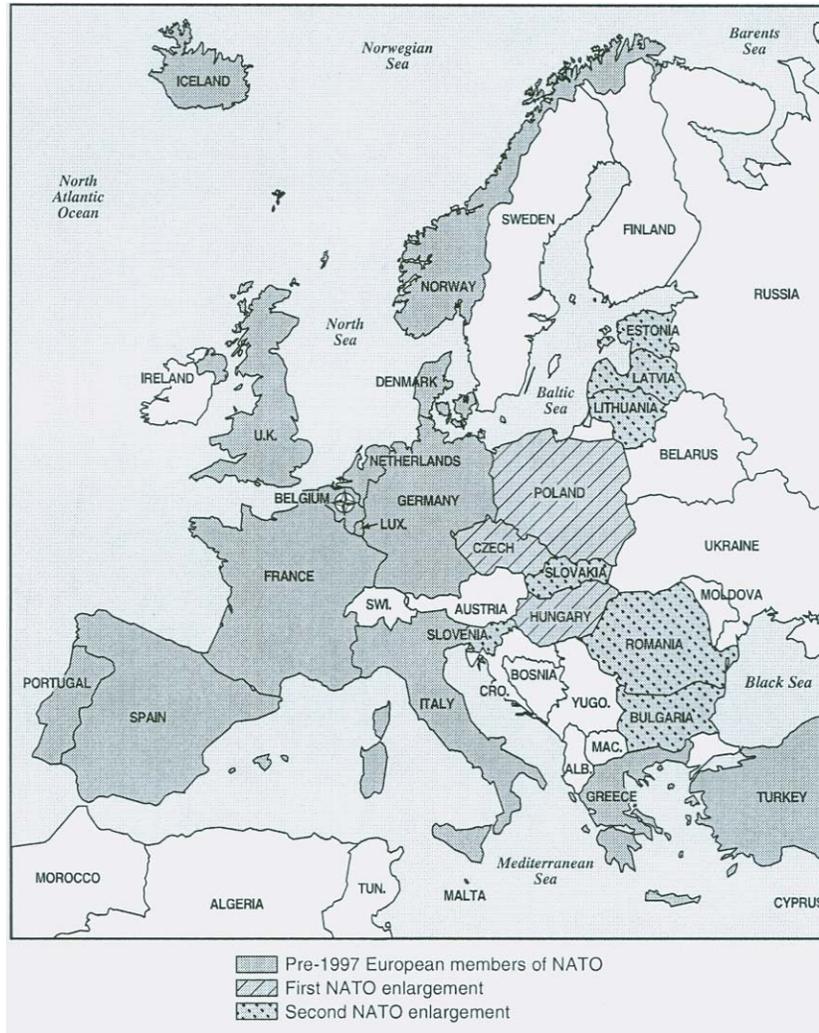


Figure 2. NATO Enlargement Since 1997⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Vladimir Putin, Press Statement and Answers to Journalists' Questions Following a Meeting of the Russia-NATO Council, Bucharest, Romania, 4 April 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/04/04/1949_type82915_163150.shtml (accessed December 2008).

⁵⁷ Adam Easton, "Deal Cools Polish-Russian Relations," *BBC News*, 15 August 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7562258.stm> (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁵⁸ F. Stephen Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), xxii, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1744.pdf (accessed 2 February 2009).

Enlargement. During initial discussions about possible German reunification in the immediate aftermath of the 9 November 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States and the Soviet Union staked out remarkably similar positions for the new state. Americans argued that a unified Germany should of course join NATO, but left open what type of association it would have with the alliance. Gorbachev seemed to support unification, but expected it to remain outside either of the two European alliances.⁵⁹ By the end of February positions had hardened on both sides.

After a meeting at Camp David, President George H.W. Bush and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl jointly declared a unified Germany would remain a full member in NATO. The Soviets believed this broke a promise made by US Secretary of State James Baker that NATO would not expand to the East.⁶⁰ In response, Gorbachev discarded the very term “unification,” shifting to the vague notion of “rapprochement” to describe the ongoing discussions.⁶¹ As the race toward German reunification gained a sense of inevitability, he grudgingly accepted unification, but hopefully suggested it should occur only after “discarding the outmoded NATO and Warsaw pacts.”⁶² Neither he nor the Russian people greeted Germany’s continued membership in NATO with joy.

While the German reunification no doubt delivered a severe shock to the global outlook of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev tried to sweeten the bitter pill by reassuring Soviet leaders and citizens that at least NATO would not expand any further to the East. Dmitry Polikanov reports that Victor Kuvardin, foreign policy advisor to Gorbachev in the 1980s, stated in an interview that “in 1990, Gorbachev and western leaders allegedly reached a gentlemen’s agreement that NATO would not go beyond the borders of the FRG [West Germany], if the

⁵⁹ Adomeit, “Gorbachev’s Consent,” 6-7.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 8.

⁶² Valentin Falin, “Why the Soviet Union Opposes a Unified Germany in NATO,” *Toronto Star*, 19 June 1990, LexisNexis® Academic (accessed 10 February 2009).

Soviet Union provided for smooth unification.”⁶³ Nonetheless, before the end of the decade three former Warsaw Pact nations had joined the ranks of NATO.

Russia had little opportunity to prevent this first round of NATO enlargement, but its leaders certainly made clear their opposition. In its 23 January 1998 Resolution, the Russian State Duma (lower house of the Russian Parliament) stated that “against the background of weakening of the Russian defense ability, including the gradual degrading of the Russian strategic nuclear forces, the NATO enlargement signifies the appearance of the most serious military threat to our country since 1945.”⁶⁴ After its strenuous initial objections, Russia tacitly accepted the first round of expansion only upon receipt of pledges that no “non-indigenous” NATO forces would move into the territories of the new members and after the formation of the NATO-Russian Council in May 1997.⁶⁵ Despite many Russian misgivings, NATO welcomed the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as its newest members on 12 March 1999.⁶⁶

After a discussion with NATO leaders in Brussels in October 2001, Putin expressed optimism that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 NATO was “willing to expand and change the quality of relations with the Russian Federation.”⁶⁷ Russians hoped cooperation in the war on terrorism would decrease Russia-NATO tension, possibly eliminating the pressure to further expand. Yet as NATO neared completion on an even larger expansion, Russia again found itself

⁶³ Dmitry Polikanov, “NATO-Russia Relations: Present and Future,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, 25, no. 3 (December 2004), 496, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a713947076&fulltext=713240928> (accessed 8 September 2008).

⁶⁴ Igor Zhukov, “Duma Calls for National Program to Counteract NATO Spread,” *ITAR-TASS*, 23 January 1998, LexisNexis® Academic, (accessed 22 December 2008).

⁶⁵ Richard J. Krickus, *The Kaliningrad Question* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 88, http://books.google.com/books?id=sDOUZEEnHFUC&pg=PA88&lpg=PA88&dq=russian+reaction+to+poland+joining+nato&source=web&ots=PiOsjOqVvA&sig=wlmr3mE3qe41Dkgsf7K23JbPWI&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=4&ct=result (accessed 1 February 2009).

⁶⁶ Jane Perlez, “Expanding Alliance: The Overview; Poland, Hungary and the Czechs Join NATO,” *New York Times*, 13 March 1999, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0DE5D6153EF930A25750C0A96F958260> (accessed 1 February 2009).

⁶⁷ Vladimir Putin, “Russian President Vladimir Putin Remarks and Replies to Questions from Journalists during Joint Press Conference after End of Conversation with NATO Secretary General George Robertson,” Brussels, 3 October 2001, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcb3/0c3788a5ccb0e42a43256adb003ce6e6?OpenDocument (accessed 9 September 2008).

with little to do but protest “NATO encroachment.”⁶⁸ On 2 April 2004, the alliance underwent its biggest expansion ever, adding seven new members.⁶⁹ As Simes notes, “Russia’s animosity toward NATO only grew after the alliance incorporated the three Baltic states, two of which—Estonia and Latvia—had unresolved disputes with Russia relating principally to the treatment of ethnic Russian minorities.”⁷⁰

Years later, speaking at the 2007 Munich Conference on Security Policy, Putin accepted that every nation has the right to ensure its own security by joining an alliance, but then asked “why is it necessary to put military infrastructure on our borders during this expansion?”⁷¹ Among other irritants, Putin was complaining about NATO’s air policing mission over the Baltic countries, started within days of their acceptance in the alliance.⁷² In an April 2008 speech in Bucharest, he clarified this objection, noting that “immediately after the Baltic countries joined NATO jet fighters appeared in the sky. To resolve what problems? In the end there were only 4 or 5 planes, and a few flights. It was an irritation, nothing more. Yet these things require constant attention, analysis and reaction.”⁷³

Although Russian leaders probably rightly dismissed it as little more than an unrealistic trial balloon, they certainly viewed the 2006 Bush administration proposal for a global NATO as

⁶⁸ Stephen Eke, “Russia Blasts NATO Encroachment,” *BBC News*, 10 December 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3308563.stm> (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁶⁹ Oana Lungescu, “NATO Sets Date for Big Expansion,” *BBC News*, 27 February 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3493560.stm> (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁷⁰ Simes, “Losing Russia.”

⁷¹ Vladimir Putin, Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, President of Russia Official Web Portal, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914t.shtml (accessed 9 October 2008).

⁷² Stephen Lee Meyers, “As NATO Finally Arrives on Its Border, Russia Grumbles,” *New York Times*, 3 April 2004, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9406EFD61339F930A35757C0A9629C8B63> (accessed 12 February 2009). For a study of the Baltic air policing mission, see Charles A. Butler, “NATO Air Policing: Past, Present, and Future Roles,” (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 2006), https://www.afresearch.org/skins/rims/q_mod_be0e99f3-fc56-4ccb-8dfe-670c0822a153/q_act_downloadpaper/q_obj_799a1522-27ad-4eeb-b384-3cbf63657d1d/display.aspx?rs=enginespage (accessed 12 February 2009). Not surprisingly, he concludes NATO’s air policing mission in the Baltics serves counters no real threat and therefore unnecessarily antagonizes Russia.

⁷³ Vladimir Putin, Press Statement and Answers to Journalists’ Questions.

a further sign of NATO encirclement. According to Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs in the US State Department, specific candidates for “global partnership” included Australia, Finland, Japan, Sweden and the Republic of Korea. His clarification that “the three Asian nations do not seek formal NATO membership” surely did little to reassure Russia, since by not including Finland and Sweden, Burns left open the possibility that they might seek NATO membership.⁷⁴ Russians naturally retain a healthy skepticism toward NATO promises, since they believe the alliance has already broken several promises on enlargement.

Balkan Operations. Despite not sharing a border, Russians have long maintained a fraternal alliance with their Slavic brethren in the Balkans. According to Riasanovsky, the idea of Pan-Slavism first became a mobilizing cause during Turkish repression of rebellions in the Balkans in the 1870s, with several thousand Russians volunteering to fight with the Serbs.⁷⁵ More famously, Russia’s alliance with Serbia led directly to Russia’s mobilization after the assassination of Serbian Archduke Ferdinand in 1914, with the well-known tragic results. Pan-Slavism suffered a blow when relations between the Soviet Union and the newly formed Yugoslavia foundered over differences in ideology and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito’s insistence on independence from Stalin.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the long-term alliance between Serbs and Russians would once again come to the fore in the 1990s as Yugoslavia disintegrated.

At the conclusion of its 1992 Ministerial meeting in Brussels, the North Atlantic Council issued a communiqué which stated “we are contributing individually and as an Alliance to the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions relating to the conflict in the former

⁷⁴ Vince Crawley, “NATO Leaders To Discuss Global Missions at Riga Summit: State’s Burns Briefs Reporters on Goals for NATO Meeting November 28-29,” *America.gov*, US Department of State, 21 November 2006, <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2006/November/20061121164755mvyelwarc6.954372e-03.html> (accessed 22 December 2008).

⁷⁵ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 386.

⁷⁶ For a full treatment of the schism between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, see Jeronim Perovic, “The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 32-63, <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/jcws.2007.9.2.32?cookieSet=1> (accessed 7 February 2009).

Yugoslavia. For the first time in its history, the Alliance is taking part in UN peacekeeping and sanctions enforcement operations.”⁷⁷ Enforcement would eventually take the form of shooting down several Bosnian Serb fighters in 1994 and bombing several targets in Bosnian Serb territory to finally bring the Bosnian Serbs to peace negotiations.⁷⁸

Although the attacks on the Bosnian Serbs disturbed Russia, at least it could console itself with the knowledge that the operations took place in support of UN Security Council resolutions. A Russian Brigade even took part in the Bosnia Peace Implementation Force resulting from the Dayton Peace Accords.⁷⁹ NATO’s Operation ALLIED FORCE (OAF) against Kosovo had no such silver lining.⁸⁰ As violence mounted between the majority Kosovars and their minority Serb rulers, Russia’s ability to veto any Security Council resolution muted United Nations calls for peace. In response to this inaction, and with the support of the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, NATO Secretary Javier Solana stated as early as January 1999 that NATO was ready to force a political settlement. Russia’s foreign ministry responded to Solana’s threat of attack by emphatically asserting, “Any attempts to bypass the U.N. Security Council and use force against a sovereign state is impermissible.”⁸¹ Riasanovsky maintains that Operation ALLIED FORCE was a “tremendous shock to the Russians, who were outraged by that unexpected attack on a sovereign, Orthodox and Slavic state.”⁸²

⁷⁷ NATO, “Final Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council,” *NATO On-line Library*, 17 December 1992, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b921217a.htm> (accessed 7 February 2009).

⁷⁸ Daniel Williams, “NATO Continues Extensive Bombing across Bosnia,” *Washington Post*, 31 August 1995, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/balkans/stories/nato.htm> (accessed 7 February 2009).

⁷⁹ George A. Joulwan, “When Ivan Meets GI Joe; In Bosnia, They Make Peace Not Cold War,” *Washington Post*, 28 April 1996, LexisNexis® Academic (accessed 10 February 2009). For a full accounting of Russian involvement in peacekeeping in the Balkans, see Sharyl Cross, “Russia and NATO Toward the 21st Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo,” NATO-EAPC Research Fellowship Award Final Report, August 2001 <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/cross.pdf> (accessed 10 February 2009).

⁸⁰ For a comprehensive study of Operation ALLIED FORCE, see Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO’s Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).

⁸¹ “Russia Blasts Solana Over Kosovo ‘Threat’,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 29 January 1999, LexisNexis® Academic (accessed 11 February 2009).

⁸² Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 626.

This outrage quickly coalesced around the idea that despite nearly a decade of Russia trying to embrace Western democracy and capitalism, the West had not changed its approach toward Russia. Simes argues in *Foreign Affairs* that “when NATO went to war against Serbia, despite strong Russian objections and without approval from the UN Security Council, the Russian elite and the Russian people quickly came to the conclusion that they had been profoundly misled and that NATO remained directed against them.”⁸³ While a weakened Russia led by a dying President Yeltsin could do little to show its displeasure at this point, Moscow’s future leaders would later use Operation ALLIED FORCE to justify their own military actions.

Overtures toward Ukraine and Georgia. To understand Russia’s current outlook on Ukraine and Georgia, one must view the issues through the prism of history. In addition to serving as the nation’s breadbasket, Ukraine provided Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union with its only warm-water ports. When Nikita Khrushchev transferred the Crimea, including the port of Sebastopol from the Russian Republic to the Ukrainian Republic in 1954, it seemed a rather minor issue within a centrally controlled Soviet Union.⁸⁴ After Ukraine became an independent country, however, the status of the predominantly Russian peninsula with its home port for the Russian Black Sea Fleet became a critical bilateral issue.

This shared history helps explain why Russia viewed Western support for Ukraine’s 2004 Orange Revolution as much more than merely promoting democracy.⁸⁵ According to Simes, Russian leaders felt the West’s ultimate goal was “undermining Russia’s influence in a neighboring state that had... significant cultural ties with Russia and a large Russian

⁸³ Simes, “Losing Russia.”

⁸⁴ Kort, *The Soviet Colossus*, 405.

⁸⁵ For a more detailed assessment of the Orange Revolution, see Graeme P. Herd, *The "Orange Revolution" : Implications for Stability in the CIS* (Camberley, Surrey, UK: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2005).

population.”⁸⁶ Suddenly NATO nations were no longer content, in Russian eyes, to keep their country down. Now NATO actively pursued replacing a pro-Russian president with a Western-oriented one. More alarmingly, the new President, Viktor Yushchenko, had openly expressed a desire to bring Ukraine into NATO, although he pledged to do so only via a national referendum.⁸⁷

Much like in Ukraine, the 2003 Rose Revolution brought a pro-Western leader to power. Needless to say, President Mikhail Saakashvili’s publicly announced intentions to join bring the birthplace of Joseph Stalin into NATO did not sit well with Russia.⁸⁸ In 2006, Western support for President Saakashvili, particularly from the United States, raised further concerns within Russia. Saakashvili’s arbitrary rule, control of the media, and the mysterious death of his principal political opponent brought no public criticism from NATO leaders.⁸⁹ Russia, on the other hand, has received sharp criticism for similar shortcomings. More importantly, the United States began providing more than \$190 million in military aid via the Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program.⁹⁰ Despite American assurances the aid was non-threatening, Russia could not be expected to support such direct involvement by NATO’s most powerful member in Russia’s backyard.

Not surprisingly, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation approved 12 June 2008 by Medvedev explicitly states that “Russia maintains its negative attitude towards the expansion of NATO, notably to the plans of admitting Ukraine and Georgia to the membership

⁸⁶ Simes, “Losing Russia.”

⁸⁷ “Yushchenko Pledges EU, NATO Vote,” *BBC News*, 13 May 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4543535.stm> (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁸⁸ “Gazprom to Double Georgia Charges,” *BBC News*, 2 November 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6108950.stm> (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁸⁹ Simes, “Losing Russia.”

⁹⁰ Howard Cincotta, “U.S. Military Aid to Georgia was Never Directed at Russia,” *America.gov*, US Department of State, 6 October 2008, <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/October/20081006142300dmslahrellek4.056948e-02.html> (accessed 12 February 2009).

in the alliance, as well as to bringing the NATO military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders on the whole, which violates the principle of equal security [and] leads to new dividing lines in Europe.”⁹¹ However, Russian perceptions of Georgian actions in South Ossetia soon led to a much more violent conflict with Georgia.

On 8 August 2008, Russian tanks rolled into Georgia, officially to protect Russian nationals in South Ossetia from assaults by Georgian military forces. Former US Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke asserts Russian leaders also hoped their action would lead to the overthrow of Saakashvili.⁹² Months after the war, monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provided information which seemed to support Russian assertions that indiscriminate Georgian artillery fire on Russian settlements in South Ossetia actually provoked the war.⁹³ Nonetheless, Russia’s rapid invasion in response surely indicates significant planning had taken place well in advance. Russia’s Georgian invasion certainly intended to send an additional reminder to NATO that it would not accept Georgia or Ukraine membership in NATO. In the words of Masha Lippman of the Carnegie Center in Moscow, "Russia here is saying: 'I was weak, you took us for granted. You expanded against our will. But in the meantime, we grew stronger. And now we are against it, and please do not ignore our opinion. Please do not take us for granted again.'"⁹⁴

History has not been kind to Russia, particularly in the 20th century. During those years, Russians witnessed multiple invasions from the West along with a cycle of destruction and

⁹¹ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 12 July 2008, President of Russia Official Web Portal, <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/24750.shtml> (accessed 9 October 2008).

⁹² Michael Schwartz, Anne Barnard, and C.J. Chivers, “1,500 Reported Killed in Georgia Battle,” *New York Times*, 10 August 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/world/europe/10georgia-2.html?pagewanted=print> (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁹³ C.J. Chivers and Ellen Berry, “Georgia Claims on Russia War Called into Question,” *New York Times*, 7 November 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/world/europe/07georgia.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print (accessed 12 February 2009).

⁹⁴ Mike Shuster, “Russia-NATO Divide Widens Amid Georgia Conflict,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, 21 August 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93823508> (accessed 17 November 2008).

rebirth of their empire that culminated with a country smaller than that ruled by Peter the Great 300 years earlier. Russia's backwardness continued to plague the Russian psyche, driven by a plummeting economy and decreasing quality of life for its citizens. The 1990s alone saw the dissolution of both the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, while NATO emerged from the decade stronger than ever. During that same decade NATO broke numerous pledges in the eyes of Russia by expanding into Warsaw Pact nations and also conducted offensive operations against Serbia, a fellow Slavic nation, without a UN Security Council resolution. The 2004 round of NATO enlargement dealt Russia another blow by including the Baltic nations, all former Soviet republics. Against this gloomy backdrop, NATO should have anticipated a particularly antagonistic Russian response to future enlargement talks, especially when they included Georgia and Ukraine.

Why Russia Still Matters to NATO

Russia's dramatic losses in territory and relative power, coupled with a crumbling economy, might lead some observers to believe Russia no longer matters in the international arena. The most obvious reasons why NATO must continue to engage with Russia are its extensive nuclear weapons and its veto power as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. However, Russia can help or at least stop hindering NATO in several other areas. In fact, if the parties could eliminate the underlying tension between them, they would rediscover issues where cooperation would further interests on both sides.

As NATO and the West struggle to bring stability to Afghanistan and control Iran's nuclear ambitions, Russia ought to emerge as a natural partner. Certainly, neither Russia's long-running struggle against Chechen rebels nor its ten-year occupation of Afghanistan has enhanced

its image in the Muslim world.⁹⁵ Additionally, although Russia has not refrained from using its oil and gas exports to Eastern and Central Europe as an economic weapon, at the end of the day Russia needs that trade relationship as much as the countries who import its resources. These key areas offer the basis for improving the partnership between Russia and NATO.

Afghanistan

Nowhere does NATO have more on the line than in Afghanistan, where it leads a 55,000 strong International Security Assistance Force conducting “NATO’s first and largest ground operation outside Europe.”⁹⁶ With significant Islamic minorities within its own territory and no natural barriers between it and Central Asia, Russia has a strong desire to maintain stability in the five predominantly Muslim states lying between it and Afghanistan. Russia certainly has no interest in allowing Afghanistan to return to a Taliban stronghold able to train and export Islamic terrorists.

Despite its own troubled military efforts in Afghanistan, Russia has not shied away from supporting US or NATO efforts to remove the Taliban regime. In fact, immediately after 9/11, Russia threw its hat solidly in the ring with the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. The first world leader to call President Bush after the attacks, Putin immediately stopped a Cold War-type exercise in the northern Pacific Ocean and offered military support for the invasion of Afghanistan.⁹⁷ President Bush publicly thanked Putin, stating "America, and I in particular, will remember this act of friendship in a time of need."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Gordon Hahn’s *Russia’s Islamic Threat* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007) offers a superb review of Russia’s challenges from Islamic threats both at home and abroad.

⁹⁶ NATO, “International Security Assistance Force (ISAF),” 12 January 2009, <http://www.nato.int/issues/isaf/index.html> (accessed 11 February 2009).

⁹⁷ Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin’s Russia and the End of Revolution* (New York: Scribner, 2005), 122-123, 133.

⁹⁸ Stephen Mulvey, “Bush and Putin’s Promising Chemistry,” *BBC News Online*, 21 October 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1612414.stm> (accessed 17 November 2008).

Unfortunately, several of the events outlined earlier changed Russia's initial enthusiasm for NATO's mission in Afghanistan to indirect hostility. When Uzbek President Islam Karimov decided in July 2005 to revoke permission for US forces to use Kharshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base as a staging point for operations into Afghanistan, a combination of Russian pressure and economic incentives helped form the decision.⁹⁹ More recently, in February 2009 Russia outbid the United States for support from Kyrgyzstan, promising \$2.3 million of debt relief and financing in apparent exchange for ending the US presence at Manas Air Base within 180 days.¹⁰⁰ If it in fact takes place, the closing of Manas to US aircraft will severely cramp efforts to resupply NATO troops in Afghanistan just as the United States prepares for a 30,000 troop surge for ISAF. Ironically, Uzbekistan has made some indications it might reconsider the use of K2, perhaps recognizing a lack of tangible benefits from Russia after its 2005 action.¹⁰¹

Despite Russian efforts to remove NATO bases in Central Asia, in his April 2008 speech in Bucharest, Putin announced an agreement with NATO which "simplified procedure for the transport of non-military goods through Russian territory to supply the...force in Afghanistan."¹⁰² Putin had expressed lingering resentment about the ABM treaty withdrawal in the same speech, but still appeared to recognize the potential threat to Russia from an unstable Afghanistan outweighed his desire to confront NATO. A couple months later, newly elected President Dmitry Medvedev stated in a speech in Berlin that "Afghanistan provides one of the

⁹⁹ Kimberly Marten, *Understanding the Impact of the K2 Closure*, PONARS Policy Memo no. 401 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic Studies, 20 December 2005), 213-215, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0401.pdf (accessed 11 February 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Gregory Gleason, "Kyrgyzstan's Multivector Foreign Policy Unravels," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 11 February 09, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyztan_Multivector_Foreign_Policy_Unravels/1491581.html (accessed 12 February 2009).

¹⁰¹ Anne Gearan and Robert Burns, "Sources: US Considers Uzbekistan as Backup Base," Associated Press, Google News, 5 February 2009, www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hPVtloI_s1EaYcDGUuU0SWBQ5NwD965M4903 (accessed 12 February 2009).

¹⁰² Putin, Press Statement and Answers to Journalists' Questions.

clearest possible examples of how NATO and Russia share the same fundamental security interests.”¹⁰³

In November 2008, Russia acted on this shared interest by agreeing to allow Germany to use Russian railways to transport military supplies for German troops in ISAF, leading some to hope it signals greater cooperation between Russia and NATO. However, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ press statement only describes the arrangement as a bilateral agreement, leaving NATO with permission to transport only “nonmilitary” equipment per the April accord.¹⁰⁴ With recent assaults on the ISAF supply convoys trying to enter Afghanistan through Pakistan, the importance of opening a northern supply route has become much more critical.

Russia’s mixed signals on supporting NATO in Afghanistan reflect its own conflicting views in the region. On the one hand, any NATO bases in Central Asia seem to cross into the realm of NATO encircling the Motherland, requiring opposition at all costs. On the other hand, Russian leaders recognize that NATO failure in Afghanistan will lead to a resurgent Taliban and a safe operating base for Islamic extremists. Increased violence among Chechen radicals would almost certainly follow. Clearly, NATO ought to be able to capitalize on this very real Russian concern.

Iran

Iran’s pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, presents a stark challenge to NATO. Although some observers might view the Iranian nuclear issue as primarily between the United States and Iran, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

¹⁰³ Dmitry Medvedev, Speech at Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders, 5 June 2008, President of Russia web site, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type82914type84779_202153.shtml (accessed 9 October 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Ahto Lobjakas, “Russia Opens Afghan Transit Route for NATO’s Germany,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 21 November 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_Opens_Afghan_Transit_Route_For_NATOs_Germany/1351659.html (accessed 14 December 2008).

warned in May 2008 that Iran's nuclear ambitions, along with those of North Korea, could set in motion a "domino effect" of other nations seeking nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁵ As a neighbor of Afghanistan, Iran is also in a position to either help or undercut NATO's ISAF mission. While Iran will not likely embrace ISAF completely in the foreseeable future, Russia's closer ties with Iran offer the possibility of at least moderating Iran's behavior.

Russia has long maintained economic relations with Iran. In the 1960s, the two nations signed a series of agreements which led to Soviet aid to build Iran's first steel works in exchange for Iranian natural gas. The Soviets also helped build a 2000-kilometer pipeline across Iran to transport the gas.¹⁰⁶ In the post-Soviet era, trade between Iran and Russia has focused on arms and energy cooperation, particularly nuclear energy. According to Dr. Steven Main of the Conflict Studies Research Centre, Iran has emerged as "the third largest buyer of Russian arms" behind China and India, buying \$3.6 billion worth of arms between 1991 and 2002. Main adds that Iran is a particularly valuable customer because "it is also one of the few countries which pays [*sic*] largely in cash."¹⁰⁷

Naturally, Russia's support for Iran's nuclear facility at Bushehr has earned the most criticism from NATO. Russians correctly point out that Germans began the facility in the 1970s, and that they only began assisting Iran's nuclear program after the Chinese left in the mid-1990s. More importantly, as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has the right to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes and other signatories like Russia have the right to assist in

¹⁰⁵ "NATO Chief Warns More Nations Could Follow Iran and North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions," *International Herald Tribune*, 6 May 2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/05/06/europe/EU-GEN-Czech-NATO-Missile-Defense.php> (accessed 26 January 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Iran: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987), <http://countrystudies.us/iran/19.htm> (accessed 11 February 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Dr. Steven J. Main, *The Russian Eagle and the Persian Peacock: Russo-Iranian Cooperation 1995-2005* (Surrey, England: Conflict Studies Research Centre, January 2005), 2.

that process.¹⁰⁸ Russia, however, is neither blind nor enthusiastic about the real possibility that Iran could weaponize its nuclear program. In October 2007, Putin himself publicly stated that Iranian nuclear weapons would be “a strategic threat.”¹⁰⁹

Russia’s troubling support of Iran may have less to do with establishing an alliance and more to do with a desire to confront a common foe. In an unfortunate tit-for-tat response after Western criticism of its incursion into Georgia, Russia considered expanding its nuclear ties with Iran, which would clearly present additional challenges to NATO. As Mark Franchetti of the Sunday Times reported, a western diplomat suggested “after the war in Georgia it’s difficult to imagine relations between Russia and America getting worse...Russia giving greater nuclear assistance to the Iranians would do the trick—that’s for sure.”¹¹⁰ While NATO should not naively assume Russia would easily end its relationship with Iran, Russia’s varied public statements about Iran hold out the possibility of engagement that supports NATO’s desire for an Iran without nuclear-weapons.

Oil and Gas

The sheer volume of the energy trade between Europe and Russia provides both an opportunity and a danger for NATO. According to Katinka Barysch, Deputy Director of the Centre for European Reform, a London think-tank, “the EU gets over 40 percent of its gas imports from Russia, and two-thirds of Russia’s gas exports go to EU countries. Russia is also the source of almost a third of the EU’s oil and a quarter of its coal imports....EU-Russia energy relations should be straightforward, mutually beneficial and fast-growing. But they are not.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Main, *The Russian Eagle*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Lily Galili, “Putin: Nuclear Iran is Strategic Threat to Russia,” *Haaretz*, 11 October 2007, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/911627.html> (accessed 12 February 2009).

¹¹⁰ Mark Franchetti, “Vladimir Putin Set to Bait US With Nuclear Aid for Tehran,” *Sunday Times*, 7 September 2008, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4692237.ece> (accessed 16 December 2008).

¹¹¹ Katinka Barysh, ed., *Pipelines, Politics and Power: The Future of EU-Russia Energy Relations* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2008), 1, http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/rp_851.pdf (accessed 21 December 2008).

Nonetheless, a spider web of oil and gas pipelines connects supplies in Russian and Central Asia with markets in Europe (see Figure 3).

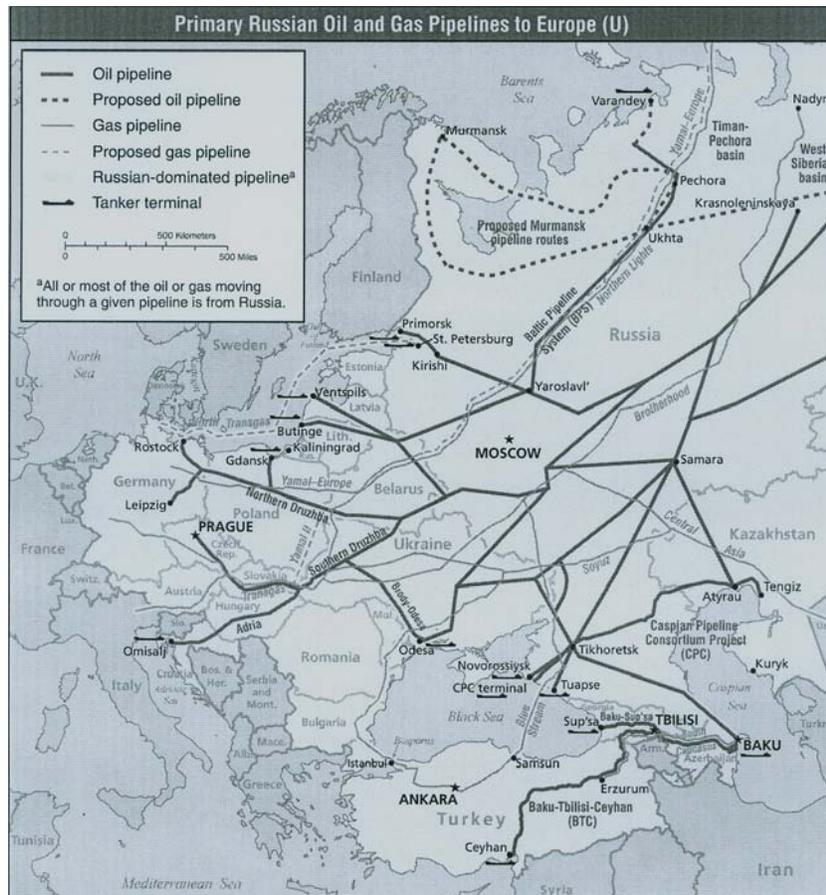


Figure 3. Primary Russian Oil and Gas Pipelines to Europe¹¹²

Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Ronald Asmus, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from 1997 to 2000, asserts “Moscow’s willingness to use its energy resources as a political weapon has made European countries reluctant to confront Russia over its antidemocratic behavior. Until the EU can liberalize its energy markets and diversify its

¹¹² CIA, Primary Russian Oil and Gas Pipelines to Europe, Energy Information Administration, Russia Country Brief, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Russia/Maps.html> (accessed 3 February 2009).

supplies, Moscow will have the upper hand.”¹¹³ Events at the end of 2008 and January of 2009 bear out that prediction. After several months of overheated rhetoric between Ukraine and Russia, Russia’s state-controlled Gazprom shut off the pipelines to Ukraine. When the two sides finally reached a settlement nearly two weeks later, Russia had sent an unmistakable signal that it controlled a critical European energy lifeline. Ukraine’s prime minister tried to claim victory in the final negotiations, but with Ukraine agreeing to pay double its gas fee in 2010 while Russia’s gas transit fees remain, Russia clearly emerged on top.¹¹⁴

If NATO possessed unlimited military and economic resources, it might well choose to go ignore Russia. The organization would be able to sustain indefinitely its large force in Afghanistan, could broker general consensus against a nuclear armed Iran, and would be able to find other suppliers for oil and gas, regardless of the cost. Clearly, this is not the case. Teaming with Russia in these critical areas would dramatically increase the chances of success. Russian logistics support could potentially reduce the costs and duration of ISAF, while its connections in Iran might offer the best chance at a diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear ambitions and a reduction in Iranian support of terrorist organizations. Finally, greater understanding between NATO and Russia holds the promise of mutually beneficial cooperation on oil and gas, with NATO nations working to develop infrastructure inside Russia in exchange for improved supply reliability and pricing transparency.

¹¹³ Ronald D. Asmus, “Europe’s Eastern Promise: Rethinking NATO and EU Enlargement,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2008, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080101faessay87107/ronald-d-asmus/europe-s-eastern-promise.html> (accessed 8 September 2008).

¹¹⁴ “Ukraine Proclaims Victory after Russia Gas War,” *Associated Press*, 21 January 2009, http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ime-eB29lh2E2m_LwNapeBBPHMBAD95RIRBOD (accessed 12 February 2009).

NATO Options for Russia

While NATO retains countless distinct options for dealing with Russia, it really only has three options with regard to future enlargement. First, it could push for rapid and continuous expansion, dropping the façade of Russia as a “partner” and treating her as an adversary, if not an outright enemy. Second, NATO could simply concede to all Russian demands by announcing a permanent halt to enlargement. Finally, the alliance could call a temporary halt, signaling that Russia will not have a veto on enlargement, but future expansion will require extensive engagement before any votes are taken. In terms of the NATO-Russian relationship, three criteria emerge as the most important for evaluating these options: how they affect the likelihood of conflict with Russia, how they affect Russia’s view of NATO, and how they affect Russia’s treatment and outlook toward potential enlargement candidates.

Enlarge While You Can

Some unrepentant Cold Warriors have adopted the stance that Russia’s move into Georgia, Putin’s meetings with Iranian President Akhmed Ahmadinejad, and inflammatory Russian rhetoric signal the return of the Cold War. Supporting this approach, Asmus writes “one can only imagine how much worse off the United States and Europe would be today if NATO and the EU had not been enlarged and they now had to worry about instability in the heart of Europe.”¹¹⁵ He then goes on to suggest that “future generations may well pay a high price” if NATO and the EU do not successfully expand to “new democracies” in the region.¹¹⁶

Supporters of the “enlarge while you can” philosophy generally subscribe to the belief that the more members in NATO, the better the chance at containing Russia when it eventually recovers. As appealing as this approach might be, it has several flaws. The fundamental flaw in

¹¹⁵ Asmus, “Europe’s Eastern Promise.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

this logic is the assumption that expanding NATO to include Ukraine or Georgia does not differ in any important way from the incorporation of Poland. Clearly, enlargement to these two members differs dramatically in Russian eyes. Both have historic, religious, emotional and cultural links to Russia that make the idea of NATO membership simply unacceptable. Consequently, pushing to include these two countries would almost certainly result in a much more militant response from Russia. Additionally, while Russia may have begrudgingly accepted NATO membership for the smaller, and formerly independent, Baltic nations, it will not react positively to membership for any other former Soviet republics.

This approach also stems from the mistaken belief that eventual conflict between Russia and NATO is inevitable. In an interview with Al-Jazeera shortly after the Georgian invasion, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev downplayed the risk of a renewed Cold War, asserting “we want to calm the situation.” However, he went on to state that if NATO threatened to break relations with Russia, “we can say goodbye to each other. It will not be a tragedy...NATO has greater interest in this cooperation than the Russian Federation. If NATO does decide to open its membership plan to Georgia we will not be happy, of course, and this certainly would increase the tension.”¹¹⁷ In the end, Medvedev is correct in asserting NATO has, or should have, a great interest in cooperating with Russia.

Most importantly, a continued race to enlarge NATO practically dares Russia to respond. This response would not likely involve a direct confrontation, but would instead focus on diverting NATO attention, dividing its membership, and generally causing global mischief. Worried about a nuclear Iran? How about a “peaceful” nuclear energy bazaar for needy third world countries, to be paid for in valuable natural resources? Seeking a more stable energy

¹¹⁷ Dmitry Medvedev, Interview with Al-Jazeera Television, 26 August 2008, President of Russia Official Web Portal, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/08/26/2240_type82915type82916_205791.shtml (accessed 9 September 2008).

market? What would happen if Iran and Russia decided to create the natural gas equivalent of OPEC? Russia could also reignite thorny separatist issues in Moldova, which has a breakaway Russian enclave in the Transdnistria region, or Ukraine, where Russians predominate in the Crimean peninsula and large areas in the eastern half of the country. Alexei Ostrovsky, head of Russia's State Duma (lower house of parliament) committee on Commonwealth of Independent States affairs, ominously told a radio audience that, "if Ukraine's admission to NATO is accelerated, Russia could raise the question of which country the Crimea should be a part of."¹¹⁸ Simply put, the perceived benefits of unconstrained enlargement are not worth the cost.

In terms of the three evaluation criteria, unrestrained enlargement would increase the likelihood of NATO conflict in Russia, whether direct or indirect. At a minimum, Russia would take several actions designed to punish NATO members or hinder their goals. Unrestrained enlargement also would do little to improve the perspective of average Russians and the Russian government toward NATO. Words from NATO about its peaceful intentions would not suffice if Ukraine becomes a NATO member. On the plus side, by continuing to aggressively expand, NATO would send a clear signal to Russia and prospective candidate nations that NATO would not allow Russia to veto the foreign policy desires of these smaller nations. However, NATO would pay a heavy price as Russia responds to another round of enlargement.

Cease and Desist

At the other extreme, some argue that NATO should simply close its doors permanently to any future members. The most obvious benefit to this strategy would be complete support from Russia. This approach offers NATO the opportunity to focus on the consolidation of its newer members, improving interoperability and creating stronger political bonds between allies.

¹¹⁸ "Russia Could Claim Crimea if Ukraine Joins NATO – MP," RIA Novosti, 9 April 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080409/104227945.html> (accessed 21 December 2008).

It also allows the NATO leadership to develop plans for the smart modernization of its forces, possibly beginning to reduce the dramatic chasm in capabilities between countries like Slovenia and the United Kingdom or Germany, much less the United States. Finally, it would allow the alliance to concentrate on its ISAF mission rather than political maneuvers associated with possible enlargement.

Despite these advantages, this approach fails because it contradicts one of the fundamental principles upon which the alliance rests, namely the ability to invite any European nation to seek membership. In the wake of earlier enlargement, non-NATO European nations have come to believe they have a sovereign right to join NATO if they so choose and meet membership criteria. If the people and the government of Ukraine choose to join NATO and meet the basic requirements, why shouldn't they be allowed to join? Russian discomfort over NATO enlargement should not grant it veto power over the freely expressed desires of a sovereign nation. Nonetheless, if that discomfort and anger leads to greater global instability, increased challenges in Iran and Afghanistan, renewed energy conflicts in Europe, and ultimately a direct conflict with Russia, NATO enlargement would have achieved a pyrrhic victory indeed.

In many ways, a permanent end to NATO enlargement actually scores well on the evaluation scorecard. Russia would certainly be pleased to know NATO will once and for all stop expanding, enabling both parties to focus on other issues. Russians might even improve their view of NATO, if aggressive diplomatic engagement accompanies the halt to enlargement. Unfortunately, a complete halt also gives Russia and its smaller neighbors the perception that Russia has a veto on the foreign policy options of countries in its "sphere of influence." NATO would have given up its Article 10 rights to invite any European state to join that it chooses.

Halt and Engage

NATO's best choice is to call a temporary halt to enlargement while it seeks to deepen its understanding with Russia. By slowing down, the alliance signals to the Kremlin its willingness to cooperate on areas of mutual interest and negotiate to resolve remaining differences. Slowing down allows both Russia and NATO to broaden the areas of cooperation, both militarily and economically. Ironically, in the same Al-Jazeera interview in which he cavalierly dismissed the need for cooperation with NATO, Medvedev admitted that "Russia does need good relations with the West—this is without any doubt. And the West needs good relations with Russia. We live in a global economy."¹¹⁹

This approach recognizes the inherent limitation and disadvantages of enlargement, especially with regard to Ukraine. As Anatol Lieven of the New American Foundation suggests, bringing Ukraine into NATO is particularly irrational: "This entire plan for Ukrainian NATO membership therefore violates one of the most fundamental rules of strategy: never make a really important, really visible commitment that you already know you will not be able to keep in a crisis, but from which you cannot withdraw without terrible humiliation. Above all, don't do this if your move is actually going to increase the threat of crisis."¹²⁰ Furthermore, since only 20% of the Ukrainian population supports NATO membership, the discussion of Ukrainian membership is premature at best.¹²¹

Part of the necessity for engagement with Russia stems from the tremendous economic connection Europe maintains with Russia. This area has the potential to raise the specter of an Atlantic divide within NATO, as the dependence of several European NATO members on energy

¹¹⁹ Medvedev, Interview with Al-Jazeera.

¹²⁰ Anatol Lieven, "To Russia with Realism," *The American Conservative*, 26 March 2007, <http://www.amconmag.com/article/2007/mar/26/00007/> (accessed 18 December 2008).

¹²¹ Charles Grant, "Ukraine Needs New Politicians," *Centre for European Reform*, 22 July 2008, <http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2008/07/ukraine-needs-new-politicians.html> (accessed 21 December 2008).

from Russia will necessarily keep them from adopting a hard-line against aggressive Russian foreign policy moves. NATO allies did in fact split on the issue of granting a Membership Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia at Bucharest in 2008, despite heavy pressure from the United States.¹²² European NATO members dependent on Russian energy proved less eager to antagonize Russia unnecessarily.

To establish a true “partnership,” both NATO and Russia need to improve mutual understanding and believe they have common goals. Reenergizing the NATO-Russia Council should be a critical first step in defining those goals. This should not be a crisis response, but rather a recurring exchange. In his December 2007 interview with *Time*, Putin correctly stated “the ability to compromise is not a diplomatic politeness toward a partner but rather taking into account and respecting your partner’s legitimate interests.”¹²³ Simes offered another take on a more engaging approach, suggesting the best way to work with Russia is to treat it like “other important nondemocratic states, such as China, Kazakhstan, and Saudi Arabia.”¹²⁴

Conclusion

On 2 December 2008, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced that “the allies agreed on a conditional and graduated re-engagement with Russia...The NATO-Russia Council will meet on an informal basis to re-engage and to have discussions on the issues on which we will agree and, I would also like to add, on the issues on which we disagree.”¹²⁵

This statement strikes at the essence of a successful NATO-Russian relationship: work together

¹²² “NATO Puts Off Membership Plan for Georgia, Ukraine,” *RIA Novosti*, 3 April 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20080403/102898616.html> (accessed 12 February 2009).

¹²³ Vladimir Putin, interview with *Time*, 18 December 2007, http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753_1690757_1695787,00.html (accessed 17 November 2008).

¹²⁴ Simes, “Losing Russia.”

¹²⁵ Agence France-Presse, “NATO Agrees Return to High-Level Talks With Russia,” *Brisbane Times*, 3 December 2008, <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/world/nato-agrees-return-to-highlevel-talks-with-russia/2008/12/03/1227980052394.html> (accessed 11 February 2009).

to further common interests while maintaining meaningful dialogue on contentious issues. It does not require “caving” to Russian pressure, but it does require treating Russia as a partner which occasionally has divergent views.

In his 2007 article, Simes asserted that “with high energy prices, sound fiscal policies, and tamed oligarchs, the Putin regime no longer needs international loans or economic assistance and has no trouble attracting major foreign investment despite growing tension with Western governments.”¹²⁶ The economic meltdown in late 2008 has dramatically changed the conditions in Russia, and offers an opportunity for NATO to correct its earlier shortsightedness. Having lost over 70 percent of the value on its stock market¹²⁷ and watched oil prices plummet from a high of \$147 per barrel in July to below \$36 by mid-December,¹²⁸ Russia does in fact need Western economic help.

Russia’s history makes them naturally suspicious of any foreign military alliance on their doorstep. Nonetheless, NATO has an opportunity to capitalize on common interests by taking enlargement off the agenda. One oft-quoted definition of insanity is to continue doing the same thing but expect a different result. A halt to enlargement would stop needlessly antagonizing Russia and its leaders, and thereby lessen the chances of continued confrontation. NATO would do well to recall the words of former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Llewellyn Thompson, in his final briefing before departing Moscow: “Don’t maneuver the Russian bear into a corner from which there is no escape; in such a position he can become vicious.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Simes, “Losing Russia.”

¹²⁷ William Mauldin, “Russian Stocks: Aeroflot, AvtoVAZ, Integra, Rosneft, Tatneft,” *Bloomberg.com*, 22 December 2008, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aWf0vKQtI_nc (accessed 22 December 2008).

¹²⁸ Mark Shenk, “Crude Oil Tumbles Below \$36 as Demand Drop Swells Inventories,” *Bloomberg.com*, 19 December 2008, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aX4pBRL.Q0Fc&refer=home> (accessed 22 December 2008).

¹²⁹ Llewellyn Thompson, briefing to American correspondents, Moscow, 1968, as quoted by Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the New Russia* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey, 2009) 130

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