

# Toward a New Euro-Atlantic “Hard” Security Agenda

Prospects for Trilateral U.S.-EU-Russia Cooperation

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JULY 2008



EUROPE, RUSSIA, AND THE UNITED STATES  
FINDING A NEW BALANCE



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## Preface

The joint CSIS/IFRI project “Europe, Russia, and the United States: Finding a New Balance” seeks to reframe this trilateral relationship for the relevant policymaking communities. We are motivated by the possibility that new opportunities may be emerging with leadership changes in Moscow and Washington. In particular, we hope that our analyses and recommendations will be useful as France takes over the chair of the European Union on July 1, 2008.

The title of the project reflects our sense that relations among Europe, Russia, and the United States have somehow lost their balance, their equilibrium. The situations of the key actors have changed a great deal for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the expansion of NATO and the European Union, and the unexpectedly rapid economic recovery of Russia. At a deeper level, we find ourselves somewhat perplexed that nearly 20 years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent conclusion of the Cold War relations among Europe, Russia, and the United States seem strained on a multitude of issues. In Berlin in June 2008, President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia invoked the language articulated 15 years earlier by then-Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin about “unity between the whole Euro-Atlantic area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.” Despite many achievements over the past 15 years, it is hard not to conclude that collectively we have underachieved in building greater trust and cooperation. We are convinced that, for enhanced European as well as global security, we must increase the level of trust and cooperation among the transatlantic allies and Russia and that this cooperation must rest on a firm economic and political grounding.

We humbly acknowledge that we have no “magic bullet,” but we hope that the series of papers to be published in the summer and fall of 2008 as part of this project may contribute to thinking anew about some of the challenging issues that we in Europe, Russia, and the United States collectively face. We are very grateful to the excellent group of American, European, and Russian authors engaged in this task: Pierre Goldschmidt, Thomas Graham, Rainer Lindner, Vladimir Milov, Dmitri Trenin, and Julianne Smith. We also want to thank Keith Crane, Jonathan Elkind, Stephen Flanagan, James Goldgeier, Stephen Larrabee, Robert Nurick, Angela Stent, and Cory Welt, participants in the workshop held on May 16, 2008, in Washington, D.C., for their rich and thoughtful comments about the papers and the project. Finally, we want to thank Amy Beavin, research associate of the Russia and Eurasia Program at CSIS and Catherine Meniane and Dominic Fean of the Russia/NIS Center at IFRI for their indispensable support in making all aspects of the project a reality.

This project is the continuation of the IFRI/CSIS transatlantic cooperation started in 2006. We would like to thank warmly our financial supporters—France Telecom, the Ryan Charitable Trust, and particularly the Daimler **Fonds**.

By publishing some articles in Russian, *Russia in Global Affairs* will also take part in this project.

*Thomas Gomart*  
IFRI

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# TOWARD A NEW EURO-ATLANTIC “HARD” SECURITY AGENDA

## Prospects for Trilateral U.S.-EU-Russia Cooperation

Dmitri Trenin<sup>1</sup>

As new leaders are taking over in Moscow, Washington, and many EU capitals, they inherit a host of security problems in the Euro-Atlantic area that have accumulated and crystallized since the latest failed attempt, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to form a new strategic partnership between the Cold War adversaries. These problems are not trivial and can get more complicated, even leading to political conflicts. In order to avoid drifting toward confrontation not warranted by the core interests of the parties concerned, Russians, Americans, and Europeans need to address the wider context of their relations, prioritize the key issues, and start looking for practical solutions.

Russia had left the Western geopolitical orbit by the mid-2000s. Ever since, its relations with the United States and the European Union have resembled a layered cake. The icing on the top (i.e., belligerent rhetoric, mostly in op-ed pieces, but occasionally also in official pronouncements) is so cold that some writers talk about a new Cold War. At the public and political level, there is deep mistrust between Russia, on the one hand, and the United States and many of its allies, on the other. Just beneath the icy surface, however, there is a somewhat cool, but mostly correct and solid political relationship between Russia and its key Western partners. Somewhere in the middle there is a booming economic interaction, complete with cross-border investments. Finally, at the bottom of the cake there are numerous people-to-people exchanges, which have taken place virtually entirely on their own. In sum, the Cold War analogy is most probably wrong, but some of the elements of 1914 are uncomfortably present in the current relationship.

The “hard” security issues, which are the subject matter of this paper, are embedded within the political layer, but are widely discussed at the “chattering” level and virtually ignored down below. Immediately after the end of the East-West confrontation, they were almost consigned to history books, along with the very notion of “European security,” only to be rediscovered several years later. Actually, there are two classes of security issues. One represents problems *between* Russia and its nominal partners in North America and Europe, and the other, common challenges

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to both the West and Russia. Thus, the Euro-Atlantic security agenda can only be complex and, in some parts, controversial.

## The Context of the Relationship

Before one proceeds to discuss the problems and ways of dealing with them, one needs to underscore the different qualities of the three protagonists. The West is no longer united vis-à-vis Russia the way it was united against the Soviet Union; yet, the alliance relationship persists across the Atlantic, and solidarity is preached and even symbolically practiced within the European Union. The United States, with its focus on the Greater Middle East, remains fundamentally distracted away from Europe. Washington's radar screen catches Russia only intermittently. Europe, sluggishly, moves forward along the axis of integration, which will gradually cover elements of common foreign policy and defense. As for Russia, newly wealthy and seemingly confident, it has broken free from Western tutelage and opted for strategic *Alleingang*.

Whatever the shape and content of its future Iraq engagement, U.S. global policy is unlikely to lose its focus on the Greater Middle East. Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Syria and Lebanon, and Israel and Palestine will continue to loom large in Washington, with Saudi Arabia and Egypt at the back of everyone's mind. China, which was fortunate to win a reprieve on 9/11 from too close attention in the United States, will probably gain more prominence among the issues facing the next U.S. administration. Key alliance relationships with Japan and the budding friendship with India, as well as the unfinished nuclear business in North Korea will highlight the long-term primacy of Asia as the world's premier strategic area, and the United States' central strategic concern, as regards traditional security. This leaves fairly little time to Europe.

The one big decision Washington pushed for recently, Kosovo's independence from Serbia, signaled its resolve to close the chapter of its Balkans involvement. Another decision the Bush administration took, to deploy a ballistic missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, was taken with a view to Iran, outside of the NATO context, and with almost no thought about Russia's reaction. True, there was support in Washington for NATO's continued enlargement to Europe's east and southeast, and broad U.S. encouragement of the "color revolutions" in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, but both looked more as sideshows, away from the main thrust of the United States' foreign policy.

There is no longer a serious rift between the United States, on the one hand, and Germany and France, on the other. Under President Nicholas Sarkozy, Paris has been more supportive of U.S. foreign policy goals than it has in decades. In 2009, France is returning to NATO's military organization, which it left under Charles de Gaulle. With Gerhard Schroeder's 2005 departure as chancellor, Berlin has become less contentious on the transatlantic track and more circumspect in dealing with the Kremlin. Divisions within Europe, over the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Europe's own constitution, have been smoothed over. Europe, of course, still faces the basic dilemma of its strategic identity, whether as a fully competent European Union, a "soft security" union working

in tandem with a “hard security specialist” NATO or a collection of several U.S. allies across the Atlantic.

For a dozen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO had been on the prowl for a new mission, buoyed first by its enlargement to Central Europe and later by a military engagement in the Balkans. Yet, this did not save it from appearing irrelevant again, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, and badly fractured (“Venus vs. Mars,” “old Europe” vs. “new Europe”) in the run-up and immediately after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The demands on the United States of Iraqi occupation and stabilization, however, created a need for NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan. Long focused on the Fulda Gap, the alliance discovered a new lease on life in the Hindu Kush. However, the outcome of that mission has much to do with the role of NATO and its very fate in the twenty-first century.

Meanwhile, Russia, having dropped the goal of Western integration, reverted to the more traditional posture of a great power. The steep rise in energy prices helped to engender new self-confidence, but the experience of being treated by the West as a marginal player made a deep impact on the leadership in Moscow. Studiously pragmatic and fiercely unaffiliated, reasonably self-sufficient and financially independent, it now rejected junior partnership with the United States and the resisted the pull of the European Union’s normative empire. Oil and gas, rather than the army and the navy, are understood to be its two true friends in the world. No longer pro-Western but neither consistently anti-Western, Russia began to insist on “equal” relations with the other centers of what it welcomed as a multipolar world.

Even though the talk of a new Cold War, as noted above, coexists incongruently with growing trade and mutual investments, information transparency and burgeoning two-way streams of visitors, it is not just talk. Russia’s failure to complete a domestic “transition,” its rejection of junior-grade integration, and its rash defiance of the post–Cold War order (i.e., U.S. global hegemony) have created a real unease in the United States and Europe. The early hopes, long dashed and succeeded by contemptuous indifference, are now giving way to historical concerns in the West about an authoritarian bully. Russia’s sudden combativeness and assertiveness have revealed its revisionist—at least in terms of the world order—inclinations and raised the question of a common Western stand to oppose Moscow’s energy-powered drive. Energy security for Europe and a global league of democracies to resist the *authoritarian internationale* are the watchwords heard on both sides of the Atlantic.

True, not everyone is convinced that time has come to gird oneself for a new, and possibly softer, confrontation. Opinions on the subject differ widely in the United States. Within the European Union, the vocal Russo-skeptics often annoy the bigger members from Western and Southern Europe with long-term economic and strategic interests in Russia. Were Moscow’s foreign policy less heavy handed, more enlightened, and making fuller use of its soft power, the balance in Europe might well tip toward deeper engagement with Russia, rather than progressive alienation from it. Similarly, one might argue that if the United States were more sensitive to Russia’s

legitimate security interests, and if Europe were more engaging and less lecturing, the appeal of isolationism in Moscow might be reduced.

As of this writing, however, this is mostly wishful thinking. Twice in the past two decades opportunities for a radical improvement of Russian-Western relations emerged, but both were missed: the first in the wake of the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and the second exactly 10 years later, immediately after 9/11. A third chance is not in sight. The context of the relationship among the United States, Europe, and Russia has been set for the foreseeable future, but the current structure of the relationship and the prevailing thinking (mostly in the West) fail to take account of it. Just as the democratic transition paradigm, as far as Russia's domestic situation is concerned, has been replaced by a less clear and more open-ended "transformational" one, featuring "authoritarian capitalism," the international partnership model that assumed Russia's joining the West on the margins needs to be radically revised. Russia is a lone great power, prickly and ambitious, and needs to be handled with care.

This paper will deal with the hard security agenda. Traditional fare of U.S., Soviet, and European diplomats and scholars during the Cold War, and happily forgotten in the post-Cold War period, it was rediscovered in the early 2000s. No longer a central element of the overall environment, it remains sufficiently important. With Russia's relations with the West having ceased to be those of a quasi-alliance, but neither having relapsed to a confrontation, a new model of interaction is in order. Clearly competitive, but not exactly adversarial; nonhierarchical, but among players of a very different international "weight"; sharing some of the basic goals, but still bitterly divided on domestic values and the patterns of international behavior. In this situation, some issues may spark real showdowns.

## The Issues

The "hard" security agenda of U.S.-Europe-Russia relations is very broad. It includes the issues of security architecture for Europe and the remaining unresolved conflicts there; nuclear proliferation; nuclear and conventional arms control; competition in the overlapping zones of interest in the new Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus/Caspian, and central Asia; conflicts in Europe's neighborhood, from Lebanon to Afghanistan; terrorism; and the impact of Asia's, and especially China's, rise on the Euro-Atlantic security environment.

### Security Architecture

As the common security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok failed to materialize, the promise of an overarching security architecture turned out to be empty. As far back as the mid-1990s, Moscow lost its bid to turn the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) into the principal security structure for the entire Euro-Atlantic space. Over time, the OSCE has evolved into a primarily human-rights and democratic-institutions watchdog with an almost exclusive interest in the former Soviet space. As a result, Moscow has lost sympathy for its former favorite. Instead, Russia was faced with the progressive "NATOization" of Europe's

security architecture, with ever more of its former Warsaw Pact satellites and even ex-Soviet republics joining the alliance or expressing their wish to do so. NATO enlargement and Russian retrenchment are the two sides of the post–Cold War dynamic in Europe’s security architecture.

The new states that have emerged from the collapse of the USSR have been the biggest bone of contention between Russia and the United States and Russia and the European Union. In 2002, prospects for a U.S.-Russia partnership foundered on the fundamental disagreement over the newly independent states. This disagreement became severely exacerbated after 2003–2004. Russian and Western interests clashed at the time of elections in Georgia and Ukraine. The Kremlin did not see the Rose, Orange, and Tulip revolutions as advances of democracy, but rather as U.S. encroachments on Russian turf, with the purpose, at minimum, of reducing Russia’s role and influence in its immediate neighborhood, where Moscow’s interests were incomparably bigger and much more vital than Washington’s. A more skeptical Kremlin view saw those upheavals in the neighborhood as dress rehearsals for a regime change in Moscow.

From 2004 on, the problem of the overlapping “near abroads” came to weigh heavily on Russo-European relations. The enlarged European Union has acquired borders with Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova; across the Black Sea, it has been able to project Europe’s influence toward Georgia and the South Caucasus, and even toward Central Asia. A European Neighborhood Policy was devised to deal with the new neighbors. Poland and the Baltic States, especially Lithuania and Estonia, have emerged as both experts, monitors, and drivers of Europe’s policies toward Russia. The spats in 2006–2007 over gas prices and pipelines raised the specter of Russia’s use of an “energy weapon” against its neighbors. Moscow, for its part, concluded that the West was hopelessly biased against it. In this situation, if a common EU strategy were to emerge, it would be based on the lowest common denominator. Still, Moscow does not perceive EU enlargement in terms similar to those of the NATO expansion. Even Ukraine as a member of the European Union is not a problem, Vladimir Putin was on record saying in 2008. What Russia seeks is not herding its neighbors into its own camp, but rather keeping them from joining a military alliance in which Russia will have no role.

Basically, Moscow has viewed the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance as the extension of the Western, U.S.-dominated sphere of influence, and as a breach of faith toward Moscow, which felt it had been promised a comfortably wide stretch of nonaligned states between Russia and Western Europe. The failure of Moscow’s top-level, but essentially discreet efforts, under both Yeltsin and Putin, to join the alliance as its de facto vice chairman, has further exacerbated the poignancy of the NATO issue. Western suggestions that Moscow’s opposition to NATO gaining new members among its former satellites and provinces only pointed to Russia’s unquenched thirst for regional domination and an historical urge for aggression added to the Kremlin’s bitterness.

Russia’s opposition to NATO enlargement has been a constant since 1993, but Moscow’s tactics have varied. Whereas in the 1990s, it loudly and helplessly protested against the inclusion of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, and finally signed a partnership document with NATO

that also contained security assurances to Russia, it remained calm in the early 2000s as the Baltic States, Bulgaria, and Romania were joining, in the hope that a new and much stronger relationship was dawning between Russia and NATO. The 2008 Bucharest summit's admission of Croatia and Albania left Moscow entirely indifferent. However, it went way beyond protests and started to resort to countermeasures with regard to the issue of awarding membership action plans (MAPs) to Ukraine and Georgia.

On the issue of Ukraine, Russia's message to the West is that the country's internal balance is so brittle that Kiev's attempt to force a clear decision could unleash civil strife and long-term instability with dire consequences for Ukraine's territorial unity. Moscow's message to Kiev is even more unsettling. Any attempt to deploy Western bases in Ukraine will make it a target for Russian missiles; Ukraine's accession to NATO would kill its 1997 treaty with Russia, which recognized Ukraine's independence in its 1991 Soviet borders; Crimea would become an open issue, now with the "Kosovo precedent" of externally imposed separation in the back of people's minds; and in any event, Sebastopol, the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters, will "stay Russian," with the fleet continuing its presence there beyond the 2017 withdrawal deadline.

Moscow's efforts to forestall Ukraine's NATO membership with such strong threats may in fact help achieve the opposite results by spreading the fear of Russia in Ukraine and the urge to look for cover in the Western alliance. This, however, does not invalidate the central fact that Ukraine is different from virtually all NATO members from Central and Eastern Europe—an overwhelming majority there does not see Russia as a historical oppressor and aggressor (although a well-organized minority does). The issue is identity, not the lack of information about NATO. Whatever has been said about Afghanistan as NATO's role model for the twenty-first century, east of Berlin, NATO, after all, is still perceived as an alliance "about Russia." This is how both Warsaw and Moscow view it, however different their attitudes to the Atlantic Alliance may be.

Russia's problem with the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO lies in Moscow's view of NATO as a U.S. strategic instrument. The Russians, of course, appreciate that traditional NATO allies are not U.S. satellites. Germany, whose unity within NATO Moscow initially vehemently opposed, has become Russia's true friend and occasional advocate. Along with Moscow, Berlin and Paris opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq. At the same time, Turkey denied to the United States the use of its territory for attacking Iraq—no light matter, by any standard. The Russians, however, have treated the countries of Central and Eastern Europe joining NATO as little more than platforms for any action the United States might decide upon. Since the acceding countries are so close to Russian territory, Moscow is increasingly worried. Politically, too, "losing Ukraine to the United States" could spell disaster for the political leadership at the Kremlin on whose watch this happens.

Russian arguments about a destabilizing split in Ukraine, should the controversial decision be imposed on its population by the government in Kiev, are not without merit, although outside interference, including Moscow's, is also part of the problem. The Bucharest summit was very

special in that, despite last-minute Washington lobbying, it refused to grant MAPs to the two applicants, over objections from several European members, led by Germany and France. However, in an effort to sweeten the deal for the Ukrainians and Georgians and to deny Russia a sense of victory over NATO, the summit promised them membership in principle even before offering MAPs. This, of course, left the Russians in no doubt that the political battle over Ukraine and Georgia will continue.

On the Georgia NATO membership issue, which is politically uncontroversial in Georgia proper, Russia's message to the West has been: inviting Tbilisi to join NATO means importing two unresolved ethnic conflicts, which carry the potential of an armed confrontation with Russia. Georgia, after all, Moscow notes, regards itself to be basically at war with Russia, which occupies part of its territory (i.e., Abkhazia and South Ossetia). To the Georgians, the Russian message sets the outline of a deal. Should Tbilisi forgo its NATO bid, Moscow will help it retain at least a semblance of territorial unity, with some kind of a confederal status for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow's steps in Moldova suggest that this could be a real offer. The problem for Russia is that there are no takers in Tbilisi. This makes the situation in that part of the Caucasus unstable and fraught with the danger of a direct military confrontation between Georgia and Russia, with the predictable fallout for the Russia-West relationship.

Russia's own relations with NATO have become routinized. There are no longer any inflated hopes about what the Russo-NATO partnership, now enshrined in a NATO-Russia Council, could achieve, but at the technical level the cooperation is proceeding professionally and generally smoothly. One area where Russia has made steps toward more "strategic" collaboration is Afghanistan. It ratified a Status of Forces Agreement with the alliance and opened the possibility of using overland supply routes for NATO's European forces across its territory. Even though actual NATO-Russia cooperation in military transit, stemming narcotics trade, or intelligence sharing is light or absent, Moscow has no interest in seeing the NATO operation in Afghanistan fail, with the resulting prospect of a Taliban comeback on the borders of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Yet, Russia's overall relationship to NATO is heavily dependent on the outcome of Ukraine and Georgia's bids to join the alliance.

By contrast, Russia does not object to its neighbors joining the European Union. The EU-Russia security exchanges have been dormant, with the EU security dimension emerging only sluggishly. In a broader sense, since the European Union has opened up to the east—and embraced 10 countries that had formed part of the Soviet sphere of influence, or the Soviet Union itself (and, before that, the Russian empire)—the relationship has grown more tense. The elites in the new member countries generally view Russia as a historical oppressor, a military aggressor, or an occupier, and sometimes all three. The new members' views, and their lingering sense of insecurity, have had a growing impact on the European Union's attempts to take a common position vis-à-vis Russia, making the union much more suspicious, on balance, of Moscow's motives.

Russian president Dmitri Medvedev's idea, unveiled in Berlin in May 2008, of a pan-European security treaty, was fleshed out two months later by Russia's ambassador to NATO. Moscow's motives are transparent. Russia seeks to end the situation in which it is basically the only odd man out in the European security landscape. Almost all other countries are either members of the Atlantic Alliance, the European Union, or aspire to join. The OSCE has turned itself into an election/human-rights watchdog for the former communist East. The adapted Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty has not been ratified by NATO countries, and the Baltic States stay outside its constraints. And the Russia-NATO relationship itself has not lived up to the initial expectations of a strategic partnership. To remedy that, the Kremlin proposes an overarching formula that would bind the United States, Europe, and Russia as three coequal pillars of an inclusive Euro-Atlantic security architecture. It further proposes a link from the Euro-Atlantic system to Asia, through an outreach to China and India.

On the surface, the Medvedev initiative looks like a rehash of the Yeltsin-Clinton-era formula ("Vancouver to Vladivostok") or even of the Gorbachevian "common European home." Some commentators reach out even farther in time, all the way to early Soviet proposals on European security. In reality, it is a follow-up to the much more recent suggestions—by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in particular—of a trilateral U.S.-EU-Russia security compact for the Euro-Atlantic area. The new element is the link to Asia. Medvedev's proposal may be too sweeping for diplomatic negotiations. Yet, he put his finger on a significant problem. His move represents an opportunity to discuss ways of fitting Russia into the Euro-Atlantic security system or, to put it differently, of extending—and adapting—the system to accommodate Russia. A failure to do that is likely to lead to Moscow turning even more inward and becoming even more defensive vis-à-vis the West. The countries situated between Russia and NATO, such as Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, would be most immediately affected. Two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe's security should not be taken for granted.

## **Conflicts—from Kosovo to the Caucasus**

The absence of a functioning security architecture has made it more difficult to resolve the conflicts that have erupted since the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Twice during the last decade, in 1999 and again in 2008, Kosovo underlined the fundamental differences in approach between Russia and the West toward post-Cold War security issues. Russia continues to insist on the primacy of the UN Security Council (where it has a veto right) in matters of war and peace; on strict respect for state sovereignty and the inviolability of borders; and on the legality of states' international behavior.

Having condemned the recognition of Kosovo's independence by the United States and its allies, Russia decided to let the West deal with the mess created by that recognition, while demonstrating its own support for international law, positioning itself as the only true friend of the Serbian people, and concluding lucrative energy deals with Belgrade. Moscow refused to sanction the EU postindependence mission in Kosovo and vowed to block the fledgling state's UN membership. However, Moscow did not, as many had feared, use the "Kosovo precedent" as

a pretext for recognizing the breakaway enclaves of Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia that Russia has protected for years. Instead, it pursued a highly nuanced policy.

On Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow essentially struck a common position with the two other co-chairs of the Minsk group, Washington and Paris, which did not sit well with Baku. In Transnistria, Russia made a genuine effort to revive the search for a “common state” solution, which would stitch the country together as a de facto federation, all contingent on its pledge of non-NATO status, which Chisinau is prepared to make.

On Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however, Russia made steps toward their de facto integration into the Russian economic, financial, and social systems. While still formally professing its support for the territorial integrity of Georgia, Moscow has been treating both the central government in Tbilisi and the separatist authorities in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali as equal “parties to conflict” and maintaining official contacts with them as part of Russia’s peacekeeping mission. At the same time, Moscow provided the population of the two enclaves with Russian passports and pensions and proceeded to integrate them with the Russian Federation without either formally annexing or diplomatically recognizing them.

This Russian tactic, which was a response to both the Kosovo decision and the Bucharest promise, led to intense Georgian efforts to portray Russia as the imperialist aggressor and to provoke it into launching a military strike so that that view of Moscow could also be shared by the international community. The Russians have responded with forceful actions, such as boosting their troop strength in the zones of conflict, repairing the rail tracks to the Russian border, shooting down Georgian drones, and sending Russian combat aircraft into Georgian airspace, but refused to take the bait and actually attack Georgia. For their own part, they have been trying to portray the Georgians as irresponsible firebrands, not fit for membership in any respectable Western club. This tactic of mutual provocations, performed essentially in front of the U.S. and European audiences, could lead to miscalculation and result in serious violence, pushing the conflict up to a new level.

## **Nuclear Nonproliferation and Arms Control**

While it is the security architecture and the “leaking” conflicts in Europe that top the current Russian agenda, the West has been primarily preoccupied with the issue of nuclear proliferation. Most importantly for the security relationship between Russia and the West, in this supremely important issue Moscow shares the basic goals of nonproliferation with its U.S. and European partners. Its approach emphasizes negotiations and compromise, joint decisionmaking at the UN Security Council, and international supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Russia abhors military “solutions,” which it sees as counterproductive, rejects “regime change” as undermining the fundamental principle of sovereignty, and is skeptical on sanctions as a pressure instrument on determined leaderships of major states. In all of this, Russia’s positions are fairly close to those consistently taken by most EU member countries and advocated in influential quarters within the United States.

As a member of the Six-Party Talks on North Korea, Russia has been a team player rather than a spoiler, supporting China's role of the principal facilitator and lauding the United States' pragmatic approach of reaching out directly to Pyongyang. On Iran, Moscow has been trying to assume the role of the main facilitator, as well as a member of the EU+3 format, but the going has been much harder, given the size and history of the country, the nature of the Tehran regime, and especially the resources that it commands. Russia's own nuclear collaboration with Iran has been structured in such a way as to provide safeguards against nuclear proliferation and create incentives for Iran's cooperation with the international community.

Like the United States and Europe, Russia is quite relaxed about Israel's nuclear capabilities, which it probably regards as generally stabilizing; even before the United States had done so, Russia basically recognized India's nuclear ambitions as natural for a country of that size and importance. Moscow, however, had always been much more worried than the West about Pakistan's nuclear program, its product, and (before the A.Q. Khan story had gotten out) its proliferation potential. Pakistan's fractiousness and notorious political instability, its military's close links to Islamist radicals, and, clearly, Pakistan's former role as the main base for the anti-Soviet Afghan resistance are the principal factors contributing to this rather dim view.

As the mainstay of its defense and security strategy, Russia has been relying on nuclear deterrence. If anything, the importance of deterrence has only grown as post-Soviet Russia's conventional military strength has declined and decayed. In terms of nuclear arms control, however, Moscow has been a consistent supporter of formal treaties reducing the nuclear arsenals. Conscious of the wide gap in economic capacity between itself and the United States, Russia seeks to codify essential equality of the nuclear capabilities of the two countries, so as to bolster strategic predictability and to preserve Russia's unique status as a nuclear coequal to the United States.

Increasingly, however, Moscow is looking for ways to include other nuclear powers in strategic arms control agreements: Britain and France, and especially China. With a very modest and antiquated conventional power-projection capability, Russia feels far less comfortable than the United States about the rise of other nuclear powers. Unless ways can be found to expand the format of strategic arms control, Russia may decide it has no option but to increase its tactical nuclear forces and withdraw from the U.S.-Soviet Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, which places no limits on missile programs of third countries.

Moscow has also been worried about the strategic defense-offense relationship. It is not clear as to the ultimate goal of the U.S. global ballistic missile defense (BMD) program. Is it to provide only limited protection against a few missiles launched by a rogue state such as North Korea and Iran, or is it aimed at acquiring the capability for preemptive attacks against major countries with small (China) or dwindling (Russia) nuclear arsenals? Doubts and suspicions about Washington's motives are strengthened by uncertainties about U.S. defense-related plans for outer space. Russians also study closely the statements coming from the U.S. defense, security, and

intelligence communities as to any indicators of whether Washington considers them an adversary again.

These broader considerations lie at the source of Moscow's concerns over the Bush administration's plans for a BMD site in Central Europe. Moscow refuses to believe that the principal reason for the deployment is the still far-away prospect of Iranian missiles threatening the United States and its allies. Russian military analysts and defense planners base their conclusions on the worst-case scenarios of the site's potential for expansion and reconfiguration. The fact that the deployments are planned for Poland and the Czech Republic, whose governments are among Europe's most Russo-skeptic, only adds to those concerns. Russia was not reassured that NATO was initially kept out of the matter altogether, and the United States' early "consultations" with Moscow were more like Pentagon briefings.

Moscow's core problem with the U.S. BMD position area in Central Europe is that Russia regards it as a part of the global network in an environment where it is not fully clear as to what Washington's long-term politico-military strategy toward Russia will be. The United States' de facto refusal to join Russia in building a joint theater missile defense (TMD) system to protect Europe has been seen as a worrying sign; alleged U.S. backtracking on confidence-building measures for the Polish and Czech sites is another. The story planted in the Russian media in July 2008 about Moscow considering the use of Cuba by its strategic bombers, now again on global patrolling missions, is obviously sending a message to Washington that Russia sees the missile defense deployments, which it cannot reliably monitor, as a strategic challenge.

Vladimir Putin's rather brutal attempt at the 2007 Munich security conference to call U.S. and broader Western attention to Russia's security worries has partially paid off: U.S.-Russia dialogue on the BMD issue has become more substantive, even though no agreement has been reached. The Strategic Framework document agreed to at the Putin-Bush "farewell summit" at Sochi in April 2008 represents the legacy of the eight years of U.S.-Russia engagement. Even if the new U.S. administration feels unbound by its predecessor's policies, the state of play reflected in that paper will weigh on any new U.S. approach toward Russia.

Official Russia has not responded, of course, to the U.S. public campaign for a nuclear- weapons-free world. A parallel public debate in Russia has not yet taken off. Russians, of course, feel no less threatened by U.S. and other nuclear weapons targeting them, as Americans feel threatened by Russia's missiles. Russia's concerns, however, deal with the glaring and unbridgeable disparities in the conventional capabilities of the two countries. Many Russian experts would view a nuclear-weapons-free world as a world safe for U.S. conventional superiority. This runs counter to Russia's strategic position, which sees the country's political independence and sovereignty in the world primarily based on Moscow's capability to effectively deter much stronger powers, such as the United States and, increasingly, China. Conceivably, Russia might engage in thinking along the lines of moving toward a minimum deterrence posture, on condition that China joins in, alongside the United States.

In the matters of conventional arms control, President Putin's Munich speech heralded the suspension of the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty. This was a largely symbolic step, akin to imperial Russia's abrogation of the 1856 Paris treaty, which ended the humiliating Crimea war. Then, as now, Russia proclaimed that it had bounced back from its defeat and would not be bound by discriminating agreements concluded in the hour of its weakness. Moscow could no longer tolerate the fact that only itself and three other former Soviet republics—Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—had ratified the treaty, but not the NATO states; that the Baltic States had not joined and thus held open the potential loophole for a hypothetical forces buildup; that new U.S. bases had appeared in Romania and Bulgaria and could appear in Poland; and that it was being subjected to flank limitations, thus losing the freedom of troop movements in its own territory. Russia, of course, rejected any legal link between the CFE and the stationing of its (few) remaining forces in Moldova (Transnistria) and Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia). Russia has noted the U.S.-European attempts at working out a compromise, but judged Western proposals on CFE, just like the U.S. ones on BMD, as “falling short” of what was necessary.

## **The Near East, Middle East, and Central Asia**

The Greater Middle East has become the focal point of U.S. foreign policy and an area of growing concern for the European Union. Russia, for its part, has reentered the region after a brief post-Soviet pause. In the Muslim world, Moscow does not necessarily always work at cross-purposes with Washington or the Europeans, but interests diverge considerably. Ironically, Russia and the West are closest on the foremost regional issue of the Cold War period, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Russia is part of the Quartet, supported its Road Map plan, and in general terms quietly accepts both U.S. policy and U.S. primacy. It supported the Annapolis peace conference in 2007. In anticipation of a follow-up conference in Moscow, Russia seeks to present itself as an honest broker and maintains good relations with all the key players without exception: Israel, Syria, the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, and Hamas in Gaza. It supports the Arab peace plan advanced by the Saudis and efforts toward a unity government for Palestine. The resources Russia is willing to commit for peace between Arabs and Jews may be limited, and its ambitions may appear unwarranted, but if anything, Russia has been a facilitator of the Middle East peace process, not its spoiler.

On Lebanon, Russia works less closely with the West, but not against it. True, it did not think much of the Cedar Revolution with its all-too-obvious parallels to the contemporary political reversals in Russia's own neighborhood (Ukraine and Georgia), but then Lebanon lies outside of the Russian sphere of interest. Russia has broadly supported the government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora but has known better than to shun or hem in Hezbollah. It did not condemn Syria for Rafiq Hariri's assassination, or Iran for its proxy interference, and counseled compromise and accommodation. Russia did not join the Europeans in their peacekeeping effort, but it sent its own battalion to Lebanon. This happened to be army engineers rather than peacekeepers, and ethnic Chechens rather than Slavs, a sign how much it had learned from its own experience in

Afghanistan and Chechnya. Skeptical of Western, especially U.S., partisanship, Russia, however, remains interested in averting a large-scale civil war in Lebanon.

On Iraq, Russia has long accepted the reality of U.S. military and political presence in the country. While supporting in principle the progressive empowerment of the Iraqi government and the transfer of responsibility to the indigenous security forces, Russia does not favor an early U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, fearing a collapse of local authority, a full-scale religious and ethnic war, and a steep rise of Islamist radicalism and terrorist activity across the region. Moscow also eyes Baghdad as a potential partner in the oil business. Russia's early calls for international engagement in Iraq (e.g., convening a neighbors' conference) have been eventually implemented by the United States, though, of course, not because Moscow had advocated them.

On Afghanistan, Russia was an early supporter of the U.S. military operation to topple the Taliban and assisted the United States through its proxy, the Northern Alliance. Later, Moscow resisted the temptation to involve its own military forces in Afghanistan, and it did not seek to compete with the U.S.-installed Karzai administration on behalf of Russia's own clients in the Northern Alliance or to undermine Hamid Karzai when he reduced the powers of Moscow's friends. Russia's willingness to help NATO supply its forces in Afghanistan has been mentioned. One needs to highlight Russia's interest in cooperating with NATO on stemming drug trafficking and its quest for NATO recognition of its role as the leader of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. On both counts, the West has so far given Moscow the cold shoulder.

On Iran, the situation is more complex. The nuclear issue was discussed earlier. Russia views Iran as a major and growing factor on the regional scene. Moscow's experience with revolutionary Iran over the past 30 years has been mixed, but it is certainly not wholly negative. Persians, Russians maintain, are often difficult, but one needs to deal with them, not demonize or try to isolate them. Moscow has made it absolutely clear that it will not support any U.S. military strikes against Iran and has been working to engage Iran economically. Still, Russia's trade with Iran trails very much behind that of the European Union, especially Germany. From Moscow's perspective, the freezing of many contacts between Iran and the West gives Russia a chance to keep a niche in the Iranian market.

## **Terrorism**

Antiterrorist cooperation among Russia, Europe, and the United States blossomed briefly in the wake of 9/11, but it later became more subdued. The Taliban was soon driven out of Kabul. Chechnya, which the United States and Europe had never regarded as a genuine antiterrorist operation, was eventually pacified with the combination of a ruthless military campaign and a deft policy of Chechenization. The terrorist attack on a Moscow theater in 2002, the suicide bombings of two civilian airliners, and especially the tragedy at the school in Beslan in 2004, prompted President Putin to level accusations at the West, painting it as the force behind the terrorists. Moscow had failed to secure extraditions of Chechen-connected tycoon Boris Berezovsky and Akhed Zakayev, whom Russia accuses of terrorism, from the United Kingdom, and of Chechen "foreign minister" Ilyas Akhmadov from the United States. The granting of

asylum to these people was seen by the Kremlin as evidence of continued U.S. and UK interest in encouraging anti-Russian separatism in the North Caucasus. This perception underlay the deterioration of relations, especially with the United Kingdom. On the British public's side, there has been a wholesale demonization of the "KGB crowd," and of Putin personally, especially after the polonium poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko. The United Kingdom's subsequent withdrawal of cooperation with the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) over Russia's refusal to extradite the person accused of having poisoned Litvinenko led to the FSB's repression of the work of the British Council and a brief revival of spy wars between Britain and Russia. Certainly, not all antiterrorist cooperation was put on hold, but it was scaled back and demoted as the centerpiece of the new "strategic partnership." Ironically, both sets of maneuvers in the Caucasus in July 2008—by Russia to the north and by the United States and Georgia in the south—were officially dubbed antiterrorist. In reality, however, each side sought to deter the other amid the growing tensions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

## Asia

China's rise affects Russia even more than it does the United States and Europe. There has been a complete role reversal: Russia, which had always felt superior, now faces the reality of a superpower emerging across the border. The border, meanwhile, has long been contested by China. Vladimir Putin regards the demarcation of the entire 4,350-kilometer boundary, completed two months after his leaving office, as his greatest foreign policy achievement: that speaks volumes about the relationship. Add to that the demographic overhang, uncertainty about China's future foreign and defense policy, and its strategy vis-à-vis Russia. From their experience, Russian leaders know only too well that if communism is not succeeded by integration within the Western community, it leads to nationalism.

Still, the interest that at least some senior Russians felt in the past in cooperating with Washington to manage China's rise has been replaced by Moscow's ever closer security collaboration with Beijing. While the Politburo is still in charge of China, there is a window of opportunity. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), started at China's initiative, became a major regional security forum expressly closed to U.S. observers. The SCO, co-led by Beijing and Moscow, officially urged the United States to wind up its military presence in Central Asia. In 2005, China and Russia held their first joint military maneuvers in Shandong province and the Yellow Sea (practicing "antiterrorist" amphibious landing), an experience repeated (as "liberation of a rebel-held town") in 2007 in Chelyabinsk region in the southern Urals. While Russia's growing cooperation with China is not problem free, Moscow gives increasing priority to its ties with Beijing. President Medvedev chose China for his first trip outside of the Commonwealth of Independent States, two weeks after his inauguration.

In North Korea, Moscow has been supporting the U.S. policy of reaching a compromise settlement on the nuclear issue. In Russia's view, the Six-Party Talks and a parallel bilateral track between the United States and the "country of concern" is a model to be used elsewhere, in particular with regard to Iran.

The conclusion one can draw from this analysis is that, contrary to the widespread perception, Russia-West security relations are difficult and at times strained, but far from antagonistic. There are sharp disagreements, as with regard to NATO's further enlargement, U.S. BMD deployments, Kosovo, Russia's policies in the zones of conflict in the Caucasus, and Russia's treatment of Ukraine. In contrast, on the issue of nuclear proliferation, there is basic agreement on the objectives to be pursued but with a clear divergence on the strategies best suited to achieve those objectives. On Iran, Russia's stance is closer to that of the EU-3, especially Germany, than to the hard-line approach once espoused by Washington. On North Korea, there is not that much daylight between the Russian position and that of the United States.

Finally, antiterrorist cooperation, even if no longer the centerpiece of the security agenda, continues to be in the interest of both sides. Interaction between Russia and the West on Afghanistan could be strengthened, if combating drug trafficking were to become a priority for the United States and NATO.

The source of current problems in Russo-Western relations is not the sum of disagreements on the particular issues, but rather the big picture outlook that has formed in Moscow, Washington, and the various capitals of Europe. This needs to change.

## The Case for Change

Russia and its partners in the West need to learn from the recent history of their relations. Domestic politics matter. So do foreign policies. Domestic changes will be influenced by external developments, but the decisive factors are internal, not external. In international relations, while great power competition is inevitable and could even be positive, new confrontation is unnecessary. Russia's integration into the West is both impossible and undesirable, at least for now, but interdependence is real and growing. There is a need to recognize the realities on the ground and learn to deal with them constructively and pragmatically.

The emphasis on values is ideological or even theological. Unless the values are prescribed by a rigid, even totalitarian ideology (and they are not), they change as society matures. In the West's relations with contemporary Russia, mutual interests are a surer guide than values, which are shared only partially, and are given to interpretation and can lead to accusations of hypocrisy, double standards, and the like. Russia, the United States, and Europe share an overriding interest in helping ensure Euro-Atlantic and—together with other major players—global security. This is what a responsible foreign policy needs to emphasize. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear security and arms control, and missile and space issues should not be dismissed as stale stuff from a bygone era, but as very serious challenges still facing societies in the twenty-first century. Managing regional instabilities, with a particular emphasis on the Middle East, adds to the top list.

While cooperating on the basis of joint interests, the three partners in this story need to achieve strategic accommodation among themselves. Of course, their current differences are minor compared to the days of the Cold War, but nonetheless they are real. Russia will need to

understand the United States' constant promotion of democracy; its tradition of interventionism; and its policies' dependence on foreign clients and domestic lobbies. Russia's partners need to take account of the costs arising from its current, if passing resentment over the losses sustained in the twentieth century; its powerful tradition of isolationism; and the reality of domestic groups playing the anti-Western card for mobilization purposes. Both the United States and Russia need to accept the European Union as a unique international player and seek to understand its often arcane internal workings.

There is a clear need for strategies. Neither Russia nor the West, or even the United States and the European Union separately, have yet developed strategies toward each other. Western countries pursue objectives vis-à-vis Russia, which include a broad range of apparently unconnected goals from domestic political liberalization to the reduction of residual Russian interests in the newly independent states to Russia's engagement in efforts to stem nuclear proliferation, especially in Iran. It is not clear how the Western countries hopes to achieve these goals, given Russia's general imperviousness to outside pressure and the lack of positive incentives for Russia.

A coordinated Western policy on Russia—which does not again take an absolutely adversarial position, as with the Soviet Union was at the height of the Cold War—is difficult, given the very different interests and diverging views on Russia not only between Europe and the United States, but also within Europe. Yet, if the principle of EU solidarity is coupled with reciprocal responsibility, Europe may come to be seen as a more coherent and effective player.

Russia, for its part, has to abandon its largely reactive and, thus, negative foreign policy agenda. It needs to know what it wants, in addition to what it does not want, such as further expansion of NATO and the installation of U.S. BMD systems in Central Europe. It needs to develop its substantial, but unused soft power potential, and stop undermining its basically legitimate policies by the choice of atrocious means of pursuing them. At some point, it will have to overcome its almost adolescent prickliness and regain the full confidence that it professes, but does not always feel. It will be important in this respect how it engages with the United States and Europe on a new security arrangement for the Euro-Atlantic area.

The modalities of the relationship need to be given a lot of thought. How do the principles of legality and democracy square with the notion of what is legitimate? What is the basis for essential equality among the very unequal players? How can we learn to make joint decisions on hard security issues outside of an alliance context? These more general issues need to be addressed alongside the more specific problems that threaten to further widen the political distance between the United States and Russia, with Europe featuring a range of views: MAPs for Ukraine and Georgia; BMD in Poland and the Czech Republic; and the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Ironically and ominously, the wider the political distance, the more likely a clash on the ground.

With new people in power, there is always a chance of a new and better beginning. It is not always realized, but a lack of trying never improves things. The one thing that leaders on both sides of the Atlantic need to do is to overcome the mutual fatigue that their predecessors had

developed. They need to confound the well-entrenched view that reaching out to “the other side” is bad domestic politics. They need to lead. For a variety of reasons, a U.S. president traveling to Russia reasonably early in his tenure with a strong message of equal partnership in ensuring Euro-Atlantic and global security and a willingness to deal seriously with the specific issues, such as missile defense and nuclear arms, would be the best first step toward a breakthrough. A Russian president traveling to Brussels to further develop the details of his pan-European security plan and then on to Strasbourg with a strong message about his administration’s renewed commitment to the principles of the Council of Europe would not do away with all the doubts, but it could break the ice. An EU decision to take the lead in the modernization and Western integration of Ukraine and to help resolve the conflicts in Georgia would be a most important step in bolstering stability on the continent. Including Russia as a third pillar of the Euro-Atlantic arrangement is anything but easy. Excluding it or, more likely, allowing it to opt out, is nothing but reckless.