

# Nato's Relevance in The New Security Environment

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*Abstract: The growing threats to security, which over the past decade have reached unprecedented and unimaginable levels in becoming unpredictable, unconventional and asymmetric, have challenged the traditional perception of the Alliance's role and mission. Modern security developments stemming from globalisation and advances in technology have led to significant changes in the security environment, and NATO has had to adjust its structure and policy in response. Due to these shifts in the security environment, the focus of NATO's security objectives was gradually transferred from traditional collective self-defence to other forms of tackling global issues. In 2010, the Alliance's new security challenges were highlighted in the NATO new Strategic Concept, in which NATO redirected its policies and actions into a more flexible approach to security. Its focus on crisis management and cooperative security represented major leaps forward in defining the role of the Alliance as a flexible, decentralised and inclusive structure capable of responding to global security challenges with a globalised and proactive approach. As the reach and range of the NATO missions significantly expanded – with new goals that transcend the traditional "Article 5 missions" – it became evident that the parameters that determine the effectiveness of the NATO command structure had to be redefined. Against this backdrop, the need for the Alliance to adapt its internal command structure to the complex and diverse challenges and to effectively manage the large spectrum of missions has become increasingly relevant.*

**Keywords:** Self-defence, NATO, security, Soviet Union, Cold War, Globalisation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The demise of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War and brought the world face to face with an uncertain future. For a good part of the last century, the Cold War provided the framework for the conduct of international affairs. Humanity was divided into two opposing blocs, each headed by one of the two dominant superpowers. The United States provided leadership to the western world, whereas the Soviet Union led the club of nations under communist rule. The competition was fierce but, excluding some instances of serious crises, there was some kind of balance. Both parties started constructing and amassing nuclear weapons to defend themselves against a possible attack by the opponent. Both parties established with their respective partners military organizations, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, to demonstrate their allied solidarity and deter potential aggressors. Neither party could seriously consider openly challenging the other, without running the risk of being dragged into a nuclear war. A balance of terror it was indeed. But after the collapse of communism all that was gone. And now what?

Russia suffered a major national humiliation when the Soviet state disintegrated. The loss of her international prestige and of a significant part of her territory confronted her with the question of her national identity and her place in Europe and the world.

On the other hand the United States faced the dilemma of either adopting a more isolationist approach to international relations now that the Soviet threat was gone, or continuing to be engaged in the world as before, adapting its Strategic Concept accordingly. The first years of the nineties were a period of trial and error tactics, while the world was waiting for the new world order to emerge.

The purpose of this article is to outline the relationship between Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, and NATO, the military organization set up by the United States and its allies to deal with the Soviet threat. Russia, feeling discredited and isolated, fears that the continuing existence of NATO, with the Cold War having ended, could only be interpreted as a threat to her national interests. NATO's relevance in the post-cold-war era will therefore be discussed and conclusions will be made as to why the Alliance considers its presence in the new security environment more necessary than ever.

## II. NATO AND RUSSIA RELATIONS

NATO and Russia have developed a very fruitful cooperation with the signing of documents and the establishment of consultation mechanisms on matters of common concern with particular emphasis on security. The most prominent issue however in the relationship between NATO and Russia appears to be that of expansion of the Alliance eastwards to include Central and East European countries and even some of the former Republics of the Soviet Union. NATO, as it is natural, desires to extend the community of democratic, law abiding nations by incorporating as many of those as possible, thus further enhancing security in the continent. Russia has time and again expressed her fierce opposition to such an eventuality for a number of reasons.

It must be borne in mind that the two leaders that assumed the task of handling the post cold-war situation, former Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, are no longer in power. In the United States, the Administration that took over is Republican, and by definition more conservative, which raises doubts about American policymakers' preparedness to remain as engaged in Europe and to indulge Russia to the extent their predecessors did. In Russia, a definitely more assertive President with a brilliant KGB past has ascended to power, which might call into question his country's commitment to harmoniously collaborate with NATO.

The argument put forward is simple: If NATO was created in order to act as a deterrent to Soviet imperialism and to counter communism and the perceived nuclear threat, then what is its relevance today? The Warsaw Pact has long been dismantled, as has the Soviet Union. The Cold War is over and the former enemies are partners. Surely, there may be problems along the way,

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but it is a common belief that Russia, especially after the election of Vladimir Putin as President, is on the path to democratisation and the free market system. Russia no longer poses a threat to the West, whereas she is heavily dependent on western institutions and governments for grants and credits in order to keep the economy from crumbling. Even if the Russians wished to adopt a policy of confrontation, they would lose the necessary support of the West. The question naturally arises: Should NATO be dissolved? If Russia is not to be feared anymore, then what is the relevance of NATO today?

The answer to this question is very crucial for NATO-Russian relations. NATO's intention of continuing to exist and its plans of taking in new members is an irrefutable reality that Russia has come to accept. The Alliance however, needs to make clear to the Russians how it perceives the new security agenda and why it is so keen on enlargement. As long as the Russians fail to comprehend NATO's rationale for its actions, they will never cease to view the Alliance as a hostile military organization, having as its sole purpose to undermine Russian positions.

The end of the Cold War, and subsequently, the absence of the Soviet threat, did not render NATO obsolete. On the contrary, it brought the Alliance face to face with the uncertainties of the new world order. The communist menace had kept the Western nations united under the umbrella of several political and/or military organizations (EEC, NATO). Europe, with the invaluable assistance of the United States, managed to abolish war, and a historic reconciliation between two archrivals, France and Germany, was achieved. What was unsettling for the Alliance after the demise of communism was the eventuality of the Europeans reverting to their past conflicts. Some may say that the event of a war among Western European nations is unimaginable in the 21st century, and that may well be true, but one ought to bear in mind that European nations have traditionally conducted their policies based upon the balance of power system, according to which, in an organized community of nations, no single nation is strong enough, politically or militarily, to threaten the combined forces of the remaining ones, which results in all nations coexisting harmoniously in an environment of mutual restraint. This has been the story in Europe until the end of World War II.

The United States, inherently abhorring the balance of power system, has changed the scenery of European politics, through the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The United States has provided Europe with security from internal and external threats. American leaders are not about to allow any of the past European discords to resurface.<sup>1</sup> Quite frankly, neither the Europeans are inclined to have it any other way.<sup>2</sup> The current attempt at creating a "European Army" is envisaged strictly in the framework of NATO, so it shouldn't be assumed that Europe wants to break away from the Alliance. In a nutshell, Europe is quite happy with American leadership and the security guarantees that go with it, even though it might not always want to own up to it.

As some analysts have very eloquently put it<sup>3</sup>, NATO is much more than a military organization. It has a political and cultural value embedded in it, the foundations of which lie in the Treaty of Washington itself.<sup>4</sup> Because of the existence of the Soviet threat, NATO naturally assumed the role of a military structure, aiming at deterring the Soviets from attacking America and its allies. Once the threat vanished, it is convincingly argued that NATO's scope didn't disappear. On the contrary, "NATO was now able to return to itself, and to move purposefully into the new situation by building upon its real historic foundations".<sup>5</sup>

### III. RELEVANCE OF NATO

In the post-Cold War era, NATO is becoming increasingly indispensable to its member states as the West transitions from a security landscape defined by a single, dominant threat, to one defined by a diverse range of credible threats. As previously explained, NATO was originally established to respond to the possibility of a Soviet offensive against Western Europe. Its sole objective was to protect the borders of its constituent states from unwelcome intrusion by the Eastern bloc. In these circumstances, few additional issues were of particular concern to NATO. This alliance against a mutual Soviet nemesis would persist throughout the duration of the Cold War, right up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, once the U.S.S.R. withered away into the pages of global history, NATO suffered from what some characterize as an "identity crisis". Stripped of its source of strategic unity, NATO had no inherent reason to exist.

However, the reality of security threats imperiling the people of the West did not spontaneously vanish after 1991: a variety of new threats are emerging in today's rapidly globalizing world. Examples include, but are not limited to, transnational terrorism, cyber terrorism, piracy on the high seas, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Altogether, these threats represent a legitimate danger, both directly and indirectly, to a vast majority of the NATO member states.

NATO's relevance today is best crystallized in the Alliance's Strategic Concept approved by the Heads of State and Government in Washington DC in April 1999.<sup>6</sup> In paragraph 3, it is recognised that the last ten years have seen the appearance of complex new risks to Euro-Atlantic peace and stability, including oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These risks

<sup>3</sup> Williams, Michael C. and Neumann, Iver B., "From Alliance to Security Community: NATO, Russia and the Power of Identity", *Millennium*, Vol.29, No.2, pp. 357-387.

<sup>4</sup> In the preamble of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, the signatory parties declare themselves "determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded upon principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law".

<sup>5</sup> Williams, Michael C. and Neumann, Iver B, see note 3.

<sup>6</sup> The Alliance's Strategic Concept, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>, paragraph 20.

<sup>1</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard* (in Greek), Livani ABE – "Nea Synora" 1998, p. 132

<sup>2</sup> Hunter, Robert E., "Solving Russia: Final Piece in NATO's Puzzle", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.1, Winter 2000, p.116-7.

need to be addressed by NATO, in order to minimize the possibility of endangering NATO security.

The NATO members express serious concerns over a number of issues that have the potential to affect negatively Euro-Atlantic security. The war in the Balkans and the turmoil in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the latter wasn't envisaged at the time of the elaboration of the Concept but it clearly represents such a threat) serve as an example of the regional instabilities, such as ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes and the dissolution of states, that are mentioned in paragraph 20. The fear of those instabilities spilling over to neighbouring countries, including NATO countries, needs to be allayed.

Furthermore, the powerful nuclear forces outside the Alliance and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose a very serious threat that must be countered.<sup>7</sup> It needs to be clear that the United States is not referring to Russia, when it talks about external nuclear threat, because both parties have signed legally binding treaties regulating the denuclearisation regime. What NATO leaders have in mind is rogue states like Iran and North Korea. It is this concern that is urging the Bush Administration to promote the Missile Defence program, as it is confessed by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.<sup>8</sup> Russia strongly opposes U.S. plans, as they constitute a violation of the 1972 ABM Treaty, but the Russian president has stated that his country is committed to using diplomatic means and consultation with The United States for a mutually acceptable solution.<sup>9</sup>

It is evident that NATO's existence has not been rendered obsolete with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. NATO has successfully transformed, adapting to the new strategic environment, preserving however its principal role as the core security organization in the Euro-Atlantic region. This development may not assuage Russian apprehension over the future of her relationship with the Alliance, but it is a decisive step toward establishing a safer world in which all parties can effectively collaborate for the promotion of peace. Russia is not an adversary but a partner. NATO and Russia need each other for the furtherance of their goals.

Despite the fact that Russia seems to favor a cooperative stance toward NATO, there are several reasons why she will vehemently oppose further NATO enlargement or will only grudgingly acquiesce to such an eventuality.

The first reason has to do with the bitter disillusionment of the Russians when the West breached the informal contract it had made with them over German reunification back in 1990. During consultations between the USSR (back then) and the West at the time of the reunification of Germany, the two parties had reached a reciprocal understanding according to which unification would preclude further enlargement of the Alliance to the east. The USSR would allow a unified Germany into NATO and would proceed with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, if and only if the West on the one hand recognized that the Soviet Union had interests in the Central European countries and on the other

hand committed to not extending its military presence into those countries.

The Bosnian crisis provided Russia with another reason for being skeptical about NATO expansion. NATO launched a series of air strikes on the Bosnian Serbs, without ever consulting with Russia. This course of action frustrated Russia primarily because she considered there was no U.N. mandate for such action, which rendered it illegitimate. The United States dismissed this argument, evoking a Resolution of the Security Council that Russia had naturally consented to. Russia retorted that the Resolution permitted to ask NATO for military support solely for the security of the evacuation of the UN peacekeeping forces in case where such a necessity would arise or in order to observe the no-fly zone regime in the region of Sarajevo. The Russian view was, and still remains, that the NATO-led operation against Bosnian Serbs provided conclusive evidence that the Alliance was moving from its purely defensive character to a more aggressive one.

NATO's intervention in Kosovo in March 1999 exacerbated Russian suspicions about the nature of the new NATO. This came almost two years after the Founding Act between NATO and Russia had been signed. The Founding Act had established what seemed to be an effective mechanism for consultations between the two parties, the Permanent Joint Council. Again, when it came to handling a crisis, such as the one in Kosovo, the consultative body was brushed aside, and unilateral action was taken by NATO. This time around the UN had not been consulted at all beforehand and, as a consequence, the operation lacked any explicit support from the international community. Russia took this to be a direct intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign country. The shock was great, since this precedent might serve as an excuse for a possible future intervention of the Alliance within the border of the Soviet Union, or even Russia herself, should it be deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

The abovementioned series of events led the Russian leaders to the conclusion that NATO was not a trustworthy partner. It also made them very suspicious of NATO's intentions regarding Russia and its interests. It was only natural for Russia to assume that NATO expansion was nothing more than an attempt on the part of the Alliance to consolidate its victory in the Cold War, assert its supremacy and pursue a cold-war policy of containment and marginalization of Russia. The West's vehement opposition to Russia obtaining a veto over NATO decision-making processes in the framework of the Founding Act left the Russians with a bitter feeling that their cooperation and consent were welcome as long as they went along with American plans and decisions but were simply neglected when they were challenging American initiatives, all the more so when the fora where Russia has a veto, such as the UN and the OSCE were being progressively disregarded by the American leadership.

<sup>7</sup> The Alliance's Strategic Concept, par. 21-22.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda, Vol.6, No.1, March 2001, pp. 12-15

<sup>9</sup> Stated on an interview in CNN, on 14 June 2001

The relationship between NATO and the Soviet Union during the Cold War rested on the premise that the two adversaries were enemies and thus had conflicting interests on practically every issue. If one party scored any winning points in the international field, the other one would most certainly stand to lose. It would be naïve to assume that, the Cold War being over, the old enemies would somehow delete their past experiences and agree on every topic on the international agenda. This however, does not necessarily mean that their relationship is by definition a “zero-sum game”. Both parties have a lot to gain if they join forces to fend off common threats and promote common interests.

NATO sees a menace in Islamic terrorism. In connection therewith, it is also very concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Southern part of Russia's border. It should be said that this, as well as organized crime and drug trafficking, represent some of the principal risks that the Alliance sees itself facing in the new security environment. Russia shares these worries. The West has every interest in supporting Russian attempts to reduce the role of organized crime in the region, block narcotics trafficking out of Afghanistan and Central Asia, and contain the rise of an aggressive politicized Islam.<sup>10</sup> A mutual understanding between the two parties over these issues would help set up a common strategy for the eradication of the problems and provide the global community with invaluable services.

The arms control agenda provides perhaps for the most compelling argument in favor of a close relationship between the Alliance and Russia. The United States, the leading NATO member, and Russia have signed bilateral agreements that regulate the arms control regime. At the moment there is considerable friction in the relationship, because Russia is objecting to the United States initiative of promoting a large-scale missile defense program and to the relative declaration of the American leadership that the 1972 ABM Treaty is out of date, being a product of the Cold War agreed to by two parties one of which has ceased to exist.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the above, NATO needs a strong Russia for the sake of European security. In both the Bosnian and the Kosovo crises it was evident that Russian diplomacy played a crucial role for the quicker resolution of the conflict. Particularly in Kosovo, when Milosevic realized that he could not depend on Russia to find a way out of the war, he finally agreed to meet NATO's conditions and the war was over.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, it becomes apparent that Russian involvement is conducive to stability in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

#### IV. NATO'S EXPANSION INTO EASTERN EUROPE AND RUSSIA'S PROBLEMS

In the case of Eastern Europe, incorporation into the NATO community has been generally beneficial. The countries that formerly participated in the Warsaw Pact had been left in poor shape after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. NATO, however, became a pioneer in integrating the former Warsaw Pact countries into the fabric of modern Europe. Integration was implemented through “Individual Partnership Action Plans,” which set forth standards that had to be met for a country to be admitted into NATO.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars argue the standards stipulated in these action plans gave several Eastern European countries sufficient incentive to improve the conditions within their territory. By forcing aspiring non-member states to adhere to its high standards, NATO essentially facilitated the modernization of much of Eastern Europe.

Similar techniques have been applied in attempts to modernize the Balkans. Conflict had perpetually plagued that region of Europe following the disintegration of the Republic of Yugoslavia. So dire was the situation in the Balkans that NATO was compelled to intervene twice there in its history (during the Bosnian War and the crisis in Kosovo).<sup>14</sup> After hostilities declined and conditions were somewhat stabilized, NATO put into place the same standards for admission as it did in Eastern Europe. Here, too, NATO has acted as a recognizable modernizing force.

In both the Balkans and Eastern Europe, NATO is striving to rehabilitate and integrate formerly oppressed or embattled states into the “community of common values.” Through its policy of openness and reconciliation, NATO has catalyzed the transition to a modern, democratic state for many of the nations in both of these regions. The successful completion of this transition permits these infant states to interact peacefully and productively with the other countries of Western Europe in the post-Cold War era. As it proceeds with this process of European consolidation, NATO once again demonstrates its prominent role in a Soviet-free political landscape.

Russia and NATO however, are not likely to have coinciding views on the policy to be followed regarding the Baltic States and Ukraine. Russia is strongly opposed to the any of the Baltic States acceding to the Alliance.

The Baltic countries are of utmost strategic importance to Russia. Russia considers that, should those countries become NATO members, her access to the Baltic Sea would be closed off, or, at best, controlled by NATO. Additionally, the strategically important enclave of Kaliningrad, which already shares borders with NATO member Poland would become a part of Russian territory surrounded exclusively by NATO countries. In the Founding Act signed between Russia and NATO, the latter explicitly stated that it has no

<sup>10</sup> R. Craig, Nation, “Beyond the Cold War: Change and Continuity in U.S. – Russian Relations”, *The United States and Russia into the 21st Century*, United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, October 1997, and Michael McFaul, “American Policy Towards Russia: Framework for Analysis and Guide to Action”, *The United States and Russia into the 21st Century*, United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, October 1997, October 1997, pp. 28-29; Lieven, Anatol, “Ham-Fisted Hegemon: The Clinton administration and Russia”, *Current History*, October 1999, p.315.

<sup>11</sup> Senator (R) Jesse Helms, *Setting the U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda*, in U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda, Vol.6, No.1, March 2001, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Hunter, Robert E., “Solving Russia: Final Piece in NATO's Puzzle”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.1, Winter 2000, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Misra, Neil, “The Relevance of NATO in the Modern World”, *Journal of International Relations*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Robert E Hunter, “Maximizing NATO: A Relevant Alliance Knows How to Reach”, *Foreign Affairs*, New York, Vol. 78, Issue 3, May/June 1999, pp.199-200.

intention or reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, nor does it foresee any future need to do so. From the wording of the Act and from its political, rather than legally binding nature, it can be concluded that there is no guarantee that NATO will stick to this policy indefinitely, should it feel in the future that the security situation has altered. Russia has bitter memories from the early days of the “honeymoon period” with the West, when the commitment made about non-expansion of the Alliance to the East was subsequently reneged upon. On top of that, there is the issue of hundreds of thousands of Russian nationals living in the Baltic States (in Latvia they represent one third of the population), which Russia feels are discriminated against. Baltic leaders hostility towards Russia and their anxiety to join NATO exacerbate Russian concerns about the situation.

Ukraine is another thorny issue in the relations between Russian and NATO. Of the former Soviet Republics Ukraine is by far the most strategically significant<sup>15</sup> mainly because of its nuclear arsenal. It is said that a Russia that manages to control Ukraine, is automatically a great European power. Without Ukraine, Russia remains isolated in the corner of Europe. Apart from its nuclear arsenal and its geographical proximity to the heart of Central Europe, Ukraine’s position gives it the possibility to control the Crimean littoral and the Black Sea Fleet, vitally important for Russia. It is therefore apparent that Ukraine’s status and its prospect of being introduced into the Euro-Atlantic family gravely concerns Russia.

Russia only grudgingly accepted Ukrainian independence. There are those who believe that Ukraine should be reunited with motherland Russia. This is enforced by the fact that the country is totally dependent on Russia economically, particularly for fuel<sup>16</sup> and for the operation and maintenance of its nuclear plants. On the other hand, politics is ridden with corruption, while the nationalistic movement is quite fervent. This is a reason for concern, since there are a lot of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine, whose fate depends heavily on the fate of the Ukrainian state and its relation with neighboring Russia. Russia wishes to have a firm hand on Ukraine, keeping it under her influence for all the above mentioned reasons.

NATO’s policy on this issue might clash with Russian interests at first sight, but if one takes a more attentive look, one could come to the conclusion that some common ground may be found. NATO has supported Ukrainian independence and will continue to do so. It is in its interest to have a strong Ukraine<sup>17</sup>, to prevent Russia from getting imperialistic ideas that would detract her from the path towards cooperation with the West. For independence to be sustainable, however, the state must become economically viable, and the West recognizes that this can only be achieved through economic interaction with Russia. Severing the ties with Russia would result in total economic chaos for Ukraine. Apart from that, the West favors Russian

control over the Ukrainian nuclear arsenal, since Ukraine itself is incapable of ensuring its safe management and guaranteeing that there will be no leakage of nuclear technology to other states. Ukraine’s non-nuclear status is critical for both Russia and NATO.

Russia realizes that that she no longer possesses the superpower status she did during the Cold War era. Though she remains a great nuclear force, the sole state capable of destroying the United States, in economic terms she can by no means compete with America. If there ever was an official Russian policy of reinstating Russia to its past great power grandeur, it must be presumed replaced by a more pragmatic one, professing the creation of a multi-polar world, where there exist different power centers that can mitigate the effects of American hegemony and thus alleviate Russian concerns about American domination in international politics.

When Primakov became Foreign Minister in the beginning of 1996 many thought that Russian diplomacy would work toward the emergence of a strong coalition around the axis of Russia, Iran and China, as a counterweight to American hegemony. Relations between Moscow and Beijing have become tighter since President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Li Peng exchanged visits to each other’s countries back in 1996. President Putin has already met with Chinese and Iranian officials. He had made advances to Iran for the joint exploitation of the Caspian oil and has offered an arms sale agreement.

Despite good relations, it should not be assumed that Russia is considering a strategic alliance with China and / or Iran to be a realistic option.<sup>18</sup> First of all, such an alliance clearly has an anti-American and anti-NATO orientation, since there are no palpable common interests justifying its existence. Such an eventuality would lead to tension in relations with the West and consequently seriously jeopardize all involved countries’ prospects of gaining access to western capital and technology, which they so badly need. Russia is by no means giving up on the West. As a consequence, Russia’s efforts to approach those countries should only be seen as a desire to establish a form of collaboration not only with the West but also with many other partners. This way, Russia hopes that alternative centers of power can be formed without endangering her status as a privileged partner of the West.

One of Moscow’s primary foreign policy objectives is to avoid at all costs any new division lines in international relations, particularly in Europe. Apart from the issue of NATO expansion, Russia is worried about a growing tendency to categorize civilizations into different groups that are, by dint of their inherent characteristics or political-historical experiences, somehow destined to clash with one another. Such an example is offered by the West’s perception of the Islamic world as being negatively predisposed to “western civilization”. This perception is generated by the terrorist activities of some extremist Islamic groups. It is a fact that the United States views Islamic fundamentalism as the most alarming threat that will

<sup>15</sup> Mead, Walter Russell, “No Cold War Two The United States and the Russian Federation”, *European Security*, Vol.11, No.2, Summer 1994, p. 8-10.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Brusstar, James H., “Russian Vital Interests and Western Security”, *Orbis*, Fall 1994, p.616.

<sup>18</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew, see Note 2.

be faced in the years to come.

Another goal of Russian diplomacy is the coordination of the international community in a number of fields such as the settlement of conflicts, the advancement of arms reduction dialogue and the transition to a new security system that will take account of the profound changes that have occurred within the last decade. Russia claims for herself a special role in conflict resolution on the basis of her great power status. This is one of the reasons for Russian participation in the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and later the KFOR in Kosovo. Russia had a national interest in engaging herself militarily in those regions, albeit under indirect NATO command, which consisted in asserting her presence in Europe and having a say in European security. Russia's role in ending the conflict in Kosovo was crucial. It is widely accepted that when it had become apparent that Russia was not going to stand by Yugoslavia, the Milosevic regime felt constrained to give in to NATO demands<sup>19</sup>, as it found itself internationally isolated.

Russia's favorite foreign policy objective has been the effort to elevate the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the status of a coordinating mechanism of all other security organizations operating in the continent. The argument is that OSCE is the only forum with a truly pan-European character, since it gathers all European states, as well as North America and Russia, hence it is the only one that has the legitimacy to shape the new security environment, now that the division into opposing blocs is no more. According to the Russian plan, all other organizations dealing with security issues – NATO, the UN, the European Council, the Western European Union and even the Commonwealth of Independent States should be subordinated to the OSCE. This new security system envisaged by Moscow would serve another purpose dear to Russia: undermine NATO's role as the core security organization in Europe. The Alliance never agreed with this plan. Taking into consideration the new security environment in Europe and the world, NATO has transformed itself, adopting a new security concept in April 1999 to reflect those changes, but it has unequivocally stated that it will remain at the forefront of security developments. As a consequence, Russia has for the time being abandoned the project.

In connection to the above, Russia would wish to see a halt in the NATO expansion process, especially where it concerns the Baltic States and Ukraine. Despite the military collaboration between the two parties in the Bosnian and Kosovo forces and despite the institutionalization of consultation on security issues in the framework of the Founding Act, both parties have yet to completely trust each other. Thus Russia, in her heart of hearts, continues to regard the enlargement of the Alliance as a move compromising her national interests and will keep on resisting it.

The end of the Cold War and, consequently, the absence of the Soviet threat, did not render NATO obsolete. On the contrary, it can be said that the challenges that have emerged

in the new security environment call for a continuing presence of a strong military organization to ensure enduring peace and stability. The risks that the world must face today are connected primarily with proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility of a rogue state or even a non-state entity acquiring such weapons and attacking the United States and its allies. International terrorism represents a growing concern to the western world, while drug trafficking in Asia is rampant.

All these threats are new and NATO has had to take them into consideration when drafting its new strategic Concept in 1999. The Alliance has undergone a transformation, adapting to the new circumstances. It should no longer be seen merely as a military Alliance with a defensive character, but as a political one as well, gathering the nations that share common democratic values and respect for human rights and the rule of law. NATO appears determined, for the first time in its history, to intervene beyond its borders, even militarily, in those cases where atrocities are being committed, as was the case in Yugoslavia, in order to promote peace and stability.

In light of NATO's character as a political forum of democratic nations, expansion to incorporate those states that had authoritatively been excluded from it and pushed into the arms of the Soviet Union seems a logical consequence. Russia however worries about that, as well as the new identity and tasks that NATO has awarded itself. Russia opposes expansion mainly because she fears that the West is trying to isolate her in the corner of Europe, deprive her of her privileged relationship with her former satellites and undermine her national interests. This is why she is so fiercely opposing enlargement to include the Baltic States and Ukraine.

Despite the aforementioned differences, it is almost certain that there won't be any serious tensions in the relations between Russia and NATO. Russia knows that she cannot be too tough with NATO, because militarily and politically, she is rather weak. Russia needs a solid cooperation with the West, not only in matters of common security concerns, but also for the flow of western capital and investment so badly needed in the country. Establishing alliances with other emerging regional powers, such as China or Iran, would upset NATO and jeopardize Russia's chances of consolidating the partnership that has been developed with NATO. Rather, Russia is likely to make overtures to such states in order to counterweight American dominance in the international arena, but will almost definitely not cross the line.

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