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NATO EXPANSION: POLAND, HUNGARY, AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC'S QUEST FOR MEMBERSHIP, AND THE PERCEIVED THREAT TO RUSSIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

by

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Abstract

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace (PFP) initiative was unveiled at the January 1994 NATO summit at Brussels, Belgium. PFP contained, in part, the Alliance's response to the challenge since the end of the Cold War whether, when, and how to expand eastwards. Twenty-seven countries, including Russia, have formally taken up NATO's open-ended offer of closer political and military cooperation. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have been the loudest in expressing their desire for full NATO membership. With the end of the Cold War, Russia has lost the hegemony it won over East Central Europe in 1945, an objective deeply rooted in Russian history, and with it the buffer it deemed necessary for its protection. Many in Russia have voiced their intentions to ensure this region remains within the country's sphere of influence and are vehemently opposed to NATO expansion.

This paper proposes that NATO expansion into East Central Europe is ill advised at this pivotal period in Russian history, and should be delayed until the Russian economy and democratic government become more stable. It also argues that the prospects for long-term political and economic stability in East Central Europe rests not with NATO, but in the European Union (EU). Following an in-depth analysis of Russian and East Central European history in conjunction with a comprehensive review of the current literature on NATO expansion, this study concludes that admitting Poland, Hungary, and

the Czech Republic is fraught with danger. It is likely to foster insecurity, and not the intended enhanced European security framework NATO seeks. NATO expansion in the region also might precipitate Russian's estrangement and the redivision of Europe into two competitive spheres, the same divisions it spent four decades trying to erase. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations how the West should address the complex challenge of fostering democracy in Russia and aiding its emerging market economy without antagonizing its insecurities by a premature push towards NATO expansion.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Bill Mauldin, the nationally syndicated political cartoonist, drew a cartoon during World War II of his famed G.I.s, Willie and Joe. While trying to get some sleep in a French barn, Willie and Joe are disturbed by a nocturnally roaming rat. Willie is depicted as holding a flashlight on the rodent as Joe bears down on it with his .45 caliber pistol. The cartoon's caption reads: "Aim between th' eyes, Joe. Sometimes they charge when they're wounded."[1] Perhaps an analogy can be drawn between Mauldin's wounded rat and Russia today. Many Russians see their country being driven into an aggrieved corner while struggling economically, defending a fledgling democratic process against assaults by ultranationalists and communists, and witnessing the prospects of NATO troops being stationed directly on their Western border.

If the United States (US) and NATO were more patient about pressing the issue of NATO expansion and showed more understanding and flexibility with regard to Russian geopolitical interests, it might help preclude neo-communists and nationalists from: (1) using NATO expansion as an example of President Boris Yeltsin's alleged selling out the country to Western interests; (2) resuming the strategic nuclear rivalry with the US; and (3) abandoning the arms control regime. Most critically, the West should appreciate more

fully how Russia's foreign policy is deeply affected by its centuries-old mistrust of the West and its almost paranoid insecurities over its borders.

Notes

[1]Bill Mauldin, *Up Front*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1945, p. 152.

Chapter 2

NATO Expansion in the Post-Cold War Era

Partnership for Peace Espoused as Avenue to NATO Membership

NATO was formed against the backdrop of emerging post-World War II tensions engendered by the threat of Soviet expansionism and concern over political and economic instability in Western Europe. On April 4, 1949, in Washington, D.C., the foreign ministers of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, and US signed the North Atlantic Treaty, the political framework for an international alliance designed to prevent aggression, or, if necessary, to resist attack against any alliance member. In 1952, Greece and Turkey acceded to the Treaty, followed by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955 and by Spain in 1962. Although NATO remains the core of American engagement in Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the progress of European integration subsequently underlined NATO's intention to redefine its objectives in light of changed circumstances. The January 1994 NATO Summit endorsed several of Clinton's proposals to the post-Cold War European security environment, to include strengthening cooperation among the allies, developing relations

with the former Warsaw Pact states, improving NATO's links with other institutions, and addressing threats to security that arise from outside the North Atlantic Treaty area.[1]

The 1994 NATO Summit also launched the PFP, which expands and intensifies practical political and military cooperation between NATO and the former Soviet bloc—as well as some of Europe's traditionally neutral countries—and allows them to consult with NATO in the event of a direct threat to their security. PFP membership neither extends NATO security guarantees nor assures entry into NATO, yet it is touted as the best preparation for states interested in becoming NATO members.[2] In an August 1995 letter to Congressional leaders, Clinton said for those Partners interested in joining NATO, PFP would be the path to membership. He added that ongoing adaptation of Europe's security structures to post-Cold War realities remains one of America's highest foreign policy priorities. "A central element of this adaptation," he wrote, "is the extension of NATO's zone of stability and security to include Europe's emerging democracies."[3]

To date, 27 countries have joined PFP, including Russia. The countries that have been the loudest in expressing their desire for full NATO membership are Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, the so-called Visegrad Four.[4] However, it is the first three who by most accounts appear to be on the "fast-track" towards membership. The label "Visegrad Four" comes from Visegrad, Hungary, where the four nations met in 1991 to pledge regional cooperation.[5]

By most accounts, the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs want NATO membership for the following interacting reasons:

- Enhance their security in the face of what they perceive to be the unstable situation in the successor states of the Soviet Union and in the face of a possible future threat to their independence from Russia itself.
- Enhance their security in other respects. For example, some Poles see it as protection against a possible future German threat, while some Hungarians see NATO membership as strengthening their case in the disputes with neighboring countries over Hungarian minorities.
- Ensure an American military presence, or at least influence, in the region. Many East Central Europeans consider this especially important due to the European debacle in the Balkans.
- Would be an important factor in bringing Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic more into the European, or Western, mainstream. It also would ensure the development of democracy and a market economy.[6]

When former Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev signed up his country to PFP on May 31, 1995, he reiterated firmly his country's objections to NATO expansion into East Central Europe. Clinton reportedly reassured Yeltsin that expansion would not happen rapidly. While twice assuring the Russians that NATO expansion would occur only as "part of an evolutionary process," this pledge was institutionalized in the May 30, 1995, communiqué of the Alliance foreign ministers' meeting in the Netherlands.[7]

President Clinton's Promise of Early NATO Membership

Despite his pledge to Yeltsin, Clinton has raised enormous expectations among East Central European nations that they will be joining NATO very soon. In October 1996, at the height of his re-election bid, Clinton told an audience in Detroit that he would press for the admission of some new NATO members by 1999, NATO's 50th anniversary. As a commentary in *The New York Times* aptly says, "…good politics does not necessarily make good foreign policy." Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic see membership as an insurance policy against any revival of the Russian military power that dominated them for so long; however, expanding NATO is as likely to provoke Moscow's hostility

as it is to deter it.[8] Clinton's enthusiastic support for early NATO expansion may have been prompted in part by Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, who called for a rapid expansion of NATO and accused Clinton of improper delay.[9] Thomas Sowell, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, cites a source that asserts the Clinton administration's foreign policy at the time was re-election. Sowell adds that certainly the same short-run approach that has marked the opportunism of this administration in domestic policy also has been seen in the way it deals with international issues. "Unfortunately," Sowell comments, "short-run policies have serious and even dangerous long-run effects, especially in relations with other nations."[10]

Clinton continues to naively treat Russia's objections to NATO expansion as protestations easily finessed.[11] A commentary in the *Boston Globe* says Clinton was engaging in a bit of election-year bravado when he addressed the question of Russia's reaction to NATO's expansion by saying no country could exercise a veto over the Alliance's plans. Saying that Clinton's setting a deadline for entry could prove to be imprudent, the paper's editorial staff added, "The political future of Russia appears less predictable than ever, and this uncertainty should be a reason for caution, since the ease or difficulty of NATO expansion will be determined by the course of relations among Moscow, NATO and the former Soviet bloc nations."[12]

NATO Expansion and Its Impact on Article 5 Guarantees

Harry G. Summers, Jr., a retired US Army colonel, distinguished fellow of the Army War College, and a nationally syndicated columnist, warns that admitting these East Central European countries into NATO also means extending the most solemn security

guarantee to them. Under the provisions of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, to be a NATO member means that all the other members make a commitment to treat an attack on one as an attack on all. In light of the enormous reductions in NATO's military strength since 1991 and remembering the trouble Congress had in ultimately agreeing to send troops to Bosnia, Summers calls Clinton's pledge to NATO expansion "brave words indeed, but, given military realities, they are at best a bluff."[13]

David Fromkin, Chairman of the International Relations Department at Boston University, is also concerned about NATO expansion and the grave consequences that Article 5 guarantees might levy on Alliance partners. It was in Brussels, Belgium, on December 10, 1996, that NATO formally announced it was going to expand. In July 1997, it will reveal exactly which countries will be the first to be invited to become new members. Others are to be invited later. Fromkin states that the language in Article 5 is dangerous: "The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all…" He calls these "hair-trigger words" that "just fall short of an automatic commitment to go to war." Article 5 was born from the lessons of 1914-1917 and 1939-1941—that the defense not only of the Western Hemisphere but also of Western Europe is among the enduring vital interests of the US. If NATO expansion should go forward and the parties to NATO do not amend the existing treaty, the US would be called upon to defend every contested frontier in, what Fromkin terms, "feud-prone Central, Eastern and Balkan Europe." He adds, "America would be undertaking to go to war to defend distant countries that, while we wish them well, are not vital to our interests." Stressing that this stance should not be viewed as isolationism, Fromkin concludes that the Article 5 commitment was an almost

unique pledge given only to meet an almost unprecedented temporary danger that has now vanished.[14]

Remarkably, more than 170 years ago, John Quincy Adams warned about over zealous involvement in foreign lands not vital to America's national interests. Then the Secretary of State to President James Monroe (1817-1825), Adams said the best response the US could give to those appealing to it for support would be to give them what he called "the benign sympathy of our example." He warned to go further and try to give direct assistance would be to involve ourselves beyond the power of extrication "in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assumed the colors and usurped the standards of freedom."[15]

NATO officials have yet to satisfactorily explain how the Article 5 "tripwire" will be addressed should Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic be admitted to NATO. Clinton continues to seize every opportunity to assure Moscow that it should not feel threatened by NATO expansion while claiming "we are building a new NATO just as they are building a new Russia." He and other Western leaders would be wise to reflect on Russia's history and culture before pressing for premature NATO expansion.[16]

Notes

[1]"Fact Sheets: NATO, Partnership for Peace, OSCE, and NATO Information Sources, *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 6, No. 23, June 5, 1995, pp. 483-484.

[2]Ibid., p. 484.

[3]William J. Clinton, "Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Partnership for Peace," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, Vol. 31, Issue 33, August 21, 1995, p. 1445.

[4]Johnathan Sunley, "Tasks for NATO II: Improve the Partnership for Peace," *The World Today*, Vol. 51, No. 4, April 1995, p. 70.

[5]"The Costs of Expanding the NATO Alliance," *CBO Papers*, March 1996, p. iv.

[6]J. F. Brown, *Hopes and Shadows: Eastern Europe After Communism*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1994, p. 273.

Notes

[7]"Partners in Appeasement," *National Review*, June 26, 1995, p. 22.

[8]"Wrong Time to Expand NATO," *The New York Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 38.

[9]Steven Erlanger, "U.S. Pushes Bigger NATO Despite Qualms on Russia," *The New York Times*, October 10, 1996, p. A16.

[10]Thomas Sowell, "Louder Talk, Little Stick Dangerous," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, November 4, 1996, p. 10A.

[11]Thomas L. Friedman, "NATO backlash coming," *The Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 29, 1996, p. A12.

[12]"Unwise haste on NATO," *Boston Globe*, October 24, 1996, p. 20.

[13]Harry Summers, "Contradictions of NATO enlargement," *Washington Times*, October 31, 1996, p. 21.

[14]David Fromkin, "Hidden Danger in a New NATO, *The New York Times*, December 19, 1996, p. A19.

[15]George F. Kennan, "On American Principles," *Foreign Affairs*, August 1996, p. 68.

[16]"Clinton urges NATO to admit former Soviet nations by 1999," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, October 23, 1996, p. 5A.

Chapter 3

Historical Background

Russia's Long-Held Insecurities Regarding Its Borders

History often teaches that events simply do not occur and then vanish in obscurity. Instead, their legacy is to produce attitudes that are then applied to the future. To the Russian people, their recurrent and prolonged suffering and the long series of invasions and wars they encountered have justified to them an intense suspicion of the outside world. According to Frederick H. Hartmann, Alfred Thayer Mahan Professor Emeritus at the Naval War College, and Robert L. Wendzel, Educational Advisor at the Air War College, Russia's expansion to continental dimensions from the sixteenth century onward came primarily as a response to exterior threats. When the Mongols came, they swept over much of Russia, almost subjugating it. The Tartars sacked and burned Moscow both in 1382 and 1571. Charles XII of Sweden mounted a serious and prolonged invasion in the early 1700s. Next came the French under Napoleon, the Germans in World War I, the Poles after that, and Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht again in World War II. Communism took up where national experience had left off. Hartmann and Wendzel state that under Joseph Stalin, V. I. Lenin's successor in 1924, relations with the West for years were no better, although the rise of Hitler and the growing threat of Germany to the Soviets finally

prompted them to examine the possibility of closer (although temporary) relations with the capitalists.[1] Consequently, Hartmann and Wendzel deduce that Russia's past made it "extremely sensitive to the recurrent threat of invasion and inclined, as a consequence, to dominate their possible invasion routes wherever possible."[2]

Although principally a Latin America expert, Juan M. del Aguila has commented on the influence of a nation's history on its present national security policy. He explains that the past and its interpretation weigh heavily on the minds of policymakers who constantly refer to "lessons" and historical experiences in their foreign policy decisions. Nations that have often been invaded or feel threatened by powerful neighbors "crystallize" the present in terms of historical experiences considered damaging to the nation. "Nationalism and anti-imperialism," he observes, "often shape their foreign policy, and defiance and strategic rebelliousness characterize their behavior."[3]

Col Dennis M. Drew, USAF, Retired, presently assigned at Air University, and Donald M. Snow, an Air War College faculty member, further argue that for Russians of whatever political persuasion, national survival has always been a major concern, and failures to prepare for war have exacted a high price. They point out that the result has been a "Barbarossa complex" (from the code name of the German invasion of 1941) that teaches the Russians they must never again be unprepared for war.[4] Moreover, they add that geography has not been so kind to the Russians. Despite the large Russian land mass, the country is a physically vulnerable place. European Russia is part of the northern European plain that has been a historic east-west invasion route in both directions. Drew and Snow conclude that "if American history suggests that geography is

a buffer against military threat, Russian history equally suggests that geography means a need for vigilance."[5]

John Lewis Gaddis, Distinguished Professor of History and Director of the Contemporary History Institute at Ohio University, takes this concept of space in relation to the Russian perception of security one step further. He says the fact that Russians tend to think of security in terms of space should not be a surprising attitude considering the frequency with which their country has been invaded or the manner in which they have used distance to defeat their enemies. That such a concept might be outmoded in an age of atomic weapons and long-range bombers, Gaddis writes, appears not to have occurred to Stalin. Hitler's defeat brought no alteration in Stalin's determination to control as much territory as possible along the periphery of the Soviet Union. Stalin had always placed the security of the Soviet state above the interests of international communism; it had been the former, not the latter, that had motivated Stalin's expansion into Eastern Europe.[6] This insecurity on the part of Russia was apparent to American leadership early in the Cold War as evidenced by NSC-68. In the introduction to this comprehensive review of US policy toward the Soviet Union conducted by the National Security Council (NSC) in 1950 and largely drafted by Paul H. Nitze, it viewed Soviet expansionism as stemming more from internal insecurities than from ideological compulsions.[7] Finally, the Yugoslav Communist Milovan Djilas once wrote: "He (Stalin) regarded as sure only whatever he held in his fist. Everything beyond the control of his police was a potential enemy."[8]

Others have commented on Russia's incessant need for vigilance against its enemies and the utility of relying on geographical space as an indispensable form of defense in

depth. Some historians believe that neither the West nor the Soviet Union alone bears the onus for the Cold War because Stalin pursued traditional Russian national security goals in Eastern Europe.[9] It was the insightful Alexis de Tocqueville who commented in 1835 in his classic *Democracy in America*: "The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russians are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the Americans are therefore gained by the plowshares; those of the Russians by the sword."[10]

Moreover, Michael Kutuzov, one of Russia's great nineteenth century heroes, was most noted for his careful strategic retreat in the face of Napoleon's invading army, a retreat that ultimately included the abandonment and burning of Moscow. Nicholas I described it in the following terms: "Russia is a power mighty and fortunate in its own right; it will never be a threat to its neighbors or to Europe. However, its defensive position must be so impressive as to make any attack impossible."[11] In the years immediately after the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 revolution, the Russian High Command chose a strategy of the strategic defensive that called for abandoning much of Poland and establishing a defensive line further to the east that would not be threatened from either the northern or southern flanks. This was consistent with reality and with some of the ideas of the "national school," which recognized defense in depth as part of the Russian tradition. Only between 1910 and 1914, after Russia's alliance with France became closer and fear of the Germans grew, did it adopt a plan of strategic offensive action as urged by Gen Mikhail Alekseev, commander of the important Kiev Military District in 1914. Ultimately, Russia would take the offensive only to experience a

disastrous defeat at the hands of Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff at Tannenberg.[12]

Geopolitical Issues Impacting Russian Perceptions of the West

As discussed above, the legacy of Russia's relations with its neighbors has been unstable and marked by almost constant conflict. According to S. Neil MacFarlane, Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University (United Kingdom) and Coordinator of the Post-Soviet Studies Programme at the University's Centre for International Relations, this instability stems from four principal geographical problems. The first is size. In terms of power potential, Russia—even with the loss of its former possessions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union—dwarfs all other European nations in territory, population, and, perhaps, economic potential. MacFarlane writes that Russia's historical challenge has been the efficient marshaling of its vast resources. Even taking these difficulties into account, the wealth of resources available have made Russia a continual preoccupation of Central and North European states at least since the Northern Wars of Ivan IV in the sixteenth century. Secondly, MacFarlane points to Russia lacking, for much of its history, clearly defined physical frontiers in both the East and the West. Having suffered repeatedly for this deficiency, he says Russia has tended to expand outward towards defensible frontiers in an effort to control unstable and threatening peripheries. Although expansion created new peripheries, it also continued the problem.[13]

MacFarlane cites a third geographical problem for Russia. The middle ground between it and the European powers has generally been occupied by small and weak

states or by people who have not organized politically. This weakness tempted stronger nations further west, thereby providing Russia with the incentive to expand preemptively. MacFarlane points out that expansion was easy because Central and East European states traditionally found it difficult to defend themselves against Russia. "The history of Russian expansion in Europe from the sixteenth to the twentieth century," he continues, "has been written at the expense of these weakly consolidated communities."[14] Lastly, Russia is geographically and, by its own account, culturally and politically caught between Europe and Asia. As a result, it has never felt that it belonged completely to either.[15]

These four geographical circumstances have led to extremely troubled relations between Russia and Europe. Historically, MacFarlane argues that there have been three geopolitically distinct, yet related, dimensions to Russian expansion in Europe: (1) the effort to secure and retain access to the Baltic littoral, which brought Russia into conflict with Sweden and Poland; (2) expansion into Ukraine and Poland; and (3) expansion southward and south-westward at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and, later, in competition with Austria-Hungary as the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Further explaining that Russian expansion is generally recognized to have played a significant role in starting two of the four major European wars of the past century and a half, MacFarlane writes: "Russian pressure on Turkey sparked the Crimean War, and Russo-Austrian competition in the Balkans—in conjunction with the challenge posed by Slavic minorities to the integrity of Austria-Hungary—was one factor inducing the Hapsburg dynasty to go to war with Serbia in 1914. In addition, German concerns about the growth of Russian power

and the consequent erosion of the German position in East-Central Europe favoured preventive war in 1914."[16]

The hostility between Russia and Western Europe since 1917 is often attributed to the Bolshevik Revolution and to the resulting Western response. Yet, had the revolution not occurred, MacFarlane insists that geography and power, not to mention culture, would have made Russian relations with Western and Central Europe troubled in any case. The Bolshevik Revolution and the Cold War have now passed, but these structural geopolitical factors remain.[17]

Russia's Cultural Influence on Foreign Policy

In order to understand more fully the development of Russian foreign policy towards the West and its desire for buffer states, one must also appreciate the influence of Russian culture. There are those who point to Russia's historical "backwardness" and argue that many Russians have traditionally perceived themselves to be behind the West in important areas. This sense of backwardness has tended to isolate Russia while fostering a sense of ambivalence. MacFarlane, for example, says there was always a recognition in Russia that it lagged behind the West in technology and that it needed Western technology in order to modernize. This interest in drawing from the West extended through the czarist period and into the Bolshevik era. It was also reflected in the substantial role played by imported Western technology in the New Economic Policy, the First Five-Year Plan, and periods of détente.[18]

MacFarlane adds that the creation of the Foreign or German Quarter in the reign of Aleksei in 1652, in part from the desire to "eject foreigners and their contaminating

influences from the heart of (Moscow)," demonstrates Russian ambivalence about its relationship with the West. He says it reflects a sense that Western influence is deeply corruptive of the Russian character and culture, that Western Catholicism and later materialism, if permitted to spread unchecked, would pollute Russian idealism and Orthodoxy and perhaps eventually destroy the Russian state. Even Peter the Great and Catherine II, who were avid supporters of westernization, were sensitive to the need of controlling and limiting the cultural and political impact of European penetration. For example, one of the petitions of the *strel'tsy* rebels in 1698 expressed the concern that beard-shaving, tobacco-smoking Germans would come to Moscow to overthrow Orthodoxy. Similar concern was also evident during the Soviet period as evidenced by the trials of foreign specialists for espionage in the early 1930s, by the anti-cosmopolitan campaign following World War II, and by the campaign against dissidents associated with détente.[19]

In short, MacFarlane stresses that there is a deep ambivalence in Russian history and culture with regard to intrusions by the West. Whereas many Russians were attracted by Western values and culture and saw Russia's backwardness as repulsive, he also explains: "Yet, Russian culture also displayed a sense of striking uniqueness from the West and a fear of being inundated and destroyed by Western cultural influences. At times, this has produced a strong anti-European xenophobia. The attitudes of the Bolsheviks reinforced this facet of Russian political culture. Although the communist regime in Moscow collapsed in 1991, there is no reason to believe that all of its political and cultural legacies have been swept away."[20]

Thomas J. McCormick, Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin (Madison), agrees with MacFarlane's assessment of Russia's historic ambivalence towards the West. Imperial czars often tried to nullify the consequences of Russian backwardness by attempting to insulate Russia from more modern Europe. At other times, he opines, Russian leaders self-consciously opted for closer ties to the West, "either out of military necessity (the Napoleonic Wars, for example) or out of nascent modernization impulses, borrowing from the West (capital and technology) in order to catch up with the West."[21] McCormick adds: "In effect, pre-Revolutionary Russia vacillated between contrary impulses to isolate itself from or integrate itself into the world-system. And the system itself reacted with equal ambivalence. Modernizing Russia as part of the system looked to be a profitable undertaking, but Russian size and military power made it a risky one."[22]

Soviet Hegemony Over East Central Europe

Russia historically evolved as an empire, fueled by migration and colonization both eastward and westward. Successive invasions of the country through the centuries not only made Russians mistrustful of the world-system, it also often inspired attempts to insulate themselves by acquiring new territory to serve as a buffer against Western encroachment, both physically and intellectually. Not surprisingly, in early February 1945 at the week-long Yalta Conference, Stalin was able to secure from President Franklin Roosevelt in a compromise agreement his tacit agreement that East Central Europe was within Russia's sphere of influence. Hence, Soviet leaders were quick to solidify their occupation of the region for they feared that historic hostilities and pro-

Western economic ties would ultimately produce governments that were not only anti-Communist but anti-Russian.[23] For example, Poland was vitally important to Russian security, being historically the natural invasion route from the West. There was strong Anglo-American displeasure at Russian efforts to install a procommunist government in Poland and to move its boundaries westward, at Germany's expense and to Russia's gain.[24] Although Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's confidante, hailed the Yalta system as "the dawn of a new day" and "the first great victory of the war," subsequent critics would lambaste it as a sell-out of Poland and East Central Europe.[25]

The American nuclear attack on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, furthered reinforced Russia's security fears, strengthened its disposition to control its East Central European buffer zone more tightly, and led Soviet leaders to create a crash atomic bomb project of their own.[26] McCormick alleges that the superficial nature of America's East Central European policies made them more a nuisance than a threat to Soviet regional interests. In Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, the Iron Curtain descended harshly and rapidly in 1945-1946. Elsewhere in East Central Europe the Russians operated in more cautious ways. In Hungary, he points out, they accepted a conservative rout of the communist party at the polls and peaceful relations with a noncommunist government until the spring of 1947, after the Cold War had begun. McCormick adds, "In Czechoslovakia they lived with a coalition government dominated by independent, democratic socialists until 1948 when a domestic crisis, partly generated by America's Marshall Plan, led to a communist takeover."[27]

Don Cook, formerly the Paris and London correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* and subsequently for the *Los Angeles Times*, asserts that Russia's post-1945

intrusion into East Central Europe had its roots in and followed a logic of Russian history. He says Soviet communism and modern military power simply added a new and terrifying dimension to traditional aims of czarist expansionism going back three centuries. Ideology had changed, but historic policies had not. Cook writes, "To restore czarist gains and secure Russia's frontiers at the expense of Eastern Europe once again was Stalin's minimum objective, and Communism had little to do with that except in terms of method."[28] Consequently, it is perhaps not so surprising when one compares the newly expanded boundaries of the Soviet Union that Winston Churchill described in his "Iron Curtain" speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in November 1945 ("From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.") to those noted by Karl Marx a century earlier (April 1853): "Having come this far on the way to universal empire, is it probable that this gigantic and swollen power will pause in its career?…The broken and undulating Western Frontier of the Empire, ill-defined in respect of natural boundaries, would call for rectification; and it would appear that the natural frontier of Russia runs from Danzig, or perhaps Stettin to Trieste."[29]

Notes

[1]Frederick H. Hartmann and Robert L. Wendzel, *America's Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, New York, Harper Collins College Publishers, 1994, pp. 204-205.

[2]Ibid., p. 342.

[3]Juan M. del Aguila, "Cuba Adapts to a Brave New World," *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1996, pp. 81-82.

[4]Col Dennis M. Drew, USAF, and Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems*, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, Air University Press, August 1988, p. 58.

[5]Ibid., p. 59.

[6]John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States: An Interpretive History*, New York, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990, p. 177.

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[9]Melbyn Dubofsky, et al., *The United States in the Twentieth Century*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978, p. 328.

[10]Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance: The Birth of the NATO Treaty and the Dramatic Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy Between 1945 and 1950*, New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989, p. 48.

[11]Peter Paret, Ed, *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 359-360.

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[13]S. Neil MacFarlane, "Russia, the West and European Security," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Autumn 1993, p. 5.

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[15]Ibid., p. 5.

[16]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[17]Ibid., p. 6.

[18]Ibid., p. 6.

[19]Ibid., p. 6.

[20]Ibid., p. 7.

[21]Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War*, Baltimore, Maryland, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, p. 60.

[22]Ibid., p. 60.

[23]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[24]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[25]Ibid., p. 40.

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[27]Ibid., pp. 64-65.

[28]Cook, pp. 47-48.

[29]Ibid., p. 54.

Chapter 4

Russia Perceives NATO Expansion as Threat

Lost Empire Damaging to Russian Prestige

Russia is currently struggling to find a new international role for itself. Today Russia appears to be but a pale shadow of its powerful and influential predecessor. Despite having inherited a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council and its ongoing efforts to find a new network of relations with NATO, the EU, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Russia has yet to establish itself as a leading player in the UN. With Yeltsin in the Kremlin, Alexei Pushkov, Deputy Editor in Chief of the *Moscow News*, writes that more than 70 years of geostrategic heritage was suddenly dropped in favor of a partnership with the West. He says the feeling of humiliation due to "losing" the Cold War and suddenly being relegated to the status of poor distant cousin of the wealthy US and Western Europe was further compounded by the loss of lands that had constituted the former Soviet Union and that millions of Russians considered as their own. "It is virtually impossible, however," he explains, "to assess the full extent of the shock to the Russian psyche produced by this geopolitical avalanche. What made this process—which might seem 'normal' and 'logical' to an outsider—so painful for the average Russian was its extreme abruptness."[1]

Moreover, as one observer comments, Russia's initial response to its loss of empire was to show that it still had military muscle and the will to use it. Russian saber-rattling against the Baltic states and the Ukraine, military interventions in Moldova, Georgia and Central Asia, and the war in Chechnya reflected the fact that Yeltsin and others were seeking credibility through very traditional conceptions of the uses of state power.[2]

Michael Mandelbaum, Professor of American Foreign Policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, also has commented that the threat to Russia's newly gained independence stems from Russia's lost status as a great power. The question Russia's worried neighbors now ask is not whether but when it will be strong enough to revive its imperial ambitions. He says the West should remember that the 1995 legislative elections produced a Duma packed with strong opponents of democratic reform. "Old-fashioned communists and their allies—agrarians and communists parading as independents—obtained a majority of the seats," he points out. Furthermore, Mandelbaum says trend lines of post-communist public opinion point to rapidly growing majorities rejecting Western-style democratic politics. The highly regarded Euro-barometer public opinion survey conducted for the EU in 1994 showed a stunning 83 percent of the Russians polled indicating that they were not satisfied with the way democracy was developing.[3] Jonathan Dean, a former US arms control ambassador, believes that in Russia NATO expansion is the functional equivalent of Versailles, evidence to many of the West's hostile aims. He states, "Western nations—especially the United States—are being transmuted, step-by-step, into the deliberate authors of Russia's abject misery."[4]

Like Mandelbaum, Edward D. Mansfield, Associate Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, recognizes the growing threat to democracy posed by Yeltsin's opponents. He, too, advocates a need to help Russia on the road to democratization by taking positive actions to support this progress. He says the "roulette wheel" is already spinning for Russia, and Washington and the international community need to think not so much about encouraging or discouraging democratization as about helping to smooth the transition in ways that minimize its risks.[5] Mansfield adds that in "today's 'Weimar Russia,' voters disgruntled by economic distress backed belligerent nationalists like (Vladimir) Zhirinovsky, put ostensible liberals like President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on the defensive on ethnic and foreign policy issues, and contributed to the climate that led to war in Chechnya."[6]

Zhirinovsky, Chairman of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party, offers to many Russians a kind of "touchstone" for their deepest yearnings and frustrations. Unlike in the West where many dismiss him as a buffoon, Zhirinovsky has earned a large, faithful group of followers including military officers, well-groomed young men from the new commercial classes, and middle-age, postcommunist *apparatchiks*. He has threatened to restore Russia's imperial borders, annex Alaska, invade Turkey, repartition Poland, give Germany "another Chernobyl," turn Kazakhstan into "scorched desert," and employ large fans to blow radioactive waste across the Baltics.[7]

The recently ousted Russian defense minister, the quick-witted and blunt-tongued Lt Gen Aleksandr I. Lebed, also has become a symbol of brusque, heroic Russian nationalism. In private meetings with NATO officials, his stance against NATO expansion was hard edged. He told them that NATO should "wait a generation" before

expanding.[8] Lebed also believes Russia's new borders are arbitrary and will not last, and deplores the manner in which the Russians withdrew from Germany and the Baltic states.[9] While Yeltsin battled pneumonia in January of this year, Lebed declared his desire to be Russia's new leader. "I want to become president and I will," said Lebed, whose ambition for power prompted Yeltsin to fire him as national security advisor in the fall of 1996. Yeltsin's heart bypass surgery on November 5, 1996, and subsequent pneumonia have sidelined him for much of his time in office since being re-elected for a four-year term in August 1996. Since his ouster, Lebed has called Yeltsin an "old, sick man" who should resign for the good of Russia. Lebed has formed a political party and has predicted that Yeltsin's "poor health" could mean a presidential election in the near future. He also has claimed that he would be ready for that election, boasting he had $250 million in his campaign war chest.[10]

NATO Expansion Could Prompt Unwanted Russian Responses

The prospect of NATO expansion by admitting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic is certain to further generate frustration, suspicion, and even anger in Moscow. Having warned the former Warsaw Pact countries and the former Soviet republics against joining NATO, Moscow argues that Russian nationalists would interpret such a step as a provocative attempt to encircle Russia. Russia has been increasingly insistent that it be treated by its former enemies and its neighbors as the region's great power. Vladimir P. Lukin, a former ambassador to Washington who heads the foreign affairs committee in the Duma, likens the NATO plan to submitting to rape. Sergei Karaganov, Deputy Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe and a member of the

Presidential Council, states that, while Polish, Hungarian, or Czech membership in NATO would not pose an immediate military threat to Russia, it would cause Russia political and psychological problems. He says such an expansion of NATO would spark a reaction from among the military elite, whose influence over Russian society is growing. It might also enrage other political groups, not just those counted among the intransigent opposition.[11]

The "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," worked out by the Russian Foreign Ministry and which lays down the basic principles of Russia's future foreign policy, states that Eastern Europe "retains its significance for Russia as an historically formulated sphere of influence." It also stresses that the importance of maintaining good relations with the countries of the area "has become immeasurably greater" with the formation of an independent Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and the Baltic states.[12] Recognizing the importance Russia continues to place on East Central Europe, F. Stephen Larrabee explains that the Russian security elite, especially the Russian military, strongly opposes NATO expansion and would like the region to remain a neutral buffer. In his research report sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy under RAND's National Defense Research Institute, he writes that despite the rather substantial changes in NATO's mission and force posture since 1990, the Russian military still regards NATO in Cold War terms—as an alliance directed against Russia. Any expansion of NATO, therefore, is seen as a direct threat to Russian security.[13]

Larrabee continues by stressing that for Moscow, Poland is the key in East Central Europe. Warsaw's integration into the West would significantly change the geostrategic balance in the Visegrad countries. It would extend NATO's borders considerably

eastward and deny Moscow an important buffer with the West. From a strategic point of view, he says, Hungary and the Czech Republic are less important. But should conservative, patriotic forces gain strength in Russia, Larrabee warns that the country could be inclined to pursue its more traditional imperial goals. He states, "Although such a Russia would be unlikely to try to retake Eastern Europe by force, it would be more inclined to throw its political weight around and use economic pressure to achieve its political goals in Eastern Europe." The overall impact would be to hinder the region's transition and integration into Western political, economic, and security structures.[14]

NATO and Russian Leaders Have Different Viewpoints on Expansion

At former Secretary of State Warren Christopher's farewell meeting in Brussels with the other NATO allies on December 10, 1996, he pledged to Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov that no nuclear weapons would be deployed in East Central European nations that join NATO. William Safire, a columnist for *The New York Times*, writes that this Western concession did not cause Russia to diminish its opposition to expansion. Instead, he says all it did was make the West's diplomats more comfortable about setting the date in July 1997 for "announcing the probable opening of the gates to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic."[15] In addition, the prospect of stationing NATO nuclear weapons in East Central Europe, according to Russian Defense Minister Col Gen Igor Rodionov, would lead Moscow to make these countries targets of its own strategic nuclear weapons.[16] Rodionov said: "Our people and our political leadership are strongly against NATO expansion. The country is concerned—concerned or alarmed—and…I'm

making that clear." The general said that it was already "very difficult to convince our public that NATO is a peaceful organization with good purposes only."[17]

It was at the Brussels meeting that Russia accepted NATO's offer to negotiate a separate formal security relationship with Moscow. Christopher and other NATO foreign ministers offered to negotiate a new charter or treaty with Russia parallel to preparations for the NATO meeting in Madrid on July 8 and 9, 1997. At that meeting NATO will decide which East Central European countries will be the first to be invited to join NATO. "This basically paves the way for very constructive negotiations," Primakov said, though he warned that expanding the Alliance could lead to "a new division of Europe" even if the allies did not intend that. Hence, the differences between Russia and NATO remain. Russia continues to object to NATO expansion into East Central Europe and NATO insists it will go ahead with expansion in July, whether they have an agreement with Russia or not. Primakov, in rather ominous language, has retorted, "We are not happy about the deployment of the NATO military infrastructure closer to our territory, and we will be looking for a way to prevent that."[18]

Prior to leaving office, former Secretary of Defense William Perry said "it is clear to me that it (NATO expansion) is an important problem with many Russians today. And I hope that they come to understand that NATO is not a threat to them."[19] Yet, when giving the keynote speech at the graduation ceremony at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany, on December 13, 1996, he emphasized doing exactly what many Russians fear will result from NATO expansion. Perry told the 85 military officers and defense officials from mostly former Soviet or Warsaw Pact nations that he favored a "super" PFP that would allow partner nations'

participation in more advanced NATO functions and activities. While calling Russian fears of planned NATO expansion unfounded and NATO expansion a commitment, he said the "super" PFP could be involved in planning and executing actual military operations.[20] Associated Press writer Susanne M. Schafer, a National War College graduate, reports that Secretary of Defense William Cohen holds the belief that the US is not and cannot become the world's policeman. However, Cohen, who spent 18 years as a senator from Maine and previously backed a careful approach to NATO expansion, adds that he will pursue the "pragmatic partnership" with Russia engineered by his predecessor.[21]

Echoing Russian Foreign Minister Primakov's opposition to NATO expansion, former Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev said it "would be unfortunate if the former Warsaw Pact states joined NATO in the near future, because this step would relegate Russia to a much more isolated position."[22] Consequently, Foreign Minister Kozyrev, whom Yeltsin eventually sacrificed in an attempt to appease his opponents, was regularly baited by nationalists for being too pro-Western. He was adamant when he stressed that Russia "is a great power with its own interests."[23] He argued that Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, in particular, should not be admitted into NATO, stressing that these states should be a bridge between Russia and Germany.[24] While underscoring the Kremlin's position that East Central Europe has never ceased to be an area of interest for Russia, Kozyrev warned that Russia would not rule out a firm and perhaps aggressive policy in order to defend its national interests.[25]

The journalist Pushkov believes NATO's eastward expansion is considered by Moscow from a totally different angle to that of Western Europe and the US. He likens

Russia to a person suffering from a serious disease. Russia is concentrating on the devastating economic and geopolitical crises it is going through, and is deeply suspicious of any plans that may lead to new coalitions that it may have to face in the future. Pushkov foresees at least four Russian responses should NATO expansion occur. First, it would cast a fatal blow to Yeltsin's policies and might push a number of conservatives in the state bureaucracy and the military into top positions. Second, such a decision would certainly help isolationist and anti-Western feelings, both in public opinion and in decision-making state institutions. Third, it would give credence to the arguments of the hard-liners that the West wants to use Russia's weakness to take over politically and militarily the countries that used to be in the Soviet sphere of influence in order to bring NATO as close as possible to Russia's borders. Lastly, Pushkov stresses, NATO expansion in East Central Europe "would create a growing pressure for membership from the Baltic states and, eventually, Ukraine. That would be considered in Moscow as a direct threat to Russia's national security…"[26]

Thomas L. Friedman, a columnist for *The New York Times*, terms NATO expansion into East Central Europe as the "most ill-conceived project of the post-Cold War era." When Gen Leontiy Shevtsov, Russia's military liaison with NATO at Mons, Belgium, was asked how he felt about NATO expansion, Friedman quotes him as saying, "I can't stand that." Shevtsov believes that if the goal is European security, then it depends on relations between NATO and Russia. It does not depend on NATO accepting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. He challenges the West to explain to the average Russian why NATO tanks and planes would be moved closer to their border.[27]

Likewise, others continue to voice their concerns over bringing Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into NATO before the end of this decade. They believe this would make the US and Europe less secure rather than more so. It would rashly commit America to the armed, and potentially nuclear, defense of the newcomers. It would divide rather than unite Europe, creating new security frontiers that would initially exclude some of the new Eastern European nations, like the Baltic states. Worst of all, it would feed defensive nationalism and opposition to arms control in Russia. Expansion would complicate ratification by the Russian Parliament of the already negotiated START II agreement, which would reduce Russian long-range nuclear weapons from 6,000 to a maximum of 3,500, and will make it difficult for any Russian leader to negotiate further strategic arms reduction agreements.[28]

Finally, Mandelbaum believes that the mere prospect of NATO expansion has already hurt the West's relations with Russia. The close cooperation that marked Russian-US relations during the Gulf War and made it possible to speed the removal of Russian troops from the Baltic states with a phone call from Clinton to Yeltsin have disappeared. This ill will is also blocking Russian ratification of START II. Most dangerously, Mandelbaum stresses, bitterness over NATO expansion could turn Russia against the entire post-Cold War settlement. He states: "That settlement, including the liberation of Eastern Europe, the end of the Soviet Union and the dramatic reductions in military force, is extraordinarily favorable to the West. Russians respect it because they agreed to every part of it. NATO expansion would be the first step in changing the security arrangements of Europe taken *against* (Mandelbaum's emphasis) Russia's wishes." Explaining that NATO expansion's full costs, political and financial, could not

be known in advance, Mandelbaum says that if expansion were a new company, its prospectus would say: "If you invest in this firm, the best you will do is break even. You'll almost certainly lose a modest amount of money, and you might lose a great deal. You won't make any." Mandelbaum argues that this is the definition of a bad investment.[29]

Notes

[1]Alexei Pushkov, "Russia and the West: an endangered relationship?," *NATO Review*, No. 1, February 1994, p. 20.

[2]Robert Bideleux and Richard Taylor, Ed, *European Integration and Disintegration: East and West*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 49.

[3]Michael Mandelbaum, Ed, *Four Perspectives on Post-Communism*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1996, pp. 153-154.

[4]Jonathan Dean, "No NATO expansion now," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May/June 1996, p. 18.

[5]Edward D. Mansfield, "Democratization and War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, May/June 1995, p. 80.

[6]Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[7]Kevin Fedarko, "Rising Czar?," *Time*, July 11, 1994, p. 40.

[8]Erlanger, p. A16.

[9]Steven Erlanger, "Russia's Nationalists Love a Man in Uniform," *The New York Times*, October 9, 1994, p. E5.

[10]"Yeltsin Remains Stable; Lebed Aims for Top Job," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, January 13, 1997, p. 7A.

[11]Suzanne Crow, "Russian Views on an Eastward Expansion of NATO," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 41, October 15, 1993, p. 23.

[12]F. Stephen Larrabee, *East European Security After the Cold War*, Santa Monica, California, RAND National Defense Research Institute, 1993, p. 157.

[13]Ibid., pp. 159 & 165.

[14]Ibid., pp. 167-168.

[15]William Safire, "NATO: Bigger Is Better," *The New York Times*, December 16, 1996, p. 15.

[16]Craig R. Whitney, "NATO Close To Popping Big Question in East Europe," *The New York Times*, December 10, 1996, p. A9.

[17]Philip Shenon, "Russians Alarmed by NATO Plan, Says Yeltsin's Defense Chief," *The New York Times*, September 27, 1996, p. A4.

[18]Craig R. Whitney, "Russia Tells NATO It Accepts Offer on a Formal Link, Still Opposes Expansion," *The New York Times*, December 12, 1996, p. A6.

[19]Shenon, p. A4.

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[20]Ed Reavis, "Partnership for Peace should grow, Perry says," *European Stars & Stripes*, December 14, 1996, p. 3.

[21]Susanne M. Schafer, "Albright, Cohen confirmed," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, January 23, 1997, p. 2A.

[22]Crow, p. 22.

[23]Alessandra Stanley, "Russia Seeks Links to NATO But Nationalists Are Bitter," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1994, p. A8.

[24]Crow, pp. 22-23.

[25]Andrei Kozyrev, "Don't Threaten Us," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1994, p. A29.

[26]Pushkov, p. 22.

[27]Friedman, p. A12.

[28]"Wrong Time to Expand NATO," p. 38.

[29]Michael Mandelbaum, "Don't Expand NATO," *Newsweek*, December 23, 1996, p. 33.

Chapter 5

Russia Poses No Threat to East Central Europe

Region Faces Threats, But Not of Military Nature

J. F. Brown, Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute in Munich, Germany, from 1991 to 1993, and the author of several works on Eastern Europe and its post-Cold War challenges, points out that the concept of "security" in East Central Europe can no longer be confined to military security. The immediate threats to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are not military, he says, but those having to do with migration, refugees, crime, nuclear reactors (possibly another Chernobyl), and above all with the dangers of failure in economic reconstruction. Moreover, Brown attests that despite the existing instability among the European successor states of the former Soviet Union and the prospect of even more, possibly resulting in greater Russian influence, none of the East Central European NATO applicants had reason to feel militarily threatened by Russia, even by a more nationalist Russian government than exists at present. "Appearing to throw a *cordon sanitaire* around Russia," Brown concludes, "would not only hurt Russian democrats but might endanger precisely those East European countries it was designed to protect by making Russia more, not less, aggressive."[1]

Mandelbaum agrees with Brown on the threats facing East Central Europe. He says advocates of NATO expansion argue that it will protect democracy in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. But democracy is not threatened there. All have problems, the result of four decades of communist rule, but NATO is irrelevant to solving them. Explaining that democracy is in far greater jeopardy—and its prospects are of far greater importance to the US—in Ukraine and Russia, Mandelbaum adds: "But they will be left out of an expanded NATO. Nor would the planned expansion contain a resurgent Russia. If Russia were again to threaten its neighbors to the west—something it's too weak for now—Ukraine and the Baltic states would be most vulnerable. Thus the countries that need NATO won't get it and the countries that get it don't need it."[2]

Even some East Central European defense officials admit that Russia poses no immediate threat to them. Gen Mieczyslaw Walentynowicz of the Polish Air Force says there is now "no chance of a direct confrontation with a neighboring country." But he adds that Poland's geographical position is a disadvantage to it. Therefore, the policy of the "government, president, and parliament is to get closer to a defense bloc."[3] Moreover, Tamas Wachsler, a member of the Hungarian Defense Committee who believes his country should be admitted to NATO, admits that Hungary faces "no real large military threat." He explains that threats to Hungary are of a regional nature and that massive migration of refugees could be the result of such fighting. Regional squabbling might also spur on other threats such as organized crime.[4]

Russian Military Power Has Declined

Proponents of rapid NATO expansion argue that the new democracies of East Central Europe are threatened or feel threatened, and need the protection that NATO membership will provide. Two former high ranking US government officials find this belief puzzling because they say there are no objective manifestations of any serious external security threat to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

Philip Zelikow, Associate Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University and who served on the NSC from 1989 to 1991, says that Poland illustrates this point well. Poland is separated from Russia by Belarus and Ukraine. No significant military formations are massed by Russia on an axis of advance leading towards Poland. In fact, he points out, Russia has completed the peaceful withdrawal of all its troops in the former Soviet satellites back to the eighteenth-century frontiers of Peter the Great.

Zelikow continues to explain that there are no acute areas of political tension between Poland and Russia, other than those created by the NATO expansion issue itself. If the Polish government felt genuinely threatened, it would presumably decide to invest in Poland's defenses. Instead, the Polish government plans to cut the term of conscription from 18 months to one year, it is disbanding divisions and reducing the size of its armed forces, and it is buying little or no new military equipment. Hungary and the Czech Republic present similar pictures. "Hungary's major acquisition of new equipment last year was the delivery of MiG-29 aircraft—from Russia," Zelikow says. "Hungary is also cutting its term of conscription—from 12 months to nine."[5] The Czechs, whose defense budget is only 2.5 percent of GDP, are hard pressed to modernize their armed forces. For the time being, they are using western technology to improve their existing supply of

aging Russian T-72 tanks, MiG-21 aircraft, and home-made light jets. What money the Czechs have for new equipment will be spent on NATO-compatible command and control systems.[6]

To further illustrate the difficulties the Hungarian armed forces are facing, one senior military official at the US Embassy in Budapest recently pointed out that only about 60 of the Hungarian Air Force's 120 aircraft are flyable. There are T-55 tanks that do not run, and other vehicles that remain stranded because of a shortage of spare parts.[7] At Kecskemet Air Base, a MiG-29 base in south central Hungary, the deputy regimental commander admitted that of his regiment's 28 aircraft, only six or seven were flyable at any given time because of a shortage of money and spare parts. His pilots flew only 44 hours a year as compared to US F-16 fighter pilots who fly between 200 to 250 hours a year. One young fighter pilot said during the Warsaw Pact era pilots made one to two times the salary of the average Hungarian worker. He said today he felt neither appreciated nor seen as a professional considering a bus driver made more money than him.[8] Nevertheless, despite their limited defense budgets, Polish, Hungarian, and Czech defense officials are being heavily courted by US, French, and Swedish aircraft companies to modernize their air forces by purchasing their premier fighter aircraft.

Sherman W. Garnett, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia (1993-1994), and now a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment, believes that Poland does not face any imminent revival of Russian military power and imperialist ambitions. The "canonical threat," he proposes, has disappeared for the foreseeable future. A Russian leader with hegemonic ambitions would need an extensive period of time and a great deal of money to reconstitute it. Except for

Kaliningrad, Russian ground forces have been withdrawn from Poland's borders. Russian conventional forces are simply not configured for offensive action, even though they loom large on paper. Rather, he says, they appear to be distributed in clumps throughout the Russian Federation. The withdrawal from Central and Eastern Europe of more than 700,000 Russian military personnel and 45,000 pieces of equipment have created remaining pockets of force, such as at Kaliningrad, but no real organized offensive capability. In addition, with little money and due to constraints imposed by the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), there is room for no more than 20 to 30 army divisions west of the Urals. And only a fraction of these ground forces, perhaps four or five divisions, would be at a high state of readiness.[9]

Garnett goes on to say that lack of money has led to the consolidation of Russia's navy, dooming its Baltic and Black Sea Fleets to continued decline and perhaps extinction. As a source of great power status, Russian nuclear forces will continue to receive priority in funding, which will further delay conventional force improvements. Garnett posits that Russia's conventional forces could become virtually obsolete in the next decade if production of basic military equipment is not dramatically increased and if current holdings are not maintained beyond their anticipated life. "Russian power has decreased in comparison with both the USSR and the Russian Empire, but it has also been transformed," Garnett writes. "Neither the authoritarian past nor a Western-style democratic future is within easy reach."[10] Finally, Hungary and the Czech Republic, unlike Poland, are not even exposed to the uncertainties to the East.[11]

NATO Expansion Likely to Entail Enormous Costs

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in its comprehensive March 1996 analysis of the costs of expanding the NATO alliance concludes that if NATO admits Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, it would have to plan a defense for them. According to NATO and US officials, such planning has not yet been done and the costs of such a defense have not been estimated. Consequently, the CBO examined five illustrative options to provide such a defense and reach some kind of estimated cost. The five options, the first being the least ambitious and costly and the remaining four more ambitious and costly, were:

- Option I: Help a Visegrad state defend itself against a border skirmish or limited attack by a regional power.
- Option II: Move NATO air power east when a Visegrad nation is under threat from attack.
- Option III: Reflects the more traditional view that substantial friendly ground forces are needed to defend territory against their enemy counterparts.
- Option IV: Preposition military equipment on the territories of the Visegrad states so that troops can be flown in to operate it during a crisis.
- Option V: Permanently station a limited number of NATO forces (equipment and personnel) in the Visegrad states.

The CBO estimates that the cost for the five illustrative options over the 15-year period from 1996 through 2010 would range from $61 billion to $125 billion. Of that total, the US might be expected to pay between $5 billion and $19 billion. The US costs might be manageable but only if—as both NATO and the CBO assume—the Visegrad nations themselves bear a substantial portion of the costs of expansion.[12] The CBO study cautions however:

> Existing NATO members seem reluctant to increase their defense budgets to finance expansion. Even under the least ambitious option, if Visegrad nations also proved unable or unwilling to increase their defense spending significantly (an estimated 60 percent increase)—as seems possible—then

> either the costs for existing members would have to increase substantially or tasks needed for an adequate defense of those nations might be left undone. The defense budgets of the Visegrad nations are small, their economies are in transition from communism to capitalism, and public opinion polls show that their populations do not support increases in the proportion of government spending devoted to defense.[13]

Furthermore, the CBO researchers point out that in addition to reducing the size of their armed forces since the end of the Cold War, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have dramatically shrunk their spending on defense. For example, Hungary's spending has dropped almost 60 percent since 1988, and Poland's spending has decreased 44 percent since 1987. Spending on defense in the Visegrad region is low, as represented by Poland's $2.4 billion per year, which is more than twice any other nation in the region.[14] Hence, the CBO recognizes that "despite their likely contributions of small contingents of forces for peacekeeping operations, the Visegrad nations will be net consumers of NATO security."[15]

The Poles have a different view of the expected costs of NATO integration. The authors of a report entitled "A Cost Estimate of NATO Enlargement" conclude that the initial costs NATO will have to pay should in time allow to lower the costs of the Alliance's defense preparations. They stress Poland will not be a mere "consumer" of security, but a state capable of rendering political, military, and economic support for NATO.

The report, published under the auspices of the Euro-Atlantic Society, states that the costs of Poland's integration into NATO are within its reach; however, it concedes that the Ministry of National Defense's budget would have to be cut by reducing the number of servicemen and disposing of unnecessary property. "When we add the aforesaid

contributions to the civilian and military budgets of NATO," the authors write, "and the costs of liaison missions at NATO Headquarters and the particular Commands,…we arrive at just under $1.5 billion. Explaining that this is the equivalent of average annual outlays in the amount of four percent of the 1995 Ministry's budget, the report adds, "Such a burden for the budget seems affordable and most probably suffices to launch cooperation with NATO forces."[16] According to Col Jon L. Lentz, Defense and Army Attache at the US Embassy in Warsaw, the Poles do not expect America to pay for their NATO integration. Although he says the expenditures necessary for modernization of the Polish military will be significant, he adds that the Poles believe their economy can afford the costs.[17] Nevertheless, there appears to be a wide discrepancy in what the Euro-Atlantic Society's report and the CBO estimate to be Poland's annual defense budget. If the CBO figure of $2.4 billion is correct and the Poles estimate it will cost $1.5 billion to join NATO, the country's financial burden would be immense.

Notes

[1]Brown, p. 275.

[2]Mandelbaum, "Don't Expand NATO," p. 33.

[3]Gen Mieczyslaw Walentynowicz, Polish Air Force, comments to Air War College students during visit to Polish Air Force Headquarters, Warsaw, Poland, March 3, 1997.

[4]Tamas Wachsler, Hungarian Defense Committee, comments to Air War College students during visit to Parliament, Budapest, Hungary, March 6, 1997.

[5]Philip Zelikow, "The Masque of Institutions," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Spring 1996, p. 13.

[6]"Let us in, say the Czechs," *The Economist*, April 15, 1995, p. 51.

[7]Senior US military official's comments to Air War College students, US Embassy, Budapest, Hungary, March 6, 1997.

[8]Lt Col Laszlo Teglas, Vice Commander, 59th Regiment, comments to Air War College students during visit to Kecskemet Air Base, Hungary, March 7, 1997.

[9]Sherman W. Garnett, "Poland: Bulwark or Bridge?," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1996, p. 68.

[10]Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[11]Ibid., p. 73.

Notes

[12]"The Costs of Expanding the NATO Alliance," pp. xii-xiii.

[13]Ibid., p. xiii.

[14]Ibid., p. 65.

[15]Ibid., p. 66.

[16]Maria Wagrowska, "First Polish Report on the Costs of Integrating With NATO; It Will Be Cheaper To Stick Together," *Warsaw Rzeczpospolita* (as reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service), January 21, 1997, p. 5.

[17]Col Jon L. Lentz, Colonel, USA, Defense and Army Attache, comments to Air War College students, US Embassy, Warsaw, Poland, March 3, 1997.

Chapter 6

European Union Key to Long-Term Regional Security

Incorporating Region's New Democracies into Western Europe

Critics of NATO see it as a creature of the Cold War and contend that it cannot address the new reality of Europe. They also say that it preserves an anachronistic American hegemony.[1] Consequently, the CBO's March 1996 report specifically states that in the post-Cold War Europe "military blocs should be replaced with European-wide organizations that promote economic and political stability—for example, the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)."[2]

The OSCE, formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, enshrines a pan-European vision of collective security.[3] American and NATO officials, pressed by the Nordic countries, in particular the Swedes, have been working to accommodate the worries of those countries who are expected to be left out of the first round of NATO expansion. The Russians have said they prefer the OSCE, rather than NATO, as the supreme security organization.[4] On one hand, however, the US government agrees with the Swedes that the OSCE might assume a larger set of tasks in order to help alleviate these countries' concerns, but also criticizes it for having neither troops nor the resources to conduct operations like NATO.[5] Yet the OSCE played a role

in undermining communist rule in Eastern Europe and, consequently, in winning the Cold War. From 1973 until 1988, it proved itself a highly flexible tool of multilateral diplomacy and strongly encouraged the emergence of human rights movements with the USSR and Eastern Europe. In 1989, it was clear that the organization had gained considerable popularity in Eastern Europe. Its valuable work in overseeing the CFE also enhanced its credibility.[6] Unfortunately, it is now beginning to be discredited because it has been enlarged to more than 50 members so as to accommodate all of the successor states of the Soviet Union, and becoming burdened under increasing layers of bureaucracy. If the OSCE could be reexamined and reorganized, perhaps it could serve as a point of compromise between Russia and NATO.[7]

J. F. Brown insists the institution, despite all its "falterings and weaknesses," that is best suited to meet the security needs of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic is the EU. He says most countries in the EU also share the same kind of threats to their own security, an important factor that might influence closer association. Hence, according to Brown, membership in the EU "would seem to demand priority. And the Russians could have no legitimate objections against membership in this organization."[8]

The editorial staffs of some of America's leading newspapers share Brown's view and now advocate a more cautious and slower approach to NATO expansion. Instead of rushing to expand an alliance that is still searching for a new purpose, *The New York Times* recommends that the EU, not NATO, should take the lead in incorporating Europe's new democracies into the Continental community. The EU can assist their continuing transformation into market economies and offer incentives to keep them on the path of political democracy and individual freedom.[9] Deputy Secretary of State

Strobe Talbott concedes that EU membership is the best avenue to locking in the "essential political, economic, and social reforms" that the emerging East Central European democracies are now implementing.[10] In addition, Karl-Heinz Kamp, head of the Foreign Security Policy Section, Department of Political Research, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, a major public policy institute in Germany, explains that it is far from clear that quick NATO membership is the most urgent precondition for stabilizing the new East Central European democracies. Instead, he says, a "very strong case can be made that economic cooperation through full access to West European markets is a much more promising approach."[11]

Zelikow pursues the argument further, specifically with regard to Poland. He believes it is hard to find any evidence, or specific chain of reasoning, in which NATO membership is even one of the top five factors that will determine whether Poland's democracy will survive. That will depend on the Poles, on the struggle for power among the new domestic elites, and on whether the Polish government can meet the demands being placed upon it by radical change. Zelikow charges that Poland's relationship with the EU is more consequential, but admits the prospects for Polish EU membership in the next decade are remote.[12]

Fostering Economic Growth and Political Stability in Region

Over the past seven years, Poland has concentrated on its domestic political and economic challenges. It has made impressive progress in both areas, becoming Europe's fastest growing economy and a vibrant democracy.[13] The Czech Republic has continued market-oriented reforms at full pace and has maintained low unemployment and short

unemployment duration. Its prevailing, negligible jobless rate, which has fluctuated around three percent for the past four years, has attracted considerable attention from economists and policy-makers in other transitional countries and EU member states.[14] And Hungary, having been in the forefront of democratization from the beginning in 1989, has progressed remarkably well in the area of creating democratic representative government.[15] It has probably gone halfway, or even beyond, in the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy.[16] It is significant that at least one-half of its GDP is produced in the private sector. Among former socialist countries, Hungary was undoubtedly the best prepared for the transition to a market economy at the outset of the 1990s. Hence, according to George Kopits, Senior Resident Representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Hungary, that nation has made considerable progress in fulfilling certain fundamental conditions for growth through opening the economy, price liberalization, and creation of a number of market-oriented institutions.[17]

The EU has proven to be a clear model of European integration. Since the Visegrad Four's October 6, 1991, declaration of its desire to join the EU, the group has only been able to sign agreements of association. Yet, if the EU would admit Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as full members, it could play an essential economic and political role in helping stabilize these countries' economies. Unfortunately, tensions and disagreements have arisen over agricultural and steel imports as well as banking, insurance, and real estate markets. Expanded EU markets would enhance not only foreign investment and economic development in East Central Europe, but also foster further Western-oriented political leaders and political stability.[18]

NATO Membership No Substitute for EU Membership

Friedman, *The New York Times* columnist, has extensively explored what he perceives to be the core issues linking NATO expansion and East Central European membership in the EU. He says the Western European states are the ones supposedly most threatened by a resurgent Russia and are the ones supposedly most in need of the East Central Europeans' joining NATO to create a buffer with Russia. Yet, Friedman explains, the members of the EU "seem about as interested in NATO expansion as they are in the Super Bowl." This is because the West Europeans think the real threat to them is not Russia, but East Central Europe.[19]

The Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, and others clamoring to join NATO, Friedman continues, are the ones who really scare the EU. EU members know that Russia is no threat to them now. What threatens them are all these new East Central European free-market democracies, whose factories and farmers want to export to Western Europe at prices that will undercut the West Europeans. EU members also fear East Central European workers who might flock to Western Europe for jobs, which would drive down wages. "Russian missiles and Russian tanks are a nebulous and distant danger to Western Europe," Friedman writes. "But Polish hams and Polish workers are a clear and present danger." He continues: "So NATO expansion is the bone E.U. members throw the East Europeans instead of letting them into the European common market, which is what the East Europeans really want and need. That's what would really bolster their democracies. For the West Europeans NATO expansion is the ideal way to block the East Europeans from becoming members of the E.U.…without feeling guilty about it." Friedman concludes by quoting Mandelbaum's deft observation: "We are going to extend the

NATO nuclear umbrella to the Eastern Europeans, so that the Western Europeans won't have to buy their tomatoes."[20]

Johann Tasker, a freelance journalist based in Prague, puts this agricultural issue into sharper perspective. He says agriculture is four times as important to the economies of East Central European countries, in terms of employment, as it is to those of EU member states. On average, 22 percent of the work force in the Central European Free Trade Agreement countries is employed in farming. Explaining that East Central Europe has the potential to become a major agricultural exporter, Tasker adds that the countries in the region seemingly have everything to gain from EU entry, but "it is the EU that holds the key."[21] Furthermore, as an American Embassy official in Warsaw recently said, 35 percent of Poland's population is rural, so the French would have the most to lose if the country were given full membership in the EU. Although the French are on the record for admitting Poland by the year 2,000, he admitted it would "gut" a large segment of the French economy.[22]

Credence to this argument that NATO membership may be a substitute for full EU membership—at least for the immediate future—is sometimes hinted to by East Central European and US officials. Pan Onyszkiewicz, Deputy Chairman of the Polish Defense Committee, admits that "on the whole, if we are in NATO, we can improve our economic and democratic prospects. It is much more difficult and more initiative is required to join the EU. So the EU must change."[23] A senior economics representative at the American Embassy in Budapest observes that although Hungary has probably privatized its economy more than any other country in the region, "the EU doesn't seem to appear to want any other members in the club until 2002 for its own reasons. But Hungary is doing

all it can to be ready when it's allowed to join."[24] Describing Hungary's immediate prospects for full EU membership as "not a realistic one," Tamas Wachsler of the Hungarian Defense Committee adds that he does not see "us as a member anytime in this century, although I wish we could." Wachsler says that by joining an organization of "common defense and common alliance," it might encourage other political organizations to cooperate with his country.[25] Finally, Michael Guest, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Prague, asserts that NATO expansion is not being presented to the Czechs as "a stepping stone to the EU." Yet he says it may be seen by many in the country as "a ticket to be punched as a signal of Western integration."[26] Jiri Sedivy, Deputy Director of Research at the Institute of International Relations in Prague, retorts that NATO and EU membership is the first strategic goal of the Czech Republic. Explaining that two-thirds of the country's trade is with the EU, he continues, "Becoming a member of NATO will occur well before full membership in the EU."[27]

In their paper published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Institute for World Economics, Andras Inotai and Magdona Sass recognize the vital importance that EU membership holds for East Central European countries. They conclude that the EU is the key to modernization for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Furthermore, they believe the EU should: (1) commit itself to full future membership for the Visegrad countries; (2) extend free-trade rules to competitive Visegrad products; (3) include Visegrad-country products in aid packages granted to Russia and other countries in the region; and (4) avoid creating in any way a new "bloc mentality" based either on short-sighted Western interests or on a misunderstanding of the highly differentiated transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe.[28]

Notes

[1]Bideleux and Taylor, p. 52.

[2]"The Costs of Expanding the NATO Alliance," p. xi.

[3]Bideleux and Taylor, p. 54.

[4]Whitney, "Russia Tells NATO It Accepts Offer on a Formal Link, Still Opposes Expansion," p. A6.

[5]Erlanger, "U.S. Pushes Bigger NATO Despite Qualms on Russia," p. A16.

[6]Bideleux and Taylor, p. 55.

[7]Brown, p. 277.

[8]Ibid., pp. 276-277.

[9]"Wrong Time to Expand NATO," p. 38.

[10]Strobe Talbott, "The Transatlantic Partnership in the Post-Cold War Era," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 6, No. 43, October 23, 1995, p. 763.

[11]Karl-Heinz Kamp, "The Folly of Rapid NATO Expansion," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1995, pp. 126-127.

[12]Zelikow, p. 15.

[13]Garnett, p. 78.

[14]Daniel Munich and Vit Sorm, "The Czech Republic as a Low-Unemployment Oasis," *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 13, June 28, 1996, p. 21.

[15]Robert M. Bigler, "Back in Europe and Adjusting to the New Realities of the 1990's in Hungary," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, June 1996, p. 208.

[16]George Kopits, "Midway in the Transition," *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 32, No. 6, November-December 1994, p. 29.

[17]Ibid., pp. 29-30 & p. 34.

[18]Jeffrey Simon, "Czechoslovakia's 'Velvet Divorce', Visegrad Cohesion, and European Faultlines," *European Security*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Autumn 1994, pp. 490-491.

[19]Thomas L. Friedman, "NATO or Tomato?," *The New York Times*, January 22, 1997, p. A19.

[20]Ibid., p. A19.

[21]Johann Tasker, "Changes Ahead for EU Protectionism," *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 15, July 26, 1996, pp. 26 & 28.

[22]US Embassy official's comments to Air War College students, US Embassy, Warsaw, Poland, March 3, 1997.

[23]Pan Onyszkiewicz, Deputy Chairman, Polish Defense Committee, comments to Air War College students during visit to Parliament (Sejm), Warsaw, Poland, March 3, 1997.

[24]Senior US Embassy economics official's comments to Air War College students, US Embassy, Budapest, Hungary, March 6, 1997.

[25]Wachsler comments, March 6, 1997.

[26]Michael Guest, Deputy Chief of Mission, comments to Air War College students, US Embassy, Prague, Czech Republic, March 10, 1997.

[27]Jiri Sedivy, Deputy Director of Research, Institute of International Relations, comments to Air War College students during visit to Prague, Czech Republic, March 10, 1997.

Notes

[28]Andras Inotai and Magdolna Sass, "Economic Integration of the Visegrad Countries," *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 32, No. 6, November-December 1994, p. 26.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

Former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt once observed that one does not solve real problems, one works them. Real problems, in other words, do not have easy answers, or "school solutions"; rather, they are the difficult province within which the strategist seeks to cope.[1] Hence, the US and its NATO allies are presently faced with the complex challenge of fostering democracy in Russia and helping the country remain on the admittedly tough road towards a market economy. Ignoring Russia's insecurities over its frontier with the West by pressing ahead with allowing Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to become members of NATO could very well set back the progress Russia has made as it explores a new relationship with outside nations.

Hartmann and Wendzel recommend that two kinds of aid are necessary for Russia: (1) food and medicine for the immediate future, and (2) capital investment and technological aid once the economy is sufficiently privatized so that the money used to achieve change will not simply disappear. Much more useful in the longer term is to provide expertise, both public and private. Since America is the most experienced and successful free market economy in the world, it has a lot to contribute. Hartmann and Wendzel insist Russia will be a major power, and the US certainly can provide diplomatic and economic encouragement to help achieve a stable situation involving at least mixed

economies and some sort of political system consistent with democratic values. America's role toward East Central Europe, they caution, must be equally encouraging but equally indirect. "Whatever the future," they write, "the 'dead hand' of the past will play its part. It is utopian to expect that the inbred wariness of foreigners will disappear, given Russia's history."[2]

Journalist Pushkov acknowledges that PFP is worthwhile in establishing a program of cooperation between NATO and East Central European countries, Russia included. However, he believes that leaving the issue of NATO expansion open until the situation in Russia becomes more stable bests suits both the West's and Russia's interests. Cautioning that there is a pronounced trend in the Kremlin to defend with more resolve what it considers Russia's vital national interests, Pushkov continues: "For its part, the West should not overreact and necessarily interpret Russia's foreign policy moves as attempts to restore its former empire, or attribute them to hardline influences. It should be understood that Russia is a world power slowly coming back to its senses. It is largely up to the West to ensure that those senses do not take the form of nostalgia for former imperial policies. The Western countries should acknowledge that Russia has its own national interests—political, commercial and geopolitical, and the right to defend them by legitimate methods."[3]

Galina Starovoitova, a former Yeltsin adviser, argues, "We cannot exclude the possibility of (a fascist period) in Russia. We can see too many parallels between Russia's current situation and that of Germany after Versailles."[4] Starovoitova suggests that Russia has been humiliated, that powerful groups feel cheated, and that central material objectives cannot be achieved by the Russian state in its current form. What is

odd and short sighted is that Western policy may serve to recreate the very security threat that Western security policy previously sought to eliminate. If NATO can only guarantee security in East Central Europe by antagonizing Russia, it is not surprising that Yeltsin should respond by constructing his own security arrangements on Russia's "near abroad," i.e., Ukraine and Belarus.[5]

In a confidential letter to Clinton the day after his re-election, Yeltsin wrote that the US and Russia need to immediately focus on "those matters where a mutually acceptable balance of interests have not yet been achieved—first and foremost reforming European security structures." Columnist Friedman is correct when he says the challenge to US leadership is to take up Yeltsin's offer. "If an understanding can be worked out with Russia on NATO expansion," he writes, "a real post-Cold War security structure can be erected in Europe. If no understanding is possible, expansion will sow instability."[6]

Clinton would be wise to reflect on the legacy of Russian fears over Western encroachment on its borders and postpone NATO expansion. Likewise, he should earnestly strive to reassure not only Yeltsin, but the Russian people, that NATO, launched during the Cold War as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, is not aimed at the new Russia. This can be done by establishing special links between NATO and Moscow as a means of showing good will.[7] As a commentary in the *Boston Globe* states, it would be the "height of folly to take a precipitate action" that might help bring nationalist hard-liners to power in Moscow. "If the preservation of security is the purpose of NATO," it continues, "then the absorption of new members should not unnecessarily induce insecurity." The commentary also stresses that in the next couple of years enlarged and

bilateral relations with Russia might develop enough to accommodate NATO expansion. Wise statecraft requires that no date be set until the time is ripe.[8]

Alexi G. Arbatov, Director of the Center for Geopolitical and Military Forecasts in Moscow, believes that the important global responsibilities Russia has to fulfill should be fostered at all costs, e.g., its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, its role in other international organizations, and its participation in peacekeeping operations in line with UN resolutions. "Russian cooperation is essential," he stresses, "for international efforts to control the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, for better control over the export of missile and missile technology, and for the introduction of quotas and restrictions on the arms trade."[9]

Lastly, Russia is passing through a deep economic and social crisis. An unprecedented decline in production, a huge budget deficit, galloping inflation, growth of foreign debt, and a decline in gold reserves have combined to put Russia in a position of extreme dependence on the Group of Seven major industrialized nations, the IMF, and the World Bank.[10] The studies of Avraham Shama, Anderson Schools of Management Foundation Professor of Management at the University of New Mexico, lead him to the optimistic conclusion that Russia is successfully converting to a market economy, though this difficult process has produced some negative consequences, most notably the "painfully indigent condition of most retirees."[11] However, the kind of ruling coalition that eventually will emerge in Russia during the course of continuing democratization will depend largely on the incentives the West continues to provide.

Regrettably, Clinton continues to do little in real terms to alleviate Russian fears of NATO encroachment. At the Helsinki summit between Clinton and Yeltsin on March 21,

1997, neither side budged on the issue of NATO expansion. Expansion of NATO will lead to a "potentially threatening buildup" of forces near Russia, Yeltsin said in the final communiqué. Clinton "stressed that the alliance contemplates nothing of that kind." Clinton added, "I reaffirm that NATO enlargement in the Madrid summit will proceed and President Yeltsin has made it clear that he thinks it's a mistake and a serious one at that." In an attempt to put the best light on their meeting, Yeltsin accepted the offer of a new consultative role with NATO. Clinton said that would make Russia "a respected partner" but without a veto over decisions. Furthermore, after an unexpected, last minute breakthrough in a difficult three-year argument over the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Yeltsin promised to seek prompt ratification of the START II treaty stalled for four years in the Duma.[12] It would be wise to take a wait-and-see attitude on whether Yeltsin will be able to deliver on prompt ratification, especially when he failed to win Clinton's promise that no former Soviet republic will ever be allowed to join NATO. Yeltsin will have to do it over the opposition of the Communist Party, the largest bloc in the Duma. Communist chief Gennady Zyuganov charges that Yeltsin is "guilty of completely betraying the national interests of the country."[13] While other Russian critics say the ABM treaty is a bad deal that was accepted out of weakness, Zyuganov adds that because Yeltsin failed to achieve a louder voice for Russia in NATO decisions, "Russia has been admitted no further than the NATO cloakroom and is not taken seriously."[14]

If Russian democratization is sacrificed due to fears of NATO encroachment, the country risks following the fate of the two nations that started World War II. Edward D. Mansfield, Associate Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, aptly writes: "Both Germany and Japan started on the path toward liberal, stable democratization in the

mid-1920s, encouraged by abundant opportunities for trade with and investment by the advanced democracies and by credible security treaties that defused nationalist scaremongering in domestic politics. When international supports for free trade and democracy were yanked out in the late 1920s, their liberal coalitions collapsed."[15]

As we end this study and reflect on Russia's continuing economic difficulties and its growing uneasiness over NATO expansion, it might benefit us to remember what Secretary of State Cordell Hull's Far East expert, Stanley Hornbeck, said in mid-November 1941. While rebuking a young colleague for prophesying that Japan would go to war in desperation, Hornbeck exclaimed, "Name me one country in history which ever went to war in desperation!"[16]

Notes

[1]Drew and Snow, p. 209.
[2]Hartmann and Wendzel, pp. 361-362.
[3]Pushkov, p. 23.
[4]Bideleux and Taylor, p. 62.
[5]Ibid., p. 62.
[6]Friedman, p. A12.
[7]"Clinton, Yeltsin to meet in March," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, December 6, 1996, p. 2A.
[8]"Unwise haste on NATO," p. 20.
[9]Alexei G. Arbatov, "Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Fall 1993, p. 38.
[10]Ibid., p. 7.
[11]Avraham Shama, "Inside Russia's True Economy," *Foreign Policy*, No. 103, Summer 1996, p. 112.
[12]"Clinton, Yeltsin agree on arms plan," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, March 22, 1997, pp. 1A & 4A.
[13]"Sour NATO note spoils summit symphony," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, March 23, 1997, p. 11A.
[14]"Clinton, Yeltsin agree on arms plan," p. 4A.
[15]Mansfield, p. 97.
[16]John Toland, *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982, pp. 288-289.

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