

NATO expansion: ‘a policy error of historic importance’

MICHAEL MCCGWIRE

Abstract. European security depends on the effective collaboration of the five major powers; it will be undermined by the extension of NATO, a policy driven by US domestic politics. The main threats to security are: the breakdown of political and economic stability; unintended nuclear proliferation and/or failure of the START process; Russia’s evolving political and territorial aspirations. All three will remain marginal as long as Russia is constructively engaged with the West. NATO expansion threatens that engagement. It is seen by all strands of Russian opinion as violating the bargain struck in 1990 and will likely lead to the withdrawal of cooperation. Invitations to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic cannot be rescinded, but the consequences can be mitigated by refraining from integrating them into NATO’s military structure, by ceasing to insist that NATO membership is open to all, and by perpetuating the *de facto* nuclear-weapons-free zone that presently exists in Central and Eastern Europe. Britain’s stance could be pivotal.

In an open letter to President Clinton at the end of June 1997, fifty former US senators, cabinet secretaries and ambassadors, as well as US arms control and foreign policy specialists, stated their belief that ‘the current US-led effort to expand NATO . . . is a policy error of historic importance’¹ for the following reasons:

- (i) In Russia, it would bring into question the entire post-Cold War settlement, undercut those who favoured reform and cooperation with the West, galvanize resistance in the Duma to START II and III, and strengthen the non-democratic opposition. NATO expansion continued to be opposed across the whole political spectrum in Russia.
- (ii) In Europe, it would draw a new line of division between the ‘ins’ and the ‘outs’, foster instability, and ultimately diminish the sense of security of those not included.
- (iii) In NATO, it would degrade the alliance’s ability to carry out its primary mission, and involve US security guarantees to countries with serious border

¹ Eminent and highly respected individuals made up this bipartisan group. The five senators included Sam Nunn, a long-standing expert on defence. Arthur Hartman and Jack Matlock, ambassadors to Moscow, 1981–7 and 1987–91, were among twelve signatories of that rank. Professors Richard Pipes and Marshal Shulman (former members of the National Security Council, but on opposite sides of the US debate on Soviet policy in the 1970–90 period) both signed the letter, as did Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defence in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and Paul Nitze, who was President Reagan’s arms control supremo in the 1980s and a leading member of the hawkish ‘Committee on the Present Danger’ in the 1970s. Former NATO Assistant Secretary-General Philip Merrill and logistics chief Maj. Gen. Christian Patte were also among the signatories, as was Admiral Stansfield Turner, former Director of the CIA.

and national minority problems and unevenly developed systems of government.

- (iv) In the US, it would trigger an extended debate over its indeterminate (but certainly high) cost and would call into question the US commitment to NATO, traditionally regarded as the centrepiece of US foreign policy.

This was not the first time that experienced professionals had warned against extending NATO eastwards. In May 1995, a group of retired senior Foreign Service, State Department, and Department of Defense officials wrote privately to the US Secretary of State expressing concern about a policy that ‘risked endangering the long-term viability of NATO, significantly exacerbating the instability that now exists in the zone that lies between Germany and Russia, and convincing most Russians that the United States and the West [were] attempting to isolate, encircle, and subordinate them, rather than integrating them into a new European system of collective security’.²

The public response to this earlier letter was an article in which Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott gave three main reasons for extending NATO.³ Two of these involved the notion of NATO as a carrot. ‘The prospect of membership’ would provide an incentive for the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to (1) strengthen democratization and legal institutions, ensure civilian control of their armed forces, liberalize their economies, and respect human rights, including those of national minorities; and (2) resolve disputes peacefully and contribute to peacekeeping operations. But even in 1995, it was clear that early NATO membership would be on offer only to the so-called Visegrad states (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic), the countries least in need of such incentives. Moreover, the Partnership for Peace (PPF) had been specifically designed to achieve many of the benefits claimed for NATO expansion, while membership of the European Union (EU) and Western European Union (WEU) was already on offer.⁴

In any case, these were subsidiary issues. The main reason advanced by Talbott was that collective defence remained an imperative and should be extended to the newly independent democracies. True, the threat NATO had been created to counter had been eliminated, but new threats could arise ‘that would require NATO to protect its members and to deter attack’. The meaning was inescapable. NATO needed to incorporate the former members of the Warsaw Pact so as to increase the

² A copy of the letter, dated 3 May 1995, was republished in the *New York Review of Books*, 21 May 1995, p. 75. (Six of the eighteen signatories subsequently signed the open letter in June 1997.) At this same period, Senator Richard G. Lugar (a proponent of enlargement) gave as his informed opinion that ‘Russians . . . see United States policy on NATO enlargement as part of a larger shift in US policy designed to squeeze Russia out of Europe. In their minds, enlargement is linked to the US support for Bosnian Muslims, as well as the Ukraine. These moves have been seen as part of a larger strategic design to consolidate the geostrategic gains of the Cold War at Russia’s expense.’ *NATO’s Future: Problems, Threats, and US Interests* (Washington, DC, 1995) Senate Committee on Foreign Relations: Hearings before the S/Cttee on European Affairs, 27 Apr. and 3 May 1995, p. 47.

³ Strobe Talbott, ‘Why NATO Should Grow’, *New York Review of Books*, 10 Aug. 1995, p. 27. The article reminded me of those in the Soviet Communist Party house organ *Kommunist*, where the losers in an internal debate were required to recant publicly by expounding the party line. For a recent justification of the Clinton administration’s policy see Madeleine Albright, ‘Enlarging NATO: Why Bigger is Better’, *The Economist*, 15 Feb. 1997.

⁴ At its June 1993 summit, the EU promised membership to these states, although no date was set. They were already Associate Partners in the WEU.

West's collective defence capability against the potential threat of a resurgent Russia.⁵

In an attempt to dilute this interpretation, Talbott claimed that the enlargement of NATO was not a new issue, and that the growth of the alliance during the period 1949–82 strengthened the case its further expansion now.⁶ But the circumstances do not bear comparison. The political liberation of Western Europe, begun in 1943–4, was carried out within a framework of tight military or civilian control. In Germany, Italy, and Austria, the victorious Allies imposed military rule, attempted political cleansing, and established new structures of democratic governance. By the time Germany joined NATO in 1955 (via membership of the WEU), American, British, and French forces had been stationed on its territory for ten years. The most important factor in bringing stability to what became NATO Europe was the vast superiority in wealth and resources enjoyed by the US, which provided powerful political and economic leverage in the face of a common threat. The Marshall Plan and other programmes were major examples, but leverage was also exercised by means of direct financial pressure (as when the French and Italian coalition governments were forced to evict Communist Party members in 1947) and clandestine payments (as in the 1948 Italian elections). Although some countries were already members of NATO when they started receiving US military assistance, the programmes were all bilateral and the leverage lay with the US. Greece did not join until US financial support had ensured the Communists lost the civil war, and Turkey joined after US bilateral aid had taken effect. Although European opinion meant that Spain could not join NATO until after Franco's death in 1982, the US had long maintained a significant military presence in the country.

In sum, none of the three official reasons for extending NATO stand up to close analysis.⁷ Nor do other reasons, involving Germany. But it is hardly surprising that 'the extension of NATO is an illogical business' and that the 'post-enlargement map makes even less military than political sense',⁸ since the policy was not the outcome of an objective analysis of the long-term requirements for security in Europe, but was largely the product of US domestic politics.

The full story of how the US arrived at this position after originally rejecting it has yet to be told, but the policy emerged in 1993, having been shaped by an amalgam of impulses. These included the ongoing debate about defence and foreign policy in the post-Cold War world, difficulty in justifying a continuing military presence in Europe, public dissatisfaction over the Bosnian conflict, disarray among the European allies, concern about developments in Russia, and the upcoming mid-

⁵ Strobe Talbott's meaning was spelt out in the *Study on NATO Enlargement* produced by NATO Headquarters in September 1995. The study was explicit that enlargement was intended to 'strengthen the effectiveness of the Alliance'.

⁶ Talbott, 'Why NATO Should Grow', p. 28, col. 1.

⁷ For an early critique of the rationale see Michael E. Brown, 'The Flawed Logic of NATO Expansion', *Survival*, 1 (1995), pp. 36–40. See also Michael Mandelbaum, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe* (New York, 1996), pp. 45–65; Michael McGwire, *NATO Expansion and European Security*, London Defence Study No. 37 (London, 1997), pp. 14–21.

⁸ *Guardian*, 7 Jul. 1997; *The Times*, 2 Jul. 1997. The *New York Times*, 12 Dec. 1996, was even more scathing: 'The administration has dressed up its plans with rhetoric about consolidating democracy and free markets in the lands of the Soviet empire, but it has yet to make a good case why a Cold War military alliance rather than the European Union is the best way to secure these aims.'

term Congressional elections⁹ and impending fight for a second Presidential term. Central to this political process was the coalition of interests which tended to view Russia, whether tsarist, Communist, or quasi-democratic, as an inherent threat to the Central and East European (CEE) region. This coalition included the influential Polish-American lobby and other ethnic-based pressure groups, whose voters are clustered in states that are crucial in Presidential elections.

This domestic policy process has produced a logical and political inconsistency of major proportions. The stated objective is to enhance security in Europe. It is officially accepted that there is no Russian threat to the CEE states for the next decade or more. And there is universal agreement that the security of Europe requires the integration of the republics of the former Soviet Union (FSU), especially Russia, into a stable security system.¹⁰ Yet it is generally acknowledged that Moscow is very worried by the hostile implications of NATO expansion and that Russia has 'legitimate concerns' about this development.¹¹

Nor should we forget that in 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev was given top-level assurances that the West would not enlarge NATO, ensuring a non-aligned buffer zone between NATO's eastern border and Russia.¹² Notwithstanding these assurances and despite Moscow's 'legitimate concerns', on 8 July 1997 NATO invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join the alliance in April 1999 (on NATO's fiftieth birthday), stressing that the door to membership remained open to others, including the Baltic republics.

Whether or not that was 'a policy error of historic importance', it is the datum from which we now start, and the immediate requirement is to minimize the adverse consequences that are latent in such a policy. One set of likely consequences was outlined in the letter to Clinton. The other set would flow from a failure by individual member states to ratify the amended treaty extending NATO membership. The two sets are interdependent, since the readiness of existing members to extend security guarantees will be inversely related to the likelihood that such guarantees will be invoked. There is also the matter of economic costs, which for both old and new members are likely to be significant. It is, therefore, by no means certain that two-thirds of the US Senate will agree to the shouldering of these new commitments.¹³ A failure to ratify could have serious political repercussions, reviving memories of the failure to ratify the Covenant of the League of Nations.

⁹ NATO enlargement was one of the ten principles in Congressman Newt Gingrich's 'Contract with America'. The Republican landslide in November 1994 tilted the political balance decisively towards the radical right, which was both hostile to Russia and bitterly critical of Clinton's relationship with Boris Yeltsin. Michael Cox, *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (London, 1995), p. 67.

¹⁰ e.g., Richard Holbrooke (a leading proponent of enlargement), 'America: A European Power', *Foreign Affairs*, Mar./Apr. 1995, p. 50. James Schlesinger (a former Secretary of Defense) is categorical that 'any [common security] order that excludes Russia would . . . carry with it the seeds of its own destruction' (publisher's blurb for Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*).

¹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'A Plan for Europe', *Foreign Affairs* Jan./Feb. 1995, p. 34.

¹² Jack Matlock, the US Ambassador in Moscow at the time, has said, 'we gave categorical assurances to Gorbachev back when the Soviet Union existed, that if a united Germany was able to stay in NATO, NATO would not be moved eastwards'. Quoted by Philip Zelikow, 'NATO Expansion Wasn't Ruled Out', *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Jul. 1995.

¹³ The ethnic vote is very influential in Presidential elections because most of the (roughly) 20 million Americans of Central European origin are concentrated in fourteen key states, which have 194 Presidential electors, a third of the total. Those same fourteen states command only twenty-eight out of a total of one hundred votes in the Senate.

If we are to mitigate the consequences of decisions already taken, we must first be clear about the problem we are addressing. In essence, the West has fallen between two stools—between two definitions of security. While paying lip service to the inclusive concept of *cooperative security*, it focused in practice on the exclusionary concept of security as *defence against an external threat*. Instead of addressing the immediate and very real problem of cooperative security in Europe, a greater Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals, it focused on the future defence (retitled 'security') of a truncated Europe that would be coextensive with an expanded (but yet to be delineated) NATO. In the main, the two approaches are mutually exclusive. Both place Russia at the centre of our security concerns, but an emphasis on defence inhibits cooperation and makes a self-fulfilling prophecy about Russian intentions. It repeats the mistakes of the 1920s, while ignoring the important role that NATO's inclusive structure played in turning an enemy, Germany, into a friend and ally in the wake of World War II.

We cannot straddle both stools; we have to choose. First, we must determine the substance of the threats facing Europe. It will be seen that the level and very nature of these threats relate directly to the extent of Russia's cooperative involvement. In other words, security in Europe will depend largely on how successful the West is in managing its relationship with Russia. With that established, we can assess the appropriateness of the current Western approach and underlying attitudes, and consider how best to promote security in Europe through alternative treaty arrangements and structures. We are then in a position to discuss (briefly) what needs to be done.

Threats to security in Europe

From a Western viewpoint, potential threats fall into three main categories. One relates to Russia's political and territorial aspirations. Another is to do with political and economic stability. And the third involves nuclear weapons and the control of fissile material. The bulk of this discussion focuses on the first category, since it clearly lies at the heart of the debate. The other two categories, although important, will first be disposed of briefly.

The breakdown of order

The Yugoslav conflict illustrates vividly how the breakdown of political and civil order can threaten security by spreading to neighbouring states, by drawing other countries into the conflict, and by generating refugee flows and an illegal arms trade. For quite some time, a general war in the Balkans seemed a live possibility, and the danger has not yet passed.

There are actual or potential crises of political authority and fragmentation throughout the CEE region, and the appropriate way for outsiders to respond to these competing claims and incipient conflicts is not at all clear. As the West discovered in Yugoslavia, the difficulty lies as much in conceptualizing the problem

correctly as in devising ways of dealing with it. We can, however, be certain that in the event of breakdowns of this kind, the nature of Russian involvement in attempts to resolve or contain the situation will be crucial to the outcome.

Nuclear weapons and materials

There are two issues here. One is the danger of unintended nuclear proliferation (the 'loose nukes' problem), which extends from concern about the control of fissile material, through procedures for dismantling nuclear weapon systems and warheads, to the verification of disarmament agreements. In 1991–2, the US approached this problem with imaginative generosity, recognizing that it was in its own interest to enable what would be a difficult, costly, and lengthy process.

The other issue is the strategic arms reduction process. An agreement to reduce nuclear arsenals to 3,000–3,500 actual warheads by the year 2003 (START II) was signed in January 1993, but was not ratified by the US Senate until January 1996. This protracted delay was one of several reasons why the treaty was also held up in the Russian Duma, but increasingly the hold-up became a political response to US plans for NATO enlargement.

That became the sole reason after the Helsinki summit in March 1997, when agreement was reached on two contentious questions: the demarcation between theatre missile defence systems and those covered by the 1972 ABM Treaty; and the outlines of START III, which would bypass Russia's difficulties with START II by moving directly to 2,000–2,500 warheads by the year 2007. Nor were the Duma's objections to NATO expansion alleviated by the terms of 'The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between Russia and NATO' that Yeltsin signed on 27 May. For the time being at least, the START process is stalled and even in danger of unravelling.¹⁴

Russia's political and territorial aspirations

Dispassionate analysis of the 'Russian threat' is handicapped by the tenacious belief that Russia has always been inherently expansionist, in a way that other great powers are not, and this despite the fact that it was France in the nineteenth century and Germany in the twentieth that set out to conquer and control the whole of Europe.

The charge was initially promoted by Great Britain, concerned about a possible threat to its interests in the eastern Mediterranean and its lines of communication with India and the Far East. It was resurrected in 1946, when it was used in conjunction with the Marxist vision of a socialist world to justify Washington's

¹⁴ The text of the 'Founding Act' was agreed on 14 May 1997. On 16 May, the head of Russia's Security Council stated, 'It is my view that [ratification] is not [now] possible with the current Duma.' That same day, the Advisory Council on Foreign and Defense Relations warned that forcing a vote would lead to the treaty's rejection, which would in turn 'lead to an extremely dangerous situation [in] which implementation of all treaties on strategic nuclear arms between Moscow and Washington over the past ten years would look doubtful'. *Disarmament and Diplomacy* (June 1997), p. 43.

claim that Soviet Communism was set on military world domination.¹⁵ History does not support the charge.

When European global expansion began to gather momentum in the sixteenth century, states bordering the Atlantic expanded overseas, and Russia, hemmed in to the west and south, expanded over land to the east. Russian colonial expansion had largely run its course by 1885, when the 'grab for Africa' by the Western Europeans was just getting under way. Russian involvement in China had trailed by more than forty years that of the Western maritime powers, who had engaged in two punitive wars in an attempt to force the failing Manchu empire to open its hinterland to trade and investment. Tsarist imperial expansion was part of the general pattern of European behaviour. The objection that the Western Europeans ultimately withdrew from their overseas empires is only partly true. To the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, the European colonists are still very much in place.

In Europe, Russia's frontiers had been largely established by the end of the eighteenth century, by which time it had finally pushed back the Swedish and Polish-Lithuanian empires to the west and the Ottoman empire to the south. The period of the Napoleonic Wars saw the addition of Bessarabia and the trans-Caucasian territories of the Persian empire, and Finland was detached from Sweden, making it an autonomous grand duchy beholden to the tsar.

Thereafter, the possession of European territory ceased to be an end in itself, as long as influence and security could be achieved by other means. As demonstrated after its victory over Turkey in 1828, Russia's objective in the Balkans was not to acquire more territory, but to facilitate and hasten the emergence from Turkish rule of Christian nation-states that would turn to Russia for protection and would heed its interests.¹⁶

Russia in Europe was conforming to contemporary great-power norms as it jostled for power, influence, and security, using its armed forces to promote and protect its interests. So did the other European powers, as did the United States in North America. In 1845–8, the latter acquired through war the half of newly independent Mexico that extended 600–900 miles north of the Rio Grande and Gila river.¹⁷ In the Caribbean, the spoils of the war with Spain (1898) were Puerto Rico and a protectorate over Cuba.¹⁸ Thereafter, the United States made it clear that it saw the Caribbean basin as its own fiefdom, and acted accordingly. In 1903, the Panamanian isthmus was detached from Colombia, and the US acquired the territory through which the canal would run.

In sum, the evidence does not support the claim that tsarist policies after 1815 were driven by an urge to expansion. Nor does the pattern change under

¹⁵ Marxist-Leninism was always explicit that the capitalist system was destined to fail and would be replaced by world socialism. But it spoke in terms of historical inevitability, of inexorable social forces, not of military conquest. Indeed, once the civil war was behind them, the Soviets consistently refuted the idea that war by itself caused revolution, or that revolution could be exported. Military forces were needed to defend socialist gains against attempts to reverse them.

¹⁶ The Turkish Straits were a partial exception. In the absence of an effective legal regime excluding warships of non-riparian powers, physical control of the Straits was the only certain way for Russia to prevent hostile maritime powers from concentrating their fleets at will, as they did in 1853–6, 1877–8, 1914, and 1918–21.

¹⁷ Which became California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

¹⁸ In the Pacific, the war yielded the Philippines and Guam as spoils. It also justified the formal annexation of Hawaii and Wake Island, thus completing the 'lifeline' to China.

Communism. It was World War II, a war they did their best to avoid, that brought the Soviets into Europe. At the end of the war they withdrew forces that, in the process of driving back the Germans, had advanced about 250 miles into Norway; they withdrew from Finland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the strategically located island of Bornholm in the Baltic; they agreed to four-power control of Berlin, a city captured by the Soviets at immense cost and well behind their lines; at Britain's request, they made Bulgaria withdraw its army from Thrace and the Aegean coast; and they refused help to the grass-roots Communist insurgency in Greece.

In the 1950s the Soviet Union relinquished military bases in Porkkala, Finland and in Port Arthur, China; and it withdrew from Austria. That is not the behaviour of a country set on military domination of the world. Those who make that claim must also explain why the Russians failed to exploit other opportunities for expansion that came their way.¹⁹ And, if the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was an example of planned expansion, why did the Soviets choose to mount the operation at short notice in mid-winter and only use limited force?

The most persuasive refutation of any innate Russian urge to military world domination lies in the structure, posture, and deployment of Soviet forces during this period. This is not the place for a detailed exposition, but it can be said with certainty that Soviet military requirements between 1948 and 1986 were shaped by the reasonable assumption that war with the West, world war, was at least possible. Throughout the period, the Soviet Union's overriding concern was the danger of world war, a war they absolutely wanted to avoid but could not afford to lose.²⁰

Eastern Europe: Stalin had always made it clear that the Soviet Union's immediate aims in World War II were to defeat the Axis powers and to secure the country's western frontiers. The longer-range objective was to keep the USSR strong and Germany weak, with the payment of German reparations and the creation of a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe as essential means to that end. This was accepted by Roosevelt and Churchill, who acknowledged, explicitly or implicitly, the primacy of the Soviet Union's political interest in the countries of the region, acquiesced in the reincorporation of the Baltic States, and agreed to Poland's physical displacement westward, aligning its eastern boundary with the 1919 Curzon Line.²¹

Soviet forces entered Eastern Europe in the course of achieving final victory over the Axis armies, and there is general agreement that, except in the most general terms, Stalin did not have clear-cut plans for the countries that came to comprise the Warsaw Pact. The basic requirement was to establish a buffer between the USSR and the resurgent Germany that could be expected to emerge in fifteen to twenty years, and this implied governments that were amicably disposed towards the Soviet Union, or at least not hostile. Having been welcomed as liberators in Eastern Europe, the Soviets probably believed that governments that represented the mass of the people would be positively disposed towards the Soviet Union, a Marxist

¹⁹ Some of these opportunities are outlined in Michael MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC, 1987), pp. 354–5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–20.

²¹ The British had already signalled *de facto* acceptance of Soviet claims to the Baltic States in 1942. Roy Douglas, *From War to Cold War, 1942–48* (London, 1981), pp. 7–9, 188.

prediction that seemed to have been validated in Albania and Yugoslavia, and again by the results of the free elections held in Czechoslovakia in 1946.

This relatively relaxed approach changed abruptly in 1947–8, following the Truman declaration in March 1947, which was matched by Zhdanov's 'two camps' doctrine in September. Soviet threat assessments were switched from 'Germany in fifteen to twenty years' time' to the more immediate danger of a capitalist coalition led by the Anglo-Saxon powers, that would be ready for war in 1953. Eastern Europe must now serve as a defensive glacis in both military and ideological terms, and the latter requirement evoked the worst kind of centrally enforced Stalinist orthodoxy.

During the next twenty-five years, Eastern Europe evolved from an ideological glacis to a cross between an ideological empire and an alliance, and it became an important part of the metropolitan core of the growing socialist system and world Communist movement. Meanwhile, its importance as a military glacis increased steadily as contingency plans were reshaped to reflect changes in Soviet doctrine about the probability and likely nature of a world war.

By 1985, however, Soviet interests in the area were badly out of balance. Economically, Eastern Europe was a net burden, and in all six countries large sections of the populace were more or less openly hostile to the government apparatus. There were strong arguments on political, ideological, and economic grounds for the Soviet Union to get out of Eastern Europe, the loss of face notwithstanding.

The obstacle to such a withdrawal was the area's vital importance in Soviet strategic plans for the contingency of world war. That obstacle was removed in January 1987 by a reformulation of Soviet military doctrine that effectively ruled out the possibility of world war and required the military to plan on the assumption that war would be avoided/prevented by political means; this lifted the requirement for Soviet forces to be deployed in Eastern Europe. By May 1987, discussions were afoot within the Warsaw Pact about unilateral force reductions and the ultimate withdrawal of Soviet troops.²²

The 'near abroad': While we can be reasonably certain about Moscow's attitude towards the former members of the Warsaw Pact, Russia's aspirations in relation to the 'near abroad'—a euphemism for the other fourteen Union Republics of the former Soviet Union (FSU)—are less easily defined, if only because of the diversity of the issues and factors involved, not least the matter of size. The republics of the FSU ranged from tiny Estonia, with a population of 1.6 million at the end of the 1980s, to the Russian Federation with a population of 147 million, roughly half the total population of the USSR, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific.

In the ebb and flow of rival empires, almost all the European territories of tsarist Russia had been acquired by the end of the eighteenth century. At the time of its disintegration at the end of 1991, the Soviet Union was the contemporary manifestation of a state entity that had, for the most part, existed in its current form for some 200 years; an entity that within the living memory of a quarter of its population had been successfully defended against foreign invasion at a very great cost. In

²² East European party chiefs had been told by Gorbachev in late 1986 that they could not expect Soviet military intervention to keep them in power. Michael MccGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security* (Washington, DC, 1991), pp. 355–63.

view of that history, the most striking aspect of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the peaceable nature of the process.

Given this background, certain conclusions can be drawn about future prospects. First, while there may be calls to restore Russia's 'greatness', the political drive to reconstitute the Soviet Union or the tsarist empire is absent, as is the military capability to do so.²³ Second, Russia has long-standing and legitimate interests in the former Union Republics; these include geostrategic concerns and the continuing presence of some 25 million ethnic Russians who were living outside the borders of the RSFSR. Moscow will therefore take a close and direct interest in their affairs, just as the US does in Central America and the Caribbean. And third, there are persuasive indicators that Russia wishes to conform to existing norms of great-power behaviour, such as they are:

- (i) By the end of 1988, it was already becoming clear that Moscow saw the Baltic States as a special case and would be willing to negotiate their orderly secession if it did not jeopardise the larger Union. Once it was ruled that world war would be averted by political means, the strategic imperatives that had justified their reannexation in 1940 and retention after the war ceased to apply. The Baltic republics could therefore be viewed through the lens of the Soviet–Finnish relationship, which had proved a satisfactory way of achieving physical security, while opening the Soviet Union to Western technology and trade.²⁴
- (ii) In 1991, 41 per cent of the population of Kazakhstan was Russian, and only 37 per cent native Kazakh, and the Russian population was largely concentrated in the northern part of the republic, adjoining the Russian Federation. In the throes of dissolution, it would have been very simple for Moscow to have annexed that region to the RSFSR.
- (iii) There were sizeable Russian minorities in the Baltic states (Estonia 36 per cent; Latvia 28 per cent). Albeit under Western pressure, Moscow has nevertheless met its obligations to withdraw all Russian forces and has relied on negotiations to achieve compromises in the Baltic States' restrictive citizenship policies that were designed to disadvantage and often exclude ethnic Russians.
- (iv) Despite Russia's relative preponderance, the complicated process of apportioning the Union's assets between the fifteen republics has been achieved with surprisingly little rancour. This is most notable in respect to military resources, where Russia had to consider its external security requirements, as well as the zero-sum implications of the internal apportionment.
- (v) The case of the Black Sea fleet and its base at Sevastopol is particularly relevant. Russia took the Crimea from the Turks in the 1780s, and it was only transferred from the Russian Federation to the Ukraine in 1954. Despite the suspect legality of this transfer, the fact that 75 per cent of the Crimea's

²³ Sir Rodric Braithwaite (former British Ambassador in Moscow) points out that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a failure not only of the Communist system, but of something much older: the Russian political and economic tradition evolved over many centuries. R. Braithwaite, 'Russia's Future Western Policy', in Robert D. Blackwill, Rodric Braithwaite, and Akiniko Tanaka, *Engaging Russia* (New York, 1995), p. 75. Jack Matlock (former US Ambassador) is adamant that the Soviet system cannot be rebuilt and that the Russian empire cannot be reconstituted. J. Matlock, 'The Russian Prospect', *New York Review of Books*, 29 Feb. 1996, p. 46.

²⁴ See MccGwire, *Perestroika*, pp. 352–3.

population is Russian, and the absence of a comparable naval base on the Russian Black Sea coast (the Ukraine has Odessa), Moscow has relied on intensive negotiations rather than populist pressure or military force to resolve this contentious issue.

While these examples are reassuring, the vexed question of Russia's long-term relationship with the Ukraine and Belarus remains uncertain. To some extent, Yeltsin was playing politics when, four weeks before the formal dissolution of the USSR, he agreed with the other two Slavic republics to join in creating the Commonwealth of Independent States. But the agreement also reflected an assumption that by virtue of their shared ethnicity and common history, there was some affinity of interests between the three. Both states are of crucial geostrategic concern to Russia. In the past, Belarus and the Ukraine provided defence in depth. Moscow is now within 250 miles of its country's western border, while the territories on its southern flanks have been opened up to hostile reinforcement by sea.²⁵

In sum, Russia is not inherently expansionist. But while its relatively limited aspirations provide the baseline for national objectives, its actual policies will be shaped by a range of factors, including domestic politics, geostrategic circumstances, the international climate, and subjective perceptions of threat. The fact that Moscow has no urge to reconstitute its former empire or to re-establish hegemony over Eastern Europe does not mean it is insensitive to Russia's fundamental security interests or its long-standing status as a major power.

Overall assessment of the threat

Security is a subjective concept. In a region stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals it is unrealistic to expect that each nation or ethno-community will be able to enjoy the same level of micro-security, if only because of political geography. But all countries have a common interest in the macro-security environment, which will largely determine the nature of state security at the micro level.

Security in Europe requires peace in Europe, and this depends on the extent to which the major powers can collaborate effectively in resolving problems that arise in the region. We have seen it in Yugoslavia with the five-nation Contact Group, and we saw it in the first half of the nineteenth century with the Concert of Europe.

Any Western policy designed to prevent the breakdown of political and civil order in Central and Eastern Europe must therefore provide for the cooperative involvement of Russia. Europe cannot be made stable without Russian agreement and direct involvement.²⁶

Whole-hearted Russian participation is also essential if the threat of unintended nuclear proliferation is to be countered. The dismantling of the FSU's nuclear arsenals and the disposal of fissile material will be a long drawn-out process that depends absolutely on US–Russian collaboration.

²⁵ The Black Sea provided the main route for Western intervention forces and supplies in 1918–21.

²⁶ Robert D. Blackwill, 'Russia and the West', in Blackwill et al., *Engaging Russia*, p. 42.

Russian political and territorial aspirations pose no inherent threat to security in Europe. Moscow has had to accept the extension of NATO to include former members of the Warsaw Pact, although it believes this to be a breach of trust. That acceptance does not extend to the republics of the FSU, which Russia considers come within its national security zone.²⁷

The potential Russian threat is reactive, responding to unfavourable events or Western initiatives. The nature of the response will reflect Moscow's assessment of the totality of US policies affecting Russia, the effects of those policies in Central and Eastern Europe, and the political response inside Russia to such developments. These same factors will condition the Duma's attitude towards the START process.

In sum, as long as Russia is constructively engaged with the West, the level of threat in all three categories is relatively low. If Russia limits or withdraws its cooperation, the level will rise sharply. The conclusion is inescapable: from a Western viewpoint, the most immediate threat to security in Europe is the withdrawal of Russian political cooperation.

Promoting security in Europe

'A stable democratic Russia at ease with its shrunken post-imperial frontier is the grand strategic prize, without which Europe can never be durably secure.'²⁸ That prize was placed within our grasp by the post-Cold War settlement, but it is now threatened by 'the current US-led effort to expand NATO', to quote the letter at the beginning of this article.

There are four entities whose security interests have to be weighed and reconciled: America, Western Europe, Russia, and the CEE states (including the republics of the FSU). The three European entities strongly favour a continued US military presence. The American interest is less obvious and the price of a continuing commitment has been the extension of NATO.²⁹

All four entities have a vital interest in peace in Europe, but that peace depends absolutely on constructive cooperation between the major powers. Russian cooperation with the West is currently endangered by the decision to extend NATO. The challenge we face is to devise policies that ensure continued Russian cooperation while also providing for the security of the CEE states. Continued cooperation depends on a reassessment of Western attitudes as well as the recognition of Russia's legitimate interests.

The Western approach

Because they embody a central contradiction, Western statements about NATO enlargement and relations with Russia are inherently disingenuous. They emphasize

²⁷ In this specific context Douglas Hurd (former British Foreign Secretary) notes that 'spheres of influence exist; they will not be eliminated by resolutions from this or that body'. D. Hurd, 'Russian Reasons', *Prospect*, 22 (Aug./Sept. 1997), p. 13.

²⁸ Lead editorial, *The Times*, 7 Jul. 1997.

²⁹ 'The NATO enlargement debate is really a debate . . . over whether, when, and how to anchor the United States in Europe'. Senator Richard G. Lugar, in *NATO's Future*, p. 47.

cooperative security in Europe as a whole, but insist on the right to enlarge an organization designed for the collective defence of one part of Europe against the other. This contradiction reflects two of several conflicting tendencies in the US policy debate, which can be labelled unilateralist and multilateralist.

The multilateral tendency pays lip-service to concepts like cooperative security, believes in working through alliances and multilateral organizations, and advocates an inclusive policy in Europe. It sees the expansion of NATO as a natural evolutionary process that in due course will include all states in the region, including Russia. The Clinton White House appears to favour this approach (subject always to assertive US leadership) and seems genuinely to believe that NATO expansion can be made to work in this way.³⁰

The unilateralist approach encompasses those internationalists who advocate a global Pax Americana, the conservative isolationists who favour external intervention to instil American values,³¹ and the coalition of interests which persists in seeing Russia as an enemy and is intent on denying Moscow any influence in Eastern and Central Europe. The Republican majority in Congress is biased in this direction, with an exclusive view of security in Europe and little sympathy for Russia's concerns.

Whereas the multilateralists speak of partnership with Russia and (within limits) think in these terms, the unilateralists emphasize rivalry,³² sometimes bordering on enmity. This helps explain why it was more than two years after the formal adoption of the policy of enlargement that NATO leaders started taking Russia's objections seriously. And then only because fears for Yeltsin's re-election in June 1996 finally caused the West to soften its line that NATO enlargement was none of Russia's business.

That line was another example of muddled thinking. Given the foreseeable consequences, it was clearly nonsense to claim that the future composition of NATO was solely a matter for present members. The right to join an alliance has to be balanced against the obligation not to strengthen one party's security at the expense of another's, an obligation that applies equally to alliances.³³ This neglect of broader political obligations in favour of legalistic rights underlay the foolish decision to stage a joint NATO–Ukrainian naval exercise in August 1997, involving landings in the Crimea.³⁴

³⁰ Martin Walker, *Guardian Weekly*, 25 May and 6 Jul. 1997. Walker quotes from Clinton's public statements, but he also cites James Steinberg (Deputy National Security Advisor) as one of his sources.

³¹ Janne E. Nolan, 'Cooperative Security in the United States', in J. E. Nolan (ed.), *Global Engagement: Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC, 1994), pp. 508–11. She notes that only the liberal theory of isolationism advocates true disengagement, while the conservative isolationists accept intervention as necessary to impose American values. In practical terms, there is convergence between Pax Americana and conservative isolationism.

³² In March 1994, Senator Lugar declared that the US had 'to get over the idea that it was involved in a partnership with Moscow'. 'This is a tough rivalry', he insisted. Cox, *US Foreign Policy*, p. 63.

³³ Principle I of the Final Act that established CSCE in 1975 recognizes the right to be a party to treaties of military alliance as a right inherent in sovereignty. However, the OSCE Code of Conduct also obligates the participating states 'not to strengthen their security at the expense of other states'. See John Borawski, 'The OSCE: In Search of Cooperative Security', *Security Dialogue*, 4 (1996), pp. 402–3.

³⁴ At one stage (which leaked) the scenario for 'Sea Breeze' involved NATO and Ukrainian forces landing in Crimea to put down a separatist conflict, which was supported by a neighbouring state (read Russia). The final scenario involved a humanitarian relief mission in the face of an earthquake and armed unrest. The US (one ship—originally two—and marines) and Greece were the only non-Black Sea countries involved. *Sunday Times*, 16 Mar. 1997; *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Mar. 1997.

The specifics of NATO enlargement

Distinct from the question whether NATO should extend its membership is what such enlargement will actually involve. The terms of the North Atlantic Treaty are very general and impose no specific obligations concerning composition, structure, or stationing of forces. For instance, France, Denmark, and Norway do not allow foreign troops on their territory; the stationing of allies' forces is *not* a condition of membership.

The existing command structure and the partial integration of forces reflects evolved practice and is not a treaty requirement. In practical terms, each member has a unique relationship with the alliance. The extent to which the Visegrad states are integrated into the military structure of NATO is therefore a matter of discretion. In treaty terms, there is no reason why they cannot enjoy the political protection of Article 5, without making fundamental changes in the existing military structure.

The idea that the Visegrad states should be taken under NATO's political wing, rather than fully integrated into its military structure,³⁵ has many attractions. It would meet their security requirements without diverting scarce resources to unproductive defence expenditure or estranging Russia.³⁶ It would soften the new lines being drawn across Europe, reduce the need for sharp increases in NATO defence budgets, and ease the difficulty of securing ratification by national legislatures.

Most importantly, it would demonstrate that the political-military situation had changed completely with the end of the Cold War and that collective defence arrangements that were appropriate in those circumstances must evolve to match the new threat environment. The option of full military integration, should the threat environment deteriorate, would provide an important instrument of diplomatic dissuasion.

Security in Central and Eastern Europe

Lying beyond the reach of Russia, the Visegrad states are currently not at risk. The eastward expansion of NATO's boundaries may, however, prompt Russia to extend its own security perimeter westwards. Will Poland be more secure in the front line of a redivided and rearmed Europe? Do the claims of cultural affinity justify jeopardizing the security of the newly independent republics of the FSU? What kind of political and economic pressures might Moscow bring to bear on the Ukraine?

³⁵ The requirement that their forces be able to operate with existing NATO forces in peace-keeping/enforcement operations is already covered by the provisions of PfP, and should not require any additional arrangements.

³⁶ Meeting with his NATO counterparts in Bonn on 4 June 1996, Foreign Minister Primakov is reported to have said that he had no objection to expansion, as long as it had only political consequences, which could include collective security guarantees. The movement of Western forces and nuclear weapons and the extension of NATO infrastructure into the territory of new members was, however, 'unacceptable'. *Independent*, 5 and 6 June 1996.

And what will happen to tiny Estonia, strategically located across the south-western approaches to St Petersburg?³⁷

If Russia feels threatened and withdraws its cooperation, macro-security in Europe will be undermined. So, too, will the micro-security of individual countries in the region, because the nature of Russia's political and strategic interests in the former Soviet republics will change. At the same time, the constraints on Moscow pursuing those redefined interests will be weakened or removed completely, as the security of the homeland assumes its traditional place at the head of Moscow's concerns. And this will happen whether or not internal political forces bring a nationalistic regime to power.

We must not confuse the aspirations of the CEE countries with the interests of their people. The political and geostrategic realities argue that the security interests of each and all of the CEE states would be best served by non-alignment, a truth that seemed self-evident in 1989–92 but was then submerged by the tide of events. Nor is the logic undermined if the Visegrad states join NATO. Half a cake is better than none and, when Finland and Sweden are included, the result is a broad neutral band stretching across Europe from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

For the time being at least, the role of the CEE states should be that of a buffer zone, girded by a lattice of non-aggression and arms-limitation treaties. Europe is still in transition, feeling its way from Cold War confrontation to some kind of cooperative security regime. Non-alignment is the only viable alternative to the fatal process of competitive alliance-building.

The neutrality of the states within the zone would be formalized by some kind of multilateral treaty, and their continuing independence would be guaranteed by the United States, Russia, and the other major European powers.³⁸ Military non-alignment would not exclude other forms of association with other states, or membership of other kinds of groupings. The multiplicity of relationships is important in itself and there is positive advantage in architectural redundancy.³⁹

Meanwhile, the CEE region already has the advantage of being a *de facto* nuclear-free zone.⁴⁰ Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine have all put forward proposals that it should become a *de jure* NFZ, and NATO has declared that it will not deploy nuclear forces on the territory of new members 'under foreseeable circumstances'. The formal declaration of a Central and Eastern European NFZ would have important political symbolism and would provide the basis for confidence-building measures and other cooperative initiatives in the zone.⁴¹

These measures should include a conventional forces arms control regime. There are too many weapons in Central and Eastern Europe. The sales push of the arms

³⁷ It is irresponsible to pretend that, if Russia took coercive action against its immediate neighbours, NATO would respond in kind.

³⁸ This would be comparable in some ways to the 1955 treaty between Austria and the four occupying powers, although that only forbade union with Germany. However, a condition of Soviet withdrawal was the Austrian 'Constitutional Law on Neutrality', which committed Austria to permanent neutrality.

³⁹ Catherine Kelleher, 'Cooperative Security in Europe', in Nolan (ed.), *Global Engagement*, pp. 299–300.

⁴⁰ See Jan Prawitz, 'A Nuclear-free Zone from the Baltic to the Black Sea', *Security Dialogue*, 2 (1996), pp. 227–8.

⁴¹ Assuming it encompassed the Baltic and the Black Sea, such an NFZ would distance Moscow and Berlin some 800 miles from the possible deployment of unfriendly nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, the inclusion of both seas would encourage the development of special regimes for these areas, as has often been suggested in the past.

suppliers is now complemented by the demand pull of PFP and the lure of NATO, which has set targets (explicitly or by implication) for upgrading the capability of CEE states. It is militarily absurd to encourage all these countries to build up high-performance air forces, and politically dangerous to pour arms into an area of potential hostilities, as the Middle East has shown.⁴² It is surely relevant that US companies were long forbidden to sell arms to South America because this would increase the chance of armed conflict.⁴³

Ideally, there would also be an agreement that the states in the CEE region (including the Visegrad three) would not allow the stationing of foreign forces on their territory, nor would the deployment of such forces be allowed for exercises. These national ordinances would be reinforced by a formal agreement between the major powers not to deploy forces to these states. There would, however, be the proviso that if faced by a major shift in the threat environment, any signatory could withdraw from the agreement at (say) sixty days' notice.

For the Western powers, withdrawal would imply the full military integration of the Visegrad states into NATO. The threat of withdrawal would be an important instrument of dissuasion, as well as providing a diplomatic fire-break.

Russia's concerns

Russia's political aspirations are limited. It wants to have due account taken of its opinions and sensibilities in international affairs, especially in Central and Eastern Europe; to establish a mutually supportive political and economic relationship with the republics of the FSU; and to enjoy a cooperative relationship with the Western powers, particularly the United States. Russia does *not* want to find itself disadvantaged by the political-military realignment of former members of the Warsaw Pact.

Russia's need at this time is for psychological more than physical security. This goes beyond questions of status to those of trust, fairness, and due recognition of what Russia has accomplished in the last ten years. It has, after all, dismantled a long-established empire with the minimum of conflict, while retaining firm control of its nuclear facilities. Before that, it was Gorbachev's 'new political thinking about international relations' that underlay the fundamental changes in the second half of the 1980s and brought about the Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War. Similarly, it was the announcement of massive unilateral cuts in conventional forces, and subsequent Soviet concessions, that enabled the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty to be negotiated.

The West was happy to garner these concessions, but dismissed Gorbachev's 'new thinking', with its emphasis on cooperation rather than competition, as utopian propaganda. When the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact invalidated the CFE Treaty's carefully wrought balances, the West then insisted that

⁴² It has been estimated that the CEE arms market could be as much as \$30bn over five years. 'NATO Expansion Means Market Expansion', *Arms Sales Monitor*, 35 (6 Aug. 1997), p. 4.

⁴³ This policy was in force for more than two decades, only being reversed in early August 1997. *Washington Post*, cited in *Guardian Weekly*, 10 Aug. 1997.

its terms must stand, to Russia's serious disadvantage.⁴⁴ And while the NATO summit in July 1990 recognized the Soviet Union as a partner in building security in Europe, and the concept of 'cooperative security' assumed a new prominence in Western discourse, cooperation as between equals was on offer only when vital interests were at stake, as in the redeployment and disposal of the FSU's nuclear assets.

Cooperative security is based on the principles of partnership and reassurance. It is the opposite to reassuring if one of the nominal partners sets out to increase what is already a preponderance of effective military power in Europe. There is deep-seated Russian resentment over NATO's decision to expand, which violates the bargain struck in 1990, allowing a united Germany to be part of NATO.

Expansion is seen as both a breach of trust and fundamentally unfair. Those who argue that fairness is irrelevant to international relations ignore its correlate, resentment. It was German resentment at the terms of the Versailles Treaty that led to the rise to power of Hitler. The almost universal Russian resentment over the extension of NATO 'could make the overturning of the post-Cold War settlement a central aim of Russian foreign policy, no matter who is responsible for conducting it'.⁴⁵

Western attitudes

The post-Cold War settlement is 'extraordinarily favourable to the West'. Moreover, it has a measure of legitimacy in Russian eyes, because Moscow took part and acquiesced in all the events that produced the settlement. 'This legitimacy is a priceless asset for the West.'⁴⁶

The West is squandering that asset, as much by its attitudes as by its actions. Some of these attitudes reflect the unilateralist bias in Congress, but others are innate or a carry-over from the Cold War. They include the moralistic stance that claimed Soviet concessions as our right, and saw compromise by the West as weakness, a self-righteousness (now tinged with triumphalism) that prevents us from even seeing Russia's point of view, let alone recognizing its legitimacy.

The current insistence that Moscow should not be concerned by plans to extend NATO, because extension will promote stability in Europe,⁴⁷ echoes the Reagan administration's claim in 1985 that the Soviets would come to recognize the benefits of the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), notwithstanding their well-founded

⁴⁴ The West persisted in this stance for four years, but at the First Review Conference on the CFE Treaty (held in May 1996), it finally agreed to some adjustment of Soviet force levels on 'the flanks'.

⁴⁵ Mandelbaum, *Dawn of Peace*, p. 61. He points out that 'NATO expansion is, in the eyes of Russians in the 1990s, what the war guilt clause was for Germans in the 1930s: It reneges on the terms on which they believe the conflict with the West ended. It is a betrayal of the understanding they thought they had with their former enemies.'

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁷ For a recent example see Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Independent Task Force, 'Statement of the Task Force', *Russia, its Neighbours, and Enlarging NATO* (May 1997).

objections to extending the arms race into space;⁴⁸ or the Kennedy administration's insistence in 1960 that the Soviet Union should welcome the impending US strategic build-up as being in the interests of peace.⁴⁹

The Cold War emphasis on negotiation from a position of strength and the danger of making concessions has re-emerged, coupled with warnings against 'even the appearance of trying to compensate Russia for NATO enlargement'.⁵⁰ In the Founding Act with Russia, NATO was thus unable to make the small but immensely productive concession of stating that it would not deploy nuclear weapons or permanently station substantial forces on the territory of new members. Instead, the agreement says it is not NATO's 'current and foreseeable intention' to do so; these were weasel words that satisfied no one. A heavy price might have to be paid for avoiding 'even the appearance' of deferring to Russia's concerns.

What is to be done?

What needs to be done is fairly clear. How to do it, given the political realities, is less obvious. Immediate action is required on two different fronts: intra-alliance politics, and relations with Russia.

It would seem self-evident that 'tinkering with the balance of power on a continent that has been the site of so much conflict should be done with great caution and a strong sense of humility'.⁵¹ In practice, US policy has been characterized by a combination of arrogance and wishful thinking, for which the Europeans who acquiesced in this approach must share the blame.

For a variety of reasons,⁵² Britain, France, and Germany conceded the decision on NATO enlargement to Washington, where policy was decided on the basis of domestic political pressures, rather than objective political-military requirements for security in Europe. As the adverse consequences of that decision become increasingly evident, two lines of advance are open to the European powers.

One is indirect: working by diplomatic and other means to strengthen the hand of the substantial body of influential US opinion that supports the analysis in the letter

⁴⁸ In rebutting an assertion by the Soviet Ambassador that the US development of space-based weapons would lead to a build-up of Soviet offensive systems, Secretary of the Navy John Lehman said that the Soviets, with time, would come to view the SDI as 'in our mutual interests'. *Washington Post*, 13 Apr. 1985. Earlier, Paul Nitze was reported as saying that the Reagan administration hoped that 'the Soviets will come to see the merits of our position—that it will serve their national interests as well as ours'. *Washington Post*, 10 Mar. 1985.

⁴⁹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), p. 301. When Kennedy's emissary Walt Rostow visited Moscow in December 1960, Deputy Foreign Minister Vasilii Kuznetsov expressed concern about the 'missile gap' issue in Kennedy's election. In 1959, US Strategic Air Command had 1,750 bombers and was beginning to develop ICBMs, at which time the Soviets lacked any effective means of delivering nuclear strikes on North America.

⁵⁰ CFR Independent Task Force, 'Statement'.

⁵¹ Editorial, *New York Times*, 12 Dec. 1996.

⁵² For a pungent comment on how the three European powers were preoccupied with domestic concerns rather than the problems of security in Europe, see Blackwill, 'Russia and the West', pp. 32–4, 41. For an analysis of the shifting political interests of the European members of NATO that led to agreement on enlargement, see Michael E. Brown, 'In the Eye of the Storm' (forthcoming).

to Clinton.⁵³ The aim is to tilt the continuing debate away from the unilateralist tendency in Congress. The other is to work directly within NATO's political-military structure, joining together to modify the recently adopted policy, particularly the commitment to invite the Baltic States to join NATO but also to dampen the expectations of the Visegrad three.

Washington resists 'Euro-caucusing', but the major powers are not without leverage. A prerequisite for Congressional ratification of NATO enlargement is that a significant share of the cost be shouldered by the Europeans, and they could refuse to pick up that share unless their objections were heeded. For this strategy to work, Britain would have to forgo its automatic support for US policy decisions and join with France in persuading the Germans to agree a modified policy. This is not unrealistic, since Britain and France initially opposed the idea of NATO enlargement, while German opinion was split.⁵⁴

Action to improve relations with Russia is of two kinds, both urgent. One relates to Western attitudes, and the major changes needed in this area can be inferred from the previous discussion. It would also help if we were more realistic about what NATO implies for others. In the eyes of Russia and much of the rest of the world, NATO is an American-led military alliance which can be (and to some extent has been) used to support what are essentially US policies.⁵⁵ Western rhetoric tends towards the image of a peaceable guard dog that no right-thinking person could object to.

The other kind of action relates to the institutional structure underpinning relations with Russia. As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is not to be allowed to serve as a vehicle for recognizing Russia as a great European power, that role will have to be assumed by NATO. Whether the arrangements set out in the Founding Act will meet Russia's aspirations will depend on how the 16+1 approach is applied in practice. The European members of NATO, particularly the major powers, will be important to ensuring the success of these arrangements, both by pressing for maximum participation by Russia and openness by NATO, and through their willingness to enable creative institutional adjustments that may impinge on their own titular standing within the decision-making structure.⁵⁶

It is conceivable that Russia's formal membership of the G-7 (now -8) and the institutional arrangements initiated by the Final Act may work to stem the tide of Russian resentment, but that is unlikely. Following the formal invitation to the Visegrad states at Madrid, opposition in the Duma to ratifying SALT II hardened and Moscow reiterated the opinion (first voiced in the West) that NATO expansion was the biggest mistake in Europe since the end of the Cold War.⁵⁷

⁵³ 'A significant number—if not an outright majority—of . . . the [US] foreign policy establishment . . . is opposed, as is a growing number of senators.' Richard Cohen, *International Herald Tribune*, 9 Jul. 1997.

⁵⁴ Brown, 'Eye of the Storm'.

⁵⁵ If that were not so, the US Congress would long ago have cut off funding.

⁵⁶ For example, two years before the Founding Act was signed, Robert Blackwill suggested as an alternative to the 16+1 formula, a 3+1 arrangement, the troika comprising the US, Britain/France/Germany (on a rotating basis), and one other member.

⁵⁷ Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov, *Independent*, 9 Jul. 1997. The opinion was first voiced by Ambassador Jonathan Dean in June 1995 and subsequently by George Kennan.

But the West was no longer listening. With the Founding Act signed and other problems pressing, relations with Russia returned to the back burner. The absence of public debate in Western Europe on this central issue is matched by governmental complacency about the likely consequences of the US-led policy. It is as if the Western Europeans had lived so long with a ready-made enemy, they had lost the capacity for political-military analysis. We are so accustomed to equating a US military presence with European security, we are unable to recognize that US policies now threaten that security.

In reality, if the Europeans did dig in their heels over the extent and modalities of NATO enlargement, the withdrawal of the US military presence is not very likely. And even if it did happen, that need not imply a US withdrawal from NATO. Nothing in the treaty requires it to station troops in Europe, and the US could continue to participate fully in NATO's decision-making processes.

Meanwhile, the concept of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within NATO is already agreed policy. Even in its present embryonic state, it could facilitate the assumption by the major powers of what is really their proper share of responsibility for security in Europe. Here again, a great deal would depend on Britain, which would need to abandon its stance of sceptical detachment and take the lead in promoting ESDI. This is one of the few remaining areas of Western European politics where Britain has both status and natural advantage.

The immediate dangers are complacency and fatalism: unwarranted complacency in the form of the assumption that the Russians will be reconciled to the progressive extension of NATO; and unnecessary fatalism in the form of the assumption that NATO policy is set in stone and nothing can be done about it. Something *can* be done, but that requires a shift in British policy. Rather than follow loyally in America's wake, the British Government should have the courage of its original convictions. Along with the signatories of the letter to President Clinton and other specialists in the field, Britain should admit that the extension of NATO is an 'error of historic importance', and move to mitigate its consequences.

In the context of security in Europe, there is no alternative to Russian cooperative involvement. Without Russian cooperation, there can be no security. If Western Europe has to choose between the withdrawal of Russian cooperation and opposing US policies that are threatening that cooperation, there can be only one choice. That is so, even if European opposition to US policy were to provoke Congress to withdraw funding for a continued US military presence. While US military involvement in Europe is desirable, in the post-Cold War threat environment it is no longer essential. There *is* an alternative. The major Western European powers have the inherent capacity to replace the US military presence if they so choose.