

The Impact of NATO Expansion on U.S.-Russian Relations:  
From Kosovo to Georgia

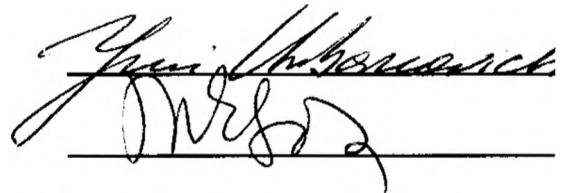
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## Introduction

In 1991, the Iron Curtain fell with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Cold War ended with the failure of the West's ideological enemy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, better known as NATO, had outlasted its eastern counterpart, the Warsaw Pact. The balance of power, defined for nearly a half century as East vs. West, had shifted, and the NATO alliance was suddenly faced with a dilemma. Should it dissolve, having served its purpose of protecting Western Europe and the United States from the Soviet Union, continue to exist in its current boundaries, or expand its arm of collective security into the former Warsaw Pact states? Ultimately its leaders chose to expand, in a decision that would have unforeseen consequences for the next two decades. The decision to expand, crafted in the mid 1990s by the Clinton Administration, led the United States down a path of unilateral security that antagonized Russia and ultimately destabilized countries caught between the pull of East and West. In making the decision to expand, NATO also transformed itself as an alliance, pledging to confront and defend against a completely different kind of enemy than it had been designed for. This new mission statement would make NATO a leader in a conflict outside its borders and antagonize Russia even further.

The decision to enlarge NATO was made after a prolonged debate within the Clinton administration. The parties against expansion argued that it was too much too soon, that expansion into Eastern Europe was not necessary for European stability and would only antagonize Russia, leading to instability. Those in favor of the move believed that Eastern Europe's newly liberated democracies would benefit from the

strong Western alliance, and that the United States was obligated to strengthen its support of the region through NATO or risk further instability. The decision to enlarge was eventually supported by NATO's major allies abroad, for the cause of strengthening democracy and increasing Europe's security.

Both the Russian people and government officials responded to all of this with deep, emotional outrage, with pronounced feelings of betrayal and animosity towards the expanding West. NATO expansion was viewed as a threat to Russia's security, as its traditional security sphere was integrated into a Western military bloc with no clear intentions of including Russia. The eagerness of Eastern European countries to abandon their traditional ties with Russia was seen by the Russian people as a major betrayal. The Russian government felt weak and exploited by an arrogant European security alliance led by the United States. As NATO extended its arm into the former territories of the Soviet Union, into countries with ancient historical ties with Russia, it largely dismissed Russia's cries of resistance. The United States, with one hand, was assisting Russia through difficult economic and political reform, while the other was slowly eroding Russia's security sphere through NATO expansion. This, at least, was Russia's perception, despite any positive intentions of the Western powers.

It is the goal of this thesis to show that, whatever the intentions, the decision to expand NATO after the fall of the Soviet Union has had a very negative impact on contemporary U.S.-Russian relations, culminating in the Russia-Georgia War of August 2008. NATO's dismissive attitude led to an increasingly isolated, reactionary Russia that saw its status as a world power vanish during the Kosovo War. Russia was left desperate to reassert itself as NATO began to implement its courtship of the Caucasus.

Russia's actions in the Russia-Georgia War of August 2008 were a direct consequence of NATO's unilateral security policy, as Russia heavily tried to reassert itself as a world power.

This paper will track events through the 1990s and 2000s, focusing initially on how the decision to expand NATO was made and how that ultimately led NATO to redefine its mission. That new mission led NATO to intervene militarily in Serbia in 1999. The Kosovo War was a turning point for relations between Russia and NATO, for it had the effect of justifying many of Russia's concerns and fears concerning NATO expansion and its new role in the world, and what that meant about Russia's role. The paper will go on to address how Russia would continue to respond to NATO expansion in this new light after the War in Kosovo, as NATO strengthened its ties with a traditional Russian ally, Georgia. It will attempt to show that the Russia-Georgia War was partially a consequence of NATO's policy of expansion initiated over a decade earlier. By invading Georgia and acting as a global watch dog, Russia was attempting to send a clear message to the West that NATO expansion needed to stop. However, Russia's violence in Georgia was a very blunt, clumsy way to send a political message to the West. Russia's heavy handed action in Georgia did not improve its standing abroad, or justify it as a rational power player in the West's eyes. In conclusion, the paper will examine what could be done differently by NATO and Russia to avoid similar conflict in the future by forming a closer relationship.

In addressing this issue, this paper has relied on a variety of materials. Apart from traditional print media, a wide expanse of scholarly online databases has been used as source material for this paper. In studying the Clinton administration's

arguments for expanding NATO, the electronic archives of the Clinton Presidential Library were used to examine correspondence between President Clinton and the Senate. Various media archives, such as those of the British Broadcasting Corporation, Reuters, and the New York Times were utilized for an accurate depiction of events as they unfolded during various crises, such as the Kosovo and Russia-Georgia Wars. Western and Russian media outlets were also examined in an attempt to conclude how each power was viewing the other during these crises. The political journal *Russia in Global Affairs* has been utilized to a great extent so as to examine as closely as possible the Russian perspective on the area covered.

This thesis will attempt to promote an understanding of not only the political moves of this international struggle, but the reactions and viewpoints of the people watching their governments in action. Actions taken by NATO and the West have elicited very strong responses from the Russian people. This must be taken into consideration if NATO wishes to avoid continuing to appear as an aggressor and threat to a vast, global population. Russia too needs to consider the implications of its heavy handed actions on the world stage if it truly wants to emerge as a respected global leader. In order for these two blocs to reconcile in the future, NATO must undergo serious reform and abandon its unilateral past in favor of bilateral relations with Russia, while Russia must cease its practice of using blunt shows of force to dictate foreign policy.

## Chapter 1

### The Initiation of NATO Expansion

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, many argued that NATO had served its purpose and needed to retire. It had witnessed the demise of its ideological enemy, the Warsaw Pact, and a triumphant West claimed victory in the Cold War. What role was NATO now going to play since it no longer faced an enemy? In 1997, the Clinton Administration determined that role by pledging the U.S.'s support to continued NATO expansion into Eastern Europe. This decision was made independently by the Clinton Administration, and not only cemented NATO's role into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also redefined the NATO mission. This chapter will discuss the forces within the administration that prompted it to embrace NATO expansion, the method they went about supporting it, and subsequent arguments that arose both for and against growth of the NATO alliance.

To begin with, the initial debate on NATO expansion began in the early 1990's and was restricted largely to the Clinton administration. During Clinton's first term, he was anxious to make his mark in foreign policy, and Margaret Warner argues,

Soon a furious debate began within the administration over whether expanding NATO was a good idea. This was somewhat odd because there was no pressure from any other quarter - not from allies, or the public, or Congress. In fact, there was no substantial debate going on anywhere else except inside the administration.<sup>1</sup>

The major voices in the argument were those of Strobe Talbott and Madeline Albright.

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. pp. 117-118

Talbott, serving as the head of the State Department office that dealt with the former Soviet Union, was against expansion, arguing that Russia would view it as hostile.<sup>2</sup> Talbott's rejection of expansion was joined by a formidable voice, that of George F. Kennan, the founder of the U.S.'s policy of containment towards the Soviet Union during the cold war. He adamantly rejected the idea of NATO expansion, stating that, "...expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era."<sup>3</sup> In an opinion piece published in the New York Times, Kennan argued that expansion of NATO would strengthen non-democratic forces in Russia, undermine the current liberal democratic reform taking place, and restore a cold-war attitude to East-West relations.<sup>4</sup> There were also opponents to expansion within the Pentagon, who feared NATO expansion could potentially undermine the alliance's military effectiveness.<sup>5</sup> Madeline Albright, first the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and then Clinton's Secretary of State, was herself a Czech refugee and argued strongly in favor of NATO expansion, as the initial three countries being considered for admission were Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.<sup>6</sup> She argued that not expanding NATO would shatter confidence Eastern Europe's confidence in Western Democracy, making them feel left out of a strong allied system, and that NATO expansion would deter conflict and increase international stability.<sup>7</sup> There were also voices in the U.S. senate arguing that NATO should use expansion to secure victory in

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<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion, pp. 117-118

<sup>3</sup> Kennan, George. "A Fateful Error." New York Times, 5 February 1996

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Goldgeier, James. Not Whether but When, pp. 74-75

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion, p 130

<sup>7</sup> Mitchel, Alison. "Albright Seeks Early Vote in Senate on Larger NATO." New York Times 08 Oct.. 1997.



the Cold War by absorbing the Soviet Union's former sphere of influence and security.<sup>8</sup> <sup>7</sup>

The debate was eventually won by those arguing for expansion, and the issue became one of when, not if. The issue was not made public until early in Clinton's second term, and steps taken in early 1997 kept it largely under the control of the administration.

During Clinton's re-election campaign against Republican Bob Dole, both candidates argued strongly for NATO expansion as a foreign policy objective. Polling of U.S. voters revealed them to be largely uninterested in the issue, except for the demographic of Americans of Central and East European ancestry, who were strongly in favor of it due to animosity towards the Soviet Union, directed largely at Russia.<sup>9</sup> The website of the Polish American Congress states:

Over the last 50 years the Polish American Congress fought on the political front, by informing and educating all who would listen -- of Poland's rightful place in the Western community and of human rights violations and the undue suffering of the Polish people under the Soviets... The issue of NATO expansion and inclusion of Poland in the Alliance has been in the forefront of Polish American Congress' activity,<sup>10</sup>

There are roughly twenty million similarly minded voters in America, largely located in fourteen electoral vote-heavy states.<sup>11</sup> This makes them a powerful demographic to appeal to, and Clinton, coming out victorious in the 1996 election, quickly moved forward with his plans for expansion, influenced by this and other lobbies.

Support for NATO expansion also came from Eastern Europe itself. In April 1993 several East European leaders were visiting Washington DC and were able to meet

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<sup>8</sup> Goldgeier, James M. *Not Whether but When*. p. 81

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. *NATO Expansion*. pp 124, 125

<sup>10</sup> "Review of the Role of the Polish American Congress in Bringing Poland into NATO." Polish American Congress. 08 May 2008

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

privately with President Clinton.<sup>12</sup> They argued strongly for NATO expansion, seeing it as essential to destroying Stalin's legacy of a divided Europe.<sup>13</sup> One very vocal supporter of NATO expansion present at this visit was the president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel. In 1993 he argued persuasively for full membership in NATO, as opposed to a milder association such as the Partnership for Peace Program, arguing, "Any dialogue on associate or observer status is welcome but cannot exclude our eventual full membership. We will continue to express our opinion at the top of our voice."<sup>14</sup> In 1999 following the integration of The Czech Republic into NATO, he argued, "Only NATO membership means the fall of the Iron Curtain. Only this is the end of the violent division of the world."<sup>15</sup> NATO expansion clearly had the support of the East European leadership and the Clinton Administration must have taken this into account, and been encouraged by the support.

On February 24, 1997, President Clinton sent a letter to the chairmen of The Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, and The House Committee on International Relations and National Security. In it, he formally notified Congress of plans for NATO expansion, and provided a brief defense of the issue. His letter argued:

By admitting new states to the alliance, NATO will limit and help eliminate a potentially destabilizing vacuum in Europe, widening the circle of like-minded nations sharing common values and willing to shoulder common responsibilities and burdens.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Goldgeier, James. Not Whether but When. p. 20

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>14</sup> Perlez, Jane. "Czech Leader Pushes for Open NATO." New York Times 22 Oct. 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Green, Peter S. "President Urges Czechs to Support Campaign: Havel's NATO Worries." New York Times 23 Apr. 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Office of the Press Secretary. "Text of a Letter From the President to the Chairmen of the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services and The House Committees on International Relations and National Security." Clinton Presidential Materials Project 24 Feb 1997. para 3

President Clinton also discussed an upcoming NATO summit in Madrid, on July 8-9, where he would call upon NATO to accept three new members by 1999.<sup>17</sup> Shortly after, on May 15th, another letter was sent discussing details of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, announced the day before as an agreement between NATO Secretary General Solana and the Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov.<sup>18</sup> The act states that NATO and Russia do not view each other as adversaries, but that "NATO and Russia will consult and coordinate regularly and, where possible and appropriate, act jointly."<sup>19</sup> However, it shies away from suggesting any strong integration of the two, stating:

NATO retains its full prerogatives. While Russia will work closely with NATO, it will not work within NATO. The Act makes clear that Russia has no veto over alliance decision and NATO retains the right to act independently when it so chooses.<sup>20</sup>

These two letters sent a strong message to the U.S. Congress that the Clinton Administration had strong ambitions for NATO expansion and had already taken steps in that direction. As mentioned before, this issue hadn't been debated thoroughly outside of the White House, and the U.S. congress was caught slightly off guard. As part of the ratification process of adding new member states to NATO, the legislatures of all existing member states must vote their approval.<sup>21</sup> By the time Congress had been informed, President Clinton had already taken steps to notify NATO allies of the U.S.'s desire for expansion and made contact with Russia on future Russia-NATO relations, while no

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<sup>17</sup> Office of the Press Secretary. "Text of a Letter From the President to the Chairmen of the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services and The House Committees on International Relations and National Security." Clinton Presidential Materials Project 24 Feb 1997. para 5

<sup>18</sup> Office of the Press Secretary. "Fact Sheet: NATO-Russia Founding Act." Clinton Presidential Materials Project 15 May. 1997. para 1

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. para 3-4

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. para 14

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. 1998. p 119

major speech had yet been made to inform the public.<sup>22</sup> In June of 1997, with the summit meeting in Madrid just weeks away, Senators John Warner and Kay Hutchison represented some twenty senators in a letter to President Clinton in which they questioned not only the administration's means and logic behind NATO expansion, but also the nature of the new relationship with Russia.<sup>23</sup> While President Clinton did respond to the letter, he waited until September 12, 1997 to do so, two months after the Madrid summit where he publicly pledged America's support for NATO expansion.<sup>24</sup> This effectively forced the U.S. senate to vote in favor of expansion, for if the United States were to back down from such a public announcement it would come away with severely damaged international prestige.

It is clear that the Clinton Administration took NATO expansion very seriously, spent the first term ironing out its approach to the issue, and implemented it very early in the second term. Both Congress and the public were left largely out of the loop initially, with congress especially having little time to respond to or discuss the issue formally before President Clinton's pledge of support in Madrid. By mid 1997, NATO's place in the post cold-war period had been largely determined with little resistance. However, this was not the only change NATO underwent during this time. In his reply to Senator Warner and Hutchison's letter, President Clinton responded to the questions and concerns the group of twenty senators had posed to him in June. His letter addressed the need for NATO expansion by broadly redefining the challenges and enemies NATO would confront, listing such threats as, "rogue states, the poisoned appeal of extreme

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<sup>22</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. p 118

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p 119

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p 130

nationalism, and ethnic, racial, and religious hatreds."<sup>25</sup> In doing so, he not only cemented the position of NATO in the 21st century, but changed its overall mission as a defensive organization. The following paragraphs will address the administrations overall defense of NATO expansion and its international role in order to define NATO's new position in world affairs. The arguments come from within the administration, from the State and Defense departments, articulated in President Clinton's letter to congress.

The argued benefits of NATO expansion fell into two spheres; protection against non-traditional security threats and the support and defense of democracy in Europe. In defining NATO's modern military threat, the administration stated that a safe, undivided Europe equaled safety for the United States; "A larger, stronger NATO that includes Europe's new democracies will be even better able to provide for Europe's security and make America safer."<sup>26</sup> NATO expansion would increase this security in two ways. First, countries with NATO aspirations must meet several guidelines set by NATO before membership is considered, including strengthening democratic institutions, establishing civilian control of their militaries, and solving all border and ethnic disputes with their neighbors.<sup>27</sup> This would encourage democratic development in Eastern Europe, decrease ethnic tension, and create an atmosphere favorable to NATO influence. Secondly, once countries were firmly established members of NATO, the capacity for multi-national cooperation would greatly increase as NATO moved to guard against the

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<sup>25</sup> The White House. "President Clinton's Response to Senators' Questions on NATO Enlargement." 12 Sep. 1997. Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

spread of nuclear weapons and address other security threats.<sup>28</sup> A militarily cohesive, compatible, and expanding US/European alliance would only strengthen NATO's abilities and influence in the world. Expansion would secure the place of democracy in Europe, encourage democratic reform, and "erase Stalin's artificial dividing line."<sup>29</sup> This would increase security not only within the NATO alliance, but throughout Europe. The administration took the argument further, saying that a decision not to enlarge NATO would actually weaken security and reinforce Stalin's dividing line. Not to expand, "would represent an abandonment of NATO's founding principle... that the alliance remains open to any other European State in a position to...contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area."<sup>30</sup> They argued that excluding any state from membership would jeopardize the integrity of the alliance. In making these claims, the administration was clear to acknowledge that the inclusion of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary by 1999 would only be the initial wave of NATO expansion, and that more countries would be invited. Since expansion was what would make NATO stronger, and a retreat from that would make it weaker, NATO must "maintain an open door."<sup>31</sup>

The discussion of NATO enlargement presented by the Clinton Administration also made some interesting arguments concerning Russia. Among the concerns listed by the group of twenty Senators who initially contacted President Clinton on NATO expansion were the nature of the Russia Founding Act and how much influence it would

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<sup>28</sup> The White House. "President Clinton's Response to Senators' Questions on NATO Enlargement." 12 Sep. 1997 Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

grant Russia over NATO and its decision making process. The Clinton administration stated in its response:

The Founding Act, in establishing a Permanent Joint Council between NATO and Russia, provides for consultation, coordination, and, to the maximum extent possible, where appropriate, joint decision-making and action. The Founding Act is equally clear, however, that NATO retains its independence of decision-making and action at all times.<sup>32</sup>

This claim made it clear that the act has no real influence on NATO actions, and did not give Russia any real power with regards to decision making, but rather provided an official network through which the two bodies could communicate. NATO had ultimately conceded nothing, but the development of open channels of communication was an improvement over NATO's former relations with Russia and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The administration's argument towards Russia was largely positive, seeking to ease concerns that NATO expansion could incite Russian hardliners or hamper reform, stating, "Those who suggest this would be the case see Russian democracy as far more fragile than has proven the reality over the last few years."<sup>33</sup> One very interesting point is quickly made, however, in regards to future threats NATO could potentially face, "The Alliance must be prepared for other contingencies, including the possibility that Russia could abandon democracy and return to the threatening behavior of the Soviet period, although we see such a turn as unlikely."<sup>34</sup> The above statement shows that the Clinton administration could not be completely ambivalent towards Russia, and that NATO could not exclude Russia as a potential target. For NATO to remain actively planned for this contingency, Russia must be excluded as a

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<sup>32</sup> The White House. "President Clinton's Response to Senators' Questions on NATO Enlargement." 12 Sep. 1997 [Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security](#).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

potential alliance member.

The administration's argument clearly stated NATO's intended security goals and provided its justification for expansion. It was required to foster and strengthen democracy in Europe, both of current and aspiring member states. The increase of NATO's size would allow it to more efficiently confront the security threats facing the modern world: extreme nationalism, rogue states, the spread of nuclear weapons, and religious and ethnic hatred. It could also not completely reject the idea of a hostile Russia, but projected relations moving in a positive direction.

This vision of NATO, however, was much different from the NATO established during the Cold-War, which was a purely defensive organization focused on a singular aggressor, the Soviet Union. One of NATO's initial security goals was to confront the threat of a nuclear attack from the Soviet Union by creating a nuclear umbrella across America's allies in Europe. It was a major configuration of the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) during the Cold War. Since an attack on one NATO member state was considered an attack on all according to Article V of the alliance's constitution, the United States was effectively extending its nuclear deterrent into Western Europe through NATO. This newly defined threat to NATO, however, was a much broader concept. NATO had now been redefined as a system to confront non-traditional security threats, in an almost complete reversal of its original goal. This would vastly influence how NATO operations would be based and carried out in the future, and this will be the focus of subsequent chapters of this thesis. Before this topic is addressed, however, it is important to discuss the response to calls for NATO expansion.



While the major arguments for and against NATO expansion had already played out in the Clinton administration, a similar debate was carried out in the civilian population following the announcement of NATO expansion. As stated earlier, a very vocal opponent was George F. Kennan. Another powerful source of opposition was Russia, whose view will be discussed in the following chapter. As for the civilian response, the arguments for and against were diverse. An interesting view of the arguments coming out of the intellectual sphere was seen in the summer of 1997, coming from the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. The following arguments were made at the center, and are representative of the wide swath of positions on NATO expansion.

At the Miller Center of Public Affairs on August 6, 1997, Lawrence J. Korb argued in favor of NATO expansion. His arguments focused around three key issues: the role of providing security in Europe, the defense of new democracies, and the moral obligation the U.S. faced to continue NATO expansion. To begin with, he claimed that there was no other body at that time capable of maintaining European security.<sup>35</sup> He claimed that the European Union was not ready to take over the responsibility of collective security, and as the force that keeps U.S. troops in Europe, NATO continued to serve an active function in world security.<sup>36</sup> As for the threats a modern NATO faced, he argued that debate is unwinnable and that NATO's true function should be maintaining European security rather than focus on a specific threat. He made the strong claim, "no one else other than the United States is ready to maintain stability in

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<sup>35</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. p. 50

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 50

Europe.”<sup>37</sup> Korb goes on to stress the importance of Poland’s integration into the alliance, arguing that a Germany flanked by friendly forces would secure its role in Europe.<sup>38</sup> In a similar vein, Korb stressed the importance of democratic stability that the NATO presence provided, foreshadowing the strong argument the Clinton Administration would make to Congress in September.<sup>39</sup>

Korb then shifted his argument in a new, as yet unseen direction, towards a more moral argument defending NATO expansion. He claimed that since the Cold War was waged to liberate the people of Eastern Europe the United States was morally obligated to follow through on that commitment and provide the newly liberated countries with NATO protection.<sup>40</sup> To withhold NATO expansion would be to renege on the moral responsibility of the United States, and damage the international prestige earned with the victory in the Cold War. NATO expansion was also somewhat morally obligated to provide assistance for the European Union. Korb argues against using the European Union as the vehicle with which to bring Eastern European states into a broader democratic system, as it is not ready to bear that financial burden, while NATO is more than ready and willing.<sup>41</sup> He closes his argument with a quick jab at Russia, arguing that NATO expansion was preferable earlier, while Russia was still weak, thus restricting a future, stronger Russia’s strategic options.<sup>42</sup> This argument stays largely consistent with that of the Clinton administration, with the included moral twist and final comment on Russia. There was clearly a common argument and mindset among those favoring

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<sup>37</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. p. 57

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 51

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 51

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 57

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 60

NATO expansion.

Ambassador Jonathan Dean put forward major arguments against NATO expansion at the Miller Center of Public Affairs on November 12, 1997. His arguments centered around the legitimacy of NATO at its then current size, and the unnecessary risks he believed expansion would involve. He focused on potential backlash from Russia, and the nature of democratic integration that would be most efficient in Eastern Europe. He began with the assertion that, “NATO in its present form and membership continues to be useful and important, but NATO enlargement will be costly and risky. Moreover, every one of the costs and risks are completely unnecessary.”<sup>43</sup> He argued that NATO in its then current state provided effective European security as it was already involved with non-member states through established bilateral security agreements, such as the Partnership for Peace program.<sup>44</sup> He also claimed that there was no imminent crisis in Europe that required haste on the part of NATO, but that the integration most Eastern European countries would benefit from would be the social and economic security provided by EU membership.<sup>45</sup> Membership in the EU would reinforce democratic establishments and also provide economic incentive and reward, while NATO membership would merely increase security in an already stable Europe facing no organized enemy. Ambassador Dean’s argument then shifted towards Russian concerns, with a strong correlation to World War II. He argued that NATO expansion into the Baltic States would mirror German tactical movements prior to WWII, sending a potential message that, “Russia is surrounded by hostile countries and that Russia has

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<sup>43</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. p. 110

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 110

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 110

been duped and cheated by the Western countries with the end of the Cold War.”<sup>46</sup>

This thesis is largely inclined to agree with the arguments against NATO expansion. In the mid 1990s, NATO was still a strong international body, fully capable of influencing security and democracy outside its member states. While initial NATO expansion was eventually accepted by Russia, despite clearly expressed concerns against it, it is this paper's opinion that subsequent waves of NATO expansion have ultimately damaged U.S. Russian relations. The following chapters will attempt to show how NATO expansion became an increasing source of friction between the United States and Russia, focusing on the 1999 NATO Bombing campaign of Serbia, the impact of NATO's expanding presence in the Caucasus, and the Russia-Georgia War of 2008.

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<sup>46</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., ed. NATO Expansion. p. 112

## Chapter 2

### NATO Expansion and the Kosovo War: Russia's Response

As NATO expansion developed into a reality during the 1990s, Russia was not silent on the matter. Expansion was almost universally condemned by Russian political, media, and private spheres. This chapter will examine the Russian response to NATO expansion, discussing those of Yeltsin and his government, and views of other political parties. The chapter will then shift to a discussion of Russia's reaction to the 1999 NATO bombing campaign of Serbia and its impact on U.S.-Russian relations. The military action taken by NATO largely confirmed Russia's concerns over NATO expansion and set the stage for Russia NATO relations in the 20th century.

After the fall of the Soviet Union one of Russia's primary concerns was maintaining its integrity as a world power. In his book *Russia Faces NATO Expansion*, J. L. Black writes:

In terms of international status, the Russian Federation (RF) inherited everything from the USSR except its territorial integrity, secure borders and a sense of being an impregnable power... From the point of view of Russian strategists, their borders were left more naked than they had been since the late eighteenth century, making the attitude of NATO a central issue for Moscow during the entire decade.<sup>47</sup>

As early as 1991 NATO was reviewing its role in the international sphere following the break-up of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>48</sup> While a concrete plan of expansion was not to be formalized until 1997 with the backing of the United States, it was nonetheless an issue Russia concentrated on and spoke out against throughout the 1990s. Yeltsin's

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<sup>47</sup> Black, J.L. Russia Faces NATO Expansion. p. 7

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 8

government was particularly vocal, with his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev voicing some of the earliest protests, despite his solid pro-Western political stance. In 1993 he published an article in the journal *NATO Review*, expressing concern that an expanding NATO could be driven by ideology to isolate Russia. He argued:

It is, therefore, particularly important not to apply the previous stereotype - the necessity of holding an ideological Soviet power in check - to the new Russia. All those who look to the future, and think not only of our future but also of their own, will stand to gain. That future lies in an alliance between a strong new Russia and other democratic states.<sup>49</sup>

It would be wrong, he argues, to treat Russia the same way the Soviet Union was treated. NATO should not be used as a tool against Russia in the same way it was used against the Soviet Union. In that same year Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service published a detailed report on the impact of NATO expansion. The report argued that NATO had traditionally been seen in Russia as an aggressive enemy, and the psychological effect of its expansion would be to create "an insurmountable barrier between Russia and the rest of Europe."<sup>50</sup>

President Yeltsin himself became a very vocal, but inconsistent opponent of NATO expansion. He saw it of such a great concern that he mentioned it in his *Annual Address to the Federal Assembly* in both 1994 and 1995. Even at the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1996, he spoke out against NATO expansion, saying:

Russia still views negatively the expansion plans of NATO. At the same time, however, we recognize -- we pay tribute to the readiness exhibited by NATO countries, despite those difficulties, to reach an agreement with Russia and take into account our interests. And that is precisely the rationale of the situation we're experiencing now, the difficulty of negotiations between Russia and NATO and also the essence, the thrust, of the Founding Act itself.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Kozyrev, Andrei. "The New Russia and the Atlantic Alliance" *NATO Review* 1.

<sup>50</sup> Black, J.L. *Russia Faces NATO Expansion*. p. 9

<sup>51</sup> Yeltsin, Boris. "Remarks." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*. 27 May. 1997.

His inconsistent position was exposed, however, by the fact that in a 1993 visit to Poland, he publicly stated his support of a Polish bid to join NATO.<sup>52</sup> Foreign Minister Kozyrev was forced to comply, stating, "It's up to Poland to decide and up to NATO to decide,"<sup>53</sup> However, in October, Yeltsin undermined that statement with a letter to President Clinton expressing Russia's opposition to any form of NATO expansion into Eastern Europe.<sup>54</sup> Yeltsin's waffle on the matter was the result of his desperate attempts to curry favor with the West and maintain domestic support at the same time, with what one Russian analyst has called, his "please everybody tactics."<sup>55</sup>

Russia's government was not the only political force opposed to NATO expansion. In fact, this was one of the few issues that all Russian political parties seemed able to agree upon. J. L. Black writes, "From the psychological standpoint, all political groups in Russia claimed that their country had been stabbed in the back...by a NATO that had promised not to do precisely what it was now doing."<sup>56</sup> Both the Russian Communist party and pro-western countries saw NATO expansion as either Western intimidation or exploitation of a weakened Russia.

One argument often cited by opponents to expansion was that in 1990, NATO had promised Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that in exchange for a unified Germany's presence in NATO a guarantee would be made that NATO would not expand beyond its eastern border. Then U.S. Secretary of State James Baker assured Gorbachev in a

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<sup>52</sup> Perlez, Jane. "Yeltsin 'Understands' Polish Bid for a Role in NATO." New York Times. 26 Aug 1993.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Cohen, Roger. "Yeltsin Opposes Expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe." New York Times. 2 Oct. 1993.

<sup>55</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 39

<sup>56</sup> Black, J.L. Russia Faces NATO Expansion. p. 14

meeting that “there would be no extension of NATO’s jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east,” and agreed to Gorbachev’s statement that “Any extension of the zone of NATO is unacceptable.”<sup>57</sup> However, there was no official signed documentation of this agreement. While it is an argument often cited by Russian opposition to NATO expansion, it is the West’s response to deny the validity of the claim, or simply state that it was an agreement made between the United States and the Soviet Union, not Russia, and no longer applies to the current political situation.

Other arguments against expansion focused on rampant concerns in Russian political circles that as Eastern European countries gravitated towards NATO out of soviet-era fears of Russian domination, they would inherently change the nature of the alliance. There was also fear that gradual expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe would isolate Russia from the European Security Sphere.<sup>58</sup> In response to these fears, numerous alternatives to NATO expansion were suggested in Russia. They either focus on securing Russia-NATO relations, or by suggesting alternative security organizations. The following paragraphs will examine these alternatives, and end with the argument on Russia itself joining NATO.

Many alternative arguments focus on the role of Eastern European security. With Russians afraid of becoming isolated from the West as Eastern Europe became more and more integrated with NATO, some argued instead for a security guarantee supported by Russia and the West.<sup>59</sup> While NATO Expansion isolated factions and heightened tensions, a guarantee of security in Eastern Europe would counter any need

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<sup>57</sup> Goldgeier, James. Not Whether But When. p. 15

<sup>58</sup> Black, J.L. Russia Faces NATO Expansion. p.18

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 31-32



for feelings to fall under a Western or Russian security sphere. It would make security in the region multi-polar and encourage cooperation between the West, Eastern Europe, and Russia, rather than causing division. In 1997 Yeltsin publicly called for Europe to consider, “an effective security system that included Russia,” and as early as 1995, Foreign Minister Kozyrev argued for “a pan-European security system - a Europe without dividing lines.”<sup>60</sup> Kozyrev had also argued that NATO expansion ran the risk of undermining the United Nations.<sup>61</sup> With its permanent position on the United Nations Security Council, Russia has always been a strong advocate of its use over NATO. Other alternatives for NATO expansion focused on using The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as the main arm of European Security instead.<sup>62</sup>

Other arguments for alternatives focus on the idea that if NATO were to expand it must create more formal relations with Russia. Russian politicians called for concrete treaties with NATO.<sup>63</sup> While the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 established formal lines of communication, we have already seen how it put no limitations on NATO authority and gave Russia no real power. What Russia really wanted was a relationship where they could have some say over who could be considered for NATO membership, and some form of veto power over NATO decisions.

Some of the most interesting calls for an alternative security system argued that Russia should be integrated into NATO. This option was strongly considered in Russian military circles in 1994, and in 1997, while acknowledging the chances to be

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<sup>60</sup> Black, J.L. Russia Faces NATO Expansion. p. 12

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 44

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 24

very slim, Russia's Council for Foreign and Defense Policy argued that Russian integration into NATO would transform the organization from a military bloc into a pan-European security system.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly enough, as early as 1994 Yeltsin himself may have put this option on the table. In the same letter in which he expressed Russian opposition to NATO integration of Poland discussed earlier, he linked Poland acceptance to Russian acceptance. Roger Cohen wrote in an article for *The New York Times*, that:

the letter went on to remind Western leaders that Russia had also expressed an interest in joining the Atlantic alliance and to make clear that President Yeltsin would view the admission of Poland or the Czech Republic, *without simultaneous NATO membership for Russia* (emphasis added), as unacceptable.<sup>65</sup>

It is very interesting to note that, as early as 1993, President Yeltsin himself seemed to express Russian interest in joining NATO.

One final argument regarding Russia's position on expansion has less to do with policy and more with emotion. For Russia, the fact that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were so anxious to join NATO was an issue of national pride. Russians felt betrayed that these countries would so quickly seek closer ties with the West rather than with Russia, after Russia had sacrificed so many lives to liberate Eastern Europe from the Nazis.<sup>66</sup> One Russian commentator wrote that, "[NATO expansion] generated a sense of injured isolation. Russia was alone in Europe. Russia was abandoned by its former allies."<sup>67</sup> This was a very strong emotional aspect of Russia's response that should not be ignored.

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<sup>64</sup> Black, J.L. Russia Faces NATO Expansion. p. 34

<sup>65</sup> Cohen, Roger. "Yeltsin Opposes Expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe." New York Times. 2 Oct. 1993.

<sup>66</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 9

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 9

At this point, this chapter has discussed not only the basic Russian concerns over NATO expansion, but the fact that those concerns were widespread. They were not limited to a specific political faction or party, but permeated most political thought, and elicited an emotional response from the Russian people. Russia feared that an expanding NATO would isolate Russia from the European security system, amid concerns that it was being taken advantage of while in a weaker position of power. Russia argued that it needed stronger ties to NATO granting it some say in NATO activities. There was much concern in Russia that an expanding NATO meant an expanding Western assertion of dominance in the region. What happened in 1999, during the NATO bombing campaign of Serbia, confirmed many of the concerns Russia had expressed. Russia watched as NATO acted offensively in a traditionally Russian sphere of influence, not only in a manner that violated NATO's own charter, but undermined any relationship established by the NATO-Russia Founding Act. It is essential to consider Russia's reaction to the NATO military campaign here as an introduction to the relationship Russia and NATO would face in the 21st century.

In the spring and summer of 1999, NATO launched a bombing campaign of Serbia in response to Slobodan Milosevic's attacks of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo. This marked the first time NATO went to war in its fifty year history.<sup>68</sup> Before discussing Russia's immediate response, it is important to analyze the full implication of this bombing campaign.

By taking military action against Milosevic's ethnic cleansing, NATO was fulfilling its newly stated purpose of confronting "the poisoned appeal of extreme

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<sup>68</sup> Norris, John. Collision Course. p. ix-x

nationalism, and ethnic, racial, and religious hatreds."<sup>69</sup> However, by doing so NATO violated its own charter. Article I of NATO's charter states:

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute *in which they may be involved* (emphasis added) by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.<sup>70</sup>

Article V goes on to establish:

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 and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.<sup>71</sup>

These two articles taken together establish that NATO is a defensive organization, which will only attack in retaliation to an attack on one of its member states. The bombing of Serbia was an offensive action taken outside NATO's borders, and was not in response to any hostility towards NATO from Milosevic. While NATO's goals had been radically altered by the Clinton administration, no steps had been taken to alter the NATO charter to legally defend or define its new mission. Also, in using NATO as the military force to confront Milosevic, the West showed Russia that they were more comfortable with violating their own charter than using an alternate source of force, such as the United Nations. This aspect of the bombing campaign, as well as the treatment of Russia during it, did much to confirm Russian concerns over NATO expansion.

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<sup>69</sup> The White House. "President Clinton's Response to Senators' Questions on NATO Enlargement." 12 Sep. 1997 [Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security](#)

<sup>70</sup> "The North Atlantic Treaty." [North Atlantic Treaty Organization On-Line Library](#). 4 Apr. 1949.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

At this point it is important to establish Russia's attitude towards NATO in Serbia. It was not Russia's goal to defend the actions of Slobodan Milosevic. Russia has, however, maintained a very close historical relationship with Serbia, and the public fury in Russia over NATO aggression could not be ignored by the government.<sup>72</sup> Russia was also compelled to oppose NATO's actions because of its underlying concern that NATO was trying to establish itself as the main security force in a traditionally Russian sphere of influence, denying Russia's role as a world power and potential enforcer in the region.<sup>73</sup> Russia was opposing NATO not in defense of Milosevic's actions, but in defense of its own security interests, calling instead for a UN presence and increased Russia/NATO cooperation.<sup>74</sup> John Norris argues, "In reality, what Russia wanted most during the Kosovo crisis was to make itself heard." Why was Russia not heard during this crisis? What were the actions taken by NATO during the bombing campaign that left Russia feeling so isolated? Throughout the conflict, NATO exhibited a clear pattern of ignoring Russia's protests and calls for alternate means of resolving the issue, and attempting to undermine and prevent any Russian presence in the area. In a report on the Russian reaction to Kosovo, Vladimir Brovkin wrote that Nato signaled:

...to the Russians that their reaction was not very important or relevant. The U.S. would pursue its NATO policy and the Russians would just have to live with it. That was the message to Russian (sic) in March 1999.<sup>75</sup>

NATO's bombing campaign began on 24 March after the breakdown of final negotiations just days before between U.S. representatives and Slobodan Milosevic

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<sup>72</sup> Black, J.L. Russia Faces NATO Expansion. p. 143, 114

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 145

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 147

<sup>75</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 7

regarding the ethnic tensions in Kosovo. According to John Norris in his book *Collision Course*, the situation in Kosovo was one of the closest modern examples of “ancient ethnic hatred,” with centuries of conflict over the region between the Orthodox Christian Serbs, and Muslim Kosovar Albanians.<sup>76</sup> Kosovo was then an autonomous province within Serbia, but Serbia’s leader had for a long time been using nationalist rhetoric against the ethnic Albanians to stir up the Serbian population in opposition to them.<sup>77</sup> Western concern over armed conflict between the two groups, fueled by Milosevic’s resistant stance and use of the Serbian military, prompted NATO intervention. The refusal of Milosevic to back down led to the bombing campaign.

The initial bombing runs by NATO planes concentrated on Serbia’s air defense systems, and gradually increased in intensity through June of 1999.<sup>78</sup> By April 2<sup>nd</sup>, government buildings in central Belgrade were targeted, in early May power facilities and other infrastructure targets were bombed throughout Serbia, and at the height of the campaign NATO had over 1,000 planes operating above Kosovo.<sup>79</sup> Initially, Milosevic was content to wait out the bombing campaign out of disregard for the suffering of his own citizens, but by early June the bombings had taken their toll, and on June 3<sup>rd</sup> Serbia accepted NATO’s demands, ending the violence against the Kosovar Albanians.<sup>80</sup> However, this was by no means a smooth military operation, as it faced conflict from within NATO itself and harsh opposition from Russia throughout the campaign.

As an alliance, NATO was divided on the issue of attacking Serbia. The French

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<sup>76</sup> Norris, John. *Collision Course*. p. xix

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. xx

<sup>78</sup> "World: Europe NATO Bombs Serbia." *BBC News*. 5 Mar. 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Norris, John. *Collision Course*. p. 21, 81, 115

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 155, 192

questioned the attack on a traditional ally, and disagreements across the alliance made it “reluctant to unleash the sorts of wholesale bombing that commanders thought would force Milosevic to yield.”<sup>81</sup> At times, separate meetings between Russian and American representatives during major political gatherings left NATO’s European allies feeling isolated, fearing a bilateral relationship between Russia and the U.S. was all that was going on.<sup>82</sup> The West also used considerable pressure to keep the UN from getting involved militarily, or expressing any anti-NATO rhetoric. Norris writes:

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan—under heavy pressure from the members of NATO to stay out of the fray—quickly distanced the United Nations, and his organization would have no immediate role in bringing the war to an end.<sup>83</sup>

Additional pressure was put on Annan when the United States made it clear that the UN would maintain no level of leadership in any peacekeeping body left in Kosovo after the conflict, but rather NATO would make up the core of any force.<sup>84</sup> Annan eventually “pleaded with the United States to leave the United Nations some room to maintain its institutional integrity and independence.”<sup>85</sup> Throughout the bombing campaign, criticisms arose in Western Capitals over the legality of NATO’s actions, as NATO had not received any authority from the UN or UN Security Council to carry out the actions. This issue is made even more pressing due to Article VII of NATO’s charter, which states:

This Treaty does not affect, and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations under the Charter of the Parties which are members of the United Nations, or the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the

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<sup>81</sup> Norris, John. Collision Course. p. 17

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 33

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 76

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 78

maintenance of international peace and security.<sup>86</sup>

While NATO's charter clearly recognizes the primacy of the UN Security Council on issues of international security, it is seen during the Serbia campaign as actively putting pressure on the UN to keep its distance. As established earlier, throughout the 1990s Russia voiced concern that NATO would try to establish itself as a primary security force, overriding the United Nations. It would seem here that Russia's concerns had been justified. Vladimir Brovkin notes on the Russian reaction to this:

By bombing Serbia NATO acted unilaterally without decision of the UN Security Council. Therefore [Boris Fedorof, Russia's former minister of Finance,] reasoned that NATO acted in violation of the International Law.<sup>87</sup>

Russia's resistance to NATO's actions was not limited to concerns over NATO's increased influence in the region, however. Throughout the conflict, Russia was actively trying to push for a diplomatic resolution to the crisis, only to have its concerns repeatedly dismissed by Western leaders.

On 23 May, a day before the bombing began, it was clear that Milosevic would not budge in response to NATO's demands and that NATO would strike. Anxious to prevent any such strike the Russian Prime Minister, Primakov, was on a flight to Washington DC to discuss the issue with U.S. Vice President Al Gore.<sup>88</sup> The two shared a phone call during the flight, during which the Vice President warned that the bombing would commence during Primakov's visit, essentially telling him that no negotiations could be made. The Russian plane made an immediate U-turn and headed

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<sup>86</sup> "The North Atlantic Treaty." North Atlantic Treaty Organization On-Line Library. 4 Apr. 1949.

<sup>87</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 13

<sup>88</sup> Norris, John. Collision Course. p. 1



home, eerily foreshadowing the nature of future relations during the conflict.<sup>89</sup> Before the day was out, Yeltsin sent Clinton a letter of concern which quickly summed up Russia's major concern with the events with the lines, "On what basis does NATO take it upon itself to decide the fates of peoples in sovereign states? Who gave it the right to act in the role of the guardian of order?"<sup>90</sup> By the second day of bombing Yeltsin attempted to involve the UN with a call for it to stop or condemn the air strikes, but could not override U.S. influence. The outrage was practically universal in Russia, with a poll finding that ninety percent of Russians believed NATO did not have the authority to launch such attacks without the permission of the UN.<sup>91</sup>

Throughout the attacks, Russia and the U.S. maintained open channels of discussion, but Russia reduced official communications with NATO by removing its military representative from NATO's headquarters.<sup>92</sup> It was the view of the U.S. that the bombing would continue until the violence against the Kosovar Albanians stopped and the Serbian Army was out of Kosovo, with plans for a NATO-led peace keeping force maintaining the safety of returning refugees.<sup>93</sup> The Russian media portrayed the NATO bombing as the violence driving refugees from the region, focusing on the destruction caused by the bombing raids.<sup>94</sup> Russia argued that the reports of ethnic violence against Albanians were exaggerated, and that it could work with Milosevic to

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<sup>89</sup> Lukin, Alexander. "From a Post-Soviet to a Russian Foreign Policy." Russia in Global Affairs. 16 Nov. 2008

<sup>90</sup> Norris, John. Collision Course. p. 3

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 14, 15

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 116

<sup>94</sup> Broykin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 20

push for international monitors in Kosovo.<sup>95</sup> On April 22, a Russian envoy succeeded in getting Milosevic to agree to a UN peacekeeping force, but the United States rejected the proposal, maintaining a firm argument that NATO had to lead any peacekeeping force in order for the refugees to feel safe enough to return.<sup>96</sup> These major arguments were tossed back and forth throughout the conflict, but by June, Russia and NATO had come to an agreement, with Russians maintaining an active presence in the NATO led peacekeeping force that would move in after the withdrawal of Serbian forces.<sup>97</sup>

This agreement, which was accepted by Milosevic and led to an end of the bombing campaign on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1999, was not the end of tension between Russia and the United States. While Russia's presence in NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) had been established in its agreement with NATO, there were no definitive guidelines set as to how deeply Russia would be involved. Feeling stung by NATO's unyielding nature during the bombing campaign, Russia was anxious not to be left out of KFOR, and made plans to assure itself a foothold in Serbia. Russia began to plan operation Trojan Horse, which involved transporting Russian soldiers from Bosnia into Serbia to take over the Slatina airfield outside of Pristina, the very airfield and city where NATO planned on establishing KFOR headquarters.<sup>98</sup> Russia was anxious for its own geographic sector of control in Kosovo, although NATO had plans for Russian troops to be dispersed among NATO troops, under NATO control.<sup>99</sup> While the Russian troops gathered on the Bosnian border with Serbia, NATO took notice and General Clark stated, "The danger

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<sup>95</sup> Norris, John. Collision Course. p. 17

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 59-60, 116

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 184

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 218, 242

<sup>99</sup> Broykin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 26

was that if the Russians got in first, they would claim their sector and then we would have lost NATO control over the mission.”<sup>100</sup>

What followed was a rather confusing series of events. On June 12<sup>th</sup> an order was given for the troops in Bosnia to move into Serbia, before NATO deployment, and they took the Slatina airfield.<sup>101</sup> NATO forces used Russia’s move as a reason to move in immediately, approaching the airfield as well.<sup>102</sup> While Russia's Foreign Minister Ivanov pledged that the troop movement had been a mistake and would be reversed, the troops stayed in place without reinforcement or supplies.<sup>103</sup> While this was seen as a defiant move towards NATO and received very positively by Russia’s population, the forces at the base were eventually forced to barter for food and water from NATO troops.<sup>104</sup> Russia ended up without its own sector, and had only 3,600 troops scattered throughout the American, French, German, and British sectors, with NATO controlling the airfield and all flight plans.<sup>105</sup>

As NATO neared the turn of the century it had established a peculiar place for itself on the international arena. It had just emerged from a war that violated its own charter in several ways. The war was offensive, in response to activity outside of NATO’s borders, and did not recognize the primacy of the United Nations. The war was largely driven by the United States, despite hesitations from prominent European NATO allies. It was carried out unilaterally, with stark deafness to any opposition,

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<sup>100</sup> Norris, John. Collision Course. p. 238

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 262

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 269

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 266, 287

<sup>104</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 30

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 290

which came mostly from Russia. NATO's supposed interest in working and communicating with Russia through the NATO-Russia Founding Act seemed mute, as Russian protests and alternate resolutions with Serbia were constantly dismissed. Even after the conflict was over and the role of Russian diplomacy in the peace process was acknowledged by the United States, Russia was given a tiny role in the peacekeeping process it tried so hard, and towards the end underhandedly, to be a part of.<sup>106</sup> NATO emerged from the conflict as an entity determined to establish itself as a major military force outside its borders that would not hesitate to put pressure on the United Nations or Russia to see its goals achieved. From the Russian perspective the NATO war in Serbia largely confirmed the fears regarding NATO that had been brewing throughout the 1990s. During the conflict, Yeltsin ceased all cooperation with NATO,<sup>107</sup> and Russia boycotted the massive NATO summit to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in April, 1999.<sup>108</sup>

However, the consequences of NATO's military campaign were not limited to foreign relations between Russia and the West. Russia's perceived weakness in the face of Western power did much to undermine the Liberal Democrats in charge, and added fire to the arguments of Communists and Nationalists in Russia. Vladimir Brovkin argues that there was a strong wave of anti-Americanism in Russia during and after the conflict, and that "NATO became a symbol of the enemy for Russian nationalists."<sup>109</sup> Alexander Lukin wrote of the situation in Russia after the Kosovo War:

The aftermath saw the disillusionment of the elites and the rank-and-file with the

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<sup>106</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme, p. 233

<sup>107</sup> "World: Europe NATO Bombs Serbia." BBC News, 25 Mar. 1999.

<sup>108</sup> "Crisis in the Balkans; Russia sends an Ex-Premier to Belgrade." New York Times, 22 Apr. 1999.

<sup>109</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme, p. 19

West's foreign policy and models of development, which gave a push to the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies and reduced the influence of liberal parties and the models of development they promoted.<sup>110</sup>

Nationalist and Communist parties in Russia fell into favor in the public eye for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, as Russia's Western driven reforms of the 1990s were showing no positive results.<sup>111</sup> Russia's economic crash of 1998 had already weakened the Russian population's faith in Western style reform, and the war of 1999 pushed them even farther from the forces of liberal democratic change associated with it.<sup>112</sup> There was also a great deal of animosity from within the Russian military towards Yeltsin's regime, over its abandonment at the Pristina Airfield.<sup>113</sup> Yeltsin's regime was viewed as a betrayer of Serbia and Russia itself, seen as having sold out to NATO, and Russia had definitively lost its status as a super power.<sup>114</sup>

NATO's actions in Kosovo had a profound impact on Russian foreign and domestic policy. Russian feelings of isolation and dismissal from NATO fueled domestic dissent and internal change. Yeltsin's regime and liberal democratic reform had been largely discredited by actions abroad and by the Russian media. This friction was not to dissipate during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite attempts by President Putin to establish more open cooperation with the West, NATO expansion continued in this unilateral fashion, deaf to Russia's concerns over NATO's path. The following chapter will discuss NATO's increasing interest in Russia's near borders, the Caucasus, a traditional strategic heartland of Russia's historical security sphere. Russia's experience

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<sup>110</sup> Lukin, Alexander From a Post-Soviet to a Russian Foreign Policy

<sup>111</sup> Brovkin, Vladimir. "Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War." NATO Research Fellowship Programme. p. 37

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 32

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p. 36, 11

during the 1990s, culminating in the war with Serbia, would greatly influence its stance towards and reaction to further NATO expansion.

## **Chapter 3**

### **NATO Courts the Caucasus**

This paper has so far established the nature of NATO-Russian relations in regards to Eastern Europe, and will show how the period of the 1990s has influenced the modern day NATO-Russia relationship. The 1990s established the unilateral approach towards global security taken by NATO and its attitude of dismissal towards Russian security concerns. However, NATO's aspirations have expanded beyond the borders of Eastern Europe and today focus, among other regions, in the Caucasus. A key country in this region is Georgia, which has established very strong ties to NATO over the past two decades. This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of NATO's history with Georgia, outlining Georgia's progression through NATO's various programs. Georgia's increasing cooperation with NATO, beginning in the early 1990s, has been a large factor in NATO's growing interest in the region, so it is important to view this history of interaction before moving on to a direct analysis of NATO's strategic interests in the region.

NATO contact with Georgia began almost immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In 1992 Georgia became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, (NACC) known since 1997 as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).<sup>115</sup> The EAPC serves as a link between NATO and non-member states through which they can receive consultation on security issues, with missions established at NATO's

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<sup>115</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.

Brussels headquarters.<sup>116</sup> This initial connection was expanded in 1994, when Georgia joined the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP), described as “a programme aimed at increasing security and defence cooperation between NATO and individual Partner countries.”<sup>117</sup> The Partnership for Peace program serves as a way for non-member states to develop a relationship NATO. The partner countries must make political pledges to NATO regarding the development of democracy in their countries, and in return NATO commits itself to military consultation if their country perceives a threat.<sup>118</sup> Although not full members of NATO, members of the Partnership for Peace program can cooperate in NATO-led military actions.<sup>119</sup> Glen E. Howard, in an article *NATO and the Caucasus: The Caspian Axis*, writes that the program, “is creating unprecedented military contacts between the Alliance and the newly independent states of the Caucasus.”<sup>120</sup> In 1995, Georgia strengthened this link by signing PfP Status of Forces Agreement.<sup>121</sup> This act legally established the rights of Georgian troops operating in other countries with NATO, indicating a relationship of anticipated involvement.<sup>122</sup> In 1999, Georgia became even more involved by joining the PfP Planning and Review Process, a move which NATO has applauded for, “[helping] develop the ability of its forces to work with NATO [and] build deployable units according to NATO standards and interoperable with Allied forces.”<sup>123</sup> These acts all signify a close and growing relationship between Georgia and NATO, as Georgia took

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<sup>116</sup> "The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council" North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 23 Jun. 2009.

<sup>117</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.

<sup>118</sup> "The Partnership for Peace" North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 08 Jun. 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Howard, Glen E. *NATO and the Caucasus: The Caspian Axis* p. 155

<sup>121</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.

<sup>122</sup> "Partnership for Peace Status Agreement." North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 08 Jun. 2009.

<sup>123</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.



steps to integrate itself militarily into NATO well throughout the 1990s. This connection was only to expand during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In November of 2002, at a NATO summit in Prague, Georgia officially announced its aspirations for full NATO membership and requested an Individual Partnership Action Plan with the alliance.<sup>124</sup> By 2005 a plan had been worked out, ever increasing NATO's military links with Georgia.<sup>125</sup> At this point, Georgia had undergone a regime change, with the soviet-era president replaced by a much more pro-Western candidate who made NATO incorporation of Georgia a top priority.<sup>126</sup> In November 2003 Georgia's Rose Revolution occurred when massive, peaceful protests against election results forced incumbent president Shevardnadze to resign his seat to the pro-Western challenger, Mikhail Saakashvili.<sup>127</sup> Shevardnadze had ruled Georgia for the past thirty years<sup>128</sup>, and while he had been key in opening up Georgian relations to the West, Saakashvili had campaigned on a definite pledge for NATO incorporation.<sup>129</sup> By April 2008 an announcement was made at the NATO Summit in Bucharest that Georgia would definitively be incorporated into NATO, although a deadline has not been established at this point.<sup>130</sup>

The relationship between Georgia and NATO has developed considerably over the past two decades. Georgia established clear, expanding military ties with the Alliance throughout the 1990s, and is currently on its way to becoming a full NATO

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<sup>124</sup> Nichol, Jim Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement: Issues and Implications p. 1

<sup>125</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.

<sup>126</sup> Nichol, Jim Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement: Issues and Implications p. 1

<sup>127</sup> "How the Rose Revolution Happened." BBC News. 10 May 2005.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Nichol, Jim Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement: Issues and Implications p. 1

<sup>130</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.

member state. Why has NATO been so motivated to spur these developments with Georgia? What are the advantages to working with Georgia militarily? What has it offered the Alliance up to this point, and why is the Alliance so focused on the region as to make it a fully fledged member state? How essential is Georgia to European security? The rest of this chapter will attempt to answer these questions, as they are essential to determining the full extent of the relationship between Georgia and NATO.

As Georgia became more intertwined with NATO, it proved itself a viable partner by offering military support for numerous NATO activities. Following the NATO bombing campaign of Serbia in 1999, Georgian troops made up a portion of the NATO peacekeeping force left in the region.<sup>131</sup> In 2003 Georgian troops were involved in an election security force in Afghanistan, and by 2005 NATO was transporting troops and supplies through Georgia to Afghanistan.<sup>132</sup> Georgia has also pledged one battalion of light infantry to NATO for PfP operations and provides a mountain training facility.<sup>133</sup> It also actively exchanges surveillance information with NATO. For example, Georgia assists NATO anti-terrorism activity by monitoring the Mediterranean Sea as part of the NATO project Operation Active Endeavor.<sup>134</sup> However, Georgian military cooperation has not been strictly limited to cooperation with NATO.

Georgian relations with the West were taken a step further than NATO when, in spring of 2002, the United States launched the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP).<sup>135</sup> The program was launched in response to Georgia's security situation in the

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<sup>131</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> "Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP)." GlobalSecurity.org. 28 January 2009.

Pankisi Gorge, a stronghold of Islamic radicals.<sup>136</sup> Under the terms of the program, U.S. special forces were dispatched to train the Georgian military on issues related to border security. Approximately one hundred and fifty U.S. soldiers and \$64 million in funding and supplies were provided to Georgia, with equipment including: “uniform items, small arms and ammunition, communications gear, training gear, medical gear, fuel, and construction material.”<sup>137</sup>

This program of military interaction directly between the United States and Georgia soon gave way to an even closer relationship in early 2005, with the Georgia Security & Stability Ops (GSSOP).<sup>138</sup> Under this program, the Georgian military became involved with the U.S.-led War in Iraq. Training during the GTEP proved useful for such operations, and was continued under GSSOP, and in March of 2005 Georgia deployed a full infantry battalion in Iraq.<sup>139</sup> By the spring of 2007, Georgia would double its forces in Iraq, bringing their numbers up to 2,000 and making the country a leading contributor to the U.S. led conflict.<sup>140</sup> As reported by the BBC, “President Mikhail Saakashvili said that Georgia wanted to do everything possible to help the Iraqi people and U.S.-led forces to bring peace and freedom to the country.”<sup>141</sup> As shown by these two instances of close cooperation with the United States, Georgia has clearly been trying to send a message that it wants to cooperate with Western security needs. It has welcomed a U.S. military presence into its borders and done its best to show that it can be a reliable partner in Western security.

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<sup>136</sup> Schriek, Daan van der. "Georgia's Pankisi Gorge Still Seems Less Than Secure." [EurasiaNet.org](http://EurasiaNet.org).

<sup>137</sup> "Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP)." [GlobalSecurity.org](http://GlobalSecurity.org). 28 January 2009.

<sup>138</sup> "Georgia Security & Stability Operations (Georgia SSOP)." [GlobalSecurity.org](http://GlobalSecurity.org). 12 Aug. 2008.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Collin, Matthew. "Georgia to Double Troops in Iraq". [BBC News](http://BBC News). 9 Mar. 2007

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

In addition to the military support it has provided to NATO and the West, Georgia has other qualities that make it of strategic significance for European Security. In 1997, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana officially visited the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. This visit, “officially acknowledged the emergence of the Caucasus as a key component in American and European security planning,” with Solana stating during a speech in Baku, “The Caucasus is an important region for Europe which has enormous social and economic potential. Europe will not be completely secure if the countries of the Caucasus remain outside European security.”<sup>142</sup> Clearly, NATO was expressing interest in the region of the Caucasus. Javier Solana was the highest ranked representative of NATO to visit the region, giving his comments considerable weight.<sup>143</sup> Europe has security interests in the region for several reasons. One is the large amount of enriched nuclear material located throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia, as a result of the breakup of the USSR. The region is thus a focal point for concerns over stemming nuclear proliferation. More importantly, the Caucasus and Georgia more specifically are of great geographical strategic significance for such things as transportation of military equipment, but more importantly, natural resources such as oil and natural gas.

During the Soviet period, the USSR's nuclear infrastructure was spread out across Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.<sup>144</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent states found themselves laden with a wide range of that infrastructure. It was estimated that at one point there were 600 kilograms of enriched uranium located

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<sup>142</sup> Howard, Glen E. NATO and The Caucasus: The Caspian Axis p. 151, 152

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 151

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 163

throughout the region.<sup>145</sup> NATO and the United States have dedicated a large amount of resources to control these supplies. In 1998 the United States gave Georgia 1.3 million dollars worth of supplies and equipment to counter nuclear proliferation.<sup>146</sup> Numerous actions have been taken to secure and remove nuclear materials throughout the Caucasus, and successful attempts have been made to stop the shipment of those materials to countries such as Iran.<sup>147</sup> As far as Europe's security at home is concerned, NATO has an invested interest in the region to neutralize the threat of nuclear proliferation out of the Caucasus.

NATO's stronger interest in the region, however, has to do with its geography. The Caucasus has proven to be an invaluable tool for the spread of Russian influence for at least two hundred years due to its direct borders with Central Asia, the Black Sea, Turkey, and Iran.<sup>148</sup> NATO would benefit enormously from a foothold in the area. Georgia holds a key position in the Caucasus with a western coast along the black sea, and deep eastern penetration into the region. NATO influence in Georgia would ensure a strong presence throughout the Caucasus, and more importantly, easy access to Central Asian energy supplies.

In his article NATO and the Caucasus: The Caspian Axis Glen E. Howard discusses in detail NATO's interest in Georgia as a transportation hub for energy supplies from Central Asia. He writes on page 155, "...for NATO, the Caucasus is becoming a key geographic nexus between the newly expanded NATO alliance and the Eurasian petroleum heartland." The Caucasus has risen as uniquely important for Western

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<sup>145</sup> Howard, Glen E. NATO and The Caucasus: The Caspian Axis. p. 164

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 165

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. 65

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p. 153

Energy concerns for two reasons. First, the West has been actively trying to diversify its dependence on Middle-Eastern oil. NATO allies have not forgotten the affect of the Arab oil embargo in 1973, and the current political relationship with the Middle East is unstable.<sup>149</sup> Energy diversification is strategically essential to secure energy needs.<sup>150</sup> Second, Russia currently uses its pipeline monopoly to control the export of Central Asian energy resources, and the only alternative export route to Western markets is through the Caucasus.<sup>151</sup> It is this second point which makes Georgia so important for NATO security concerns, or, more specifically, their energy security concerns.

Over the past several decades, Russia has used the state run energy company Gazprom to obtain near monopoly control of the oil and natural gas pipeline infrastructure of the former USSR.<sup>152</sup> All Central Asian energy exports headed to Eastern and Western Europe pass through Russia, which uses its control of transport to control the price. Russia has also not hesitated to use manipulations to the flow of Natural Gas as a weapon against its closest neighbors when negotiating prices.<sup>153</sup> As Howard puts it:

Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine each attach a certain degree of strategic significance to Caspian Oil that enhances their overall energy security. Each of these NATO-aligned states share a commonality of interest in their desire to break the Russian energy umbilical cord that has tied their economies to Russia since their subjugation into the former Warsaw Pact.<sup>154</sup>

Taken in this light, Georgia becomes even more important geographically because it has already demonstrated its ability to circumvent Russia's pipeline monopoly.

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<sup>149</sup> Goldman, Marshall. Petrostate. p. 137

<sup>150</sup> Howard, Glen E. NATO and The Caucasus: The Caspian Axis p. 164

<sup>151</sup> Goldman, Marshall. Petrostate. p. 148

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p. 149

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Howard, Glen E. NATO and The Caucasus: The Caspian Axis p. 154

Currently, there is only one pipeline running out of the oil rich country of Azerbaijan that does not go through Russia, and that is the Baku-Supsa pipeline which travels through Georgia.<sup>155</sup> Unlike other countries in the region, Georgia has been able adjust its energy consumption and currently only relies on Russia for 20% of its energy needs.<sup>156</sup> It has long been a goal of Western Europe to reduce its dependency on Russian energy as well by creating a pipeline parallel to the one currently in Georgia, granting them access to Central Asian energy without involving Russian territory. Howard writes, “Today, the struggle over pipelines and transportation of Caspian oil to Western markets is a key security concern of the United States and its NATO allies.”<sup>157</sup>

Georgia is clearly of strategic importance for NATO security, especially once a stable supply of energy is established as a major security goal. Georgia has already established its ability to circumvent the Russian pipeline monopoly, and NATO interest in Georgia because of this has strongly altered the strategic importance of the Caucasus itself. Howard puts it most effectively when he writes,

The eastward expansion of [NATO] and the rush to gain a strategic foothold in the oil-rich Caspian is dramatically altering the strategic landscape between Eurasia’s petroleum heartland and the world’s most powerful alliance.<sup>158</sup>

However, despite NATO’s clear interest in the Caucasus, it cannot simply ignore other security interests held in the region. Russia has maintained long historical links to the region, and views it as within its security sphere. How was Russia to respond to a NATO already viewed as hostile, expanding further into Russia’s perceived security zone? The impact of NATO's courtship of Georgia was far reaching indeed.

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<sup>155</sup> Howard, Glen E. NATO and The Caucasus: The Caspian Axis. p. 160

<sup>156</sup> Goldman, Marshall. Petrostate p. 149

<sup>157</sup> Howard, Glen E. NATO and The Caucasus: The Caspian Axis p. 152

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 151

## Chapter 4

### Russia Responds to Georgia

In August of 2008 Russia and Georgia began a seven day war against each other over the autonomous Georgian breakaway province of South Ossetia. Russia was largely condemned by the Western media for attacking and occupying a sovereign country. However, despite loud international calls for a cease fire, the West did not step in militarily through NATO to come to Georgia's aid. This chapter will examine the causes of the Russia-Georgia War and its links to the Russia-NATO relationship. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili was emboldened to attack South Ossetia by increased partnership with the United States and NATO, believing he would have firm western support in any military conflict. The military actions taken against Georgia represent Russia's message to NATO that its expansion needs to stop and that Russia is indeed still a strong power player in regional affairs.

The aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11th against the United States saw a brief era of increased cooperation between the U.S. and Russia. While the United States began its plans for retaliation against the Taliban, President Putin proved himself a valuable security partner. He opened an air corridor for U.S. planes through Russian air space, shared military intelligence, and endorsed a U.S. presence in Central Asian military bases.<sup>159</sup> However, as we saw in the previous chapter, NATO's unilateral approach to global security continued, and spread into the Caucasus. This interest led to

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<sup>159</sup> Urbanovich, Yuri. Have Russian-American Relations Truly Changed since September 11? p. 190



a gradual increase in tensions between Georgia and Russia. In March of 2006, Russia initialized an embargo on wine from Georgia, demonstrating its ability to hurt Georgia economically.<sup>160</sup> This was followed by further embargos in October of the same year, focused more broadly on transportation between the two countries. These embargos were seen by many as, "one of many measures Moscow has devised to punish Tbilisi for pursuing Intensified Dialogue with NATO and promoting, in the eyes of the Kremlin, an anti-Russian rhetoric."<sup>161</sup> Georgia was little inclined to give in to Russia's bullying tactics, however, and as we have seen merely took steps to strengthen its ties outside of Russia and was not dissuaded from its goal of becoming a NATO member state. Georgian President Saakashvili is quoted to have defined his country as the, "Israel of the Caucasus."<sup>162</sup>

The central issue of Russia's conflict with Georgia was the Georgian break-away region of South Ossetia which had struggled for autonomy from Georgia since 1989.<sup>163</sup> North Ossetia is in Russian territory, and Russia has always been very supportive of South Ossetia's calls for independence or integration with North Ossetia and thus into Russia.<sup>164</sup> Russian soldiers have been present in the region since 1992 as peacekeepers following the South Ossetian War.<sup>165</sup> Throughout the spring and early summer of 2008, tensions between Russia and Georgia were climbing as each side accused the other of

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<sup>160</sup> Corso, Molly. "To Georgia, Wine War with Russia a Question of National Security." [EurasiaNet.org](http://EurasiaNet.org). 13 Apr. 2006.

<sup>161</sup> Jibladze, Kakha. "Russian Embargo Begins to be Felt in Georgia." [Central Asia-Caucasus Institute](http://CentralAsia-CaucasusInstitute.org). 18 Oct. 2006.

<sup>162</sup> Borchgrave, Arnaud De. "De Borchgrave: Israel of the Caucasus?" [The Washington Times](http://TheWashingtonTimes.com). 4 Sep. 2008.

<sup>163</sup> Niedermaier, Ana. ed. [Countdown to War in Georgia](#). p. v

<sup>164</sup> Eke, Steven. "S Ossetia Bitterness Turns to Conflict." [BBC News](http://BBCNews.com). 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>165</sup> Niedermaier, Ana. ed. [Countdown to War in Georgia](#). p. 354

preparing for war over that region, and another Georgian break-away region, Abkhazia.

Russia had been issuing Russian passports to South Ossetians, and in July Russia admitted to having flown jets over the area.<sup>166</sup> In April of 2008 Russian military aircraft shot down an unmanned Georgian spy plane over Abkhazia.<sup>167</sup> These military tensions culminated in August, when Georgia launched a military offensive in South Ossetia, and Russia responded militarily.

What exactly were Georgia's motivations for launching this offensive? It is clear that President Saakashvili was largely motivated by the desire to gain full control of Georgia's territory, ending hopes of rebellion or secession in South Ossetia by targeting the separatist movement. As one of the qualifications for entering NATO, potential members must have all internal ethnic and border disputes settled.<sup>168</sup> President Saakashvili may very well have eyed South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, as obstacles for NATO membership, and was hoping to finally solve the issue with force. In an article *The Logic of South Ossetia Conflict*, written by Ivan Koltarov, it is argued that, "Georgians naturally felt acute pain about the lack of Georgian control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia," and that, "Saakashvili craved the restoration of Georgian sovereignty over the former autonomous republics."<sup>169</sup> He also argues that Saakashvili's faith in NATO support gave him confidence that his strategy would secure positive political results. South Ossetia was a political headache and a pretext for Russian military presence in Georgia that Saakashvili was hoping to quickly wipe away.

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<sup>166</sup> Eke, Steven. "S Ossetia Bitterness Turns to Conflict." BBC News. 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>167</sup> "Russia 'Shot Down Georgia Drone.'" BBC News. 21 Apr. 2008.

<sup>168</sup> The White House. "President Clinton's Response to Senators' Questions on NATO Enlargement." 12 Sep. 1997. Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security

<sup>169</sup> Koltarev, Ivan. "The Logic of South Ossetia Conflict." Russia in Global Affairs. No. 4. (2008). 16 Nov. 2008.

Russia also had its strong reasons for entering the conflict, motivated by both domestic and foreign policy. First and foremost, it was obligated to protect Russian citizens and peacekeepers in the region. Koltarov argues, "This was not a war against Georgia: this was a peacekeeping action aimed at coercing the aggressor to stop military operations."<sup>170</sup> Any conflict in the region could also have potential consequences within Russia, making it an issue of domestic security. In an article *Georgia On My Mind*, by Yuri Urbanovich, he argues this point by referencing a 1992 conflict involving North Ossetia and Ingushetia, both regions of Russia, which was partially triggered by a strong influx of South Ossetians.<sup>171</sup> Russia had seen before how tensions from Georgia had triggered unrest at home. Russia and the Caucasus have several potential ethnic hotbeds, and Russia intervened in an attempt to maintain regional order.

Another issue Russia was responding to by entering Georgia was linked to Kosovo. In February 2008, the issue of Kosovo had once again become an area of contention between Russia and the U.S. On February 17, Kosovo's parliament declared independence from Serbia.<sup>172</sup> Its independence was quickly recognized by the United States and many Western allies.<sup>173</sup> Russia was strongly against the move, going so far as to call on the UN to annul Kosovo independence the very day it was announced.<sup>174</sup> Voices in Russia saw recognition of Kosovo as a very dangerous precedent, and warned of potential consequences in Georgia's separatist regions. One analyst, a specialist on

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<sup>170</sup> Koltarev, Ivan. "The Logic of South Ossetia Conflict." *Russia in Global Affairs*. No. 4. (2008). 16 Nov. 2008.

<sup>171</sup> Urbanovich, Yuri. "Georgia On My Mind." *iVPR* vol. II, issue III, spring 2009. p. 17

<sup>172</sup> "Highlights- Kosovo Declaration of Independence from Serbia." *Reuters*. 17 Feb. 2008.

<sup>173</sup> Charles, Deborah. "Bush recognizes Kosovo, says will bring peace." *Reuters*. 19 Feb. 2008.

<sup>174</sup> Lowe, Christian. "Russia Urges U.N. to annul Kosovo Independence." *Reuters*. 17 Feb. 2009.

Georgia, Svante Cornell, drew direct links between Kosovo independence and the Russia-Georgia War, saying of the conflict, "It boils down to Kosovo independence," among other things.<sup>175</sup> A news report from Reuters covering the initial phases of the conflict noted, "In February, Russian diplomats said Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia would stir up strife in the Balkans and linked Kosovar status to separatist areas Abkhazia and South Ossetia."<sup>176</sup> Russia clearly had a strong understanding of the volatile nature of the situation, and immediately took action to step in and confront the situation. Russia's leadership was also potentially stung by the West once again getting involved in Kosovo, ignoring Russia's warnings.

On August 7 Georgia began its offensive, attacking South Ossetia's capital, Tskhinvali, and adjacent villages with artillery fire and ground and air assault. Reports in the Russian media surfaced the following day claiming that Russian peacekeepers had been fired upon deliberately but had not returned fire.<sup>177</sup> Russia responded the following day in defense of its peacekeepers and Russian citizens in the region, and accused Georgia of attempted genocide. Russia's assault consisted of artillery and military aircraft, as ground forces entered South Ossetia and the present peacekeeping forces joined them. The Georgian military was quickly overwhelmed, and Russia insisted the attacks would continue until Georgia had withdrawn from South Ossetia.<sup>178</sup> Russian troops occupied South Ossetia and pushed deeper into Georgian territory, and also came in through Abkhazia, occupying cities in Western Georgia.<sup>179</sup> The French

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<sup>175</sup> Baldwin, Chris. "Analysis-Georgia-Russia Conflict Could be Drawn Out." Reuters. 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Niedermaier, Ana. ed. Countdown to War in Georgia. p. 398

<sup>178</sup> Finn, Peter. "Russia-Georgia War Intensifies." The Washington Post. 10 Aug. 2008. p 2

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. 10 Aug. 2008. p 2

government became very involved in brokering a cease-fire deal, which was completed by August 15th.<sup>180</sup> During the conflict, the number of civilian deaths vastly outnumbered those of combatants.<sup>181</sup>

However, Russia's initial move was not one of force. During an emergency late night meeting of the UN Security Council on August 7th lasting through the morning of August 8th, a Russia drafted a call for an immediate cease fire was discussed by the council but ultimately rejected.<sup>182</sup> The proposal was not agreed upon because of a simple line that called for all involved to "renounce the use of force,"; this wording was rejected by the Georgians, who held the backing of the United States, as they did not want force removed as an option for them.<sup>183</sup> As Russia entered the conflict on August 8th President Saakashvili did his best to paint Russia as the aggressor, citing "very blunt Russian aggression," and indirectly called on assistance from the U.S., claiming:

[This conflict] is not about Georgia anymore. It's about America, its values. I...thought that America stands up for those freedom-loving nations and supports them. That's what America is all about. That's why we look with hope at every American.<sup>184</sup>

He also claimed that Georgian forces had only been deployed to South Ossetia after Russian aggression against Georgia, which was a blatant lie.<sup>185</sup> Despite his stance as a victim he wanted nothing to do with a resolution that would restrict his right to use force in South Ossetia, and used his close alliance with the U.S. to prevent any such statement from the UN security council. Western media was also very supportive of the Georgian

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<sup>180</sup> "Up in Flames." Human Rights Watch. 23 Jan. 2009. Executive Summary.

<sup>181</sup> "Georgia: In Wake of Russia-Georgia Conflict, Return, Security and Truth a Long Way Off, Says Amnesty International." Amnesty International USA. 18 Nov. 2008.

<sup>182</sup> Charbonneau, Louis. "U.N. Council Split on South Ossetia, Russia Angry." Reuters. 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>183</sup> Charbonneau, Louis. "U.N. Council Meets again on South Ossetia, hopes to act." Reuters. 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>184</sup> "Georgian President says, "Russia Fighting War." Reuters. 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

president and his arguments against Russia. Koltzarev writes of the Western Media,

The international mass media seethed with bias and did not stop short of downright falsification in their coverage of the conflict. Russia was depicted as an aggressor and Georgia, as a tiny freedom-loving country that was heroically fighting an invasion under the command of its pro-Western leader. Any attempts to recount the events from the Russian or South Ossetian point of view were cut short.<sup>186</sup>

As the Georgian president tried to pin all blame of the conflict on Russia, the UN continued to come to a stalemate on issuing any statement on the crisis. A Security Council meeting on August 9th was neutralized due to similar disagreements on wordings of any statement.<sup>187</sup> However, the U.S. was very vocal in its condemnation of Russian action in support of its Georgian ally throughout the conflict, especially following Russia's advance beyond South Ossetia and Abkhazia into undisputed Georgian territory. James Jeffery, the deputy national security advisor to then U.S. President George W. Bush, stated on August 10th:

We've made it clear to the Russians that if the disproportionate and dangerous escalation on the Russian side continues, that this will have a significant, long-term impact on U.S.-Russian relations...[The United States would be] very, very concerned if in fact there is ground action inside of Georgia proper that is outside these areas of Abkhazia and Ossetia.<sup>188</sup>

Russia, however, was not to take accusations and criticism lying down. From the beginning of its involvement in Georgia Russia claimed Georgia was the aggressor and that military action had been taken against Russian peacekeepers and civilians by Georgian troops.<sup>189</sup> During a speech on August 10th, Russian President Dimitri

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<sup>186</sup> Koltzarev, Ivan. "The Logic of South Ossetia Conflict." Russia in Global Affairs, No. 4. (2008). 16 Nov. 2008.

<sup>187</sup> Charbonneau, Louis. "U.N. Council Meets again on South Ossetia Crisis." Reuters. 9 Aug. 2008.

<sup>188</sup> Pelofsky, Jeremy, and Spetalnick, Matt. "U.S.: Russia's actions in Georgia could harm U.S. ties." Reuters. 10 Aug. 2008

<sup>189</sup> "Georgian President says 'Russia Fighting War.'" Reuters. 8 Aug. 2008.

Medvedev threw the accusation that, "the actions of the Georgian side cannot be called anything other than Genocide."<sup>190</sup> The next day, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin made a very critical statement on state television regarding the United States, accusing the U.S. of supporting Georgia out of a "cynical Cold War mentality," and accusing the West of "manipulat[ing] the truth about the war to present the Georgians as victims rather than the aggressors."<sup>191</sup> The Russian media also, naturally, had a very favorable view of Russia's role in the conflict, with one article referring to the occupied areas as "the peacekeepers' zone of responsibility," and dismissing Georgian claims as propaganda.<sup>192</sup> Another article justified Russia's actions with a precedent set by NATO, writing in reference to the Kosovo War:

Essentially, the Russian authorities decided to follow the examples of the U.S., which in 1999 initiated the NATO operation in the former Yugoslavia without the authorization of the UN, justifying its actions by citing instances of ethnic cleansing among the Albanian population.<sup>193</sup>

Former USSR president Mikhail Gorbachev also came to Russia's defense in an opinion piece published in the New York Times on August 20, 2008, *Russia Never Wanted a War*. He argued that Russia was pulled into the fight by Georgia who "would not have dared to attack without outside support."<sup>194</sup> He points to unfair Western media coverage which was accusing Russia of aggression before it had even entered the country. Force is not the solution for the region, he argued. The West, instead of talking about finding ways to punish a defiant Russia, should focus on getting Georgia to sign an agreement to not use force.

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<sup>190</sup> "Up in Flames." Human Rights Watch. 23 Jan. 2009. Section 2.6

<sup>191</sup> Faulconbridge, Guy. "Putin Criticizes U.S. over South Ossetia." Reuters. 11 Aug. 2008. p. 1

<sup>192</sup> Niedermaier, Ana. ed. Countdown to War in Georgia. p. 408 409

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* p. 402

<sup>194</sup> Gorbachev, Mikhail. "Russia Never Wanted a War." The New York Times. 19 Aug. 2008

The Western Media too eventually acknowledged that Georgia was the initiator of the conflict. A report by Human Rights Watch established that Georgia did indeed begin its assault on South Ossetian villages on the night of August 7th, with Russia responding the next day.<sup>195</sup> On November 20th, The New York Times published an article on Georgian parliament hearings where the former Georgian ambassador to Moscow testified that he had heard of Georgian war plans as early as April 2008.<sup>196</sup> A timeline of the conflict established by Reuters, published on August 28th also establishes that Russians responded to a Georgian assault on South Ossetia.<sup>197</sup>

The Russia-Georgia War had profound consequences on both nations. While Russia did assert itself militarily with a clear message that NATO could not rely on being the only power player in the Caucasus, it only damaged its relations with Georgia further and pushed them closer to the West. Relations with NATO were frozen once again during the conflict.<sup>198</sup> Georgia failed at asserting control throughout its territory, which could be used as a roadblock to its full NATO membership, but ultimately relations with NATO were strengthened following the creation of the NATO-Georgia commission in September 2008, and NATO promises of support for Georgia during its recovery from the conflict.<sup>199</sup> One very strong step Russia took following the War was to recognize the independence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, citing the West's recognition of an

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<sup>195</sup> "Up in Flames." Human Rights Watch. 23 Jan. 2009. Executive Summary.

<sup>196</sup> Vartanyan, Olesya, and Barry, Ellen. "Ex-Diplomat says Georgia Started War with Russia." The New York Times. 25 Nov. 2008.

<sup>197</sup> "Timeline: Georgia and Russia's Worsening Relations." Reuters. 28 Aug. 2008.

<sup>198</sup> Koltzarev, Ivan. "The Logic of South Ossetia Conflict." Russia in Global Affairs. No. 4. (2008). 16 Nov. 2008.

<sup>199</sup> "NATO's Relations with Georgia." North Atlantic Treaty Organization Topics. 11 Mar. 2009.



independent Kosovo as precedent.<sup>200</sup> These areas make up approximately one third of Georgia's territory, and while the only other country to recognize them has been Nicaragua, it is still another thorn in Georgia's side. Again, when viewing NATO's guidelines for membership, Georgia is now faced with the dilemma to either give up the valuable territories so as not to have any border disputes, or attempt to successfully convince them to voluntarily re-join Georgia. Kolyarev's analysis of Georgia's post-war position is that, "even if Georgia gets NATO membership, this will not make up for its political losses."<sup>201</sup>

While NATO has undoubtedly been a strong driving force behind Saakashvili, how exactly had it been a potential source for conflict? NATO did nothing to initiate conflict on the ground, and didn't antagonize Russia during the fighting. There is overwhelming evidence to show, however, that the Georgian president acted with the confidence that he would have the full support of NATO, and that consistent NATO and U.S. attention emboldened him to act on securing these two break-away regions, initiating a bloody conflict that was grossly beyond his control. Russia also entered the conflict not only to end the violence against South Ossetians, but to show NATO that Russia's strategic concerns could not be ignored and that it was not afraid of NATO's increasing ties with Georgia. Georgia's President himself acknowledged NATO as a source of friction early on in the conflict, claiming of Russia that, "They made no secret. They are unhappy with our closeness with the United States, with the North Atlantic

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<sup>200</sup> "Medvedev: Why Russia had to Recognise Rebel Regions." Reuters. 26 Aug. 2008.

<sup>201</sup> Kolyarev, Ivan. "The Logic of South Ossetia Conflict." Russia in Global Affairs. No. 4. (2008). 16 Nov. 2008.

Treaty Organization, with the West in general."<sup>202</sup> Saakashvili appeared confident that Western backing would lead to military support against Russia, even though he was not a member of NATO. In fact, this concept is not entirely without backing, for in President Clinton's letter to the Senate regarding NATO's redefined post Cold War role (see Chapter 1), he wrote, "States that are credible candidates for future admission to the alliance will benefit from the knowledge that the alliance is attentive to their security."<sup>203</sup>

Russia was also open in identifying NATO and Western influence in Georgia as a source of the conflict. In comments to CNN on August 29th, Putin threw harsh accusations at the United States, stating that their military support of Georgia had encouraged the country to avoid peace negotiations and cut right to violence.<sup>204</sup> Undoubtedly the continued military connections formed between NATO, the U.S. and Georgia during the past decade were on his mind. President Medvedev was soon to follow, stating in his annual address on November 5th that the War was "among other things, the result of the arrogant course of the U.S. administration which hates criticism and prefers unilateral decisions."<sup>205</sup> Clearly Russia's top leadership was not afraid to express its dissatisfaction with an American presence in the Caucasus.

Earlier in the year there had also been some signs directly from NATO that expansion into the Caucasus would cause unnecessary antagonism towards Russia. While George W. Bush had always been a very vocal supporter of Georgia joining NATO, at the alliance's summit in Bucharest in April 2008 a firm deadline for Georgian

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<sup>202</sup> "Georgian President says 'Russia Fighting War.'" Reuters. 8 Aug. 2008.

<sup>203</sup> The White House. "President Clinton's Response to Senators' Questions on NATO Enlargement." 12 Sep. 1997 Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security

<sup>204</sup> Finer, Jonathan, and Philip P. Pan. "Putin Asserts Link Between U.S. Election and Georgia." The Washington Post. 29 Aug. 2008.

<sup>205</sup> Stott, Michael. "Russia's Medvedev Criticizes U.S. over Georgia." Reuters. 5 Nov. 2008.

membership was not established.<sup>206</sup> Not all of NATO's major members were supportive of the move, mainly the major powers of Western Europe such as France and Germany, who maintain energy ties with Russia. Their closer connection presumably had them more concerned over the possibility of antagonizing Russia by entering the Caucasus, and thus prevented a firmly established Georgia NATO-membership timetable. An article in Time magazine effectively presents the European view of the issue, stating:

Indeed, many in Europe see the Bush Administration's military support for Georgia and its trumpeting of Tbilisi's cause in NATO as having emboldened President Mikheil Saakashvili to launch his reckless attack on South Ossetia.<sup>207</sup>

At this point it should be clearly established that Russia had become increasingly agitated by NATO expansion over the past decade, and was anxious to send a strong message to the bloc that it was still a major contender in world affairs whose will could not be ignored. The connection between Kosovo and South Ossetia had been established in the Russian media and was undoubtedly active in Russian military circles. Russia saw its opportunity to step in and assert control, despite NATO interest in the region and Western outcry. Russia also outsmarted Saakashvili, who naively assumed NATO or the United States would come to his aid and help repel Russia if need be. Instead, Russia was able to confirm to itself that ultimately, U.S. relations with Russia were more important than relations with Georgia, that the U.S. was not willing to launch a military offensive against Russia over Georgia. An article published in Time magazine on August 15, *The Georgia Crisis: A Blow to NATO*, discusses the difficulties that would come with any NATO intervention. The article argues that Putin was very

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<sup>206</sup> Evans, Michael. "Georgia: Reckless Saakashvili Took on Russian Goliath Putin." TimesOnline. 11 Aug. 2008.

<sup>207</sup> Karon, Tony. "The Georgia Crisis: A Blow to NATO." Time. 15 Aug. 2008.

effective in standing up to the U.S., by showing, "Russia's neighbors that Washington's tough talk could not be matched by any meaningful response to the Kremlin's military campaign."<sup>208</sup> It mirrors much of what had been said already by all sides, that "The conflict was never simply about Georgia and its restive minority regions; it was always about NATO, as well as the regional balance of power between Russia and the U.S."<sup>209</sup> If NATO were obligated to militarily support Georgia, it would have faced much tension from NATO's major partners, due to differences already established by this paper.

However, Russia cannot be completely absolved of responsibility for the conflict. In the months leading up to the war, there were reports in Georgia of Russia arming separatist movements in Abkhazia, and video detailing such actions was shown to the BBC by Georgia in May.<sup>210</sup> Also, Russia's effective, practically immediate response to the events of August 7th were facilitated by the fact that days before, suspiciously convenient military exercises were being carried out close to the Georgian border.<sup>211</sup> Gradual buildup of Russian troops in Abkhazia had been taking place as well. It is hard to completely accept Russia's claim that they were merely responding to Georgian aggression when all of this initial buildup is taken into consideration. Russia also cannot be labeled guilt free during the conflict. A report published by Human Rights Watch after the conflict accused Russia of failing its obligation to maintain order as an occupying power during its presence in South Ossetia, and cites numerous acts of violence carried out by South Ossetians against ethnic Georgians in the region, under

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<sup>208</sup> Karon, Tony. "The Georgia Crisis: A Blow to NATO." Time. 15 Aug. 2008..

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> "Georgia Condemns Russian Actions." BBC News. 18 May. 2008.

<sup>211</sup> Norton, Jenny. "Ossetian Crisis: Who Started It?" BBC News. 19 Aug. 2008.

Russia's watch.<sup>212</sup> If Russia's point was to show up NATO as a world power, they should have more effectively maintained peace to show its strength.

While Russia did successfully establish that they still remained an active player in the Caucasus and that NATO had less power in the region than projected, they did so in a very heavy handed fashion that led to the deaths of civilians and destruction of private property. Under Russia's watch, more ethnic violence was carried out in the region despite the fact that Russia's entire pretense for entering was to quell ethnic violence. Like Russia's rash, poorly controlled decision to enter Kosovo before NATO after the Kosovo War of 1999, Russia's desperate attempts to display its power may just result in a decrease in power. Georgia's ties to the U.S. were only strengthened by the conflict, with the U.S. pledging reconstruction to the country in the wake of the conflict.<sup>213</sup> If NATO can bridge its internal frictions and form a consensus on expansion into the Caucasus, it could very well adopt Georgia as a member to spite the Russian aggression. However, NATO's ability to overcome division and work effectively has been questioned.

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<sup>212</sup> "Up in Flames." Human Rights Watch. 23 Jan. 2009. Executive Summary.

<sup>213</sup> Grebler, Dan. Ed. "U.S. Will Work to Rebuild Georgia: Kimmitt." Reuters. 19 Aug. 2008.

## Conclusion

The decision to expand NATO after the fall of the Soviet Union has undoubtedly had a strong negative impact on U.S.-Russian relations. What opportunities there were for the two countries to work together seemed shattered by NATO's dismissal of Russia during the Kosovo War, and then again during NATO's courtship of Georgia. While Kosovo made Russia feel as if it had lost its great power status by not being able to stand up to NATO, Georgia was its attempt to regain that status by confronting NATO. Russia is clearly viewing NATO as an extension of U.S. power abroad, and is using NATO as a standard it needs to match. Russia has made the most recent major move in this political tug of war by asserting itself in Georgia, and it is now time for NATO to consider its response.

There are, at this point, three potential options for NATO's future. It could cease to exist as an alliance and cede its authority to another organization such as the United Nations or the OSCE. Another option would be for it to continue to embrace expansion and push for US interests abroad, keeping its future open. The third option would be for NATO to make substantial adjustments to its means of operation.

To begin with, the first option of NATO ceasing to exist is simply not feasible at this point. The United States is not willing to withdraw from Europe, and NATO is currently engaged in the U.S. led War in Afghanistan. There is simply too much invested in NATO for it simply dissolve, and it does serve a very useful purpose as an alliance. It has maintained peace among its member states for its entire sixty years of existence, and has done much to reform, modernize, and integrate many armies of the

world. It is a unique system of military command that does well to serve European security. The opportunity for NATO to dissolve has passed, and it has cemented its role in the modern world as a security organization.

If NATO were to continue to expand according to its established pattern, it would run into a series of serious complications. To begin with, as more members entered the alliance the validity of Article V would no doubt begin to wane. During the Russia-Georgia War NATO was not willing to come to the defense of a strong ally and prospective member. If NATO were to continue to expand, no doubt the willingness of its prospective members to honor Article V would decrease. The potential for conflict would increase as each new member brought with it its own set of problems. Would the populations of the United States and Western Europe be able to justify sending troops to settle disputes in Central Asia or South East Asia if NATO were to expand into those regions? Also, an expanding NATO would have to be open to the prospect of accepting Russia as a member. Any policy of actively excluding Russia from the alliance would justifiably increase Russia's concerns and the intensity of its reactions. Russia's intervention in Georgia highlighted its ability to challenge NATO and the validity of Article V. In an article *From a Post-Soviet to a Russian Foreign Policy*, Alexander Lukin argued that after the Russia-Georgia War, "...the West has actually turned out to be incapable of guaranteeing Georgia's security and territorial integrity."<sup>214</sup>

The final complication of an expanded NATO is that it would become too bulky to come to a consensus on security issues. Chapter two of this thesis demonstrated that within NATO's 1999 boundaries there were member states resistant to action in Kosovo,

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<sup>214</sup> Lukin, Alexander. "From a Post-Soviet to a Russian Foreign Policy." Russia in Global Affairs. 16 Nov. 2008

and some who felt pushed by the United States. As NATO membership increased, and especially if Russia entered, the United States' influence would become diluted, and the views of all its members would become convoluted and cancel each other out. Rajan Menon, a strong critic of the NATO alliance, writes that strong opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq from Western Europe shows, "the frailty of NATO's cohesion in a post-Soviet world."<sup>215</sup> Russia has been demanding a voice in NATO affairs even as a non-member; as a member they would undoubtedly have no concerns over opposing U.S. policy. As shown by the Kosovo War, the U.S. is not against circumventing the UN if they fear a potential Russian veto from the Security Council, and would hate to see Russia with this power within NATO.

The final option for NATO would be for it to undergo substantial changes for it to fit more equally in the global security system, reducing concerns of antagonizing Russia or powers in the Middle East or Asia. An argument commonly voiced in Russia is that NATO has to reduce its power abroad to ensure global stability. A Russian report *Russia in 2003 and Its Foreign Policy* argues that there are strong prospects for cooperation between NATO and Russia, but in order for it to work the two must maintain a relationship as partners, and that, "Whatever the situation, NATO will most likely be playing a less definite, secondary role than the one it is playing now."<sup>216</sup> They argue that NATO may over time become a more politically rather than militarily oriented alliance.

It is this paper's argument that for NATO to succeed and maintain security

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<sup>215</sup> Menon, Rajan. The End of Alliances. p. 70

<sup>216</sup> Baranovsky, Vladimir. "Russia in 2003 and Its Foreign Policy." Russia in Global Affairs. 21 Mar. 2003.



through the 21st century it does not necessarily have to establish a weaker role in global security, but a better defined one. A major issue with NATO currently is that while its mission statement was altered dramatically by the Clinton administration, no changes were made to its official Charter to adapt it to its new mission, or even attempt to legally defend its potential new actions. NATO's credibility was severely damaged during the Kosovo War for the simple reason that it violated its own charter in several different ways. This exposed it as largely a military tool of the United States. Its other major flaw is that its mission is currently still too vague and open ended, leaving it vulnerable to criticism. This vagueness is displayed by the fact that a military alliance that was founded to protect the North Atlantic region is currently attempting to use its power to establish Western oil pipelines in Georgia. NATO is currently operating on such a wide spectrum that it is exposing itself as simply operating for the benefit of the United States and Western Europe, not international security. NATO is hindered by its charter and is losing credibility abroad by maintaining such a broad exercise of power.

It is this paper's view that for NATO to become an effective security force for the future it must shed itself of these flaws and focus more specifically on a global agenda. It needs to more clearly establish its focus and amend its charter to clearly define when it will act to secure its goals. It also needs to cease acting as a body that purely focuses on all of the United States' or Western Europe's concerns. It should not involve itself in energy policy or political sway, but should stick to its supposed aim of peace and security. As an institution it has already established a strong, unified, interoperable military force that would be capable of rapidly deploying mixed forces to address security concerns. It would also have to be willing to work with non-member states and

more openly work with their security concerns. For example, NATO could more readily accept the presence of non-member militaries as allies, as NATO was so reluctant to do with Russia after the Kosovo War.

This altered alliance would also have to maintain its credibility abroad, be open to expansion, but avoid the pitfalls of becoming a cumbersome organization. It could attempt this by doing its best to establish a consensus among at least a majority of members. Its charter could be adjusted to implement some sort of efficient member voting system. Members would recognize the advantages of being integrated with the global security system would outweigh the disadvantage of being occasionally out-voted. However, if NATO can effectively cast off any one driving force at its helm and truly focus on global security, its actions would be all around more acceptable to the international community and less controversial. NATO needs to abandon its unilateral approach to security that has clearly taken form over its history. It would not necessarily have to abandon any of its current power to make these changes. It would maintain its position as a dominant military alliance, but be more suitable to meet global security. In order for the alliance to avoid the pitfalls of weakening Article V, it could possibly establish within itself several zones of responsibility so that regional issues could be handled initially by those closest in proximity, with the level of response and involvement of powers able to fluctuate according to the level of offense taken against the alliance. This too, however, runs the risk of becoming too bulky and too bureaucratic an organization. It would have to do its best to maintain its flexibility and use its military cohesion to the benefit of all members.

This argument, unfortunately, is too idealistic. The United States is not ready to

completely leave NATO's helm, and it would be near impossible to establish a NATO leadership that could truly move beyond a central driving political force and focus purely on global security. The United States can at least in the mean time do its best to learn from the events of Kosovo and Georgia, acknowledge Russia's voice and concerns on issues of international security, and be willing to work with Russia more closely and cooperatively than it has in the past. Indeed, the recently appointed Obama administration seems to be bearing this in mind, which is positive indeed. In an early March visit with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, President Obama's Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, stressed the need to "reset" relations with Russia.<sup>217</sup> Russian President Dimitri Medvedev has also expressed an earnest desire to work with America's new President to improve relations. In an opinion piece published in the Washington Post on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009, Medvedev criticizes the previous administration's, "efforts to push NATO's borders eastwards," among other things, and wrote, "Neither Russia nor the United States can tolerate drift and indifference in our relations."<sup>218</sup> He positively identifies disarmament and economic stabilization as a potential playing fields for the two to begin improved relations, and by April 2<sup>nd</sup> the two leaders announced a new arms-control treaty.<sup>219</sup> Calls for improved relations with Russia have also come from the United States. A report published by The Commission on U.S. Policy toward Russia in March 2009, *The Right Direction for U.S. Policy toward Russia*, identifies Russia as an essential partner for the U.S. if its security goals are to be met. It encourages the Obama administration to "establish an effective, comprehensive bilateral structure to facilitate

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<sup>217</sup> Dougherty, Jill. "U.S. seeks to 'reset' relations with Russia." [CNN.com](http://CNN.com). 7 Mar. 2009.

<sup>218</sup> Medvedev, Dimitry A. "Building Russian-U.S. Bonds." [The Washington Post](http://The Washington Post). 31 Mar. 2009.

<sup>219</sup> Shear, Micheal D. and Scott Wilson. "Obama, Medvedev Pledge Cooperation." [The Washington Post](http://The Washington Post). 2 Apr. 2009.

consultation, dialogue, and negotiation [with Russia].”<sup>220</sup>

In concluding this thesis, it is important to stress that NATO is by far not the only source of friction on the world stage. While Russia does have legitimate concerns about NATO that have been justified several times since the early 1990s, it is also guilty of exacerbating relations by consistently overreacting to NATO activity. In responding to NATO, Russia seems to try too hard to assert its status as a great power and ends up causing collateral damage, marring its image. This occurred when the country tried to take the Pristina airfield in 1999, and is reflected in its overly dramatic military response to Georgia and failure to maintain control as an occupying power during the war. Desperate to secure themselves a place in KFOR after the Kosovo War, Russia took underhanded steps to ensure a presence there, and ended up with humiliated troops begging for food and water. Russia’s military action in Georgia, while it sent a clear message to NATO, did nothing to stabilize the situation or make Georgia a closer ally of Russia. In fact, Russia’s actions had the opposite effect, as Georgia is still on the path to NATO membership and hosted defiant NATO exercises in May of 2009, much to Russia’s dismay.<sup>221</sup> Russia’s violent responses to perceived NATO threats do not serve any stabilizing purpose, but are more akin to the emotional outbursts of a frustrated child. If Russia is so desperate to establish itself once again as a global power, it should cease trying to do so through shows of force. One could argue in Russia’s defense, however, that NATO and the West have ignored Russia for so long that at this point, shows of strength are the only messages that can get through. However, Russia has consistently

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<sup>220</sup> Hagel, Chuck et al. "The Right Direction for U.S. Policy Toward Russia: A Report from The Commission on U.S. Policy toward Russia." The Nixon Center. Mar. 2009. . p. 1

<sup>221</sup> Barry, Ellen. "Putin Says NATO Exercises in Georgia Hinder U.S.-Russia Relations." The New York Times. 10 May 2009.

used blunt shows of force to drive its foreign policy even when not confronting NATO, for example in Ukraine during its periodic winter gas crises. Russia needs to seriously reconsider its means of achieving foreign policy objectives if it wants to maintain a true dialogue with the West.

For Russia and the West to reach new levels of cooperation, the United States needs, first and foremost, to take Russia's security concerns into account and not simply ignore them, as it has done so often before, and Russia needs to be able to express itself in a more productive fashion. An updated NATO focused on concrete, bilateral relationships could just be the perfect tool for bridging the gap between Russia and the West. For NATO to operate as an effective military tool, however, it must abandon its history of unilateralism, begin to build a solid relationship with Russia by listening to its concerns, and focus on areas the two can easily come together on. NATO's current form, and its form for the past two decades, has only served to damage the U.S.-Russian relationship.

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