

## **After September 11: Russia and U.S. in the War Against Terrorism. Beginning of the New Alliance?**

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After the September 11 attack, President Vladimir Putin has directed Russia along the new path – that of de-facto alliance with the United States in the war on terrorism, and of acquiescence, if not acceptance, of the open-ended U.S. security presence in the Eurasian land mass. For the first time in over three hundred years Russia acquiesced to the friendly presence of a foreign power in the territory of the former empire. This is a historical sea change, the significance of which we are only begging to comprehend. This phenomenon demonstrates that the Russian leadership understands the seriousness of the radical Islamic terrorist threat to the Western world, and is serious about pursuing joint defense against this common danger.

Last September, President Putin convinced his Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov, to reverse himself on opposition to the NATO use of Central Asian military bases. Whereas Ivanov had a legal basis to oppose such use in cases of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, both countries being members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Collective Security Treaty, he had no such grounds in case of Uzbekistan, which eagerly cooperated with the United States.

Ivanov was dispatched on several trips to the region, including a trip to Tajikistan, in which some of the basing issues were discussed with President Imomali Rakhmonov.<sup>1</sup>

**The triumph of the Westernizers?** Westernizers, such as the former Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, have long called for U.S.-Russian cooperation in controlling the threats which emanate from Afghanistan and Central Asia: terrorism, drug trafficking, radical and militant brands of Islamic proselytizing. For years, American top policy makers, such as then-secretaries of state James Baker, Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright, have not paid attention to Russia’s pleas.<sup>2</sup>

However, as the U.S. started addressing issues of common concern, the usual suspects -- inside-the-Moscow-Ring-Road experts, who express the frequent misgivings and phobias of Russia being mistreated by the U.S., continue to complain about the heightened U.S. presence in the post-Afghan war Central Asia.<sup>3</sup> These are fears stemming from Russia’s imperial decline, which we have heard for the last twelve years, not really a concern

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<sup>1</sup> “Russian minister to visit Tajikistan on 7 December, talk with Northern Alliance,” BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political, 03:40, December 6, 2001, quoting ITAR-TASS.

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by Andrey Kozyrev, the former foreign minister, at a breakfast of the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia. Federal News Service, April 2, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Igor Torbakov “Russia Worries That Afghan Success Will Prompt US Unilateralism,” *EurasiaNet*, January 2, 2002, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010202.shtml>

about the U.S. unilateralism. In fact, factors which influence changes in the strategic and geopolitical power balance -- what in the “good old days” Muscovites used to call “the correlation of forces,” -- go beyond the recent American military success in Afghanistan. The timeframe of the balance of power shift is much wider, and its scope is truly global.

Moscow analysts see a connection between the martial feat of the Afghan war and the U.S. announced withdrawal from the 1972 ABM Treaty. Victory in Afghanistan, the Moscow thinking went, prompted the Pentagon to push for leaving the ABM Treaty. However, the roots of the withdrawal from the treaty are in the prevailing strategic analysis in Washington, not in the performance of the Green Berets in mountains of Tora Bora.

The U.S. security leaders and defense intellectuals realize that the future threat to the U.S. will come not from the massive Soviet-era nuclear arsenal, but from intercontinental ballistic missiles in the hands of Iran, Iraq, or an Al Qaeda-dominated regime in the Middle East. While incapable of thwarting a full-scale Russian attack, a BMD system will be effective against a few warheads. It is time to join forces to develop a joint missile defense system to protect Russia and the U.S., and to cooperate on building theater missile defenses.

**Common Enemy** A liberal critic of the Russian policy with excellent ties to the upper echelons of the military establishment, Pavel Felgengauer claims that Russia received a “slap in the face” from its American ally as U.S. troops deployed in Central Asia and the Caucasus. If President Putin heard about Felgengauer’s soundbite, he would have disagreed. His measured response indicates that Putin understands that the U.S. and Russia are facing the common enemy: global Islamist terrorism, which is not limited to Afghanistan.

The flames of jihad can be fanned in Northern Caucasus and even in the Volga valley by the same quarters who bankroll Usama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda network: by rich fundamentalists based in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. These circles believe in use of unrestrained violence to “liberate” Islamic lands, be it Chechnya or Dagestan – or in the future possibly Tatarstan and Bashkortostan from the rule of “infidels.” Islamist analysts are misled about today’s Russia and exaggerate its weakness.

They see corruption and internal weakness allowing to create a Caliphate in Central Asia, to fight for a Shari’a state “from sea to sea” – meaning, from the Black Sea to the Caspian; they believe in possibility of revival of Islam on the fundamentalist – Wahhabbi basis in the territory of the Russian Federation, and even conversion to Islam of large numbers of the Orthodox believers. These ideologues also believe in driving Israelis into the Mediterranean, kicking the Indians out of Kashmir, or attacking Americans in Saudi Arabia, Somalia or Lebanon, to “liberate” the land of two mosques – Mecca and Medina. These are the same people who conceived and funded the attacks on New York and Washington and who are preparing new attacks as we speak.

**Geopolitical importance of Russia.** Alexei Arbatov's recently quoted well-known quip from Otto von Bismark about international coalitions which consist of a mule and a rider – but Russia, with its unique geographic span and clout in Central Asia is far from being a mule. In addition, when faced with a threat from a pack of wolves, riders and mules make excellent coalition partners indeed. Or, as my favorite Russian expression goes, “let's be friends – against whom?”

Most importantly, Russia has been going through a decade of phantom pains of the amputated superpower. Today, it finally is getting over it. It starts to realize its real place in the world: that of a great power, but not of a superpower. It is true that its GDP, GDP per capita, population size, or even military prowess make it less intimidating or dominating than the USSR, that Stalin's equivalent of the Golden Horde. But it is for the benefit of the Russians. The costs of empire impoverished the ordinary Soviet men and women.

It is also true that while United States won two wars -- the 1991 Gulf War and the current campaign in Afghanistan. The Russian army today is not at the par with American military, primarily because the Russian economy went through its worse crisis since the Civil War 80 years ago; because over the last twelve years Russia bungled up its military reforms, and because a modern military is a very expensive, high tech proposition – a luxury only very rich countries can afford.

Still, neither the U.S. foreign policy establishment nor its Moscow counterpart, should forget that Russia turned out to be more important for the United States in the war in Afghanistan than any of its NATO ally save Great Britain, and was second only to Pakistan in geopolitical importance. While the Russian forces did not fight in Afghanistan, neither did the French or the Germans. In fact, the U.S. turned down the unprecedented offer of assistance by NATO, not because of non-existent unilateralism, but because of insufficient battlefield compatibility between cash-starved European militaries and the high-tech U.S. forces.

It is clear that the Russian military played a critical role in resupplying the Northern Alliance in the early days of the war. Moreover, the Russian intelligence was crucial in the early American successes in Afghanistan. Washington insiders are elated that US-Russian intelligence cooperation was exemplary – a great achievement after 80 years of rivalries between the Western and Russian spies.

After three years of economic growth, the Russians retain most of the gains of the post-Soviet era: freedom of speech, freedom of travel, a modicum of political and economic stability – and even some increased optimism, as measured by a flurry of recent public opinion polls.

Russia is gaining friends in Europe and the United States. And yes, the Russians will be treated as partners and on the same terms as others in the military and security areas – just as President Putin requested (in relation to admittance to WTO). But being treated as

partners also implies playing by partnership rules -- not to supply weapons to Teheran's terror-mongering ayatollahs or provide the U.N. cover to the Butcher of Baghdad.

We should hail the U.S.-Russian security cooperation and prepare to difficult battles ahead against the common enemy.

**Summit Achievements.** When President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin met for summits in Russia and Rome May 23-25, they had an opportunity to define a new framework for U.S.-Russia strategic relations that extends beyond the war on terrorism. I hope they did. Such a framework could lay the foundation for a new 21st century security architecture while facilitating Russia's integration into the European-North Atlantic security and economic environment.

Given Russia's proximity to Western Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East, and in light of Putin's decision to line up with the United States in the war on terrorism, establishing closer cooperation with Russia will have significant benefits for U.S. national security and regional and economic interests. Closer cooperation with Moscow is vital, for example, for isolating such terrorism-supporting states as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and North Korea and for slowing the transfer of Russian military technology to China.

At the summit meetings in St. Petersburg and Moscow on May 23-26 and at the NATO-Russia summit in Rome on May 28, President Bush and President Putin focused on matters of security and economic policies. In Moscow, they signed a formal treaty that calls for deep cuts in nuclear arsenals on both sides over the next 10 years. Both leaders are committed to ending the legacy of the Cold War by reducing the strategic nuclear arsenals of their countries to around 1,700 to 2,200 deliverable warheads each. Such a commitment will also be required in cooperative efforts to reduce the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), to increase security in regions of common interest, and to increase trade to strengthen economies.

The treaty to reduce U.S. and Russian offensive nuclear arsenals is compatible with currently projected U.S. security requirements. These requirements, however, could change with little warning. As a result, reductions should proceed cautiously and the process should permit flexibility. The treaty allows flexibility by limiting its duration to 10 years, by pacing the reductions within the 10-year period, and by allowing either party to withdraw from the treaty with three months' notice. Another welcome sign of this flexibility is the agreement not to require the destruction of the warheads or to impose limitations on missile defenses.

Since the beginning of the war, bilateral contacts with Russia and Central Asian states grew in both frequency and intensity. The Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage-Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov working group on counter-terrorism expanded its purview to include the war on terrorism and Afghanistan. A high quality exchange of intelligence was instituted between the Russian and American intelligence communities – an unparalleled achievement which goes even beyond the

precedent of World War Two, when two countries' intelligence establishments viewed each other with extreme mistrust.

U.S. diplomatic activity in the region is on the rise. In late January 2002, a delegation co-chaired by Elizabeth Jones, Assistance Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs and Mira Ricardel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Eurasia visited Tashkent for the first U.S.- Uzbekistan Joint Security Cooperation Consultations (JSCC). The delegation also visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.<sup>4</sup>

**Joint Agenda.** Specifically, during the summit meetings President Putin and Bush should have defined the following agenda which could greatly boost security cooperation between the two countries:

- Secure Russia's support for removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. For Russia, the issues in Iraq are primarily the Soviet-era debt of \$11 billion to \$13 billion for arms sales during the Iran-Iraq war and how the oil deals secured by Russian companies in Iraq (worth \$30 billion in cash flow for the life of the projects) would be grandfathered in under a new regime. In addition, Russia is concerned about the territorial integrity of Iraq. President Bush could secure Russia's active diplomatic and military participation in an operation against Baghdad by guaranteeing that such concerns would be addressed in the post-Saddam Iraq in a manner that is satisfactory to Russia.
- Agree to terminate Russian sales of conventional weapons to Iran and technological cooperation to produce WMD. In 2001, Russia and Iran signed a \$300 million a year, multi-year arms export agreement, making Iran the third largest customer for Russian weapons after India and China. Moscow is also building two nuclear reactors at Bushehr, from which the precursors to nuclear bomb fissile material could be obtained, and is selling sophisticated anti-ship missiles and other destabilizing weapons to Iran.

On May 6, Under Secretary of State John Bolton called for the United States and Russia to sign a political declaration on the New Strategic Framework that would cover not just strategic offense and defense systems, but also nonproliferation and counterproliferation. Such a framework should promote cooperation to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state armed with ballistic missiles. The Bush Administration should be ready to offer an economic quid pro quo for Russia's actions, such as participation in building the components of ballistic missile defense systems and expansion of civilian space launch quotas.

- Move forward with NATO-Russia cooperation. On May 28, NATO and Russia signed an agreement to establish the NATO-Russia Council. This agreement should allow for joint development of policy and the planning of mutual activities in such areas as the war on terrorism including joint military and intelligence

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<sup>4</sup> "First U.S.-Uzbek Security Consultations," Kabar News Agency of Kyrgyzstan, January 29, 2002.

operations against terrorist organizations and their financial supporters; nonproliferation and WMD security; special forces interoperability; educational exchanges between officers on all levels; peacekeeping operations; and NATO assistance in comprehensive military reform, which President Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov would welcome.

In the past, the forum provided by the 1997 Permanent Joint Council often turned into a venue for Moscow to air its frustrations with NATO actions, such as the Balkans operations. Today, the joint NATO-Russia peacekeeping activities in that region demonstrate how these two sides can cooperate. Top U.S. generals, such as Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Joseph Ralston and Commander in Chief of Central Command (CENTCOM) General Tommy Franks, routinely praise Russia's cooperation with the United States and NATO. The NATO-Russia Council should be seen as a first step on the road to even greater security integration between Russia and the North Atlantic alliance after the first round of the joint security agenda items are successfully pursued. The President also should invite President Putin to address the NATO summit in Prague in November.

- Encourage Russia to expand its energy sales in the global market. Russia could increase energy sales significantly by enhancing corporate governance transparency and shareholder rights for Western investors. In addition, production could be increased by including 100 new oil and gas fields in the Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) legislation, which allows Western oil companies to be compensated by drawing oil for sale from the jointly developed fields. U.S. companies need assurances that their investments in Russian fields and infrastructure are secure. U.S. should request from the Russian government guarantees for Western companies through expanded PSA legislation which would add new fields to the existing PSA list, and to ensure its passage in the Duma.

Russia exports over 1.8 billion barrels of oil and 6.7 billion cubic feet of natural gas per year. It is the world's largest exporter of natural gas and second largest exporter of oil. Together with the countries of Eurasia, it could catch up with Saudi Arabia as a leading oil exporter by 2010. U.S. export development agencies, such as the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Export-Import Bank, and the international financial institutions, could assist foreign investors by insisting that the rule of law be honored and contracts upheld. A boost in Russia's energy exports also would provide its European and Far Eastern customers with additional energy security in the event that OPEC continues its policy of high prices and production cuts.

- U.S. should plan to lift of U.S. barriers to trade with Russia. The Administration supports Russia's economic integration with the West, including its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). President Putin has declared that Russia will not require any special deals from the WTO, so standard WTO criteria for

membership should apply. President Bush should declare U.S. support for Russia's accession in 2004, provided the negotiations in all sectors are completed successfully.

The U.S. statute known as the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which denies Russia most favored nation status, is a relic of the Cold War. It was passed in 1974 when the Soviet Union severely limited emigration. Congress suspended application of the amendment after the Soviet Union collapsed. At the Russia summit, President Bush should express his support for a permanent lifting of the Jackson-Vanik restrictions, which Congress could accomplish by attaching an amendment to trade legislation.

### **Conclusion**

The U.S.-Russia and Russia-NATO summits offered both countries a unique opportunity to launch a strategic partnership that would assure greater security in the 21st century. At the summit meetings, both President Bush and President Putin focused on casting off the baggage that has hampered U.S.-Russia relations in the past, such as Moscow's ties with Iran and Iraq and other states that sponsor terrorism.

By signing a strategic treaty to reduce their nuclear arsenals, the two leaders put to rest the legacy of the Cold War. Most importantly, they should expand joint actions in the war on terrorism, as well as establish goals for NATO-Russian cooperation and support policies that further integrate Russia into the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and the global market.

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