



THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL
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Russian Academy of Sciences

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The New Partnership:

Building Russia-West Cooperation on Strategic Challenges

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THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL

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Foreword

The challenge of transcending the Cold War relationship between Russia and the West and supplanting it with a new partnership capable of dealing cooperatively with the major international issues of the time has been a major focus of policy for the past decade and a half. Initially, much of the attention was devoted to Russia's own transition away from communism towards a more democratic politics and market-based economy. Latterly, especially since the attacks of September 11 and subsequent terrorist incidents, notably in Madrid and Beslan, the focus of attention has increasingly turned towards new security threats, especially those represented by the rise of jihadist terrorism, the threat of the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) into the hands of terrorist groups and their state supporters, and problems of regional instability, especially in the Middle East, the Gulf region, and Central Asia.

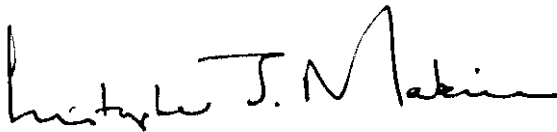
The United States, European countries, and Russia have for the most part each pursued their own approach to these issues. But few doubt that a more coordinated, trilateral approach — at least in some areas — would be more effective in addressing the issues themselves, as well as laying the foundation for a stronger Russia-West partnership over the longer term. But can the United States, Europe, and Russia work together to address global terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, and regional instability? Will political developments in Russia and its region enable such a partnership to flourish? To help answer these questions, the Atlantic Council of the United States, Aspen Institute Italia, and the Institute for US and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences brought together leaders and experts on terrorism, proliferation, and the broader Middle East region for three workshops in 2003-2004. Together, they identified areas of potential cooperation and constructive next steps that Russia, Europe, and the United States could take to address the common challenges they face. This report embodies the results of their work.

On behalf of the Atlantic Council, I would like to express great appreciation to all those who made this project possible. First, to all those who participated in the workshops in Washington, Moscow, and Rome and provided distinctive and lively analyses of current policies and future options. The discussions were unusually practical and constructive, due in large measure to the willingness of all to consider other perspectives and to a determination that the workshops produce specific recommendations. A list of participants appears at the end of this report. Although the report represents a general sense of their discussions, they are not responsible for every conclusion or recommendation. This report is issued with the support and agreement of the three sponsoring institutions: the Atlantic Council, Aspen Institute Italia, and the U.S. and Canada Institute of Russian Academic Studies. Those three also collaborated on the introduction, which takes note of the impact of political developments since the last workshop, especially in Russia.

Great thanks are also due to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which provided the bulk of the funds needed for the project. The Foundation for Bridges between East and West also provided much valued support to the Russian delegation and the workshop in Moscow.

The German Marshall Fund of the United States, through grants to the Atlantic Council under its Key Institutions program, was critical in ensuring the Council's ability to launch and sustain the project.

Thanks are due as well to the staffs of the co-sponsoring institutes, who worked across many time zones to ensure that agendas were set, hotel rooms ready, and transportation arranged. Special thanks go to the characteristically effective and high quality work of Fran Burwell and Sara Tesorieri of the Atlantic Council, who bore the brunt of the management and coordination of the project and the drafting and production of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christopher J. Makins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "C".

Christopher J. Makins
President, The Atlantic Council of the United States

Introduction

By the beginning of 2005, the improvement in relations between Russia and the West had lost momentum and come to a standstill, as serious concerns emerged in the United States and Europe about developments in Russia. European and U.S. commentators who disagree over economic policies and Iraq find themselves in broad critical consensus about Russian political and economic evolution. Will the term that has been moribund since the death of the Cold War — “containment” — emerge as an option for those in the United States and Europe making policy toward Russia? Already some argue for isolating Russia from Ukraine, Georgia, and other former Soviet republics; will they encourage the building of a new fence around Russia? Or will there be a new effort at engagement, albeit one that is more cautious about Russia’s future in the West?

It is fashionable nowadays in Russia to speculate how Western countries, in general, and the United States in particular, have always been, and will always remain, enemies of Russia. This argument is used by the groups which are hostile to democracy building and the transition to a market economy in Russia. But there is no denying that today the situation with respect to Russia’s internal policy is quite serious. Can Russia become a mature democratic state with a developed market economy if it is isolated from other developed democratic countries? History suggests that this can never happen — if Russia is to enter the community of democratic countries with market economies, it must meet certain standards.

In Russia, Europe, and the United States, there are efforts by some to reestablish the relationships of the Cold War. This can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although Russia and the West were enemies in the past, now their interests are no longer antagonistic. In fact, they share common security interests in their response to the double threat of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The February 2005 Bratislava Summit between Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin helped restore the dialogue between Russia and the West. That the Russian and U.S. presidents meet so often is good, as it proves that there are close ties between the two leaders. At the same time, it is bad, because it means that the strategic partnership — declared by Presidents Bush and Putin after 11 September 2001 — is based largely on the personal chemistry between the two presidents. Lasting partnership cannot be based on personal relations alone. Yet the declared strategic relationship lacks an institutionalized interactive mechanism. Characteristic of this is the underdevelopment of Russia-West trade and economic ties, which — given that Russia is not yet in the World Trade Organization — lack a solid legal and institutional basis.

Yet there is some good news: in Bratislava, the U.S. and Russian leaders decided to enhance cooperation to counter one of the gravest threats the international community faces — nuclear terrorism. Recognizing that the terrorist threat is both long-term and growing, Russia and the United States accepted a special responsibility for the security of nuclear weapons and fissile material, in order to ensure that such weapons and materials would not fall into terrorist

hands. The United States and Russia announced that they would deepen their cooperation on nuclear security with the goal of enhancing the security of nuclear facilities not only in these two countries, but also with the help of friends and allies around the globe. Specifically, U.S. and Russian experts will share “best practices” for improving security at nuclear facilities and will jointly initiate such consultations with other relevant countries. The United States and Russia will establish a Senior Interagency Group for Cooperation on Nuclear Security to oversee implementation of these cooperative efforts. They also agreed to expand cooperation on emergency response capabilities, including development of technical detection methods, to deal better with the consequences of a nuclear or radiological incident. Finally, the United States and Russia pledged to work together to achieve full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and early adoption of an International Convention on Nuclear Terrorism and the amended Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

On the issue of nuclear security and several others, the Bratislava summit demonstrated the need for the legal and institutional base — as well as common values — if there is to be a lasting partnership between Russia and the West. The meeting set out an ambitious agenda, but also indicated some steps that can be taken toward creating a stronger relationship that is not so dependent on personalities.

But this must not be just a bilateral U.S.-Russia partnership. Building a strong relationship between the European Union and Russia is also an integral part of ensuring that Russia-West ties remain strong. The informal meeting in Paris in mid-March involving President Putin, Chancellor Schroeder, President Chirac, and Prime Minister Zapatero was intended to smooth recent frictions in anticipation of the May EU-Russia summit. But here again the relationship cannot rest primarily on the personal ties between President Putin and European leaders. Although there is a more structured relationship between the EU and Russia, highlighted by biannual summits, both parties have much work to do to make this structure effective over time. But if a practical trilateral partnership in the economic, political, and military spheres can be established, and a dialogue on democracy and human rights continued, Russia will one day be able to join the community of democratic market nations.

This report, prepared by non-official leaders and experts from the United States, Europe and Russia, discusses in detail how to move forward the relationship between Russia and the West. The three sponsoring institutions hope that the report will help shape the agenda for the dialogue between the two sides and provide pragmatic solutions to the many issues that must be resolved if the common vision — a democratic Russia legally and institutionally integrated with the West — is to become a shared reality.

The New Partnership:

Building Russia-West Cooperation on Strategic Challenges

Executive Summary

The United States, Europe, and Russia all face the same key challenges as we begin the 21st century: global terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and the threat of instability in the broader Middle East region. Although they could react individually — and in fact often do — it is increasingly clear that a truly effective response will require the three to act together. During a series of summits in June 2004, some initial steps were taken to foster such cooperation, but much more remains to be done before trilateral coordination in meeting these challenges becomes a reality.

During 2003-2004, the Atlantic Council, Aspen Institute Italia, and the Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences convened a series of workshops involving non-governmental experts on terrorism, proliferation, and the broader Middle East region. In these trilateral discussions, the parties quickly agreed on the value of cooperation, but reaching accord on the exact nature of the threats and the most appropriate response proved difficult. However, the disagreements were just as likely to be between European and U.S. representatives, as between Russians and the others. In fact, the lines of agreement and disagreement between U.S., European, and Russian participants shifted according to the issue under discussion, reflecting the very real shifts among the United States, Russia, and Europe that have made efforts to cooperate so far rather *ad hoc*. The continuing conflict in Iraq, the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process, and the growing concern about proliferation in Iran contributed to the difficulty of the discussions. They were further complicated by the increasing concern by all participants over the course of events in Russia, especially the rise of terrorist incidents and the apparent move away from political pluralism and economic reform. Nevertheless, by the end of three workshops, the participants had reached agreement on some specific recommendations for building trilateral cooperation against the threats of global terrorism, proliferation of WMD, and instability in the broader Middle East region.

Fighting the Threat of Global Terrorism

Since September 2001, there has been a remarkable convergence among U.S., European, and Russian analysts about the evolving nature of terrorism and the significant threat that it presents. International terrorist groups are increasingly characterized by decentralized networks that allow maximum flexibility and by links with national terrorist groups and international criminal organizations. But there is little consensus among the United States, Europe, and Russia about the most appropriate response, with differences arising over: how best to protect domestic society; the most effective means for fighting — and perhaps defeating — terrorism; and whether political measures can be effective in isolating terrorists from a broader base of support. The strongest disagreements came over the apparent U.S. intention to defeat terrorism through the use of military means. Europeans contend that defeat is impossible and that an over-reliance on military force is not effective. Europeans and Russians also caution that the U.S. policy aim of ensuring total safety for the domestic society is unachievable. Finally, many Europeans believe that an effective policy against terrorism must include measures to address the economic, social, and political grievances that have supported such violence. U.S. analysts are not indifferent to these grievances, but argue that groups such as al-Qaeda do not have any negotiable political objectives, while the Russians are primarily concerned with limiting the spread of radical Islam and defeating Chechen terrorists.

The final area in which U.S., European, and Russian perspectives seem far apart is in agreeing on the most appropriate roles for key international organizations, especially NATO. One U.S. perspective views NATO — and particularly the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) — as the most suitable forum for a trilateral strategic discussion about terrorism, while a number of Europeans voiced concerns that making a military alliance central to such a discussion would inappropriately privilege military means in responding to terrorism. The Russians remained neutral on the issue of NATO, urging only that an organization be identified that can help coordinate responses without limiting national measures. But despite these differences, the following emerged as realistic steps forward in developing trilateral cooperation against terrorism:

- **The United States, Russia, and Europe should establish a mechanism that encourages a continuous strategic dialogue about terrorism and the most effective responses.** A combination of the NRC and the G-8 would probably be the most effective, but all participants must recognize that a wide range of institutions must be brought in to implement any decisions.
- **There should be a greater focus on the sharing of information and assessment, rather than classified intelligence.** Sharing classified operational intelligence should be recognized as something that happens only rarely and usually on an *ad hoc*, bilateral basis. But greater sharing of less sensitive information and of assessments and analysis could be extremely useful in deepening the collective understanding of the evolution of

the terrorist threat and perhaps even in preventing terrorist attacks or tracking organizations and individuals.

- **Russia should be increasingly integrated into U.S.-EU cooperation on the law enforcement aspects of fighting terrorism.** Having the ability to launch joint investigations and to extradite accused terrorists will circumscribe the ability of terrorist networks to exploit boundaries between national law enforcement agencies and inconsistencies in legal systems.
- Greater attention should be paid to addressing the grievances that lead ordinary individuals to tolerate terrorists, thereby providing a supportive environment in which these networks can thrive. The United States, Europe, and Russia should especially focus on the broader Middle East region, since it is radical Islam that poses the most dangerous threat today.

Preventing the Proliferation of WMD

Of all these challenges, the proliferation of WMD — and particularly of nuclear weapons — has seen the most convergence among U.S., European, and Russian experts concerning the nature of the threat and the requirements of an effective response. That consensus is largely focused on building a generalized response to proliferation, while differences remain over how to respond in particular cases, especially Pakistan, North Korea, and Iran. But the frustration all parties feel about the ineffectiveness of the current international non-proliferation regime has led to a recognition that a more cohesive approach is required. All three are concerned that more states are moving toward developing a WMD capacity, and that there is a growing black market aimed at supplying the necessary technology, materials, and equipment. In response, there is a consensus among the U.S., European, and Russian experts that the non-proliferation regime must be better able to address three tactical issues: detection of a potential nuclear weapons capacity; denial of a usable capacity; and protection should that denial effort fail. There is also a great need for a strategic dialogue within the international community that would address the factors encouraging proliferation, including regional insecurities and the appropriate response should nonproliferation efforts fail. Should proliferation be accepted once it occurs, and what are the alternatives? How do we manage a world with many more nuclear weapons states? Ironically, this convergence of views is inspired to some extent by the strong differences over the supposed threat of WMD in Iraq, which made clear the importance of addressing this issue. In recent months, there has even been some movement toward greater trilateral cooperation on specific cases, especially Iran. The following measures could help strengthen that cooperation which also contribute to a more strategic trilateral understanding of proliferation:

- **More effort should be put into sharing both information and intelligence as a way of better identifying potential proliferators and assessing their progress.** This

should include information on commercial transactions that may reveal suspicious patterns of transfers of expertise or material.

- **The International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) should be strengthened in its ability to conduct inspections without interference.** The IAEA should develop a permanent corps of inspectors, who should be active in more countries and not be hindered in their work; if they are, the UN Security Council should consider the situation promptly.
- **A much closer consensus must be developed regarding the penalties to be imposed on potential proliferators.** These could include economic or diplomatic sanctions, but serious advance consideration should also be given to a range of military options, including the possibility of preventive action. That discussion might best be conducted through the UN Security Council, perhaps in a revitalized Military Committee.
- **The reasons behind proliferation should be addressed more effectively and the international community should be better prepared to offer alternatives.** For example, security guarantees might be offered to states with genuine security needs. In order to restrict the availability of dangerous material, a closed multinational system of fuel cycle services for peaceful nuclear undertakings could be developed.
- **A regular strategic discussion of WMD proliferation should be initiated between the United States, Russia, and the European Union.** This should not substitute for the broad multilateral discussions that accompany Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conferences, but instead this “trialogue” should consider some of the more strategic issues raised by recent events. This discussion could occur within several institutions, but perhaps most appropriately within the G-8 and the NATO-Russia Council.

Building Regional Stability

Since September 2001, the area of the Middle East and Persian Gulf has jumped to the forefront of the U.S.-European-Russian agenda. All recognize the danger of Islamic extremism and share the goal of encouraging the region to move toward economic, social, and political reform. But this agreement is only superficial, as the issue of the greater Middle East has produced more dissonance and outright disagreement than any other topic discussed in this “trialogue.” Even defining the geographical scope of the broader Middle East has proved contentious. The United States, Russia, and Europe have had starkly different views of reform in the region, with Russian observers skeptical of the value of any reform and the U.S. and European representatives divided over whether the emphasis should be on political or economic reforms, respectively. Moreover, most European analysts also regarded some movement in the Middle East peace process — including greater engagement by the United

States — to be essential for any meaningful regional reform to succeed, while the United States has been reluctant to give this issue that sort of primacy. The recent death of Yasser Arafat, followed by the Palestinian presidential elections, has opened up new possibilities for progress and U.S. re-engagement, but it is not yet clear that there will be any significant move forward. Similarly, the June 2004 summits — G-8, U.S.-EU, and NATO — together outlined an economic, political, and military approach for reaching out to the broader Middle East, although in the end, the differences cited above led to an approach more cautious than that initially put forward by the United States. Nevertheless, discussion among U.S., European, and Russian analysts has identified some areas where progress seems plausible:

- **Reform efforts should pay special attention to the potential role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the business community.** The first step is to identify current efforts by these groups, and to this end, the establishment of a regional information clearinghouse on NGOs and business associations could be very useful, both for those organizations and for those outsiders seeking to provide assistance.
- **Trilateral efforts in the region should focus particularly on reform efforts that will fight the twin scourges of terrorism and drug trafficking.** Focusing efforts on those programs that will address the incentives and capacity for terrorism and drug trafficking throughout the region will provide some clear benchmarks for reform efforts. Police training, anti-money laundering efforts, and local economic development programs can all contribute to this effort.
- **Russia should become more engaged in the region, especially in those areas where it has specific interests that can be addressed by all parties in a constructive manner.** The United States and Europe cannot simply ignore Russian interests in the region, but neither can Russia simply play a blocking role. It will inevitably be involved in security issues related to its southern flank, and there may even be a role for Russia in combating drug trafficking from Afghanistan.
- **There must be greater engagement in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** At a minimum, the Quartet should be reinvigorated as an effective consultation mechanism focused on finding ways forward in a post-Gaza withdrawal scenario.
- **A regular and effective trilateral consultative process should be established.** As demonstrated by the June 2004 summits, a range of institutions could be involved in such a process. Whatever the institutions involved, there must be a sustained trilateral conversation about the broader Middle East if that region is to become a source of stability and reform rather than instability and violence.

The New Partnership: Hope and Reality

The United States, Europe, and Russia all recognize the importance of finding ways to cooperate in meeting the threats of global terrorism, WMD proliferation, and instability in the broader Middle East region. Despite the tensions of the past two years, especially over the Iraq war, and the concerns over the course of democratization and economic reform in Russia, the three still share a concrete interest in identifying and building a cooperative strategy to address these challenges. New habits of cooperation should be learned and because this will not be easy, ambitions should be appropriately modest. Efforts at building trilateral cooperation should especially focus on:

- Greater sharing of intelligence and especially of non-classified information and assessments;
- Improving the effectiveness of current agreements and institutions;
- Focusing collaborative actions narrowly and establishing discrete goals; and
- Establishing a mechanism for a regular trilateral dialogue that will address these issues at a strategic level.

The New Partnership: Building Russia-West Cooperation on Strategic Challenges

A New Partnership?

The beginning of the second term of the Bush administration ushers in a key period for relations between the United States, Europe and Russia. All too often, these relationships are kept in separate bilateral channels, with distinct agendas for U.S.-Europe, Europe-Russia, and U.S.-Russian discussion. While this is understandable, given the different concerns that must be addressed in bilateral meetings, there is also much to be gained by engaging in a trilateral format. The United States, Europe, and Russia all face the same key challenges in the first decade of the 21st century: global terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and the threat of instability in the broader Middle East region. These challenges will persist for some time, and although the United States, Russia, and Europe could respond individually — and in fact have done so — it is increasingly clear that a truly effective response will require coordination among the three. Some initial steps in that direction were taken during a series of summits in June 2004 — G-8, U.S.-EU, and NATO — but there remains much more to be done before trilateral coordination in meeting these challenges becomes a reality.

The end of the Cold War provided an opportunity for the United States and Europe to build a new partnership with Russia — one that not only anchors Russia firmly into the West, but effectively addresses the strategic threats faced by all. This was reinforced by the terrorist attacks of September 2001, which, along with the proliferation of WMD in Pakistan, Iran, and North Korea, made clear that the threats of this new century would require a concerted response. President Vladimir Putin committed to making Russia an integral part of the West — a shift that was seen as essential not only in meeting international challenges, but in reinforcing the Russian move toward political and economic reform.

During 2001-2002, the Atlantic Council, Centre for European Reform, and the Institute of U.S. and Canada Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences) brought together U.S., European, and Russian experts for two workshops focused on the question of integrating Russia into the West. Although the project, supported in part by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, began before the Russian move toward the West was clear, by the time of its conclusion in

summer 2002, there had been a significant shift. As the resulting report, *The Twain Shall Meet: The Prospects for Russia-West Relations*, pointed out, “a closer relationship with the West will be key to the development of Russian prosperity, democracy, and stability — achievements that will benefit the West as well as Russia.” Significant challenges remained in integrating the Russian economy into the global one, in bringing Russia into a new Euro-Atlantic security framework, and in meeting the new global challenges. Yet the political will finally seemed to exist.

In this new and rather positive context, the Atlantic Council, along with Aspen Institute Italia and the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, convened a new set of trilateral discussions. Meeting from July 2003 through April 2004 in Washington, Moscow, and Rome, a rotating group of experts discussed how to build a joint response to the challenges of global terrorism, proliferation of WMD, and instability in the wider Middle East region. To what extent did the three regions share a common understanding of these threats? Could the need to respond together overcome the temptation to pursue individual interests? What might be the nature of a joint response and would it be effective? And finally, what resources could each bring to a partnership aimed at addressing these strategic challenges?

The first meeting, held in Washington in July 2003, initiated discussions in the shadow of the U.S.-led coalition operations in Iraq. Understandably, perspectives were often very different, and there was much lively debate. However, all parties agreed that U.S., European, and Russian cooperation was essential if the West was to meet the three key challenges effectively. Although in accord on the general need for joint responses, the participants found little consensus on the nature of the threats, nor did they make much progress in identifying the specific elements of a collective response. International institutions seemed likely to offer a way forward, but there was no agreement on which institutions or exactly how they might be useful.

The project’s second meeting, held in Moscow in December 2003, took place against a background of real concern about Russian political developments, as many of the politicians most associated with western-style political and economic reform had just been defeated in the Duma elections. Terrorism also came to the front of the agenda in a dramatic way, as one day before the meeting began, a bomb exploded in front of a prominent center-city hotel. As for proliferation, the situation in North Korea and Iran seemed more and more ominous, while President George W. Bush’s November speech calling for reform in the wider Middle East gave that issue considerably more urgency.

Under these difficult circumstances, the differences between U.S., European, and Russian perspectives emerged all the more sharply. Throughout the second workshop, there was little agreement on the severity and scope of threats, and even less on the most appropriate response. On terrorism, if anything the difference of perspective had widened, although the disagreements were as frequently between the United States and Europe as between Russia and the West, which was clearly not very unified on this matter. Differences also continued on the topic of proliferation of WMD, especially over the relative importance of strengthening

the international legal regime, including arms control treaties, versus the merits of more *ad hoc*, flexible instruments. Perhaps the most difficult issue was that of building regional stability in the wider Middle East, as differences expanded in the face of continued deterioration of relations between Israel and the Palestinians and the emergence of an insurgency in Iraq.

As the final meeting in Rome in April 2004 approached, the issues under discussion reasserted themselves. The situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate and to cause serious tensions across the Atlantic and within Europe. The March train bombings in Madrid brought terrorism to the fore once again. Continuing violence in the Middle East — from Israel and Palestine to Iraq — drew attention to the lack of stability in that region, while negotiations between the EU-3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) and Iran demonstrated the difficulties of effectively addressing the threat of proliferation. The workshop also took place during the lead up to a series of summits: the G-8 in early June, the European Council soon after followed by the U.S.-EU summit, and at the end of the month, the NATO summit in Istanbul. The summit agendas would be dominated by many of the same issues under discussion in the project. It was increasingly clear that the summit declarations would not be as ambitious as originally thought and would still require many concrete proposals to move them from rhetoric to reality. Against this background, European, U.S., and Russian analysts sought to identify recommendations for building trilateral cooperation.

Fighting the Threat of Global Terrorism

Since September 2001, there has been a remarkable convergence among U.S., European, and Russian analysts about the nature of terrorism and the threat that each region faces. In part, this convergence derives from the painful experiences each has suffered at the hands of terrorists. The Madrid and Moscow bombings — although far smaller than the attacks on New York and Washington — have brought home to Europeans and Russians the immediacy of the threat. The discovery that al-Qaeda was involved in the Madrid bombing erased any contention that the threat was directed solely, or even mainly, at the United States. In Russia, the growing suspicion of links between Chechen terrorists and al-Qaeda has brought a new focus on the threat of global terrorism.

Moreover, U.S., Russian, and European analysts agree that terrorism itself seems to be evolving, as more connections develop between traditional “nationalist” terrorist groups and global terrorist networks. Terrorism is increasingly characterized by decentralized networks that allow maximum flexibility in operations. Different nodes of the network may have considerable autonomy, and destroying one cell — or even several — may not affect operations planned by another. Even a global terrorist network such as al-Qaeda may find it convenient to cooperate with international criminal networks or with traditional nationalist terrorist groups, such as the IRA or ETA, especially in weapons smuggling, training, and various criminal activities designed to provide financial support. Changes in the nature of

terrorism are happening so rapidly that analysts must constantly rethink their conclusions about terrorist operations and the threats they represent.

This convergence of views about the nature of terrorism has not, however, led to a consensus over the most appropriate way to respond to that threat. Differences reflect the complexity of the terrorist threat, but also grow out of the distinct experiences the United States, Europe, and Russia have had with terrorism and the different capabilities each can bring to bear. Responses can be divided into three distinct elements, not all of which are equally accepted in importance among the U.S., Russian, and European governments: protection of domestic society, penetration and defeat of the terrorist groups, and the pursuit of political steps to divorce terrorists from their broader base of support.

All parties recognize the need for governments to take steps to protect the population at home, even at the cost of infringing on some liberties. But the effectiveness of various measures is certainly in dispute. The stricter U.S. visa regime is seen by many visitors as arbitrary, while the color-coded alert system devised by the Department of Homeland Security seemed ineffective in providing the public with information that they could use. Several European countries have long experience in protecting citizens from more traditional terrorist operations, but the EU as a whole is only at the beginning of developing effective cross-border cooperation among civil authorities. In Russia, the issue of protecting society is complicated by the apparent merger of traditional Chechen terrorists with more global elements, possibly al-Qaeda, and by the tightening of political control by President Putin and his allies. Perhaps the most important distinction, however, is the contention by European and Russian analysts that no amount of domestic safeguards could eliminate terrorist activities — government efforts could not be 100 percent effective. U.S. efforts to achieve such absolute domestic security are seen as extreme and misguided, and ultimately suspected of making Europe a more available target.

All can also agree on the importance of penetrating terrorist networks and, when possible, enlisting law enforcement and other anti-criminal instruments both to prevent attacks and to track down perpetrators after the fact. Since 2001, the United States and the European Union have developed significant cooperation in the law enforcement and judicial policy field. To date, Russia has been outside of this growing cooperation, and instead has collaborated very occasionally on an *ad hoc* basis. Yet, especially with the EU's recent enlargement, cross-border cooperation between Russian and European law enforcement will become increasingly important, involving not only sharing intelligence and information, but also potential joint operations in tracing dangerous materials, illicit financial flows, and suspect individuals. This in turn will require greater confidence among police forces and greater understanding of procedures, rules of evidence, etc. Bringing Russian law enforcement into closer, more regular cooperation with both European and U.S. efforts in this area could help enhance Russian police capabilities as well as strengthen the ability of all parties to track and intercept international terrorists.

While U.S., European, and Russian views are well aligned on the need for greater cooperation in identifying and intercepting terrorists, there is less consensus about whether the defeat of terrorism is a realistic objective. The related disagreement over whether a military response is justified or effective has become the focal point of U.S.-European discord over how best to counter terrorism, while Russia stands slightly apart with a third approach. For most Europeans, the idea of defeating international terrorism — while it might be devoutly wished for — is unlikely to be realized in the short term. The U.S. emphasis on a military response to terrorism is seen as largely futile, except in a few rare situations, such as Afghanistan. On the contrary, many Europeans argue that a military response, either against al-Qaeda or Chechen terrorists, is likely to create more sympathy for the terrorists, and bring more recruits to their cause, while being ineffective in eliminating a network-based organization comprised of decentralized cells.

For many Americans, however, the “war on terrorism” — a terminology that many Europeans reject — cannot be fought simply with police and judicial authorities. Many terrorist cells are effectively para-military groups, and can only be defeated by better-armed units trained in military tactics and willing to use deadly force. Military forces have played a key role in disrupting al-Qaeda hideouts on the Afghan-Pakistan border; a task for which even top police forces would have been inadequate. Russian analysts — although perhaps not the Russian government — share European skepticism about the effectiveness of military forces in fighting terrorism, and point to Chechnya as an example of the way the use of military force can deepen a conflict. But they, like many U.S. analysts, also see law enforcement alone as inadequate to deal with a well-trained and well-armed terrorist force — a view that has hardened following the attack on the school in Beslan.

This division over the use of military force as a response to terrorism has been exacerbated by the conflict in Iraq. While this was justified in part by the U.S. Administration as part of the global war on terror, those Europeans who oppose the war often argue that military operations in Iraq have heightened anger within the Arab world at the United States and the West in general. As a result, it is claimed Iraq has become a focal point of terrorist activity, with more terrorists operating within its borders and others outside Iraq using it as a justification for their actions against the West.

These differences over the effectiveness of a military response to terrorism have carried over to the question of whether political steps might be effective in divorcing terrorists from their broader base of support. The biggest split on this issue is between the United States and the European Union, with Russian views probably closer to those of the U.S. administration rather than to the general European perspective. Many Europeans draw on their own experience with nationally-oriented terrorism to argue that greater emphasis must be given to addressing the perceived injustices that provide terrorists with their political support. A critical first step in fighting terrorists is to isolate them from potential supporters within the *populace*, portraying them as violent criminals whose actions disrupt the flow of benefits to the community. A distinction should be drawn between those terrorist groups who are aligned with a particular political movement, and those that are independent of any such ties.

Those that fall into the first category may prove vulnerable to government efforts to address political grievances, perhaps even by negotiating with the political wing of a terrorist movement. Even when such negotiations are seen as unlikely to resolve the conflict, they might provide valuable information and access, as well as demonstrating to the sympathetic public that the government is serious about addressing their concerns.

However, some terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, do not have negotiable political objectives, nor are they linked with any coherent political group. Not only are individual terrorists within such movements willing to lose their own lives in suicide attacks, but the overall goal is the destruction of Western societies, or at least of Western influence in the Middle East. This may make negotiations impossible, but for many Europeans it does not obviate the need to identify and address the grievances within societies that give rise to such movements. On the contrary, European leaders have increasingly emphasized the need to address the social and especially economic aspirations of those living in the Middle East. They have also repeatedly warned that the failure to move forward toward a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict inflames a sense of injustice among many in the Arab world that in turn creates an atmosphere in which anti-western terrorism is tolerated.

The U.S. government has not been indifferent to the need for social and economic reform in the Arab world; in fact, the Bush administration was the leading proponent of the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), which was intended to foster such reform within a process of democratization across the region. But many European governments were leery of the U.S. emphasis on political reform and viewed the GMEI as potentially destabilizing and lacking support by the governments and peoples of the region. In the weeks preceding the G-8 summit, the initiative evolved into a measure of more limited scope.¹ The U.S. perspective was also different from the European view on the relationship between the Israel-Palestine conflict and the rise of radical Islamic terrorism. While most European analysts saw the two as inevitably connected, the U.S. administration viewed the growth of al-Qaeda as having little to do with the Israel-Palestine issue, and argued that progress toward resolving the latter would have little impact on the former. Meanwhile, Israel had every right to defend itself against the use of terrorist means by Palestinian organizations.

Russian views on these questions have evolved as they have found themselves subject to more frequent attacks by Chechen nationalists, and as suspicions grew that these terrorists were increasingly aligned with global terrorist networks. The Russian focus was less on the need for social, economic, or political reform in the Arab world, but on ways of limiting the spread of radical Islam. At least some Russian analysts recognize that support for terrorism is encouraged by social and economic inequities. This has been reinforced by globalization, which has brought the “haves” and “have nots” into closer proximity while also weakening the restraints that had kept traditional societies orderly. But in dealing with the Chechen terrorists who have endangered Russian civilians, the emphasis is on military and law

¹ At the G-8 summit, this would emerge as the Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative, known as BMENA.

enforcement measures designed to stop and eradicate the threat in the short term. Few Russian analysts or policymakers seem to feel that a political dialogue might be useful.²

The final area in which the U.S., European, and Russian perspectives seem far apart is in specifying the role of specific institutions in building trilateral cooperation against terrorism. There is widespread recognition that greater involvement by a few key institutions might provide a stronger framework for encouraging such cooperation. But there is little agreement on which specific institutions should be the focal point.

The sharpest difference emerged between the United States and Europe over the appropriate role for NATO. At least one U.S. view saw NATO — and particularly the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) — as the most suitable institution for a continuous trilateral strategic discussion of terrorism and the available responses. Clearly terrorism requires a strategic response, not simply a series of unconnected tactical replies which might disable one element of a terrorist network, but not address the threat in any comprehensive way. A wide range of institutions could and should have a role in fighting terrorism: the G-8, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations, and others. But few offer the right composition for a sustained U.S.-European-Russian discussion, apart from the NRC. Moreover, NATO has more experience than most other institutions in sharing sensitive information — a key element in the fight against terrorism — and also has a small but established center designed to coordinate responses to major civil emergencies, including a possible terrorist attack. Joint preparation for civil emergencies has been a primary focus of NRC activities to date, and this is clearly relevant to building anti-terrorist capabilities. As the premier security-oriented organization linking the United States, Europe, and Russia, the NRC offers an on-going forum for examining the threat of terrorism in a strategic way and developing a comprehensive response involving many more organizations.

For some Europeans, however, designating NATO — or even the NRC — as the premier forum for strategic discussions of terrorism is problematic. First, it privileges NATO as an institution over others, and since much of the EU reaction to terrorism has been pursued through the European Union and the G-8, it is unclear why NATO and the NRC should be given such a prominent role. Second, because NATO is a military alliance, having it serve as the forum for review and discussion may lead to an overemphasis on military measures. This is a reflection of the very different U.S. and EU perspectives on the general effectiveness of military responses to terrorism.

For the Russians — and for many U.S. and European analysts — this difference over the role of NATO is rather secondary. Their concern is the lack of an effective organization that can help coordinate responses without creating undue obligations or restraints on national measures against terrorism. This may make the G-8 suitable, although that institution lacks any implementing powers. The regular U.S.-EU discussions and summits have proven useful, but do not involve the Russians, while the United Nations involves coordination with many

² The suggestion by some Europeans after the Beslan attack that a political dialogue might be useful was strongly rebuffed by President Putin, who saw no justification for negotiations.

other governments. The OSCE can be useful, but only if it does not interfere with domestic matters, while the Russians also point to regional institutions, especially as a way of involving the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In sum, over the past year, there has been a clear analytic convergence between the United States, Europe, and Russia as to the changing nature of terrorism and the threat it presents, while recent terrorist attacks have heightened the sense of urgency and commitment surrounding this issue. But serious differences remain over the nature of the response on three levels:

- The relative roles and effectiveness of law enforcement and military or para-military measures;
- The importance of fostering social, economic, and political reform in the broader Middle East region, and how that might best be done; and
- Which institution can best serve as the forum for a continuous strategic discussion about terrorism and the potential responses.

These differences are not simply between Russia and the West — if anything, it is the “West” that is most divided on these matters, with Russia finding itself standing off to one side with a slightly different third perspective. Yet on one matter, all are united: the United States, Europe, and Russia are increasingly connected by this threat and must find a way to collaborate in addressing it. Despite the differences, the following emerged as realistic possible ways to move forward in the next few months.

- **The United States, Russia, and Europe should establish a mechanism that encourages a continuous strategic dialogue about terrorism and the most effective responses.** A combination of the NRC and the G-8 would probably be the most effective, but there must be a recognition among all participants that a wide range of institutions must be brought in to implement any decisions. Despite the complexity of this arrangement, the overall objective must remain clear — to develop a more comprehensive and interconnected approach to terrorism, even as each government maintains its own priorities and emphasis.
- **There should be a greater focus on the sharing of information and assessment, rather than classified intelligence.** Repeated blandishments in the past to share intelligence on particular issues — even among close allies — have mostly been ignored. Sharing classified operational intelligence should be recognized as something that happens only rarely and usually on an *ad hoc*, bilateral basis. But greater sharing of less sensitive information and of assessments and analysis could be extremely useful in deepening the collective understanding of the evolution of the terrorist threat and perhaps even in preventing terrorist attacks or tracking organizations and individuals.

- **Russia should be increasingly integrated into U.S.-EU cooperation on the law enforcement aspects of fighting terrorism.** This will not always be easy; indeed, it has been difficult enough to foster cooperation between the United States and the EU, which have relatively similar standards of police procedure and rules of evidence. Yet having the ability to launch joint investigations and to extradite accused terrorists will circumscribe the ability of terrorist networks to exploit boundaries between national law enforcement agencies and inconsistencies in legal systems.
- **Greater attention should be paid to addressing the grievances that lead ordinary individuals to tolerate terrorists, thereby providing a supportive environment in which these networks can thrive.** The United States, Europe, and Russia should especially focus on the broader Middle East region, since it is radical Islam that poses the most dangerous threat today, and where many of the support mechanisms originate for other groups. (More discussion of this follows below in the section on building regional stability.)

Preventing the Proliferation of WMD

Of all the challenges facing the United States, Europe, and Russia, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has seen the most convergence in attitudes concerning the nature of the threat and the requirements of an effective response. That consensus is still somewhat shaky and largely focused on a building a generalized response to proliferation, rather than addressing specific instances of proliferation. There are differences, of course, most notably over the use of military force in response to the possibility that Iraq might have had WMD. And differences remain over how to respond to particular cases — especially Pakistan, North Korea, and Iran. But the frustration all parties feel about the ineffectiveness of the international regime in these instances has led to a recognition that a more cohesive approach is required. As a result, trilateral U.S.-European-Russian discussions revealed more agreement on the fundamentals of this issue than on any other and that the movement toward building that consensus has strengthened considerably.

Earlier discussions on proliferation centered on the future of the international arms control treaty regime, especially in light of the U.S. abandonment of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, and the potential merits of more such treaties. Europeans in particular tended to equate the health of the international regime with agreement on new legal instruments. But the graduation of India, Pakistan and North Korea into the ranks of states with nuclear weapons, and the apparent intention of Iran to do the same, has focused discussion on the successes and failures of the current legal regime, especially the NPT and the IAEA, as the enforcing agency. For the United States, Europe, and Russia, the main question now is: how can the existing regime be made more effective, so that the rising tide of proliferation can be stopped?

The Iraq example, and particularly the revelation that — contrary to general expectations — Saddam Hussein did not have WMD or even a functioning WMD program has demonstrated

how difficult it is simply to identify the likely proliferators and to judge their progress. And while many disagreed with the U.S. administration's decision to go to war (with the support of the British and a few other European governments), the course of events during late 2002 through mid-2003 made clear the lack of alternative responses to the Iraqi situation that held any promise of being truly effective. As a result, although the Iraq conflict exacerbated tensions generally between Europe, Russia, and the United States, it also made clear to them that a reinvigorated approach to identifying and stopping WMD proliferation must be a high priority. The alternative, illustrated by the evolving situation regarding Iran and its potential nuclear capabilities, is continuing tension among the three and the realization that the available policy choices are only slightly less bad than those that are unacceptable.

As in the case of the fight against global terrorism, there is increasing agreement among the United States, Europe, and Russia about the extent and nature of the proliferation problem. First, more states are developing a WMD capacity or taking the first steps in that direction. Clearly, incentives still exist for governments to pursue this ambition despite international condemnation. Pakistan, Iran, North Korea are viewed as the more normal case than Libya, which in December 2003 announced that it was abandoning its nuclear weapon program. Second, states are no longer simply developing an indigenous capacity; instead they have been participating — either as providers or recipients — in an international black market aimed at supplying the necessary technology, materials, and equipment. The discovery in late 2003 of an extensive sales network headed by an eminent former weapons scientist still closely connected to the government of Pakistan underlined how difficult it can be to detect such illegal markets. Third, there is the continuing potential threat of “loose nukes”; that is, material and equipment specifically from the former Soviet Union that might escape to the illegal global market in such goods. Finally, the threat also comes increasingly from non-state actors, both terrorists and international criminal organizations which hope to profit by trading in such goods. The current nonproliferation regime was aimed at traditional state actors and, in terms of detection, relies on governments going through the lengthy process of developing their own indigenous capacity. The threat has changed considerably, and now involves a range of players, state and non-state, with an expanding supply of material, technology, and expertise more readily available than ever through a variety of sources.

If the threat from nuclear WMD is significant, the danger from chemical and biological weapons is even more difficult to address. There seem to be fewer national programs — although the use of these weapons by Saddam Hussein is never far from anyone's mind. The availability of material and the relatively “low-tech” approach that might be successful makes chemical and biological weapons of special relevance when discussing terrorists. It also makes the materials and expertise associated with the development of those weapons very difficult to detect and monitor. Given the complexity of this situation, the priority has been to address the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. Some of the issues that must be addressed in the nuclear context may have lessons for biological and chemical proliferation as well.

In considering how best to address the proliferation of nuclear WMD, it is useful to distinguish between two levels of analysis and policy:

- The tactical level, focused on how to make the existing non-proliferation regime effective by strengthening the IAEA and other institutions; and
- The strategic level, including addressing the broader security, economic, and political issues that may encourage proliferation.

On the tactical level, the experience of the last few years has made it clear that the existing non-proliferation regime is not effective against states determined to develop nuclear weapons. In the future, the response of the world community to a potential proliferator must come earlier and must involve more options. To accomplish this aim, the nonproliferation regime must address three distinct challenges: detection of a potential nuclear weapons capacity; denial of a usable capacity; and protection should that denial effort fail.

The experience in Iraq has brought the United States, Europe, and Russia together in one regard — they now all recognize the difficulty of evaluating accurately whether a specific regime is developing nuclear WMD and how far that program has progressed (biological and chemical weapons present an even more difficult challenge). No detection system, even after the Iraq experience, will be perfect, especially for those states outside the NPT. Detecting WMD capacity among terrorist groups and other non-state actors will be even more difficult, although nuclear weapons are a less immediate concern in that regard than chemical, biological, or radiological weapons simply because nuclear weapons are more difficult for non-state groups to develop or acquire.

Improving the detection of nuclear weapons — or even of a development program — will require an attack on two fronts. First, the IAEA inspectors must be able to do their job. They must not only have adequate resources; they must also have sufficient backing from the world community, with the (UNSC) taking a leading role. It must be clear to those governments subject to inspections that the penalties for refusing or restricting IAEA inspectors will be severe. Second, there must be much greater sharing of both intelligence and information among those seeking to prevent proliferation. Intelligence sharing has always been an elusive goal, in part because of concerns about compromising sources and methods. But a greater effort in this area is required and in particular there should be a new focus on the sharing of non-restricted information.

Once a potential weapons program is detected, the task is then to convince the suspect government not to proceed. U.S., Russian, and European analysts agreed that the current non-proliferation regime does not offer enough incentives to restrict weapons development, nor adequate disincentives that might penalize a potential proliferator. All too often, whenever a specific case has arisen, one or more of the key states of the IAEA and UN Security Council have suffered a loss of political will, especially if attempts to discourage undesirable behavior might have significant political or economic costs. For example, the continuation of Pakistan's close relationship with the United States, despite its move into the nuclear weapons club, could certainly be used as the basis for arguing that there was little diplomatic cost for proliferators. North Korea provides a case in which a country has gained in status — and perhaps in security — by at least seeming to cross the nuclear threshold. European efforts to

reach an agreement with Iran are focused on offering economic and trade benefits if the Iranians accept measures designed to ensure the peaceful nature of their nuclear development — an approach based on positive incentives. Despite Russian and U.S. support for current European negotiations, there is little consensus about the use of sanctions or even military force if Iran chooses to maintain its nuclear program.

Some observers argue that if humanitarian crises now merit multilateral military responses, so does proliferation of WMD, which is even more dangerous to world stability. But it is unclear which body should authorize military intervention, particularly if the UN Security Council was too divided to take such a decision. The Proliferation Security Initiative is viewed positively as one type of step that might be taken to limit proliferation, but it is also seen as a very limited measure that cannot by itself stop a determined proliferator. The development of a consensus on the use of more effective “carrots” and “sticks” will be one of the most important tasks of any trilateral effort.

Finally, there is always the possibility that these efforts will fail and a nuclear device be detonated by a non-state group such as al-Qaeda. There is clearly much that could be done to boost trilateral cooperation in mitigating the impact of such an event, including joint training for rescue teams and developing sustainable communications networks. Just as important, the United States, Europe, and Russia should develop the capacity to respond jointly to punish the perpetrators of such an attack. This might entail a sustained military campaign, as in Afghanistan, or it might involve a more targeted and limited strike against a specific camp or installation. Clear and determined preparations for both retaliation and consequence management could, in some circumstances, provide a form of deterrence, as those seeking to create maximum chaos realize it could not be achieved except at an unacceptably high cost. However, such deterrence might not work in all cases, especially against terrorist groups.

Beyond the immediate concern of improving the tactical effectiveness of the current nonproliferation regime, there is a need to consider this issue on the strategic level. The first challenge would be to address the factors encouraging proliferation. On this issue there is a great deal of consensus among U.S., European, and Russian perspectives. Most states of concern are in unstable regions with neighbors that are already nuclear-weapons states. Pakistan’s proliferation could be explained by its long, difficult relationship with India, and Iran is in the same region (with a past adversary — Saddam Hussein’s Iraq — that at different times has sought and used WMD). North Korea is in a fairly stable area, but surrounded by nuclear-capable states and with an isolated, paranoid leadership. When proliferation is motivated by genuine security needs, especially in an unstable region, this should be taken into account. In some cases, the nuclear weapons states may find that the only way to avoid further proliferation is to offer security guarantees to those with real concerns. Financial gain also provides an incentive for proliferation, especially as a growing number of institutions and individuals seek to make money by putting expertise and material on the open market. Finally, it should also be recognized that nuclear weapons are seen not only by the elites as a deterrent against regional instability, but by the larger public as a worthy national goal, a factor that is likely to complicate any bargaining with the government. In such a situation,

the world community could do little to dissuade nuclear ambitions except by making the penalties very stiff; something that has been consistently difficult to do.

In the eyes of some observers, proliferation has also been encouraged by the fact that, from a strategic perspective, the end of the Cold War has not altered the global nuclear balance. The United States and Russia still have — and see reason to maintain — massive arsenals, even though their superpower rivalry is in the past. The U.S. tolerance for Pakistani proliferation and initial Russian tolerance for apparent Iranian movement in that direction perpetuated the notion of client states, although this concept is not as rigid as during the Cold War. In addition, some observers criticize the United States, and to a lesser extent Russia, for failing to meet their obligations under the NPT to move toward nuclear disarmament, as this reinforces a climate of unfairness in which some states were allowed nuclear weapons and others were not.

Nor is there consensus on what to do if greater efforts to stem WMD proliferation fail. Clearly, the goal of all three parties is to keep further WMD proliferation to an absolute minimum, hopefully nil. But once a state has broken through the barrier and is clearly on the road to nuclear weapons, should that goal change? Is a peaceful nuclear energy sector permissible for a country with weapons ambitions? Once a state has a weapons capacity, is the goal to prevent further development in the program and the actual use of weapons? Or is the objective “rollback” — that is, the dismantlement of that capacity, either entirely or in some limited, supervised way? Is rollback possible without the willing cooperation of the government in question? If there is no choice but to accept the proliferation, does that reward violators of current norms and perhaps even treaty provisions (if they were parties to the NPT)? Failure to find answers to these questions opens a disquieting possibility: a world with a significant number of new nuclear weapons states. If we must accept nuclear proliferation once it has occurred, how do we manage a world with many more nuclear weapons states? Given developments in Pakistan, Iran, and North Korea, should that question be as much a priority for the United States, Europe, and Russia as the puzzle of how to make the current non-proliferation regime more effective?

These larger strategic issues, which are compounded by the addition of non-state actors as potential proliferators and certainly as providers of expertise and material, need to be more fully discussed. As with building cooperation in fighting terrorism, enhancing trilateral efforts against proliferation will require continually reaching beyond the most immediate issues and developing a broader strategic consensus. For that reason, a regular, trilateral strategic dialogue on these issues is essential. Again, as with the issue of terrorism, the best forum for this “trialogue” is unclear, but certainly could include the NATO-Russia Council, the United Nations, or the G-8. The United States and EU have increasingly included proliferation of WMD on their annual summit agenda, but of course this forum does not include Russia.

The issue of WMD proliferation has received increasing attention within Europe, the United States, and Russia. While there were huge differences over the appropriate response to the

supposed threat of WMD in Iraq, that experience has, ironically, brought analysts from the three regions closer together. It has highlighted the difficulties of accurately detecting a weapons program and, together with North Korea and Iran, made clear the need for a more effective nonproliferation regime. The following measures could contribute to that end as well as to a more useful strategic discussion of WMD proliferation and its impact:

- **More effort should be put into sharing both information and intelligence as a way of better identifying potential proliferators and assessing their progress.** This should include information on commercial transactions that may reveal suspicious patterns of transfers of expertise or material. An appropriate forum for sharing intelligence and information must be found — one that will not facilitate leakage of technical information to non-nuclear states, but that will also enhance transparency in the commercial area.
- **The IAEA should be strengthened in its ability to conduct inspections without interference.** The IAEA should develop a permanent corps of inspectors, who should be active in more countries and not be hindered in their work; if they are, the UN Security Council should consider the situation promptly. Failures to implement IAEA requirements should bring a much speedier, perhaps even automatic, review by the UN.³
- **A much closer consensus must be developed regarding the penalties to be imposed on potential proliferators.** These could include economic or diplomatic sanctions, but serious advance consideration should also be given to a range of military options, including the possibility of preventive action. To facilitate early discussion of this — and to ensure the widest possible support when the need actually arises — this discussion should be conducted within the UNSC, based on a strengthened system of providing military assessments to the UNSC members, perhaps through the establishment of a revitalized Military Committee.⁴ In most cases, UNSC approval would be required to legitimize any preventive military action against a proliferator

³ The UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change has recommended that "The IAEA Board of Governors should recognize the Model Additional Protocol as today's standard for IAEA safeguards, and the Security Council should be prepared to act in cases of serious concern over non-compliance with non-proliferation and safeguards standards." See *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (New York: United Nations) December 2004, paragraph 129.

⁴ The UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change has recommended the abolition of the Military Staff Committee attached to the UNSC, and making the Secretary General's Military Adviser to provide information to member states without adequate military advising systems. However, the recommendation presented here envisions a new Committee to provide advice, assessments, and strategic planning to the UNSC. See *A More Secure World*, paragraphs 259 and 300.

- **The reasons behind proliferation should be addressed more effectively and the international community should be better prepared to offer alternatives.** For example, security guarantees might be offered to states with genuine security needs. In order to restrict the availability of dangerous material, a closed multinational system of fuel cycle services for peaceful nuclear undertakings could be developed.
- **A regular strategic discussion of WMD proliferation should be initiated between the United States, Russia, and the European Union.** Other countries could be invited to join as appropriate, but this should not substitute for, or try to replicate, the broad multilateral discussions that accompany NPT review conferences, for example. Instead, this “trialogue” should consider some of the more fundamental issues raised by the events of recent years: how to reduce the incentives to proliferate, but also how to manage a world with more states having nuclear weapons now that the fixed alignments of the Cold War have disappeared. As with a strategic dialogue on fighting terrorism, this discussion could occur within several institutions, but perhaps most appropriately within the G-8 and the NATO-Russia Council.

Building Regional Stability

Even before September 2001, the region including the Middle East and Persian Gulf area had long been a matter of transatlantic discussion and frequent disagreement. Once an area of competition between the West and the Soviet Union, after 1990 that region was still a matter of importance in Russia-West relations, but whether the approach would be competitive or cooperative was far less clear. As for the United States and Europe, there had been frequent disagreements over the Middle East region throughout the Cold War, with the 1956 Suez War only the most spectacular. But the impact of those disputes on transatlantic relations was limited in the face of the Soviet threat. After 1990, the disagreements continued, especially over the Middle East peace process,⁵ but the effect on the relationship overall was uncertain, as neither Europe nor the United States put the region consistently at the top of their joint agenda.

When it became apparent, however, that the perpetrators of September 11 were part of a wider network based in Afghanistan and with roots throughout the “greater Middle East,” that region jumped to the forefront of U.S.-European-Russian relations. All three saw the Middle East and Persian Gulf as fostering a type of Islamic extremism that could pose a mortal threat to the West. And all shared the goal of encouraging the region to move toward economic, social, and political reform in a way that would foster stability and modernization, and thus reduce the attractiveness of radical movements and terrorism.

⁵ For further details on U.S.-European differences over the Middle East, see *Elusive Partnership: U.S. and European Policies in the Near East and the Gulf* and *Partners in Frustration: Europe, the United States, and the Broader Middle East* (Washington DC: Atlantic Council of the United States), 2002 and 2004.

But this apparent agreement has proven only superficial, as the issue of the greater Middle East has engendered more dissonance and outright disagreement than any other topic discussed in this trilateral framework. Even terminology proved contentious, so that the very term, “greater Middle East” had to be changed to the “broader Middle East” in order to reach consensus on even a limited agenda of reform. Disagreements on this issue relate to — and exacerbate — trilateral tensions over the challenges of terrorism and WMD proliferation. Religious extremism and terrorism are at least partly rooted in the conflicts and instabilities of the wider Middle East, and in the lack of economic opportunity and political alternatives that is all too common in the area. The lack of good governance in some states and the availability of illegal commercial networks also make the transfers of illicit materials required for WMD production more possible, while regional instabilities contribute to the motivation for proliferation. But even though all parties recognize the importance of reform and stability — not only for their own sake, but also in order to lessen the threats of terrorism and proliferation — the United States, European Union, and Russia have found it extraordinarily difficult to move forward in a cooperative framework on these issues.

The differences start at a very basic level — the definition of the broader Middle East. The European Union has long had a significant relationship with the north African countries bordering the Mediterranean, and the perpetrators of the Madrid 2004 train bombing appear to have come from primarily from Morocco. Turkey was initially included by the United States in its “greater Middle East initiative,” but vociferously rejected that status and has shied away from even being labeled as a model for Muslim democracies. The Palestinian territory was included, but how did Israel, a Jewish democracy, fit into a program designed to enhance political reform in Muslim states? How far afield did the broader Middle East stretch: should Afghanistan be included, and Iran? What about those countries — from Georgia to Tajikistan — that were formerly part of the Soviet Union? The diversity encompassed by the broader Middle East — in terms of history, location, culture, political structure, etc. — made the development of a general strategy fraught with potential pitfalls.

Disagreements over the borders of the broader Middle East have proven symptomatic of the starkly different approaches that divide the United States, Russia, and Europe. Russia, for example, has remained generally skeptical of reform and fears it will destabilize the region. Efforts to include former Soviet republics in the broader Middle East initiative have been viewed as a threat to Russian interests in its immediate neighborhood. Some Russian observers see U.S. interest in the region as indicative of a desire to preserve its overwhelming superiority and are suspicious of how the U.S. doctrine of pre-emption might come into play. At the same time, U.S. and especially European observers are unsure what role Russia might play in a reform process. Some have argued that Russia’s recent political and economic transitions might offer valuable lessons for those seeking reform, but this is balanced by increasing concern about the future of Russian democracy as well as Russian intentions in its “near abroad.”

From the European perspective, EU efforts at reform had been focused on the Mediterranean states involved in the Barcelona process. The new U.S. plans were regarded by some as

ignorant or dismissive of those efforts. But Europeans also worry that they will inevitably be linked with U.S. efforts, and even though Europeans had been critical of the U.S. initiative, they would also be criticized by those in the region if it failed.

As for the United States, the focus for reform was inevitably on the two countries that had dominated the Washington agenda, Afghanistan and Iraq, and it was believed that successful transitions in those countries would reduce the region's capacity for generating terrorism and WMD proliferation. Meanwhile, the Bush administration maintains close ties with the non-democratic governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, regarding the first one, especially, as a valuable ally in the fight against terrorism. This contrast has led European and Russian observers to charge that the U.S. commitment to reform is not only too ambitious, but too selectively applied.

Another key difference has been the priority given to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Most European observers regard progress in resolving this conflict — including greater engagement by the Bush administration — to be a *sine qua non* of any significant and lasting reform in the broader Middle East. The continuing violence on both sides contributes to the radicalization of many Arab communities and the recruitment not only of suicide bombers but of terrorists willing to fight elsewhere against the West. Europeans regard the lack of progress as a significant indicator of a U.S. failure to engage on this issue. They see themselves as having little opportunity to affect a political settlement, but likely to end up funding Palestinian reconstruction, as they have in the past, and perhaps being blamed by others if the violence continues. Many U.S. observers, while recognizing the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the entire region, have not been optimistic that progress could be made in the short-term. As a result, they have been reluctant to give this issue the same primacy as did the Europeans and cautioned that regional reform should not be held hostage to progress in the Middle East peace process. While the death of Yasser Arafat and the January 2005 elections for a new Palestinian president have opened up new possibilities for progress and U.S. re-engagement, many U.S. observers remain more cautious than Europeans in assessing the prospects for quick progress.

The Russian observers have taken a different view, arguing primarily that Russia should have a larger role in the peace process and that the Quartet has been reduced almost to irrelevance. U.S. and European skepticism about a constructive Russian role in the peace process remains considerable. But all agree that while the Quartet is a potentially useful mechanism, it has not been supported with the necessary political will and it is uncertain whether it could still be useful in moving toward a settlement.

In the wake of the initial U.S. greater Middle East initiative proposal in spring 2004, another major difference emerged over the balance between political reform and regional stability. While the U.S. proposal promoted democratization, many European and Russia observers were skeptical about the fruits such political reform might bear, especially in the near term. Democratization could, it was noted, release the political power of radical Islam — an outcome that no one desires. Moreover, in some ways, the war on terrorism is in direct

conflict with the push for political liberalization. Certainly the continuing U.S. partnerships with some repressive regimes are problematic from the standpoint of political reform. But even in more open societies, the tools associated with effective anti-terrorism — extensive police surveillance, continuing identity checks, detentions of suspected terrorists — are often the very elements transitional societies should leave behind. In contrast to this emphasis on democratization, the Europeans prefer to focus on economic reform, in terms of domestic economic policy and in opening the region to commerce, both among the countries of the region and with other external partners (such as the EU). The Russian priority is to enhance regional stability and ensure that their interests are adequately represented, however the region evolves. They remain skeptical of almost any reforms, whether political or economic.

These differences were very apparent in the lead up to the June 2004 summits. The United States hoped these meetings in rapid succession (G-8, U.S.-EU, and NATO) would provide an opportunity to develop a comprehensive and ambitious program for addressing the needs of the Middle East and the Gulf. In the end, concerns about reform vs. stability and the continuing Israeli-Palestinian impasse led to a somewhat more cautious approach. Some new initiatives were launched, including the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the BMENA and a reinvigoration of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative at the NATO summit. Many of the specific proposals focused on economic development and reform. Beyond those, however, it was unclear how effective these initiatives would be or even to what extent they would be embraced by governments in the region. Thus, after the summits the task remains essentially the same as before: to overcome differences in U.S., European, and Russian approaches and to develop the consensus required to move trilateral cooperation forward.

The United States, Russia, and Europe do agree with the need for some kind of reform and for some movement toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They all also agree on the importance of ensuring a stable outcome in Iraq. Even though there are many serious disagreements over how to achieve these ambitions, there is room for some collaborative steps forward. Efforts to build that cooperation, however, will have to take into account four limiting factors:

- **The goals of any initiatives should be modest and targeted to address the specific needs of each country.** It may be that only a few key countries will be able to undertake a process of democratization without creating unwelcome instability; for other countries, the priorities may be focused more on specific economic or anti-terrorism issues. It should also be remembered that transitions in governance take years rather than months.
- **Because of the reaction in the region to the Iraq war, it will not always be beneficial to have the United States openly involved in a particular initiative.** At the same time, however, governments in the region will doubt that the initiative will be effective unless the U.S. administration is on board. This paradoxical situation means that trilateral cooperation sometimes should be open and visible, but other

times, it should be implicit and informal. The United States, Europe, and Russia, should not, however, let these attitudes create further differences among themselves.

- **Some accommodation must be made for the role of religion in these societies.** An appeal for political change is unlikely to succeed if it is based on a purely secular alternative (hence Turkey is unlikely to be a widely relevant model). Reform efforts must not result in the exclusion of the strongly religious portion of the population, but must provide them with political alternatives to radicalism.
- **Initiatives must be based on a *quid pro quo*; in other words, there must be some incentive for governments in the region to change the way they do business, both economically and politically, and it must go beyond the provision of assistance simply to further those changes.** Perhaps the most appropriate exchange is one that links economics and security. The Helsinki accord may be an appropriate model, as it linked acceptance of regional security concerns with guidelines for economic and political reform (obviously, however, Cold War Europe provided a significantly different context than exists in the broader Middle East today).

Despite these caveats, discussions between U.S., European, and Russian analysts identified several areas where progress seems plausible.

- **Reform efforts should pay special attention to the potential role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the business community.** Whether the focus is on economic or political reform, the NGO and business sectors can play a key role. NGOs are commonly at the forefront of reform efforts, but it should not be forgotten that the business community stands to benefit tremendously from a lessening of corruption and government interference in the economy, not to mention growth in regional trade. The first step is to identify current efforts by these groups, and to this end, the establishment of a regional information clearinghouse on NGOs and business associations could be very useful, both for those organizations and for those outsiders seeking to provide assistance.
- **Trilateral efforts in the region should focus particularly on reform efforts that will fight the twin scourges of terrorism and drug trafficking.** As the preceding discussion demonstrates, reform is a huge undertaking, and too often many specific and separate efforts prove ineffective in the face of such a challenging task. Focusing efforts on those programs that will address the incentives and capacity for terrorism and drug trafficking throughout the region will provide some clear benchmarks for reform efforts. Police training, anti-money laundering efforts, and local economic development programs can all contribute to this effort.
- **Russia should become more engaged in the region, especially in those areas where it has specific interests that can be addressed by all parties in a constructive manner.** The United States and Europe cannot simply ignore Russian interests in the

region, but neither can Russia simply play a blocking role, dismissing initiatives without putting forward constructive alternatives. Nor can Russia expect to be engaged in every issue across the region. But it will inevitably be involved in security issues related to its southern flank, and there may even be a role for Russia in combating drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

- **There must be greater engagement in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** Although active U.S. engagement is critical, Europe might also play an expanded role. Especially as Turkey moves toward membership in the European Union, the EU will have both more incentive and more credibility in the region, especially given Turkey's longstanding relationship with Israel. Certainly, at a minimum, the Quartet should be reinvigorated as an effective consultation mechanism focused on finding ways forward in a post-Gaza withdrawal scenario.
- **A regular and effective trilateral consultative process should be established.** As demonstrated by the June 2004 summits, a range of institutions could be involved in such a process. Along with the G-8, NATO, and the regular U.S.-EU consultations, the OSCE and United Nations may also provide effective formats. There may also be a need to establish some new mechanisms that foster consultation between the United States, Russia, Europe, and regional institutions, both in the Middle East and Central Asia. Whatever the institutions involved, there must be a sustained trilateral conversation about the broader Middle East if that region is to become a source of stability and reform rather than instability and violence.

The New Partnership: Hope and Reality

At the beginning of 2003, it appeared that the United States, Europe, and Russia might be on the verge of creating a new strategic partnership. Russia seemed to be moving strongly toward the West, while the attacks of September 2001 and the conflict in Afghanistan seemed to demonstrate both the will and the capacity of the West to work together. There certainly were divisions, but all recognized the importance of finding ways to cooperate against the major threats of global terrorism and WMD proliferation, and the need to foster greater stability in the region that was all too often the focal point of these threats.

By mid-2004, the conflict in Iraq, coupled with growing alarm at the pace of WMD proliferation, had exacerbated differences between the United States, Europe, and Russia. Increasing concern about the course of democratization and economic reform in Russia made the prospect of cooperation look even more distant at times. Trilateral discord has been especially sharp over the prospects for reform in the broader Middle East, and it is not uncommon for discussions of this issue to lead to the Russians voicing suspicions of the West's ambitions in the "near abroad," while U.S. and European analysts express doubts about Russia's willingness to let those regions move toward real autonomy. On the issues of terrorism and proliferation, there was much agreement, especially on the nature of the

problem. But regarding terrorism, that consensus fell apart over the balance between military force and other measures as the most appropriate response. On proliferation, there was significant agreement on how to strengthen the current non-proliferation regime, but a recognition that too often that political will disappeared when confronted with particular cases.

But even on those issues where differences remain sharp, there is still a compelling case for closer U.S.-European-Russian cooperation. Each recognizes that they all have a stake in addressing these challenges together, and, as the June 2004 summits demonstrated, it is possible to arrive at specific agreements despite very different perspectives. To build cooperation on the three issues examined here, discussions between U.S., European, and Russian analysts identified several possible next steps. New habits of cooperation will have to be learned, and because this will not be easy, ambitions should be appropriately modest. In particular, efforts to build trilateral cooperation should focus on:

- Greater sharing of intelligence and especially of non-classified information and assessments. Whether regarding terrorism or proliferation, information will be key to identifying the problem and judging the effectiveness of any response.
- Improving the effectiveness of current agreements and institutions. Inevitably, multiple institutions will be required to address each issue, and the most relevant institution will differ in each case. The emphasis now should be on creating the mechanisms and instituting any needed reforms so that existing institutions can respond promptly and effectively when the need arises.
- Focusing collaborative actions narrowly and establishing discrete goals: bringing Russia into some elements of U.S.-EU law enforcement cooperation; addressing the Russian nuclear industry's financial needs while also making the nuclear fuel supply more secure, establishing an information clearing house for NGOs in the Middle East, etc. Success in reaching these specific objectives will be the foundation for more extensive collaboration in the future.
- Establishing a mechanism for a regular trilateral dialogue that will address these issues at a strategic level. This discussion could happen within the confines of existing institutions — or even several institutions — but it must be regular and intense enough that the sessions can contribute to building a consensus on broader strategic issues.

By moving forward along these lines, the United States, Europe, and Russia can take some important steps toward building a truly post-Cold War partnership. Such steps can also help insulate that nascent partnership from two real threats to its future effectiveness. First, disintegration in Iraq, coupled with reduced deployments from many European countries now involved, could exacerbate tensions among the three, especially if Iraqi instabilities seem to spill over its borders. Regular consultations — including discussions of specific joint non-military projects in the region — could help keep the focus off recriminations and on reconstruction. Second, Russia must maintain President Putin's commitment to move toward

the West, as any new partnership must be based not simply on shared interests on specific issues, but also on shared economic and political understandings. Building a habit of cooperation on issues that confront both Russia and the West can help reinforce Russia's move toward in a democratic and market-oriented direction. A new strategic partnership will be key in meeting the challenges of global terrorism, proliferation, and regional instability, and will reaffirm a positive dynamic in relations between the United States, Europe, and Russia.

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The following experts participated in at least one of the conferences which were held in Washington (July 2003), Moscow (December 2003), and Rome (April 2004).

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