



Russia in NATO: Thinking the Unthinkable?

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Abstract

It was a newspaper cartoon that inspired this text, in particular the reflection it carried on the relations between Russia and NATO: what seems unthinkable today was thought yesterday and could be made possible tomorrow. Hence this question: Russia in NATO, thinking the unthinkable. With the dual perspective of a historian, trained in the history of Russia, and a futurist, the author analyzes the ambivalent relationship that Russia and NATO have maintained from 1954 to 1998, a period during which the Kremlin, from Khrushchev to Yeltsin, has, on several occasions, formally requested its membership in the Atlantic Alliance. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, NATO reached out to Russia, but also to the former Warsaw Pact countries, while carefully keeping the door closed to Moscow. The year 1999 was a turning point in relations between Russia and NATO, with the two major events of the military intervention in Kosovo and the enlargement of the Alliance to include Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In the eyes of observers at the time, the arrival in power of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin the following year appeared in many respects to be a fork in the road. Indeed, at that time, good relations were still possible, which would deteriorate until 2022. By 2050, many metamorphoses are possible, the best and the worst. Can we still think of Russia's entry into NATO, as it was conceivable to some thirty years ago?

Think outside the agreed framework. That is the message of the cartoon by Nicolas Vadot in the economic newspaper of Brussels *L'Echo* on 12 March 2022, the 17th day of the Russian army's assault on Ukraine. In the top third of this image, a group of senior NATO officers set the tone. The one in the center offers *a solution which, he says, no one has thought of and which would solve everything: what if we included the Russians? That would create a large, unified, NATO-type family stretching from Washington to Moscow, Paris to Ankara, and Ottawa to Kyiv!*^{*}

Like *The Emperor's New Clothes*, the tale by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), in which only a little boy dares tell the truth—“*But he's not wearing anything!*”—, Vadot, with the finesse that characterizes his drawings and analyses, touches on an essential dimension in the evolving relationship that we, the Atlantic alliance, and therefore also part of the European Union, maintain with Russia. There is no right time to think outside the box, even when global media attention is on the suffering of Ukraine, or when the focus is on the now hated figure in the West, Vladimir Putin.

^{*} *Vadot au Carré*, 2022. <https://www.nicolasvadot.com/fr/dessins-de-presse/dessins-de-presse-2022/vadot-au-carre-2022/>

For historians and futurists alike, the unthinkable is not always very far away,^{*} conscious, as they are, that the exercise is not without danger, while the war, like any war, entails so much blood, death, tears and violence, including—as we see on a daily basis—in terms of information and disinformation, both worldwide and sometimes in Europe. It is clearly time to remember our source criticism and heuristic lessons.[†] Attempting to shed light on such an important subject as Russia’s candidacy for NATO enlargement is no less perilous, especially as this issue should be seen in the context of a much broader system which we certainly will not be able to explore: European defense, global disarmament, market penetration, etc.

A further warning, from Edgar Morin on 20 March 2022, pointed out that *it is an extremely widespread intellectual weakness to consider that explanation is justification.*[‡] I do not know to which specific context the sociologist was alluding, but his observation is certainly applicable to the subject under discussion here.

1. An Ambivalent Relationship (1954-1998)

1.1. A request from Nikita Khrushchev in 1955

Moscow, 31 March 1954. Joseph Stalin had died a year earlier. The ruthless Lavrentiy Beria (1899-1953), former head of the NKVD and then Vice-President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, was in prison awaiting execution. In the struggle to succeed Stalin, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) had also ousted Georgy Malenkov (1901-1988) on his way to power. Nikolai Bulganin (1895-1975) was Defense Minister. Once again, it was the prominent Vyacheslav Molotov (1890-1986) who was in charge of international relations.

At the Big Four Conference, attended by the Foreign Ministers of the nations that had defeated Nazism (the USSR, the United States, Great Britain and France), which was held in Berlin from 25 January to 18 February 1954, Molotov put forward a Soviet alternative to the West’s plans to create a European Defense Community (EDC), involving the participation of a rearmed West Germany. The Molotov Plan of 10 February 1954 was a plan for collective security in Europe inspired by the Inter-American Treaty signed in Rio in 1947. Since this plan was rejected by the Allies after the conference ended, the Kremlin launched a new initiative. The aim of the Soviet proposal of 31 March 1954 was simply to allow the USSR, under certain conditions, to join NATO, which had been founded five years earlier.[§] In May 1954, the Western powers rejected the Soviet proposal for accession to the Alliance on the grounds that allowing the USSR to join the organization was incompatible with the democratic and defense objectives of the Alliance. Thwarted simultaneously by the Communists, the Gaullists and several other French deputies, the European Defense Community (EDC)

* Richard J. Krickus, *Russia in NATO: Thinking about the Unthinkable*, Copenhagen, Danish Institute of International Affairs, 2002.

† Philippe Destatte, “Opinions which are partial have the effect of vitiating the rectitude of judgment”, *Heuristics and criticism of sources in sciences*, *Blog PhD2050*, October 21, 2021. https://phd2050.org/2021/10/26/heuristics/#_ftn1

‡ Edgar Morin’s Tweet, March 20, 2021.

§ “Molotov’s Proposal that the USSR Join NATO, March 1954,” *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation (Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, or AVP RF), F. 6, Op. 13, Pap. 2, D. 9, L1. 56-59. Translated for CWIHP by Geoffrey Roberts and included in CWIHP e-Dossier No. 27. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113924>; Geoffrey Roberts, *A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955*, Working Paper No. 57, Cold War International History Project, December 2008. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/WP57_WebFinal.pdf

founded after the failure of its ratification at the National Assembly at the end of August 1954. On 9 May 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) became a member of NATO. Moscow, which had been notified in advance, feared that German vindictiveness would turn the Alliance from a defensive system into an aggressive coalition. On 14 May, in response, the USSR brought together the Iron Curtain countries of the East in an organization known as the Warsaw Pact. The blocs were now set for confrontation.*

1.2. After the Fall of the Iron Curtain

It was, of course, not until the fall of the Iron Curtain and the accelerated collapse of Communism in the East, 45 years later, that an idea as disruptive as allowing Russia to join NATO resurfaced. It comes as no surprise that it was the great reformer, President Mikhail Gorbachev, who raised the possibility. According to James A. Baker, US Secretary of State during the presidency of George H. Bush (1924-2018), Gorbachev had put forward this suggestion on at least three occasions in 1990. In Baker's view, the Russian leader had tempered his remarks by indicating he himself considered the idea both premature and ambitious.† However, the former president was not the only person to think that way.

Was there room for Russia in the Allies' thinking? On 12 December 1989, in a famous speech he gave at the West Berlin Press Club, the same James Baker outlined a new Atlantic order in which the Alliance's role would be political rather than military. He argued in favor of strengthening the European Community and advocated developing closer institutional and economic ties between the Alliance and the United States.§ To allay Soviet concerns during the German reunification negotiations, James Baker soon had to rely on ideas developed previously by the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Hans Dietrich Genscher (1927-2016).§ In the article which appeared in the *Evangelische Akademie Tutzing*, in Bavaria, on 31 January 1990, Genscher declared that whatever the future of the Warsaw Pact, NATO was not looking to increase its territory in the East, *in other words, closer to the borders of the Soviet Union*.¶ At his meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev on 9 February 1990, barely a week later, James Baker aligned himself with this position, telling Gorbachev: *we understand that not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well it is important to have guarantees that if the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction*.** Baker asked the Russian leader about the possible links between

* Robert Service, *The Penguin History of Modern Russia, From Tsarism to Twenty-First Century*, p. 337, Penguin Random House, UK, 4th ed., 2020.

† James A. Baker III, *Russia in NATO*, in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Nr. 1, Winter 2002, p. 102 et 103. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/36660/pdf>

‡ J. Baker, *A New Europe, a New Atlanticism: Architecture for a New Era*, 12 Dec. 1989, in *US Department of State Current Policy*, nr. 1233. <http://aei.pitt.edu/101501/1.1.pdf>

§ Melvyn P. Leffler & Odd Arne Westad dir., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 3, *Endings*, p. 344, Cambridge University Press, 2012; Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1982-1990*, p. 584-85, Munich, Droemer Knaur, 2005.

¶ Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1982-1990*, p. 584-85, Munich, Droemer Knaur, 2005. - Stephen F. Szabo, *The diplomacy of German unification*, p. 58, New York, St Martin's, 1992.

** Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker February 9, 1990, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16117-document-06-record-conversation-between>; Declassified files released by the National Security Archive, Svetlana Savranskaya & Tom Blanton, Dec 12, 2017; - Gorbachev Foundation Archive, Fond 1, Opis 1 - *NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard? Declassified documents show security assurances against NATO expansion to Soviet leaders from Baker, Bush, Genscher, Kohl, Gates, Mitterrand, Thatcher, Hurd, Major, and Woerner. Slavic Studies Panel Addresses Who Promised What to Whom on NATO Expansion?*, National Security Archive, Washington, *The George Washington University*, Dec 12, 2017 <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>

reunified Germany and the Atlantic Alliance. Replying that he was going to discuss the matter with his colleagues in the Kremlin, Gorbachev stated that enlargement of the NATO area was unacceptable, which the US Secretary of State confirmed with the words: *we agree with that.** The following day, on 10 February 1990, Chancellor Helmut Kohl also came to Moscow to say that NATO did not need to expand beyond East Germany and that he clearly understood Russia's security interests.†

The Secretary General of NATO, the German Manfred Wörner (1934-1994), also wanted to offer reassurance, pointing out several months later that the Alliance's strategy was purely defensive, that NATO would never threaten anyone and that it was in favor of large-scale disarmament. *This assertion* added the Alliance spokesperson in May 1990, *and the assurance that NATO troops would not go beyond the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, offer the Soviet Union robust security guarantees.*‡

In his introductory speech at the NATO Summit held at Lancaster House in London on 5 July 1990, George H. W. Bush (1924-2018) confirmed before the Atlantic Council Mikhail Gorbachev's request for the Soviet Union to join NATO. For the President of the United States, that idea was *out of the question*. However, he did say that he was in favor of the proposal to create a liaison mission which could help to push aside the image held by Russians of NATO as an enemy, *an image so deeply engrained in the mind of the Soviet public*§. At the same summit, French President François Mitterrand (1916-1996) stated that NATO needed to *consider the interests of all countries in Europe, including those that are today still members of the Warsaw Pact, even though we do not know precisely which ones are, especially—and I have no hesitation in saying it—the Soviet Union.*¶ Wilfried Martens (1936-2013) declared that the Soviet Union *has its place in the European entente*. Noting that the Soviet Union would remain the principal military power on the continent, the Belgian Prime Minister thought it *neither desirable, nor reasonable, nor even thinkable to maintain a marginal position*. That did not mean, he added, that the Soviet Union, an important element for security in Europe, also had to be part of the European integration process, since, in his view, it could not be part of it without distorting it.**

1.3. NATO's hand of friendship and closed door

On the day after this Summit, Manfred Wörner went to Moscow at the invitation of Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze (1928-2014). It was the first time that a NATO

* *Ibidem*.

† Philippe Descamps, *Quand la Russie rêvait d'Europe, "L'OTAN ne s'étendra pas d'un pouce vers l'Es"*, in *Le Monde diplomatique*, September 2018, p. 10 et 11. <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2018/09/DESCAMPS/59053>

‡ Manfred Wörner, *The Atlantic Alliance and European Security in the 1990s*, Address by NATO Secretary General, to the Bremer Tabaks Collegium, 17 May 1990, NATO, 1990. https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions_23732.htm?selectedLocale=en

§ Gorbachev has even publicly suggested Soviet membership in NATO. Now that is in our view out of the question but the Liaison Mission proposal could help him work to push aside the image of NATO as an enemy, an image so deeply ingrained in the mind of the Soviet public. NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL, *Verbatim Record of the North Atlantic Council Meeting with the participation of Heads of State and Government held on Thursday, 5th July 1990 at Lancaster House, London*, NATO Confidential, Verbatim Record C-VR(90) 36, PART I https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_archives/20141218_C-VR-90-36-PART1.PDF

¶ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

** 17 *Ibidem*, p. 45.

Secretary General had made an official visit to Moscow. Wörner addressed the Supreme Soviet in a famous speech:

I have come to Moscow today with a very simple message: we extend our hand of friendship to you. And I have come with a very direct offer: to cooperate with you. The time of confrontation is over. The hostility and mistrust of the past must be buried. We see your country, and all the other countries of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, no longer as adversaries but as partners in a common endeavour to build what you call a Common European Home, erected on the values of democracy, human freedoms, and partnership.

*There is a way that leads us beyond confrontation and towards a Europe whole and free: through the building of new structures, a new architecture that includes all of us; through arms control negotiations to reduce weapons to the minimum, and to increase stability and reassurance; through cooperation between us in all fields, political, economic, scientific, cultural.**

It was to maintain this attitude of friendship without integrating Russia that, following the decisions taken at the Rome Summit of November 1991, NATO created the North-Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). At the inaugural session, a month later, the Soviet ambassador announced that he no longer represented the USSR but rather the Russian Federation. The Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan joined the NACC the following year. This Council would go on to play a positive role in issues such as the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States and the regional conflicts in the former USSR and in Yugoslavia.†

In December 1991, the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007), wrote to the Cooperation Council with the simple request that his country be allowed to join NATO.‡ This request is understood to have been greeted unenthusiastically by the Allies.§ In the same month, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Gennady Burbulis, visited the NATO Headquarters, where he was received by the Secretary General of the Alliance, Manfred Wörner. Burbulis raised the issue of Russia joining NATO without success.¶ It appears that this idea was also supported by the Vice-President, Alexander Rutskoy, and the economist Yegor Gaidar (1956-2009), who became Prime Minister of Russia in 1992.** In February 1992, on a visit to Moscow, Wörner met not only Boris Yeltsin but also Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who held that post from 1990 to 1996. Kozyrev is said to have emphasized genuine cooperation mechanisms rather than *grandiose ideas such as swift membership of NATO*.††

* *A Common Europe-Partners in Stability*. Speech by Secretary General, Manfred Wörner to Members of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, NATO, Jul. 16, 1990. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_23719.htm

† *North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)* (Archived), NATO, October 24, 2011. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69344.htm

‡ Gerald B. Solomon, *The NATO enlargement debate, 1990–1997: Blessings of Liberty*, (Westport: Praeger publishers, 1998).

§ *NATO Mr. Manfred Woerner's visit to Moscow Assault of good intentions* Feb. 27, 1992. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1992/02/27/otan-la-visite-de-m-manfred-woerner-a-moscou-assaut-de-bonnes-intentions_3880346_1819218.html

¶ Yuriy Davydov (NATO Research Fellow), *Should Russia Join NATO?*, Final Report, p. 21, Moscow, NATO Office of Information and Press, Academic Affairs Unit, 2000. <https://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/98-00/davydov.pdf>

** Yuriy Davydov, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

†† *Ibidem*.

At a time when the Russians were demonstrating their interest in NATO, they also proved very sensitive to requests from some of their former allies in Central Europe for membership of the Atlantic defense system. In mid-September 1993, Boris Yeltsin sent a secret letter to the leaders of Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States recalling the spirit of the German unification treaty, which stipulated the abandonment of any expansion of NATO to the east of that border. The President of the Russian Federation felt that relations between his country and the Alliance ought to be *several degrees warmer* than relations between NATO and the countries of Eastern Europe. In this letter, Yeltsin also declared that, even if such a relationship seemed purely theoretical at that moment, Russia could join NATO in the fullness of time.* In October 1993, at a NATO meeting in Travemünde, in the Baltic Bay of Lübeck (DE), the US Defense Secretary under the Clinton administration, Les[lie] Aspin (1938-1995), also said that he opposed such enlargement. At the same time, the German Federal Defense Minister, Volker Rühle, indicated that *stability in Europe could only be achieved with, not against, Russia*.

For his part, the Belgian Foreign Minister, Willy Claes—who would succeed Manfred Wörner the following year,—felt that a new member of NATO must at least be a candidate for membership of the European Union, which was one way of explaining to Moscow why other countries could join the Alliance before Russia.† As a result, the wording chosen by the Alliance for the former members of the Warsaw Pact appears to focus more on collaboration contracts, without offering any guarantee of assistance to the East.

1.4. James Baker's Road Map

On the American side, it was James Baker who, that year, launched an initiative to expand NATO to include not only the countries of Central and Eastern Europe but also a *democratic Russia*.‡ With an eye on the Brussels Summit of January 1994, the US Secretary of State wrote an opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times*§: *in Brussels, the NATO leaders should draw up a clear road map for expanding the alliance eastward to include the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, especially a democratic Russia. Otherwise, the most successful alliance in history is destined to follow the threat that created it into the dustbin of history*.¶

Baker noted that the peoples of Russia, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and the other emerging democracies had their eyes on the Alliance Summit, in the hope that NATO would give them the opportunity to join. He observed that objections to the enlargement were coming from two camps: the first, made up of Alliance purists, feared inefficiency,

* Gerald B. Solomon, *The NATO enlargement debate, 1990–1997: Blessings of Liberty*, (Westport: Praeger publishers, 1998).

† G. B. Solomon, *The NATO enlargement debate...*, p. 21.

‡ “In 1993, I proposed that NATO draw up a clear road map for expanding the alliance eastward to include not only the states of Central and Eastern Europe but also a democratic Russia. Otherwise, the most successful alliance in history is destined to follow the threat that created it into the dustbin of history”. James A. Baker III, “Expanding to the East, A New NATO: Alliance, Full membership may be the most sought-after ‘good’ now enticing Eastern and Central European states—particularly, Russia”, in *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 5, 1993. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-12-05-op-64339-story.html>

§ The *New York Times*' chief White House correspondent, Peter Baker, disagrees with this analysis of James Baker's statements, particularly because the Secretary of State has not enshrined the issue of NATO's expansion to the east in a treaty. Peter Baker, “In Ukraine Conflict, Putin relies on a promise that ultimately wasn't”, in *New York Times*, Jan 9, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/09/us/politics/russia-ukraine-james-baker.html>

¶ *Ibidem*.

impotence, and implosion if NATO was enlarged beyond its sixteen long-standing members. The second camp was concerned that enlargement might constitute a provocation for Russia, and that Moscow might react angrily if it was threatened by further confrontation between Slavophiles and the West. For the US Secretary of State, such concerns would be valid if the NATO enlargement were to include the States of Central and Eastern Europe, while excluding the former Soviet Union States. *Such an ill-advised approach, he added, would not only sow the seeds for revanchism and a revived Russian empire, it would also undermine the independence of the 11 non-Russian independent states of the former Soviet Union.**

And Baker continued:

This is why Russian eligibility for membership is key to any long-term vision for NATO and should be announced as a goal at the summit. A democratic Russia can play a constructive role in European security and play it best through NATO's institutional framework.

Clearly, full Russian membership in NATO will not occur overnight. Russian democracy, whatever the outcome of this week's election, remains precarious and the future of economic reform in doubt. But offering the possibility of NATO membership will signal support for reform and bolster reformers.

Much as the Russian people can choose democracy this week, the Russian leadership in the months ahead should be given the choice of aligning with the West. Ruling Russia out of NATO would only undercut the hopes of Russia's Westernizers while fueling the fear-mongering neo-fascists.†

After pointing out that it was not possible to give a right to veto NATO membership for democratic countries to those who did not want to reform Russia, James Baker ended his article by stating that *if democracy prevails, NATO membership for Russia will mark a milestone on the road to full integration with the West. If reform fails, an expanded NATO will protect democracy where it has taken firm root—in Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest.*‡

It was from this perspective that, on the initiative of the United States under Bill Clinton, the NATO Summit held in Brussels in January 1994 established the Partnership for Peace (PfP) as a new, mainly military, cooperation programme. The aim of this cooperation platform was to bring together the members of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)—47 countries, including Russia and Ukraine—and some other countries, including those of the OSCE.§ The Russian Federation joined the partnership in June 1994. The objective was to promote a common security culture around the Alliance and to enable each member to strengthen its own links with NATO. Some member states of the PfP saw it as a waiting room

* *Ibidem.*

† *Ibidem.*

‡ James A. Baker III, *Expanding to the East*.

§ The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization, bringing comprehensive and co-operative security to a region that stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok, founded by the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and which during the Cold War provided a forum for dialogue between East and West.

prior to membership of the Alliance, which was not a surprise, given that certain US officials presented the mechanism in that way.*

In August 1994, Boris Yeltsin again declared that Russia could join NATO in due course.†

1.5. The Russians at SHAPE in Mons

Who, today, remembers the presence, at the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) in Mons (Wallonia, BE), of Russians who had come to plan the operation carried out in Bosnia under NATO command?‡

On 15 October 1995, a group of staff officers from the Russian Army arrived at the headquarters of the allied forces in Europe under the direction of General Leontiy Pavlovich Shevtsov.§ He would go on to become Deputy Supreme Commander of the Stabilization Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SFOR). Their mission originated directly from the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, and his Defense Minister, General Pavel Sergeyevich Grachev (1948-2012). It involved negotiating with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR),¶ US General George A. Joulwan, to define the principles and criteria for the participation of a Russian military contingent in the Implementation Force (IFOR). This NATO operational force was intended to succeed the United Nations Protection Force (FORPRONU) in Bosnia, which would later become SFOR. The command-and-control mechanism that regulated these Russian troop operations in IFOR was the subject of a protocol signed on 8 November 1995 by the Defense Ministers of the United States and Russia. This protocol established an operational liaison and decision-making group within SHAPE under the command of General Shevtsov,** along with coordination on the ground in Tuzla, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to ensure liaison with the Russian brigade on deployment. Another Russian liaison group was also active at the Vicenza air base in Italy, the headquarters of the 5th ATAF (Allied Tactical Air Force). The Russian brigade was deployed and operational on the ground in Bosnia on 2 February 1996 and carried out its mission as part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) from December 1996, with a view to implementing the treaties signed in Dayton (Ohio) on 21 November 1995 and ratified in Paris on 14 December 1995.††

As General Shevtsov would later write in the *NATO Review*:

Our participation in IFOR has given a new impetus to the military cooperation between the Russian and NATO forces.

Whereas we had been divided for fifty years, now, for the first time in history, officers from the Russian Ministry of Defense have been working at SHAPE for over a year.

* Les Aspin, *A new Europe, a new NATO*, *Revue de l'OTAN*, Vol. 42, N°1, February 1994, p. 12-14. <https://www.nato.int/docu/revue/1994/9401-03.htm>

† Yuriy Davydov, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

‡ *Did you know that SACEUR had a Russian General as his deputy at SHAPE in the 1990s?* <https://shape.nato.int/page2148203020>

§ Shevtsov Leontiy Pavlovich - biography, 14 March 1946 – <http://viperson.ru/people/shevtsov-leontiy-pavlovich>

¶ The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) is one of NATO's two strategic commanders and is the head of Allied Command Operations (ACO). He is responsible to NATO's highest military authority, the Military Committee (MC), for the conduct of all NATO military operations. NATO, May 3, 2019. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50110.htm

** This center was located inside the Live Oak building, which until 1991 had housed the Allied planning staff responsible for preserving access to Berlin in case of a Soviet blockade.

†† The role of NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina, *NATO*, 1999. <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1999/9904-wsh/pres-fra/06bosni.pdf>

*Naturally, things have not always been easy, but gradually, by working alongside SHAPE, we are learning to collaborate. The Russian Ministry of Defense operational group at SHAPE guides the Russian contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and also serves as an operational communication channel between the NATO headquarters and the headquarters of the Russian armed forces.**

At that time, Shevtsov welcomed the discussions on permanent missions between the Russian armed forces at SHAPE and the NATO forces at the headquarters of the Russian armed forces. The Russian general observed that each party was beginning to understand that the interaction should continue and be extended to senior government officials and to diplomatic and political experts and institutions. He considered it self-evident that *if cooperation between Russia and NATO [were] to be strengthened, it [would] be necessary to set up permanent authorised structures capable of dealing with a wide range of cooperation issues.*† The General also felt that it was possible for NATO officers to be sent to the headquarters of the Russian armed forces on a permanent basis to strengthen the trust between the Alliance and the Russian Federation.

NATO also thought that the cooperation with Russia within IFOR had been excellent, and the NATO management wanted to go further and strengthen ties with Moscow at the political and the military level. In June 1996, the North Atlantic Council felt that this collaboration could serve as a catalyst for developing ties between NATO and Russia. The Alliance wanted such ties to be *founded on mutual respect, reciprocal trust and friendship*. At the same time, the Council said that it valued its relations with Ukraine, and was convinced that an independent, democratic and stable Ukraine had an important role to play in strengthening harmony in Europe.‡

However, at the *Wehrkunde Tagung*, the annual high-level conference on security policy, which was held in February 1996 in Munich, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (1930-2017) warned against an over-rapid expansion of the Alliance to the former members of the Warsaw Pact, adding that *the West must consider the position of Russia. Those who fail to pay sufficient attention to this matter will be faced with stalemate*, he said.§

Keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down

When Boris Yeltsin came to power in December 1991, Russia certainly experienced *the most pro-Western government in its history*.¶ Yet the liberal domestic policy and the somewhat idealistic, even friendly foreign policy towards the West were constantly highlighted, even

* Leontii Shevtsov, *Russia-NATO Military Cooperation in Bosnia: A Basis for the Future?*, in *NATO Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, March 1997, p. 17-21.

† Leontii Shevtsov, *Russia-NATO Military Cooperation*.

‡ *Final Communiqué, Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defense Ministers Session*, June 13, 1996. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25065.htm?selectedLocale=en

§ Frits Bolkestein, “Deepening and expanding NATO?”, *NATO Review* n°4, July 1996, p. 20-24. <https://www.nato.int/docu/revue/1996/9604-5.htm>: “NATO was aware of this, or at least aware of it. In the preparatory study for any enlargement that it had commissioned, it was well established that: *Russia has raised concerns with respect to the enlargement process of the Alliance. The Alliance is addressing these concerns in developing its wider relationship with Russia and the Alliance has made it clear that the enlargement process including the associated military arrangements will threaten no-one and contribute to a developing broad European security architecture based on true cooperation throughout the whole of Europe, enhancing security and stability for all*”. Study on NATO Enlargement, *NATO*, Sept. 3, 1995. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm?selectedLocale=en

¶ David Teurtrie, *Russie, Le retour de la puissance*, (Paris : Armand Colin, 2021), p. 126.

if the Kremlin had to be realistic when considering its structural weakness since the end of the Soviet Union.

From the West's point of view, more than ever, the NATO goals defined by Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay (1887-1965), Winston Churchill's closest military adviser during the Second World War and the first Secretary General of the Alliance from 1952 to 1957, were maintained: *keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down*.^{*} Whereas NATO could have disappeared following the collapse of the USSR and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and with it the permanent presence of American troops,[†] Washington and Evere (Brussels) found new momentum. London was also very much in favor of maintaining this presence since it provided reassurance to several European capitals in the face of German reunification. For the Americans, maintaining NATO to the detriment of any other strictly European configuration had the advantage of maintaining American influence in Europe. At the same time, as James Baker had hoped in his speech in Berlin on 12 December 1989, Washington was busy giving NATO a broader geographical scope, assigning it a general European security function beyond territorial defense.[‡]

The turn of the 21st century would see a major shift in a refashioned landscape.

2. 1999: When Storm Clouds Gather...

2.1. Russia casts a shadow over the partnership

Although General Leontiy P. Shevtsov, Deputy to the Supreme Commander of SFOR (the NATO-led stabilization force in Bosnia) and First Deputy to the Head of Operations at the Russian headquarters, saw the cooperation arising from the implementation of the peace agreements in that region of the Balkans as *the basis for a solid partnership in the next millennium*, he expressed his views with a note of caution:

As already indicated above on several occasions, NATO expansion remains the major obstacle to broader cooperation as it is not in Russia's national interests. Nor is it aligned with the supreme objective of strengthening security and stability in Europe. NATO expansion, if it takes place, will create a fundamentally new geopolitical situation which risks causing a total revision of security policies. If Russia remains outside the security system that will emerge on the continent, the threat of a new division of Europe will become a reality.[§]

^{*} Peter Hennessy, Whitehall, (London: Free Press, 1989), p. 412. – *NATO Leaders: Lord Ismay*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_137930.htm; Note that in this NATO text, the formula is: *keep the Soviets out*...

[†] Roland Lomme, then in charge of research at the Sociological Observatory of Eastern Europe (CNRS), wrote in 1991, after the announcement of the unilateral withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe, that it was a safe bet that NATO would not survive long after the Warsaw Pact, whose official dissolution was announced for 1991. Roland Lomme, *The USSR and disarmament*, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1991), p. 142.

[‡] Notably in reference to the NATO Summit held in Rome in 1991, Georges Labaki, then Director of International Relations at Notre-Dame de Louaizé University (Lebanon), wrote: *even if they recognize a growing role for the European Community in its defense, there is a consensus among U.S. officials on the need to maintain a permanent U.S. presence in Europe, even if reduced. (...) Indeed, the United States considers this presence essential to the stability of Europe, which has been the scene of two world wars in less than a century. Moreover, this presence ensures the continuity of its influence in Europe. However, the real stakes in terms of American interests in Europe are more economic than military or economic.* (Translation from French). Georges T. Labaki, *The United States and European Integration*, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1993), p. 133.

[§] Leontii Shevtsov, *Russia-NATO Military Cooperation*; S. NEIL Macfarlane, *NATO in Russia's Relations with the West*, in *Security Dialogue*, vol. 32, 3, p. 281-296, Sept. 1, 2001.

The arrival of Yevgeny Primakov (1929-2015) as Russian Foreign Minister (1996-1998) and then Prime Minister in Moscow (1998-1999) marked a change in approach which would be theorized in what is called *the Primakov doctrine*. This superseded the Kozyrev doctrine, which was characterized by an Atlanticism—if not American centrism—conceived as a partnership with the USA in which Russia would be the number two,* and by a multipolar alternative. The Primakov doctrine was based on three premises: first, prioritizing the national interest by avoiding tensions with the West, second, pursuing a multi-pronged policy which included *global centres* other than the USA, such as Europe, China, and the Arab states, and third, continuing to integrate Russia and its economy into a globalised world[†]. Thus, upon observing, in the late 1990s, the diplomatic manoeuvres of the former allies of the Warsaw Pact to join the Atlantic Alliance, Primakov felt that, for NATO, the *red line* not to be crossed was that of the former state border of the Soviet Union, and he ruled out any possibility of allowing the former Soviet republics to join the Alliance.[‡] As a result, he himself also closed the door on Moscow joining NATO.[§]

2.2. The NATO-Russian Federation Founding Act

The Americans, Europeans and Russians, however, took concrete steps towards collaboration. On 17 May 1997, cooperation and partnership agreement was signed in Paris: the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. This Act was ratified at the NATO Summit in Madrid, in July 1998. In this document, the parties, who state that they no longer consider each other as adversaries, demonstrate their desire to eliminate the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation. The Act reaffirms the commitment of the Alliance and Russia to *build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples through a strong, stable and enduring partnership*.[¶] NATO recalls its own transformation, and its new peacekeeping and crisis-management missions with the support of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OCSE), such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Alliance also recalls the *European Security and Defense Identity* (ESDI), which it was developing internally. As for Russia, the Act indicates that it is continuing *the building of a democratic society and the realization of its political and economic transformation*. The signatories also note that Moscow has withdrawn its forces from Central and Eastern Europe and from the Baltic Region, and has withdrawn all its nuclear weapons back to its own national territory. The Atlantic Alliance and the Federation undertake to work together to contribute to the establishment in Europe of common and

* Vyacheslav Nikonov, *La Russie et l'Occident : des illusions au désenchantement*, in *Critique internationale*, vol. no 12, no. 3, 2001, pp. 175-191, z. 15 ; Evgueni Primakov, *Gody v bolchoi politike*, p. 231-233, Moscou, Soverchenno sekretno, 1990.

† Evgueni Primakov, *Le monde sans la Russie ? A quoi conduit la myopie politique*, p.10sv, Paris, Economica, 2009 ; V. Nikonov, *La Russie et l'Occident*, z 24-25.

‡ E. Primakov, *Le monde sans la Russie?*, p. 149. Primakov wrote in 2009: *In embarking on a frenzied expansion of NATO, the United States has not taken into account Russia's extremely negative position on the admission of former Soviet republics into the North Atlantic Alliance. We did not have a written agreement with the United States on this. But when I was Russian Foreign Minister, I repeatedly told Madeleine Albright and Strobe Talbot and other American colleagues that the admission of former Soviet republics into NATO would mean for us that "the red line" had been crossed. I was told that there was no reason to assume that this would happen in the near future. But it did happen.* (Translation from French).

§ Y. Davydov, *Should Russia Join NATO?*, p. 23.

¶ *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation*, Brussels, NATO Office of Information and Press, 1997; *The NATO Handbook, 50th Anniversary Edition*, NATO Office of Information and Press, Brussels, 1998.

comprehensive security based on the allegiance to shared values, commitments and norms of behavior in the interests of all states. They also affirm their desire to strengthen the OSCE and to cooperate to *prevent any possibility of returning to a Europe of division and confrontation, or the isolation of any state*.^{*} Taking into account the OCSE's work on a common and comprehensive security model for Europe in the 21st Century, NATO and Russia announce their determination to seek the widest possible cooperation among participating States of the OSCE, with the aim of *creating in Europe a common space of security and stability, without dividing lines or spheres of influence limiting the sovereignty of any state*.[†]

NATO and Russia also state in this Act that they will observe in good faith their obligations under international law and international instruments, including the obligations of the United Nations Charter (1945) and the provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), as well as their commitments under the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and subsequent OSCE documents. These objectives are then translated into principles. In practice, the Act announces the creation of a *NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council*. This will provide a mechanism for consultations, coordination and, where appropriate, for joint decisions and joint action with respect to security issues of common concern. However, it is stated that the consultations *will not extend to internal matters of either NATO, NATO member States or Russia*.[‡] With the aim of strengthening their partnership, NATO and Russia end their Act by highlighting the need to ensure that their activities are grounded in practical activities and direct cooperation, including through the development of a concept for joint NATO-Russia peacekeeping operations. This initiative should build upon the experience of working together in Bosnia and Herzegovina, again described as positive by the parties.

Thus, each party recognises the importance of this mutual undertaking. As General Shevtsov stated at a global security conference in Prague, in June 1997, the signing of the Act in Paris served to establish a political basis for the further development of military cooperation between Russia, NATO and the United States.[§]

2.3. Drawing Russia out of its isolation

However, at this same meeting in Prague, Vitaly Churkin (1952-2017), Russian Ambassador to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC[¶]) and Permanent Representative to NATO in Brussels between 1994 and 1998, expressed his great concern on the subject of NATO expansion. The future Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN Security Council (2006-2017)^{**} considered at that time that, in the process, NATO had made too many promises to too many people and too many countries, *promises which could*

^{*} *Founding Act on Mutual Relations.*

[†] *Founding Act on Mutual Relations.*

[‡] *Founding Act on Mutual Relations.*

[§] General Leontiy Pavlovich Shevtsov, *Russian Participation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 14th International Workshop on Global Security - Prague, 21-25 June 1997*, Under the patronage of President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel, the 14th International NATO Workshop on Political-Military Decision Making was held in the Rudolph and Spanish Halls of Prague Castle on 21-25 June 1997. The Workshop's theme was "The New NATO: The Way Ahead." <http://www.esdr.org/97Book/SHEVTS.HTM>

[¶] The North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established by the Allies on December 20, 1991 as a forum for dialogue and cooperation with former NATO Warsaw Pact adversaries.

^{**} Marie Bourreau, "Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitali Churkin is dead", *Le Monde*, Feb. 20, 2017. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2017/02/20/1-ambassadeur-russe-a-l-onu-vitali-tchourkine-est-mort_5082637_3210.html

not be kept because some problems relate to areas in which NATO has little involvement. The Ambassador pointed out that those countries with high hopes of achieving increased security from NATO could quickly and radically improve their security situation simply by complying with some of the recommendations from the OCSE and the Council of Europe on human rights and minorities.* Despite these Russian remarks, Robert E. Hunter, United States Ambassador to NATO and to the NACC, promptly confirmed his country's intention to support the immediate entry of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into the Alliance, while keeping the door open to further expansion for as long as there were European countries ready and willing to assume the responsibilities of membership. Evoking the Partnership for Peace, which he described as *NATO's most successful flagship venture*, Hunter announced the US's desire to implement the NATO-Russia Founding Act, *recognising that Russia's security is as important as everything else that we are doing, and underscoring the effort to draw Russia out of its isolation to play a full and legitimate part in European security.*†

A month later, in July 1997, Moscow joined the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which replaced the NACC from that year. For the Allies, it was a question of establishing a security forum which, in the very diplomatic words of the Alliance, was *better suited to the increasingly complex relations between the partners, many of whom were strengthening their cooperation with NATO.*‡

In fact, rather than political doctrine or regime change, it appears that it was the cooperation experience itself that affected the convergence of the pathways between NATO and Russia, even though the post-Cold War period seemed to be following the path of cooperation. To say that the 1997 Founding Act, which opened up the prospect of organic relations between Russia and NATO, failed to deliver would be something of an understatement. Admittedly, however, as the Allies had hoped, bilateral relations did become more formal, particularly through the creation of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC).§

For its part, at the beginning of 1998, the Russian Parliament described NATO expansion as the most serious military threat for Russia since the end of the Second World War.¶ The mention of this new red line was repeated until the end of Boris Yeltsin's presidency. At the security policy conference held in Munich on 7 February 1999, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Gusev, reiterated to NATO its advice not to cross the *red line* formed by the countries that previously made up the Soviet Union.** A few days later, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, sounded more threatening when he declared that if NATO continued to expand in the East, and especially if this process included the Baltic countries

* Vitaly Churkin, *European Security Opportunities: The Need for Cooperation*, 14th International Workshop on Global Security - Prague, 21-25 June 1997. <http://www.csd.org/97Book/churkin-C.htm>

† Robert E. Hunter, *European Security: Problems, Risks, and Challenges*, <http://www.csd.org/97Book/hunter-C.htm> *We have also concluded, and will make effective over time, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, recognizing that Russia's security is as important as everything else that we are doing, and underscoring the effort to draw Russia out of its isolation to play a full and legitimate part in European security.*

‡ Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, NATO, March 19, 2020. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49276.htm

§ NATO-Russia Relations, NATO, February 2022. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/2/pdf/220214-factsheet_NATO-Russia_Relations_e.pdf

¶ Igor Zelevy, *NATO's Enlargement and Russian Perceptions of Eurasian Political Frontiers*, Final Report, NATO, 1998. (I. Zelevy is professor of Russian Studies at George Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany). RFE/RL *Newsline*, Vol. 2, No 16, Part II, 26 January 1998. <https://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/98-00/zelevy.pdf>

** Robert Burns, *Russia opposes more NATO expansion*, Associated Press, Feb. 7, 1999. - I. ZEVELEV, *op. cit.* p. 5.

or the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, *Russia would take any steps it deemed necessary to guarantee its national security*.*

2.4. Kosovo, 24 March 1999

The discovery by OSCE observers, on 16 January 1999, of the massacre of 45 people, nearly all men, in the Kosovan village of Račak, around thirty kilometres from Pristina, was a significant moment in the conflict between the Serbian government and insurgents from the Kosovan Liberation Army (UCK) and the Democratic League (LDK). Even though what actually happened on the day before the discovery in the Kosovan village remains controversial,[†] there is little doubt that this event lay behind the international conference on Kosovo, which began on 6 February 1999 in Rambouillet in Île-de-France. Attending this meeting, with the aim of stemming the spiral of violence, were representatives from the governments of the grouping known as the Contact Group of Foreign Ministers—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Russia—under the joint presidency of French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine and his British counterpart Robin Cook (1946-2005). The delegations from the Serbian and Kosovan warring parties present in Rambouillet kept their distance and refused to talk to each other directly, a clear sign of the difficult negotiation process. We should remember that this conflict had already lasted almost ten years, having begun in 1989, when the independent status enjoyed by Kosovans within Yugoslavia was withdrawn. Yugoslavia had also had difficult relations with its Albanian neighbour since 1948.[‡]

Despite their efforts, the diplomats were unable to unite the Kosovans around the new proposals agreed by the members of the Contact Group. These proposals maintained the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, which appeared unacceptable for the UCK and the LDK. For their part, the Serbs refused to withdraw their troops from the province, and they rejected any deployment of NATO-led forces (which, in their view, were not a neutral force[§]) in support of the OSCE observers. The UCK, meanwhile, rejected all disarmament. The US Secretary of State under the Clinton administration, Madeleine Albright (1937-2022), also intervened, with the carrot of reintegrating Belgrade into the international community and the stick of military intervention. But she was unable to wear down the Yugoslavian side any more than her colleague Richard Holbrooke (1941-2010), Bill Clinton's former Special Envoy for Kosovo. Meanwhile, with the shadow of war hanging over Chechnya, the Russian delegation saw its objections to a military intervention scenario rejected by the United States and its allies.[¶]

* RFE/RL Newline, February 18, 1999. - I. Zevelev, *op. cit.*, p. 12. - The CIS was founded in Minsk on 8 December 1991 to bring together the former countries of the Soviet Union.

† The event is said to have taken place during a deliberate campaign of provocations organized by the Kosovo Liberation Movement (UCK-KLA). Jaime Castan Pinos, *Kosovo and the Collateral Effects of Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 38-45 (London: Routledge, 2019); Christophe Chatelot, *Les morts de Racak ont-ils vraiment été massacrés froidement?* in *Le Monde*, January 21, 1999. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1999/01/21/les-morts-de-racak-ont-ils-vraiment-ete-massacres-froidement_3533047_1819218.html; Jean-Arnault Derens and Catherine Samary, *Les 100 Portes des conflits yougoslaves*, p. 294-296, L'Atelier, 2000; The British historian Tony Judt, of New York University, is less dubious about this massacre than the French historian and attributes it without doubt to Serbian forces. Tony Judt, *Après-Guerre, Une histoire de l'Europe depuis 1945*, p. 794, Paris, Hachette, 2007. ; Christophe Chatelot, *Les morts de Racak ont-ils réellement été massacrés de sang-froid?* in *Le Monde*, January 21, 1999.

‡ Jean-Michel De Waele and Kolë Gjeshaj, *De la question albanaise au Kosovo*, Brussels, Complexe, 1999 ; Hans Stark, *Kosovo, Du problème serbe à la question albanaise, dans Rapport annuel mondial sur le Système économique et les Stratégies (RAMSES 2000)*, p. 346-347, Paris, Dunod-IFRI, 1999.

§ Barbara Delcourt, *La position des autorités serbes et yougoslaves au sujet du Kosovo : entre raison d'État et logique nationale*, dans Jean-Michel De Waele and Kolë Gjeshaj, *De la question albanaise au Kosovo*, p. 105.

¶ Marc Weller, *The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo*, in *International Affairs*, 75 (2), p. 211-251.

With the failure of the Rambouillet talks, and of the Paris follow-on conference, the United States and most of its European partners pushed for military action but were met with vetoes from China and Russia at the United Nations. On 17 March 1999, at the NATO-Russia Permanent Council, the ambassadors continued their consultations on the Kosovo crisis, underlining the urgency and importance of the negotiations being held in Paris.* Meanwhile, the Russian *Duma* passed a resolution describing any future military action by NATO in Kosovo as *illegal aggression*, while Ukraine and Belarus expressed their *unconditional solidarity with their Slavic brothers in Serbia*.†

On 24 March 1999, despite the absence of United Nations' backing, and with the Serbian forces having renewed their offensive, NATO commenced action against the Yugoslavia of President Slobodan Milošević (1941-2006).‡ Thus, the Alliance took the unilateral decision to ignore Moscow's position and overlook the Kremlin's misgivings. Moscow considered the NATO initiative a blow not only to Yugoslavia but also to Russia.§

For nearly three months, until 9 June 1999, in almost 39,000 sorties,¶ NATO aircraft and ships rained bombs and missiles down on Serbia, Montenegro, the province of Vojvodina, and Kosovo, inflicting serious damage on the country and its people but failing to prevent atrocities on the ground and the expulsion of the Albania population in Kosovo. Although the bombardments were launched *under pressure from the US*, as Henry Kissinger pointed out in 2001,** President Bill Clinton unwisely declared in public that NATO would not engage any ground forces.†† Kissinger, former Secretary of State under Richard Nixon (1913-1994) and Gerald Ford (1913-2006), noted that NATO *was so afraid of suffering losses that the bombs were dropped beyond the range of the Serbian anti-aircraft batteries—from five miles up, or even higher, —which might suggest that, in Kosovo at any rate, the Western democracies were limiting their risk taking to carefully calculated heights in the name of morality*.‡‡

As the French historian and journalist, André Fontaine (1921-2013) rightly observes, *the fact that NATO is intervening, under pressure from the US, without a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, in the territory of an orthodox Slavic State, has allowed Russian political forces, which are hostile to openness towards the West, to increase their influence in public opinion and in foreign policy in their country*.§§ This intervention created unease from

* NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council Meeting at Ambassadorial Level, NATO Press Statement, 17 March, 1999. <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p990317e.htm>

† T. Judt, *Après-Guerre...*, p. 794.

‡ I have been informed by SACEUR, General Clark, that at this moment NATO Air Operations against targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have commenced. Press Statement by Dr. Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General following the Commencement of Air Operations, Press Release, (1999) 041, 24 March 1999. <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-041e.htm>

§ See the intervention in the Security Council of Sergueï V. Lavrov, who was then the permanent representative of the Russian Federation to the UN: Press release CS/1035, Russian Federation demands immediate end to NATO military actions in Kosovo March 24, 1999. <https://www.un.org/press/fr/1999/19990324.cs1035.html>

¶ 38.116 sorties. Rebecca Grant, *Wesley Clark's War in AirForce Magazine*, Sept 1, 2001 <https://www.airforcemag.com/article/0901clark/>

** Henry Kissinger, *La Nouvelle puissance américaine*, (Paris : Fayard, 2003) , p. 283.

†† T. Judt, *op. cit.*, p. 795.

‡‡ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

§§ André Fontaine, Pierre Melandri, Guillaume Parmentier, *NATO, Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique nord*, dans *Encyclopædia Universalis* <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/otan-organisation-du-traite-de-l-atlantique-nord/> These authors also note that: However, the conduct of the campaign created tensions between Americans and Europeans. The Alliance headquarters in Europe, Shape, was excluded from military planning, which was in fact designed by the American command in Europe. As a result, the Europeans were unable to control operations, and it was therefore through the Atlantic Council, a diplomatic body, that they were led to object to the choice of certain targets to be bombed. The American military felt that this political interference in military affairs was detrimental to the proper conduct of operations.

a Western perspective also, especially since the Allies found Madeleine Albright's tactics annoying. According to British professor of international law Michael J. Glennon, when Robin Cook (1946-2005), British Foreign Minister under Tony Blair, told Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that he was having problems with his lawyers over using force against Yugoslavia without Security Council approval, Secretary Albright reportedly responded: *Get new lawyers.** In May 1999, in *Le Monde diplomatique*, the American linguist Noam Chomsky also pondered the legitimacy of the NATO bombardments in Yugoslavia in the name of a right to intervene on humanitarian grounds. Chomsky, a professor at the MIT, also observed that this precedent now entitled China, India, Russia and other countries to carry out interventions similar to those of NATO in their own areas of influence.† At a conference held on 20 May 1999 at the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at the Free University of Brussels, with the support of the National Fund for Scientific Research, Nicolas Bárdos-Féltoronyi, a Hungarian-born geopolitics expert and professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, pondered:

What would we say in Europe if, one day, Russia or Turkey rightly or wrongly invoked the oppression of Russian or Turkish minorities in Ukraine as grounds for bombarding or invading that country? This is clearly the question that the Ukrainian authorities have been asking in order to indicate, among other things, their radical opposition to the bombardments in Yugoslavia.‡

During this period, although NATO and Russia held detailed negotiations and convened extraordinary meetings on several occasions, they were unable to agree on a political solution to the conflict. They did, however, agree that such a solution should be based on Kosovan autonomy, not on its independence. While the Allies felt, after the failure of the Rambouillet negotiations, that Belgrade had acted in bad faith and that the government of President Slobodan Milošević (1941-2006) had no intention of complying with the Security Council resolutions and had used force,§ Moscow accused NATO of destroying the standard system of international relations and of undermining the foundations of international law.

Since NATO's military action in Yugoslavia had then been used by the nationalists in Russia to wage an unprecedented anti-West campaign after the end of the Cold War, Boris Yeltsin's government was forced to suspend the cooperation process that was being pursued with NATO under the auspices of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) at a time of crisis during which close relations and discussions became even more important.¶ For the Russians, this cooperation was becoming meaningless. Moscow suspended its participation in the Founding Act. Russian military representatives were recalled to the Alliance's headquarters in Evere, official NATO representatives became *persona non grata* in Moscow, and the establishment

* When Robin Cook, the British foreign secretary, told Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that he had "problems with our lawyers" over using force against Yugoslavia without Security Council approval, Secretary Albright responded: "Get new lawyers." Michael J. Glennon, *How War Left the Law Behind*, in *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 2002. <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/21/opinion/how-war-left-the-law-behind.html> Consulté le 17 April 2022 ; Jaume Castan Pinos, *Kosovo and the Collateral Effects*, p. 66, note 12.

† Noam Chomsky, *Guerre dans les Balkans, L'OTAN, maître du monde*, dans *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 1999, p. 1, 4 and 5. <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/05/CHOMSKY/2976>;

‡ N. Chomsky, *Humanitarian Imperialism, Lessons from Kosovo*, (London : Pluto Press, 1999). Nicolas Bardos-Feltoronyi, *La question albanaise est-elle à nouveau balkanisée?* in Jean-Michel De Waele and Kolë Gjelošaj, *De la question albanaise au Kosovo...*, p. 47. (Translation from French).

§ *The Reader's Guide to the NATO Summit in Washington*, p.95-96, NATO, 1999. <https://www.nato.int/docu/rdr-gde/rdr-gde-c.pdf>

¶ E. Primakov, *Le monde sans la Russie?*, p. 156.

of the NATO Documentation Centre in Moscow was suspended.* The deputies in the Russian State Duma demanded that NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, who had held office since December 1995, be tried for crimes against humanity.†

The Russians returned to the diplomatic table when President Yeltsin appointed Viktor Chernomyrdin (1938-2010), his former Prime Minister from 1992 to 1998, as his personal Special Envoy for Kosovo to find a diplomatic solution. From the outset, it appeared to Western eyes that Chernomyrdin might be more flexible than Yevgeny Primakov. That was not the case, although he did maintain some friendships in the United States, particularly with Clinton's Vice President, Al Gore. Despite extensive shuttle diplomacy, between Moscow, Belgrade, New York and Washington, and an attempt to involve the United Nations,‡ Chernomyrdin seemed unwilling to make any concessions on Russian positions. Then, in early June, at Yeltsin's initiative once more, Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, who led the government from May until the beginning of August 1999, informed Clinton of Russia's desire to seek a solution to all its disputes with NATO.§

The KFOR troops were deployed in the province, under NATO authority, as a result of the agreements signed at Kumanovo airbase, near Skopje (North Macedonia), on 9 June 1999, between the military and police forces of Belgrade and the International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR). United Nations Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999, while reaffirming the commitment of Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, established a United Nations protectorate in Kosovo but failed to end the atrocities.¶

For Russia, this was an about-turn in relation to the fierce criticism of the NATO positions which, according to Chernomyrdin, had put US-Russian relations back several decades.**

While its planes were bombing Yugoslavia, NATO, in its 50th anniversary year, completed the process of redefining its defense doctrine, a process begun at the North Atlantic Council in Rome on 7 and 8 November 1991, against the backdrop of the break-up of the Soviet Union, as previously mentioned. It was, therefore, in parallel with celebrating its jubilee that NATO held its Washington Summit on 24 and 25 April 1999, almost fifty years to the day since its formation in the US capital on 4 April 1949. In the sixty-five paragraphs describing the new Strategic Concept—which we have not covered here,—it should be noted that NATO intended not only to broaden its expertise in order to extend its field of activity beyond the territorial area of its members, a process it had begun in 1991, but also to open up a huge sphere of activity by announcing its desire *to promote security, prosperity and*

* Y. Davydov, *Should Russia Join Nato?*, p. 18.

† Y. Davydov, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

‡ Chernomyrdin calls for greater UN role in Kosovo diplomacy, CNN, May 4, 1999. <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9905/04/kosovo.diplomacy.02/index.html>

§ *To find a way to settle all differences with NATO*. William Drozdiak, *Russia's Concession Led to Breakthrough*, in *The Washington Post*, June 9, 1999. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/balkans/stories/diplomacy060699.htm>

¶ Christophe Chielet, *Balkans, les conséquences régionales de la guerre au Kosovo*, dans *Universalia 2000*, p. 141sv, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2000).

** William Drozdiak, *Russia's Concession Led to Breakthrough*, in *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/balkans/stories/diplomacy060699.htm>

democracy in the entire Euro-Atlantic region.* These provisions certainly enabled NATO to encompass its activities in respect of the Balkan States and other regions in Europe which were not members of NATO.† However, as André Dumoulin points out, NATO's new strategic concept, unveiled in Washington without naming the United Nations Charter, did not explicitly state that NATO could act only if it had a mandate from the Security Council. Writing in 2000, Dumoulin, a researcher at the Centre for Political Analysis and International Relations (CAPRI) at the University of Liège, states that *NATO's air intervention in Kosovo and Serbia [...] is of the utmost ambiguity; it is regarded by NATO as an exception to the general rule that a decision from the Security Council is necessary.*‡

Similarly, the Washington Declaration indicates that the Member States are determined to stand firm against those who violate Human Rights, wage war and conquer territory.§

Thus, in Russian eyes, the use of military power against a sovereign State such as Yugoslavia, which is outside NATO responsibility, without approval from the NATO Security Council and without consulting its Russian partner as provided for in the Founding Act, illustrates NATO's new intervention concept as had been applied in the Kosovo affair. Moreover, the interpretation given later by US General Wesley Clark, former commander of the allied forces in Europe, may still resonate today: *indeed, it was not a war; it was a campaign of coercive diplomacy.*¶

2.5. Independence, Missouri, 12 March 1999

It was in the presence of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that the Hungarian Foreign Minister, János Martonyi, his Czech counterpart, Jan Kavan, and the Polish minister Bronislaw Geremek (1932-2008) formerly ratified their countries' membership of NATO, at a ceremony in the President Truman Library in Independence (Missouri), on 12 March 1999.

At the Madrid Summit on 8 July 1997, the Alliance leaders had invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to enter into membership negotiations with NATO. At the same time, the Summit reaffirmed that NATO would remain open to potential new members.** The Allies had also indicated their intention to increase political consultation and practical cooperation within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, to develop more individualised cooperation through the strengthened Partnership for Peace, and to give substance to the specific arrangements agreed previously with Russia and Ukraine.†† In December 1997, the NATO foreign ministers signed the membership protocols for the three

* Press Release NAC-S (99) 65, April, 24 1999. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/>. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm?selectedDocId=en

† Wael Badawi, *Les opérations de maintien de la paix en Europe, Essai d'évaluation et de prospective à la lumière du cas de la Bosnie-Herzégovine*, p. 246, Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de docteur en science politique, Orientation relations internationales, Faculté des Sciences économiques, sociales et politiques, Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2003

‡ André Dumoulin, *Défense, L'OTAN au seuil du XXIe siècle*, dans *Universalia 2000*, p. 152-155, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2000).

§ *We remain determined to stand firm against those who violate human rights, wage war and conquer territory. The Washington Declaration, signed and issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. 23 April 1999.* <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-063e.htm>

¶ Sylvie Kauffmann, *Le général Wesley Clark fait ses adieux au Pentagone et tire les leçons du Kosovo*, in *Le Monde*, June, 28 2000.

** *The Reader's Guide to the NATO Summit, 23-25 April 1999*, p. 81, <https://www.nato.int/docu/rdr-gde/rdr-gde-e.pdf>

†† NATO's Enlargement, Press Info, 4 July 1997. <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1997/970708/infopres/e-enl.htm>

countries. These protocols were ratified by the Allies and the applicant countries within their national procedures during 1998, and the membership instruments were then submitted at the ceremony in Missouri.

On 5 February 1997, the renowned American diplomat and historian George F. Kennan (1904-2005), one of the designers and architects of the American policy of containment against the Soviet Union during the Cold War and also a former State Department employee and former US Ambassador to Moscow, wrote an article in *The New York Times* entitled *A Fateful Error*. *The view, bluntly stated, he writes, is that expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era.**

Kennan's fear was that such a decision would inflame Russian nationalism and the anti-West and militarist tendencies of Russian public opinion, and that this would harm the nascent democracy in the Russian Federation and reinstate a Cold-War atmosphere at a time when uncertainty was hanging over East-West relations and when the START II (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) treaties were due to be ratified by the Duma. Following the Washington Treaty of 8 December 1987, the United States and Russia had concluded the START I arms reduction treaty in 1990 and the START II treaty in 1993, the latter being signed between George H. W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin on 3 January 1993. These were intended to lead to a very significant reduction in the strategic arsenals of the two major powers.

Kennan observed that the Russians were unimpressed by the American assurances and the efforts made to persuade them that NATO's intentions were not hostile. Kennan, the author of *American Diplomacy*,[†] felt that the Russians would view NATO expansion as an attack on their prestige—something that was very important to them,—and as a threat to their security. He then called on the Sixteen to make the most of the time remaining before the final ratification to amend the declared expansion format in order to mitigate the impact on Russian opinion and policy.

On 26 June 1997, fifty eminent American foreign policy experts, including Robert McNamara (1916-2009), former Defense Secretary under JFK, signed an open letter to Bill Clinton. They, too, believed that the United States' efforts to expand NATO *were a political error of historical proportions which would disrupt European stability*. They pointed out that the President of the Defense Committee in the Duma, General Lev Rokhlin (1947-1998), had questioned the good faith of the United States, claiming that NATO expansion would constitute a repudiation of the assurances given to Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze when Russian consent had been obtained for German reunification and for NATO membership of a reunified Germany. The signatories urgently requested that the expansion process be suspended and alternative actions pursued, including opening up the European Union to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, developing an improved Partnership for Peace programme, supporting NATO-Russia cooperation, and continuing the arms reduction process. They concluded their letter with the following phrase:

* *The view, bluntly stated, is that expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era.* George F. Kennan, *A Fateful Error*, in *New York Times*, February 5, 1997.

† G. F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1951; *American Diplomacy, Sixtieth-Anniversary expanded Edition*, 2012.

*Russia does not now pose a threat to its western neighbours and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe are not in danger. For this reason, and the others cited above, we believe that NATO expansion is neither necessary nor desirable and that this ill-conceived policy can and should be put on hold.**

On 30 April 1998, the US Senate approved the expansion by 80 votes to 19, much more than the two-thirds majority needed to approve the resolution. As the *New York Times* pointed out, this historic vote crossed party and ideological lines, since 35 democrats had joined 45 republicans in favor of allowing Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join the Alliance. Ten democrats and nine republicans opposed the resolution.[†]

After the expansion was approved by the US Senate in the spring of 1998, Kennan felt that this decision demonstrated a poor understanding of the history of Russia on the part of the United States and that it was a *tragic error*, opening the door to a new Cold War.[‡]

2.6. Russia is still waiting at the door...

When, in 1989, Europe and the world thought that they were on the road to reducing tension, a new wave of uncertainties reached the Old Continent. In 1991, it was clear that the collapse of the Soviet Empire raised not only the question of decolonization in the Central Asiatic republics and the Caucasus region, and the issue of the future of the Baltic countries and Moldova, but it also affected the heart of Russia, namely Ukraine and Belarus. The thawing of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, and even more so in the Balkans, is resurrecting the secular rivalries that threaten borders.

As British historian Robert Service wrote, in the decade that followed the implosion of the USSR and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Russia lost its position as a global power. Even in Eastern Europe its influence has waned[§]. Fascinated by the United States and the American model, the former satellite countries fought tirelessly to distance themselves from Moscow, while Washington, believing that it had won the Cold War, was ready to welcome them, not only as favored allies, but also as members of an Atlantic Alliance rising from its ashes. The issue of NATO's survival, which had been clearly raised and which had become the *obsession* of Republican President George H. Bush—in the words of Hubert Védérine,[¶]—would be resolved during the presidency of Bill Clinton. In an interview with French historians Pierre Nora and Marcel Gauchet in May 1997, Védérine, who became Deputy Foreign Minister under Jacques Chirac (1932-2019) and Lionel Jospin, recalled the

* *Russia does not now pose a threat to its western neighbours and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe are not in danger. For this reason, and the others cited above, we believe that NATO expansion is neither necessary nor desirable and that this ill-conceived policy can and should be put on hold. Opposition to NATO Expansion, Letter to the President of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton, June 27, 1997. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-06/arms-control-today/opposition-nato-expansion>*

† Eric Schmitt, *Senate approves expansion of NATO by vote of 80 to 19; Clinton pleased by decision*, in *New York Times*, May 1, 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/01/world/senate-approves-expansion-nato-vote-80-19-clinton-pleased-decision.html>

‡ Thomas L. Friedman, *Foreign Affairs. Now a Word from X*, in *The New York Times*, 2 May 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html>; Michael Pembroke, *The Decline of US Leadership from WW2 to Covid-19*, (London: Oneworld, 2021), p. 115.

§ Robert Service, *The Penguin History of Modern Russia*, p. 539.

¶ Hubert Védérine, *Les Mondes de François Mitterrand*, Paris, A. Fayard, 1996. Reproduit dans H. Védérine, *Une vision du monde*, (Paris : Bouquins, 1992), p. 468.

ambition of the former Communist countries to feel fully Western, and the determination of the United States to assert its leadership in Europe.

For Védérine, *in this case, it was the United States that decided whether and how to proceed. Europe was treated like an object, not a subject, as in the good old days of the cohabitation. Is this an unfortunate consequence, or was this the objective? In any event, we are now required to stand by the decision, while trying to counteract the expansion through an appropriate relationship with Russia, to be established by NATO or by Europe, continued Védérine, former Secretary General of the French Presidency under François Mitterrand.**

The combined effects of the refusal to acknowledge Russia as a partner worthy of an alliance with the West, the indifference, if not contempt, shown towards its position in the Kosovo tragedy, and allowing Prague, Warsaw and Budapest to join NATO are just some of the reasons behind a return to the historical mistrust with which Russia once held NATO and the United States, to the detriment of Europe, even though this mistrust had abated during the final decade of the 20th century.

In 2019, Thomas Gomart, historian and Director of the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI), noted that *the Russian elite experienced the escheat of the 1990s as genuine humiliation*. The resulting tensions brought NATO and Russia back into conflict, with each side strengthening their own security system. But, as Gomart pointed out, *such enmity is necessary on both sides*. This explains why, despite the attempts we have reviewed, the Atlantic Alliance and Russia were unable to transform the European security structure created by the Cold War.†

With the departure of Boris Yeltsin on 31 December 1999, the arrival of a new occupant in the Kremlin, and the impact of 11 September 2001, relations between Moscow and the Allies would be deeply affected once more.

3. The resurgence of Russia and its long-term effects

3.1. The rollback doctrine

At the turn of the century, it seemed that the rollback doctrine, the policy of repelling communism, if not Russia, favored by John Foster Dulles (1888-1959), former Secretary of State under President Eisenhower, prevailed over the containment doctrine advocated by George Kennan. *It is as if the weakened Russia was prey rather than a non-hostile power: NATO expansion, encouragement of Ukrainian, Azeri and Uzbek nationalism and, thanks to the oil companies, a plan to open up Central Asia*, wrote the celebrated geopolitical expert Gérard Chaliand and the historian Jean-Pierre Rageau in the *Atlas du millénaire* in 1998.‡ Somewhat paradoxically, as we have seen, the economic, military and geopolitical weakening of Russia during this decade enabled the Allies to reduce their sphere of influence,

* France: *le piano ou le tabouret*, Entretien avec Pierre Nora et Marcel Gauchet, dans *Le Débat*, n°95, Paris, Gallimard, mai -août 1997, p. 165-182. Reproduced in H. Védérine, *Une vision du monde*, p. 292.

† Thomas Gomart, *L'affolement du monde, Dix enjeux géopolitiques*, (Paris : Tallandier, 2020) , p. 144-154.

‡ Gérard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Razgeau, *Atlas du millénaire*, (Paris : Hachette, 1998) , p. 182 ; David Teurtrie, *Russie, Le retour de la puissance*, (Paris : A. Collin, 2021) , p. 128.

while denouncing Russia's call for a sphere of influence of its own and moving the NATO forces significantly closer to its borders. In addition, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention practiced by the Alliance without United Nations approval, as tested in Kosovo, was a source of major uncertainty for the Kremlin, where Boris Yeltsin remained in power until 31 December 1999. As a result, in a Russia in which Yeltsin had appeared to be a beacon for the Westernization of the country and a bulwark for its fledgling democracy, the assessment at the close of the century was disastrous: the image of the United States and Europe was deteriorating, and NATO was the main enemy once more. For the elite and the population at large, nationalism was being rekindled by a new Russian characteristic, based on opposition to Western values.*

At the White House, in Ottawa, and in the European capitals, this view was more nuanced. For the NATO leaders, the Alliance was trying to respect both Russia and Ukraine. In 1999, at the Washington Summit, the Allies still felt that *security in Europe cannot be built without Russia*, and that they needed to try to establish trust and cooperation with Russia in order to overcome the divisions of the past and address, together, the security problems of the future. They pointed out that this objective was at the heart of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security signed by the Heads of State and Government of the NATO Member States and Russia in Paris two years earlier. They still hoped for a commitment from both parties to help *build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe based on partnership and mutual interest*.† Point 8 of the Washington Declaration of 23 and 24 April 1999 proclaims as follows: *Our Alliance remains open to all European democracies, regardless of geography, willing and able to meet the responsibilities of membership, and whose inclusion would enhance overall security and stability in Europe*. It continues: *NATO is an essential pillar of a wider community of shared values and shared responsibility. Working together, Allies and Partners, including Russia and Ukraine, are developing their cooperation and erasing the divisions imposed by the Cold War to help to build a Europe whole and free, where security and prosperity are shared and indivisible*‡. At that time, the Spanish Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, could still claim that *history will see the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as a key step towards a Europe of co-operation and integration, towards a Europe without dividing lines*.§

3.2. Vladimir Putin rebuilds the strategic partnership

For the observers of the time, the arrival of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin appeared in many respects to be a change of direction. Head of the Security Service, the FSB,¶ since 1998, after extensive education, including at the University of Leningrad, and a career in the KGB, followed by political and administrative experience working alongside the liberal mayor of St. Petersburg, he succeeded Sergei Stepashin as Prime Minister under Boris Yeltsin on 9

* Jacques Sapir, *Bilan et héritage de Boris Eltsine*, in *Universalia 2001*, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2001) , p. 89.

† *The Reader's Guide to the NATO Summit in Washington*, p. 95-96, NATO, 1999.

‡ *The Washington Declaration, Signed and issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. on 23rd and 24th April 1999*. <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-063e.htm>

§ *History will see the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as a key step towards a Europe of co-operation and integration, towards a Europe without dividing lines. The Reader's Guide to the NATO Summit in Washington*, p.82, NATO, 1999. <https://www.nato.int/docu/rdr-gde/rdr-gde-e.pdf>.

¶ The Federal Security Service of the Federation of Russia (FSB).

August 1999. Benefiting from the early retirement of Yeltsin, whom he succeeded on an interim basis, his career was nothing short of meteoric since he was elected President of the Russian Federation in the first round on 26 March 2000. At 47, he was then the youngest leader of Russia since at least 1917. The portrayal of him at the time by Jacques Sapir revealed a significant departure from the path followed by his predecessors in the Kremlin. For Sapir, Director of Research at the EHESS [School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences] in Paris, Putin was a *man of order* and a *fervent Russian patriot*. He observed that the new president, supported by Mikhail Gorbachev, appeared to be a *moderate reformer who wanted to combine economic openness with reconstruction of the State*. Sapir also noted that *Vladimir Putin has generated a movement of hope in Russia and has enjoyed a level of support that few leaders have experienced*.*

During the presidential election campaign, Vladimir Putin sent signals to the West on the issue of expanding NATO to include the former Warsaw Pact countries and on relations with NATO which were demonized at the time. In his famous *Why not?* comment in response to a BBC journalist who asked him about the possibility of joining the Alliance, Putin said that, if that were the case, Moscow would have to have the same status as the other members. The interim president underlined that Russia was part of European culture and that he could not imagine his country existing outside Europe and the civilized world.†

From the moment he took office, the new president took steps to turn over a new diplomatic leaf after the pain of NATO's intervention in Kosovo and to bring Russia out of its relative isolation. The events of 11 September 2001 gave him the opportunity to change his relations with Washington in a positive way. On the very day of the attacks, Vladimir Putin was one of the first leaders to offer the United States his country's assistance to respond to the act of terrorism it had suffered‡. Moscow approved the use of its airspace and its bases in Central Asia to enable the Americans and NATO to intervene against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.§ Similarly, the change in strategic dynamic in the United States and Europe at the time encouraged him to reconsider Russian membership of an Atlantic Alliance that was turning into a political organization and moderating its expansion to the East.¶ In addition, the brutal nature of the war being waged in Chechnya, a legacy of the Yeltsin era, meant that its objective of tension with the West was becoming irrelevant since it was ignoring the great struggle against Islamic terrorism.

Despite the unilateral decision of George W. Bush to withdraw his country from the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) at the end of 2001, a genuine strategic partnership was established between Russia and the United States. On 24 May 2002, in Moscow, the two countries signed a treaty on the mutual reduction of their nuclear arsenals, then, on 28 May, they met in Rome to set up the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), in which the Russians shared

* Jacques Sapir, *Vladimir Poutine, Vies et portrait*, dans *Universalis 2001*, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2001) , p. 404.

† Yuriy Davidov, *Should Russia join NATO? Final Report, NATO Research Fellow*, p. 23, Moscow, NATO Office of Information and Press, Academic Affair Unit, 2000.

‡ Charles Zorgbide, *Histoire de l'OTAN*, p. 253, Brussels, Complexe, 2002.

§ Jacques Sapir, *Les années Poutine*, in *Universalis 2009*, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2009) , p. 115 ; – Vladimir Putin, *President of Russia* in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Updated on March 5, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Putin>

¶ William Drozdiak, *Putin eases stance on NATO expansion*, dans *Washington Post*, October 4, 2001, p. A1.

common interests on an equal footing with the 26 countries of the Alliance and which replaced the Permanent Joint Council (PJC). The Rome Declaration was based on the objectives and principles of the Founding Act of 1997, which was then renewed as the basic formal instrument for relations between the Alliance and Russia.* Against this relaxed background, Russia again took part in the peacekeeping operations in the Balkans—including in Kosovo, as part of KFOR—and was involved in NATO military initiatives launched after the 11 September attacks, including Operation Active Endeavour,† an initiative to tackle terrorism in the Mediterranean, in which the Russian fleet participated in the Black Sea.

3.3. Russia, in between New and Old Europe

In 2003, the NATO partnership was rocked by the Iraq Blunder. On 22 January 2003, whereas the administration of George W. Bush had, for months, been exerting pressure on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (1937-2006), who was suspected of supporting terrorism and having weapons of mass destruction (WMD), France and Germany declared that the United Nations Security Council alone was authorised to launch military action against a third country. The following day, at a press conference, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (1932-2021) popularised the divide between what he called the *New Europe* and the *Old Europe*. According to Reginald Dale, a researcher at Stanford University, the former consisted of the countries willing to form a new military coalition against Saddam Hussein, plus the new members of NATO. Most of these countries were applying to join the European Union, particularly the Poles, whom President Bush considered *the most stalwart allies of America*,‡ and the other new members from Central and Eastern Europe. Rumsfeld used the term *Old Europe* to refer to France, Germany and several countries which opposed the war in Iraq and wanted a more integrated European Union as a counterweight to the United States.§

When, on 27 January 2003, the NATO Foreign Ministers signed a call for Iraqi disarmament, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and French President Jacques Chirac demanded that UN Resolution 1441 be implemented by peaceful means and refused to legitimise the war against Saddam Hussein and his government. This led to direct confrontation with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who was very close to the US President. At that time, Madrid, like Berlin, was a rotating member of the United Nations Security Council. London and Paris were permanent members. The US conservatives were close to regarding the Franco-German partnership, along with Belgium and Sweden who shared their point of view, as traitors to the Alliance, and they rallied the other European allies around their diplomacy of military intervention. They were joined by Italy, under Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. At the end of January, on the initiative of Aznar, eight European countries wrote a letter in support of the US position, denouncing

* NATO-Russia Council, NATO, Jan. 13, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50091.htm

† Operation Active Endeavour, Archived, NATO, Oct. 27, 2016. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_7932.htm

‡ Leah Pizar, *Orange sur l'Atlantique, La France, les États-Unis et la deuxième guerre en Irak*, (Paris, Fayard, 2010).

§ Barry James, (International Herald Tribune), *Rumsfeld visits Europe with more frank words*, in *The New York Times*, Feb. 8, 2003. <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/08/news/rumsfeld-visits-europe-with-more-frank-words.html?searchResultPosition=3>; Reginald Dale, *Old and new Europe: European divisions don't help America*, in *The New York Times*, June 23, 2004. <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/23/opinion/IHT-old-and-new-europe-european-divisions-dont-help-america.html?searchResultPosition=5>

the Iraqi regime and its weapons of mass destruction which, in their words, represented a threat to world security. The letter was signed by Spain, Portugal, Italy, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the three new members of NATO—Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. On 5 February 2003, the day on which US Secretary of State Colin Powell (1937-2021) presented to the United Nations Security Council the fabricated evidence of the presence of WMD in Iraq, a number of other European countries, the so-called Vilnius Group, which had not been approached regarding the initial letter, added their support for military intervention: Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. It should be noted that, at the NATO Summit held in Prague in 2002, the last seven countries on this list had received confirmation of their future entry into NATO, with membership set for March 2004. Thus, for the Americans, they strengthened the New Europe clan whereas, on 17 February, at the end of a European Council meeting, Jacques Chirac memorably stated that, by displaying their solidarity with Washington, *these countries have missed the opportunity to keep quiet*.*

On 10 February 2003, on a visit to the Elysée Palace in Paris after talks in Berlin, Vladimir Putin distanced himself from *the special relationship he had established with George Bush since the start of his presidency*,[†] and aligned himself with the French and German view of Iraq, while French President Jacques Chirac (1932-2019) highlighted the efforts made by the Kremlin, which had just launched a referendum on Chechnya. On that occasion, France, Germany and Russia signed a joint declaration in which they called for the inspections in Iraq be continued in an attempt to avoid intervention. While indicating that they did not disagree with the United States on the issue of disarmament, they demanded a United Nations mandate prior to any intervention.[‡] Russian Foreign Minister Igor Sergeyevich Ivanov explained that this was not a challenge to America but, on the contrary, that it was necessary to do everything possible to maintain the anti-terrorist coalition without provoking a war which would radicalise the Muslim world to no avail.[§] On 17 February, on the initiative of European Commission President Romano Prodi, the European Commission also called on Iraq to comply, underlining that war was not inevitable and that force must only be used as a last resort.[¶] Officials from France, Germany and Russia met in St. Petersburg on 5 March to call for the diplomatic route to be continued. Thus Berlin, Paris and Moscow were in step with each other, which concerned Washington greatly.

As Jacques Sapir wrote in 2009, it would be an understatement to say that the Kremlin's commitment to the United States in the war on terror *was not paid back*. From 2002 to 2008, he wrote, US policy was characterised by a succession of aggressive and provocative actions towards Russia, of which the installation of anti-missile systems on its borders and the proposal to open up NATO to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States

* Natalie Nougayrede, *Jacques Chirac et la Nouvelle Europe*, in *Le Monde*, December 11, 2006. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2006/12/11/jacques-chirac-et-la-nouvelle-europe-par-natalie-nougayrede_844204_3232.html

† L. Pisar, *op. cit.*, p. 1841.

‡ Vladimir Putin, *President of Russia in Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Updated March 9, 2022. April 24, 2022 ; L. Pisar, *Orange sur l'Atlantique*, p. 1814-1815.

§ Interview of Igor Ivanov in *Le Figaro*, 12 February 2003, quoted by L. PISAR, p. 1841-1842.

¶ Leah Pisar, *Orange sur l'Atlantique*.

(CIS), actions in clear violation of the treaties signed in Moscow and Washington in 1991 and 1992, are just a few examples.*

The Alliance's winning diplomacy became increasingly less restrictive. The more attractive it became in areas where the body of the former Soviet Empire was concerned, rather than just its borders. The old red line was starting to unravel. After the expansion in March 2004 to include the seven countries mentioned above, the momentum envisaged in Prague for the Membership Action Plan (MAP) began to build. As Philippe Boulanger noted, in October 2004, it was Georgia that established a partnership with NATO, then Azerbaijan in May 2005, Armenia in December 2005 and Moldova in May 2006. The Alliance intensified its dialogue with Ukraine in April 2005, then with Georgia in September 2006[†]. In response, Vladimir Putin increased his multilateral approach to international relations in line with the Primakov doctrine. With some success, he took steps to strengthen his relations with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and with India and Iran within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), an evolution of the Shanghai Group. Putin also re-established the former Russian alliances with the Middle East, in particular with Syria and the Palestinian Authority.[‡]

On 7 June 2006, the Duma adopted a resolution warning that Ukrainian membership of the NATO military block would have very negative consequences for relations between the *brother peoples* of Ukraine and Russia. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was worried about the Alliance's expansion plans, the reconfiguration of the American military presence in Europe, the deployment of elements of the American anti-missile defense system, and NATO's refusal to ratify the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Minister Lavrov issued a warning: any movement by Ukraine or Georgia towards NATO would constitute a *colossal geopolitical shift for Russia*.[§]

According to some observers, the speech given on 10 February 2007 by Vladimir Putin at the Munich Security Conference was interpreted, at least by some in Russia, as a defining moment similar to the speech given by Winston Churchill, in Fulton in March 1946, where the former Prime Minister gave the world the expression *The Iron Curtain*.[¶] For The New York Times, this speech by President Putin reflected Russia's renewed arrogance on the world stage and *it certainly could become a historical marker*.^{**}

Vladimir Putin stated his irritation at the developments in international relations. In front of Chancellor Angela Merkel, US Defence Secretary under President Bush Robert

* Jacques Sapir, *Les années Poutine*, in *Universalia 1999*, (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1999), p. 115-116. - This idea of Western engagement with Russia is highly contested in 2022. Yet in 1995, Mikhail Gorbachev wrote in his memoirs that he reminded Western politicians of the assurances they had given during the German reunification talks that the Atlantic Alliance would under no circumstances extend its jurisdiction eastward. M. Gorbachev, *Mémoires. Une vie et les réformes*, p. 858, Paris, Éditions du Rocher, 1997.

† Philippe Boulanger, *L'élargissement de l'OTAN. Les enjeux et les risques du Sommet de Bucarest* (April 2 to 4, 2008), in *Echogéo*, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.4000/echogeo.5083>

‡ *Ibidem*, p. 116-117.

§ Nick Paton Walsh, *Russia tells Ukraine to stay out of NATO*, in *The Guardian*, June 7, 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/08/russia.nickpatonwalsh>

¶ Winston Churchill, *Fulton's Speech*, Westminster College, Missouri, March 5, 1946. (BBC Archives) www.winstonchurchill.org

** Stephen Lee Myers, *No Cold War, perhaps, but surely a lukewarm peace*, in *The New York Times*, Feb 18, 2007. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/weekinreview/18myers.html>

M. Gates, and several dozen diplomats, the President of the Russian Federation observed that the *uncontained* and *hyper use* of military force in international affairs was plunging the world into a succession of conflicts in which finding political solutions was becoming impossible. Vladimir Putin's particular target was the United States, which, he said, had disregarded the basic principles of international law and overstepped its national borders in every area. For the Kremlin leader, this situation was extremely dangerous as people could no longer seek protection from international law, a situation which would restart the arms race and stimulate terrorism. It was necessary, he said, *to seriously think about the architecture of global security*.

The use of force can only be considered legitimate if the decision is sanctioned by the UN. And we do not need to substitute NATO or the EU for the UN. When the UN will truly unite the forces of the international community and can really react to events in various countries, when we will leave behind this disdain for international law, then the situation will be able to change. Otherwise the situation will simply result in a dead end, and the number of serious mistakes will be multiplied. Along with this, it is necessary to make sure that international law has a universal character both in the conception and application of its norms.

Vladimir Putin continued by condemning the establishment of American bases in Bulgaria and Romania and the fact that NATO was moving its frontline forces closer to Russian borders. He observed that NATO expansion had no relation with the modernization of the Alliance or with security in Europe but was instead *a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust*. The President considered that Russia had the right to ask against whom this expansion was intended and what had happened to the assurances made by its Western partners after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. And he recalled the declarations in the speech given by NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner on 17 May 1990: *“the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee”*. *“Where are these guarantees?”*, asked Putin.*

Although Robert Gates tried to cushion the effect, this speech left its mark on Western minds and, even then, foreshadowed the violent anger which the Russian president would later express at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, so infuriated was he at the American proposal to allow Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO.†

* We mentioned this speech by Mr. Wörner in the first part of our paper. Vladimir Putin quotes the text correctly, except that he places it in Brussels, whereas it was given at the Bremer Tabaks Collegium. *I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience of what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO Secretary General Mr. Wörner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: “the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee”. Where are these guarantees? Putin's Prepared Remarks at the 43rd Munich Security Conference, Munich, Feb. 10, 2007, Transcript. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR20070212005555.html>:*

Discours du Président russe sur la sécurité, Munich, 10 février 2007, Université de Sherbrooke, Canada. <https://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMDictionnaire?iddictionnaire=1886> - Manfred Wörner, *The Atlantic Alliance and European Security in the 1990s*, 17 May 1990 : *The very fact that we are ready not to deploy NATO troops beyond the territory of the Federal Republic gives the Soviet Union firm security guarantees.*

https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions_23732.htm?selectedLocale=en; Laurent Zecchini, *Vladimir Poutine dénonce l'unilatéralisme américain*, in *Le Monde*, 12 février 2007

https://www.lemonde.fr/ameriques/article/2007/02/12/m-poutine-denonce-l-unilateralisme-americain_866329_3222.html

† R. Service, *op. cit.*, p. 566.

At the NATO Summit held at the Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest from 2 to 4 April 2008, a Russian Head of State was, for the first time in the Alliance's history, due to attend the NATO-Russia Council which closed the meeting. Although Vladimir Putin was expected in Bucharest, problems arose not only on the issue of the membership of former parts of Yugoslavia, such as Croatia and Macedonia, but primarily on the membership of Georgia and Ukraine. Russian minorities were under pressure in the Georgian breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As for Ukraine, a few days before the Summit, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov again expressed his opposition to the idea of Ukraine joining the Partnership for Peace as part of a further expansion of that country which would merely accentuate the division of Europe.* The divide between the New Europe and the Old Europe was rearing its head again: Poland, the Baltic states and nine Eastern European countries supported the position of President Bush and the diplomatic efforts by American and Canada in favour of expansion, whereas France, Germany, Italy and Belgium, followed by six other Member States, objected to it based on the need to take into account the role and the sensitivity of Russia.† However, Montreal-based newspaper *Le Devoir* saw their misgivings as a concern not to irritate the important neighbour who supplies gas to the entire continent.‡

In his analysis of the Bucharest Summit, Philippe Boulanger thought a potential expansion of the Alliance to include Georgia and Ukraine would risk a collision with Russia. He noted that the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Grouchko, had considered that integrating the two former Soviet republics would be a major strategic error, with serious consequences for security in Europe. Thus, for Russia, NATO expansion was progressing too fast and too far across a territory under Russian influence.§

It must be recognised that the Bucharest Declaration falls short of taking into account the concerns expressed by the Kremlin: *NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO*. It goes on to say that *[w]e agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. (...)*¶

After noting certain concerns over relations with Russia, the next paragraph of the Summit Declaration states that the members of the Alliance consider that the potential offered by the NATO-Russia Council is not being fully exploited, and that they stand ready to define and maximise the opportunities for joint action, as a group of 27, while reiterating the principle that NATO and Russia act and take their decisions independently. The Summit reaffirmed the idea of an Open-Door policy for Russia but based this on *opportunities to deepen levels of cooperation and stability*, with no mention of the possibility of membership.**

* Ph. Boulanger, *L'élargissement*, p. 13.

† *Ibidem*.

‡ Christian Rioux, *Sommet de l'OTAN, Poutine souffle le chaud et le froid*, in *Le Devoir*, April 5, 2008. <https://www.ledevoir.com/monde/183741/sommet-de-l-otan-poutine-souffle-le-chaud-et-le-froid>

§ Ph. Boulanger, *L'élargissement*, p. 20.

¶ *Bucharest Summit Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm

** *Bucharest Summit Declaration*, 28.

When he attended the closing session of the Summit, Vladimir Putin demonstrated his desire to maintain a constructive dialogue with NATO while also highlighting Russia's significant differences regarding the approach of an organisation which, he pointed out, was founded to combat a Soviet bloc that no longer existed and included certain members who continued to demonise Russia. While claiming to be satisfied with the postponement of Ukraine and Georgia's NATO membership, the Russian president did show his irritation at the guarantee given that Ukraine and Georgia would join NATO one day. Putin stated: *the appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders (...) will always be considered a direct threat to Russia*. In his view, *NATO cannot guarantee its own security at the expense of the security of others*.*

It did not prevent US Vice President Joe Biden from visiting Ukraine on 21 and 22 July 2009 and assuring Viktor Yushchenko, who had been in office since the Orange Revolution in 2004, that the United States still supported Kyiv's request to join NATO, despite the delay in the integration process.† However, tempers were flaring with Moscow. President Dmitri Medvedev wrote an open letter to Yushchenko, describing him as anti-Russian for disrupting Russian gas supplies to Europe. The Kremlin also criticized Yushchenko's efforts to have the famine that affected Ukraine in 1932-1933 recognized as genocide attributable to the Kremlin, and to rehabilitate the Ukrainian nationalists who had fought against the Soviets alongside the Nazis during the Second World War.‡

3.4. *A stick with two ends*

The climate of disintegration which had characterized Russia at the turn of the century, and the realization of the increasing weakness, if not inability, of the State to hold its own on the international stage and also domestically had a significant effect on Russia's elite and, undoubtedly, on its leader. The reactions to what Thomas Gomart called "Russia's 9/11"—the hostage-taking at Beslan school in North Ossetia on the first day of term in 2004, which resulted in 331 deaths, including 172 children, and more than 540 wounded—told Putin that Russia had shown weakness and the weak get a thrashing. *Some want to snatch a juicy morsel from us, others are helping them do so as they consider that Russia is still a threat because it is one of the world's major nuclear powers—a threat which must be eliminated*.§ Gomart, head of the Russia/ICE programme at the French Institute of International Relations, noted in 2005 that, by indiscriminately mixing up international terrorism, the power game and the destabilization attempts coming from abroad, Vladimir Putin was cultivating a mental confusion and a scheming outlook which would help to explain his attitude towards Ukraine,¶ but also probably towards Caucasus.

For David Teurtrie, the Russia-Georgia conflict in the summer of 2008 was a paradigm shift in relations between Russia and the West.** While South Ossetia and Abkhazia had

* R. Service, *The Penguin History of Modern Russia*, p. 566 ; Christian Rioux, *Sommet de l'OTAN, Poutine souffle le chaud et le froid*, in *Le Devoir*, April 5, 2008.

† David R. Marples, *Ukraine*, in *Universalia 2010*, (Paris : Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2010) , p. 514.

‡ *Ibidem*.

§ Thomas Gomart, *Russie : trop-plein d'énergie ou d'inertie*, dans Th. de MONTBRIAL et Ph. MOREAU DEFARGES dir., *Rapport annuel mondial sur le système économique et les stratégies (RAMSES)*, p. 84, Paris, Dunod-IFRI, 2005.

¶ Th. Gomart, *Russie : trop plein d'énergies...*, p. 86.

** D. Teurtrie, *Russie, Le retour de la puissance*, p. 131.

proclaimed their independence in 1991 and 1992 respectively, their secessionist aspirations had not been taken into account either by the international community or even by Russia. However, in 2006, Vladimir Putin had posed the question: *if someone thinks that Kosovo can be granted full independence as a state, then why should the Abkhaz or the South -Ossetian peoples not also have the right to statehood?*^{*} Thus, as Jaume Castan Pinos noted, the Russian president considered that Kosovan independence would constitute a precedent which could potentially cause Russia to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia.[†]

Kosovan independence from Serbia was proclaimed on 17 February 2008 and recognized the following day by the United States, whose Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that, *as Kosovo today begins its life as an independent state, the United States pledges to continue to be its close friend and partner.*[‡] A few days later, Vladimir Putin observed that this event constituted *a terrible precedent* which would trigger a chain of unpredictable consequences. He added: *ultimately this is a stick with two ends, and one day the other end of this stick will hit them on their heads.*[§]

In the Caucasus, relations between Tbilisi and the separatists deteriorated when, after several incidents, Georgia bombarded and invaded South Ossetia, and also threatened the Russian peacekeeping forces which had been deployed in that region since 1992. Russia entered the war against Georgia and pushed back its armies. On 26 August, Moscow recognized the two republics and justified its action in a diplomatic statement from Dimitri Medvedev—who had replaced Putin in May—similar to that used for the NATO intervention in Kosovo.[¶]

The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 and its subsequent developments could appear to be *a point of no return* in relations between Russia and the West. This crisis arose, firstly, from the division among the Ukrainians on the choice they had to make between the association agreement with the European Union and the Customs Union which Moscow was offering them and, secondly, the suspicion felt by the Russians that the West was trying, once again, to separate Ukraine from Russia.^{**} In 2003, Putin had proposed the creation of a single economic area of 215 million inhabitants, comprising Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. The Orange Revolution had ended Ukraine's involvement in that project which, in 2010, became the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union. The election of Victor Yanukovich saw Ukraine again being encouraged to support this plan rather than join the European Union. When Yanukovich refused to sign the association agreement with the EU in 2013, he was toppled by the *nationalist, pro-Western opposition supported by Brussels and*

^{*} *If someone thinks that Kosovo can be granted full independence as a state, then why should the Abkhaz or the South-Ossetian peoples not also have the right to statehood?* (Kremlin, 2006), in Jaume Castan Pinos, *Kosovo and the Collateral Effects*, p. 163.

[†] J. Castan Pinos, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

[‡] *As Kosovo today begins its life as an independent state, the United States pledges to continue to be its close friend and partner.* Condoleezza Rice, *US Recognizes Kosovo as Independent State*, Washington, US Department of State, February 18, 2008. Archive. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/02/100973.htm> last modified 26 April 2022.

[§] *Quoted by J. Castan Pinos, op. cit.*, p. 164.

[¶] *Medvedev's Statement on South Ossetia and Abkhazia*, in *The New York Times*, August 26, 2008. - *Statement by President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev*, Moscow, Kremlin, August 26, 2008. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/1222> J. Castan Pinos, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

^{**} David Teurtrie, *Russie, Le retour de la puissance*, p. 132-133.

Washington.* For the Kremlin, the overthrow of President Victor Yanukovich, who had been elected in 2010 and who had signed, with Medvedev, the Kharkiv Pact on Russian use of the Sevastapol naval base for a further 25 years, was a blow for Moscow. The Kremlin viewed the Euromaidan movement as a Western power grab. It is clear that nationalism emerged stronger, particularly when Parliament granted precedence to the Ukrainian language and further discussions took place in Kyiv on the possibility of increasing military cooperation between Ukraine and NATO.†

The Russian response took the form of a media campaign in which the authorities in Kyiv were described as Nazi sympathizers.‡ There was also reaction from Crimea, where the Parliament refused to submit to the new authorities. The Russian and associated armed forces occupied the peninsula on 27 February. The Crimean Parliament voted to hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia. Although the result was broadly in favor, the United Nations, in its Resolution 68/262 of 27 March 2014, rejected its validity.§ For the Russians who voted in favor of joining, it was reparation for a historical injustice.¶ With great fanfare, Vladimir Putin signed the accession treaty with the representatives of the Republic of Crimea. For the West, as for the majority of UN members, this was an action designed to disrupt *the national unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine*.** The European Union and the United States then imposed a raft of sanctions, which they expanded as the fighting intensified in the Donbas region.

A Protocol was signed between representatives of Russia, Ukraine and the Donbas separatists in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, on 5 September 2014, under the auspices of the OSCE, to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine. As a result of continuing clashes, the Minsk Summit of 11 February 2015 brought together on the initiative of French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, representatives from Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany in an attempt to end the conflict in the Donbas region. During the summer of 2021, Tatiana Kastoueva-Jean, Director of the Russia/NEI Centre at the *Institut français des Relations internationales*, noted that this process, which was a pivotal element in the relations between Russia and the West, had reached an impasse and that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who had taken office on 20 May 2019, was taking a harder line than his predecessor Petro Porochenko, who had held that role since 2014. She observed that his initiatives, such as closing down three pro-Russian media outlets, imposing sanctions on Viktor Medvedchuk, an ally of Vladimir Putin, and creating the international Crimea Platform, were provoking the Kremlin into an escalation of tensions on the Ukrainian border.††

From April 2014, following Russia's illegal military intervention in Ukraine, the Atlantic Alliance suspended all practical cooperation with Russia, including in relation to

* D. Teurtrie, *Où en est l'Union économique eurasiatique? Entre instabilité sociopolitique et ambitions géoéconomiques*, dans Thierry de Montbrial & Dominique David, Ramses 2022, (Paris : IFRI-Dunod, 2021) , p. 161.

† R. Service, *The Penguin History of Modern Russia*, p. 580.

‡ *Ibidem*.

§ United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution adopted on March 27, 2014. Ukraine Territorial Integrity. https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/262&referer=http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/resolutions.shtml&Lang=F

¶ David Teurtrie, *Russie, Le retour de la puissance*, p. 133.

** *Résolution*, p. 2.

†† Tatiana Kastoueva-Jean, *La Russie après la réforme constitutionnelle, La dérive autoritaire se poursuit*, in Thierry de Montbrial & Dominique David, Ramses 2022, (Paris : IFRI-Dunod, 2021) , p. 146.

COR, the European Committee of the Regions. However, it decided not to close down the communication channels within COR and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in order to maintain exchanges of views on the subject of the crisis in Ukraine. The members of COR met three times in 2016, three times in 2017, twice in 2018, and twice in 2019. The most recent meeting was held on 12 January 2022.*

4. Conclusion: Thinking the Unthinkable?

One trajectory, several bifurcations

If we had to describe the trajectory of the changing relations between NATO and Russia, from the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) to the launch, in 2014, of the operations in Crimea and then in the Donbas region which are still continuing in 2022, we would hesitate between words such as mutual misunderstanding, divergence of interests and strategies, and, naturally, arrogance on either side of the red line that is constantly moving eastwards. The limits to understanding this path are immediately apparent: we are in the presence of a complex system based, first and foremost, on human actors whose empathy, for example, as the power to identify with a partner, is not a constant virtue. We are also operating in a dynamic in which the actors are pursuing their own path: alone—the United States, France, Russia, Germany—, or within a collective murmur mentality—the Commonwealth of Independent States in its various configurations, the European Union, the Old Europe, the New Europe, to use the typology attributed to Donald Rumsfeld, and so on. In parallel with our trajectory describing the relations between the Alliance and Russia, we could add two others, demonstrating that they often resonate with each other: the chaotic relations between Russia and the United States, on the one hand, and the expansion and integration of the European Union, on the other, including the vain attempts by the Union to establish a common defence mechanism and even the much-fêted European identity within NATO. Other key factors weigh heavily and are particularly influential at times, even though we have seen them mentioned very infrequently, if at all: global geopolitics, defence budgets,[†] disarmament processes, terrorism and, above all, economic and social changes and energy issues. So many black boxes that would need to be opened and integrated into the model.

There are some essential bifurcations on our trajectory. The first was the period from the negotiations on German reunification, the *Deutsche Einheit*, on 3 October 1990, until the collapse of the USSR on 26 December 1991. This was a time of intense diplomatic activity during which questions were asked about the endurance of the Alliance, while considering, with varying degrees of humility, that the West had the upper hand.

We have pinpointed the second significant bifurcation in 1999. In its final year, the 20th century bequeathed us two debts, which will be costly and ugly for us to honor in the 21st century: the Washington Summit of 24 and 25 April 1999 marked the 50th anniversary of the Alliance, its renewal, and the expansion of its missions, but it also highlighted the Alliance's capacity to violate international order, as the organization did when it attacked

* NATO-Russia Council, NATO, January 13, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50091.htm

[†] Voir par exemple : Éric Sourisseau, *Les conséquences militaires et stratégiques de l'élargissement de l'Europe*, *Annuaire stratégique et militaire*, Paris, FRS, Odile Jacob, 2003.

Kosovo, despite misgivings from some of its members and the absence of a mandate from the United Nations. These events tainted the previously constructive dialogue between the various protagonists. At that precise moment, as the French historian and journalist André Fontaine wrote, NATO had unquestionably failed to create trusting, enduring and effective relations with Russia.* On the contrary, the Alliance had showed Russia powerful leadership, humiliated it on the international stage, and admitted three former members of the Warsaw Pact, despite repeated requests from Russia to join at the same time, if not earlier. The ceremony held in Independence, Missouri, clearly showed that the momentum was first and foremost with the Americans.

The pre-emptive war launched on 20 March 2003 in Iraq jeopardised relations between the Europeans and the United States, and especially between the Europeans themselves. The challenge to American prominence by France and Germany, the old allies of the United States, irritated Washington greatly, all the more so since an axis was created with Moscow which, despite the affronts, had remained fairly obliging. Since the fall of the Wall, any rapprochement between Moscow and Berlin was a sensitive matter for American diplomacy. The demand for multipolarity advocated by Evgeni Primakov and Vladimir Putin should also be viewed in this context. The events of 2003 were soon followed by the Munich speech by the President of the Russian Federation in 2007, and the Bucharest Summit in 2008. The Europeans were divided over the question of NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia. It was these divisions that blocked it, probably more than the focus on Vladimir Putin's anger. Georgia in 2006, the Donbas region and Crimea in 2014, and the frontal Russia-Ukraine war from 24 February 2022 represented a single escalation and, at the same time, the worst response from Russia to the ostracism it had suffered, which, at least for a time, would merely be accentuated. As Hubert Védrine pointed out on 20 April 2022, the *Russian attack on Ukraine shatters Europe's vision of world affairs*. Further on, the former French Foreign Minister wonders whether, at a given point, the West could have been smarter?†

To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn't!

Fifteen years earlier, the same Hubert Védrine had observed that, because the West had believed, with the end of the USSR, that they had won the battle of history and would be able to *reign supreme*, they were bewildered by a world that conformed so little to their expectations. The United States, he wrote, were triumphalist. *They considered their leadership and their benevolent supremacy necessary for world stability and security.*‡

What is, today, increasingly clear to researchers—and I think that we have begun to discover this in this journey—, is that, since 1990, American policymakers had wanted German reunification to result in *carte blanche* for the United States by cementing a reunified Germany into NATO and enabling all the American diplomatic options within the new strategic landscape of Europe.§ The comments made by George H. Bush at his meeting with

* André Fontaine, Pierre Melandri, Guillaume Parmentier, *NATO, Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique nord*, dans *Encyclopædia Universalis*

† Hubert Védrine & Pascal Boniface, *Comprendre le monde, Après la guerre en Ukraine, une vision du monde*, April 20, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYMm2XKh6uA>

‡ H. Védérine, Adrien Abecassis and Mohamed Bouabdallah, *Continuer l'histoire*, (Paris : Fayard, 2007) , p. 7-9.

§ J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 5

the West German leaders at Camp David, on 24 and 25 February 1990, are characteristic. The American president considered that *the Soviets are not in a position to dictate Germany's relationship with NATO. What worries me, he said, is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.**

That period, which seems very distant to us today, is still a point of reference when one is in Moscow, particularly the speech of the NATO Secretary General on 17 May 1990, the interpretation of which is the subject of passionate arguments and even divides international relations analysts and historians into two schools. These two approaches are also the basis for two narratives which have a profound effect on the possible interpretation of current events.† In his speech, on 24 February 2022, in which he justified his operation in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin took only twenty seconds to refer to thirty years of efforts by the Kremlin to reach an agreement with NATO on the principles of European security. And to assert: *in response to our proposals, we invariably faced either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail, while the North Atlantic alliance continued to expand despite our protests and concerns. Its military machine is moving and, as I said, is approaching our very border.* The President of the Russian Federation goes on to mention the signs of disregard for international law which he attributes to the West: *this array includes promises not to expand NATO eastwards even by an inch.* (...)‡

After visiting a number of archives, including some of which I have presented here, particularly those declassified by the NSA, the American researcher Joshua Itzkowitz Shiffrinson noted, in 2016, that the leaders of his country had offered the Soviets informal guarantees against NATO expansion on several occasions during the talks on German reunification in the spring, summer and autumn of 1990. Shiffrinson, who was Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University, then at Boston University, showed that this was common diplomatic practice. In this instance, these guarantees were part of the negotiating position of George H. Bush's administration, and they indicated that the European order after the Cold War would be acceptable to both Washington and Moscow. As a result, NATO would remain in place provided that the security architecture of Europe included the Soviet Union. *Collectively, for Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, this evidence suggests that Russian leaders are essentially correct in claiming that U.S. efforts to expand NATO since the 1990s violate the "spirit" of the 1990 negotiations: NATO expansion nullified the assurances given to the Soviet Union in 1990.*§

* The Soviets are not in a position to dictate Germany's relationship with NATO. *What worries me is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.* Quoted in Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 253; J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 35.

† Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the US Offer to Limit NATO Expansion*, in *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Spring 2016), pp. 7–44. (Harvard College and MIT). See for example: Hannes Adomeit, *NATO's Eastward Enlargement: What the Western Leaders Said*, in *Security Policy Working Paper*, nr. 3, 2018. - Bruno Tertrais, *L'élargissement de L'otan : ni développement naturel ni erreur historique*, in *A quoi sert l'OTAN ? Questions internationales*, n°111, January-February 2022, p. 22-23.

‡ Address by the President of Russian Federation, Moscow, *The Kremlin*, February 24, 2022. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843#Transcript>; Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine, *Bloomberg News*, US Edition, February 24, 2022. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/full-transcript-vladimir-putin-s-televised-address-to-russia-on-ukraine-feb-24>

§ *Collectively, this evidence suggests that Russian leaders are essentially correct in claiming that U.S. efforts to expand NATO since the 1990s violate the "spirit" of the 1990 negotiations: NATO expansion nullified the assurances given to the Soviet Union in 1990.* J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 5.

But the American researcher developed the argument further in his paper, which was endorsed by Harvard and the MIT, indicating that there was growing evidence that the United States was insincere when it offered the Soviet Union informal guarantees against NATO expansion. Referring to the works of the historian Mary Elise Sarotte from the European Studies Centre at Harvard,^{*} he noted that *declassified materials from U.S. archives suggest that U.S. policymakers used the diplomacy of German reunification to strengthen the United States' position in Europe after the Cold War.*[†] And he added that, contrary to what was claimed by many policymakers and analysts, there was significant evidence that Russian assertions of a “broken promise” regarding NATO expansion had merit. Applying insights from international relations theory to both new and pre-existing evidence on the 1990 negotiations, he considered that *Russian leaders [were] essentially correct: NATO expansion violated the quid pro quo at the heart of the diplomacy that culminated in German reunification within NATO. There was no written agreement precluding NATO expansion, but non-expansion guarantees were still advanced in 1990, only to be overturned.*[‡]

As noted in 2021 by Jean-Marie Guehenno, former Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations and Professor at Columbia University, *the hypocrisy of the strategic relationship with Russia was perhaps inevitable, but such lies come at a price. To dispel them, it would have been necessary to suspend our doubts on the future of Russia and reflect on the significance of a NATO of which Russia would become a member. But raising this issue would have required us to think not in terms of victors and the vanquished, but of joint leaders in a new world to be constructed.*[§]

This analysis, which certainly overturns our traditional—and, it must be said—generally Manichean approach to international relations, invites us to reflect on the path outlined at the beginning of this conclusion. The changing relationship between NATO and Russia must clearly be based more on the power balance between the parties, as Joshua Itzkowitz Shiffrin urges. In his work entitled *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts*,[¶] the Boston University professor analyses, from a historical perspective, the decline process of great powers that lost their economic, military and strategic capabilities and saw other powers emerge at the same time. Their decline is particularly significant when compared with the increasing power of their neighbours. Itzkowitz Shiffrin conceptualises a predation theory and applies it to several cases, including one in which he charts the strategy of the United States and the decline of the Soviet Union. Thus, based on sources from the US State Department and the National Security Council (NSC), he demonstrates

* Mary Elise Sarotte, *Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence, The 1990 Deals to “Bribe the Soviets out” and Move NATO in*, in *International Security*, vol. 35, N°1, Summer 2010, p. 110-137, p. 118, 135. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40784649> - Also: M. E. SAROTTE, *How to Enlarge NATO. The Debate inside the Clinton Administration, 1993-1995*, in *International Security*, Vol. 44, N°1, p. 7-41, Summer 2019. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00353

† J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 34.

‡ J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 40.

§ Our translation. Guehenno, *Le Premier XXIe siècle, De la globalisation à l'émiettement du monde*, (Paris : Flammarion, 2021) , p. 35.

¶ J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts*, Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 2018; Brent Scowcroft au Président, *Turmoil in the Soviet Union and U.S. Policy* 18 août 1990, dossier *USSR Collapse: U.S.-Soviet Relations thru 1991* (August 1990), Boîte 91118, Scowcroft Files, GBPL. p. 40. “Even as the United States helped reunify Germany and prepared for possible NATO expansion, U.S. leaders were concerned with Gorbachev’s political survival. If forced to choose between helping Gorbachev stay in office or reinforcing U.S. preeminence, it is debatable which option the United States would have pursued. For an appreciation of the dilemma, see Brent Scowcroft to the President, *Turmoil in the Soviet Union and U.S. Policy* August 18, 1990, folder *USSR Collapse: U.S.-Soviet Relations thru 1991* (August 1990),” box 91118, Scowcroft Files, GBPL. 40.

that the conditions for German reunification were conceived during the 1980s and 1990s to maximise the domination of the United States in European security matters while minimising Soviet influence.* The predation theory approach is enlightening when the researcher highlights an NSC archive from 1985-86 in which, at a time when Gorbachev was moving closer to the United States in an effort to turn the USSR into a *decentralised, modern and efficient State*, Jack F. Matlock, Ronald Reagan's National Security Adviser and future US Ambassador to Moscow from 1987 to 1991, posed the question of whether this USSR would be good for the United States, bluntly concluding: absolutely not.† This strategy of systematically weakening Russia, under Ronald Reagan, George H. Bush,‡ and probably their successors, was the key to a more proactive and central path for relations between NATO and Russia, which incorporated a desire for American leadership, ostracism of Russia and perpetuation of the pre-eminence of the United States in Europe within a context of relative subservience for which Washington relied on the inclusion of new actors in the East. NATO was the instrument of this policy—an integrated structure, an emblem of official Western values, and an instrument of power.

“Can we envisage Russian membership of NATO, as some thought possible thirty years ago?”

As a result, we have a better understanding of history since 1989. If the objectives of the United States were, first and foremost, to instill harmony while ensuring its predominance on the continent of Europe by relying on the former satellites of Moscow, and at the same time to establish a distance between Germany and Russia, it is unclear why they would have allowed Moscow to join the Atlantic Alliance at any time.

What does the future hold?

The foundations for foresight reflection are partially laid. There is obviously much to do to plot the next twenty years, identify the long-term challenges and respond accordingly. A number of projects have been launched in recent months, at the regional and the international level. By 2050, a multitude of transformations are possible, both good and bad. But can we envisage Russian membership of NATO, as some thought possible thirty years ago? At first glance, this is a difficult question. Readers even shudder at the thought of it, all the more so since 24 February 2022 and the Russian attacks on Kiev, Kharkiv, Kramatorsk, Marioupol, Kherson, etc. How can we even contemplate it?

Investigating paths towards futures possible by 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045 and 2050 widens the scope of the review and highlights the changing stakeholders involved. Whatever assumptions one might make regarding the presidency of Russia, the United States, the evolution of NATO, its missions in relation to the United Nations, the integration and expansion of Europe, its desire or its lack of genuine desire to construct a common defence mechanism and weapons industry, the growth of the emerging powers, China, India, the

* J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Rising*, Ke. 2964.

† *Ibidem*, Ke. 3135.

‡ *Contrary to what U.S. officials told their Soviet interlocutors, the Bush administration privately looked to use the collapse of Soviet power in Central-Eastern Europe to enhance U.S. preeminence on the continent.* J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 34.

logic of economic decline and harmony mentioned above, the capacity of States to begin cooperating to respond to transitions, climate change, space ambitions, and so on, it is clear, today, that the twin Russia-NATO system is far from limited to the continental context. What are the views and positions of the twenty countries which refused to condemn Russia's aggression in the United Nations, including China and India which represent a majority of the world's population?*

But reflecting on the future does not only mean exploring possible futures. It also means setting in motion desirable futures which meet the challenges of the future and offer of variety of aims through a shared vision and concrete, operational action strategies.

Discussing the future of Russia and NATO means, above all, thinking about peace, particularly peace between Ukraine and Russia, since, to date, the Atlantic Alliance has regularly stated that it is not at war. Peace and friendship are hard to envisage when television and social media are full of atrocities, particularly those committed by the side we support.

During the Rambouillet negotiations between the Kosovan insurgents and the Serbians, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made overtures to the warring parties by offering them the example of Gerry Adams' Northern Ireland peace process and the ability of our societies to move from violence to peaceful political and social relations.† The role of the IRA during the Second World War did not prevent London and the organisation which practised bloody terrorism at one of the worst moments in British history from negotiating a peace settlement. I tried to apply this example to Islamic terrorism in a NATO foresight seminar organised by the Millennium Project at Falls Church, in Virginia in 2016.‡ Similarly, there are many examples, including Pearl Harbour, the bombings of Tokyo and Dresden, the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre and the Battle of the Bulge, which, although not forgotten, may be forgiven.

In my research, I have also met numerous assumptions of evolution which may be a source of inspiration for us. To take just one example—but one I feel is central,—Joshua Itzkowitz Shiffrin mentioned an approach which involved granting a more important decision-making role to NATO members who are less enthusiastic about expansion than the United States, with the aim of strengthening or increasing NATO's presence in Eastern Europe and abandoning military deployments, such as those announced in early 2016.§. In 2007, the French Senate lamented the fact that US-Russian relations were having a direct impact on the atmosphere surrounding Russia's dialogue with NATO.¶ The question being posed again is that of the Europeanisation of NATO, an idea suggested by John Fitzgerald Kennedy back in the early 1960s, with its two equivalent Alliance pillars—American and European. But, once again, we are faced with not only American leadership but also the national egos of its European partners.**

* H. Vedrine and Pascal Boniface, *Comprendre le monde, Après la guerre en Ukraine, une vision du monde*, April 20, 2022.

† Jonathan Freedland, *They've made one Good Friday; Let's hope they can make another*, in *The Guardian*, March 31, 1999.

‡ Philippe Destatte, *Counter-Terrorism in Europe 2030; Managing Efficiency and Civil Rights*, in Theodore J. Gordon e.a., *Identification of Potential Terrorists and Adversary Planning*, p. 87-105; NATO Science for Peace and Security Series - E: Human and Societal Dynamics, IOS Press, 2017.

§ J. R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Deal or No Deal?*, p. 44.

¶ Jean François-Poncet, Jean-Guy Branger and André Rouvière, *Rapport d'information fait au nom de la commission des Affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées sur l'évolution de l'OTAN*, Sénat français, July 19, 2007 https://www.senat.fr/rap/r06-405/r06-405_mono.html#toc32

** Estelle Hoorickx, *La Bel'ique, l'OTAN et la Guerre froide, Le témoignage d'André de Staercke*, (Brussels : Racine, 2022) , p. 303.

In this mass of data and alternatives, it is important not to neglect the immediate prospects for emerging from the current crisis at some point. In this regard, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928-2017) gave us some recommendations, in 2014, in the form of several scenarios. It's a pity he wasn't not only heard by President Putin, but also by NATO! The first scenario involved seeking a compromise with Ukraine by ending the attack on its sovereignty and its economic well-being. This, he said, would require *wisdom and perseverance* on the part of Russia, Ukraine and the West. Such a compromise would mean the end of Russian efforts to destabilize Ukraine from within, the end of any threat of a larger invasion, and some sort of East-West agreement involving tacit acceptance by Russia that Ukraine was on a lengthy road towards possible membership of the European Union. In parallel, Ukraine would no longer seek to join NATO.

In the second scenario presented by President Jimmy Carter's former National Security Adviser, Putin could continue to support military intervention in certain parts of Ukraine. The Western response would have to be a protracted and genuinely punitive imposition of sanctions designed to make Russia understand the painful consequences of its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. This scenario would destroy the economy of both countries.

Brzezinski's third scenario saw Putin invade Ukraine, which, he wrote, would not only lead to reprisals by the West but could also provoke Ukrainian resistance. *If this resistance was sustained and intense, NATO members would be under growing pressure to support the Ukrainians in various ways, rendering the conflict much more costly for the aggressor.*

*For the Kremlin, the consequence of this third option would not only be a Ukrainian population of more than 40 million permanently hostile inhabitants, but also a Russia that was economically and politically isolated, facing the possibility of increasing domestic problems.**

Brzezinski, who was Polish by birth and also a leading political scientist, supported the idea of finding a compromise solution which would involve Russia abandoning the idea of using force against Ukraine. However, he felt that the issue of Crimea could not be resolved. He condemned the nationalism and highlighted the scale of the risks of this scenario for Russia itself.

As we can see, Brzezinski did not mention what remains a possible scenario: allowing Russia, Ukraine and Georgia to join the Alliance.† However, at the start of our path, in 1998, Brzezinski, who had been hawkish in his policy towards the USSR, stated that *the United States, as the principal power in NATO, should explicitly declare that, at a given moment in the future, even Russian membership of NATO might make sense.‡*

This is exactly the position that I have advocated on numerous occasions over the past twenty years regarding Ukrainian membership of the European Union. Perhaps Moscow

* Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Putin's three Choices on Ukraine*, in *The Washington Post*, July 8, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/zbigniew-brzezinski-putins-three-choices-on-ukraine/2014/07/08/ba1e62ae-0620-11e4-a0dd-f2b22a257353_story.html

† Charles A. Kupchan, *NATO's Final Frontier: Why Russia Should Join the Atlantic Alliance*, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 3, Council on Foreign Relations, 2010, pp. 100–12, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25680919>.

‡ Z. Brzezinski, *On to Russia*, in *The Washington Post*, May 3, 1998.

and Kyiv should join together. Or perhaps they do not qualify. Because if Ukraine is part of Europe, Russia is also part of Europe.* Let us use this assumption in relation to NATO, by 2050, if the Alliance still has a mission in this world.

It is unclear how the West will, in time, find a solution for a strategic coexistence with Moscow. The alternative we would be faced with was clearly defined by the researcher Sumantra Maitra at the Royal Historical Society in the United Kingdom in summer 2021: *is it right to negotiate a compromise with Moscow and allow Russia its own little sphere of influence in parts of Europe where it already has bases and established interests, or is it better to exclude Russia from the equation and run the risk of triggering a localized war of attrition through proxy factions?*†

There is a concern that, as a result of the momentum generated from the Russian offensive of February 2022, we are already firmly established on one of the possible routes, at the cost of an increasing number of human lives. We therefore also need to take a long-term view.

In the process that has led to this dramatic situation, the European Union has been largely absent, apart from a few initiatives by some of its members, in particular President Emmanuel Macron. Yet it is from Europe that we could have expected diplomatic wisdom and conciliatory initiative.

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* Gérard Chaliand, *Un homme de terrain décode le nouveau désordre mondial*. "La Russie c'est l'Europe" explique le géostratège Gérard Chaliand, France 24, March 15, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7FsR94QN3M>

† Sumantra Maitra, *L'élargissement de l'OTAN, la Russie et l'équilibre de la menace*, in *Revue militaire canadienne*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Summer 2021, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/cmj-article-fr-page35.html>