

# *The NATO-Russia Council – a Success?*

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**Masteroppgave i statsvitenskap,**

**Universitetet i Oslo,**

**14. mai 2010**

**Antall ord: 27.219 (16.000 – 35.000)**



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## **Summary/Abstract**

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO and Russia concluded that «they no longer regarded each other as adversaries» (NATO, 1997). They also soon began a gradual rapprochement. In 1997, the Founding Act was created, and in 2002, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established. The aim of the NRC was to treat the actors as equal partners, build trust, practical cooperation and become the main forum for crisis and security consultation between NATO and Russia (NATO, 2002). Building on Karl Deutsch's (1961) theory, particular emphasis will be put on an incorporation of 'transaction density' and 'mutual responsiveness' as crucial characteristics for the NRC in forwarding a path towards a 'Security Community' between NATO and Russia. From 2002 to 2009, an assessment of whether or not the NRC has been a success will be presented.

## **Personal note**

To fully contextualize the content of this master's thesis, some background information about the author could be of relevance. While having grown up in Norway, a NATO member and part of the West, Russia has always been an intriguing neighbor. In a Western country, one often gets socialized to a bit of skepticism towards Russia. In the fall of 2008, I wanted to challenge this skepticism and prejudice and I moved to St. Petersburg to study Russian politics and Russian foreign and security policy for one semester. This again led me to seek a higher knowledge of the former Russian adversary, NATO; the flagship of European and Norwegian security. What could explain the difficulties of establishing friendly relations between the two actors, so many years after the ending of the Cold War? When there already was an institution gathering the two, why did it not function? Few scholars have assessed the NATO-Russia Council. Moreover, the literature mostly seems to be divided between the many western pro-NATO authors assessing NATO's victory and «apparent success» and the few Russian scholars presenting Russia's point of view. With one foot in both «fields», I will try to integrate the two points of view, so that readers could perhaps better understand the development of the relationship.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to first and foremost thank my supervisor, Paal S. Hilde, for guiding and supervising me through this process. His insight has been of utmost value and inspiration. The Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies (IFS) has been a very helpful partner in writing for the project *NATO in a Changing World*, a collaboration between the Institute for Political Science at the University of Oslo (UiO) and IFS.

Secondly, I would like to thank all my key respondents at the NATO Headquarters, and the Norwegian Delegation in particular for kindly accommodating me.

Thirdly, I would like to thank Hans Olav Stensli, Andreas Runesson and Ingvild Baustad for reading through parts of my thesis and reducing errors.

Finally, I would like to thank my beloved ones and especially my parents, who are always of greatest support.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

*«Security must be indivisible and must rest on pan-European structures. (...) There is a risk of neo-isolation of [Russia] as opposed to its natural introduction into the Euro-Atlantic space.»*

(Boris Yeltsin in a letter to Bill Clinton, 1993<sup>1</sup>)

The 1990s marked an end of more than 50 years of hostile competition between the West and the East. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the representatives of the old blocs, NATO and Russia, concluded that «they no longer regarded each other as adversaries» (NATO, 1997). While mutual deterrence was believed as being the main factor causing the absence of war between the two superpowers during the Cold War, the transformed situation in the early 1990s gave incentives to a gradual rapprochement and the development of cooperation between NATO and Russia. Would it be possible to prevent war through institutionalized contact and practical cooperation?

Great expectations were made. In 1997, the Founding Act between NATO and Russia was signed and in 2002, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established. The Times described the NRC as no less than “the most far-reaching change in the North Atlantic alliance since NATO was founded in 1949”.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of the NRC and institutional cooperation in general was for Russia and NATO to together build “a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area”. Through treating the actors as equal partners, develop trust, practical cooperation and become the main forum of contact and security related discussions between NATO and Russia, this goal would be reached (NATO, 1997, 2002). Yet, the relationship between NATO and Russia has gone through ups and downs. Recently, the cooperation saw a radical downturn with the suspension of the Council in the aftermath of the 5 days war in Georgia of August 2008.

The role of international institutions as peace building actors has generally been acknowledged the last years. In this thesis, the main forum for conflict solving and security

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<sup>1</sup> Smith 2006: 55

<sup>2</sup> 'The New Alliance'. The Times, 15 May 2002.

cooperation between Russia and NATO, the NATO-Russia Council, will be examined.

Building on Karl Deutsch's (1961) theory of Security Community, the period of investigation will be from its establishment in 2002 and up until its reopening after the war in Georgia in 2009. Has the NRC lived up to its expectations, and how has it functioned in times of crisis? What is the role of the NRC in the overall relationship, what is its value, potential spillover effects and its constraints?

In using the NRC as a barometer for the overall NATO-Russia relationship, I ask: *to what degree has the NRC contributed towards creating a Security Community between Russia and NATO?*

The NRC has two main functions; building practical cooperation in the field of security and being the main forum for political consultation and crisis management between NATO and Russia. While some of the most important outputs in terms of practical cooperation will be assessed, the latter category, namely the Council's ability to function in times of crisis, will be analyzed through four test cases, the boom enlargement in 2002, the war in Iraq in 2003, the CFE Treaty in 2006-2007 and the war in Georgia in 2008. Particular emphasis will be put on 'transaction flows' and 'mutual responsiveness' as crucial characteristics for institutional cooperation between NATO and Russia in the NRC. In other words; the question is if the NRC has succeeded in reaching its potential of establishing a qualitatively developed transaction density. This answer will be analyzed through the indicators of 'volume', 'density' and 'quality'.

In the upcoming chapter, Deutsch's theory of Security Community together with Adler and Barnett's (1998) re-conceptualization, will be presented. Chapter 3 will go through methodological challenges for elite interviews, while NATO and Russia's way towards constructing the NRC from 1991 to 2001 will be presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 examines the NATO-Russia Council since its inauguration in 2002. Here, its two functions will be examined, while four test cases will illuminate the Council's history of tackling crisis in 2002, 2003, 2006-7 and 2008. Finally, the overall volume, density and quality of the Council's activities will be analyzed in chapter 6, followed by a short scenario overview on the future of institutional cooperation between NATO and Russia.

*Has the NATO-Russia Council been a success?*

## 1.1. Two different units of analysis

It is important to emphasize that the units of analysis in this thesis are far from being homogenous. First of all, NATO is a security alliance, where currently 28 states are members. The Russian Federation is not a member of NATO, but has formally the most developed non-membership institutionalized cooperation with NATO. While NATO was established after the Second World War in 1949 to guarantee security and peaceful relations between Western Europe and North America (USA and Canada), the Russian Federation was re-established as a single country in 1991 after 70 years within the Soviet Union. As NATO had balancing of the Soviet Union as its main task during the Cold War, many expected it to be dissolved after the fall of the Berlin Wall, like the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. *Au contraire*, NATO both strengthened its scope and expanded its membership base, soon integrating former members of the Warsaw Pact as well. Russia, on the other hand, replaced the USSR's representations in international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Russia continued to be the world's largest country based on territorial space, but its population size and power was in many ways dramatically decreased. The differences between Russia and NATO today are many. NATO's total member size is many times bigger than Russia's population of 141 million. While NATO and the Soviet Union used to be relatively balanced when it comes to military resources during the Cold War, today the balance is overwhelmingly in NATO's favor.

As NATO's relations with Russia differ from its relations with other non-members (as for example with Ukraine, Georgia or Finland), Russia's relations with NATO also differ from those Russia has with other international security organizations (as the EU, OSCE, CSTO, etc). Deutsch (1961) and Adler & Barnett have proposed a concept and a framework for explaining and establishing an absence of war within international relations. Their theoretical presumptions will guide the assessment of the NATO-Russia Council.



## 2. Theoretical Perceptions

*“NATO and Russia will 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”*

*(From the NATO-Russia Founding Act, 27 May 1997)*

### 2.1. The Theory of Security Communities

Ever since the two world wars ravaged the European continent, social scientists have been preoccupied with theorizing about how to create structures and societies that prevent or even exclude the use of violence in conflicts between states and peoples. The study of regime types<sup>3</sup> and war has been a dominant and long-lasting theme within the field of political science. However, while there was a focus on the relationship between the different state governance systems and violent conflicts through the post second world war period, towards the end of 20<sup>th</sup> Century the attention has been brought towards multilateral and international institutions peace building capabilities as well (George & Bennett 2005: 38pp). The Czech scientist Karl Deutsch (1961) proposed a theory within this category. However, as a result of contextual factors, his theory never got the attention it deserved before 30-40 years after its publication.

Deutsch (1961: 98) proposed theoretical presumptions for “*creating stable and dependable conditions for peaceful change*”. In other words: making a formula where war between states within a so-called 'Security Community' eventually would seem unthinkable. His idea was to integrate states or people within states so that a transnational society with a '*shared identity*' and '*mutual trust*' would be created, and within this society, violent conflicts between states would grow to be psychologically unlikely. Deutsch separated between amalgamated and pluralistic Security Communities (Deutsch 1961: 103). An 'amalgamated security community' is a “formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some form of common government after amalgamation”, while

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<sup>3</sup> Regimes could be both state regimes and institutions regimes (Hovi & Underdal 2000).

'pluralistic Security Communities' "retains the legal independence of separate governments" (Adler & Barnett 1998: 6-7). Only the latter part is important for this thesis.

Through 'transaction flows' and 'mutual responsiveness' in international organizations and institutions within the Security Community, member states would develop a shared identity, loyalty and a feeling of 'we-ness'. Social learning of political elites and integration both on the level of the elites and between peoples would, according to Deusch (1961: 98), create "dependable expectations of peaceful change". This thesis puts focus on the level of elites.

### **2.1.1. Origins of the concept and the concept's renewed relevance today**

The theory of Security Communities was first introduced by Richard Van Wagener in the early 1950s, but it did not get a more thorough theoretical or empirical treatment before the publication by Karl Deutsch and his associates in 1957 (Adler & Barnett 1998: 6). Deutsch, a professor of political science at Yale University, was considered controversial at the time. Quite tellingly, already in the early 1950s and 60s, he predicted the downgrading of the nation-state, he defined 'security' as something different from pure, traditional 'military security', as well as challenging the current security theories and models of political security of that time with the concept of 'community'. He has been recognized for bringing in the sociological perspective into security and international relations theory as well (Adler & Barnett 1998: 6-15). Even though the aftermath of the two world wars saw the creation of several large international organizations and multilateral institutions, international relations theory soon got overshadowed by the Cold War, threats of nuclear weapons and *realism* theory (Jackson & Sørensen 2003: 68pp). Thereafter, Deutsch's concept never really got full acknowledgement within the scientific community before the end of the Cold War (Adler & Barnett 1998: 8pp).

The theory of Security Community and this thesis follow a *liberal* approach and basic liberal assumptions<sup>4</sup> in general. The leading, relevant argument from the point of view of *liberal institutionalism* is that a high level of institutionalization will reduce potential instability in the post bipolar world. Accordingly, multilateral institutions reduce member states' fear of each other and significantly decrease any thus destabilizing consequences of

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<sup>4</sup> Basic liberal assumptions: 1. A positive view of human nature; 2. a conviction that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual; 3. a belief in progress (Jackson & Sørensen 2003: 105).

'multipolar anarchy' (Jackson & Sørensen 2003: 117-120).

With the end of the Cold War, the international environment has in many ways changed dramatically. The *globalization* factor with an increasingly interdependent world has been deemed to have gradually, but strongly increased. New concepts of 'security' have emerged on the international agenda. Not only military threats, but economic, environmental, and welfare issues have been deemed as new forms of 'security' as well (Huebert: 2004, Jackson & Sørensen 2003: 267). During the Cold War, the paradigm of *threats* were synonymous to be coming from the adversing bloc. In the post Cold War era however, new, *common* threats to both Russia and NATO, like terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, have emerged (Goldgeier 2010: 4)<sup>5</sup>. This new, interconnected world has given Deutsch's concept of 1961 a renewed relevance and acknowledgement. Accordingly, the emergence of a new globalized post Cold War world inspired a re-conceptualization of the 'Security Communities' theory in 1998, by Adler and Barnett. The use of the 'Security Community' theory in this thesis will be build on both Deutsch's original publication and Adler and Barnett's re-activation of the concept (1998).

### **2.1.2. The Framework of Security Communities**

*“The central objective of this Permanent Joint Council will be to build increasing levels of trust, unity of purpose and habits of consultation and cooperation between NATO and Russia, in order to enhance each other's security and that of all nations in the Euro-Atlantic area and diminish the security of none”* (NATO, 1997).

Adler and Barnett (1998:30) define a pluralistic security community<sup>6</sup> as “a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change”. As an extention to Deutsch's original theory, they present a framework for studying the emergence of security communities in terms of three tiers. The first tier

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<sup>5</sup> Not only political scientists have recognized this, the view is clearly tracable in several National Strategies, including Russia's Foreign Policy Concept of both 2003 and 2007, as well as Norway's Foreign Policy White Paper no. 15 of 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Adler & Barnett (1998) also separate between two ideal types, loosely and tightly coupled pluralistic security communities, but highlight that the most distinctive factor of a security community is that a stable peace is tied to the existence of a transnational community (Adler & Barnett 1998: 30).

presents the 'precipitating factors' that lead states in each other's direction and toward a coordination of their policies. The second tier consists of 'structural' (power and knowledge) and 'process' (transactions, international institutions and social learning) elements. A positive, dynamic and reinforcing relationship between these variables leads to the third and final tier: 'necessary conditions'. (Adler & Barnett 1998: 29). While it is being emphasized that this process of passing the three tiers is described to be causal and sequential - yet not theological, the passing of the third tier will produce *dependable expectations of peaceful change*.

#### Tier one – precipitating conditions

Precipitating conditions are exogenous or endogenous factors that make states orient themselves towards each other and start coordinating their relations. This might be technological development, exogenous threats that leads states in to forming alliances, the wish to reduce mutual fear through security cooperation, new interpretations of social reality, transformations of economic, demographic or migration patterns, and so on (Adler & Barnett 1998: 37-39). The examples are many, also within the Russian-Western relationship. It is important to emphasize, however, that while these precipitating conditions will not necessarily produce mutual trust and shared identification (they will as a preliminary basis create more modestly frequent and positive interactions) – they can actually be viewed as necessary on the path towards the development of mutual trust and shared identity. It is important to note as well that a common ending (security community) might have very different beginnings.

#### Tier two – structure and processes

In this tier, states and peoples have been involved in a series *social interactions* that have started to change their environment. The second tier consists of 'structural' and 'process' elements. Power and knowledge are categorized within the 'structural' frame, while transactions, international organizations and social learning are situated within the 'process' fraction. According to Deutsch, 'strong states' of highly developed political, administrative, economic and educated political entities have the power to emerge as a core basis for the development of an integration process. Power in this way might be coercive, but might also

be understood as 'authority' to influence. A Security community formed around a group of strong states gives weaker states incentives to join the community in order to increase their security and get other benefits (Adler and Barnett 1998: 39).

Cognitive structures, shared opinions and understandings – categorized here as knowledge – can facilitate that conflict solution is bound by mutual trust and identity formation, and thereby making the use of violent means a non-option. While several western scholars<sup>7</sup> have emphasized the existence of liberalism, democracy and other western norms and values as incremental to develop a security community, others argue that the existence of *mutual or common* interests, knowledge or understanding is most important - not their basis in the Western world (Goldgeier 2010). Adler and Barnett (1998: 19pp) also argue that security communities can grow out of previous non-liberal societies, such as the Asian states who today form ASEAN.

### 2.1.3. Variables and Indicators

Deutsch (1961:98) defined a 'Security Community' to be a “*group which has become integrated, where integration is defined as the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with 'reasonable' certainty over a 'long' period of time*” (Deutsch 1961: 98). At the heart of Deutsch's approach were assumptions of 'integration' and 'communication'. *Integration* was understood to be processes that create unifying habits, facilitated by international institutions. *Communication* was assumed to be “the cement of social groups in general and political communities in particular” (Adler & Barnett 1998: 7). What is important here is the development and construction of *effective communication and transaction channels* that increase integration.

Within the label *processes*, we find the density of 'transaction flows', international organizations or institutions and 'social learning'. International institutions<sup>8</sup>, as originally only one part of a larger structure, can be examined in order to measure the progress of developing a security community (Adler & Barnett 1998: 39-45). Within international

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. Wilhelmsen (2002) and Åtland (2003). The school of republican liberalism also supports this view (Jackson & Sørensen 2003: 120pp).

<sup>8</sup> While complete security communities include a complex set of transactions, this thesis focuses on the level of political elites, and especially within an international institution, the NATO-Russia Council.

institutions, Wilhelmsen (2002) highlights the 'transaction flows'; while Åtland (2003) combines the degree of 'mutual responsiveness' in order to judge the development of a security community.

### *Transaction Flows*

Transaction flows can be defined as “bounded communication between one actor and another” (Adler & Barnett 1998: 41). This can be *different types of communicational exchanges*, included symbolic, economic, material, political, technological, etc. According to Emile Durkheim (Adler & Barnett 1998: 41), dynamic closeness can shape and change social facts. Social facts are in this way not only dependent on the economic resources a society possesses, but also on collective experience and popular consensus. International organizations and institutions may contribute both directly and indirectly towards the development of a security community. Multilateral institutions are sites of socialization where political actors learn from each other about how they interpret situations and normative understandings, which might lead to positive expectations and identifications of each other. The development of rules of conduct, norms, regulations, monitoring mechanisms and sanctions are important in this context. These institutions make peaceful interstate and intergovernmental action possible because of their *trust building properties*.

### *Mutual Responsiveness*

'Mutual responsiveness' has been chosen as a leading indicator of whether or not the NRC has been a success in conflict situations. As integration is a two-way process, mutual responsiveness is understood to be a situation *where the actors try to respond to each other's needs and interests, in order to reach a compromise that reflects relative satisfaction for both parties* (Åtland 2003: 22-23). Furthermore, mutual responsiveness is believed to be strengthened by social learning. Social learning is an “active process of redefinition or reinterpretation of reality - what people consider real, possible and desirable – on the basis of new causal and normative knowledge. (...) It represents the capacity and motivation of social actors to manage and even transform reality by changing their beliefs of the material and social world and their identities” (Adler and Barnett 1998: 44). When individuals communicate self and reality perceptions or normative expectations, change of collective and individual understanding might occur.

Social learning is facilitated by transactions that typically occur within organizational settings and core states. Deutsch (1961) believed mutual responsiveness to be crucial in order to forward integration towards a Security Community. Accordingly, mutual responsiveness within multilateral institutions plays a critical role in the emergence of a security community.

### *Volume, Density and Quality*

This thesis focuses on the quality of the institution at hand, namely the NRC's ability to build trust, produce practical cooperation and live up to its specified goals and visions. If the potential is reached, it could be an important step along the pathway towards unthinkable use of violent means to solve conflicts. But considering how the two above variables were covering a multifaceted, overall relationship, I argue that a more detailed operationalization specific for the NRC is needed. Therefore, to evaluate the institution's success in contributing towards reaching a Security Community, this thesis proposes the indicators of 'volume', 'density' and 'quality'. Each of the indicators, attempts to incorporate both transaction flows and mutual responsiveness of the NRC's two functions (practical cooperation and security consultation).<sup>9</sup> While mutual responsiveness and transaction flows are guiding presumptions for the overall NATO-Russia relationship's path toward a Security Community, through 'volume', 'density' and 'quality' the NRC's record is evaluated. The assessment of the indicators will be based on data collection through interviews, first and secondary literature.

**Volume** specifies the scope of the NRC's tasks, both through its mandate and through an assessment of the use of its potential. **Density** assesses the quantity and reach of the NRC's transaction flows. Especially Deutsch (1961) highlighted the value of a high transaction density. **Quality** concerns the communicative quality of the institution's transactions and the overall value of the institution. The three indicators are understood to be interconnected and reinforcing. The more the volume, density and quality within the NRC are developed, accordingly by a high transaction flow and mutual responsiveness, the more the NRC can contribute towards mutual trust and collective identity and thus forward the integration process between NATO and Russia. The more the mutual trust and collective identity are

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<sup>9</sup> Following Adcock and Collier's (2001: 531) measurement validity scheme.

consolidated, the stronger the foundation for peaceful conflict solving will be.

### Tier three – necessary conditions

A dynamic and positive relationship between the above mentioned variables can be wellsprings of mutual trust and collective identity, which again are necessary conditions for the development of dependable expectations of peaceful change. 'Trust' can be described as believing despite an insecure environment (Adler & Barnett 1998: 46). It is a social phenomenon that is characterized by the belief that another actor will behave consistently with normative expectations. 'Identity' is understood as the understanding of oneself in relation to others, not only personally and psychologically, but socially, as defined by the actors' relationship with others (Adler & Barnett 1998: 47). The identification of friend or foe, which is a social basis for trust, is a judgment based on years of experience and meetings that create the cultural definition of trust. While trust and identity are close and reinforcing factors, trust might logically come before identity, while identity reinforces trust (Adler & Barnett 1998: 45-48). As Adler & Barnett (1998: 35) argue, *«Integration is matter of fact, not of time. If people on both sides do not fear war and do not prepare for it, it matters little how long it took them to reach this stage. But once integration has been reached, the length of time over which it persists may contribute to its consolidation»*. Identification takes time to develop, and the stronger it gets, the more peaceful change is looked upon as the only legitimate way of doing business between the members.

### **2.3. The three Phases towards a Security Community**

The development of a security community is a social-constructive and path dependent process. This does not mean, however, that it is a theological exercise, nor that there is only one way that leads towards a security community. Rather, Adler and Barnett (1998) propose three phases, but highlights that these «phases» can be looked upon as a heuristic tool in framing an understanding of how the development and existence of a community influences interstate relations generally, and security politics especially.

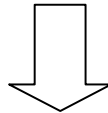


## The Development of Security Communities

Tier one

*Precipitating conditions*

- Changes in technology, demography, environment, economy
- Development of new interpretations of social reality
  - external threats



*Nascent phase*

Tier two

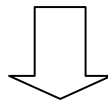
*Factors conducive for development of mutual trust and shared identity*

Structure:

- power
- knowledge

Process:

- \* transactions
- \* organizations
  - social learning – mutual responsiveness



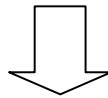
*Ascendant phase*

Tier three

*Necessary conditions for dependable expectations of peaceful change*

Mutual trust

Collective identity



*Mature phase*

*Dependable expectations of peaceful change*

Figure 1, Adler & Barnett (1998)

### Phase 1: 'Nascent'

In this phase, the governments do not explicitly attempt to create a security community. Rather, they perceptionalize how to coordinate their relations in order to strengthen common security, downgrade the transaction costs related to exchange, and encourage further interactions (Adler & Barnett 1998: 50). This could be achieved through different bilateral or multilateral diplomatic exchanges between the political elites, so-called 'search missions'. A natural follow up of these preliminary initiatives is the engagement and creation of 'third parties' to support the contracts or stated obligations upon the participating states. Third parties will often be operationalized as different kinds of treaties, organizations or other types of institutions. These are the results of 'trigger' mechanisms described in tier one; be it mutual security threats, war, trade, health issues, human rights, and so on.<sup>10</sup> Such catalyzing events often lead to new thoughts on how to organize political life.

Norms or mechanisms that make states accountable to one another may reflect a wish for creating a binding set of interests towards a collective future, and international cooperation might create collective synergy effects (Hovi and Underdal 2000: 11). Furthermore, multilateral security organizations mirror a belief in security as being interdependent and should be overseen by a collective organ. This might lead to removal of fear between the members and exemplified in patterns of downgrading of military expenses, deployment and strategies (Adler & Barnett 1998: 50-59).

### Phase 2: 'Ascendant'

This phase is characterized by the emergence of new, close networks; new and reinforced institutions and organizations. These third parties often reflect an even closer military coordination and cooperation, decreased fear of the other, as well as the development of mutual trust and collective identity. Accordingly, expectations of peaceful change are encouraged. The development and institutionalization of mutual responsiveness, combined with high transaction density, is important in this phase. This implies that states try to meet and respond to each other's needs, and often produce consensus based mutual actions. Social learning contributes to these effects. Finding more solutions to eventual conflicts than before, as well as the avoidance of controversial or potentially provocative actions upon the

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<sup>10</sup> These mechanisms are often based on material or economical resources.

other part, could be a manifestation. Subsequently, the expectations of violent conflicts between the participants would decrease (Adler & Barnett 1998: 53-55).

### Phase three: 'Mature'

The more these expectations are institutionalized in both domestic and supranational settings, the more *war* in the region becomes unthinkable. At this level, the different participating actors share an identity and have expectations of peaceful change. A security community is understood to have emerged. Indicators that exemplify the emergence of a security community are argued by Adler & Barnett (1998: 50-57) to be multilateralism, unfortified borders, changes in military planning, common definitions of threats and discourse of community features. Accordingly, these indicators reflect a high degree of trust and a shared identity.

It is important to note, however, that a security community or its development process is not of a static character. Values and identities are dynamic features, vulnerable to change – and the same forces that build up a security community can also contribute to its demolition. Many of the same processes that encourage and reproduce security communities, might also be associated with its decline (Adler & Barnett 1998: 47). Therefore, concerning transaction flows, not only the *volume* and *density*, but also the *quality* of the transactions must be examined.

Considering the low number of security institutions that exist between Russia and the West, studying the NATO-Russia Council will be an important tool to assess the overall NATO-Russia relationship. As the Rome Declaration (NATO, 2002) states, “*The NATO-Russia Council will serve as the principal structure and venue for advancing the relationship between NATO and Russia*”. As the theoretical framework of security community implies however, the NATO-Russia Council can only be *one small part* of a bigger picture in order to reach a 'matured' state where violent conflicts between Russia and NATO member states would seem unthinkable for political elites and the general public. Thus, despite the challenge that Deutsch's theoretical framework aims to explain and predict the effects of larger scale multi-level interaction, I argue that his approach is fruitful also for the study of the NRC. Moreover, this framework will also guide the methodological approach to collect data for the assessment of the Council.

## 3. METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

### 3.1. Available Data

My main period of investigation is between 2002 and 2009, from the start of the NRC's existence and up until the Council was re-activated in 2009.<sup>11</sup> The 'constitution' between Russia and NATO, the Founding Act, may be traced back to 1997 along with the NRC's predecessor, the Permanent Joint Council (PJC). I could have analyzed the PJC in this thesis as well, but the institutional and organizational changes in 2002 make the comparison of conflicts under just one institutional regime more valid.<sup>12</sup> However, the Founding Act, together with the Rome Declaration are the basis documents that regulate the relationship between NATO and Russia, and must be examined. A general assessment of the period leading up the establishment of the NRC in 2002 is important as well, and the NRC should be analyzed within the context of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in order to better understand the two actors' motivations for establishing a partnership.

To assess NATO's evolution since 1991, I will base my analysis on secondary literature, next to consulting NATO's Strategic Concept from 1991 and 1999, as well as other official NATO documents. For Russia's foreign political development, I will use secondary literature next to documents officially published by Russian authorities. The earlier Foreign Policy concepts from 1993 have not yet been published officially in English, so here I need to use secondary literature. For the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), next to the Founding Act and the Rome Declaration, I examine all official documents published at the NRC website. The NRC only produces agreements once the two actors have agreed after official Ministerial or Heads of State Meetings. Considering how limited these often are, NATO's Secretary-General and Russia's Ambassador to NATO will be used as official spokesmen for the two actors.<sup>13</sup> That interpretation of the role of the Secretary-General and the Russian Ambassador is important for the thesis, considering how 'closed' security organizations

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<sup>11</sup> The NRC was formally reestablished on 5 March 2009 after its suspension in 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the official website with all official documents from the Council does not include any pre NRC history.

<sup>13</sup> Both NATO's Secretary-General and Russia's Permanent Mission to NATO have their own website. Texts produced here will be regarded as official statements on their part.

often are. Finally, to support and strengthen the assessment of the NRC,, I will collect data from key interviews done at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to early underline the challenge of the 'secrecy culture' that exists within NATO and security politics in general. As mentioned, only when all members of the NRC agree, will information be released to the public. Despite the official projection of more openness and public debate about NATO's development, not much has changed. This is also why continued research on the theme is important, and why interviews with key actors are crucial. In order to access the NATO Headquarters (HQ) in Brussels and get hold on interviews, I got a Security Clearance from the Norwegian Defense Authorities. The granting also induces ambivalence, however: the researcher is entitled to get a closer approach to the subject of investigation, but far from everything can be published in a thesis. Access to key respondents at the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), however, will nevertheless be strengthen my basis for analysis .

### **3.2. Issues to consider in Elite Interviewing**

As mentioned, documents published by the NRC are often incomplete and present a misleading account. They may often present consensus and agreement, when in reality disagreement is widespread. Interviews can be an important method in trying to move beyond official written or presented accounts or narratives. When one wants to obtain information about well-defined and specific events and processes, talking to key actors, i.e. those who have the most involvement with the process of interest, will be an important source to reach valuable insight.

There exist different types of methods when talking to key persons in order to get valuable information. In interviewing, there are broadly three types: structured, semi-structured and open interviewing (Leech 2002). The first category follows a *structured* and planned out scheme where questions and different types of possible answers are pre-made and closed. Often the questions involve 'yes or no' questions or graded answers, and this method is often

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<sup>14</sup> For support and further analysis I will use diverse second literature.

used when conducting interviews with many people, also called surveys. *Open interviewing* is at the other end of the scale, where often only a few questions are pre-made and answers are open. This method is more used by anthropologists in general. Leech (2002) warns against this type, as it might be a guarantee for letting the interviews become inconsistent sources of reliable data that can be compared across the interviews. The middle road is called *semi-structured interviewing*, and is the method of choice for this thesis. This method is chosen because only a few, key persons with high insight will be interviewed. Letting highly qualified respondents be able to speak freely, might prove fruitful for the thesis. Goldstein (2002) also lists three basic goals when conducting elite interviews. First, elite interviews are used to gather information in order to be able to make generalizable claims about official characteristics or decisions. Second, researchers often wish to discover a particular piece of information. Third, elite interviews can be used as support or guidance to work that uses other sources of data as well (Goldstein 2002: 1-5).

As always when considering methodology, the researcher should assess the tool's validity and reliability. When considering *validity*, one might ask how appropriate the measuring instrument at hand might be (Berry: 2002). Aberbach (2002) mentions three major considerations the researcher should make when conducting semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the researcher should always consult prior research on the subject of concern. Secondly, regarding the desire to maximize response validity – open ended questions provide greater opportunity for respondents to organize their answers themselves, and thereby increase validity – but it also makes coding and analysis difficult. Finally, the researcher must consider the costs of doing the interviews. Getting the interviews, preparation, security declaration, time spent when interviewing and travel – transcribing them or preparing them for coding, the coding process itself, analytical rigor and limits on what to do in the data analysis, are issues to consider. Aberbach (2002) highlights the semi-structured method as useful when it comes to elites, arguing that elites often prefer to articulate their own answers – rather than being 'put in the straightjacket' of close-ended questions. The semi-structured methodology involves pre-made questions with open answers that gives flexibility, but it also has techniques to tentatively structure the subject of the conversation. Therefore, questions and an interview guide is prepared, in order to get the answers to the questions of importance for the thesis.

*Reliability* concerns how consistent the results of repeated tests with the chosen measuring instrument will be (Berry: 2002). Tansey (2002) lists three specific criteria for elite interviews to be considered reliable. First, the information should be mostly from first-hand witnesses. Second, the level of access of the respondent should be known, and that the senior-level is more reliable. However, the higher level, the more unapproachable the respondent might be. And often within the diplomatic community, the lower levels might have more detailed knowledge than the ambassadors who perform more representative and overall tasks.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the interviewee's track record of reliability should be established. The latter criteria might however often be very difficult to ascertain, given that bureaucrats are not official persons whose records are easily attainable.<sup>16</sup>

### **3.3. The Data Collectioning Process**

As mentioned before, the limited publication of NATO-Russia Council (NRC) documents creates a demand for other methods of acquiring information. When considering the NRC, interviews with key representatives from the different member states and NATO's own staff who work with NRC and NATO-Russia questions are a valuable source.

During five days at the NATO Headquarters (HQ) I was able to get 10 interviews lasting 1-2 hours each. I also had many informal talks, coffees and lunches with other people working at the NATO HQ, who gave me their opinions on the NRC. Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to follow an NRC or an NRC committee meeting while I was there, simply for the reason that there were none during my week there. My 10 interviews included both states parties representatives; two from Norway, one from Poland, one from Germany and one from Russia. As most of them had worked at their home country's Foreign Affairs Department before started working at the HQ, the NATO employees who work with NRC indirectly represent their home countries as well. Their views are most likely influenced by their backgrounds. The NATO officials came from the US, Italy, Germany (2) and the Czech Republic. Overall, the 10 respondents had mixed backgrounds that may contribute to higher

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<sup>15</sup> This is why I have chosen to interview lower level diplomats and NATO officials.

<sup>16</sup> The third criteria from Tansey (2002) are most likely ment for politicians or other official persons.

validity. Only three were women, but they included both people with short experience on NRC and NATO-Russia questions (often diplomats who get transferred to new stations relatively frequently) and others who had been working on political questions regarding Russia and the West since the 1980s.

I followed the technique of semi-structural interviewing. The questions from my prepared interview guide were strategically build up, with non controversial and «easier» questions first. In this way, I asked more or less the same questions to everyone, but let the space open for them to speak freely when they wanted to. I placed an emphasis on trying to establish good personal relations in order to make them feel as comfortable as possible. That seemed to work, the majority of my respondents talked rather freely and devoted a good amount of their busy schedules to the interviews. I usually started and finished the interviews with conversational tone, following Berry's (2002: 679) advice on “the best interviewer is not one who writes the best questions. Rather, excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists. They make interviews seem like a good conversation among old friends”. This 'friendly' approach has several sides to it. The researcher's ability to make the respondent become such at ease to open him or her up adequately, poses at the same time the risk of the researcher connecting too strongly with the respondents to lose all critical mindset. Secondly, there is a risk of finding one interviewee more persuasive than the others, and making that one strongly affect our understanding of the matter (Berry 2002: 680). Finally, possible exaggeration might be an issue.. Usually, the better prepared the interviewer, and the more use of multiple sources, the easier it is to avoid errors.

It is important to take a step out of the interviews to make some points on what possible agendas the respondents might have. It is not necessarily an obligation from the respondent's side to tell the truth, and they might have a purpose in giving the interviews as well (Berry 2002: 680).<sup>17</sup> In this case, the two groups of respondents might have different purposes, and certainly different cases and opinions they would like to highlight. From the point of view of the NATO staff who work as facilitators to the NRC, it is not unlikely that they would put a higher emphasis on the positive effects and the success of the Council than the states

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<sup>17</sup> The respondents differed in whether they would allow a recorder to tape their answers or not. Several wanted to meet in the NATO Cafeteria, where both a recorder and classified information talks are impossible.



parties representatives might do. The latter group is employed to project political instructions from their home countries. There is also a risk of them blaming the institution itself if their diplomatic efforts have been unable to produce wanted outcomes.

However, excessive personal bias is usually not a problem that will be seen with all respondents, according to Berry (2002: 680). Overall, most respondents might be both open and relatively objective when it comes to projecting characteristics of the NRC. But it is nevertheless important to balance the elite interviews with multiple sources.

### **3.4. Case Studies and Methodology Triangulation**

A *case study* is defined by Gerring (2007: 20) as “the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed a light on a larger class of cases”. As Gerring suggests, the case study research is focused on a single, relatively bounded unit. Proponents of statistical methods have criticized the method for its lack of clear evidence and hence low scientific value. Others have highlighted the case study's many advantages, both for the researcher, as well as its contribution to the political science community. Firstly, it has an inherent *flexibility*: it may employ a variety of techniques, both quantitative and qualitative, in order to gather evidence (Gerring 2007: 33). This way, it provides a good basis for employing methodological triangulation in order to strengthen the final findings. Moreover, methodological literature<sup>18</sup> argues that robust causal analyses can be carried out also through within-case analysis and not only cross-case analysis.

Secondly, its form as a *depth study* of a single unit instead of a large sample of units, may strengthen its internal validity. This reveals also its disadvantage: it is more capable of providing valuable evidence for the population of interest – than being able to apply its findings to a broader and unstudied population (Gerring 2007: 43). In other words, while the conclusions from studying the NATO-Russia Council based on a Deutsch's framework will provide important knowledge about the NRC in itself and for the overall NATO-Russia relationship – its conclusions cannot automatically be generalizable to the larger class of security institutions. However, improved insight into one institution might nonetheless be transferable and improve understandings of important dynamics and factors regarding

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. Gerring (2007), George & Bennett (2005).

institution building in general. NATO and Russia, former adversaries with a joint council, is an interesting case to study for this purpose.

## 4. NATO-RUSSIA 1991-2002

### *From Cold War Adversaries to Partnership Development*

*“The security challenges and risks which NATO faces are different in nature from what they were in the past. The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy.(...) The new environment does not change the purpose or the security functions of the Alliance, but rather underlines their enduring validity. The second, on the other hand, is that the changed environment offers new opportunities for the Alliance to frame its strategy within a broad approach to security”.*

(From NATO's 1991 Strategic Concept)

NATO and Russia had been *main enemies* in a Cold War that dominated international relations for more than 50 years. These long-lasting characteristics make it interesting to study the background for why these enemies started to cooperate in the first place, and how the NATO-Russia Council finally evolved into the structure that exists today. This chapter will take us through the first attempts of cooperation and rapprochement in the early 1990s, towards the establishment of the Founding Act in 1997. Shortly after, the Kosovo crisis in 1999 posed a serious challenge to the relationship. On the other hand, a radically changed atmosphere in 2001 turned out to be an incitement for further institutional integration between NATO and Russia. However, before the first institutional development took place, in the last part of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's, important changes in the international atmosphere made NATO and Russia, respectively, change focus.

### **4.1. NATO's changed nature since 1991**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 gave impetus to change NATO's strategy. However, the organization was early to foresee possible ethnic rivalries and territorial conflicts especially among the newly independent former Soviet states. Therefore, the organization shifted its military focus with a reduction in conventional static (ground) forces, and a change towards more mobile and flexible forces, especially air and maritime

forces. Another important change of strategy was the recognition that political means were important parts of conflict prevention. Moreover, next to pure military dimension, security now contained political, social-economic, and environmental factors as well. Dialogue and diplomatic means were to get a greater role among NATO's strategic capabilities (NATO, 1991).

As suggested by Smith (2006: 27), NATO's changed nature since 1991 can be categorized within four themes: internal adaptation, external adaptation, peace support operations and crisis management and response. NATO's *internal adaptation* since 1991 has been focused on restructuring and reforms. While NATO has incorporated new members, however, the decision making procedures have not changed fundamentally.

The *external adaptation* of NATO has according to Smith, been a mixture of five elements: the Partnership for Peace (PfP) process, the inclusion of new member states to the organization, the Russia-NATO relationship, the Distinct partnership with Ukraine and lastly the relationship between NATO and traditionally neutral states.

When it comes to the third change of NATO's nature, *peace support operations* has been an important change of NATO's character as a defense organization. NATO stated in the 1990s a readiness to support peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the OSCE and the UN. The conflicts following the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s became NATO's first important area for peace support.

*Crisis management and response* is the fourth change of NATO's nature since the fall of the Berlin Wall. When NATO started Operation Allied Force against Yugoslavia in 1999 without a UN mandate, the organization signaled its willingness to use coercive force also, for non-article 5 operations. The discussion of whether NATO should stay concerned within the Euro-Atlantic area alone, or be able to operate outside its geographical boundaries as well, so-called 'out of area' operations has been increasingly important.

According to Kupchan (2010), the Euro-Atlantic security order<sup>19</sup>, created by the West, has since its establishment after the World Wars, had a *dual character*. Firstly, the institutions have sought to uphold a collective defense for its member states' territories against external

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<sup>19</sup> Included here are institutions as the EU, NATO, OSCE,

threats, by its military capacities. On the other hand, they have attempted to increase collective security by binding members together through military, political and socioeconomic integration, and thereby reducing the threat of internal rivalries. While the EU has gone the furthest in the latter category, there has remained a tension between these two characters within NATO, and perhaps especially between NATO's member states regarding its relations with Russia (Kupchan 2010: 1pp).

Furthermore, today there are roughly three different views on NATO's role among its members, divided between the US, the Western Europe and Eastern Europe (Kupchan 2010: 2). Firstly, the US is seeing NATO first and foremost as an instrument for power projection, using the Alliance to get European support to missions far out of the European continent. Secondly, Western Europe view NATO as a tool for consolidating peace and prosperity within Europe, and finally, the new members from Central and Eastern Europe differ when seeing NATO as a counterweight and bulwark against Russia. Moreover, the latter two perceptions on NATO's role may be argued to create a division within the Alliance on how to handle Russia. While many countries from Western Europe seek a more including and integrating strategy towards Russia, many of the Eastern European countries desire a more traditional stance from NATO *against* Russia (Kupchan 2010: 2). These divisions on NATO's character and role may largely affect the relationship with Russia.

## **4.2. Russia's changed nature since 1991**

*«Putin is the de Gaulle of our day: Russia, like France, wants to be a part of the West, but on its own terms. While the West wants Russia to be a junior partner, Russia insists that it is a separate power in its own right».* (Sakwa 2008: 246)

Many lifelong observers of Russia, like the Norwegian journalist, Jan Otto Johansen, have said that despite decades of studying and living in Russia, there remains the challenge of “capturing the Russian soul”. In other words, Russia is more complex than most other countries, and it is difficult to fully understand the Russian political situation with western 'goggles' (Johansen 2009).

Tsygankov (2006: 1pp) argues that mainstream international relations theories (realism and liberalism) are insufficient perspectives for understanding Russia. Even though Russia has

changed dramatically since the Soviet Union, it is important to consider the survivability of the old communist elite in the new political system. According to Tsygankov (2006), Russia's foreign policy choices are often heavily influenced by the aim of securing the West's recognition of Russia as an equal and legitimate member of the international system. The acceptance of Russia as a 'great power' has been an important part of the Russian identity for decades (Neumann 2000).

According to Tsygankov (2006), there are three broad foreign policy «schools» in Russia that can be traced to having a large degree of historical continuity and importance since Peter the Great (1703) until today – Westernizers, Statists and Civilizationists. *Westernizers* have traditionally been, as its label indicates, the most pro-Western of the schools. They have stressed Russia's similarities and closeness to the West, and viewed the West as the most viable civilization in the world. Important Westernizers have been Peter the Great, Alexander I, Gorbachev, Kozyrev and Boris Yeltsin. While this group cannot be considered completely homogeneous, in the post Soviet era the Westernizers have emphasized Russia's shared values with the West, such as democracy, human rights and a free market (Tsygankov 2006: 4-5).

The *Statists* have, according to Tsygankov, historically been the most influential school in Russia's foreign policy thinking up until today. They have regarded the state's ability to govern and to maintain social and political order and stability, as more important than Western values like freedom and democracy. While Russia's long and unstable border and history of invasions have justified this view, the Statists are not inherently anti-Western. They seek the West's recognition by emphasizing economic and military capabilities. Important Statists have been Peter the Great, Gorchakov, Stalin, Krushchev, Brezhnev, Primakov and Putin (Tsygankov 2006:6).

Finally, *Civilizationists* are perhaps the most 'anti-Western' group. This group has tried to challenge the Western system of values, and to spread Russian culture sometimes rather aggressively outside its own borders. Imperialism, pan-Slavic unity and Eurasianism have been important features of this school's foreign policy thinking. Leading Civilizationists have been Ivan the Terrible, Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin and Zyuganov. Today's Civilizationists contain both partly communist and nationalist features.

Russian foreign policy strategies have changed depending on which of the three groups that have been in power (Tsygankov 2006: 7pp). Subsequently, the shaping of foreign policy are generally influenced by the way that a country defines itself and its place in the world. While the first period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was dominated by domestic reforms as a priority before any global ambitions, gradually a more assertive foreign policy took shape (Sakwa 2008: 365pp). Moreover, the internal challenges of a transitional period of the Russian Federation also affected the outwards cooperation with NATO. The beginning of cooperation between NATO and Russia in the 1990s must thus be understood in light of the demise of the Soviet Union.

### **4.3. Gorbachev's idea of a 'Common European Home'**

Russia and the West have historically had conflicts, turbulences and a deepened suspicion of the other on both sides throughout history. Since the burning of Moscow by Napoleon in 1812, there has been a resilient assumption in Russia that as long as Europe explicitly did not try otherwise, they would naturally try to hold Russia weakened and isolated from Europe (Black 2000: 10pp). Lenin insisted that Russia was surrounded by enemies who were ready to explore all types of Russian weaknesses, something he referred to as a 'capitalistic encirclement' (Black 2000: 11pp).

The same skepticism toward Russia has been established in the West after Soviet annexations and occupations in Eastern Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Russia created a thick 'buffer zone' between itself and the West, the following isolation and almost complete lack of transactions between the two blocks after the Second World War, served to strengthen prejudices and fear of the other (Black 2000: 10pp).

Despite the well known opposition towards each other, the relatively early tentative of rapprochement between NATO and Russia, is less familiar to many. The concept of a 'common European Home' was proposed by USSR already in 1953-54 and led up to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki in 1972-75 (Smith 2006: 1-26). Because of its close geography, culture and history, the concept of 'the Common European Home' projected the Soviet Union to be an integrated part of Europe with rights to full participation in all pan-European arrangements. While reiterated by Brezhnev in 1981, the

concept got a renewed and enlarged use by Gorbachev during his presidency. Gorbachev tried to de-ideologize Soviet foreign policy by underlining both that the USSR could become a true part of Europe, as well as pronouncing an understanding “of the close bonds between Western Europe and the US”. From its very beginning however, many in the West regarded 'the Common European Home' as being motivated by a splitting agenda: that the Soviet Union tried to split Western Europe from its American ally (Smith 2006: 1pp). Strikingly though, the outcome of the Gorbachovian proposal was the creation of a pan-European organization that included both the USSR, Europe and the US – the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). After Gorbachev, however, the concept fell a bit out of fashion for many years. Arguably, Medvedev's proposal of a new Euro-Atlantic security order in 2009, has been a reinvigoration.

While the NATO-Russian relationship was established formally first in 1997, the need for cooperation between the two former adversaries was discussed even before the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991. Moreover, in one of Boris Yeltsin's major foreign policy statements, he even suggested that Russia might someday become a NATO member (Smith 2009: 2). Subsequently, Russia's foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev proposed a new security system based on the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – with NATO as a subordinate part to this organization. Both the Russian president and his foreign minister's ideas were quickly rejected by NATO (Smith 2009: 3).

Formal negotiations on relations between NATO and Russia started in 1991 when Russia became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC<sup>20</sup>). This Council was created in December 1991 by a joint German-US initiative to form an instrument for cooperation and consultation with Russia and the former East Bloc (Kampf 2001: 209-210). The subsequent development of the NATO-Russia relationship up until the Founding Act has been described by Smith (2006) as forming in two phases; 'the Honeymoon' (1990-1993) and 'Deterioration and Revival' (1994-1996).

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<sup>20</sup> Now called the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).



#### 4.4. The Honeymoon, 1990 - 1993

In these first years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both NATO and Russia seemed almost overwhelmingly positive towards each other. On 6 July 1990 the North Atlantic Council issued the London Declaration hailing the «new, promising era» of European relations (NATO, 1990). The same year, Gorbachev and the German Chancellor Kohl together announced that a reunited Germany should belong to NATO (Kampf 2001: 207pp). Shortly after the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, the new Russian State was confronted with several crisis that also affected the foreign policy. The foreign policy under the Soviet Union had been run by tight control, coordination and hierarchy. After the dissolution, however, foreign policy was characterized by a large group of actors with diverse and at times conflictous interests, with individual networks of contacts and partly private considerations. Accordingly, there was a great lack of foreign policy resources and institutions (Sakwa 2008: 366pp). The overall capability of the Russian State was also severely degraded at this point, with the economy heading towards a negative spiral and a gigantic transformation process that no one really knew the outcome of (Opdahl 2008: 49-50). Therefore, Russian foreign policy was at times characterized by a lack of direct links between stated policy and actual actions.

Yeltsin and his Prime Minister, Kozyrev, were outspoken *Westernizers* who had good relations with the Western world as their main foreign political priority (Tsygankov 2006: 4pp). Russia's relations with NATO was Yeltsin's first important foreign policy initiative, and NATO membership was stated as a «long-term political aim» (Smith 2006: 51). However, NATO never considered this to be realistic, and accordingly never gave any direct answers to the initiative (Smith 2006: 52). Moreover, the Russian government did not follow up Yeltsin's ideas either. Smith (2006: 52pp) suggests two reasons for why the Russian membership was not forwarded on the agenda between NATO and Russia at this point in time.

Firstly, the Russian government was in the middle of the biggest turmoil since after the Russian Revolution in 1917. 70 years of Communist rule were in a transition towards a market economy and democratic governance. As often with countries in transition from one type of rule to another, the political situation is extremely insecure. In Russia's case, this

was reinforced by the large opposition Yeltsin had around him, especially from the National Assembly. Most state bureaucrats from the Soviet apparatus had survived the transition, and Yeltsin felt forced to conduct more authoritative means in order to get his political actions implemented (Sakwa 2008: 40pp). The large opposition to Yeltsin from top politicians meant that the country was on the verge of civil war. The conflict culminated with the government crisis in 1993 (Remington 2006). Russia's many often fragmented political statements during the Yeltsin reign must be considered in their domestic context.

Secondly, as long as the NACC program was focused on seminars and meetings and not operationalized any further, Russia did not see this as a threat (Smith 2006: 50pp). The enlargement question was not yet on the agenda either, at least not officially. Yeltsin also at first expressed a positive view of Poland's potential membership to NATO in a mutual statement in 1993 (Smith 2006: 53). This implies that the Russian government underestimated the potential of the NATO expansion debate. Another expression of the positive relations was that in 1992, Yeltsin ordered the withdrawal of troops from the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh, and asked for positioning of NATO troops in their place (Smith 2006: 50-54). While this period thus showed glimpses of a good and positive atmosphere between the two former adversaries, tension still existed below the surface.

#### **4.5. Deterioration and Revival, 1994 - 1996**

This phase is characterized by the first attempts at a partnership between NATO and Russia. Arguably, Yeltsin wanted a special relationship with NATO that lifted Russia over NATO's other Eastern connections and thus recognized its status as a 'great power'. NATO's hesitation to address this at the January 1994 meeting played an important role in the deterioration of the relationship that now started (Smith 2006: 56pp). Within NATO, there was an important debate about how far one should let Russia influence NATO's decisions. Already in 1994, NATO and Russia made an informal agreement which was called 'no vetoes, no surprises' (Smith 2006: 62). The agreement was supposed to give Russia participation but clearly deny them any veto powers in NATO's decision making. As a compromise, NATO would not commit any large or radical decisions without consulting the Russian Federation first. This way, Russia would have good warning in case NATO would

seriously decide to execute an enlargement process (Smith 2006: 62).

Though carefully, Russia and NATO gradually developed a partnership. At an informal NATO meeting in Travemünde in October 1993, the US Defense Minister Les Aspin announced the concept of 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP), a cooperation program for those countries interested in closer relations with NATO. The program aimed at building strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO, increasing force structures and military capacities for Eastern European countries, as well as serving as a crisis consultation forum<sup>21</sup> In May 1995 Russia signed the PfP. The same year, Russia contributed with peacekeeping forces to Operation Joint Endeavour<sup>22</sup> in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and endorsed the Dayton Peace Accords in 1996. To the surprise to many in NATO and in the West, Russia, as the largest non-NATO contributor – turned out to be a valuable partner (Smith 2009: 2). Relations seemed good, but the insecure political situation in Russia made NATO wait until after the Russian presidential elections in 1996 to extend the relationship further. After a dramatic campaign, Yeltsin was reelected (Remington 2006). While preparing for developing the Founding Act for relations between NATO and Russia, NATO issued the Madrid Declaration<sup>23</sup> the same year, signed a NATO-Ukraine Charter and invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to begin accession talks with NATO. Arguably, it seems that NATO was playing the ball in more than one court at the same time. Smith (2009: 4) suggests that the lack of deep protests from Russia regarding NATO's expansion could have been a “good will exchange” from Yeltsin for extending the NATO-Russia relationship. At the same time, Russia's domestic situation with a dramatic reelection, the Chechen War (1994) and a state of transition might have contributed to a less assertive and more accommodating Russian foreign policy.

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<sup>21</sup> NATO's Public Policy Division on the Partnership for Peace, was adopted at the NATO Summit in Brussels in 1994. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50349.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm). See also Partnership for Peace: Framework Document: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_24469.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24469.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>22</sup> The predecessor to the NATO-led IFOR in 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation issued by the Heads of State and Government at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council 08 Jul. 1997. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25460.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25460.htm?selectedLocale=en)

#### **4. 6. Enlargement and Institutionalized Special Partnership**

NATO members agreed that a power vacuum would be created when the Soviet machinery left the former Soviet satellites. This vacuum could again lead to instability, close to the territories of several European NATO members. Conflicts could prove contagious. The peaceful reunification of Germany and its following inclusion in to NATO in 1990 might have been an 'idea spinner' that started the enlargement debate within NATO (Kampf 2001: 209pp). Soon, at least unofficially, the debate had developed quite intensively within the Alliance about an eventual first inclusion of three former members of the Eastern Bloc, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.. There were roughly three main arguments in favor of an enlargement: diminishing the potential exportation of instability, a 'bridging' of the historical division of Europe and finally, a strengthening of a NATO identity with a new mission for the Alliance. The opponents of a NATO enlargement pointed however towards the potential detrimental effects of enlargements to the development in Russia, thereby potentially threatening the Russian democratization process. Another critique was the question of whether Eastern European countries, would be able to fulfill any military commitments to NATO in times of crises (Kampf 2001: 208).

A part from some of the new sovereign states in the East, it was the German Defense Minister, Volker R  he, who officially took the lead in introducing the enlargement debate with a memorial lecture in London<sup>24</sup> in 1993, together with NATO's Secretary General Manfred W  rner. Great Britain, France and the US were among the opponents in the beginning. However, the American position quickly changed in 1994 when Congressional elections forged a sharpened foreign policy profile from the Clinton Administration. Though still a controversial issue, such a radical change from the largest power within the Alliance, gave the expansion process a clear push (Kampf 2001: 211).

Events taking place throughout the 1990's contributed to a slowdown of the expansion. The war in the former Yugoslavia did not provide good signal effect, but the most important factor was the clear rejection from the Russians. Not very surprisingly, a NATO inclusion of states from the former Soviet bloc was an extremely controversial and to some Russians, maybe even a shocking turn. For decades, these Eastern satellites had functioned as a buffer

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<sup>24</sup> The Alistar Buchan Memorial Lecture in London March 23 1993.

zone between Russia and the West. For Russia, with its history of invasions and an unstable border, this territorial space had an important psychological effect. Some scholars argue that NATO actually established a strategic partnership with Russia not really so much from a true wish to include Russia as a cooperative partner in itself, but as a selling point to the Russians in order to include Eastern European members into NATO (Kampf 2001: 211). Accordingly, the idea of giving Russia a limited role within a European security space, gained support in 1996. The Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeni Primakov accepted official negotiations on a 'strategic partnership' in December 1996 (Smith 2006: 57pp).

The initial talks of a founding document started in Moscow in January 1997 between the NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, and the Russian authorities. . It seems rather clear from the beginning, however, who was actually setting the standards in the development of the partnership, and that the process was not evolving between two equal partners. Tellingly, NATO stated clearly already from the beginning that an enlargement process to the East would be continued regardless of the negotiations with Russia. Moreover, Russia seemed more eager to develop a substantial framework. The framing of the base document signaled different expectations from the two sides: Russia wanted it to be called a *Treaty*, while NATO preferred it being called a *Charter*. NATO feared that a *Treaty* would be a too strong de facto position for Russia over NATO's internal affairs, so in the end it was agreed to call it an *Act*, which was signed 27 May 1997 in Paris (Kampf 2001: 213).

'The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and NATO' is still the 'constitutional' document concerning relations between the two actors. Its opening statement introduces a missionary goal of “*overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation*”, and of building “*lasting and inclusive peace*” (NATO, 1997). It starts by stating supposedly common values and principles of conduct in reaching the goals of mutual peace and security, such as “*democracy, political pluralism, the rule of law, respect for Human Rights, civil liberties and the development of free market economies*”.<sup>25</sup> In order to reach these activities and missions, an organ, the Permanent Joint Council, was

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<sup>25</sup> Founding Act 1997, Section I.

created as part of the Founding Act. Its main goal was to *build increasing levels of trust, consultation and cooperation habits* between NATO and Russia in order to strengthen *the two actors' security* as well as *Euro-Atlantic security as a whole*. These consultations would attempt to lead to as many mutual decisions and actions as possible. Furthermore, the PJC would function as *the main forum for talks and consultations between NATO and Russia "in times of crisis"* (NATO, 1997). The consultations would exclude matters of internal affairs for both actors, and would give neither NATO nor Russia a veto power over the other's actions. The PJC would be chaired by NATO's General Secretary, followed by one representative from Russia and one from NATO. The agenda for the meetings would be established together, and a dialogue between the North Atlantic Assembly and the Russian Duma was meant to be developed. The fundamental principle would be that none of the actors would look at each other as a threat or try to strengthen its own security at the expense of the other's security, often called 'the principle of indivisibility' (NATO 1997). The first crisis soon confronted the PJC's principles, however.

#### **4.7. The Kosovo Crisis, 1999 - 2000**

In 1998 the Relations between the West and Russia seemed calm for the outside viewer. But while NATO was preparing to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the year after, the largest storm between NATO and Russia since the Cold War was about to blow up (Smith 2006: 77-88). Since the war in Bosnia, a different part of the former Yugoslav Republic, the Serbian province of Kosovo was building up as a problem just as large. The Serbian authorities tried to commit ethnic cleansing of non-Serbian people in a province historically and cultural-symbolically important to the Serbs. The Serbs, of Slavic ethnicity and Orthodox faith, were historically closer to the Russians than the Kosovars of Muslim faith and heritage. The Russian support to Serbia, together with China's usual 'no interference' politics, prevented a forceful response from the UN, since China and Russia had veto powers in the UN Security Council. Russia, a part of the Contact Group on Yugoslavia, was at the table in the Rambouillet Conference in France February 1999, but this road did not lead to a solution either (Paris 2002: 424). At the same time, reports of massive violence and killings continued from Kosovo. Eventually, NATO decided to launch a campaign of airstrikes against the Serbs on 24 March 1999, Operation Allied Force, against Russia's outspoken

opposition. As Smith (2009) argues, “*the NAC's authorization of the use of force in Kosovo served as a major turning point for Russia's relationship with the West, underscoring its powerless role inside the alliance*” (Smith 2009: 5). Another problematic factor was that NATO acted without a UN Mandate, and was therefore, in the eyes of critics, violating international law<sup>26</sup>, the Helsinki Final Act<sup>27</sup> and its own Treaty. At the same time, in the opinion of the Russians, NATO ignored the only international legal organ capable of authorizing the use of military force in a non defensive situation, the last stance of the Soviet Union heritage status – and thereby great power status – the UN Security Council.

On the very same day as NATO started its Operation Allied Force against Yugoslavia, Russia reacted with a suspension of the PJC. While Yeltsin originally had threatened with “extreme” response, Russia was careful not to break all ties with NATO (Smith 2009:6). According to Smith (2009), cooperation with NATO at that point seemed to be Russia's only choice, given its problems in Chechnya and its financial breakdown the year before. Accordingly, only 4 months after the suspension, Russia returned to NATO. Despite the stark opposition in the Kosovo conflict, Russia seemed again ready to engage in fruitful practical cooperation. The former Prime Minister, Victor Chernomyrdin was appointed lead negotiator to the conflict, and Russia contributed to NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) (Smith 2009:6).

#### **4.8. An Chance to Move Forward? September 11, 2001**

Yeltsin officially resigned as president on 31 December 1999, and the acting Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, was elected President 3 months later. Putin, a former KGB Agent, *statist* and less inclined to the West, was originally skeptical of a relationship with NATO, but decided to take a pragmatic pathway for Russia the next years to come. Significantly, Putin promised to rebuild relations with NATO in the “spirit of pragmatism”, and even responded that a future NATO membership on behalf of Russia would “not be ruled out” (Smith 2009: 7).

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<sup>26</sup> Specified in the UN Charter , from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Principles and article 33 and 53 (and more).

<sup>27</sup> Article 6 - Non-Intervention in Internal Affairs, The Helsinki Final Act, 1975

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, had unprecedented consequences for the international atmosphere. The incident also affected the NATO-Russian relationship, albeit in a good way. The Russian President Vladimir Putin was actually the first foreign leader to call George W. Bush and offer help and cooperation after the attacks, a symbolically important move. Observers claim that part of the motivation behind this offer, was Putins's belief in terrorism as a common threat to both Russia and the West (Smith 2009: 8).

Though Russia has never actually sent an official application to join NATO, at least this time, unlike in 1991, NATO gave a reply to Putin's suggestion that Russian membership should not be excluded. General Secretary Lord Robertson, though in the beginning carefully replacing 'membership' with 'partnership', gradually showed signs of interests in developing deepened institutional arrangement with Russia. In 2001, he commented: *“our partnership has remained a nervous one. The foundation for our new relationship was laid in the Founding Act, but the process of building upon that foundation proved to be problematic. Cooperation seemed to go hand in hand with competition. (...) The 1999 Kosovo crisis exposed these fundamental differences in perception”* (Smith 2006: 95).

In November 2001, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, suggested a new NATO-Russia relationship, “treating Russia as an equal” in several areas of common interest. While Blair's proposal quickly met opposition especially from Central and Eastern European states, the final communiqué of a PJC Meeting in November recommended that a “new, effective mechanism” should be pursued. This communiqué reserved NATO the right to make decisions without Russia, however (Smith 2009: 10). Subsequently, General-Secretary Robertson announced the idea of 'the Russia-North Atlantic Council' (RNAC), which was endorsed by the NATO Foreign Ministers in December. They stated that there was an aim of establishing a new Council to “identify and pursue opportunities” and promised “new, effective mechanisms” (Smith 2006: 96). This way, they also admitted that the PCJ had been substantially ineffective. Finally, the NATO-Russia Council was established with the signing of the Rome Declaration in Italy, 2002. Whether the new, institutional arrangement in a better way would prevent conflicts and survive new crisis, remained to be seen.



## **5. THE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF A NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP**

*“As a result there will be high expectations of all. Expectations that this will not be just another glitzy protocol event, but a real breakthrough. Expectations that the new NATO-Russia Council will not just talk but will act, not just analyze but prescribe, not just deliberate but take decisive action. We have a profound obligation to ensure that these expectations are not disappointed. And if we need a reminder of why, then there is a simple answer. There is a common enemy out there.”*

*(NATO's Secretary-General Lord Robertson 28 July 2002<sup>28</sup>)*

### **5.1. A New Quality? The Establishment of the NRC in 2002**

In the spring of 2002, NATO and Russia published a common statement, launching “a new era” in NATO-Russia cooperation (NATO, 2002). The institutional framework got a new impetus with the signing of a declaration in Rome. The Rome Declaration stated a 'New Quality' and “equal basis” in the relations. Three characteristics may describe this document. Firstly, compared to the 1997 Founding Act, the rhetoric use was much stronger and showed signs of increased confidence in the relationship.. Secondly, the scale of cooperation was expanded. Nine areas of mutual interest were identified to have potential for co-operation, and among them, some were tentatively developed already. The nine areas ('efforts') were the fight against terrorism, crisis management, arms control, non-proliferation, rescue at sea, Theatre Missile Defense, military-to-military cooperation, civil emergencies and finally, identification of new threats and challenges. Thirdly, the consultative organ, taking over from the Permanent Joint Council (PJC), was named the 'NATO-Russia Council'.

Largely, two main characteristics differentiates the PJC from the NRC. Firstly, the NRC has a

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<sup>28</sup> From Smith 2006: 99.

more institutionalized character than its predecessor. From earlier routines of simply sending representatives to the meetings, Russia was now to have a *permanent* representative mission at the NATO Headquarters. Secondly, Russia is given a greater opportunity to influence the NRC agenda and avoid the collective decisions of the Alliance already been taken before the meetings, often called 'pre-cooking', something that had been highly criticized by Russia before (Smith 2006: 99). This changed dynamic came with the establishment of 'Preparatory Committees' – both permanent ones and the possibility of starting ad-hoc committee groups as well. This way, in the NRC, NATO and Russia will operate 'as equals', while retaining NATO's right to retreat to its NAC-meetings when Russia and NATO cannot agree (Smith 2009: 10).

Despite radical descriptions of the future of this new organ, some institutional arrangements did not change substantively. More frequent meetings would be arranged, but the Council remained consultative and advisory only. This way, NATO could avoid giving Russia a 'veto power', while Russia retained a special partnership status, different from the all other non-membership states, and an institutional arrangement that could in a better way match the Russian leadership's quest for a 'great power status'. Another factor that NATO avoided, was giving Russia any security guarantee. NATO's famous Article V was not mentioned in the founding documents (Smith 2009: 12).

## **5.2. The functioning of the NRC**

*“Once more the new spirit of NATO-Russia cooperation is crystal clear. This is one of the biggest changes NATO has brought about over the past four years of my term. As I prepare to step down, it is one of my biggest sources of satisfaction”*

(General-Secretary Lord Robertson, 4 December 2003)<sup>29</sup>

The NRC was formally established with the Rome Declaration on 28 July 2002. Since its inauguration and up until its suspension in August 2008, the NRC has had a total of 34 official meetings at the Ministerial and Heads of State level, 14 with Foreign Ministers, 16 with Defense Ministers, as well as 4 mixed sessions of both Defense and Foreign

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<sup>29</sup> Speaking to the press after the last ministerial meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) he was to chair, before being succeeded by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer as NATO Secretary General at the beginning of 2004

Department Representatives.<sup>30</sup> Apart from the official high level meetings, there has been held several informal meetings<sup>31</sup> at the ministerial level, monthly meetings at the ambassador level and more frequent, continuous meetings in the different Preparatory Committees. The NRC work by consensus rule and official statements are usually only produced from the official ministerial meetings, and only when all parties have agreed to the texts for publication.

Strikingly, 55 conferences, seminars and roundtable discussions were arranged between 2002 and 2007. Added to this, several different military exercises have been arranged. The NATO-Russia website<sup>32</sup> was established to increase public awareness of NRC activities. However, not much effort seems to have been put into this site, compared with NATO's official websites.

A NATO official suggests that the history of the NRC can be split up into three phases, from 2002 to 2004, from 2004 to 2008 and lastly, from 2008 to 2009. The first phase, spanning from 2002 to 2004, could be considered to be the «highlight of the NRC», according to the NATO official. Significantly, at a NRC meeting in Madrid, one year after its inauguration, the first steps of cooperation in most of the specified areas, followed by optimistic expressions of future collaboration, were outlined.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, 2004 seems to be the among the most active years of the NRC, producing important promises at the Istanbul summit, and an Action Plan on Terrorism in December 2004.

The second phase, from 2004 to 2008, is characterized as a period where the progress in the NRC seemed to be stagnating. The Council was neither advancing the common agenda, nor producing any policy changes. Soon NATO and Russia started blaming each other for the lack of results (Smith 2009: 5pp). In an often cited speech at the annual Security Conference

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<sup>30</sup> From counting official documents of the NRC and NATO's Websites.

<sup>31</sup> An informal meeting does normally not have the possibility to proclaim any decisions, and usually the only official document being publicized is a statement from the General-Secretary before the meeting.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.nato-russia-council.info/>

<sup>33</sup> Statement, Meeting of the NATO-Russia Council at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Madrid, 4 June 2003.

in Munich in 2007, Putin posed hard criticism of the West, NATO and the US in particular. At the same time as Alliance attention was largely focused in 'out of area' operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, parts of the Western media feared 'the Russian resurgence' after its economy had recovered. Most of the attention towards Russia from the West was aimed at Russia's rebuilding of defense structures and its supposedly degrading democratic structures (Smith 2009).

The year 2007 was symbolically important including the celebration of the 10 years anniversary of the Founding Act and 5 years of the NRC. According to a NATO official, however, the NRC was only able to agree on two documents after 2005: a framework document on interoperability and an agreement on a Counter Narcotics project in Afghanistan. The Russian respondent confirmed this view, commenting that “the conversation had stalled” and that there was “a feeling that we had reached a plateau in the relationship”. Most of my respondents explained this downturn in the NRC as a result of the Bush administration's lack of attention to the NRC and to Russia in general. Other observers explained the changed atmosphere in the NATO-Russia relationship by pointing to Russia and Putin's regained confidence after the recovered financial situation and a more calmed domestic environment ensued (Smith 2009: 12). Other factors may have contributed to Putin's growing frustration with NATO as well. The US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, NATO's F-16 patrolling over the Baltic territory, the Baltic states failure to ratify the CFE and lastly the 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, interpreted as a Western supported strategy (Smith 2009: 13).

In December 2007, as the NRC was about to make decisions on a work plan for the following year, the US blocked the agreement, with a referral to Russia's lack of fulfillment of the obligations of the CFE Treaty (Smith 2009: 15). At the NATO Heads of State Summit on 2-4 April 2008 in Bucharest, Romania, the evaluation of the 6 years of cooperation between NATO and Russia was the main agenda point. It was stated that the NRC should be continued to be used as a forum for “open and honest dialogue”.<sup>34</sup> The official document from the meeting showed a pragmatic tone, where political differences and disagreement

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<sup>34</sup> Chairman's statement, meeting of the NATO-Russia Council at the level of Heads of State and Government held in Bucharest, 02-04 April 2008.

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8962.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8962.htm?mode=pressrelease)

between the two partners were recognized, albeit not rejecting that the NRC had a continued relevance. Areas of disagreement were exemplified as NATO's transformation and enlargement process, missile defense, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) and the handling of the Kosovo-question<sup>35</sup>. At the same time, an agreement on non-military freight transit across Russian territory to Afghanistan was agreed. In other words, NRC as an action oriented and powerful institution was downplayed, and its capacity as a forum for discussing and talking, was highlighted. Though these functions should not be regarded as unimportant, this change may have important signal effects. Both NATO, Russia and the NRC want to be projected as action oriented actors. However, only four months after, the NATO-Russia relationship and the functioning of the NRC saw a radical downturn.

The third phase of the NRC, suggested by the NATO official, is '*the post Georgia phase*' - cooperation in the Council after the suspension following the war. This will be dealt with later, in the last part of this chapter. First, results and tests of the NRC will be assessed.

### **5.3. Practical Cooperation**

The functions of the NRC can be split up into two parts; a practical and a political side. The first function of the NRC is the goal of *producing practical cooperation* between NATO and Russia in fields related to security. It is believed that mutual trust will be strengthened through practical cooperation and the Polish representative repeatedly stated that “practical cooperation should be the driving force of the NRC”. NATO and Russia identified 9 potential areas of cooperation and established 17 committees and expert groups in 2002, giving the Council the ability to work on a range of security related issues (Smith 2009: 11). The overall practical activity can be categorized in to two parts, a military collaboration focus and more civil and societal focus.

#### **5.3.1. Military Cooperation**

Firstly, on the *military collaboration*, one year after the extended institutionalization, by its own assessment<sup>36</sup>, the NRC had produced practically focused discussions and programs in

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<sup>35</sup> Both the NATO bombings in Kosovo 1999 and the debate of whether declaring and recognizing Kosovo as an independent state. From the NRC Statement of the Bucharest Summit 4 April 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Statement, NRC Ministerial Meeting, Madrid, June 2003.

four of the nine areas: a joint threat assessment on potential terrorist threats to Russian and NATO forces in Bosnia and Kosovo, a 'Generic Concept' for future Russia-NATO peacekeeping troops, a threat assessment of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and finally an exploration of a shared Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) – the latter identified by the NRC itself as “the flagship program” in 2004.<sup>37</sup> The main drive behind the expanded institutional arrangements in 2002 and thereafter, has been the fight against terrorism. It seems that this is the area where the NATO-Russian cooperation has developed the most, and many official NRC documents state the fight against terrorism as 'key priority' for the NRC. Cooperation in the fight against terrorism has taken the form of information exchange and consultations, joint threat assessments, civil emergency planning, high-level dialogue on the role of the military in combating terrorism and scientific and technical cooperation. In Istanbul in June 2004, Russia offered to participate in 'Operation Active Endeavor', a Maritime Anti Terrorist Operation in the Mediterranean Sea, and the North Atlantic Council (NAC) approved the offer. The collaboration in this Operation has been described as “historical” and repeatedly endorsed for its positive importance in the relationship. Even the General Secretary stated the symbolism in it being the “*Première fois dans l’histoire qu’un État non membre de l’Alliance contribue à une opération relevant de l’article 5*”.<sup>38</sup> Russia has participated twice in this operation, the first time on 15 September 2006. NATO and Russia also cooperate on other projects related to terrorism, such as border control, non proliferation, airspace management, and nuclear safety<sup>39</sup>. An Anti-Terrorism Action Plan was produced in 2004, followed by a Mid Term Review Report in 2008. Furthermore, a 'Memoranda of Understanding on Air Transport and Host Nation Support' was established in December in 2003. This paved way for what eventually became a cooperation on Afghanistan, or rather the willingness of Russia to let NATO fly over its air space and use Central Asian states as strategic military bases. Perhaps not so practically important, but symbolically visible indeed, in December 2003 a direct secure telephone communication link was established between the NATO Secretary General and the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation.

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<sup>37</sup> NRC Foreign Ministers Meeting, Istanbul 28 June 2004

<sup>38</sup> General-Secretary Statement, 26 April 2007, Brussels, Foreign Ministers

<sup>39</sup> According to NATO's own Web Page [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50090.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm?)

Russian peacekeepers participated already in 1996 as part of the NATO led Implementation Force (IFOR, later named SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From 1996 until 2003, Russia was the largest non-NATO contributor to NATO-led peacekeeping operations<sup>40</sup>. An objective for the NATO-Russia military-to-military cooperation has therefore been to increase the two actors' abilities to work together in future joint military operations. NRC approved a 'Political-Military Guidance Towards enhanced Interoperability between Forces of Russia and NATO nations' in June 2005. An important achievement has been Russia's signature of the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 2004, later ratified by the Russian Duma in 2007. The SOFA sets provisions for the status of foreign forces while present on the territory of another state. *“The SOFA will allow us to organize better a rich menu of cooperative activities”*, argued the NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, at a press conference, *“It will save us time by providing a legal basis for movement of people and equipment agreed in advance, and it will allow us to act together in new areas, such as strategic airlift”*.<sup>41</sup>

The Cooperative Airspace Initiative over Afghanistan, a cooperation between Russia, Turkey and Poland, is what both Russian and Polish representatives mentioned as the most important practical cooperation produced by the NRC. Here, airspace surveillance and air traffic management in fighting terrorism has been the focus. In 1998, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre was established for all the countries of the EAPC (NATO member countries and NATO's Partner countries). Exercises related to disastrous consequences of terrorist attacks have also been conducted.

### **5.3.2. Civil and Societal Cooperation**

The second category of the practical cooperation, *the civil and societal focus*, has had a practical focus on different initiatives aimed at reducing the enormous Russian military and helping the former military personnel integrate into a civilian life. On 2 July 2002, a joint NATO-Russia centre for helping discharged Russian military personnel return to civilian life

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<sup>40</sup> Russian troops also contributed as an integral part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) until their withdrawal in 2003.

<sup>41</sup> NATO's Public Policy Division, on 'Russia to join Partnership Status of Forces agreement', [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_21690.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_21690.htm?selectedLocale=en)

was officially opened in Moscow. The Centre got a renewed five year contract in 2006. The 'NATO-Russia Centre for the Retraining of Discharged Military Personnel' provides personnel leaving the Russian military with information on training and employment opportunities and their rights and privileges. The Centre is financed by NATO, but administered by Russia. From 2002 till 2007, 725 former Russian military personnel have been helped to find new jobs, while 1500 have been retrained and 600 resettlement specialists have been educated.<sup>42</sup> The year after its establishment in Moscow, three regional centers were opened in St. Petersburg (8 April), Yaroslavl (21 March) and Chita (22 April), followed by the launching of a Job Placement Unit at the NATO-Russia Resettlement Centre in Moscow in 2004.

'The NRC pilot project for counter-narcotics training of Afghan and Central Asian personnel' was launched by NRC foreign ministers in December 2005 to seek to address the challenges posed by the trafficking in Afghan narcotics. It attempts to build regional and local capacity and cooperation by sharing the combined experience of NRC member states with police officers from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The project is being implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).<sup>43</sup> Russia and Turkey have arranged training courses for Afghan and Central Asian personnel, and mobile courses are being conducted in each of the six participating countries. In summer 2007, Finland's also signaled willingness to contribute to the initiative. By spring 2009, more than 750 officers had been trained under the NRC project.

#### **5.4. Political consultation**

*"If disagreements arise, NATO and Russia will endeavor to settle them on the basis of goodwill and mutual respect within the framework of political consultations"* (NATO, 1997).

The second function of the NRC is *political*. The NRC has a goal of being a forum where

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<sup>42</sup> NATO's Public Policy Division, on NATO's Relations with Russia, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-E9422C99-00441B3F/natolive/topics\\_50090.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-E9422C99-00441B3F/natolive/topics_50090.htm?)

<sup>43</sup> Produced by NATO's Public Policy Division. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50090.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm)



Russia and NATO can discuss their divergences and try to solve common problems and challenges. Moreover, the Founding Act identifies the PJC<sup>44</sup>, now the NRC, as *the main forum* for talks and consultations in times of crisis between NATO and Russia and in situations that could potentially disturb peace and stability on the European continent.<sup>45</sup> The aim of these discussions is threefold: to be a place where security challenges the two parties face can be discussed, to hinder any violent conflict erupting on the European continent and especially directly between the two parties, and finally, to find common grounds and mutual interests on diverging issues – materialized by common statements.

The Founding Act provided a mechanism for breaking up the consultations within the Council if NATO or Russia felt their territorial integrity, political independence or security threatened. Besides an actual upsurge in violent conflicts, a sign of failure in the relationship would therefore be a suspension of the planned meeting structure of the Council. It is important to note, especially from NATO's point of view, that the Founding Act did not give any of the actors a right to limit or to *veto* the other's actions or political decision making. One of the goals of the Council has been to produce as many mutual policy decisions as possible. However, given that the decisions in the Council are taken on a consensus base only, decisions might be harder to obtain (Hovi & Underdal 2000: 129pp). *Common positions* have been produced on Border Control in the Balkans (February 2003), Defense Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina (July 2003) and regarding the presidential elections in Ukraine (December 2004). The latter has been a particular success on the part of the NRC, according to an Italian NATO official: while Russia initially had expressed a rather harsh and oppositional tone to what was happening in Ukraine, only a month later the NRC was able to produce a common statement on behalf of the Council that expressed a much calmer and neutral tone. Some conflicts between NATO and Russia have been more challenging than others, however.

'Mutual responsiveness' is an important feature to lead the NRC to success in conflict situations. As Åtland (2003) argues, *integration* is a two-ways process, where the actors should try to respond to each other's needs and interests, in order to reach a compromise

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<sup>44</sup> The Founding Act uses the term 'the Permanent Joint Council', while that is understood to apply for the NATO Russia Council today.

<sup>45</sup> The 1997 Founding Act, Section II.

that reflects a relative satisfaction on both parties. Transferred to the NRC, I suggest the following indicators for 'success' when related to deep conflicts in the relationship: Firstly; the role of the NRC (whether the matter has been discussed in the NRC, if common positions have been produced) and secondly; the degree of mutual responsiveness in the matter (especially if the NRC's existence has helped lower the tension and ultimately, whether violent upsurge or dissolution of the Council have been avoided). As Wilhelmsen (2002) argues, interests between states might diverge, but the test of a 'security community' is *how* the states interact when interests collide. Between 2002 and 2009, observers have mentioned four cases to be among the most challenging between Russia and NATO: the enlargement issue, the war in Iraq, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) and the war in Georgia.

#### **5.4.1. NATO's 'Big Bang' Enlargement**

The perhaps largest and long-lasting oppositional stance from Russia since the end of the Cold War, has been its resistance against an enlargement of NATO to include the former Soviet Republics (Sakwa 2008: 414). Already in 1993, the Russian parliament, military officers and Russia's Intelligence Service (SVR) saw NATO's enlargement as a *direct threat* to Russia's security (Smith 2009: 2). Even the Russian Prime Minister Kozyrev, a *Westernizer*, objected: “*NATO's advance towards Russia's borders cannot but be seen as a continuation, though by inertia, of a policy aimed at containment of Russia*” (Sakwa 2008: 415). As mentioned earlier, one of the motives for NATO to establish the NRC was to avoid Russian opposition as a reaction to NATO extension (Lindley-French 2007: 78). It is quite possible that the strategy might have born results. On 27 May 1997 the PJC and the Founding Act were created. Only 3 days later, the inauguration of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the successor to NACC, took place together with 27 Partner Countries from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus as well as the traditional neutral Western European countries (Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland, and Ireland). NATO's plan seemed pretty clear. The same year as the PJC held its first formal meeting of Foreign Ministers, the first 3 new members, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were formally invited to join.<sup>46</sup> After barely shaking off the earthquake in the relationship after the non-UN

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<sup>46</sup> The accession protocols were signed in December 1997, while they formally joined first in 1999. The PJC's first

approved NATO intervention of Kosovo in 1999, the NATO Prague Summit in November 2002 could have potentially been a new crisis for the NATO-Russian relationship. The Summit agreed to proceed with a 'big bang' expansion – including no less than seven Central and Eastern European States at the same time, planned for 2004. At earlier Summits discussing enlargement questions, Russia had under Yeltsin showed strong signs of disapproval by refusing to send Russian representatives to the meetings. In 2002, however, despite reports of continuing Russian opposition to the enlargement, the Foreign Minister under Putin, Sergey Ivanov, showed up in Prague to participate in an NRC Ministerial meeting. After the meeting, Lord Robertson stated this appearance as “a revolution indeed” (Smith 2006: 101). NATO still seemed to fear a Russian reaction however. In several official common NRC documents later, it was clearly expressed an “*assurance of NATO member states that decisions taken by the Alliance at its Summit meeting in Prague are not directed against the security interests of Russia or any other Partner state*”.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, NATO increased its collaboration with Russia. Therefore, the 'boom enlargement' in 2002, though clearly opposed by the Russian side, did not provoke increased tension in the relationship at that time. Arguably, it seems highly likely that the existence of a new and expanded institution, the NRC, might have influenced the calm Russian reaction at that time.

#### **5.4.2 The war in Iraq**

When the US wanted to attack Iraq in 2003, Russia was initially against. The potential of a new 'Kosovo disagreement' was in the air. However, the Iraq crisis of 2002-03 actually seemed to show a changed relationship between NATO and Russia, and maybe even a small sign of a basis of trust (Smith 2006: 101). While old NATO allies like France and Germany openly expressed strong opposition to the forthcoming US attack on Iraq, Russia, though not a strong supporter either, chose to stay rather passive and neutral in the event. President Putin and Foreign Minister Ivanov surprisingly indicated that Russia might ultimately support the planned attack on Iraq, as well as declaring that Russia would make a great effort to avoid the use of veto power in the UN Security Council. Subsequently, the US

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meeting was on 26 September 1997.

<sup>47</sup> NRC Statement Foreign Ministers Meeting 22 November 2002, Brussels.

Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, stated that post-war US policy would be to “*punish France, ignore Germany and forgive Russia*” (Smith 2006: 102).

Noteworthy, Lord Robertson argued that the NRC should be granted a certain amount of credit in securing calm relations between the US and Russia at this point. Speaking at a press conference after a Ministerial Meeting of the NRC in May 2003, he stated that he thought “*the existence of the NATO-Russia Council [sic] has prevented differences over Iraq from becoming a crisis, like the NATO-Russia Council suffered during Kosovo in 1999. It has brought about a new maturity. It has created a new equality and a new respect for each other, so that we are now capable of disagreeing without falling out, of having different opinions without walking out of the room. The NATO nations and Russia have established a working relationship of such durability that it can survive and move on from even passionately held differences of opinion*” (Smith 2006: 102). However, according to Smith (2006: 102), the Iraqi question was never seriously debated within the NRC. This was in a large part because NATO members themselves were divided in the question. But could the existence of the NRC in itself have contributed to Russia's reluctance toward flagging its opposition strongly? Most of my respondents confirmed that the matter had not been on the agenda. Subsequently, the majority supported Lord Robertson's argument on the value of the NRC as a *tension reducing element* in the conflict.

Significantly, the Kosovo and Iraq questions were two very different debates. Russia did not have the same 'bonds' with the Iraqis as it did with the Serbs. Moreover, Russia seemed to be much more engaged and interested in collaboration in 2002-2004, than what they were back in 1998-1999. The US Ambassador to Russia, Alexander Vershbow, argued in January 2003 that a possible explanation could be that Russia had the perceptions that both NATO itself and the NATO-Russian relations were evolving in the direction towards dealing with some of Russia's main security problems, especially concerning terrorism (Smith 2006: 103).

As a pragmatist, Putin might have seen a 'window of opportunity' towards transformed and increased collaboration, following by the September 11 incident. And the changed strategy of NATO to deepen its relations with Russia through the NRC, could be interpreted as a willingness to accept Russia as a 'great power' and important actor in the international system, at least in the eyes of the Kremlin. Statements from the Russian Foreign Minister,

Ivanov, showed that Russia at that point in time was optimistic of the development of the NRC. According to Ivanov, the first six months in the NRC had “*shown that this is not simply yet another mechanism, but something that works constructively for everyone*” (Smith 2006: 103). This was echoed by NATO's General Secretary Lord Robertson after a NRC Ministerial Meeting in Brussels 6 months after the NRC establishment, where he expressed “*deep satisfaction of the substantial progress that has been made in implementing the Rome Declaration*”.<sup>48</sup> Thus, at this point in time, the increased institutionalized communication and collaboration through the creation of the NRC seems to have given positive results, having spillover effect on decreasing tension in a potentially explosive matter of the US attacking Iraq. This way, the existence of an institutional cooperation between NATO and Russia seems to have had politically positive consequences – even to a matter *not actually discussed in the Council itself*.

#### **5.4.3 The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty**

The CFE Treaty, often referred to as “a cornerstone of European security”, was the result of over sixteen years of negotiations under various mandates (Rydmark 2010: 1). The Treaty Document was signed in Paris in 1990 by 22 states (but later ratified by 30 states since many got their independence the following years) and entered into force in July 1992, thereby marking the end of the Cold War with a legally binding Treaty.<sup>49</sup> The CFE Treaty set equal limitations for each bloc (NATO and the Warsaw Treaty) on key armaments essential for initiating surprise attacks and large-scale offensive operations.<sup>50</sup> It established a system of limitations and reductions of conventional weapons, transparency (annual exchanges of information and notifications), verification (on-site inspection) and an emphasis on host-nation consent to the stationing of foreign forces. The CFE Treaty can also be argued to have large, indirect effects of trust and confidence building between Russia and the West, increased stability, transparency and strengthened overall European security (Rydmark 2010: 15).

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<sup>48</sup> Official NRC Statement, 22. November 2002

<sup>49</sup> For the full text and related documents, please see the OSCE internet site for original texts, available at <http://osce.org/item13517.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Moreover, five important categories of Treaty-Limited Equipment (TLE) were put ceilings on: tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, attack helicopters, and combat aircraft. In the course of implementing the Treaty, over 60,000 pieces of TLE have been destroyed and over 4000 on-site inspections have been conducted. From 'QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON CFE' from NATO's Official Web Page.

In 1996, CFE States Parties agreed to initiate the process of adapting the CFE Treaty to the transformed international situation, considering that neither the Soviet Union nor the Warsaw Treaty any longer existed. The former bloc-to-bloc system of limitations was changed in to a system of national and territorial ceilings, entitled 'the Adapted CFE Treaty'. While not all Russian wishes<sup>51</sup> were met by the new Treaty, the Adapted Treaty also included possibilities of states parties temporarily exceeding their force quotas, reflecting especially Russia's challenges of an unstable Caucasus region<sup>52</sup>. Subsequently, before the OSCE's 1999 Istanbul Summit, three CFE Treaty compliance problems regarding Russia were proclaimed from NATO's side.<sup>53</sup> At the Summit in Istanbul, Russia promised to accommodate the raised critique. These agreements became known as 'the Istanbul Commitments' and are today included in 14 Annexes to the CFE Final Act and within the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration. Since 1999, NATO members have refused to ratify the Adapted treaty while waiting for Russia to stand by its promises. Russia, on the other hand, interprets the Istanbul Commitments to be a political document rather than a legal one, and not part of the CFE framework (Rydmark 2010: 10).

In the spring of 2007, the future of the CFE saw a radical turn. Putin warned of a 'moratorium' on the Treaty in his April 26, 2007 address, and issued a decree declaring a suspension of the treaty obligations on July 14, 2007<sup>54</sup>, unless the NATO member states ratified the Adapted CFE Agreement.<sup>55</sup> Even though Putin's actions were officially directed towards the CFE Regime, many observers interpreted the 'suspension' as a protest move against the US President George W. Bush's plans to deploy a missile defense system in Eastern Europe to intercept missiles coming from Iran.<sup>56</sup> The immediate answer from NATO to Russia's actions came in form of a statement. Despite the diplomatic format, it did not

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<sup>51</sup> Russia sought an inclusion of a group ceiling of NATO to meet the initial principle of balance of forces from the original Treaty, as well as an elimination of limitations on flank regimes. The first demand was attempted to reflect the new situation of a continued expansion of the NATO Alliance of former Warsaw Pact countries. Russia still quickly ratified the Adapted Treaty.

<sup>52</sup> With the first and second Chechen War (1994 and 1999).

<sup>53</sup> According to NATO, Russian equipment holdings in the North Caucasus region were over going the agreed Treaty limits as well as Russian military presence in Georgia and Moldova were lacking the necessary consent of the Georgian and Moldovan authorities.

<sup>54</sup> Being effective 150 days later.

<sup>55</sup> At that point it had only been ratified by the Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

<sup>56</sup> **Feil! Hyperkoblingsreferansen er ugyldig. Feil! Hyperkoblingsreferansen er ugyldig.**

however exclude more serious reactions from the Alliance's side.<sup>57</sup>

According to a NATO document on the CFE Treaty, already the day after Putin's moratorium address in 2007, the question was debated at the ambassadorial level in the NRC. It was taken to an expert level on 16 May, and both the CFE and the American Missile Defense System<sup>58</sup> in Eastern Europe have been repeatedly discussed at NRC ministerial meetings. Despite the fact that an institutionalized forum existed for the two parts to make agreements, *it did not stop* the Russian President from suspending the CFE Treaty. Even though the probability of a large scale war within the European continent seems unlikely within the short term view, a reduced CFE Regime might have deeper consequences for the European security and the risk of further destabilizing international security (Rydmark 2010: 1pp). It has been generally recognized that agreements especially between Russia and the US on weapons reductions might have significant symbolic effects. Without the CFE Treaty, a new arms race between Russia and the West, cannot be excluded, though it today seems highly unlikely. The lack of a legal framework for conventional weapon controls might also have effects on reduced trust and confidence between NATO and Russia.

While the NRC cannot be blamed for the conflict, the CFE Treaty has been a repeated theme for NRC Meetings, and the Council has not been able to meet an agreement yet. Significantly, NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, commented on the importance of the Treaty for the European Security: *“Russia's relations with the alliance cannot reach their full potential while these disagreements remain”*.<sup>59</sup>

#### **5.4.4. The August 2008 War in Georgia**

Ever since the 'Rose Revolution' and the election of Michael Sakashvili, an outspoken critique of Russia as President in 2005, the tensions between Russia and Georgia have remained high. Georgia, a small country in the heated Southern Caucasus and a former part

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<sup>57</sup> Statement from the North Atlantic Council on December 12 2007

<sup>58</sup> While probably having been debated in the NRC, the Missile Defense issue seemed to be solved mostly through bilateral US-Russian diplomatic channels.

<sup>59</sup> Statements to the Press, Informal meeting of the NATO Russia Council at the level of Foreign Ministers, 26 April 2007. From the NATO-Russia Council Official web page. <http://www.nato-russia-council.info/htm/EN/statements26apr07.shtml>

of the Soviet Union, has ever since it got its independence in 1991 had problems with its ethnic minority regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Observers and independent reports have claimed that Georgian forces started an attack on Tshinkvalli, the capital of South Ossetia on August 7 2008, to which Russia responded promptly, in what was at that point an internal conflict (Opdahl 2008: 15pp). However, since a large percentage of the South Ossetian citizens also had Russian passports, and since Russian peacekeepers were hit<sup>60</sup>, Russia felt justified to intervene to protect the South Ossetian population. Russia soon outmaneuvered the Georgian forces from Tshinkvalli and the areas around, and tensions started to rise concerning whether Russia would move to take the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, as well. However, the EU under the French presidency was able to negotiate a cease-fire on 12 August. The US President, George W. Bush, soon characterized the Russian actions for 'disproportionate' and the Republican candidate for the upcoming American Presidential Elections, John McCain, warned about "a new cold war".<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the Western media at large was full of headlines criticizing Russia. In their views, Russia had broken international law by not having a UN Mandate when committing violent acts within another country, without that country's official consent. In the aftermath of the war however, *both* parties to the conflict were deemed responsible to the out leash and for civilian deaths in South Ossetia.<sup>62</sup>

It seemed soon clear that other geopolitical matters could be brought into the situation as well. Firstly, Russia made the same arguments about the need for a '*humanitarian intervention*' and 'the responsibility to protect' as NATO did when intervening in the Serbian region of Kosovo, in 1999. Secondly, Russia referred to the right to protect its citizens abroad<sup>63</sup>, as pointed out by the Russian Ambassador to NATO, comparable to what the US had done during the sending of American troops to Panama in 1989 to defend, among others, American nationals.<sup>64</sup> Finally, some observers argue that Russia's actions were to a

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<sup>60</sup> Russia reported 15 Russian Peace Keepers were dead.

<sup>61</sup> From 'Warning to Obama on the new cold war'. T. Hayden, the Nation, 1 September 2008.  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/warning-obama-new-cold-war>

<sup>62</sup> According to an 18 August report by the organisation Human Rights Watch, at the start of the military conflict on 7 August 2008, Georgian military used indiscriminate and disproportionate force resulting in civilian deaths in South Ossetia. The Russian military had then used indiscriminate force in attacks in South Ossetia and in the Gori district.

<sup>63</sup> Medvedev in an interview with BBC in Sochi, 26 August 2008, Interview Transcript publicized on Kremlin's official Web Page.

<sup>64</sup> From the Russian Mission to NATO's Web Page: 'Washington's Hypocrisy', August 19, 2008



certain degree a reflection of Georgia's Westward alignment (Kupchan 2010: 1). Soon after the war, the two regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia unilaterally declared independence, recognized and supported by Russia on 26 August. The 2008 Independence Declarations received thorough criticism from many Western states, among them a “condemnation” from the North Atlantic Council.<sup>65</sup>

The reaction from NATO and the West to Russia's actions in Georgia came in form of statements and a suspension of the NRC. *“We remain concerned by Russia's actions during this crisis and remind Russia of its responsibility for maintaining security and order in the areas where it exercises control, especially in light of continuing reports of Russia’s deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure. (...) The Alliance is considering seriously the implications of Russia’s actions for the NATO-Russia relationship. In 2002, we established the NATO-Russia Council, a framework for discussions with Russia, including on issues that divide the Alliance and Russia. We have determined that we cannot continue with business as usual”*.<sup>66</sup> While NATO repeated George W. Bush's characterizations and called Russia's actions 'disproportionate', Russian Officials claimed that Russia's use of force here was much more proportionate than what NATO did it in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>67</sup>

The conflict over Georgia was the first violent conflict in the European neighborhood since the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo at the end of the 1990s. Moreover, it was between two of NATO's partners; Georgia, a country eager to gain NATO membership, and Russia, a country with a special partnership status and its own consultative organ. Clearly, NATO had an important indirect role in the conflict. However, interviews with officials at NATO reveals that Georgia was never a matter of debate at a higher level within the NRC, neither *before, during or after the crisis*. According to a Russian official, Russia wanted to discuss Georgia at a meeting in the NRC just after the crisis had broken out, but the US was not present, so the meeting was cancelled. However, according to one NATO official, the matter was briefly mentioned at the European Atlantic Partnership Council, where both

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<sup>65</sup> Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the Russian recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia, 27 August 2008, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_43517.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_43517.htm)

<sup>66</sup> Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 19 August 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Quote from Russia's Ambassador to NATO, Rogozin's Web Page,

Georgia and Russia are members, but a real debate never happened. The enlargement question in itself had of course been subject for debate several times, but not this rising conflict between Russia and Georgia. From earlier on, the focus on that region on the part of the West in general, had been on the «frozen conflicts» of the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and as an internal problem within Georgia, not so much as a bilateral dispute between Georgia and its neighboring state, Russia (Opdahl 2008: 5pp). Noteworthy, when NATO suspended the NRC, any talks or discussions became impossible. Instead, the EU with the French President became the mediator in the crisis. The result of the suspension was that Russia, Georgia and NATO mediated their views through the media. It is needless to say that communicating through the media poses challenges. Significantly, the majority<sup>68</sup> of my respondents felt that suspending the Council had been the wrong decision to make. Considering how NATO members felt that *some* reaction against Russia had to be made, this one was perhaps not the worst one.. And incentives still existed to make Russia and NATO soon want to cooperate again. Officially, NATO suspended the NRC until Russia had fulfilled its obligations from the peace agreement known as 'the six principle agreement' signed and mediated by the EU and the French presidency. On 2 December 2008<sup>69</sup>, they decided that the demands had been met and that Russia was ready to go back in to the institutional collaboration within the NRC.

### **5.5. Re-opening and Post-Georgia phase**

NATO's relations with Russia would dominate the agenda of a NATO Ministerial Meeting on 5 March 2009. There it was decided to hold first formal NRC meeting on 30 April the same year, more than 6 months since its suspension. Subsequently, at NATO's 60 years Anniversary summit meeting in Strasbourg/Kehl in April 2009, the importance of a good relations and practical cooperation between NATO and Russia for overall European security was reiterated.<sup>70</sup> *The relations seemed to be at a fragile state, however.* At the same day as the re-opening, NATO declared two members of staff of the Permanent Mission of the

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<sup>68</sup> Apart from one respondent from Poland and another from the Czech Republic.

<sup>69</sup> Final communiqué, Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 03 December 2008

<sup>70</sup> NAC Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration, 04 April 2009. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52837.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm)

Russian Federation to NATO 'personae non grata'<sup>71</sup>, accused of spying at the NATO Headquarters (De Haas 2009: 3). Russia responded with the expulsion of two NATO officials from NATO's Information Office in Moscow the following week. Furthermore, soon, NATO held a long time planned military exercise in Georgia, which Russia described as “provoking” and “dubious”<sup>72</sup>. However, with the re-opening of NRC after the suspension with the Georgian war of August 2008, NRC was again stated as a 'strategic element' towards reaching Euro-Atlantic security. Shortly after the inauguration of Barack Obama in January 2009, the new presidential administration in the US decided launch an attempt to 'reset' relations between Russia and the US, and roll back on the plans for plans for installing a radar in the Czech Republic and deploy interceptor missiles in Poland. At a NRC Meeting on 4 December 2009, with the participation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, further important progress was made. Stability in Afghanistan was restated a shared goal for all 29 members of the NRC. Moreover, the NRC was able to agree on the NRC Work Program for 2010 and to launch a Joint Review of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Common Security Challenges. New areas as 'natural and man-made disasters' and 'piracy' were listed as among the subjects for the review, which should be published by December 2010. Finally, the ministers approved a set of measures aimed at improving the working methods of the NRC, *“to make it an even more result-oriented and politically relevant structure”*.<sup>73</sup> What this implies in practice is not yet known.

Overall, has the NRC met its expectations? What lessons can be learned from the structure of the NRC and from its conflict cases? In what degree has the NATO-Russia Council contributed towards a reaching a Security Community?

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<sup>71</sup> Rogozin: 'On NATO's declaration of two members of staff of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to NATO personae non grata', April 30, 2009,

<sup>72</sup> From the Guardian 06 May 2009: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/06/nato-military-exercises-georgia>

<sup>73</sup> 'NATO and Russia agree to move partnership forward', NAC Statement 4 December 2009

## 6. ANALYSIS OF THE NRC

*“Despite many achievements over the past 15 years, it is hard not to conclude that collectively we have underachieved in building greater trust and cooperation”.*

(Smith 2009: 1)

### 6.1. Initial Confusion

As seen in the first chapter, the atmosphere between Russia and NATO was fairly good at the beginning of the 1990s, in the «honeymoon» period. At that time, both Russian and Western leaders had a real chance of a completely fresh start of the relationship.

Unfortunately, neither of the two parts was willing to go far enough. Several differences of understanding or expectations of the relationship might explain their lack of reaching a more substantial cooperation.

Firstly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was quite differently interpreted by the Russian and the Western, and especially the American side. While the US presidents celebrated the dissolution as an American victory in a 'zero sum game', the Soviet leaders, with Gorbachev at the lead, saw the dissolution as their own deliberate choice and caused by internal factors, not a forced decision by outside states (Krickus 2009).

Secondly, when asking my respondents what they thought had been both Russia and NATO's motivations for conducting cooperation in the 1990's after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the two parties' expectations of what the collaboration would lead to after 1997 and 2002, I received quite different answers<sup>74</sup>. When discussing *NATO's motivations and expectations*, largely three different suggestions were made. Firstly, as a neighboring great power, Europe and the Alliance were forced to have a relationship with Russia. Secondly, NATO conducting cooperation with Russia was a reflection of a shift in the threat perception, both concerning the prevention of conflicts from the new nation-states in Eastern Europe – by including them into the Alliance, as well as the upsurge of terrorism

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It is very important again, to emphasize that NATO was a very different Alliance in the 1990's, to what it is today, starting with the first enlargement in 1999. Equally, Russia seems to have a different point of view on their place in the world and approach to NATO from Yeltsin to Putin, and now Medvedev (Sakwa 2008: 4pp).

after 2001 as a major threat to the Alliance. Thirdly, one respondent claimed that NATO's motivations were based on the belief in supporting Russia's democratic development.

Thirdly, regarding my respondents views on *Russia's motivations and expectations*, the answers differed even more. A rather freely speaking NATO official from the former Soviet bloc, suggested that the Russian motivations, driven by agents from the Secret Service, were to get hold of sensitive information and block decisions in the Alliance. A German NATO official expressed that Russia sought to be considered «equal». Several of the respondents acknowledged that Russia probably believed that they were promised a «no expansion» on the part of NATO, and that Russia most likely thought they would, with the closer cooperation, be able to stop the enlargement. The Russian official said that Russia were expecting a dismantling of NATO after 1991, a transformation of the organization – and that the OSCE eventually would take over.

Finally, in 1997, with the establishment of the NATO – Russia Act, the word «consultation» was interpreted differently by the actors. Russia thought that this meant that the Russian voice would be heard, while NATO countries focused on not giving Russia any veto power over NATO's actions. As Smith (2009: 5) comments on NATO's involvement in Kosovo; “*it also confirmed Russian suspicions that its definition of «consultation» differed significantly from NATO's. The Alliance had indeed consulted the Russians on the situation in Kosovo, but each time it did, it stressed that Russia did not hold a veto».*

Important conclusions to sum up from these views, are that despite the joint declarations and the Founding Act, Russia and NATO's motivations and expectations from conducting cooperation *differed quite largely* from the beginning.

## **6.2. To What Degree has the NRC been a Success?**

It is quite clear that the NATO-Russia relationship is not yet completely free of suspicion or fear for violent acts from the other part. Neither has mutual trust reached a satisfactory level. Russia published its new Military Doctrine on 5 February 2010<sup>75</sup>, where, quite

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<sup>75</sup> Its publication at Kremlin's Official Web Pages is only in Russian so far, so highlights from the text is here taken from <http://www.defencetalk.com/russias-new-military-doctrine-24072/>

surprising to many in the West, NATO is referred to as one of the external threats towards Russia, by «attempts to expand NATO military infrastructure closer to Russian borders». While the mentioning of NATO as a threat has raised sharpened criticism in the West, Russian officials have repeatedly replied that the threat is *NATO expansion, not NATO in itself*.<sup>76</sup> Important conflicts between Russia and NATO seem to have been deliberately mentioned in the Doctrine, however. Missile Defense is mentioned, and the NATO bombings in Kosovo in 1999 seem referred to as «the use of military force on territories neighboring Russia in violation of the UN Charter and other norms of international law». The war in Georgia may have been referred to as “Russia may send troops abroad to protect its national interests or its citizens”.<sup>77</sup>

At the same time, in the course of 2010, NATO has debated its new strategic concept, and there has been a debate on how to frame Russia. As mentioned, several Eastern European NATO members still perceives Russia *as a threat* (Krickus 2009: 10pp), In other words, there are parts on both the Russian and the Alliance's side that have a lack of trust towards the other.

Not surprisingly perhaps, it is quite clear that the overall NATO-Russia relationship may *not yet* be categorized as a Security Community. Again, it must be emphasized how the NRC is only *one small part of a larger structure* towards reaching a security community. A security community between NATO and Russia cannot be reached exclusively through the NRC. However, the relationship may be deemed to have entered into the beginning of the second phase, 'Ascendant'. According to Adler & Barnett (1998), this phase is categorized by the emergence and reinforcement of networks, institutions and organizations. The NATO-Russia Council has, by its political and practical functions, a large potential for building trust and preventing violent conflicts. Among its member states. According to Deutch, the capabilities relating to the 'responsiveness' of a political unit and its leaders are of crucial importance to the success or failure of integration (Deutsch 1966: 21). In other words, if the political units are not capable of responding to each other's needs, signals and actions, it will make it difficult to forward the integration process (Åtland 2003: 10). From the four 'test cases'

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<sup>76</sup> 'Medvedev says NATO not main military threat to Russia'. People Daily, 25 February 2010. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90853/6902830.html>

<sup>77</sup> Published at [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru), February 5 2010. Commented also by the Jamestown Foundation 23 February 2010, 'Russian Military Doctrine looks east', Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 36. See also [www.defencetalk.com/russias-new-military-doctrine-24072/](http://www.defencetalk.com/russias-new-military-doctrine-24072/).

analyzed above, it is clear that the Council has been at times successful at lowering tensions, building trust and preventing violent conflicts.

The key to the second tier (which is at focus at this thesis), both concerning knowledge, transactions and social learning among the elites in the NRC, is divided into three factors, *volume*, *density* and *quality*. While the scope and quantity of the transactions within the NRC will respectively be assessed through 'volume' and 'density', through the last factor the quality and value of the NRC will be analyzed.

### 6.2.1. Volume

*Volume* in this context is referred to as the mandate of the NRC and the reach of its political discussions and practical cooperation, related to its potential. When the Permanent-Joint-Council (PJC) was reformed and renamed the NRC in 2002, large expectations regarding the new expansion of the Council's scope was made. However, the overall reach of the NRC cannot be deemed to be very large or wide.

Concerning the first function of the NRC described in the previous chapter, *the practical cooperation*, the Founding Act expressed the shared objective of NATO and Russia “to identify and pursue as many opportunities for joint action as possible” (NATO, 1997). The Rome Declaration specified nine areas of potential cooperation between NATO and Russia. While the Counter-narcotics project, military-to-military cooperation and terrorism are among the most developed and rated as the most successful by my respondents, far from all of the areas have been developed into successful practical cooperation. Moreover, the activity level have seen a downturn after at the second phase of the relationship (2004 - 2008). Yet, both Russia and NATO express that they have further interests in common, such as stability in Afghanistan, Iran, energy security, non proliferation, nuclear security (de Haas 2009). The lack of actual results here might be blamed to the *low political willingness* from the part of the involved member states. Significantly, as a female NATO Staffer pointed out: «*the NRC is the best available mechanism there is – but it only functions on the basis of its members*». If there is no will, even the best mechanism will not work.

The *political function* of the NRC, its 'all-weather forum' role, reveals a similar picture. The

NRC was originally created with a vision of being a framework for consultation on current security issues and practical cooperation within a “wide range of areas of common interests”, where the NATO member states and Russia would work together as “*equal partners*” (NATO, 2002). It has been agreed that the Council will be an institutionalized forum for dialogue between the Alliance and Russia on *all issues related to security*<sup>78</sup>— both in areas where they agree and disagree – with the goal of solving problems and building practical cooperation. In other words, the NRC would be used as a permanent meeting place for NATO and Russia, in order to uphold good relations and develop trust. It was also to have an important function as a forum for discussing divergences of opinions and preventing escalation of conflicts. Indicators from the early conflict cases (The 'boom enlargement' in 2002 and the war in Iraq 2003) show that these subsequent developments within the NRC might have contributed to lower tensions between NATO and Russia. Significantly, Smith (2006:103) argues that the Russians were “far more constructive and engaged in 2002 and 2003 than they had been in 1998 and 1999”. Moreover, this view was confirmed by Alexander Vershbow, the US Ambassador to Russia, in January 2003, saying that the Russian co-operation in the NRC was being “facilitated by their perception that NATO is evolving in its orientation to deal with the very same threats that Russia is worried about”.<sup>79</sup>

Albeit having clear differences in a lot of cases, important political discussions have been conducted in the NRC as well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the fight against terrorism, NATO’s transformation and enlargement, energy security, missile defense, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), Afghanistan, Kosovo, Belarus, Iraq, Uzbekistan, the situation in the Middle East, Darfur, Ukraine, and Georgia are just some of the themes that have been announced as officially having been on the agenda during high level meetings. Moreover, it can be assumed that other themes have been brought up during informal meetings and during the monthly meetings at ambassador level.

Many were very disappointed when the NRC failed to be both an organ for *conflict*

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<sup>78</sup> “*The NRC is developing a continuous political dialogue on security issues with a view to early identification of emerging problems, determination of optimal common approaches and the conduct of joint actions, as appropriate*”. Official NRC Statement, 4 June 2003, Madrid.

<sup>79</sup> From Smith 2006: 103.



*prevention* (considering how a violent conflict saw an upsurge on the European continent) and *crisis management* when the Council was suspended by NATO and one of the very few, existing institution for security and crisis discussions between Russia and the West was dismantled when it may have mattered the most. When asking my respondents of whether NRC has reached its goal as being «the main forum in times of crisis», all of them, including NATO officials, regretted that when the first serious crisis really rose up, the NRC was not used the way it had been intended. The Norwegian and the German officials expressed that suspending the NRC had been the wrong decision when the 5 day war broke out. At the time however, it seems that the violent actions on behalf of Russia brought up a lot of old memories and feelings, especially on the part of several Eastern European countries and from the main former adversary, the US. Several Eastern European countries suggested that the war in Georgia should lead to a discussion of the use of Article V, even though Georgia was far from being a full member of the time. The crisis created strong feelings, and the suspension seems to have been an emotional reaction from NATO.

However, the NRC has an important value in its functioning that rarely reaches the headlines of the media. It is a forum for discussions, dialogue and consensus reaching decisions – which, according to Deutsch (1961) may have important value in itself. The consensus rule has both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage of the consensus decision approach concerning the NRC, could be the difficulty of producing actual results, because all states parties must agree in order to reach a decision. This difficulty is greatly strengthened by the fact that views of Russia seems to differ strongly within the Alliance, and mostly between the 'old' and the 'new' members. This would of course make it difficult to agree on declarations and produce practical results for the NRC. Concerning the more positive effects from the consensus building rule, most of my respondents shared the view that the value of having a place to talk – even though practical cooperation is not always produced – has an important, trust building function in itself. A Norwegian official highlighted that the rules of consensus in the NRC were an important prerequisite in the exercise towards reaching a common view, and that this exercise would also strengthen the ending results. Moreover, when asking my respondents of “what the greatest success of the NRC had been”, 8 out of 10 respondents declared the greatest success to be *the existence of the NRC in itself, the fact that there was an institution promoting security policy*

### **6.2.2. Density**

Density is here understood as the quantity and reach of the trust building transactions in the NRC. Overall, the transaction density cannot be deemed as being very high (Wilhelmsen 2002, Åtland 2003). The transaction flow in the NRC saw an upsurge with the Rome Declaration of 2002, where preparatory committees and other group formations were gathered at a lower level. In the following years of the NRC, however, the cooperation between NATO and Russia stagnated. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the course of 2004 – 2008, according to many of my respondents, while the NRC was at one side upholding the permanent meeting frequency, at the other side, fewer, if any practical arrangements were produced, and many of the committees originally designed were more or less empty shells<sup>81</sup> existing without substance. The downturn of the cooperation and atmosphere in the NRC was therefore a fact prior to the Georgia war of 2008. This view was shared by most of the elite respondents in Brussels. A fundamental problem in this category, is the fact that the Russian delegation in fact is not present with its permanent staff at the Headquarters next to the other delegations from the Alliance. The reason for this, according to the Russian official, was that the facilities at NATO was “not secure” for Russia. While coming to the Headquarters for the official meetings, this lack of presence by the Russian delegation may have several interconnected effects.

Firstly, it may prevent the trust building factors from reaching a higher potential, with the diplomats and NATO Staff interacting informally at a higher density; at lunch time, in the NATO café, at the NATO gym, receptions, etc. These are important venues for social interaction and social learning. Secondly, it strengthens the Alliance perhaps even unintentional «pre-cooking», which was Russia's perhaps largest criticism against the PJC (Smith 2006: 70pp). It is the Russian view that “NATO still unifies its position before the meetings”<sup>82</sup>. But while NATO still discusses Russia at the its Council meetings, the lack of Russian presence at NATO HQ may prevail Russia from at an earlier time being included in informal discussions on practical cooperation or other matters at hand. Thirdly, despite the

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<sup>80</sup> The last two respondents highlighted practical work, such as the Transit to Afghanistan, the cooperative airspace initiative and the counter-narcotics project as the NRC's greatest success.

<sup>81</sup> As pointed out by a NATO official at the Brussels HQ during an interview.

<sup>82</sup> According to the Russian representative.

existence of preparatory committees and such, the reduced amount of talks before the higher level meetings, might increase these meetings' politicized feature. Nikolas Gvosdev, a professor of national security studies at the U.S. Naval War College in Rhode Island and editor of the blog 'The Washington Realist', argues that “personalizing the relationship is easier and more attractive in the absence of strong institutional connections”.<sup>83</sup> In other words, good personal relations between international actors are even more important when the overall transaction level is low. It is possible that if the Russians and the Baltic or American representatives had at an informal basis just met at the gym, played tennis or had a coffee, that could lead to lower political tensions at the meetings.

An important question might be however, *trust building – for whom?* Here I observed a distance between NATO officials and the different officials' standings from the political leadership of the different countries. My overall field work through observations and interviews seemed to reveal that between the diplomats working at the NRC, including between the Russians and the Western diplomats, there seemed to exist a nice and polite tone. Indeed, the atmosphere *between working level diplomats seemed to be good.*

However, while the NRC have monthly meetings at the Ambassadorial level, and weekend meetings at the committee levels between lower officials, only twice a year do the foreign and defense ministers from the different countries actually meet. In other words, while the NRC is building trust within its own meeting rooms at the NATO HQ, the spillover effect to the political decision makers at the top level in different countries, seems to be much lower. There is another fact supporting this; when the NRC was suspended during the 2008 war in Georgia, there were some areas of the Council that was still operating: the transit to Afghanistan, and several committees at the lower level. As the Russian official could confirm: “the practical relationship in the NRC was still working, so overall, on a lower level, things looked normal”.

### 6.2.3. Quality

The third factor concerns the communicative and transactional *quality* of meetings and the overall value of the NRC. Deutsch (1961) compared security communities to 'mutual-response communities', arguing that “its participants or participating groups must have

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<sup>83</sup> From the Radio Free Liberty Europe article 'Is Personal Chemistry At Work Between Obama And Medvedev?' 16 April 2010.  
[http://www.rferl.org/content/Is\\_Personal\\_Chemistry\\_At\\_Work\\_Between\\_Obama\\_And\\_Medvedev/2015904.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Is_Personal_Chemistry_At_Work_Between_Obama_And_Medvedev/2015904.html)

continued and effective facilities for receiving signals concerning the most urgent needs of their partners, and for making responses sufficiently quick and appropriate to avoid serious conflicts or collisions” (Deutsch1961: 104) . Several of my respondents mentioned challenges of communication – both concerning language interpretations and cultural misunderstandings between the parties. For instance, the German official mentioned a comparison she had done between some of her colleagues who had both listened to the Russian representative speaking. One of the officials spoke Russian, but took notes in German. Another representative had been listening to the official NATO translator who had been translating from Russian to either German or English. Their notes differed greatly and substantively on several occasions. Another concern is the cultural differences. The Russian and the Western traditions differ greatly in many features of inter-social habits of communication, which could often lead to misinterpretations. The Russian official confirmed this view, commenting that “the difference of mentality is huge”. Moreover, when the density of unofficial meetings is low as well, the inter-cultural knowledge level takes more time to develop. Several of the Western representatives also suggested a lack of communication between the Russian mission at NATO and the very top of the hierarchy of the Russian Federation. It was claimed that Russia at several times could suddenly change their positions, and that it in this way had been “difficult to know what the Russians really wanted”. Another factor to take into consideration as well was the fact that the majority of my respondents had not been working at the NATO headquarters very long, and had very differentiated level of experience when it came to political questions regarding Russia. The reason for this, especially when considering the different country representatives, is the fact that diplomats usually do not stay any longer than 3-4 years at each Foreign Department station. As mentioned already, at the political level, there are only meetings between Foreign and Defense Ministers twice a year. To sum up, this frequent shift of states representatives together with a low density and a limited volume, might limit the development towards a solid basis of mutual trust and shared identity among the top officials working at the NRC.

However, as Åtland (2003: 11) argues, any given political community will experience upturns and downturns. For the development toward a security community however, it is crucial that the involving actors are able to uphold a minimum level of mutual trust during the more challenging periods. Overall, since 1997, Russia and NATO have been able to do

this. During the two suspensions periods, far from all ties were broken. During what my respondents deemed as the largest crisis in the NATO-Russian relationship after the Cold War, the 2008 war in Georgia, talks with Russia were not suspended through the format of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) (de Haas 2009: 3). As Åtland (2003: 19) argues, in a situation where NATO and Russia have mutual interests, the transaction level will recover relatively quickly. What this shows as well, is that after every 'damage' or large conflict, certain precipitating factors make Russia and NATO want to restore ties and cooperation.

During the Cold War there were no forum to solve situations where Russia and NATO member states displayed deep differences of opinion. The aftermath of the Cold War presented a changed situation with both a more globalized and interdependent world, which removed some of isolation that initially surrounded the two world's poles. While closer contact previously had meant higher tension, the new situation also brought new threats that mutually challenged both parties. Moreover, the new era eventually included an institution with the potential to present and meet each other's concerns, build trust on a longer time basis, and this way contribute to more peaceful conflict solving. Significantly, in three out of the four above conflicts, the boom enlargement, the war in Iraq and the CFE Treaty, violent acts did not happen. In the same three incidents, the NRC had a more frequent and qualitatively developed transaction density where elements of mutual responsiveness on behalf of both parties had been executed. Only at the last conflict, the war in Georgia, was a point where the existence of a NATO-Russia Council was not enough.

Regarding the war in Georgia, it is clear that the NRC failed. it did not succeed in preventing violence from happening, nor did it function as an “all weather forum” to be a place where Russia and NATO could discuss the matter. This does not mean that the negative development in the NRC led to the conflict. As a Norwegian representative told me: “Georgia shed light at how bad things were in the NRC before Georgia”. This view was confirmed by a German representative: “the NRC had not lived up to the expectations from the Rome Declaration – way before the Georgia crisis”.

Arguably, the connection between at the one hand, a poor transaction density through few meetings with substance and any attempt at bargaining or negotiating before or during the

incidence, and at the other hand, the violent eruption in itself, cannot be excluded. It may be suggested *that a more qualitatively developed and exploited institution would have a higher probability of solving the conflict peacefully*. On the other hand, it is difficult to conclude whether it is NATO's collaboration with Russia, or the Cold War paradigm of believing that it is the *deterrence factor* that contributes to making violent conflict solving more unlikely. But, when comparing with the situation during the Cold War, it seems highly likely that collaboration between Russia and NATO has in fact contributed to lowering tensions.

To sum up, despite a challenged communicational environment, as most multilateral institutions are, it is generally been recognized, that without these kinds of venues – international relations, cooperation in general and peace efforts become much more difficult (Hovi & Underdal 2000: 23pp). *Yes, to a certain degree, the NRC has contributed to strengthen the path towards a security community*. However, the institutional structure and scope of the Council has not been developed enough at this point. There are important limitations of the Councils reach, both concerning *volume, density and quality* to reach both reach its own potential through its defined abilities, and to reach a satisfactory level of Deutsch's proposed indicators of transaction density and mutual responsiveness concerning institutions.

### **6.3. Future Perspectives**

*“The 20-year long post-Cold War history of NATO-Russia relations is a history of problems, mistrust and mis-perceptions that have produced a relationship which can hardly be characterized as a true partnership. Moreover, the actual fabric of cooperation – including the NATO-Russia Council – has not produced any meaningful strategic rapprochement capable of overcoming the legacy of Cold War stereotypes, developing common threat perceptions and capabilities to deal with these threats”.*

(Antonenko 2009: 1-2)

Within international organizations, a high and qualitatively developed *transaction density* characterized by *mutual responsiveness* would, according to Deutch (1961) and Adler & Barnett (1998) be crucial features taking the relationship to the next phase to a Security

Community. Indicators that would exemplify the emergence of a security community, the 'Matured' phase, are argued by Adler & Barnett (1998: 50-57) to be multilateralism, unfortified borders, changes in military planning, common definitions of threats and discourse of community features.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, these indicators reflect a high degree of trust and a shared identity. As mentioned, the NRC have started work some of these indicators, and will produce a joint threat assessment at the end of the year. While the matured phase has not yet been reached, a continues integration process will most likely strengthen the path.

While another suspension of the NRC must be seen as a failure in the relationship, it can also be regarded as an opportunity, trigger mechanism or *precipitating condition*, to make radical changes. The war in Georgia in 2008 could be an 'exogenous condition', precipitating new changes, as the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 or the 9/11 2001 incident were to the NATO-Russian relationship as a whole. Elections of new political leaders, as with the election of Barack Obama as American President on November 4, 2009, or the former Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen as Secretary-General to NATO in the spring of 2009, are other opportunities to make new political and strategically focused changes. From NATO's point of view, the process leading up to the establishment of a new, strategic concept, which should ready by December 2010, could be a relevant and useful opportunity.

Both Russia and NATO say they need each other for the overall European, as well as global security. How can this partnership be developed so that suspicions are eliminated completely? How can a fully fledged security community between Russia and the Northern Atlantic community be developed in the best way? According to Deutch (1957), *mutual trust* and *collective identity* are required, basic ingredients in order to create "dependable expectations of peaceful change". The NATO-Russia Council is clearly not, at this point, enough to secure a fully developed mutual trust and far from any collective identity. In fact, after the crisis in Georgia in August 2008, the mutual *distrust* seemed to have been strengthened with relations going in the wrong direction. But it is possible to overcome this

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<sup>84</sup> Adler and Barnett separate between 'loosely' and 'tightly' coupled security communities. I choose to only look at the loosely coupled definition, since the time frame for a developing a tightly coupled or amalgamated one could be deemed to be too long and of higher insecurity.

stagnation in the relationship. Russia is geographically closer to Europe than for example Australia or Japan. It shares borders, history and cultural affinities with several European countries.

There seems to be several possible future *scenarios* for the NRC and the Russia-NATO relationship. A first scenario could be a *future membership of Russia in NATO*. As repeatedly stated by NATO, “in accordance with Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, NATO’s door will remain open to all European democracies which share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and whose inclusion can contribute to common security and stability”.<sup>85</sup> Noteworthy, this option has been promoted by amongst other the same man that is recognized for starting NATO's Eastward enlargement, Volker Rühle.<sup>86</sup> A second scenario could be the creation of a *completely new European security architecture*, as the Russian President Medvedev suggested in the summer of 2008 (Krickus 2009: 1pp). This option should not be excluded. A third scenario could be *the dissolution of the NRC* and a downplay of today’s multilateral security institutions as they are, where countries would pursue more bilateral agreements as a basis of their relationship with each other. This solution is not very plausible – or indeed desirable – in either the short or the long term, given how the world gets even more interconnected as times goes by. The 2008 global financial crisis showed how interdependent the world's countries are, how vulnerable they are, and many observers felt that the crisis showed an even stronger need for increased global governance. This has been repeated by both Russian and Western leaders. Another reason why this seems to be unlikely, at least in the short term, is that the survivability of organizations and institutions have historically been pretty strong. Often, only very radical changes can cause the death of an existing institution, because they seem to get better at adjusting to the current environment. A fourth scenario would be the continuing of *status quo*, with the NRC as a 'talking club' and consultative organ between NATO and Russia. But as Karaganov et al. (2009: 14) argues, “leaving things as they are will inevitably lead to a hidden or open rivalry between various sub-organizations of European security”. Moreover,

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<sup>85</sup> NAC Final Statement, 04 December 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Volker Rühle, Klaus Naumann, Frank Elbe and Ulrich Weisser. 'It's time to invite Russia to join NATO', Der Spiegel, 08.03.2010.



they emphasize that the two latter scenarios will only make “the parties participation on rebuffing real challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (will be) far less effective”.

Several observers have argued that by not fully including Russia into an Euro-Atlantic security architecture, the West is making a historic mistake over again (Kupchan 2010: 1). Lessons from the settlements after the Napoleonic Wars and the Second World War, suggest that former adversaries should be included in a postwar system in order to consolidate 'great power peace' (Krickus 2009: 88pp). As the assessment of the NRC has shown, international relations is not a one-sided process, however. *Increased mutual integration* should be an urgent aim for the two former adversaries.

## 7. CONCLUSION

When the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established in 2002, large expectations were made. The Guardian described the establishment of the NRC as “*one of the most fundamental shifts in European Security since the collapse of communism*”.<sup>87</sup>

Adler and Barnett's (1998) re-conceptualization of Deutsch's (1961) theory of 'Security Community' aimed at describing a multifaceted and complex process towards the creation of *dependable expectations of peaceful change*. While applying this theory to assess a single institution might seem like a mismatch, the theoretical presumptions of this approach have been fruitful in responding to the question: 'has the NATO-Russia Council been a success?' Employing Security Community theory has enabled an insightful analysis of interesting aspects of the NRC. Firstly, it is, and has indeed been a «talking club». It has also been successful in producing practical cooperation. Secondly, from the four test cases, it is probable that its existence has helped to reduce tension in the relationship, both directly and indirectly. It remains clear, however, that the NRC has only *to a very limited degree* contributed to laying the foundations for a Security Community between NATO and Russia. Though some more successful than others, the list of successful practical cooperation is not long and substantial. Despite expectations of increasingly engaging in new areas or forwarding the existing ones, the practical cooperation and overall transaction quality saw a slow downturn after 2004 and up until the breakdown in relations in 2008. Though difficult discussions have been held in the NRC, it has not functioned as an organ to solve disputes in times of crisis, as shown with the Georgia war of 2008. Moreover, it has not developed *enough* mutual trust and collective identity to ensure dependable expectations of peaceful change. Accordingly, the NRC's volume, density and quality have a potential for future development. Following Deutsch's assumptions, only through *more integration* between NATO and Russia can the overall Euro-Atlantic security be strengthened.

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NRC's Web Page:  
[www.nato-russia-council.info](http://www.nato-russia-council.info)

Russia's Permanent Mission to NATO: [www.natomission.ru](http://www.natomission.ru)

NATO's Web pages: [www.nato.info](http://www.nato.info)

The Russian Government's Official Web Pages: [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru)