

**United States Department of State***Special Middle East Coordinator**Washington, D.C. 20520*

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Strobe,

As I said to you at lunch, I have begun to think about the problem -- NATO expansion and the Russians -- that you have been grappling with for some time. I don't know if what I have to say will be useful to you or not -- or even if what I'm offering will simply be a rehash of what you have already been saying and doing. But, you know me, I've never been shy so there is no point in starting now.

With my apologies for being presumptuous up front, let me give my impressions of the picture I see.

To begin with, the Russians for all the reasons you know see NATO expansion through a political, psychological, and historical lens. Unfortunately, it tends to confirm the imagery that they lost the Cold War, their status as a great power is collapsing, they continue to be humiliated, and, worse, they will face potential threats closer to their borders. Politically, this gives the ultra-nationalists a field day -- particularly, if there is no effective counter to this imagery.

You have been working to create such a counter, and it is very clear to me that your Russian colleagues are interested in developing it. I will say more about how to develop the counter-imagery deal below, but here it makes sense to note two factors that will shape the substance of what the Russians feel they need.

First, they feel they were snookered at the time of German unification. As you noted with me, Baker's promises on not extending NATO military presence into what was East Germany were part of a perceived commitment not to expand the Alliance eastward. In addition, the 1991 promise to begin to transform NATO from a military alliance into a political alliance was part of the Soviet explanation for accepting a unified Germany in NATO. Today, I believe the Russians feel both promises should have had more of a binding and precise character. As a result, they are taking the lessons of 1991 and are trying to apply them now in the negotiations on NATO expansion. (This

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isn't to say that the Russians don't have genuine concerns about the Wehrmacht in Poland; it is to say that what is driving them tactically is the sense that had they pressed for much more concrete commitments in 1991, they would be far better off today.)

Second, they don't want the outcome of this process to highlight their impotence. They don't need further humiliations. Here I would characterize their concerns in the following fashion:

-- We (Russians) must not look like we sat on the sidelines as something so fundamental to European security was developed and implemented. In reality and appearance, we must be part of the process and its solution.

-- We must also shape the emerging structures in order to ensure that either we are embedded in them or at least nothing that could effect our interests can be done without us. (Partly this results from the need to show that as Gromyko said in 1971, "nothing can be decided anywhere in the world without us." And partly this results from the need to avoid further perceived humiliations like NATO's bombing of Russia's Serbian ally.)

Clearly, there are ways to address each of their concerns, recognizing that it is one thing to devise a process that gives them a seat at the table and another that gives them a veto. We can act on the first and, as you have been doing, make clear the second is a non-starter. Here the Russians must know we prefer no deal to one we cannot live with.

They are suggesting this is their posture -- namely, that it is better to live with no deal than a bad one. I'm very dubious that this is the case. The worst outcome for Yeltsin is NATO enlargement and no Russian-NATO deal. Nothing could further demonstrate Russian weakness and irrelevance. ✓

The point is we have real leverage but we have to orchestrate the process carefully to take advantage of it. If we don't, the Russians, will exploit the differences among the French, the Germans, the British, Solana and ourselves, and they will do so in a way that stretches the process out until at least the Denver Summit. If nothing else, they may believe that they can exploit our fear of a failure in Denver to get us to go beyond our redlines on the terms of a Russia-NATO deal.

How do we avoid this? First, recognize our leverage. Second, hold in reserve some of the key substantive elements of our package until we are closer to the decision-point. Third,

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devise a way to bring the allies together with us so the Russians can't deal with them separately. And, fourth, create a process that permits Yeltsin to show that Russia shaped the outcome.

Recognize our Leverage

As noted above, we have considerable leverage. The Russians cannot afford to look irrelevant to this process. While being willing to make a genuine effort to address Russian needs and sensitivities -- and make clear NATO does not view Russia as an adversary -- it is essential for Yelstin et al to understand they can push us too far. They must understand that the effort to produce a NATO-Russian charter could stop even if NATO enlargement will not. We don't need to play this with a sledgehammer but it is a message that they must clearly perceive. ✓

Beyond this, we have additional leverage. For one thing, Yeltsin has a profound need to show he is back in control, and that when he is, it makes a difference. He won't want to look like he retreated in the face of our pressure, but he will want to demonstrate how he took charge and fixed things. We should approach both the Secretary's and the President's meetings with Yeltsin with this in mind.

What will also matter to Yeltsin is clearly his international standing. From this standpoint, the Denver Summit is an opportunity for us not to negotiate the NATO-Russian deal, but rather to offer Yeltsin an additional place at the table. If we are able to make Yeltsin a formal member of the club -- assuming, of course, the climate is right -- we would have another arrow in our quiver. 5!

In noting that we have leverage and must consider how best to use it, I am not saying our task is easy. It is not. But we must use our leverage to give Yeltsin pause about an approach that could put what he values at risk. This will be far more compelling if at the same time he will be able to point to some very positive achievements on Russia's relationship with NATO, on security issues, and on the US-Russian relationship more generally.

Hold Some of Our Substantive Package in Reserve

In any negotiation, we always want to hold the key elements of substance in reserve until it is very clear the point of decision has arrived. We are not close to that yet. We have presented the elements of the package to the Russians --

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something necessary to show them we were serious about addressing their concerns. Between the charter, consultative mechanism, possible joint units, the approach to nukes, and CFE, we have enough on the table.

Refining, though not concluding some of these elements is one thing; adding anything more, like the revision of the 1991 strategic concept should wait. Even the refining should involve some but not all of the elements we have on the table for consideration; this, too, is one of the ways to signal there are limits, even while showing our Russian colleagues there are gains. ✓

The Secretary in her meeting should present a more refined package to Yeltsin as a way of showing him what we have done to meet Russian concerns. (We can't be sure what Yeltsin will know, or how he has been briefed, so we will want to put a positive step forward.) But she, too, will need to present some of the limits and hold back what may yet prove to be necessary sweeteners.

Devising A Way To Keep The Allies Together & Give Yeltsin What He Needs

This may be one of our hardest, yet most necessary challenges. No matter how much you, and Sandy work with your German, French, and British counterparts -- not to mention Solana -- I am convinced the Russians hear something different in every conversation and that encourages them to delay. It probably misleads them about what is possible, and it surely undercuts our leverage. ✓

That's obvious. So what do we do about it? Create a mechanism that addresses our needs with the Allies and Yeltsin's need to show he shaped the outcome.

I was initially negative about a Summit of the Five, and I remain so for the time being. It must be prepared. Therefore, I believe a group of the Five (or Six if you can rationalize Solana's presence) makes sense. It should initially be chaired by you. Then perhaps by Ministers. It has the virtue of folding the British, French, and Germans in, in a way that maximizes coordination at least when compared to the current situation. It gives the Russians the ability to say they are part of a visible process that will shape the future. Thus, it creates a platform that can give the Russians a way to explain what is going on. ✓

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To be sure, some will argue this is a forum where we will be in the minority. That's potentially true, but our chances to increase responsible behavior of the French, in particular, goes up in a forum like this. In addition, we will have a stronger handle on what is being said to the Russians. Finally, I remain convinced we are at a stage where how what we say to the Russians is as important as what we say to them. And, at the end of the day, the platform Yeltsin has for explaining the package will also be as important as the package itself.

The real question is what is the right sequence for using a group of five mechanism? And how does it relate to the Secretary's trip and the President's meeting with Yeltsin? I would propose the following sequence:

-- You work with Mamedov until and into the Secretary's trip.

-- Privately, with Kohl, Chirac, and Major, the Secretary raises the idea of the 5-power approach at your level, then hers and finally as a Summit. She then raises it with Yeltsin.))

-- You have a meeting of the five prior to the President's meeting with Yeltsin. ^

Ultimately, the logic behind this approach is that for the time-being, process is more important than substance. If we are to succeed, we must ensure the Russians can't play a waiting game; can't pocket the best that we can provide; can't easily exploit fissures among the five; and yet can present to their public an unmistakable vehicle for showing Russian needs were addressed and satisfied.

Dennis