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## Catching the BUG (Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia) - Russia's Buffer or NATO's Annex?

A New Framework for Euro-Atlantic-Russian Cooperation  
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Meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) on April 23. The author contends such institutions are failing. Image: NATO

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NATO-Russia relations are at an all-time low. A new framework is needed that centers on Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia. Certainly, common threats, such as terrorism, narcotics, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), and Afghanistan's instability, amongst other issues, still unite Europe and Russia, and by extension the United States. Yet, issues surrounding human rights, democracy, Conventional

Forces Agreement (CFE)[i], Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Missile Defense have divided NATO and Russia in recent history. 'Frozen conflicts' like those of Transnistria (Moldova) and Georgia, as well as emerging conflicts like Syria, have only served to further this divide. The Syrian regime slaughters its people, as Russia continues to arm it, while the United States supports Syrian rebels.[ii] Last year Turkey, a NATO member, called for an emergency meeting of the alliance after Syrians shot down a Turkish fighter jet with a Russian supplied anti-aircraft system.[iii] In the face of these recent conflicts, the current framework to resolve NATO-Russia crisis has failed.

I propose a new phased framework of NATO-Russia cooperation based on a realistic timeline and common security concerns: energy security, counterterrorism, counter-proliferation of WMDs, counter-narcotics, and stability of Afghanistan.

In sharp contrast to others that have proposed numerous frameworks as expansions of current regional organizations, treaties or initiatives, I propose a strategic timeout of any further enlargement of European or Russian regional organizations.[iv] The three most critical countries still 'in-between' are Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia (BUG).[v] I argue that BUG countries provide an opportunity for NATO and Russia to move toward cooperation in a measured and phased process based on common security issues. Three major trends support my argument: NATO-Russia status quo maintained by cooperation organizations is unsustainable and edging toward Cold War-lite; BUG is not ready to commit because public opinion data shows ambivalence about joining Russia's near abroad or NATO; and NATO-Russia-BUG energy and arms trade represents strong interdependence, which supports a phased framework of cooperation.

First, I briefly discuss the failure of current NATO-Russia cooperation organizations. Second, I examine NATO's approach toward Russia. Third, I examine BUG countries' domestic politics and their impact on desire to join Europe or Russia or remain neutral. I conclude with presenting parameters of a phased framework and address common counterarguments.

### **NATO-Russia Cooperation Organizations are Failing**

Examining the course of seven regional organizations and two regional initiatives highlights the failure of the status quo; with those organizations and initiatives being Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), Partnership for Peace (PfP), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO-Russia Council (NRC), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), and Medvedev's European Security Treaty (EST).

Several former Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern Europe joined the EU and NATO after 1992. For instance, the EU welcomed Latvia and Lithuania in 2004, and NATO welcomed Hungary and Poland in 1999 and Lithuania in 2004. At the same time, Russia initiated the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991 with Belarus and

the Central Asian States. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and The Partnership for Peace came about as a compromise for delaying NATO enlargement as Russia tried to get its house in order after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the early 1990s, future Russian membership in the EU and NATO was seriously considered albeit with apprehension and hope on both sides.[\[vi\]](#) Yet EAPC and PfP could not substitute the vitality, influence, power, and reach of regional organizations such as EU and NATO. The European Union provides a deeply integrated, mutually reinforcing economic and political unit build on five-decades of hard work and compromises. Centered on shared values of human rights and free markets, the EU additionally maintains a common currency despite current economic turmoil.[\[vii\]](#) Likewise, NATO is a firm military alliance with a record of cooperation and effective response to legitimate military assistance needs of member states under Article 5.[\[viii\]](#) On balance, unlike the successful and long-lived EU and NATO, Russian-led cooperation organizations have faltered due to a lack of consensus, low retention rate amid Russian dictation, and the absence of sustained economic or security cooperation that is a prerequisite for multi-country bureaucracies and joint operations.

In the early 1990s, Russia promoted and heavily funded the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). As time passed, however, and little was done to resolve security or economic issues between member states, most members began to think of CIS as an ineffective body.[\[ix\]](#) By 2012, Ukraine and Turkmenistan all but withdrew.[\[x\]](#) Russia has also created two more organizations to promote security and economic stability in its 'near abroad': The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). CSTO focused on military-to-military cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, training exercises, sale of military equipment, and as hub for the coordination of defense policies.[\[xi\]](#) The creation of CSTO was a direct reaction to Ukraine and Georgia's flirtation with joining NATO. Russia felt surrounded by NATO, and former President Medvedev, attempting to rival NATO, said that the Collection Operational Reaction Force under the CSTO, should have the "most modern weapons...on par with NATO forces."[\[xii\]](#) To counter NATO forces, in February 2009, CSTO agreed to form a 16,000 strong force, with Russia making up 50 percent of the force. Yet not everyone in CSTO agrees with Russian dominance. Uzbekistan, for example, considers a CSTO base in Kyrgyzstan, close to the Uzbek border, a threat, and refused to send troops to engage in joint exercises.[\[xiii\]](#) Furthermore, Uzbeks consider CORF to be a force that will be used by Russia to interfere in the internal affairs of former Soviet Central Asian states.[\[xiv\]](#) Consequently, CSTO has a bleak future.

The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) was established in 2001 by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as a direct result of the failure of CIS. This Eurasian community was meant to help member states (mostly former USSR states like Belarus) with economic revival, trade incentives, and regulation. For example, on July 1, 2010 Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia created a Commission of the Customs Union to regulate customs tariffs within the three countries.[\[xv\]](#) But

the other members were not consulted or invited, thus negating the value of the partnership. Tashkent suspended its membership soon after because it was ignored. In 2009, EurAsEC members created a \$10 billion (Russian contribution: \$7.5 billion) fund to help combat the financial crisis, as a bank of last resort for EurAsEC. Here too, Russia is the dominant player while consensus building, real action, long term planning, and a record of success are missing.[\[xvi\]](#)

Two major organizations were created to bridge the Euro-Atlantic-Russia divide with equally dismal results: OSCE and NATO-Russia Council (NRC). The NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 was established to increase cooperation between NATO members; in 2002 it was replaced by the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), which permitted the creation of a Russian ambassador to NATO, albeit without veto or other membership rights, with the goal of deepening communication.[\[xvii\]](#) Several major crises tested the NATO-Russia Council and the outcomes of the crises demonstrate the ineffectiveness of NRC. The Russia-Georgia War of 2008, recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states (demanded by Russia and denied by NATO), future NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia, and NATO missile defense have all strained NATO-Russia relations and shown the weakness of the NATO-Russia Council. On all accounts the end result of these crises was irreconcilable differences. Today, Russia has 10,000 troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and has placed missiles in Kaliningrad to reassert its strong opposition to NATO missile defense.[\[xviii\]](#) Moreover, several US tactical nuclear weapons, a symbol of Cold War hostility and mutual distrust, remain in Europe,[\[xix\]](#) and Russia refuses to ratify and implement the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).[\[xx\]](#) More trouble is on the horizon, as Russia and NATO are locking horns on the Syria.[\[xxi\]](#) Last summer, President Putin, despite US President Barak Obama's efforts in the G-20 summit, outright refused to stop supplying weapons to Syria or to endorse an NATO intervention in Syria.[\[xxii\]](#)

The NRC pales in membership to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is the largest Euro-Atlantic-Russia cooperation organization (56 member states), larger than the EU-27 and NATO-28 combined. Yet, its ability to influence events in the Europe-Russia theater is remarkably weak. OSCE began as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1973, and today works on a myriad of issues: arms control, border management, counterterrorism, conflict prevention, countering human trafficking, clean climate support, military reform, media freedom, human rights and democracy promotion, post-conflict reconstruction, and policing.[\[xxiii\]](#) It faces budgetary constraints, staff shortages, and limited capacity to prevent or mitigate conflict. For example, Russia accused OSCE of being a tool of the Western World when OSCE helpers were spotted in Georgia during the Rose revolution in 2004 and in Ukraine during the Orange revolution in 2006.[\[xxiv\]](#) Moreover, OSCE could not stop the Russia-Georgia war, and has done little to provide policing and post-reconstruction help to Georgia and break away regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.[\[xxv\]](#)

Regional initiatives are not far removed from the ineffectiveness of regional cooperation organizations. Europe's Neighborhood Policy and Medvedev's European Security Treaty are ineffectively implemented and resourced. In 2004, the EU Commission of the European Communities introduced the European Neighborhood Policy centered on spreading European values to non-EU members in Eastern Europe, including Russia, with the promise of economic aid and technology exchange.<sup>[xxvi]</sup> While aid was disbursed, it was unable to bridge the gap between Euro-Atlantic-Russia relations as Russia used energy blackmail, actively challenged the Rose and Orange revolutions, and waged war in Georgia in 2008. Moreover, Russia pulled out of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), and continues to divide the EU-27 by maintaining strong bilateral relations with countries such as Greece and Germany.<sup>[xxvii]</sup> While Europe's Neighborhood Policy struggles to develop influence, a Russian initiative is still on paper. Former Russian President Medvedev introduced the European Security Treaty on November 29, 2009 (in a written format), which proposed a leading role for Russia in Europe. The proposed treaty emphasized state sovereignty. This treaty was never ratified by any members, or formally presented by Russia, but it was a strong response to NATO's desire to expand. Without ratification, the treaty has had little effect.<sup>[xxviii]</sup> In summary, regional cooperation organization and initiatives outside of the EU and NATO are weak, ineffective, and add to the frustration in promoting a NATO-Russia détente. Next I discuss Euro-Russia relations context.

### **By-Passing European Unity: Russia's Bilateral Relations with European Partners**

Despite Euro-Atlantic-Russia tensions, Russia is engaging with select European countries on common issues of economic development and energy trade. In doing so, Russia is undermining the EU and NATO as organizations, and exploiting intra-NATO and intra-EU fissures to its advantage.

In a detailed study by the European Council on Foreign Relations, "A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations," the authors argue that Russia has created asymmetric interdependence<sup>[xxix]</sup> with Europe. Russia depends on the European market for its oil and gas imports as much as Europe depends on Russian gas and crude oil, yet Russia has exercised far more leverage in this relationship. While Russia plans to expand the market for its natural gas exports to Asia (China, India, etc.), at present most of its gas is exported via pipelines directed toward Europe, tying Russia to the European market through infrastructure limitations. Russia continues to expand its network in Europe while fighting off competing gas pipeline routes.<sup>[xxx]</sup> Additionally, Russia has taken advantage of divisions within the EU and NATO. Leonard and Popescu argue that EU and NATO members come in five categories. The "Trojan horses" (Cyprus and Greece) always side with Russia. Facing a major financial crisis, last year Cyprus reached out to Moscow over the EU.<sup>[xxxi]</sup> 'Friendly pragmatists' (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia), have a close business-focused relationship with Russia. The 'frosty pragmatists' (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the

Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom) focus on business but are more discreet; while the ‘new cold warriors’ (Lithuania and Poland) are openly hostile toward Russia, support the inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, and actively advocate expanded NATO missile defense. Finally, the ‘strategic partners’ (France, Germany, Italy and Spain) have a special relationship with Russia, which at times prioritizes Russian security and economic concerns over the interests of the EU and NATO.[\[xxxii\]](#)

Examining the parameters of the relationship between Russia and France and Germany, two leading members of the EU and NATO, highlights the dysfunction of regional cooperation. In 2007, former French president Nicolas Sarkozy went to Russia and cemented the latest iteration of Franco-Russian economic and military partnership.[\[xxxiii\]](#) For instance, in February 2010 France decided to sell Russia warships.[\[xxxiv\]](#) More recently a Russian arms dealer responsible for selling arms to Syria was spotted at the Paris Arms Fair.[\[xxxv\]](#) The Russo-German relationship is a close one despite challenges concerning incompatible governance values, NATO enlargement and missile defense, emerging conflict in Syria, and energy interdependence.[\[xxxvi\]](#) Generally, German elites like to play the role of mediator between Russia and Europe, and many Germany businesses are thriving in Russia as a result.[\[xxxvii\]](#) Most recently, Germany has been outspoken in its support of Russia’s entry into the World Trade Organization. With Russia hoping to take advantage of WTO technology exchange and modernization programs that come with membership, German firms heavily invested in Russia stand to benefit greatly from Russia’s WTO membership.[\[xxxviii\]](#) By establishing these bilateral relations with Germany and France, Russia continues to undermine the EU and NATO by playing their members against each other.

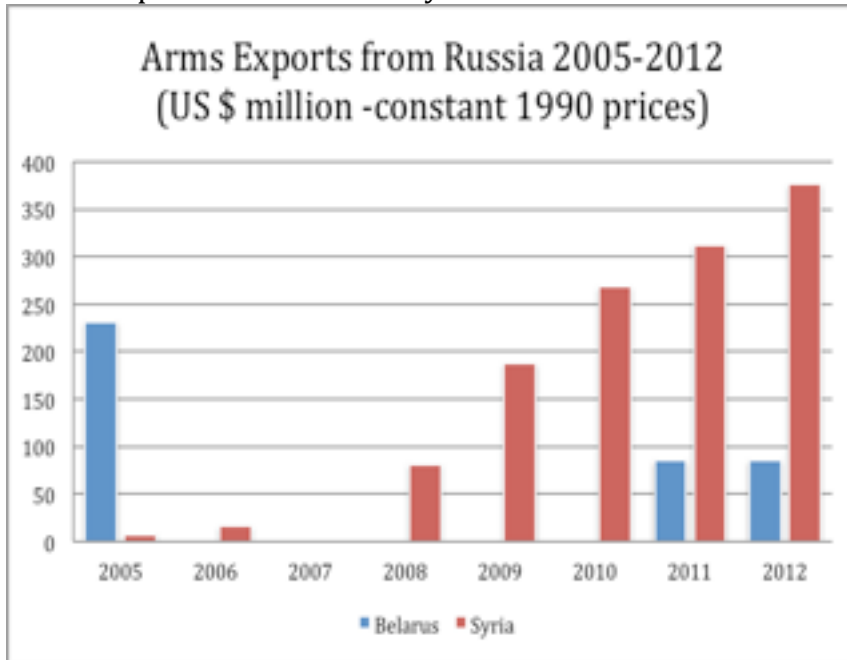
### **Not Clear Who Gets to Catch the BUG**

The dynamics of Euro-Atlantic-Russia relations shape how Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia act toward Europe and Russia. It is commonly assumed that the BUG countries are clear on joining the EU, NATO or Russia, but public opinion demonstrates a more complex and divided picture.[\[xxxix\]](#)

Belarus is usually referred to as “Europe’s last dictatorship.”[\[xl\]](#) According to Freedom House’s “Freedom in the World 2012” index Belarus is “not free,” which means that institutions such as a free press, checks and balances between the executive, parliament (or Senate), and judiciary are very weak, and that there is little to no sign of a constitutional democracy.[\[xli\]](#) Transparency International Corruption Index 2010 ranks Belarus at 2.4 (on a 1 to 10 scale where 1 is most corrupt and 10 is least corrupt).[\[xlii\]](#) Despite rampant corruption, the Belarusian economy recovered from anemic 0.1% GDP growth in 2009 to 7.6% GDP growth in 2010.[\[xliii\]](#) While Belarus’ 18-year dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, has been reported to side openly with Russia, public opinion poll data and his contrary statements paint a complex picture.[\[xliv\]](#)

According to a survey of public opinion conducted by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) in 2011, the proportion of Belarusians

who “would like the Soviet Union to be restored” has decreased from 56% in 1994 to 27% in 2011.<sup>[xlvi]</sup> When asked the question “which would you choose: integration with Russia or accession to the European Union?” 54% picked the EU while only 33% picked Russia. This public opinion data demonstrates that Belarus domestic politics are not clearly defined.



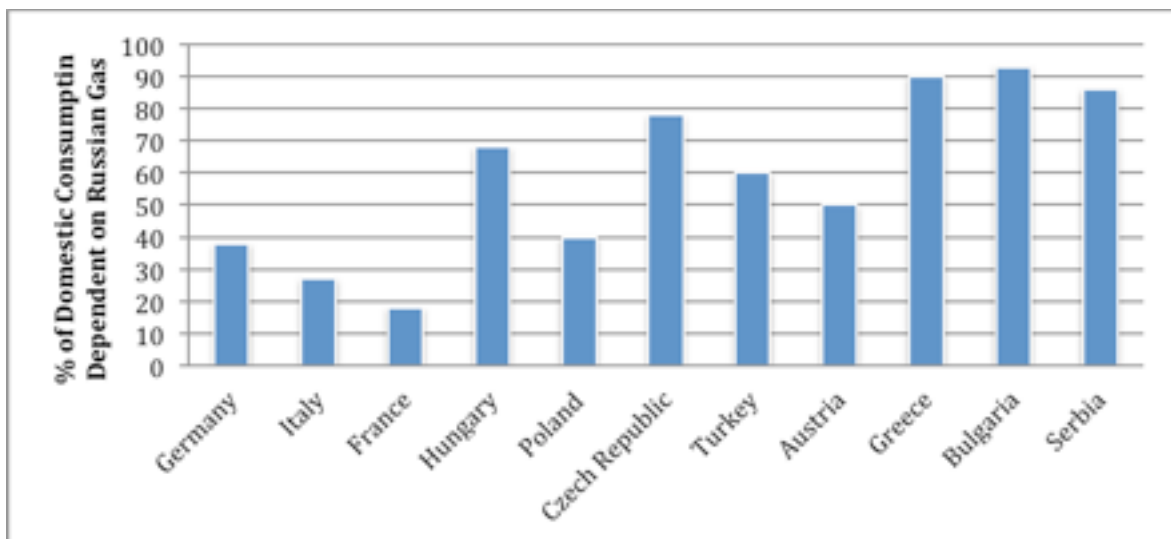
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute <http://armstrade.sipri.org>

The European Union’s stance toward Belarus since 1992 has evolved from sanctioning undemocratic practices of Lukashenko’s regime to engaging Belarusian NGOs under the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) framework. Europeans fear a Belarus-Russia union, yet Belarusians show little appetite for such a union despite importing almost 100% of their domestic gas consumption from Russia.<sup>[xlvi]</sup> Similar to Belarusians, Ukrainians are split on courting Europe or Russia. Generally, Eastern Ukraine, with a majority of Russian speaking denizens, leans toward Russia while western Ukraine leans toward Europe.<sup>[xlvii]</sup> Five issues affect Ukrainian elite as they wrestle over Europe vs. Russia: the aftermath of the 2006 orange revolution; the Russia-Ukraine gas faceoff of 2006; Russia’s Black Sea fleet on the shores of Ukraine; the Russian military base in Sevastopol; and the state of Crimea. Russia was very concerned about Ukraine’s orange revolution, more so than it was the Rose Revolution in Georgia. Russia feared that if Ukraine joined NATO it would end any chance of creating a “Slavic union.”<sup>[xlviii]</sup> Consequently, Russia intervened by cutting of gas on the pretext of a contractual violation by Ukraine vis-à-vis pricing.<sup>[xlix]</sup> Much like Belarus, Ukraine is greatly dependent on Russia’s gas, as nearly early two-thirds (66%) of Ukraine’s domestic gas consumption is imported from Russia.

Ukrainians are further split over Russia’s military leverage in the form of its naval fleet (Black Sea Fleet) and its Sevastopol base on Ukraine’s shoreline, which houses

13,000 Russia troops.<sup>[i]</sup> Despite the transfer of the Crimea to Ukraine in 1954, the status of Sevastopol remains unclear. On the one hand, the pro-European and orange-revolution-supported regime in Ukraine and its successor regime have asked Russia to leave. Contrarily, the local populace in Sevastopol and Crimea has favored expanding the base's lease because the military base and the Black Sea Fleet employ 20% of the labor force in the area.<sup>[ii]</sup> These employment numbers matter. Three years after the gas face-off and a year after the Russia-Georgia war of 2008, Ukraine, along with most of Europe and Russia, experienced a 15% contraction in GDP from a high of 8% GDP growth in 2007.<sup>[iii]</sup> Ongoing economic pressure makes the jobs the base offers to the region that much more important.

Two years after Russia cut off gas to Ukraine, Russian troops, a division strong, marched into the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in northern Georgia.<sup>[iiii]</sup> Today 10,000 Russian troops occupy these regions and Russia has recognized them as independent states despite no corresponding international recognition.<sup>[liv]</sup> Russia's relations with the north and south caucuses are complex and historical.<sup>[lv]</sup> In the north Caucasus, Russia has fought two major wars in Chechnya and in the south Russia has had tensions with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Much like its reaction to the Orange revolution in Ukraine, Russia was upset by Georgia's Rose Revolution that brought the firebrand Mikheil Saakashvili to power.<sup>[lvi]</sup> Saakashvili actively lobbied for NATO membership and even established an anti-Russian Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) with Ukraine in August 2005.<sup>[lvii]</sup> As had been the case in many frozen conflict zones in post-Soviet states, Russia had peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia before the 2008 war. These Russian troops withdrew amid Saakashvili's plan to establish control over all of Georgia. Saakashvili ordered troops to take South Ossetia in August 2008 and Russia responded with force on the pretense of stopping ethnic cleansing and protecting Russian citizens abroad (many of whom were given passports days before Russian troops intervened).<sup>[lviii]</sup>





*Source: Data from a report of the Energy Policy Research Foundation Inc., which appeared in Lucian Pugliaresi et al., "Is it time for Gazprom to hit the reset button?" Oil and Gas Journal , March 10, 2009, Vol. 18, 22, p 24-25.*

As a consequence of the historical relations outlined above, not many Georgians support Russia. The EU-27, NATO, and the United States did not encourage Saakashvili's dare devil tactics; instead, French President Nicolas Sarkozy negotiated a cease-fire. That same year, the global economic meltdown of 2008 occurred, and Georgia experienced negative GDP growth of 3.7%, from a high of 12.3% GDP growth in 2007. Unemployment rate also jumped to 16.5% in 2008 from 13.3% from the previous year. [\[lix\]](#).

Georgians remain worried about their economy and foreign policy. In a public opinion poll conducted by the International Republican Institute in winter 2011, 75% of Georgians worry about unemployment, 38% about territorial integrity, and yet only 4% worry about deteriorating relations with Russia. Still, 31% of respondents termed "war with Russia in August 2008" as a failure of the Gregorian government, while only 2% actually want the parliament to "solve Russian relations." On international relations, 94% respondents said relations with the United States, and 91% with European Union, were good, while only 3% said relations with Russia were good. 78% respondents said that Russia was an economic threat to Georgia and 84% think that "Russian aggression to Georgia is still going on," and yet 78% said that they strongly support dialogue with Russia to resolve issues. While a majority is in support of joining NATO, the percentage in support has decreased from 70% in September 2008 to 61% in November 2011, and most responded "don't know" when asked "when do you think Georgia will become a member of NATO?" [\[lx\]](#)

While Moldova is not the focus of this piece, it represents an important frozen conflict and is generally discussed alongside BUG countries. Moldova, like Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia, carries both peril and opportunity for Euro-Atlantic-Russian détente. If Moldova tries to conquer the Russian-dominated autonomous region of Transnistria, Russia may intervene as it did during the Russia-Georgia war of 2008. In a poll taken in the winter of 2011 by the International Republican Institute, 32% Moldavians complained about unemployment and 19% complained about corruption. In regard to international relations, 29% of Moldavians said their relations with Russia were bad, while 69% said that their relations with the EU-27 were good. Still, 66% of respondents said that Russia was an economic partner and 72% said the EU was an economic partner. When asked about joining the EU, NATO, or remaining active in Russian-dominated CIS, 64% wanted to join the EU, 53% wanted to remain a neutral country, 45% remain active in CIS, and only 39% wanted to join NATO. [\[lxi\]](#) While less consequential than BUG countries, Moldova represents another country in-between Europe and Russia that carries peril and confusion about which side to pick.

## **A New Phased Approach toward Euro-Atlantic Detente**

As discussed in the previous sections, Euro-Atlantic-Russian relations are complex and deteriorating. The current cooperation organizations are clearly not working despite regional interdependence. The BUG countries are not ready to join Russia or Europe, and a moratorium on EU, NATO, and Russia-dominated alliances is required to institute a phased approach toward Euro-Atlantic-Russian détente.

At present it is clear that the EU-27 faces myriad economic problems. The ongoing financial crisis in Greece and Cyprus has several foreign policy thinkers advocating internal strengthening of Europe by calling a time out on other social issues like human rights. [lxii] Consequently my main argument is that all expansion of EU, NATO, and Russia-dominated regional organizations should be put on a strategic hold. Second, geopolitical, economic, and security issues should be categorized and ranked under what works, what must work, what should work, and what could work in the future within a Euro-Atlantic-Russian cooperative framework and a reasonable timeline.

#### Euro-Atlantic-Russian Relations: A Phased Approach to Future Détente

<b>What Works (Timeline: NOW)</b>	<b>What Must Work (Timeline: 2016)</b>	<b>What Should Work (Timeline: 2020)</b>	<b>What Could Work (Timeline: 2035)</b>
<b>Counterterrorism</b>	<b>Energy Security (supply and price)</b>	<b>NATO-Russia Ballistic Missile Defense Compromise</b>	<b>The EU-27 push for Rule of Law in Russia</b>
<b>Counter-narcotics</b>	<b>Border Security</b>	<b>Mil to mil and other educational exchange programs</b>	<b>Climate change cooperation</b>
<b>WMDs non-proliferation, WMDs safety</b>	<b>Arms Control compromise (CFE, TNWs, Kaliningrad missiles)</b>	<b>Cooperation in Space technology and exploration</b>	<b>Support Russian healthcare system</b>
<b>Protect Nuclear Fissile Material</b>	<b>Russian support for Iran and Syria Crisis</b>	<b>Anti-human trafficking cooperation</b>	<b>Regional public diplomacy programs</b>
<b>Russian Support for NATO-ISAF in Afghanistan</b>	<b>Russia's compliance with the World Trade Organization membership requirements</b>	<b>Restart EU-NATO membership talks with Ukraine and Georgia</b>	<b>Substantively integrate Russia into EU-Russia framework</b>
<b>Arms Control (NEW START)</b>	<b>Infectious disease, early warning systems</b>		

#### Addressing Counterarguments

Helga and Bruns argue that the EU and NATO treat important security issues like frozen conflicts, border security, and counterterrorism as internal to Europe and remain highly skeptical to change from the external environment. Absent NATO expansion that includes BUG countries and Moldova, Europe will remain insecure. Recent NATO expansions in 1999 and 2004 demonstrate a net gain in European security because “the production of internal security...and the production of secure milieus outside [EU] ...are closely interconnected...” [lxiii] In other words,

a strong Europe ought be welded together with a wall of protection made out of BUG countries to keep Russia out.

I agree that the EU and NATO need secure borders, but I don't agree that the only way to have secure borders is continued EU/NATO expansion. The economic crisis in Europe and the brewing international crisis over Syria could pit NATO against Russia if Turkey wages a war with Syria and Russia continue to arm the Assad regime. NATO expansion is currently on hold. After the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008, many Europeans consider inclusion of Georgia into NATO a Russian redline not worth crossing. [lxiv] However, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton caused some commotion last year when she said that NATO's door to Georgia remains open. [lxv] This prompted a strong warning from Russia. Russia's Foreign Minister drew on recent history in commenting that, "It was active inspiration from the US and other Western states, commitments about accepting Georgia into NATO and a massive supply of armaments from abroad, that formed a sense of all-permissiveness and impunity for Mikheil Saakashvili, which pushed him to [engage in a] criminal adventure in South Ossetia." [lxvi] Given Russia's stance and the implications of expanding membership, further expansion of NATO at this time is not a good strategy.

Instead, the EU and Russia should help the BUG countries economically by supporting rule of law and modernization. As EU and NATO members mull over future expansion, BUG and Moldova should not join either organization nor should they become more active in CIS-related organizations until at least 2020. Moreover, EU-27 membership for BUG should come first and NATO membership second. While harder to join than NATO, EU-27 is primarily an economic body and much less threatening to Russia than BUG countries joining a military alliance.

There are also those that consider NATO expansion as the next logical step that ought to end with Russia as a NATO member. [lxvii] This is a dangerous proposition considering the myriad of Euro-Atlantic-Russia differences on missile defense, Syria, energy security, etc. Instead, as mentioned earlier, the focus should be on what works and future progress should be incremental and issues based (as explained in the table above).

## **Conclusion**

The Russian Federation and the European Union have had a tumultuous relationship since the breakup of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Early hopes of integration and enhanced cooperation were thwarted by a whole host of ideological and security differences. For nearly eight years (1992-2000) Russia and the EU tried to find mechanisms to integrate. A good example is the strengthening of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) held in Helsinki, Finland July 1975, through conversion into a Russia-Europe regional cooperation organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Lisbon, Portugal in 1996. Ostensibly, OSCE was created to bridge the gap between the EU and Russia in order to placate security concerns in the post-Soviet Era. The

EU and Russia encouraged former Warsaw Pact members like Poland and Hungary to join the EU and NATO, and Russia encouraged the membership of Belarus and Ukraine in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). While energy trade brought the EU and Russia together, lack of Russian democracy and human rights violations in Russia's breakaway region of Chechnya have soured EU-Russia relations.

Today, the road of Euro-Atlantic-Russia détente goes through BUG countries. They provide a great opportunity for all parties to pause, rethink and begin working on a phased approach toward viable and sustainable cooperation.

#### Endnotes:

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[i] CFE: Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, signed on November 19, 1990, divided Western and Eastern Europe into two groups: NATO and the old Warsaw Act, placing troop and military equipment ceilings on countries in each group. Russia pulled out of the treaty on April 26, 2007, and since then NATO members have tried to persuade Russia to come back and comply with military restrictions. The treaty also put limits on how much troops Russia could deploy to former Warsaw Pact countries. Russia has deployed troops in Ukraine, Georgia, and Belarus.

[ii] "Report: US Helping Syrian Rebels Arm, Fight," VOA News, June 21, 2012, [http://www.voanews.com/content/report\\_us\\_aiding\\_syrian\\_opposition/1216745.html](http://www.voanews.com/content/report_us_aiding_syrian_opposition/1216745.html)

[iii] Bladimir Radyuhin, "Russia suspends supply of anti-aircraft missile systems to Syria," The Hindu, June 28, 2012, (Yet article states that the current Syrian system is provided by

Russia), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article3577578.ece>

[iv] See for example Craig R. Nation, "NATO in the Western Balkans: A Force for Stability?" Southeastern Europe, 201, Vol 35, 1, 120-137.

[v] Moldova is sometimes mentioned as an addition to BUG, but due to the limited scope of this paper I briefly discuss Moldova. On importance of BUG 'in between countries," read Stephen Ganzle, "EU-Russia Relations and the Repercussions on the "In-Betweens," in Europe's Last Frontier? Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine between Russia and the European Union, edited by Oliver Schmidtke and Serhy Yekelchuk, 195-201. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

[vi] Michael Mandelbaum, "Preserving the New Peace: The Case Against NATO Expansion," Foreign Affairs, 1995, Vol. 74, 3, 9-13, and Dieter Dettke, "Europe and Russia: from Neighborhood without a shared vision to a modernization partnership," European Security, March 2011, Vol. 20, 1, 127.

[vii] European Union official website: [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

[viii] NATO official website: [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)

[ix] Stephen Aris, "Russia's Approach to Multilateral Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space: CSTO, EurAsEC and SCO," Russian Analytical Digest, German Association for East European Studies, April 15, 2010.

[x] Aris, Ibid. 6.

[xi] Aris, Ibid 4.

[xii] Aris, Ibid. 10.

[xiii] Aris, Ibid. 9.

[xiv] Sergei Blagov, "Russia Moves to Strengthen Ties with Uzbekistan," Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 28, 2010, Vol 7, 82, Jamestown Foundation, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=36319&cHash=b562ba643a](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36319&cHash=b562ba643a)

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