Book IV

ESTABLISHING THE DUAL TRACK

The Clinton Administration had decided to enlarge NATO—but slowly, cautiously, and with an expanded effort to engage Moscow. This dual track approach was seen as the way to manage the tension between the President's commitments to secure Central and Eastern Europe yet support Russian democratic reform. By moving gradually, the Administration also hoped to buy time to overcome allied doubts about enlargement, work out a cooperative NATO-Russia relationship, and assemble the various other pieces of its strategy—all without precipitating a controversial debate at home, in Europe, or with Moscow.

Russian and allied reticence weren't the only factors that led the Administration to opt for this approach. Moving gradually also gave NATO breathing space to focus on the considerable amount of homework it needed to complete before it could enlarge—both in the Alliance and with candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Those voices calling for a faster approach often overlooked the fact that enlarging the Alliance to Central and Eastern Europe was a major undertaking. A blueprint for how to deal with the political and military modalities did not yet exist, and first needed to be created. Institutionalizing a cooperative NATO-Russia relationship was also *terra incognita* that needed to be explored. The Alliance set for itself the goal of completing both the NATO enlargement study and the parameters for a new NATO-Russia relationship by the end of the year.

As the spring of 1995 unfolded, it became clear that this latter goal was going to be harder to achieve than expected. Yeltsin was under growing political pressure at home to directly oppose the Alliance's eastward expansion. As the nationalistic and anti-NATO tone in Russia increased, the Russian President started to inch away from his commitment to NATO-Russia cooperation. In May, President Clinton convinced him to finally follow through on moving ahead with a NATO-Russia relationship—but only in return for a pledge that the U.S. would not move on enlargement until after the Russian Presidential elections in the summer of 1996.

At home, the Clinton Administration also found itself facing a growing controversy over enlargement. Conservative Republicans on Capitol Hill now accused the Administration of waffling on enlargement and capitulating to Russian pressure. They stepped up their attacks on the Administration's handling of both NATO and Russia and tabled legislation in an attempt to pressure the Administration to commit to specific candidates and a clear deadline. At the same time, opponents of enlargement stepped up their criticism. The latter included some of the most influential voices on defense issues in the President's own party such as Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA). The Administration found itself in a fierce political crossfire between those wanting to move faster on enlargement and those not wanting to move ahead at all.

The debate over NATO enlargement was not taking place in a vacuum. Against the backdrop of the war in Bosnia, the Alliance was staring into an abyss. Its inability to stop the bloodshed in the Balkans increasingly cast a shadow over the U.S.-European relationship. Ethnic cleansing threatened to undermine European security, while the inability of the most powerful Alliance in the world to stop the Bosnian Serb military threatened to make a mockery of the vision of a Europe whole and free. And for the Clinton Administration, Bosnia was a cancer eating away at America's credibility. Until the war in Bosnia was stopped, NATO was hardly in a position to credibly extend new security commitments to Central and Eastern Europe.

In the summer of 1995, the Clinton Administration shifted course in its Bosnia policy and decided to make an all out effort to end the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II. Following the election of French President Jacques Chirac in May 1995, the United States detected a greater European willingness to use force in Bosnia. With a ceasefire established on the ground, the U.S. launched a second major effort to negotiate a peace settlement among the warring parties at Dayton. The success at Dayton in the fall of 1995 not only brought peace to Bosnia, but also paved the way for NATO to enlarge. It restored a sense of purpose and confidence in the Alliance and reassured Washington's allies that it could credibly extend new security guarantees to Central and Eastern Europe. Above all, the U.S.-brokered deal on Russian participation in NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) moved the idea of NATO-Russia cooperation from theory to reality.

By the end of the year, the NATO enlargement study was completed. NATO and Russian troops who once faced each other as Cold War adversaries were now preparing to deploy together to Bosnia. And the troops of former Warsaw Pact countries that desired NATO membership were preparing to operate side-by-side with NATO troops. It was a powerful example of how NATO was adapting to a new era and the challenge of projecting stability throughout Europe.

1. ESTABLISHING THE NATO TRACK

Washington's first challenge on enlargement in the spring of 1995 was to consolidate an Alliance consensus. While Holbrooke had steamrolled the allies into moving beyond PfP, many of them were not happy about the shift in U.S. and NATO policy and still had doubts about enlarging the Alliance. The NATO enlargement study commissioned by allied Foreign Ministers in December 1994 now became the vehicle for addressing those doubts. In late January 1995, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, reiterated that European support for enlargement was still shallow. "Few allies are enthusiastic about expansion, and several will drag their feet on getting the necessary work done this year, whether out of inertia or out of a hope that, somehow they will not have to cross this particular Rubicon." Washington had to view the enlargement study, he argued, "not as a technical exercise of working through the details of a robust NATO decision, but primarily as a process of building political support for the taking of actual decisions on enlargement in terms of real countries and real dates"—with the goal being "to get allies used to the idea of having new allies, comfortable with the fact that the alliance which emerges afterwards will not somehow be weakened, and confident that enlargement will not help bring into being renewed threats to European security."[1]

One way to do so was for the Administration to underscore its own commitment to moving ahead. From the President on down, senior Administration officials such as Secretary of State Christopher and Secretary of Defense Perry now delivered major speeches presenting the Administration's case for enlargement as the centerpiece of a more general overhaul of the Atlantic Alliance to help shape a unified Europe.[2] In the spring issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke argued that the U.S. had become a "European power" in a new sense and that NATO enlargement was part of recasting the Alliance as a permanent feature of a post Cold War Europe.[3] And in the summer, Deputy Secretary of State Talbott, still portrayed by some critics as an opponent, publicly argued in favor of NATO enlargement to help consolidate democracy and to promote stability in Central and Eastern Europe in an essay in *The New York Review of Books*.[4]

The Administration's increasingly strong public commitment helped to bring allies on board. In early January 1995, a team of senior British officials ar-

rived in Washington for consultations. Their message was that London would support enlargement, but wanted assurances that the U.S. would take the defense component seriously and not compromise the integrated command structure. It was also important, British officials underscored, to be "realistic" and recognize that some PfP countries would not be able to join NATO for a long time, if at all.[5] Following a visit by Foreign Secretary Sir Douglas Hurd to Washington, British officials cautioned the Americans that while enlargement was not something to be undertaken in haste, they were on board.[6] In late January Hurd publicly endorsed the U.S. dual-track strategy and shortly thereafter British Defense Secretary Rifkind told Bill Perry that London was in "lockstep" with Washington on the issue.[7]

Germany was the key, however. In the White House on February 9, 1995, Kohl told Clinton that his goal was to broaden the trans-Atlantic link, not to push the U.S. out of Europe. "We need to enlarge to Central and Eastern Europe," Kohl stated. "The issue, of course, is Poland, not Hungary or the Czech Republic." His top priority, he noted, was Poland: "They are our closest neighbor." But Kohl was equally adamant of the need for a parallel NATO-Russia track. Enlargement "will not work" if the West used harsh, anti-Russia language. "It has always been our position that NATO enlargement only makes sense if it does not lead to increased hostility with the Russians," he told President Clinton. "Therefore, we can only do it if Russia—and Ukraine as well—are part of the process."

Kohl urged great caution when it came to the timing of NATO enlargement. He supported using the rest of the year to determine the "why" and the "how" of enlargement. He praised Clinton for maintaining ties with Yeltsin in spite of the Russian invasion of Chechnya and the growing criticism by Republicans of the Administratino's Moscow policy. The West could not, he continued, simply "lean back and say that Yeltsin is an autocrat, a traitor to the cause of democracy. . . . I don't know if Yeltsin will prevail. But I am sure that if we leave him in the lurch, matters will get much worse." Kohl urged Clinton to stand up to those Republicans urging the Administration to accelerate enlargement. "We should stick to our [current] policy line on NATO enlargement. Perhaps we are wrong—that is a risk we always run in politics—but the other risk would be greater."[8] After Kohl's departure, Christopher cabled all American Ambassadors in Europe underlining that there was now a common U.S.-German position on NATO enlargement. "We now hope," the cable concluded, "to move beyond the question whether the U.S. is pushing the process too rapidly" while "recognizing that there will be continued delaying attempts from other quarters."[9]

One of those quarters was Paris. It, too, was worried that the Clinton Administration was already moving too fast and was likely to succumb to conservative Republican pressure to move even faster on enlargement.[10] Meeting with Secretary Christopher in late January 1995, French Foreign Minister Alain

Juppé queried him several times whether the combination of Chechnya and Republican pressure would lead Washington to pick up the pace on enlargement and adopt a harsher course vis-à-vis Russia.[11] At the same time, the first signs of a reappraisal in French attitudes toward NATO were bubbling up to the surface. In late January, Juppe gave a major speech laying out a post–Cold War Gaullist vision. In it he stated clearly that European defense for the foreseeable future could not be built outside of NATO. The expansion of the EU and the WEU, he noted, "will bring with it sooner or later the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance."[12] The election of Jacques Chirac as President of France later that spring would accelerate France's reappraisal of its relations to NATO, including its position on enlargement.

In the meantime, at NATO headquarters, diplomats were busy hammering out early drafts of the enlargement study under NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, German Ambassador Gebhardt von Moltke. By early March, an initial round of "brainstorming sessions" had led to agreement on a set of core ideas. The first was that enlargement's rationale was to expand integration and stability in Europe eastward, and not a strategic response to a specific military threat from Russia. A second was that there would be no "second class" membership. New members would share both the benefits and risks of membership and be expected to adhere to existing NATO strategy and doctrine and participate in both collective defense obligations and also undertake new military missions beyond Alliance borders. Subsequent drafts started to fill in the blanks on the criteria new members were expected to meet, the modalities on how enlargement would take place, and how enlargement would relate to PfP. The Alliance blueprint for NATO enlargement was slowly taking shape and allies were buying into the process.[13]

The assumption that NATO enlargement was not driven by an imminent Russian military threat also shaped early Alliance thinking on enlargement's military implications. While during the Cold War NATO faced Soviet military superiority, it was now the Alliance that enjoyed the upper hand. The Alliance's conventional superiority and the strategic warning it enjoyed allowed NATO planners considerable flexibility in carrying out new security guarantees. While new allies would be covered by the Alliance's nuclear umbrella and integrated into alliance nuclear planning, there was no need to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members.[14] Similarly, while the U.S. wanted new members to be fully integrated into NATO's multinational command structures, American defense officials concluded that there was also no *a priori* need for NATO to permanently deploy large numbers of troops on the territory of new members either.

Instead, NATO officials concluded that the Alliance could rely on the projection of military power into the region in a crisis to carry out its new defense obligations to new members under Article 5. To do this, it was essential that

NATO retained the right to deploy its forces to reinforce new members in a crisis or if the security environment changed for the worse. Relying heavily on reinforcement also meant the Atlantic Alliance would have to create the infrastructure so that forces of other allies could move in fast enough and in adequate numbers to defend new members in a crisis. In order to back this up, NATO defense planners would also need to routinely hold exercises on the territory of new members to demonstrate its reinforcement capabilities and to help the forces of these countries adapt to alliance standards.[15] But the bottom line was that NATO was capable of defending Central and Eastern Europe, and did not require the forward deployment of large numbers of allied troops has had been the case in West Germany during the Cold War.

By early March, Ambassador Hunter reported that the framework of the study was in place and that only a handful of political issues were left to resolve.[16] At the same time, the early draft suffered from many of the typical faults of a document drafted by Committee—it was too long, inconsistent, and written in bureaucratic code that was difficult for any layperson to comprehend. Washington wanted a document that was clear and accessible to the public, not one that only insiders would understand. After Holbrooke reviewed a draft in late March, he wrote a note to his principal deputy, John Kornblum: "John, I find this draft desperately didactic, diversionary, etc. It will cause us real problems with the pro-expansionists and raises too many hypotheticals. Can we still walk it back without an undue Euro-crise?"[17] U.S. diplomats were sent back to clean up the language and come back with a better, more accessible document.

On March 7, NATO Secretary General Claes met with President Clinton in the White House and assured the President that the enlargement study was on track and that NATO would complete its work by the end of the year. The most difficult question, the NATO Secretary General underscored, was what to do next. He warned President Clinton that if NATO moved to immediately try to tackle the question of the "who" and "when" of enlargement, it could "play into the hands of the Russian nationalists and communists" in the run up to Russian parliamentary elections at the end of the year and Presidential elections the following summer.

Claes was not the only one with an eye on the Russian electoral calendar. President Clinton looked, too. But it was politically dangerous to slow enlargement preparations until after the Russian elections in light of Republican criticism that the Administration was already waffling on the issue. Lake immediately pointed out that if such an assumption leaked it would appear as if Washington had given Moscow a veto over enlargement. "The consequence would be to destroy the psychological progress we have made in Central and Eastern Europe and it would exacerbate the domestic politics of NATO expansion," Lake underscored. Vice President Gore added: "We should never use the Russian elections as a reference date. It is not part of our decision-making process."

But the Russian elections *were* a reference point—especially as it became clear that Yeltsin had decided to run for reelection against communist leader Gennady Zuganov. No one in the room was more attuned to supporting Yeltsin than Bill Clinton. Claes responded that he was simply recognizing that a NATO decision on the "who" and "when" in December 1995 could play into the hands of the nationalist and communist parties. He added that the Alliance had legitimate internal homework to do that could be stretched out in a way to justify not tackling the "who" and "when" until after the Russian Presidential elections in mid-1996. "That's the way to do it," Clinton responded.[18]

When NATO Foreign Ministers met in late May, the enlargement study was on track. The issue barely made the news, having been overshadowed by the growing crisis in Bosnia and the Alliance's efforts to finally finish the NATO-Russia framework with Moscow.[19] Over the summer months of 1995, NATO officials wrapped up the final details for the study in time to meet their mid-September deadine. On September 28, NATO Secretary General Claes officially presented the study to a gathering of NATO and Partner Ambassadors at NATO headquarters. Claes highlighted the principles underpinning the study and the contribution enlargement could make to broader Euro-Atlantic stability. The Ambassadors from the Partner countries warmly welcomed and praised the study, with the head of the Polish delegation noting that critics of NATO enlargement now had to justify their claim that it would somehow endanger European security.[20]

The first track of the Administration's dual track strategy was in place. In Washington, on October 2, 1995, the Deputies Committee met to review next steps following the completion of the enlargement study. They concluded that NATO had to "maintain palpable and substantive momentum toward enlargement in 1996" but that no decisions on extending invitations should be made before the end of the year "given our interest in trying to ensure that enlargement plays as small a role as possible in the June 1996 Russian Presidential elections." Instead, they suggested that the U.S. propose to NATO intensified consultations with Partner countries seeking membership to familiarize them with what membership would actually entail. This would also allow NATO military authorities to look at the military capabilities of potential members.[21]

2. A PARALLEL TRACK WITH MOSCOW

Getting the NATO-Russia track up and running was more difficult but just as important. Supporting Moscow's integration into the West was crucial to the Administration in its own right. But ensuring that enlargement did not produce a blow-up with Moscow was also a *sine qua non* for keeping nervous allies on board. As Kohl had told Clinton in February, enlargement made sense only if it did not lead to increased hostility with the Russians. It was a view shared by

many allies. Enlargement critics at home were also predicting a train wreck in relations with Moscow. There was no better way to disarm them than to successfully deliver a NATO-Russia deal. Clinton was cautiously optimistic. Asked in February 1995 by Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok what he thought the chances were of getting the Russians on board, the President responded: "It will be difficult but at least in principle I think Russia can be bought off. . . . The Russians are still uneasy but if we make the most of Partnership for Peace and show good faith in dealing with Russia, then we can make progress on the timetable we have set."[22]

U.S. thinking was reflected in an internal Administration strategy paper circulated in early January 1995. The paper defined the Administration's goal as a formalized NATO-Russia arrangement that would reassure Moscow that NATO expansion to Central and Eastern Europe was neither directed against or aimed at marginalizing Russia in European security. To underscore this, it proposed that the Administration seek to negotiate a NATO-Russia "arrangement" in parallel to enlargement. The core of such an arrangement would be a consultative mechanism "with" but not "in" NATO. It would allow Russia to engage with NATO on a regular and ad hoc basis, to have timely input into Alliance decisions on Bosnia-type non-Article 5 operations, and to work out means of cooperation and in implementing those decisions.[23] But Washington also needed to protect NATO's only internal decisionmaking mechanisms from potential Russian mischief. The paper rejected, for example, Russia's demand that a NATO-Russia relationship be worked out prior to enlargement. Giving Russia a seat at the NATO table or some kind of "political membership," as some Russians had suggested, was also excluded.

In early January 1995, Talbott traveled to Brussels to share Washington's early thinking on a NATO-Russia strategy with Washington's allies. He met separately with Deputy Foreign Minister Mamedov to lay the groundwork for the upcoming Christopher-Kozyrev meeting in Geneva later that month. During a walk around the grounds of Truman Hall, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO's residence, Mamedov also pressed Talbott for a response to Yeltsin's invitation to Clinton to visit Moscow in early May for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the end of World War II. Talbott was noncommittal, and joked that his credibility as a Presidential travel agent had suffered a nearly mortal blow after what happened in Budapest the previous December.

Mamedov floated an even more explosive trial balloon. He suggested that the U.S. and Russia work out a secret deal, to be concluded by the end of the year, in which Russia would acquiesce to NATO enlargement. In return, NATO would have to take three steps. First, NATO would transform itself from a collective defense into a collective security organization—and revise the language of the 1949 Washington Treaty to that effect. NATO's historical task of deterring Russia as an aggressor would be cast onto the ash heap of history and the

Alliance would now commit itself to focusing on new missions, such as peacekeeping and counter-terrorism. Second, Russia would also be allowed into the decisionmaking mechanism of the Alliance, by either joining a "political committee" or through a binding consultative mechanism. Third, NATO would admit new members but only after this transformation of the Atlantic Alliance had taken place.

The two processes would be linked, Mamedov underscored: NATO expansion would proceed only if this internal transformation of NATO took place. This package, which the Russian side called the "reform" of NATO, would be concluded by the time of the completion of the NATO enlargement study in the fall of 1995. Such changes to NATO would be implemented over a three-to-five year period while the Alliance was preparing to bring in new members. As the "reformed NATO" was expanding, Russia would join "politically" or by some other formal arrangement. Mamedov also proposed a "confidential" exchange of letters on this work plan sometime after the upcoming Christopher-Kozyrev meeting, to be followed up with a "confidential" bilateral understanding by the two Presidents at the May summit.

Talbott sent an unmistakable signal for the Deputy Foreign Minster to take back to Moscow. "Your boss is on his way to making a huge mistake. You've given us a sneak preview of a disaster movie," he told Mamedov. Kozyrev was living in a "dangerous dream world" if he thought Washington would consider that kind of package. Clinton and Christopher were already taking a risk by being willing to go forward with a serious discussion on a NATO-Russia relationship against the backdrop of Chechnya and Russian behavior in other areas. "But this proposal could abort the whole process," Talbott continued. "Moreover, if it gets out that you're playing this sort of game, it could actually accelerate NATO expansion and exacerbate concerns that Russia is out to wreck the Alliance."[24]

Talbott sent Christopher a private memo on his conversation. Mamedov's trial balloon, he noted, crossed all of the Administration's red lines—the Russians might as well have proposed a U.S.-Russia summit in Yalta! But there was also a silver lining in what he was saying. The Russians were acknowledging that NATO was going to expand, and laying out their opening gambit on the terms of enlargement. The fact that this opening gambit was completely unacceptable to the U.S. was not surprising. That was a classic Soviet negotiating tactic. But the bottom line was that the Russians knew enlargement was coming and were willing to deal. In his upcoming meeting with Kozyrev, Christopher's task would be to defend Washington's own red lines while making it clear that Moscow's were unacceptable. Further, he had to convince Kozyrev that Moscow had little choice but to work out a special relationship with NATO before it expanded.[25]

Christopher and Kozyrev met in Geneva on January 17–18, 1995 for a private one-on-one dinner followed by a larger meeting of the full delegations the next

day. Discussion of Moscow's invasion of Chechnya dominated much of the meeting. But Christopher told Kozyrev that NATO enlargement was inevitable, that the basic character of NATO was not going to change, and that nonmembers could not be involved in decisionmaking. While Russia was not a priori excluded from joining NATO, Christopher made it clear that this was not likely to happen any time soon. The real question, therefore, was how to build a positive relationship between NATO and Russia. It was important that both sides roll up their sleeves and start to try to develop that relationship. The most important thing, Christopher concluded, was for Russia to engage and work with NATO through PfP.

Kozyrev initially trotted out a half-hearted version of the NATO "reform" plan Mamedov had previewed for Talbott. But he soon switched gears and admitted that the real problem with NATO was the widespread view in Russia that the Alliance was still an "alien body." To make a NATO-Russia relationship work, the two sides needed to address several Russian concerns. He went on to list four issues. The first was to show the Alliance no longer saw Russia as an enemy. The second was how to change Russia's public perceptions of the Alliance. A third issue was what Kozyrev called the "organizational trap," Russia wanted to be a partner with NATO but found the Alliance's decisionmaking closed and cumbersome. Fourth, there was what the Russian Foreign Minister called the "natural nervousness" that occurs when a military alliance comes closer to a country's borders.

To address these concerns, Kozyrev emphasized, NATO need to take several steps. First, it needed to show that it was changing its Cold War orientation and be seen as an institution evolving away from an "exclusive military body." Second, the two sides needed to come up with an institutionalized consultative mechanism for joint decisionmaking, and leave open the option of eventual Russian membership. Third, NATO needed to reassure Moscow that it would not move conventional or nuclear forces eastward as it expanded. And fourth, he suggested that there be a "joint market" for armaments in Central and Eastern Europe to help the Russian defense industry.[26] It was the first time Washington got a clear list of Russian desiderata. British Foreign Secretary Hurd subsequently assessed Kozyrev's demands as follows: the first was straightforward, the last conceivable, the third not impossible and the second the most problematic.[27]

In early February 1995, Secretary of Defense Bill Perry took the next step by laying out in public the key elements of what a NATO-Russia partnership could consist of at the annual major "Wehrkunde" conference held in Munich. "Right now, a set of plans for Russia's cooperation within and outside of the Partnership for Peace awaits their signature," Perry stated. "We should build on these plans. For example, we could have a formal arrangement—perhaps eventually codified in a memorandum of understanding or a charter—for a number

of cooperative arrangements." Such arrangements could include "some sort of Standing Consultative Commission to provide formal structure for our NATO-Russia relationship" as well as "a continuing dialogue on a variety of subjects, such as: counter-proliferation, cooperation on defense technology, transparency in defense policymaking, crisis management, and peacekeeping doctrine and tactics." While respecting each side's independence, such an approach, he concluded, "should give input into each other's decision-making and we should cooperate in implementing our decisions."[28]

U.S. and Russian officials had originally hoped to establish a framework for NATO-Russia cooperation by the spring of 1995 and to finalize an agreement by the end of the year. But the rising tide of anti-Western sentiment in Russia made that goal increasingly elusive. Throughout the spring, opposition to NATO enlargement grew across the political spectrum both in its breadth and intensity. The chorus of voices calling for a tougher line no longer came just from the far right or far left but from moderate and centrist Russians as well.[29] In late February 1995, Mamedov arrived in Washington for another round of consultations. He pushed for Clinton to attend the fiftieth anniversary V-E Day summit in Moscow. In an emotional appeal to Talbott, he argued that it was important that on this the sacred day for Russia, Yeltsin was standing on the podium in Red Square with western leaders like Clinton and Kohl, not anti-democratic pariahs like the Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, or Belarussian President Aleksander Lukashenko. The future of reform in Russia, he warned, could be at stake.[30]

In a larger meeting with U.S. officials the next day, Mamedov reiterated that Moscow wanted a NATO-Russia agreement by the end of the year that could serve as a kind of security safety net for the 1996 political season in Russian politics. Such an agreement was within reach, he argued. Indeed, the elements were already on the table: a statement that NATO's mission had changed; a standing consultative mechanism as outlined by Perry at Wehrkunde; an explicit statement that Russia was not excluded from membership; no prohibition on the sales of Russian arms to new members; and "guarantees" that there would be no NATO conventional or nuclear forces deployed on the soil of new members. Mamedov claimed that he had no illusions about when Russia might be prepared to join the Alliance, noting that it might take "up to one-hundred years." But it was psychologically crucial that NATO's door be open to eventual membership.[31]

In mid-March 1995, after weeks of debate, President Clinton decided to attend the Moscow May summit to underscore his support for Yeltsin. The President also initiated an exchange of letters with the Russian President designed to answer some of the issues Kozyrev had raised with Christopher and start to create a common framework the two sides could work with. In a letter dated March 15, 1995, Clinton wrote that the U.S. and Russia had a common in-

terest in building an inclusive and undivided Europe for generations to come. It was important to build on the existing foundation of institutions in Europe of which NATO was an essential one. The Alliance had already changed substantially since the end of the Cold War. The concept of containment no longer governed NATO's strategy and planning. Instead, the Alliance was focusing on new threats that could arise from ethnic and territorial disputes, weapons of mass destruction, and other post–Cold War risks. It was the President's way of signaling that NATO and the U.S. presence were here to stay but that the Alliance was changing in ways that Yeltsin could point to in order to answer his critics.

At the same time, President Clinton continued, a consensus among NATO member states now existed that enlargement would enhance stability in Europe. Clinton reminded Yeltsin that he had assured him the previous fall that Russia would not be excluded from eligibility to join the Alliance. The Alliance did not plan to make any decisions on enlargement "this year." Instead, it wanted to use this period to develop a relationship with Russia in parallel to the NATO enlargement study. The President underscored that good NATO-Russia relations could be achieved only if Russia cooperated with the Alliance, starting with the implementation of PfP. President Clinton enclosed an attachment laying out arguments on how NATO had changed. While ostensibly designed to assist President Yeltsin in making the case to the Russian public for a NATO-Russia rapprochement, it was really meant to counter the internal arguments from hard-line voices in Yeltsin's entourage.[32]

Clinton's letter, however, had not yet arrived in Moscow when Yeltsin himself joined the ranks of the critics, harshly criticizing Kozyrev for not being vigorous enough in opposing enlargement in a Kremlin meeting on March 14.[33] On March 17, Mamedov told Pickering that Yeltsin was again suspicious about a possible "acceleration of NATO expansion." Asked where Yeltsin was getting such mistaken perceptions, Mamedov responded that "some of your European allies are telling us again that you're pushing them harder on expansion than you're telling us, just as they claimed before Brussels and Budapest last year." He added that opposition to enlargement was growing across the Russian political spectrum and was likely to get stronger as elections approached. Kozyrev, he told Pickering, had been instructed to get a "straightforward" assessment of Washington's enlargement plans from Christopher.[34]

Two days later on March 23, Christopher and Kozyrev met in Geneva. Over dinner, Kozyrev expressed growing apprehension over NATO enlargement. He again admitted that Russian concerns were being driven largely by political rather than strategic considerations, but insisted it was critical that public discussion of enlargement be toned down given the changing political scene in Russia.[35] In a subsequent note to the President, Christopher wrote that Russia was clearly pursuing its own definition of national interest and the U.S. had to

do the same."[36] But the roller-coaster ride on NATO-Russia talks continued. When U.S. Secretary of Defense Bill Perry arrived in Moscow in early April for talks on U.S.-Russian military cooperation, Grachev told him in private that he supported moving ahead with PfP. But in public the Russian Defense Minister threatened to abrogate key arms control treaties if NATO went ahead with enlargement.[37] Russian General Alexsandr Lebed went so far as to warn of a third world war if NATO enlarged.[38] While no one took it seriously, it was a further sign that Russian politicians were competing to out do one other with their anti-NATO rhetoric in trying to score points against Yeltsin.

3. THE MAY-FOR-MAY DEAL

By the spring of 1995 a long and growing list of disagreements over Bosnia, Chechnya, Iran, and NATO were casting an increasingly long shadow over U.S.-Russian relations. With the President committed to visiting Moscow in May, an increasingly frustrated Christopher turned to Talbott to ask how the U.S. could better bring its leverage to bear.

Talbott sent Christopher several memos in the ensuing weeks laying out his views on how the Administration should manage relations with Moscow, including NATO enlargement, against this deteriorating political backdrop. Russia, he wrote, was a country in a transition of uncertain duration, course, and destination. Russians had lost their defining ideology, the principles for organizing their state and society, and their international role. The 20th century had essentially been a series of disasters for the Russian people, he wrote. Russians were only beginning to realize that the transition to a new Russia was going to be long and very hard. And Yeltsin was facing the political backlash from that growing realization.

At the same time, Moscow needed all the help it could get from the West. Most Russians knew this. Many of them resented it. The U.S. was the western country most willing to champion Russia's inclusion and eventual integration into Western institutions. That was the source of Washington's leverage but also a source of frustration as it reminded Russians just how uneven the U.S.-Russia relationship had become. Talbott noted how much Yeltsin had liked Vice President Gore's metaphor comparing the U.S.-Russia relationship to two space stations docking—precisely because it retained the notion of them as co-equals. But it was also misleading, he noted. The U.S. and Russia were not equals and were not going to meet each other half way. Russia was either going move toward the West or it would flounder as the Soviet Union did.

But Talbott also argued that the U.S. should not abandon Moscow when confronted with unacceptable Russian behavior as conservative Republican critics were suggesting. Instead, Washington had to focus on influencing Moscow's behavior over the longer term, recognizing that Russia's course would

be erratic. He suggested his own metaphor for U.S. policymakers. Washington, he argued, should view itself as the lighthouse on the horizon that could help guide Russian reformers to a safe harbor in the West. Russian reformers had their own vision of integrating with the West. What Washington could provide for them was a constant point of light and navigational assistance as they tried to reach western shores. Such assistance was needed not only during fair weather, Talbott underscored, but all the more so during rough seas to ensure that what he termed the "the rickety, leaky, oversized cannon-laden Good Ship Russia, with its erratic autocratic captain, semi-mutinous crew and stinking bilge (complete with black eye patches and peg legs)" had a clearly visible point on the horizon to steer by."[39]

Washington's leverage, Talbott continued, came from the fact that the U.S. controlled the pace of Moscow's integration with the West. Moscow knew that American willingness to champion Russia's integration into the West was conditional and subject to review. Yeltsin knew that if he went in the wrong direction on NATO, for example, the Alliance could accelerate enlargement. If he moved in the right direction, however, Russia would get more cooperation, international acceptance, and financial assistance. Washington and its allies therefore had to defend NATO's red lines but also keep holding the door open to cooperation—in spite of Moscow's regular anti-Western outbursts. Washington's ace in the hole, Talbott concluded, was Clinton's personal relationship with Yeltsin. The Russian President wanted to make Russia a normal Western country at peace with itself and its neighbors. Given the choice between isolation and integration, Yeltsin would choose integration. But he was increasingly surrounded by advisors whose orientation was anti-reformist if not openly revanchist. That meant Clinton had to involve the Russian President directly.[40]

In early April, the Deputies Committee met again to review what additional steps the U.S. might consider to respond to the demands Kozyrev had laid out to Christopher. In what became known as the "May-for-May" deal, the Deputies recommended that the U.S. reaffirm to Moscow that NATO actions in 1995 would be limited to completing the NATO study and briefing Central and East Europeans on its results if Moscow was prepared to take the next steps on PfP and work to reach closure on the framework of a new NATO-Russia relationship by December. When the Alliance would tackle the question of "who" or "when" in 1996 with both Russian and U.S. Presidential elections scheduled was left open.[41]

President Clinton had more immediate concerns. In a meeting with British Prime Minister John Major on April 4, he noted that Yeltsin was backing away from his previous assurances on NATO. "I thought that if we could get an understanding with the Russians [on NATO enlargement], we could achieve some level of comfort and tone down the rhetoric," Clinton told Major. "I thought we could proceed at a deliberate pace, but my current feeling is that

Yeltsin is mishandling the issue." But he also told Major that the fact Yeltsin was being driven in the wrong direction by Russian domestic politics made it all the more important to remain engaged with him in spite of the criticism he was facing from Republicans on this issue. "Anything we can do in May to get him more centered on the issue would be helpful," Clinton said. "When we stay away from Yeltsin, domestic politics begin to affect him."[42]

The next day President Clinton met with his foreign policy team in the Oval Office. Christopher tried to brace him for what he warned could be a difficult visit to Moscow. The Yeltsin he would meet in May would be "a different man from the one you dealt with in Vancouver, when he was worried about his own survival, and even from the one you dealt with here in Washington last September when he seemed prepared to be sensible about NATO," Christopher warned. The Russian President was consumed by domestic politics and the growing opposition to NATO enlargement. He had taken the NATO portfolio completely into his own hands. "Only he can decide the issue and he's got a lot of people around him pushing him the wrong way. You're going to have to deal with him yourself and make him understand that his current course is self-destructive. He may do another Budapest on you."[43]

Following a quick Talbott trip to Moscow to test the waters, President Clinton reconvened his foreign policy team on April 13. This time Clinton was worried about the depth of the allied commitment to NATO enlargement, too. "They aren't exactly sounding four-square behind me on this thing," he told his advisors. "They're probably sympathetic to some of the arguments they're hearing from the Russians. They worry that I'm being driven by the Polish-American vote in 1996 and the Republicans just aggravate that calculus." There was a danger that Moscow would isolate the U.S. and split the Atlantic Alliance. "We're getting double-boxed here—both by the Russians and the Europeans." It made a NATO-Russia understanding all that more difficult yet also more important to achieve. Talbott and Perry laid out the strategy for the summit and the run up to the NATO Ministerial in May. As the meeting was breaking up, Clinton pulled Talbott aside and said: "Strobe, I want you to bust your ass to get this thing fixed along the lines you and Bill [Perry] were talking about."[44]

For the third time that spring, Christopher and Kozyrev met on April 27, this time in the U.S. State Department's Madison Room for two hours. The U.S. Secretary of state noted that Yeltsin's response to President Clinton's letter had been positive and bore Kozyrev's fingerprints. The Russian Foreign Minster replied that they were bloodstains and reflected the blood he had shed to get the letter past hard-liners in Yeltsin's entourage. The answer to Russia's concerns about enlargement, Christopher countered, was an active NATO-Russia dialogue. "That's fine," said Kozyrev, "but I need an ally in Washington to make this work." Christopher responded: "You've got an ally in me and another one at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue."[45]

Christopher then laid out the "May-for-May" deal. If Russia would commit to signing up for PfP at the spring NATO Ministerial, the U.S. would ensure that the Alliance would proceed "no faster and no slower" than already agreed, and put a fresh emphasis on inaugurating the NATO-Russia dialogue. The U.S. would avoid any suggestion that it was speeding up enlargement. In return, Moscow would avoid claiming it had slowed it down. Since NATO had yet to set a definite timeline for enlargement, the deal provided political cover for both sides. Christopher added that he expected the Alliance to be busy at the December 1995 Ministerial following up on the NATO enlargement study. While not saying so explicitly, Christopher was telling Kozyrev that the Alliance would not make any major decisions on the "who" or the "when" of enlargement until well into 1996—at the earliest.

Kozyrev underscored the need to avoid public statements that could aggravate the political situation in Moscow on NATO. "There is so much talk about the expansion of NATO and about the acceleration of that expansion," he stated, "that it is like an echo in a valley in the mountains that causes an avalanche." Christopher's approach, he noted, seemed "pragmatic enough" and that "there is really no other way to handle the issue." But he cautioned he was not sure he could deliver Yeltsin, and that Clinton would have to help get the Russian President on board. Western statements on enlargement were being used to torpedo Russian participation in PfP. Hard-liners in Moscow were urging the Russian President to try to halt enlargement by imposing "countermeasures" designed to scare off the West. It was essential to get momentum back into the NATO-Russia track. Only Yeltsin could give the green light on that.[46]

The next morning Christopher took Kozyrev to the White House for a brief meeting with the President to seal the agreement. Later that day, Clinton telephoned Yeltsin. He assured Yeltsin that enlargement was proceeding along the path the two Presidents had agreed to the previous September, and went on to describe the "May-for-May" deal in some detail. Just as the interpreter was beginning to translate Clinton's fairly long statement into Russian, Yeltsin hung up. After the connection was re-established, Yeltsin agreed to support the agreement in a preliminary basis but added that he wanted to clarify some details and insisted that the two men discuss it in greater detail in Moscow.[47]

President Clinton met with Yeltsin in Moscow on the margins of the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Talbott was the President's notetaker in these meetings and often fine-tuned Clinton's talking points at the last minute. This time he added a brief note to accompany the talking points entitled "May 10: The Moment of Truth." The summit, he said, was key to both strategies and crucial to President Clinton's vision of post–Cold War Europe: admitting new members to NATO and to developing a security relationship between the Atlantic Alliance and Russia. The best outcome that could be hoped for, Talbott wrote, was one in which President Clinton disabused

Yeltsin of his fears regarding NATO enlargement and secured Russia's membership in PfP. The start of a NATO-Russia dialogue could, by the end of the year, yield a framework for NATO-Russia relations.

The second-best outcome would be an inconclusive, but not acrimonious, exchange—no breakthrough—but also not a second Budapest. The Russians were motivated by a fear and a hope—the fear that Washington would accelerate expansion, and the hope that they could drive a wedge between the U.S. and its NATO allies to stop it. President Clinton had to convince them otherwise. The U.S. comeback, Talbott wrote, was to convince Yeltsin that NATO enlargement would proceed even if the Russians refused to permit progress on the NATO-Russia track—which would only further isolate Moscow. Talbott's note concluded: "Yeltsin has taken over this issue personally. It must be resolved at the Presidential level."[48]

On the morning of May 10, 1995, Clinton and Yeltsin met one-on-one in Saint Catherine's Hall of the Kremlin. Whatever open-mindedness Yeltsin had shown to the President the previous September was gone. Instead, the Russian President adamantly tried to persuade Clinton to halt, postpone or limit the future scope of NATO enlargement. "I see nothing in enlargement but humiliation for Russia," Yeltsin said. Many Russians were afraid of it and viewed enlargement as a new form of encirclement, he continued. "For me to agree to the borders of NATO expanding toward those of Russia would constitute a betrayal of the Russian people," Yeltsin stated. Wasn't it better to think about creating new pan-European structures with joint U.S. and Russian guarantees to Central and Eastern Europe? Wouldn't it be better to postpone enlargement until 2000 to calm down the situation, he asked? Finally, Yeltsin noted that some of Washington's key Western allies, such as France, did not support U.S. policy. But he also told Clinton he knew that British Prime Minister Major and German Chancellor Kohl "are under your influence" and had "tried to talk me into your approach."

Clinton replied that he wanted to first talk about the merits of enlargement and then the political problems it posed for Yeltsin. The real issue, he stated, was whether the U.S. would remain involved in European security after the Cold War to help promote a unified, integrated Europe. NATO, President Clinton argued, was also founded to keep the U.S. and Canada involved in European security. Although the Cold War was over and Russia no longer posed a threat to NATO, the U.S. still needed to be involved, he continued. Yeltsin interrupted to say he was not sure the U.S. still needed to be permanently involved in Europe. President Clinton countered: "Well, Boris, I believe we do. Yesterday's ceremony [commemorating V-E Day] was a reminder of why." According to Clinton, the issue was how to ensure that the U.S. stayed involved in Europe and that Russia, too, be integrated and allowed to play a role.

The U.S., President Clinton underscored, was committed to doing everything it could to open the doors of Western financial, political, and other insti-

tutions to Russia. But Russia had to walk through those doors itself and participate in PfP and build a positive NATO-Russia dialogue. Looking ahead, Clinton proposed four steps. First, the U.S. and Russia should make the best out of PfP—which required Moscow to join it. Second, the U.S. was willing to make a clear statement that Russia should not be excluded from NATO membership. Third, the two sides should agree to work together to build a special NATO-Russia relationship. Fourth, that "there be a very deliberate process for review of NATO's membership—a process that's designed, among other things, not to cause you problems in 1996." The President explained how NATO's consultation schedule would, in his words, "consume us for the first half of 1996."

Yeltsin then interjected: "The first half? Meaning what?" Clinton repeated that NATO's own planned consultations would consume "a major portion of 1996" and that he, mindful of the political pressures facing Yeltsin, had tried to structure the NATO processes accordingly. After a long pause, Yeltsin acknowledged he understood Clinton's line of reasoning. But, he continued, there was not only a strategic but also a political issue: Russian parliamentary elections were scheduled for late 1995 and Russian Presidential elections for mid-1996. His electoral position heading into the 1996 elections was not good, he conceded. "One false move now could ruin everything," Yeltsin remarked. Could the American President postpone any major decisions on enlargement until after the Russian Presidential elections, he asked? It was Yeltsin's first unambiguous sign to Clinton that he would run for reelection in 1996, thus breaking a vow he had made many times in public that he would not, again, seek public office.

"If there is anything I can do to help you, I will," Clinton told Yeltsin. He pointed out how he had stood by Yeltsin on many occasions as President, including coming to Moscow in spite of Chechnya. Clinton noted that he, too, faced a difficult reelection campaign in 1996. Conservative Republicans were pushing for rapid NATO enlargement, he said, adding that this would be an issue in Midwestern states he had won in the 1992 Presidential elections by a narrow electoral margin. "So here is what I want to do," President Clinton continued. "I've made it clear I'll do nothing to accelerate NATO enlargement. I'm trying to give you now, in this conversation, the reassurance you need for '95 and '96. But we need to be careful that neither of us appears to capitulate. For you, that means you're not going to embrace expansion; for me it means no talk about slowing the process down or putting it on hold or anything like that."

Clinton suggested that if Yeltsin agreed to move forward on PfP and start the NATO-Russia dialogue, he would control the timing of the enlargement process "so that nothing is done to cause you a problem." When Yeltsin replied that expansion should be held back until after the Russian Presidential elections, Clinton reiterated that if Yeltsin signed PfP and began the NATO-Russia dialogue, then "I can get you past the next election with no discussion of 'who' or

'when.'" Yeltsin then proposed a break. When the two leaders resumed their conversation, Yeltsin, who had huddled with his advisors during the break, said: "I accept your plan, especially what you said about delaying through the Presidential election in '96. But this is not something we should tell the press. Let's tell them that we discussed the issue—not conclusively, but we understood each other. . . . As for the political fallout, we can both absorb the punches we'll take." Clinton responded: "Good, so join PfP, too." Yeltsin responded: "Okay, we sign both documents."[49]

It was a breakthrough. In their joint press conference, Clinton remarked that progress had been made with regard to European security. "While there was not an agreement between us on the details on the question of the expansion of NATO," the American President stated, "Russia did agree to enter into the Partnership for Peace. And I committed myself in return at the meeting at the end of the month to encourage the beginning of the NATO-Russia dialogue which I think is very important." In response, Yeltsin added that one needed to look at the question of NATO enlargement in broader terms: While noting that one could not say the two Presidents had agreed on the subject, he underscored that they had had a long and positive meeting and that they would continue to consult when they next saw each other.[50]

Following President Clinton's departure from Moscow, U.S. officials started to hear rumors that opposition in Moscow was mounting and that the deal was in danger of unraveling. On May 23, Clinton wrote Yeltsin to firm up the understanding, describing it as an "act of statesmanship that would help open a new era in the history of Europe."[51] Nonetheless, Washington continued to receive reports that at a Kremlin meeting anti-reformist forces—led by Russia's SVR Chief Primakov, Presidential Advisor Baturin, Deputy Defense Minister Kokoshin, and the Executive Secretary of the Russian Security Council Lobov—made a last-minute attempt to scuttle the deal, sack Kozyrev, and embrace a hard-line strategy to try to stop enlargement.[52] The Russian press even reported that the Defense Ministry had convinced Yeltsin that NATO enlargement could be stopped with a "decisive no."[53]

On May 26, however, Yeltsin confirmed in writing to Clinton that the understanding the two men had reached in Moscow was still on.[54] NATO diplomats nonetheless awaited the arrival of Kozyrev at the Alliance's spring Ministerial in Noordwijk, the Netherlands with some trepidation. But Kozyrev signed Russia's Individual Partnership Program (IPP) and a second document entitled "Areas of Profound Dialogue between Russia and NATO," without incident. In his statement to NATO Ministers, he underscored the need for the Alliance to "transform" itself "from a military alliance to a political organization with corresponding changes in NATO institutions and basic documents." But it was a *pro forma* demand, not a precondition for moving forward.[55] As *The Economist* put it, Russia had "grunted" yes on NATO-Russia cooperation.[56]

Following the meeting, Christopher wrote the President that it was the "good" Kozyrev who had shown up in Brussels this time. The U.S. would have to continue to carry the burden of bringing the NATO-Russia relationship to life but, he concluded, Russia had crossed an important threshold toward integration with the West.[57]

But the U.S. was not out of the woods yet. At a major academic conference on European security held in Moscow in late June, First Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kokoshin told the gathering: "We have a national consensus in Russia against NATO expansion."[58] The influential Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy issued a report arguing that Moscow could still stop enlargement by adopting a harsher anti-NATO line and allying itself with opponents of enlargement in the West. It pointed to enlargement critics in the West and claimed that proponents were still in a minority[59] The chief author of the Council's report, Sergei Karaganov, Director of the Institute of Europe, boasted to American diplomats that while Moscow's chances of stopping enlargement had been reduced because of the war in Chechnya, the odds were still in favor of Moscow stopping it. When reminded of Moscow's failure to stop NATO's Euromissile deployments in the early 1980s, his response was that this time Moscow would rely on mainstream conservative parties, not just on Greens and leftists, in pursuing its campaign.[60]

4. THE POLITICAL BATTLE HEATS UP

It was not only in Russia that the controversy over NATO enlargement was heating up. At home the Administration found itself caught in a political crossfire between those who wanted to enlarge NATO faster and those who did not want to enlarge it at all. What started out as a trickle grew into a torrent of criticism in the spring of 1995 as the enlargement issue exploded into one of the most divisive foreign policy debates since the end of the Cold War. At a time of general indifference over foreign policy issues, NATO enlargement sparked an increasingly fierce debate not only in the strategic community but also in the media and on Capitol Hill. Dueling op-eds in favor of and against enlargement appeared in many newspapers in what Administration officials referred to as the "op-ed war on enlargement." National Security Council Senior Director Dan Fried and Poland's Ambassador to Washington, Jerzy Kozminski, jokingly compared the debate to the old Stalinist thesis from the 1930s regarding the onset of communism: the closer you come to reaching the goal, the greater the intensity of the class struggle.

Several factors contributed to this escalation. In terms of substance, NATO enlargement generated so much controversy precisely because it raised issues that went beyond the question of the future of Central and Eastern Europe and whether and how to integrate those countries into the West. It also raised the

issue of what kind of vision the U.S. had of Europe and NATO in a world absent a communist threat, as well as what kind of relationship the U.S. and Europe wanted to have with Moscow. In the U.S., the debate also became a kind of surrogate litmus test for many on the issue of whether the U.S. was stepping up its international engagement or retreating from it with the Cold War's end.

Democrats and Republicans often approached these issues with very different premises. President Clinton came to power focused on Russia as his top foreign policy priority. He had subsequently embraced NATO enlargement as well, not as an anti-Russia move but rather as part of a strategy to consolidate democracy in Europe's eastern half and modernize NATO to face new threats after the end of the Cold War. For many Democrats, they key issue was whether, and how, to reconcile enlargement with a commitment to democratic Russian reform, so that the U.S. could pursue both goals.

In contrast, Republicans were less trusting of Moscow and more wedded to the traditional view of NATO's role as a hedge against potential residual neo-imperial Russian impulses. They supported NATO enlargement first and foremost as a hedge against Russia and were skeptical about the Administration's broader efforts to transform the Alliance. They opposed Clinton's policy on Russia, and increasingly so in the aftermath of Moscow's invasion of Chechnya and the drift in Russian politics toward greater nationalism. They were much more comfortable in expanding but preserving the old NATO and talk of a "new NATO" made them nervous.

Moreover, relations between the Clinton Administration and the Republican leadership on Capitol Hill were going from bad to worse. Many Republicans did not like or trust President Clinton. They thought his policy on Russia was misguided and bordered on appeasement. In a hearing before the Senate Sub-Committee on Foreign Operations of the Appropriations Committee in mid-February 1995, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) bluntly attacked the Clinton Administration's Russian policy and its main architect, Strobe Talbott.[61] Although President Clinton had embraced NATO enlargement, Republicans doubted his commitment and saw this as an opportunity to attack the Administration's foreign policy competence and credentials. As William Safire wrote in *The New York Times* in January 1995: "President Clinton is waffling on this central issue. He talks the talk of protecting Poland and other states at potential risk, but walks the walk of not offending Boris Yeltsin by failing to set out a timetable for new membership."[62]

Partisan politics and the approach of the 1996 U.S. Presidential election also played a role. The Republicans had put the NATO enlargement issue on their own masthead as one of the few foreign policy issues in the Contract with America. They sensed a political vulnerability and wanted to exploit this for all it was worth. On the opening day of the new Congress, Representative Benjamin Gilman, (R-NY), the new Chairman of the House International

Relations Committee, introduced the National Security Revitalization Act (NSRA). It called for a clear timetable, a list of leading candidates and greater resources to help Central and East European countries prepare for membership.[63] Senator Hank Brown (R-CO) tabled similar legislation in the Senate in mid-March. And Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), Chairman of the European Sub-Committee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced that he would hold a series of hearings to help the Administration develop a plan on moving ahead on NATO enlargement.[64]

Meeting with Belgium Prime Minister Dehaene in mid-February 1995, Clinton admitted that he was under growing pressure from Republicans on Capitol Hill to accelerate enlargement. "Some of them," the President noted, "believe we should be moving faster on NATO expansion, partly because of domestic politics and partly because of their convictions." The Republican argument that NATO had to enlarge quickly before Russia regained its strength, Clinton added, was being fueled by the war in Chechnya and Polish President Walesa's stature. "I disagree with this," Clinton noted. "But there is pressure here from people arguing that we should take the historic opportunity now to move east." President Clinton encouraged Dehaene to make the European view clear that the Alliance was moving at the right pace in his talks on Capitol Hill. "Things might change. We could have a different conversation in six months. But for now I think we are on the right track." [65]

On March 1, 1995, Senate Majority leader Bob Dole (R-KS) broadened the attack on the Administration by calling for a "new realism" in dealing with Russia, including a clear timetable for NATO enlargement.[66] The end of communism in Russia, Dole argued, had not led to the end of Moscow's imperialist impulses. Dole claimed that the Clinton Administration was ignoring "the fact that President Yeltsin has made serious errors, has moved toward authoritarian rule, and has lost the political support of virtually all reform-minded Russians." When the Administration announced Clinton's visit to Moscow for the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in Europe (V-E) Day, Senator Jesse Helms (R–NC) criticized the decision as "the latest in a series of ill-advised foreign policy actions" that would "be interpreted as an endorsement of Russian aggression in Chechnya, nuclear sales to Iran and meddling by Russian agents in the affairs of former Soviet Republics."[67]

Such criticism again underscored that while both the Clinton Administration and Republican leaders favored enlarging NATO in principle, they did so with different rationales and conflicting strategies. Republicans preferred a *Realpolitik* rationale for enlargement based explicitly on the need to preempt any neo-imperial impulses or temptations by Moscow. They feared that the strategy of trying to build NATO-Russia cooperation would either stall the enlargement process or allow Moscow to obtain concessions that would render NATO enlargement meaningless. As Henry Kissinger put it: "I strongly favor

NATO expansion. The current policy of carrying water on both shoulders, of hinting at expansion to Eastern and Central Europe while trying to placate Russia with prospects of a protracted delay—of which the Moscow summit is a prime example—is likely to accelerate the disintegration of Western unity without reassuring Russia. NATO expansion requires a decision, not a study."[68]

But for every voice urging the Administration to move faster on NATO enlargement, there was another one calling on the Administration to postpone or roll back its decision. Opposition to NATO enlargement was centered on three core arguments. The first was that enlargement could alienate Moscow and that supporting Russian reform and cooperative U.S.-Russian relations should be a higher U.S. priority. The second was that enlargement could weaken and dilute the Alliance's political cohesion and military effectiveness. The third was that NATO enlargement should be opposed because it involved the extension of new commitments to countries and areas that were unstable or where the U.S. had little national interest and the American public would never support it.

Opponents included many of the remaining figures from the generation of U.S. strategists that had helped to found NATO—strategic icons such as Andrew Goodpaster, George Kennan, and Paul Nitze. While the Republican Party's platform supported NATO enlargement, a number of influential Republican strategists such as former NSC advisor Brent Scowcroft and former Undersecretary of Defense Fred Ikle did not.[69] Democratic skeptics included Harold Brown, former Secretary of Defense under President Jimmy Carter; Lee Hamilton (D-IN), the influential ranking Democrat of the House International Affairs Committee; and Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.[70]

Opposition also ran deep among American diplomats. On May 2, 1995 a group of 15 retired senior diplomats who had served in Europe and Russia wrote U.S. Secretary of State Christopher criticizing Administration policy. "In our view," they wrote, "this policy risks endangering the long-term viability of NATO, significantly exacerbating the instability that now exists in the zone that lies between Germany and Russia and convincing most Russians that the United States is attempting to isolate, encircle and subordinate them, rather than integrating them into a new European system of collective security."[71] Hostility to NATO enlargement was just as strong in the academic community. In the spring and summer of 1995, nearly every major academic journal in international affairs carried articles criticizing the policy and urging the Administration to abandon its enlargement plans.[72] As former Clinton NSC aide Charles Kupchan wrote: "NATO expansion is a train wreck in the making."[73]

But perhaps no voice was more strident in opposing enlargement than *The New York Times*. Over the next few years this pillar of the East Coast establishment printed one editorial after another savaging Administration policy. In an opening salvo on the eve of President Clinton's trip to Moscow in May 1995, an

editorial stated: "Rooted in Cold War logic and driven partly by domestic politics, the idea of expanding NATO's defense perimeter eastward represents a failure of imagination. It would unwisely commit American troops in advance to defend countries, with nuclear weapons if necessary, where no vital American security interest may be involved."[74] The following day, *New York Times*' foreign affairs columnist, Tom Friedman, wrote that the U.S. needed to keep its eye on the big prize—which was Russia, and not ignore the costs enlargement would entail.[75]

The President's own party was divided on the NATO enlargement issue. Democratic Senators such as Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Paul Simon (D-IL) were among the earliest and strongest supporters. Other key Democratic foreign policy figures on Capitol Hill, such as Senator Joe Biden (D-DE)—who would later become the most passionate supporter of enlargement and lead the Senate floor debate on ratification—had not yet made up their minds.[76] But some prominent Democrats figures openly opposed the Administration. At the top of that list was the most influential Democratic thinker on defense policy in the U.S. Senate—Senator Nunn.

Nunn came out publicly against NATO enlargement in a speech at NATO's Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT) in June 1995. "I have missed the logical explanation of why" the U.S. wants to enlarge, the Senator stated. "Are we really going to be able to convince the East Europeans that we are protecting them from their historical threats, while we convince the Russians that NATO enlargement has nothing to do with Russia as a potential military threat?" The "number one security threat for America, for NATO and the world," Nunn argued, was stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and controlling Russia's Cold War nuclear stockpiles—a goal that NATO enlargement could undermine by producing a more paranoid and nationalistic Russia less willing to cooperate with the West. He warned that Russia might respond by redeploying tactical nuclear weapons or putting its strategic nuclear forces on a higher nuclear alert status. "This," he concluded, "is the stuff that self-fulfilling prophecies and historic tragedies are made of."[77]

Nunn posed a political threat to the Administration of a different magnitude. He was the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee and the leading authority on defense issues in the Democratic Party. He had opposed President Clinton on issues such as gays in the military—and won. His anti-enlargement arguments were essentially the same as those the Defense Department and Secretary Perry had advanced in the Administration's internal debate one year earlier. If Nunn were to lead a revolt against enlargement in the Democratic Party, it would provide political cover for other Democrats to desert the President on this issue and could reopen the debate within the Administration as well.

The growing volatility in the U.S. debate made Washington's West European allies nervous, and no one more so than Chancellor Kohl. In late May Kohl

called Clinton to express his concern about the American debate. "I hear with concern what Dole is saying about you," Kohl said. "The subject [of NATO expansion] is being used to harm you," he said, noting that the Republicans and Polish-American lobby would be turning up the political heat on Clinton in the months ahead. Kohl told Clinton that he would be in Warsaw in several weeks where he would endorse Poland's NATO bid but also tell the Poles not to lobby the U.S. to move faster. "My intention is to tell those in charge that it won't help to light a NATO fire and that this would only cause problems for their friends in the U.S."

The German Chancellor added that he was "willing to be as helpful as I can." He had discussed this issue with Chirac, Kok and would be speaking with Major soon: "I think we have everyone in line," Kohl added. "We cannot let foreign policy become a blunt instrument of domestic policy." The President responded that he did not expect to have to deal with the NATO enlargement issue politically in the U.S. until after the Russian election and the final phase in the U.S. election. "My goal is for us to be seen as steady so that neither the Poles nor the Russians will make an issue out of it. We must keep the dialogue steady and deliberate so that we can get through June 1996 without any adverse consequences for Yeltsin or for us." Kohl responded: "Bill, I totally agree with you. I will do everything so that the Europeans follow this path."[78]

But if Washington's West European allies were concerned that the Clinton Administration might move too fast on enlargement, Central and East European leaders were concerned that the process was stalling.[79] In May 1995, Polish Ambassador to Washington, Jerzy Kozminski, returned to Warsaw to brief the Sejm's Committee on Foreign Affairs. Kozminski was struck by the audience's profound skepticism about the U.S. commitment, whether the European allies were really on board, and whether the Alliance would hold firm in the face of growing Russian opposition. The Committee's Chairman, Bronislaw Geremek, a former Professor familiar with the U.S. academic scene, wondered out loud why the overwhelming majority of American academics at institutions such as Harvard opposed NATO enlargement.[80] In mid July, Foreign Minister Bartoszewski remarked in public what many Poles thought in private: that they had a better chance to get into NATO under Republicans than Democrats, thereby eliciting a howl of protest from Assistant Secretary Holbrooke.[81]

The conflicting political pressures the Administration was subjected to surfaced following the release of the NATO enlargement study in September 1995. German Chancellor Kohl was on the phone a few days later again urging Clinton not to accelerate enlargement. "I see a major problem by things being said in Congress by a few people," Kohl told Clinton. "Yeltsin told me he didn't have any problems with you. But he is concerned that the Republicans will use the primaries to get Polish-American votes. You must make sure that things don't degenerate to irrationality." The Chancellor continued by saying that the

impact of the U.S. elections on the NATO enlargement process had been discussed at an EU meeting by European heads-of-state. "The view is unanimous and clear. They want NATO enlargement, especially with a view towards Poland, which is Russia's main concern." The Chancellor added: "All colleagues agreed to support your steady hand, so to speak. . . . You have lots of support here. I can make that public. You must tell me when it would be useful."[82]

In the Oval Office several weeks later, Czech President Vaclav Havel told President Clinton that the U.S. and NATO needed to act now on enlargement. The region could not go on forever in the kind of uncertainty and vacuum that existed. While everyone wanted to have good relations with Russia, there were some issues on which one cannot yield, Havel continued. If the West postpones NATO enlargement to reassure Moscow, he argued, it was accepting Russia's logic that NATO was the enemy and that it was slowing down what was essentially an anti-Russia process. The real issue was how NATO could encourage Russia to change its thinking. Prolonging the vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe would only retard that adjustment, he concluded. President Clinton promised Havel that he would be firm with Yeltsin and that NATO enlargement would proceed as planned.[83]

On October 10, however, Senators Nunn and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) took to the Senate floor to call on the Clinton Administration to postpone NATO enlargement. They claimed that the 1995 NATO enlargement study had not answered the question about why the Alliance was enlarging, had understated the likely Russian reaction, and ignored what enlargement meant for the U.S. Senator Hutchison stated, "We are talking about American troops and American tax dollars." NATO enlargement, she emphasized, "is a strategic decision that must not be made in haste and must not be made before we answer the crucial questions" lest the U.S. and its allies are drawn "into regional border and ethnic disputes in which we have no demonstrable national security interest." In Nunn's words, the Administration was trying to "bridge the unbridgeable."[84]

5. BOSNIA AND NATO ENLARGEMENT

NATO enlargement would never have happened absent the U.S. and NATO's all-out and eventually successful effort to stop the war raging in Bosnia. The Administration's vision of a Europe democratic, secure, and undivided rang hollow so long as one part of Europe was involved in a fratricidal war that the West would or could not stop. NATO's claim that an enlarged Alliance should be the core of a new European security architecture was not credible as long as the most powerful alliance in the world was unable to halt the bloodiest war in Europe in 50 years. The same Alliance that was so badly fractured on questions

of war and peace in the Balkans could not simply turn around and initiate the largest increase in NATO security commitments since 1949. As Richard Holbrooke wrote: "This new European security structure could not be built while part of it, the former Yugoslavia, was in flames."[85]

The U.S. decision to reengage in the Bosnia conflict was a turning point not only on the ground in Bosnia, but also in U.S.-European relations. It reinvigorated NATO and reestablished the Alliance's, and thereby Washington's, primary role in European security. As Ian Davidson wrote in *The Financial Times* following the conclusion of the Dayton negotiations in November 1995, the peace plan was not perfect, and it was not even clear if it would actually bring peace to Bosnia, but it was "having an electric effect on NATO" and ended the debate over whether NATO had a post–Cold War purpose.[86] As French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette put it: "America was back."

Bosnia also reinforced the growing conviction that NATO needed a post–Cold War overhaul. Senator Lugar's original battle cry that the alliance had to go "out of area or out of business" had been validated. While NATO's collective defense guarantee would remain the formal core of the Alliance, the need to respond to threats from beyond the Alliance's borders was a key challenge for the future. For enlargement proponents, Bosnia also validated the second part of Lugar's thesis—that NATO had to enlarge to Central and Eastern Europe to consolidate democracy *before* instability arose there. New NATO missions and members were increasingly seen as two sides of the same coin of Alliance reform. Each underscored NATO's need to transcend a Cold War Maginot Line mentality and project stability beyond its original borders.

Bosnia also validated the Partnership for Peace, which now provided an ideal framework to bring together allies and non-allies into an Implementation Force (IFOR). Of the initial 60,000 IFOR troops deployed in early 1996, one in six were from non-NATO countries. PfP countries contributed troops and, in the case of Hungary, permitted the transit and stationing of NATO troops on their soil, and host-nation support. Few things more vividly demonstrated how NATO could transcend past Cold War divisions than the sight of a Czech-mechanized battalion incorporated into a Canadian brigade subordinated to a British division—or a Polish airborne battalion serving as part of a Nordic-Polish brigade subordinated to a U.S. infantry division.

Above all, Bosnia underscored how the Alliance's relations with Russia were changing. NATO ground troops were deploying—for the first time in Alliance history—with Russian soldiers at their side as partners, not enemies. While both NATO and Russia had proclaimed that they no longer viewed each other as adversaries in 1991, the fact that U.S. and Russian soldiers were now working together on the ground in Bosnia was a mini-revolution. Nothing more graphically demonstrated how NATO was moving beyond its Cold War mindset and rationale.

The Clinton Administration's *volte face* in Bosnia took place in the summer of 1995. Instead of simply trying to contain the conflict, Washington launched an all-out effort to stop the war on the ground, and forge a peace settlement. This reversal resulted from a realization that the previous policy had failed, the violence in Bosnia was spreading and the risks of not acting—for Europe, NATO and overall U.S. foreign policy credibility, including the President's—had become greater than the risks of acting. Early on in the Clinton Administration, National Security Adviser Tony Lake had written the President a memo arguing that the Administration's "muddle-through" strategy in Bosnia could become a cancer not only in the region but on the Administration's entire foreign policy. In the summer of 1995, President Clinton concluded that this Bosnian cancer had to be stopped before it metastasized further.

This realization came slowly and only after the Administration and the Alliance stared into the potential abyss facing it in the Balkans.[87] The turning point came in the spring and summer of 1995 as the Administration realized its policy was failing. In May, Bosnian Serbs responded to NATO air strikes by taking several hundred UN troops hostage and chaining them to telephone poles to deter further NATO action. It was a short-term tactical victory for the Bosnian Serbs, but a strategic mistake. In Europe, the newly elected President of France, Jacques Chirac, was enraged. In one of his first telephone conversations with Clinton, Chirac interrupted the interpreter to tell the President emphatically that the Serbs were behaving like terrorists and that it was time to get tough. When Chirac visited the White House in mid-June, his message was clear: enough is enough. Clinton was rapidly reaching the same conclusion."[88]

President Clinton now gave Lake a green light to start thinking through what became known as the "endgame strategy." As Lake and his staff were developing their plan, the news arrived that the Bosnian Serbs had overrun the UN "safe area" of Srebrenica. It was a further shock to the U.S. and its allies. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, 7,079 Bosnian Muslims were killed in Srebrenica between July 12–16, 1995. Most of the victims were unarmed and died in ambushes or mass executions. As Richard Holbrooke wrote: "For sheer intensity, nothing in the war matched, or would ever match, Srebrenica. The name would become part of the language of horrors of modern war, alongside Lidice, Pradour, Babi Yar and the Katyn Forest."[89]

The slaughter in Srebrenica helped tip the balance within the Administration in favor of intervention. On July 17, 1995, Clinton dropped by, unannounced, to a breakfast meeting at the White House to reinforce the point that the U.S. needed a new policy. In attendance were Lake, Christopher, Perry, Shalikashvilli, Albright, and Berger. Clinton told his team he wanted a new policy. "I don't like where we are now. This policy is doing enormous damage to the United States and to our standing in the world. We look weak." The current

policy, Clinton concluded, was unsustainable on the ground in Bosnia and was having a negative impact on U.S. standing in the world.[90]

In early August, the U.S. settled on a strategy combining carrots and sticks in an all-out effort to get a definitive end to the war. The plan called for using NATO air power to bring the Bosnian Serbs to the peace table. If that failed, the Clinton Administration would let UNPROFOR collapse and take a number of steps to protect the Muslims and Sarajevo, including lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnians. In early August Lake led a delegation to various European capitals to share the U.S. thinking. Unlike Christopher's ill-fated trip two years earlier, Lake was authorized to say that the President had made up his mind. Although there was some grumbling in France, most allies were enormously relieved that the U.S. was finally committing its prestige and power to get a settlement. As the Lake team concluded after one of their stops, "the big dog [in the Alliance] had barked."[91]

Richard Holbrooke was chosen to be the American President's envoy for the shuttle diplomacy in the Balkans that would begin the diplomatic push. He headed to the Balkans with a team that included Lieutenant General Wes Clark from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the NSC's Colonel Nelson Drew, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Frasure and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Joe Kruzel. Five days later, on August 19, on a dirt road on Mount Igman, which overlooked Sarajevo, a French armored vehicle carrying half the U.S. team rolled off the road and tumbled more than 1,000 feet down the mountainside, taking the lives of Drew, Frasure, and Kruzel.[92] Following the tragedy and a trip home to Washington to bury their colleagues and regroup, Holbrooke and his team arrived in Paris on August 28 to hear the news that a Bosnian mortar shell had landed in a marketplace in Sarajevo, killing 35 people.

As Holbrooke later wrote, it was the final outrage. While it was not the worst incident of the war, it came at a turning point in Western policy after Srebrenica, the launching of the diplomatic shuttle, and the tragedy on Mt. Igman. As a result, it appeared not only as a random act of terror against innocent civilians but "the first direct affront to the United States."[93] Two days later, the Alliance launched Operation Deliberate Force. It ultimately consisted of 3,515 sorties over two weeks flown by 293 aircraft from eight NATO countries. The avowed objective of the campaign was to get the Bosnian Serbs to lift the siege of Sarajevo, remove their heavy weapons, and allow freedom of movement around the capital. The unstated objective was to achieve the terms of the U.S. peace plan. Moreover, the NATO campaign overlapped with a Croatian military offensive that began in early August and contributed to a major shift in the balance of power and forces on the ground. By early October the Bosnian Serbs were in retreat. On October 5, President Clinton announced that a cease-fire would go into effect five days later.

NATO's actions were received with relief in Central and Eastern Europe. The impotence of the West to stop the bloodshed that ensued from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia recalled vivid memories from their own recent history. As one Polish commentator put it, Central Europeans knew only too well what it was like to be treated as second-class Europeans whose fate was not worth fighting or dying for.[94] Donald Blinken, U.S. Ambassador to Hungary at the time, recalled how the failure of the U.S. to initially stop the Bosnian Serbs had an enormous impact in the region. "I was painfully aware," he wrote, "that U.S. prestige was visibly ebbing away, not only in Hungary and the new democracies of Central Europe but also in Western European capitals." Hungarians, he noted, draw parallels with their own past. "Sarajevo often reminded them of Budapest in late 1944 or 1956."[95]

The fact that the Bosnian conflict was ended through the reassertion of NATO's primacy, however, only reinforced the Central and East European's conviction that their security could only be secured with and through the Atlantic Alliance. A NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia now offered these countries an opportunity to show that they could be good allies. Nowhere was this more true than in the case of Hungary. U.S. and NATO military officials had concluded that southern Hungary was their preferred choice for a staging ground for the deployment of U.S. and other NATO-led forces into Bosnia. But they were uncertain whether Hungary would be willing to put bases in this region at NATO's disposal. It was only four years after the uninvited troops of the former Soviet Union had departed and memories of occupation by foreign troops were still strong. The Hungarian minority in Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia had also made Budapest cautious about how far it went in supporting the NATO effort.

In the fall of 1995, Hungarian Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs visited New York for the annual United Nations General Assembly. While in New York City, he spoke at a roundtable at the Council on Foreign Relations presided over by the Hungarian-born journalist Kati Marton who, since the previous spring, was married to Holbrooke. Although the Dayton negotiations were not yet over, Holbrooke, in town to visit with her, was already thinking about implementing the peace plan. He told Kovacs that Hungary had to be part of the effort on the ground to bring peace to Bosnia. Kovacs agreed. It was absurd, he told Holbrooke, to expect a country like Sweden in Northern Europe to send peacekeepers and for Hungary not to contribute. He promised Holbrooke he would recommend that Hungary provide a contingent of non-combat forces. Holbrooke also hinted that Hungary was being considered as a staging base for NATO forces to move into Bosnia. Kovacs carried the message back to Budapest.[96]

In Budapest, Ambassador Donald Blinken knew the Pentagon was considering using southern Hungary as a military staging base. When the first Pentagon team arrived in early November for informal talks with the Hungarian side,

Blinken was determined that this issue be turned into a success story in U.S.-Hungarian relations.[97] Over the next three weeks the U.S. and Hungarian sides finalized agreements on NATO's use of Hungarian bases. The normally fractious Hungarian parliament came together to shepherd through the necessary resolutions and approvals. The Dayton peace accords were signed on November 21, 1995. The day before Thanksgiving, the U.S. State Department officially requested the use of Hungarian facilities to deploy U.S. forces as part of IFOR. The following day the Hungarian parliament voted 312 in favor, one against, and with six abstentions to approve the request.

As Blinken summed it up: "By putting aside both domestic politics and residual fears following 45 years of Soviet occupation in just 48 hours time, Hungary demonstrated in a manner no words could match, that it was clearly prepared to be taken seriously as a candidate for NATO membership."[98] Hungarian officials soon had a clever motto to summarize their new relationship with NATO: "Hungary has not entered NATO but NATO has entered Hungary." Whatever local concerns had existed about the presence of American and NATO troops quickly dissipated. Indeed, public support increased for NATO in the region surrounding the Taszar base, and ended up being higher than average in the country as a whole.[99] Hungarians had cheered the departure of the Soviet troops four years earlier. Now they were quite content for the Americans to stay. The local mayor even commented that the U.S. and NATO forces might as well just stay until Hungary joins the Alliance.[100]

If the Central and East Europeans were relieved by NATO's actions, the Russians were furious—at least initially. It was another moment of *Sturm und Drang*. The rhetoric from Moscow exploded into one of the harshest attacks on the West in years—and it came from Yeltsin himself. In a letter to Clinton on September 7, Yeltsin denounced NATO's air campaign as "unacceptable" and as an "execution of the Bosnian Serbs." In a press conference the following day, he accused the West of ignoring Russia. "This is impossible. . . . This means a return to two camps that are at war with one another," he warned. If bombing the Serbs and dismissing Russian views continued, he added, "we will have to thoroughly reconsider our strategy, including our approach to relations with the North Atlantic Alliance."[101]

As the Bosnian conflict edged to a cease-fire, Talbott traveled to Moscow for consultations. He told Kozyrev that given the dreadful experience with UNPROFOR, a new Bosnian peacekeeping force would have to be NATO-led if the U.S. was going to participate. "We have to avoid a situation where only NATO is in charge," Kozyrev told Talbott. Russia's role in the Bosnian peace force would set a precedent for future European security arrangements, he continued, "so we must have an equal seat at the table." If the U.S. and Russia could not find a solution, "it will be ruinous to our future relations and our ability to cooperate in Europe," he said. The only way to reconcile conflicting U.S. and

Russian views was for Clinton to stay in regular touch with Yeltsin. "Put Boris Yeltsin's name on an auto-dial button in the Oval Office," he told Talbott and advised him to make good use of the Perry-Grachev channel as well. "All we want is to end this bloody goddamn war, and to end it in a way that's a visibly cooperative achievement," he told Talbott.[102]

For Washington, Bosnia was a chance to put into practice the theory that there was a new NATO interested in cooperating with Russia. If NATO could work with Russia in Bosnia, such concrete cooperation might gradually lead to a shift in Russia's attitude toward the Alliance more generally. But first the issue of who commanded whom had to be resolved. SACEUR George Joulwan had drawn up plans for a force of 50,000 to 60,000 troops divided into three different geographic zones headed by an American, British, and French division. Meeting with President Clinton on September 27, Kozyrev stated that Russia would not put its troops under NATO command. Clinton, in response, made it equally clear that the principle of unity of command in NATO was sacrosanct. On September 29, the NAC approved the IFOR mission and decided that NATO should be prepared to include non-NATO troops, including those of Russia. At the informal NATO Defense Ministers meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia on October 5–6, Perry received approval from his NATO counterparts to negotiate the terms of Russian participation with Defense Minster Grachev.

Arriving in Geneva on October 7, the U.S. delegation led by Perry and Talbott sat down for what in diplomatic parlance would qualify as "frank and candid" discussions with their Russian counterparts. While both sides agreed in principle on the desirability of Russian participation in IFOR, their positions seemed unbridgeable. Ash Carter and Bill Perry subsequently described the scene: "The mood at the table was surly from the outset. Those of us from the Pentagon who knew each other well greeted one another with uncharacteristic grimness. The Bosnian experts on both sides were glowering. Each Minister got right to the point." The Bosnian peace force, said Perry, "must be a NATO force, for military reasons. Grachev shot back that it could not be a NATO force, that Russia would not accept this. He gripped his throat with both hands: this is what would happen in Moscow, he said, to any Russian who agreed to such a humiliation. 'And therefore you, Dr. Perry, have me by the throat.' "[103]

At the end of a day of unsuccessful negotiations, Perry suggested that Grachev send a senior Russian military officer to General Joulwan at SHAPE to allow the Russian side to get a better feel for what NATO was planning. Grachev agreed. Perry also asked him to attend a U.S-Russia peacekeeping exercise in Fort Riley after the October 1995 Hyde Park summit. It would provide an opportunity for the two men to take another run at finding a solution. Perry was cautiously optimistic. Grachev had signaled a willingness to have a Russian General serve under a senior U.S. military commander so long as there was no direct link with the NATO chain of command. The reason was political.

Grachev had told Perry that placing Russian forces under NATO would be political dynamite for Yeltsin and could produce a communist victory in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

On October 23, 1995 Clinton and Yeltsin met at Franklin D. Roosevelt's estate in Hyde Park, New York. The setting could hardly have been more symbolic, recalling an era when the two countries were allies in the fight against Nazi Germany. As Yeltsin had mentioned to Clinton during a phone call on September 27, "NATO, NATO, NATO, NATO" was the most difficult issue that had to be resolved. Clinton opened the discussion with a friendly challenge to Yeltsin by saying their objective should be to "prove the pundits wrong" and show that they could still work together, including on Bosnia. Yeltsin responded enthusiastically, saying, "we can't let our partnership be shattered by a failure." He continued: "We need to end the discussion today with an agreement. If we don't agree, it'll be a scandal." The two Presidents went through their respective positions on a NATO-led force in Bosnia. Clinton explained the importance of unity of command and why a separate Russian sector in IFOR did not make sense.[104]

Yeltsin, in turn, sketched out on a piece of paper how he envisioned Russian forces being under U.S. but not NATO command. He reiterated that Russian forces could not be under NATO. "The Russian people," he said, "have an allergy against NATO." At the end of the conversation, Yeltsin told Clinton that if he agreed to the U.S. proposals, he would lose the 1996 Russian Presidential elections. "I'll be finished," he told Clinton who responded: "Let's not give up. Let's work on this." And he asked Yeltsin to agree to contribute "at a minimum" two battalions of Russian forces for non-combat tasks "in a liaison relationship with NATO." Yeltsin agreed and the two leaders decided that Perry and Grachev would be asked to explore what might be done "beyond that." In the subsequent plenary meeting, Yeltsin, as Carter and Perry would subsequently note, "gave a strong *da*, to the obvious discomfort of his staff" to the proposal.[105] The Russian President had, once again, responded with his gut instinct to align himself with the West.

In late October, Grachev was back in the U.S. to attend the joint peacekeeping exercise at Fort Riley, Kansas. The exercise symbolically underscored that American and Russian troops could work together on the ground if their leaders could sort out the chain-of-command issue. Between events, the two delegations reached agreement on an arrangement that would allow the Russians to participate in non-combat roles. Thus, they had achieved the minimum. But Perry and Grachev agreed to try for more—a full combat role for Russian forces. They asked U.S. General George Joulwan and Russian Colonel General Shevtsov to see what they could work out. Perry also invited Grachev to attend the November NATO Defense Ministers meeting to see for himself whether NATO was truly still the enemy of Russia.

In early November 1995, Joulwan and Shevtsov came up with a scheme that squared the circle. It hinged upon the difference between what military commanders call "operational control," or OPCON, and "tactical control," or TACON. Joulwan and Shevtsov now agreed that Joulwan, as overall commander, would exercise TACON through the divisional commander in the northern sector of Bosnia, while Shevtsov, as his deputy, would maintain OPCON. This enabled Moscow to say that they were not under the command of NATO, but under General Joulwan in his role of Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army in Europe. When Perry and Grachev arrived in Brussels in early December 1995, Joulwan and Shevtsov had prepared a briefing that started with a chart displaying the NATO emblem and the Russian flag. Underneath were the words: "Intended Outcome: NATO + Russia = Success."[106] As Joulwan wrote in a subsequent op-ed, the U.S. and Russia were no longer making Cold War but peace together in Europe.[107]

In late October, President Clinton spoke at a dinner honoring the Harry S. Truman Library Institute. Truman, President Clinton noted, had considered the creation of NATO one of his finest achievements. "What are we going to do to build on his achievement?" he asked. History, the President continued, had made it "possible for us to help to build a Europe that is democratic, that is peaceful, and that for the first time since nation states appeared on that continent is undivided." The U.S. and Europe needed to build a new trans-Atlantic community to meet new threats. That was why, the President continued, the U.S. had to deploy forces to Bosnia. And that was why NATO had to enlarge. "The end of the Cold War cannot mean the end of NATO, and it cannot mean a NATO frozen in the past because there is no other cornerstone for an integrated, secure and stable Europe for the future." It was essential to include the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union into NATO's community of shared values. NATO enlargement, Clinton pledged, would move forward "carefully, and deliberately and openly."[108]

In London on November 29, 1995, British Prime Minister John Major asked Clinton for his views on the timing of NATO enlargement. The American President replied that specific decisions on the "who" and the "when" should wait until after the Russian Presidential elections. Clinton talked about how Yeltsin had been driven toward a more hard-line position on NATO enlargement by Russian domestic politics, but that he continued to take a softer line in private, and still seemed committed to maintaining a cooperative relationship with the West. "At one point Yeltsin agreed with me," Clinton said, "but over a year [sic] he modified his position. There is a difference between his public posture and his private talks with me; between his rhetoric and his cooperative action. That shows he wants to build bridges without undermining his political base."

When Major asked Clinton whether he thought Yeltsin would run again for President, Clinton remarked, "Perhaps I am biased because I like him," but "if

he can stay healthy and sober he might pull it off." Major agreed but noted that the Russian President had already had his third heart attack and was six years older than the average Russian male. Clinton responded: "When General Grant started winning battles, President Lincoln's advisors told him that Grant was a crude drunk. Lincoln replied: 'Find out what he drinks and give it to the rest of them.' "[109]

As December 1995 drew to a close, Russia again held parliamentary elections for the Duma. Whereas two years earlier it had been Zhirinovsky's right wing fascist party that had gained the largest vote, this time it was the left-wing communists that gained the upper hand. On Christmas Eve, Clinton pulled Talbott aside at a party and asked him for his assessment of the communists' strong showing in the Duma elections. "How many more of these elections is it going to take before they stop electing fascists and communists?" Clinton asked. "Lots," Talbott replied. "The main thing is that they keep having elections. Eventually they'll get it right." "Yeah," Clinton responded," I guess that's part of the deal, isn't it? Well, let's hope they're a little smarter in the Presidential electing next year."[110]