

Russian Handshake

By Harry C. Blaney III

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Summary:

To the Editor:

Ronald Asmus' article "Europe's Eastern Promise" (January/February 2008) was right on the fundamental importance of promoting stability, security, and democracy in eastern Europe. However, such an approach should be combined with a Western strategy to engage Russia in major efforts to promote cooperation and Russia's integration with the West. Russia feels that the further extension of NATO toward its borders would not be in its interests. Although that may not be the overriding consideration in the West's decisions, it must remain part of any assessment of the long-term strategic situation and inform a larger vision for the area.

It is clear that the integration of Russia as a cooperative, strategic partner of the West would do more for stability in eastern Europe than simple membership in NATO would for many of the region's still problematic states -- especially if the end result of granting such membership is an increased sense of isolation in Russia and exacerbated tensions between Russia and the West.

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