

Many members of Russia's military elite object to Russia's full entry into NATO because they believe that Russia is now in a relatively good position to decide for itself what kind of relations it wishes to develop with the rest of the world. The act of entering NATO would strip Russia of its independence and relative freedom of manoeuvre. As first Deputy Chief of Armed Forces, General Yury Baluyevsky, explains "As a military person I see without a doubt that there is no need for Russia to join NATO military structures. Russia is a self-sufficient state capable of independently settling issues of its military and national security". He goes on to say that in his opinion all previous Russia-NATO relations were a waste of time, that some decisions that were made jointly were not implemented, and that Russia should cooperate with NATO only if and when it coincides with Russia's security interests.⁵¹

This report puts forward the argument that key (not all) Russian and US interests coincide now more than at any other time in the past ten years, and thus it is a propitious time for both sides to develop relations. As Sergei Karaganov, chairman of the foreign and defence policy council clearly understands: "It is essential for Russia to have good relations with NATO because NATO is the only serious organization dealing with issues of European security."⁵² Thus, Russia's full entry into NATO should be on the table even if it is still a long-term goal.

b) Russian Reforms not up to Par?

It has been argued that Russia has shrunk from serious discussions about joining NATO because Russia is not prepared to undertake far-reaching reforms in the way the state and armed forces are run. In other words it is not prepared to make the military more open, to ensure civilian control over the army and to accelerate human rights reform. However, in fact Russia has made steps towards military reform. For example, on 21 November 2001 Putin approved plans to recruit a growing number of professional soldiers. The move represents a first step towards the

⁵¹ Russian top brass downbeat on relations with NATO, Interfax.

⁵² Karaganov calls for a degree of skepticism in cooperation with NATO. Russian Mayak rad, 23 Nov, *BBC Monitoring*.