

established, what precise issues they will debate, and how decisions will be executed. One example of a potential area of cooperation is the US proposal for Russia and NATO to develop a common picture of commercial air traffic in their respective airspaces. The so-called Air Sovereignty Operation Center would help make commercial air travel safer and would be useful in emergencies such as terrorist hijackings.⁴⁷ Other suggestions have included the formation of a group of Russian experts to be based in Brussels, and NATO's opening of its long-delayed military mission in Moscow.⁴⁸

To conclude, the new NATO-Russia Council has great potential to bring together Russia with NATO states to counter the three major threats to their mutual security: global terrorism, instability in Eurasia and proliferation. Even the Baltic states have reacted optimistically that the new council will lead to closer ties between their nations and Russia. However, these are very early days. Much depends on the willingness of Russia and the US to not just talk or act unilaterally but to cooperate and take joint action. It is also important not to have too high expectations for immediate results so that if they are not forthcoming all will not be deemed lost. Instead, NATO and Russia should define limited and well-defined projects on which they can work together and develop the relationship one step at a time. To quote Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov: "We should not be too hopeful, draw epochal conclusions, expect crucial decisions, breakthroughs".⁴⁹

3.2 Option #2: Russia Joins NATO

a) Russian Perspectives

The NATO-Russia Council is now a reality and the second option for Russia to join NATO as a full member simply a theoretical possibility. However, it is not only NATO that is not prepared to go so far at this time. Russians are more in favour of getting rid of NATO completely

⁴⁷ Donald Rumsfeld, Reuters, 4 June, 2002.

⁴⁸ AP, 27 May 2002.

⁴⁹ Interfax, 6 June, 2002.