

council, stated that Russia no longer deems the West a threat even if Russia does not intend to fully join NATO.⁴²

Many others among the Russian elite have taken a negative view of the new council and argue that although it is a step forward it will produce little. Russia will still not have real decision making power. Some opponents therefore perceive that Russia's room of manoeuvre is being reduced, and that Russia will be indirectly forced to approve all of NATO's actions. Thus, the difficulty for Russia will be to keep its autonomy, that is, "to assume responsibility only for decisions which we share and which are in line with our national interests".⁴³ However, others rightly interpret that Russia has little choice, for otherwise it would find itself outside of Europe and outside of the world.⁴⁴ This leads Grigory Yavlinsky to argue that the new council "won't be any worse, firstly because we won't play any special role there. Secondly, there is every indication that NATO itself won't play any special role in the near future".⁴⁵

The opposite Russian argument is that the new council is a significant and positive step because "The US needs a certain counterbalance to act as an opponent to it in the decision-making process. NATO could allow us within the US-Europe-Russia triangle to build a more reasonable and balanced policy, influence the US, support them on some issues and oppose them on others".⁴⁶ Indeed, it seems that the majority of the Russian view the NRC as a temporary structure which will eventually be replaced by other bodies, international organizations of broader representation.

The decisive question now is how the new council will work in practice and have its provisions actually implemented. Of particular interest is how the working groups will be

⁴² *RIA Novosti*, 17 May 2002.

⁴³ Fyodor Mikhailovich Burlatsky, vice-president of the Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Association, *Federal News Service*, May 31, 2002.

⁴⁴ Viktor Kremenyuk, deputy director of US and Canada Institute. "Russian Academic sees no visible benefits from NATO agreement". *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 29 May 2002.

⁴⁵ *Interfax*, June 2, 2002.

⁴⁶ Major General Pavel Semyonovich Zolotaryov at a Press conference on Russia's relations with USA, NATO and EU, *Federal New Service*, May 31, 2002.