

The proposal for a Russia-North Atlantic Council appeared to accord with Mr Putin's desire for NATO to become a more of a political organisation concerned with security policy issues. Viktor Ozerov, head of Russia's delegation to NATO (head of the Federal Council's Security and Defence committee) argued that the Russian delegation should be a full fledged member in NATO's Parliamentary Assembly.³⁵ Also, since 1991, Russian leaders have desired acknowledgement of Russia's great power status. A seat at the NATO table could provide that and might strengthen Putin's position in dealing with those of his generals who are anti-NATO. Finally, it seemed this proposal would benefit Russia in terms of foreign policy and improve its image in the West.

Russian opponents of the Russia-NATO Council countered that it would leave Russia in a no mans land as semi-partner and semi-adversary. To quote Aleksei Pushkov "NATO is seeking a form of cooperation with Russia which will bring Russia closer to the Alliance politically and enable NATO to use Russia's potential while simultaneously restricting Russia's involvement in decision-making to the spheres where the Alliance cannot do without Russia, or where it is interested for some reason in Russia's involvement".³⁶

a) Veto

The question of whether or not Russia should get a veto in NATO affairs was (and still is) a key issue in the Russia-NATO formal discussions. On the Russian side there have been many unclear and contradictory statements. For example, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov argued that Russia does not seek a veto but at the same time implied that this *is* what Russia wants:

"Russia is not even considering this problem to acquire the right to veto in its consultations with NATO. At the same time, since Russia is arranging closer relations with the alliance "a partner's opinion must be taken into account".

He continued,

³⁵ "Russian Delegation Asks for full-fledged membership in NATO PA", *ROS Business Consulting*, 23 November, 2001.

³⁶ Aleksei Pushkov, Why Russia should not join NATO, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, November 27, 2001.