

Russia, Iran to expand nuclear cooperation

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, DEC. 27. Ignoring strong protests from Washington, Russia has moved to expand its nuclear cooperation with Iran, which could upgrade relations between Moscow and Teheran to the level of strategic partnership.

During a high-profile four-day visit to Iran this week the Russian Atomic Energy Minister, Alexander Romyantsev, agreed to speed up the construction of a \$1,000-megawatt nuclear reactor in Bushehr, to supply nuclear fuel for the power plant and to consider building more reactors.

Mr. Romyantsev said Russia was "extremely keen" to take part in Iran's programme of building six more 1,000-mw nuclear reactors.

He also stated that Moscow had "no differences" with Teheran over the latter's nuclear energy programme, which the U.S. said could help Iran acquire nuclear weapons.

Russia's decision to expand nuclear cooperation with Iran comes in the midst of a mounting U.S. crusade against the "axis of evil" countries, which include Iraq,

Iran and North Korea. Earlier this month the U.S. made a last-minute attempt to derail the Bushehr nuclear project by publishing satellite pictures of what Washington said were two facilities under construction in Iran to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The move was specifically aimed at stopping Russia from supplying uranium fuel for the Bushehr power plant, which theoretically can be reprocessed in weapon-grade uranium.

"Clearly a country that acquires 90 tons of nuclear fuel, even if this is peaceful material, far from the weapon-grade quality, dramatically increases its political weight," the *Izvestia* daily said, commenting on the undercurrent motives of Washington's concerns.

The Russian Atomic Energy Minister, Mr. Romyantsev, described the U.S. concerns as "groundless."

For one thing, Iran's nuclear programme is under close supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Secondly, Iran has agreed to return all spent fuel back to Russia.

"Nuclear fuel will be supplied in keeping

with international accords and under IAEA control," Mr. Romyantsev said.

Russia has been steadily expanding ties with Iran since the milestone visit of the Iranian President, Mohammed Khatami, to Moscow in March 2001.

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, agreed to resume defence supplies to Iran that were suspended in 1995 due to American pressure and approved a 10-year plan to upgrade economic links with Iran in nuclear and conventional energy, hydrocarbons, aircraft building, communications and metal industry.

If implemented these plans will make Iran Russia's third strategic partner in Asia after India and China.

An intriguing aspect of Russia's growing nuclear cooperation with Iran is that it is unlikely to spoil Moscow's new partnership with Washington in the global war on terror.

In the post-11/9 dispensation Russia has proved to be a valuable enough ally of the U.S. to feel free to pursue its strategic interests without provoking a crisis in relations with the world's only superpower.

Russia says no proof of Iraq being terror threat

Moscow: Russia on Thursday challenged the US contention that Iraq posed a terror threat, saying nobody had produced any such evidence, while Syria denied an Israeli claim that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were stationed on its soil.

Meanwhile, it was business as usual for UN inspectors on Christmas day with five teams from the UN monitoring, verification and inspection commission (Unmovic) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), scouring Iraqi territory.

Russia's deputy foreign minister Yury Fedotov was quoted by Itar-Tass news agency as saying: "No one can provide the slightest evidence" that Iraq represented a terrorist threat.

Russia opposes unilateral US military intervention against Iraq, threatened by Washington if Baghdad should prove to be in material breach of UN security council resolution 1441 ordering its complete renunciation of weapons of mass destruction.

Syria described as "ridiculous" and "unfounded" the accusations by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Iraq had transferred weapons of mass destruction to Syria.

Mr Sharon told Israel's private Channel II on Wednesday that he had information Iraq had transferred chemical or biological weapons to Syria in order to hide them.

"Mr Sharon's allegations are unfounded and aim to divert attention from the chem-

ical, nuclear and biological arsenal that Israel possesses, "a foreign ministry spokesman said in Damascus.

War is unlikely to shatter Iraq into smaller states along religious and ethnic lines because Baghdad and Washington agree on the necessity of preserving a single Iraqi nation, Saudi Arabia's deputy defence minister has said in Riyadh.

Still, Saudi Arabia and all countries in the region are planning for their national security if a war against Iraq cannot be avoided and destabilises the region, Prince Khaled Bin Sultan said on Wednesday. He did not elaborate on the preparations.

"If there's one thing that everybody agrees on, including the US and Iraq, it is we believe Iraq must be united and should not be shattered," Prince Khaled said. "I don't think this is something we should be worried about. Are we worried there will be differences between the people themselves in Iraq?...I think we have to wait and see."

At an Iraqi opposition meeting earlier this month in London, deep divides were apparent in a conference convened to show unity and select a council to represent ethnic, religious and nationalist groups seeking a say in any post-Saddam Hussein government.

Meanwhile, Iraqi missile batteries and ground defences opened up on US and British warplanes overflying the south of the country, driving them back to Kuwait, a military spokesman has said. Agencies

Russia
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40-19

Russia warns Iraq on scrapping deal

15/12 ✓

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, DEC. 14. Russia warned Iraq that its cancellation of a huge oil contract with its companies could deprive Baghdad of Moscow's support in its standoff with the United States. The move "removes a major incentive for Russia to oppose military action against Iraq," a government source told the RIA-Novosti news agency on Friday.

The official was commenting on Baghdad's decision to tear up a \$6-billion contract with a Russian consortium led by the country's Number One oil producer LukOil to develop the

West Qurna oil field. A letter from an Iraqi Deputy Oil Minister said Baghdad was breaking the 1997 deal because the Russian companies had failed to start work on the field as stipulated by the contract. RIA-Novosti news agency quoted the Russian official as saying all nations were guided, not by principles alone, but their interests as well in their foreign policy, and that Russia's economic interests today took precedence over any other motives.

"Saddam Hussein is not so terribly a sympathetic leader to defend him for no other reason," the Russian government official said. The unusually can-

did rejection of "principles" in dealing with the Iraq problem appeared to contradict Moscow's official line that it would take a stand on the proposed U.S. military action against Baghdad depending on whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

The remarks by a government official could mean one of two things: either admission that in the U.S.-Iraq standoff Russia would back the side which offered it a bigger reward, or an indication of a split between the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and the Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, over a crucial foreign policy issue.

LEE HINDU

1 5 DEC 2002

Russia to upgrade ties with NATO

By Vladimir Radyuhin

Russia
ND-12

MOSCOW, DEC. 9. Moscow is upgrading its ties with NATO, but says it is premature to plan joint anti-terrorist operations with the alliance. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said Moscow planned to raise the status of its office in the NATO headquarters in Brussels.

At the same time Mr. Putin told the visiting NATO Secretary-General, George Robertson, that the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union should serve, "not to aggravate the situation, but increase trust" between Russia and the Atlantic bloc. Until NATO clears Russian concerns Moscow says no to any joint action on the ground with NATO.

"It would be premature to talk about any practical, let alone combat (joint) operations against terrorism at this stage," the Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, said today at a Russia-NATO conference on the role of the military in combating terrorism.

The NATO chief is in Moscow for the conference, but his prime reason for visiting Russia is to see to it that the NATO-Russia cooperation under a joint council set up in May does not suffer as a result of the admission into the alliance of seven new members, including three former Soviet Baltic republics.

Moscow criticised the expansion as "unwarranted," but stopped short of regarding it as a threat.

GUNS AND POSES: RUSSIA KEEN ON CONTINUING DEFENCE TIES WITH INDIA

Putin wants N-system revised

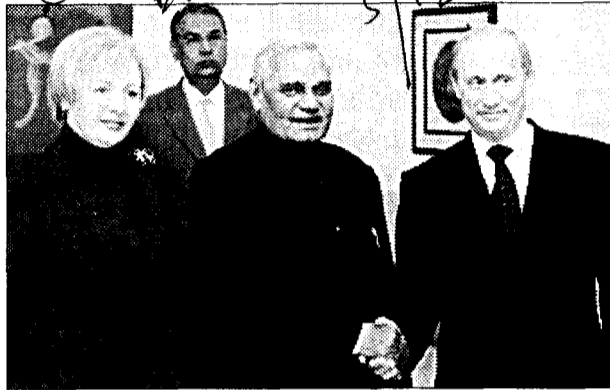
Indrani Bagchi

NEW DELHI 4 DECEMBER

VLADIMIR Putin on Wednesday called for a reworking of the existing global nuclear system. Demanding more stringent international safeguards against weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation by some countries (read Pakistan), Mr Putin simultaneously said that the rules prohibiting civilian nuclear co-operation with countries like India should be changed.

Mr Putin's remarks, coming at the end of what Indian government sources described as a "very successful visit" was interpreted as an "acknowledgement of new realities." Pakistan, which has been at the receiving end of Mr Putin's verbiage on terrorism and WMD proliferation was once again within his sights as he asked Islamabad to stop infiltration and dismantle the "terror infrastructure." On a more global scale, Mr Putin characterised his recent statements attacking Pakistan as his way of creating "international public opinion of the presence of such a threat." International safeguards on WMD proliferation should be strengthened, he said, which could be the basis of the resolution of this problem. The Delhi declaration even says that "states that aid, abet or shelter terrorists are as guilty of the acts of terrorism as their perpetrators."

However, it was Mr Putin's remarks on the nuclear order that gave India the greatest satisfac-



CLOSE UP: Atal Behari Vajpayee with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian First Lady Lyudmila in New Delhi on Wednesday. — AFP

tion. They were seen as a challenge to the premise of the nuclear order which prevents development of nuclear energy because of the suspicion of a spillover into a nuclear weapons programme. In effect, as senior officials pointed out, Mr Putin was virtually echoing Mr Vajpayee's recent statement in BARC when he asked the "high priests of nonproliferation... to tackle the clandestine development and transfer of nuclear and missile technologies, rather than targeting countries which have played by the rules. They might then be persuaded to look at atomic energy in India as an engine of growth rather than through the prism of nuclear weapons."

The issue of civilian nuclear co-operation was discussed "in detail", Mr Putin said. Officials later said that a resolution still eluded both sides, as both countries searched for a way to cir-

cumvent the existing nuclear order, like the provisions of the Nuclear Suppliers Group which makes it almost impossible for countries to have civilian nuclear co-operation with India.

Thus though the Kudankulam nuclear reactor is going ahead with Russian help, on the face of it, adding two more reactors to the package to meet India's nuclear power needs of 20,000 MW by 2020 looks difficult. However, the Russian minister for nuclear energy, Oleg Rummyantsev, was recently quoted as saying that as of March this year, the platform of the Kudankulam reactor had been extended to increase the output—a development that obviates the necessity of the Russians to ask the NSG for permission. This then was the spirit behind Mr Putin's statement that Russia was "ready and prepared to develop this (nuclear) relationship with India."

India wants a bigger discount on Gorshkov

Swaraj Thapa

NEW DELHI 4 DECEMBER

INDIA has asked Russia to further decrease the price for making aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov battle-worthy despite a fresh offer made on Tuesday by Russian minister Ilya Klebanov, who is a member of President Putin's team.

Notwithstanding the seeming inevitability of the carrier's inclusion in the Indian Navy, negotiators are understood to have made it clear to the Russian team that an agreement will not be possible unless the price is re-worked.

Mr Klebanov and other Russian officials spent an hour with defence minister George Fernandes on Tuesday discussing a comprehensive defence package including the sale of Admiral Gorshkov. Mr Klebanov, who is here for the second time within a month, is believed to have bettered his earlier offer on Tuesday. The speculation so far is that refurbishing the carrier, being offered "free," could cost India anything upwards of \$1.5 billion.

Defence sources indicated that the price being quoted by the Russians was unacceptable.

5 DEC 2002

The Economic Times

Putin concerned over Pak N-arms

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Dec. 1. — On the eve of his visit here, Mr Vladimir Putin has echoed the concerns of India about Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

The Russian President said in Moscow that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Pakistan could fall into the hands of "bandits and terrorists". This is exactly what India conveyed to the USA and Britain about a year ago — sometime between the 9/11 incident and the attack on Parliament. The issue was discussed by the Cabinet Committee on Security in October 2001.

The Pakistani nuclear weapons were stored in Babeli, in the North-West Frontier Province. The nuclear plant is at Kahuta. It is understood that certain measures were taken by the Pakistani government and General Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani President, has said the weaponry is safe.

Mr Putin is arriving tomorrow



Mr Vladimir Putin

row and he and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee will sign the Delhi Declaration focussing on terrorism and politico-security issues. Another declaration on scientific and economic affairs is likely to be agreed upon. Mr Putin will also call on Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and the Vice-President, Mr BS Shekhawat. Senior Cabinet ministers, including Mr LK Advani, Mr Yashwant Sinha and Mr George Fernandes, are likely to meet him.

Speaking about Pakistan's nuclear weapons, he said: "Our concerns, our anxiety still persist. Our position is

such that we believe that practical action should be taken to prevent the dissemination of WMD," he told some Indian journalists on Thursday. Mr Putin said: "What we are worried about is not only the fact that WMD could fall into the hands of bandits and terrorists (this is how I would like to call these persons rather than just ultras).

"We also have concerns that they (terrorists) could obtain information concerning production techniques of even simple means that could be equal to WMD in their destructive potential," he said.

He said he had no information about Pakistan transferring military technologies to other countries but welcomed India's and Pakistan's decision to pull back troops from the international border. He said it was a movement in the right direction.

"Relaxation of tension in such an explosive... region is an act that deserves respect and we will try to support any steps taken by either country towards that objective," he said.

2 DEC 2002

THE STATESMAN

Russia deploys aircraft in C. Asia

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, DEC. 1. Russia has begun deploying its military aircraft in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, in what appears to be an effort to balance American military presence in the region.

Two SU-25 ground attack jets and two Il-76 transport planes landed at the Kvant military airfield 20 km from the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, on Saturday, the Interfax news wire reported. The aircraft will be part of an air force base being set up in Kyrgyzstan under the Collective Se-

curity Treaty, which unites Russia and five other post-Soviet states.

Another two fighter jets, SU-27, were expected to arrive at the base later on Saturday. When fully deployed the airbase will comprise an impressive array of five SU-27 fighters, five SU-25 attack planes, two IL-76 and two AN-26 military transports, two MI-8 helicopter gunships and five L-39 trainers, Interfax said.

The base will also have a staff of 700 military and civilian personnel. Ten days ago, the De-

fence Ministers of the Collective Security Treaty decided to beef up a 3,000-strong rapid deployment force for Central Asia that was set up last year.

The move is seen as a Russian effort to reinforce its presence in Central Asia to offset the deployment of U.S. troops and aircraft in Uzbekistan and in Kyrgyzstan, for the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan.

Until now Russian military presence in the region was confined to Tajikistan, to protect its border with Afghanistan.

2 DEC 2002

THE HINDU

'THERE IS FUTURE FOR DEVELOPING A RUSSIA-CHINA-INDIA TRIANGLE'

Concerns over terrorists acquiring Pak. nuclear arms remain: Putin

By Amit Baruah

MOSCOW, NOV. 30. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has expressed the fear that Pakistan's weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of "bandits and terrorists". The assurances of the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, on the safety of his country's nuclear weapons were not enough.

"We take note of the statements made by President Musharraf that the military potential of his country is safely protected, strictly under control. But, to be frank, our concerns, our anxiety, still persist," said Mr. Putin in an interview to *The Hindu* and the NDTV.

The Russian President, who will be in India from December 3 to 5, said his concerns extended beyond the fact that Pakistani nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists. "Not only is that dangerous, but we also have concerns they (terrorists) could obtain information concerning techniques of even simple means that could be equal to weapons of mass destruction in their destructive potential."

Speaking at his official residence in the Kremlin late on Thursday night, Mr. Putin stressed that Russia was a "guarantor" of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and would insist on fulfilling its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Mr. Putin, who will be travelling directly to New Delhi after visiting China, was clear that there was a future for developing the Russia, China, India tri-



The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, during an interview in Moscow on Friday. — Photo: Vladimir Radyuhin

angle. "We are convinced of the need for positive development of relations between Russia and India, Russia and China and China and India. I think that all parties within this triangle are interested in this development." "At the same time, I think we shouldn't get ahead of time or move ahead without proper preparation. We should move step-by-step trying to develop harmonious relations... our aspiration, overall, should be to develop our relations in as positive a way as possible," he maintained.

Asked about Russian arms sales to China given its border

dispute with India, Mr. Putin pointed to Moscow's experience in tackling border problems with Beijing.

"Given goodwill on both sides, any problem can be resolved. We also hope that the questions that are still not resolved, outstanding questions, or issues, between China and India, will be resolved."

"There is no conflict now between China and India and I hope there will be no conflict in the future. The more we keep developing relations within the triangle, to which you have referred, the more successful we will be in achieving that positive

result." On India-Russia bilateral relations, the President said the experience gathered by the two countries in joint military cooperation should be transferred to the civilian sector.

"We are already engaged in joint development and production of high-tech, very complex and very promising weapons systems. This is something that we do not do with other countries. We think this experience should be exploited, should be transferred to our civil cooperation."

Mr. Putin readily conceded that trade between the two countries was "inadmissibly" low. "In recent years, it has not exceeded \$1.5 billion. For our two great countries, it is much too low." The President held out the possibility of India associating with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), where Russia and China have taken the lead in dealing with the terrorist threat. "We are prepared to engage in consultations with our Indian partners and our partners within the SCO in order to determine what capacity, to what extent, India would like to participate in the work of the Organisation. At a later stage, we could take a proper decision. I think that India's participation in joint work within that Organisation would help to enhance (its) role..."

Mr. Putin said he understood, "emotionally", the United States President, George W. Bush's position on Iraq after the barbaric September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and would not like to "demonise" the American position. "At the

same time, it has always been our position that decisions of that kind (military action against Iraq) are solely within the competence of the United Nations. It is only the Security Council that can take decisions of that kind," he said, adding that all parties concerned, including Iraq, should abide by Resolution 1441. Here, Mr. Putin may be referring to American adherence to the resolution as well.

Welcoming the Indian and Pakistani decision to pull back troops from the border, the Russian President, in a view quite close to the U.S. and European Union, said that in recent times Gen. Musharraf had taken a number of "resolute steps" to combat terrorism.

Rather than put all the blame on the Pakistani leader for "negative developments", there was need to "stimulate him" to continue with such a policy. "We have the right to hope that his actions will be sincere...and effective. Otherwise, all talk on this matter would make no sense." About the presence of American troops in Central Asia and Afghanistan, the Russian President said the U.S. had repeatedly said it had no intention of staying in Afghanistan longer than was necessary to deal with the problems there. "We consider ourselves as a member of the international anti-terror coalition and we hope all the actions taken in combating terrorism will be concerted action. And, so far, it has been exactly that way. We hope it will stay that way."

Details of interview: Page 11

Inspectors must be fair: Russia

HAITHAM HADDADIN

Baghdad, Nov. 15 (Reuters): Russia today urged UN weapons inspectors returning to Baghdad to focus solely on the disarmament job in hand and Iraqi newspapers said they had to be objective and free from any US influence.

Moscow, an ally of Baghdad from the Soviet days with important oil interests in the country, wants to ensure the UN experts cannot be used by Washington to justify a military invasion to oust President Saddam Hussein, a stated US aim.

Russia's deputy foreign minister Yuri Fedotov said inspectors had to compare the current arsenal with what existed at the end of 1998 when the head of the team Richard Butler unilaterally quit Iraq, complaining Baghdad was not cooperating. "That was how he cleared the way for strikes against that country," Fedotov told Itar-Tass news agency. This time, Fedotov said, any hitch in the UN inspectors' work had to be brought before the UN Security Council.

An advance party of UN technicians is scheduled to arrive in Baghdad on Monday to prepare for inspections, which are not expected to begin for another week or two. The group will be accompanied by chief UN arms inspector Hans Blix and International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director-general Mohamed El-Baradei. Moscow's UN ambassador Sergei Lavrov said he hoped the inspectors had drawn lessons from the time experts were last in Iraq, when they pursued "tasks which had nothing to do with the need to eliminate weapons of mass destruction".

"Crude and arrogant methods were used which ignored the sovereignty and dignity of Iraq and its people," he told Russian television late yesterday. Iraq accepted on Wednesday a new UN resolution giving Baghdad one last chance to disarm and paving the way for weapons inspectors to return after a four-year absence.

But the US vowed again yesterday that military force would be used to oust Saddam if he did not comply. Iraq's official *al-Thawra* newspaper, mouthpiece of Saddam's ruling Baath Party, said Baghdad's acceptance of the tough new resolution will put UN credibility to the test and said inspectors had to be honest and objective.

"The most important thing is that inspection teams should keep themselves away from American and Zionist influence which will take different forms such as bribes, blackmail, threats and the recruitment of spies under the label of experts," *al-Thawra* said.

THE TELEGRAPH

16 NOV 2002

Russia, Iraq discuss new project

By Vladimir Radyuhin

Russia *11-15* *16*
MOSCOW, NOV. 15. Russia and Iraq opened talks on new energy projects a day after Baghdad accepted the new U.N. Security Council resolution on international weapons inspections. Iraq's Energy Minister, Sahban Feisal Al Mahjub, arrived in Moscow to discuss "a number of major contracts," the Iraqi Ambassador to Russia, Mahmud Abbas, told the Interfax news agency on Thursday.

The visit began hours after the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, welcomed Iraq's decision to comply with the tough Security Council Resolution and called for U.N. inspections to begin as

soon as possible. "Moscow welcomes the decision of the Iraqi leadership to fulfil U.N. Security Council resolution 1441," Mr. Ivanov told the Russian television from Paris.

"We will now press at the Security Council for the earliest possible return of international inspectors to Iraq." The Russian Foreign Minister said Iraq's full compliance with the U.N. Resolution should lead to a "comprehensive settlement of the Iraq situation, including the lifting of sanctions." Over the past three years Iraq signed over 130 contracts with Russia for the construction of electric power projects worth \$1.2 billion, Interfax quoted the Iraqi Ambassador as saying.

1 6 NOV 2002

THE HINDO

Chechen crisis overshadows E.U.-Russia summit

By Batuk Gathani

17/4
Brussels
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BRUSSELS, NOV. 11. The one-day summit of the European Union (E.U.) and Russia here on Monday was overshadowed by the Chechen crisis. The summit venue was suddenly shifted from Copenhagen to Brussels, because of Moscow's anger that Denmark, which currently holds the six monthly rotating presidency of the European Union, hosted a Chechen congress days before the Moscow siege by Chechen Islamic terrorists.

Denmark is still considering a Russian extradition request for a Chechen rebel envoy, Akhmed Zakayev. Russia has consistently resented pressure by pro-Chechen European activists to convince E.U. officials to put "human rights" at the centre of their dialogue with Russia.

Moscow currently rates the yearly summit with the E.U. as a forum to discuss trade and political matters. Russia has emphatically stated that the crisis in Chechnya is a "domestic" issue.

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, told a group of pro-



The Russian President, Vladimir Putin (second left), shakes hands with the E.U. Commission President, Romano Prodi (left), Denmark's Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen (second right), and the E.U. Foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, in Brussels on Monday. — AP

Moscow Chechen leaders on Sunday that that his Government was not in favour of holding talks with the rebel Chechen President, Aslan Maskhadov, or any other "separatist" leader.

On the eve of the summit, human rights organisations had urged European Union officials not to compromise on human rights in order to improve relations with Russia.

E.U.-Russian relations have grown "increasingly warm" in the past two years.

THE HINDU

10 NOV 2002

Russia, Georgia strike deal

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, OCT. 7. Russia and Georgia reported progress in defusing tension that has recently built up between the two former Soviet republics over the presence of Chechen rebels on Georgian territory.

At a one-to-one meeting on Sunday, the Presidents of Russia and Georgia, Vladimir Putin and Eduard Shevardnadze, agreed to join forces to stop cross-border terrorism and strengthen their border.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of a regular summit meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States that opened in Moldova on Monday. Speaking after the meeting, Mr. Putin said the Georgian leader had proposed improving interaction between the borderguards of the two countries and organising joint patrolling of the border. Mr. Putin also said that he had received assurances that Georgia would extradite Chechen rebels detained in Georgia.

Russia issues ultimatum to Georgia

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, SEPT. 12. Russia has issued an ultimatum to the former Soviet republic of Georgia to stop cross-border attacks on Russian territory or face the prospect of a Russian military action to wipe out Chechen rebels holed up in Georgia.

"If the Georgian leadership fails to stop bandit incursions and attacks on Russia's neighbouring areas, we reserve the right to act in line with Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which gives every U.N. member nation the inalienable right to defend itself on its own or collectively," the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said.

Russia has long accused Georgia of taking no action against Chechen rebel bases in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge near the Russian border.

Georgia has also rejected repeated Russian proposals to mount a joint anti-terrorist operation in the region.

In televised remarks broad-



Georgian troops stand guard in the Pankisi gorge near the village of Duisi, recently. — AP

cast on Wednesday evening Mr. Putin said he had "absolutely verified information" that some of the militants entrenched in Georgia "were involved in planning the terrorist attacks in the U. S. a year ago and also in the apartment house bombings in Russia (in 1999)."

Moscow made it clear that its patience had run out.

The Russian President on Wednesday instructed top defence and security officials to draw up plans of "delivering strikes against terrorist bases (in Georgia) in the course of a pursuit operation."

He gave the Georgian leadership a month to accept the ultimatum, saying that he hopes to work out "joint anti-terrorist

measures" with the Georgian President, Eduard Shevardnadze, during their meeting at a summit of ex-Soviet states at the beginning of October.

Russian analysts saw Mr. Putin's ultimatum to Georgia issued on the anniversary of the September 11 events amounts as the offer of a deal to the U. S. President, George W. Bush: you go ahead with an antiterrorist attack in Iraq and let us do the same in Georgia.

"There are no arguments against this logic," the *Kommersant Daily* said. "George Bush has asserted time and again that terrorists must be hunted down wherever they are."

AP reports:

Meanwhile, in Tbilisi amid heightened tension, the Georgian President, Eduard Shevardnadze, and the nation's Parliament on Thursday gloomily mulled over a response to the Kremlin's ultimatum to wipe out Chechen rebels on their territory or face unilateral Russian military action.

Putin leads diplomatic offensive against allied attack on Saddam

ROLAND WATSON,
PHILIP WEBSTER &
RICHARD BEESTON
THE TIMES, LONDON

Sept. 7. — President George W Bush and Mr Tony Blair ran into a wall of international opposition to their proposed military action against Iraq yesterday, after world leaders from Paris to Moscow and Beijing urged them to shelve their plans.

On the eve of the prime minister's trip to Camp David for talks with Mr Bush, President Putin of Russia led a diplomatic counter-attack. Mr Bush and Mr Blair telephoned the leaders of the other permanent members of the UN Security Council to convince them of the need for action against Iraq. But the tactic appeared to backfire when Mr Putin told both men that their strategy was wrong and potentially disastrous for the region.

In the course of the discussions, the President expressed his serious doubts concerning the basis — both in interna-

tional law, and the global-political sense — of using force against Iraq," a Kremlin spokesman said.

Mr Blair, who will visit Russia next month, was warned of the "serious, negative consequences for the situation in the Gulf region, the Middle East and for the future of the US-led anti-terrorism coalition".

The Russians were also very concerned about Thursday night's air raid by British and US aircraft against an Iraqi air defence command post 240 miles west of Baghdad, the latest in a series of strikes.

Mr Bush and Mr Blair also spoke to President Chirac, who stressed his view that military action could only be sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Mr Chirac said it was up to the UN, and not the USA alone, to decide how to act against Baghdad if Saddam rejected the return of weapons inspectors. The US President was given a similar brush-off when he telephoned Mr Jiang Zemin, the Chinese leader, echoed Mr Chirac's sentiments.

The growing resistance to the Anglo-America push for action is likely to come to a head next week when Mr Bush makes his case before world leaders at the UN General Assembly in New York.

However, evidence emerged yesterday in support of Washington and London's contention that Iraq is developing weapons of mass destruction. UN experts said recent satellite photographs revealed new construction at sites linked to Baghdad's development of nuclear weapons. That evidence is likely to be added to a pool of information which Mr Bush and Mr Blair are preparing to make public.

The two will swap notes to ensure that when Mr Blair publishes the government's dossier against Saddam, it is in line with Washington's information. A similar campaign was launched last year to justify the campaign in Afghanistan.

US officials will travel to China, Russia and France after Mr Bush's speech to the UN to win support for their case. Senior officials will appear on tomorrow's talk shows to make the case to the American people.

Russia
49/19

KIM VISIT / MOSCOW PUSHES FOR TRANS-KOREAN RAILWAY

24/8

Putin to facilitate reconciliation

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, AUG. 23. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, met the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-Il, in the Far Eastern seaport of Vladivostok in an effort to facilitate reconciliation between North and South Korea, which will boost Russia's global role and bring big economic gains.

"Our (reconciliation) efforts have met with a positive response from our North Korean partners and there is clear goodwill on the part of the Korean People's Democratic Republic in this process," Mr. Putin said on Friday after three-and-a-half hours of talks with the Korean leader, who had come to Vladivostok by train.

This is Mr. Kim's second visit to Russia. Last year, he came to Moscow by train all the way from Korea.

The Russian leader discussed with Mr. Kim a plan to relink



The Russian President, Vladimir Putin (right), and the North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il, in Vladivostok, Russia, on Friday.

North and South Korea' railroads and tie them to Russia's

trans-Siberian railroad.

The ambitious project would

bring the two Koreas closer together and yield multi-billion revenues to Russia in tariffs for Korean goods shipped to Western Europe.

Mr. Putin said the new rail link would help revitalise Russia's depressed and underpopulated Far-East regions.

Ahead of Friday's talks, Mr. Putin said Russia should push ahead with the railroad to upstage China, which wanted a large portion of the road to pass through its territory.

"If we don't link it up here... it will still go ahead — but through the territory of our dearly loved neighbour China," Mr. Putin told local officials in Vladivostok.

Russia's Railway Minister, Gennady Fadeyev, who took part in the talks, described the linking of the Trans-Siberian and trans-Korean railroads as the most promising project in the Far-East and said it would get under way soon.

24 AUG 2002

Russia clouds US Iraq plan

CLARA FERREIRA-MARQUES

Moscow, Aug. 18 (Reuters): Russia said today it was set to sign a \$40 billion economic and trade cooperation agreement with Iraq in a move that could complicate Washington's plans to deal with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

A top Russian official confirmed the deal was being prepared despite concerns expressed by the administration of US President George W. Bush, who has made ousting Saddam a top priority and is seeking to build international support for a possible attack on Iraq.

"This document is being prepared," Oleg Buklmeshev, an adviser to Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, said, confirming a *Washington Post* report on the deal.

"It is an umbrella document

setting a framework for the development of economic ties between companies from the two countries."

He added: "We do not know when it will be signed. When it is ready, it will be signed."

Buklmeshev said the five-year deal to cooperate in areas ranging from oil to electric energy and railroads would not violate UN sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. "It is in line with current international agreements," he said.

Russia has close economic ties with Iraq, which owes Moscow Soviet-era debt believed to be worth several billion dollars, and hopes to proceed with lucrative oil deals once sanctions against Baghdad — which underwent a major overhaul this year — are lifted.

Under UN resolutions, Iraq

can currently sell only limited amounts of oil, using the proceeds to buy food and medicine.

After *The Washington Post* published news of the planned Russia-Iraq deal yesterday, US officials, keen to sidestep a public clash with Moscow, said Russia should bear in mind its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions.

"We're confident Russia understands its obligations under UN security council resolutions and will abide by them," White House spokeswoman Claire Buchan said.

An agreement with Iraq, part of Bush's "axis of evil" of states accused of seeking weapons of mass destruction, could add to disagreements which have marred Moscow and Washington's friendship over the past months.

The two sides, which saw

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their relations blossom after the September 11 attacks, have already publicly disagreed over Moscow's plans to boost nuclear cooperation with Iran, also part of the "axis".

Washington says Iraq, has been a threat since it invaded Kuwait, triggering the 1991 Gulf War.

9 AUG 2002

Georgia a 'terrorist nest', says Russia

11/18 By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, AUG. 10. Russia's Defence Minister accused Georgia of weaving a "nest of international terrorism", a-la Afghanistan, on its territory, as relations between the two countries plunged to a new low.

It is against such nests of terrorism that Russia was flexing its muscles in the region, Mr. Sergei Ivanov said during his trip to the Caspian to observe Russia's largest naval manoeuvres on the land-locked sea in decades.

"The situation on the Caspian is stable today, but we must not forget about Afghanistan next door, where the international community has just crushed a nest of international terrorism.

We must not forget either about Georgia nearby, where exactly the same nest has recently begun to emerge," the Minister

said on Friday in televised remarks after flagging off the week-long wargames, which involve 60 warships, 30 aircraft and 10,000 servicemen and will culminate in an assault on a barren coast to destroy a large group of armed rebels.

Tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi have been building up after a large group of Chechen rebels crossed into Russia from Georgia at the end of July. Russia has accused Georgia of harbouring Chechen rebels in the Pankisi Gorge near the border with Chechnya and refusing to undertake a joint anti-terrorist operation against them.

Georgia also refused to hand over to Russia several Chechen rebels detained by Georgian borderguards when they crossed from Chechnya fleeing a Russian mop-up operation.

Mr. Sergei Ivanov, described Georgia's stand as "double-faced". Relations be-

tween the two former Soviet republics have been further strained by a recent murder of a Russian Colonel in Tbilisi, who served as a liaison officer between the military of the two countries.

Georgian authorities arrested a retired Russian serviceman charging him with killing the Colonel for a small unreturned debt. However, Moscow placed full responsibility for the murder on Tbilisi. The Russian Foreign Ministry accused Georgian authorities of mounting a "noisy anti-Russian campaign" which "effectively untied the hands of criminals" who murdered the Russian officer. In response Georgia said it could allow U.S. troops to participate in anti-terrorist operations on its territory — a sore point with Moscow, which had painfully reacted to Tbilisi's invitation of American military instructors to train Georgian commandoes earlier this year.

Chechnya: Russia, Georgia on the 'brink of war'

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, JULY 31. Russia has stepped up a war of words with Georgia over continuing infiltration of Chechen rebels based in Georgia, comparing the situation in the region to that in Kashmir.

Moscow accused Tbilisi of 'aggression' and threatened to use force to destroy Chechen camps across the Russian border in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge after at least seven Russian border guards died fighting a large group of Chechen rebels who reportedly crossed into southern Chechnya from Georgia on Saturday. Russian officials accused Georgia of letting the group cross the border unimpeded.

"Such actions undertaken by international terrorism from the territory of a neighbouring state can only be qualified as aggression," the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, adding that the situation on the Russian-Georgian border was identical to that on the Indian-Pakistani LoC in Kashmir.

In both cases "trans-border terrorists are destabilising the situation in the region by engaging in criminal activities from the territory of a neighbouring state," Mr. Ivanov said in Brunei, where he is attending an ASEAN meeting.

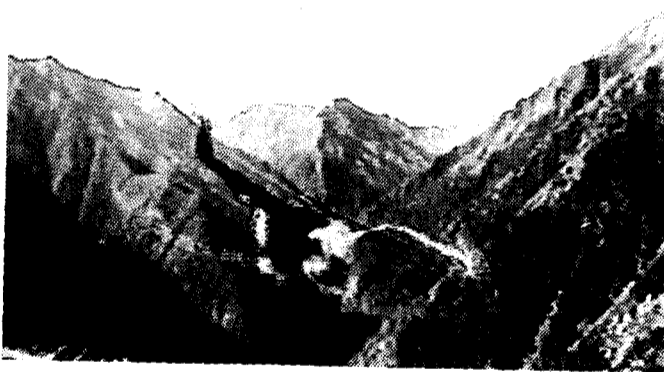
The Russian Foreign Ministry today said Georgia was either

unable or unwilling to curb the activity of Chechen rebels from its territory. "Georgia shall bear full responsibility for the consequences of such armed intrusions into Russian territory," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. A senior Russian leader has publicly called for striking at the Chechen bases in Georgia.

"I think we could emulate the example of Israel, which carries out pre-emptive strikes against terrorist bases on neighbouring territories without waiting for the terrorists to strike first," the Speaker of the Upper House, the Federation Council, told Russian television on Wednesday.

The Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, said "the problem of Chechen bandits on Georgian territory cannot be conclusively resolved without the use of Russian armed forces," as Georgia was unable to deal with them on its own. On Tuesday Georgia accused Russia of sending combat aircraft to raid its territory in what it said amounted to "aggression against a sovereign state." The Russian military promptly denied the charge.

"The standoff (between Russia and Georgia) is as intense as between two states on the brink of war," the Russian daily, *Nevzavisimaya Gazeta*, wrote on Wednesday.



A helicopter flies above Russian border guards fighting Chechen rebels in the Kerigo gorge on Chechnya's border with Georgia, on Sunday in this television image. — AP

Putin reiterates ties with U.S.

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, JULY 13. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, reasserted his strategic course of building close friendship with Russia's erstwhile enemy, the United States. Trusted partnership between Russia and the U.S. is not only in the interests of both nations. It exerts positive effect on the entire system of international relations and is therefore one of our unquestionable priorities, Mr. Putin said addressing the first meeting of all Russian ambassadors after the break up of the Soviet Union on Friday to mark 200 years of Russian diplomatic service.

Russia and the United States bear special responsibility for

strengthening global stability and share close views on today's global threats, Mr. Putin said describing strategic stability as his second most important priority after the struggle against international terrorism. At the same time the Russian leader called for a multi-vector pragmatic foreign policy aimed at advancing the country's national and economic interests.

Mr. Putin said Russia's foreign policy remained global in its sweep, not only by virtue of the country's military and political weight, but also due to its geography. Russia should look for such allies in Europe, Asia, Africa and America who recognise and respect our national interests and cooperation with whom is equitable and benefi-

cial for Russia. The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, said Russia's main threats come from Asia, not the West. The threat for Russia hides in the Caucasus Mountains region and its Asian border, Mr. Ivanov told the daily *Izvestia*. One of the main threats we have seen has not been the United States or NATO, but Afghanistan.

The Russian chief diplomat stressed the pragmatic nature of his country's foreign policy.

In the beginning of the 1990s we were in a state of searching and shakiness about whether to align with Europe or Asia, Mr. Ivanov said.

Today, we realistically recognize what is in our interests and what isn't, what we can do and what we can't.

THE HINDU

1 3 2002

Russia leaves pact

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, JUNE 14. Russia no longer feels bound by the START-II nuclear arms reduction treaty, its Foreign Ministry said.

Moscow sees "no preconditions" for START-II to take effect and therefore "does not consider itself bound by international legal obligations" not to take steps that could make this treaty meaningless, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement issued a day after the United States formally withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

START-II called for slashing the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the U. S. from about 6,000 warheads to between 3,000 and 3,500. The U.S. ratified the treaty in 1996 and Russian did the same in 2000, but linked its implementation to the Russian-American memorandum on preserving the ABM pact. Last month, the two countries signed a new treaty providing for more radical nuclear cuts.

The main implication of today's statement is that Moscow considers itself free from a START-II ban on having land-based strategic missiles with multiple warheads.

THE HINDI

15 JUN 2002

Runner Putin on Tashkent track

FROM K.P. NAYAR

Washington, June 1: Even as India asserts that there will be no Tashkent-II with Pakistan when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is in Kazakhstan, plans are being made in Almaty for a re-conditioned version of the Tashkent talks which took place in 1966.

These plans stem from a long telephone conversation yesterday between US secretary of state Colin Powell and his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov.

The call is expected to facilitate shuttle diplomacy by Russian President Vladimir Putin between Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf. This is the reason behind Vajpayee's decision to extend his stay in Almaty by a day.

Since India is convinced that a wrong message will go to Pak-

istan about its military resolve if Vajpayee has a meeting with Musharraf in Almaty, Putin will now carry messages back and forth between Indian and Pakistani leaders after the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (Cica). China will pitch in with its own peace-making efforts in Almaty by President Jiang Zemin.

Musharraf, who had earlier been undecided about travelling to Almaty, made up his mind to attend the Cica summit after an emissary of Putin convinced him of the need to try for peace on the sidelines of the summit.

In practice, Almaty will now see a replay of the events in Kathmandu during the last South Asian summit, albeit with some differences.

India had then insisted that there were no substantive meet-

ings of any kind with Pakistan: actually, the Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers held several meetings in Kathmandu and the Saarc summit culminated in brief talks between Vajpayee and Musharraf.

At the state department here and in the Russian foreign ministry in Moscow, there are fond hopes that Putin's shuttle diplomacy will lead to face-to-face talks between Indian and Pakistani leaders. But it seems unlikely.

Within the Bush administration, the minimum hope is that Putin's shuttle diplomacy in the Kazakh capital will prepare the ground for a major peace push which US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld is planning in Islamabad and New Delhi.

According to the timetable which has emerged from Pow-

ell's phone conversation with Ivanov, the day after Vajpayee returns to New Delhi from Central Asia, US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage will meet the Prime Minister to build on whatever the Russians have been able to achieve in Almaty.

Sources here said Rumsfeld would be carrying with him a comprehensive report on the scenario which could result from a nuclear conflict — however extended — in South Asia. He will also carry proposals for nuclear confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan in the event of a war becoming unavoidable.

Some of these proposals have already been discussed this weekend at Singapore between defence minister George Fernandes and Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz.

Russia and the summits

By Pran Chopra

The summits have kept the public mind focussed on world leaders discussing positive possibilities, not more ways of destroying the world.

710-10
11/6

AFTER WALTZING with the West at the recent summits in Moscow and Rome, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, might like to look back and count what he got from them. The list is neither long nor meaningful, despite the two agreements signed in Moscow — the declaration on strategic cooperation, and the nuclear arms agreement — and the accord reached in Rome on “NATO at 20”.

Take the declaration first. How much “strategic cooperation” can there be between the two nuclear giants when they remain as divided as they are on the three strategic areas which interest them most. The Middle East for one, particularly Iran and Iraq. Next, Central Asia, and finally China. All three raise questions which Mr. Putin would find hard to answer.

Even before the Moscow summit, Russia and the United States (and also, let's remember, the U.S. and Western Europe) had serious differences over Iran and Iraq. But they have been accentuated by the gung-ho address by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, on June 2 at the prestigious West Point military academy. He urged the cadets to be the first to strike before the “enemy” could strike, and his “enemy” list is said to include 60 countries, headed of course by Saddam Hussein's Iraq, with Iran not far behind, whereas Europe believes in trying reconciliation.

China also may have questions about the Moscow declaration. It might well ask Moscow the meaning of the Russian acquiescence in the growing American military presence on China's Central Asian flank. China has as much reason as India to wonder and worry about who is exploiting Muslim unrest in Central Asia against whom and for what reason. China might also be uneasily curious about the new NATO configuration after the Rome summit, and about NMD after the Moscow summit.

The new NATO Council, comprising the “NATO 19 plus Russia”, was billed at Rome as a security structure extending from Vancouver to Vladivostok. If that be so, where would China figure, which has one V in the north and the other in the east, and what does that do to China's hottest potato, Taiwan? And if Mr. Putin and Mr. Bush have patched up over NMD, what does that do to the talk last year and earlier that China and Russia could build up a joint response, whether in the form of a shield or a sword, if America went ahead with NMD?

Of course, an honest reply by Mr. Putin would be that there was no way he could have prevented Mr. Bush either from withdrawing from the ABM unilaterally, or from going ahead with the NMD after that, or from seizing the chance offered by September 11 for spreading himself in Central Asia. Nor could he undo NATO's new shape. But it appears he chose a softer option.

He sent off his Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, to Beijing to smooth such feathers as he might find to have been ruffled there by the Moscow and Rome summits. Mr. Ivanov met Jiang Zemin, and according to the Chinese news agency, Xinhua, as quoted in the Russian press, the two agreed that Russia and China needed (guess what) strategic cooperation. Mr. Ivanov knew that his boss and Mr. Jiang would be meeting at (yet another) summit, this time in Almaty, and he could leave it to them to puzzle over how a Bush-type strategic cooperation between Russia and the U.S. could be squared with a Jiang-type strategic cooperation between Russia and China.

It might seem that Mr. Putin still

has room for manoeuvre because, as he argued in an interview in Rome, these summits are only the beginning and as the plans laid there were unfolded many contradictions could be sorted out. But it appears that the shadow of another summit might have fallen on that hope, and it might disrupt rather than further promote the growing cooperation between Russia and the European Union. Indications of that have been given by Mr. Putin himself.

It was made clear at Rome, among others by Mr. Bush, that Russia's role in the new NATO Council would be a limited one for now, and its expansion later belonged to an undefined future. Among the subjects from which Russia is excluded is the now nearly certain expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe. One part of this project is very prickly for Mother Russia. When Poland and Lithuania join it, NATO will encircle the Kaliningrad part of Russia. NATO wants Russians travelling between Kaliningrad and the rest of their own country to carry NATO passports. That would be a blow enough for Russians' pride, but more so is the stated reason for it: that if their transit is not restricted they will wander freely through the NATO region and pollute it with prostitutes, drugs and stolen cars. Russian commentaries assert that visas relations will sour relations between Russia and the E.U., which is not such a good forecast for what Mr. Bush has hailed as the emerging new European Nation.

The arms cut outcome of the Moscow summit is also under a cloud. Not only have the two nuclear superpowers retained enough missiles to destroy the world many times over, America has additionally retained the

option to reactivate the ones it claims to have given up. Not a single warhead has been sacrificed in the name of humanity, and the future race to destruction has been lifted to a still higher level in the form of NMD. Very little has been done for stepping up trade and investment, which Russia most needs and was hoping for, and on its part Russia too has kept its door firmly closed on American investment in finding and developing new oil resources in Russia.

None of this means, however, that the summits have been a waste of time. Like all peace parleys, the summits have kept the public mind focussed on world leaders discussing positive possibilities, not more ways of destroying the world faster and more efficiently. They have brought nearer the day when meetings between the two nations become so frequent and easy that they need not be called summits any more than meetings between the American and British leaders are called by that name.

But it is the fourth summit held in this season of summits, at Almaty, Kazhakstan, that has broken most new ground, whether seen from Moscow, Beijing or New Delhi. It has created a brand new forum for the security concerns of Asia, corresponding to the security and cooperation organisation for Europe. It covers more people than any outside the U.N, including three of the largest countries in the world, Russia, China and India, and the two most populous. In its first document, the Almaty Act, it has spoken clearly on such major issues as terrorism and secessionism. It has made a beginning with tackling the most serious current danger of war, between India and Pakistan. It has become a forum in which Russia stands out most in its own right, not courtesy some patronising powers, and with China standing alongside it can also command more trust in South Asia than either the U.S. or the U.N.

THE HINDU

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NATO-Russia Council targets terror

Pratica Di Mare (Italy): The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which on Tuesday marked a new era of post-Cold War cooperation with the creation here of a NATO-Russia Council, has become the world's most powerful defence alliance since its formation in 1949.

The 20-nation summit in this military base near Rome established a joint council in which Moscow will have an equal voice in taking common decisions on such hot-button issues as terrorism, arms proliferation and military reform.

Such a move was unimaginable when NATO was set up 53 years ago to counter the Soviet Union's bid to extend its influence in Europe. The alliance quickly expanded from its initial 10 European states plus the United States and Canada to include Greece and Turkey in 1952 and West Germany in 1955. But then, as now, it was militarily dominated by the United States.

During the Cold War era, NATO's strategy was based largely on nuclear deterrence, providing for a riposte by all if any one of its members should be attacked.

U.S. dominance of the alliance was seen as a major threat by the Soviet Union.

In 1955 it created a counter-alliance in the form of the Warsaw Pact, which dissolved after the Soviet Union's break-up in 1991. The

Soviet demise left NATO with no clear role.

In 1992, the alliance decided to extend its traditional defence role to join in peacekeeping operations outside its own territory, and in 1994, for the first time in its history, engaged in military action by shooting down warplanes over Bosnia. It deployed a peacekeeping force in Bosnia in December 1995 following the Dayton peace accords that ended the war there and has since remained heavily engaged in the Balkan state.

In 1999, NATO, led by the United States, launched air strikes against Yugoslavia to force it to accept an international peace plan to end repression in its southern province of Kosovo.

The attack, involving more than 1,000 warplanes, was the largest military operation ever undertaken by NATO. It was the first time it had used force against a sovereign state without United Nations' approval.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 also led NATO to begin building relationships with former Warsaw Pact countries and particularly with Russia, where many are still suspicious about the alliance and particularly its plans for further eastward expansion.

In 1994, NATO offered its former eastern European adversaries, membership of the Partnership for Peace, a programme of military cooperation involving ex-



U.S. President George W. Bush and secretary of state Colin Powell arrive at Ciampino airport in Rome on Monday.

changes and joint operations, but without a formal security guarantee. Some 28 states, including the Russian Federation, joined the scheme.

Three years later, NATO and Russia signed a deal providing for enhanced Russian participation in all NATO decision-making activities and equal status in peacekeeping operations. But Russia's fears grew when, in 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became the first former Soviet bloc states to join the alliance, bringing its borders 650 kilometres (400

miles) closer to the Russian frontier.

NATO is to consider at least nine new applications for membership at a summit in Prague in November. The September 11 attacks on the United States were seen by many observers as of crucial importance for NATO. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in the face of anti-Western critics at home, came out squarely behind the U.S.-led war on terrorism, giving Washington intelligence and access to Central Asian airbases for its Afghan operations. AFP

Russia signs deal with Nato

Reykjavik (Iceland), May 15

MORE THAN 50 years after its founding and a decade after the end of the Cold War, the Nato approved an agreement today accepting Russia, the former enemy it was formed to fight, into a new partnership with the allies on terrorism, arms control and international crisis management in a post-September 11 world.

"Together, the countries that spent four decades glowering at each other across the wall of hatred and fear now have the opportunity to transform Euro-Atlantic security for the better," the Nato secretary general, Lord Robertson, said at a meeting of foreign ministers here.

The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, called the agreement "the funeral of the cold war," which he pronounced "kaput."

Coming just a day after the US and Russia announced that they had reached agreement on a new treaty to reduce nuclear warheads by two-thirds, the decision today solidified an almost surreal sense of a major change in Russia's relations with the West.

The Nato rapprochement with Russia occurred not far from the guesthouse where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail S Gorbachev met in 1986 for the "snap summit" that narrowly failed to end

the nuclear arms race but wound up marking the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

Under the agreement, Russia will for the first time become an equal partner for discussions and actions with the 19 Nato members on a variety of issues, including non-proliferation, military cooperation and civilian emergency planning.

For Russia, the new arrangement amounts to considerably less than full membership, though it will now have a say on many questions important to it and the prestige of association with the West's pre-eminent military alliance. The ministers also approved a communiqué pledging to improve their military abilities and compatibility and declaring that Nato "must be able to field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed."

In doing so, they acknowledged that the alliance now faced unpredictable threats far afield from Europe, even as some have questioned its continued relevance because the US made only selective use of the members' forces in the Afghanistan campaign. In the end, as Lord Robertson has said, it may be more a question of chemistry than of arithmetic.

The New York Times



US Secretary of State Colin Powell (right), with Russia's Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov (left) and Nato Secretary General Lord Robertson in Reykjavik on Tuesday.

Russia urged to build closer ties with India, China

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, FEB. 3. Russia should respond to the U.S. global war on terrorism by forging closer ties with India and China, leading Russian experts have said.

"George W. Bush's State of the Union address left no doubt that the American war on terrorism is aimed more at winning global supremacy, than rooting out terrorism," the head of the Russian Institute of Globalisation Studies, Mikhail Delyagin, said.

In this new reality, Russia should look for allies and "Mr. Bush himself showed us where to look for them by listing Russia together with India and China in his address," Mr. Delyagin said.

"Mr. Bush called them American allies in the war on terrorism, but the real reason he singled out India and China is that they are major powers

which follow an independent foreign policy and do not kowtow to America," the Russian expert said. "Strength is the only thing the U.S. feels respect for."

Russia deserved mention along with India and China, not out of respect for its strength, but in appreciation for its help to the U.S. operation in Afghanistan, Mr. Delyagin opined.

Russian experts are convinced that the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Central Asia will inevitably push Russia, India and China closer together.

"The Americans are doing in that region the same thing they did in the Balkans, where they created a controlled-hotbed of conflict by rearing Albanian separatists," said Ivashov, former head of the Defence Ministry's foreign relations directorate, who now heads the

Academy of Political Studies. "Such conflicts give the U.S. new leverage in dealing with other countries."

Mr. Delyagin believes that the U.S.-engineered instability in various parts of the world also serves the purpose of forcing capital to flee those regions to America.

The turmoil in Nepal last year was aimed at pitting India and China against each other, they said.

Now the Americans are setting up bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which cannot but be viewed in Beijing as an attempt to encircle China.

Russia, China, and India have no interest in seeing the region of Central Asia destabilised, they said. "Shared geopolitical interests dictate the need for closer interaction among the three nations," Gen. Ivashov said.