Click to read: NATO Defence College Occasional Paper No 7, June 2005 - 'Long-Term Possibilities for NATO-Russia Naval Security Cooperation' – a synopsis

This paper has been written by a Russian Naval Colonel whilst a Fellow at the NATO Defence College. Whilst it is a comprehensive study into potential NATO-Russian naval cooperation, it focuses on the NATO perspective and whilst acknowledging the political realities of cooperation from a Russian perspective, it fails to offer possible solutions to the major unresolved issues that could well hamper future strategic level cooperation. The paper promotes a vision of a mutually beneficial common security space in Eurasia based on the assumption that this goal is dependent upon NATO-Russian cooperation in recognising and solving a range of common threats and challenges. The NATO-Russia Council that was established in 2002 has made much progress and the assumption at the centre of this paper is that to maintain the momentum the existing structures and mechanisms need to evolve to the next level. The paper then addresses the likely nature of this evolution to achieve the aforementioned goal.

The first chapter is a Russian view of the military and political situation in the Euro-Atlantic area. The analysis is sound if conventional but the application of Russian military doctrine provides an interesting new dimension. The majority of the chapter is concerned with the history of the 6 phases of NATO-Russian cooperation dating from 1991 that lead to the NATO-Russia Council, and summarises the initial expectations and activities associated with the Council. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth look at the Council's achievements and what needs to be done in the future. In the 13 areas of cooperation analysed, there is nothing with which any western alliance member could argue in terms of principle or objective. The 4 unresolved issues that need to be addressed to facilitate strategic cooperation are identified but other than acknowledging that they are principally issues for the Russian Federation no attempt is made to suggest solutions. This leads on to the listing of a number of 'next step' options for the Council members in a series of domains one of which is naval cooperation. Chapter 3 comprehensively addresses areas of documentary and organisational reform, the latter concentrating on organisational changes at the levels of Council, Joint NATO-Russia Naval Task Force Command and sub-Task Force Command. However, the real focus is about enhanced naval cooperation in 9 functional areas. [One area is joint submarine rescue operations that is topical with the recent Royal Navy rescue operation of the Russian submarine AS-28 off Kamchatkya.] The text examines each of these areas in turn identifying the issues and proposing courses of action or possible solutions. Generally these proposals are practical although some may be beyond current political acceptability.

Overall this paper provides a good analysis of NATO-Russian co-operation, its potential for the future and provides a vision that could serve as a sound objective for those charged with defining the 'road map' to move this established cooperation forward.