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RUSSIA AND NATO: THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

In early April 2009 NATO marked its 60th anniversary. At the summit the members of the Alliance agreed to launch the process of elaboration of the new Strategic Concept, which would reflect the present-day threats and would hence correct the mission of NATO.

The final declaration also mentioned the relations with Russia. Despite a number of differences, the member states backed the idea of reconvening the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) meetings and welcomed the continuation of cooperation in such areas, as the stabilization of Afghanistan; arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation of WMD, including their means of delivery; crisis management; counterterrorism; counternarcotics; and antipiracy.¹

The development of the Strategic Concept is a good chance to give a fresh look at cooperation between NATO and various poles of power, including Russia. Is it possible to ensure rapprochement and true partnership between Brussels and Moscow or will it be more productive to pursue the previous course for mild confrontation?²

NATO-Russia relations have always been moving like a pendulum. From the euphoria of the early 1990s – the attempts of rapprochement and desire to join the *Partnership and Peace* (PfP) program – to the search of new framework of relationship due to the first wave of enlargement. From *freezing* the ties after the Kosovo bombing in 2000 to the fraternization after the 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States and the start of the operation in Afghanistan. Then some accommodation again – an effort to institutionalize normal relations in 2002 through the establishment of the NRC – and a new downward trend due to the NATO expansion plans and the war in Georgia.

The current state of NATO-Russia relations causes strong déjà vu. Now it seems that we are back into 2000 with its freezing and defreezing, superficial hopes and cautious steps towards partnership. It seems that after defeating the phantom of the Communism, Russia and the Alliance still follow the Lenin principle – one step forward, two steps back.

The years that passed were mainly the lost epoch – the parties failed to build trust and the attitude to NATO in Russia, as well as to Moscow in Brussels remains skeptical, if not hostile. There are some success stories – joint peacekeeping in the Balkans, *Active Endeavor*, TMD staff exercises, exercises to eliminate the consequences of man-made and natural disasters, a training program for the Afghani drug police, the center for retraining of the Russian retired officers. But they are few and are not as publicized as the negative stereotypes about NATO. There is much negative information in the media and in official statements, and the polls indicate this quite well.³

There were a number of cooperation programs and action plans, which mainly remain on paper – there hasn't been any significant joint large-scale exercise, similar to those Russia conducts with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). After all, it took several years to ratify the Status of Forces agreement,



which eventually provided for the transit of NATO non-military cargoes through the Russian territory and the legal presence of its military in Russia.

All these years the parties have been obsessed with setting up structures and institutions. However, it turned out that various hotlines, consultations, working groups and liaison officers are good for times when the parties don't care about each other, but fail any time when even a petty crisis occurs – be it an impasse over the CFE Treaty, independence of breakaway republics in Georgia, NATO expansion, NATO exercises in neighboring countries, or missile defense. As people say, “if you want to kill the idea, establish a working group.”

Hence, if any partnership to exist, the parties have to take off their diplomatic suits, sit down together and make an honest assessment of differences and commonalities. The list of true, not propagandistic claims to each other should be prepared. And the list of areas for joint work with very specific projects. They can be fewer than listed in the annual plans of action, but there should one or two large-scale events and numerous small-scale activities, which would create the link of engagement.

OLD LEGENDS

To ensure that the Russia-NATO partnership becomes a reality, both parties should stop creating myths. It is quite difficult, taking into account that the politics in the era of post-modernism is virtual, while the Russian politics is running ahead the rest of the planet in this area. However, each party has at least three stereotypes which should be and can be abandoned, in order to demonstrate political will and desire for cooperation.

Firstly, it is the conviction that NATO jeopardizes Russia's national interests. The existence of such mental setting is proved by various sociological surveys among the general public and the expert community – nearly two thirds of the population see the threat in the Alliance and think negatively about this “aggressive politico-military bloc.”⁴

Meanwhile, Russia's national interests, being peeled from propagandistic wrapping, do not contradict the objectives of the Alliance, whatever strange this may sound. Due to its geographical position, Russia is doomed to be the transit country. It is not good or bad – it is a fact for our *Heartland*. Moreover, this transit country has common borders with so many subjects of international relations that it is interested in maintaining the most friendly environment along its frontiers. This is emphasized in the recent (and in the all previous) Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.

There are different means to this end. The task can be accomplished by investing significant resources in the restoration of the Great Power status. This may help to pursue a more independent policy in the world, to benefit from one's authority and to exert some influence on the neighbors, and, hence, to preserve the territorial integrity – let us remember the famous Andrey Gromyko principle of “not giving away an inch of our land.”

Nonetheless, there are other mechanisms. After all, taking into account the size of the Russian territory, the current state of the Armed Forces and substantial (even growing) economic strength of the neighbors, it becomes clear that it will be quite difficult to keep the territory with military force, whatever sacrifices it may take from the country. It won't be possible to stop the aggressor with the very fact of “being a Great Power” either. And besides, the present-day *occupants* prefer soft economic penetration, which is accepted less painfully in the modern globalized world.

One may look into the future and try to predict the apocalyptic, but at the same time quite real picture of the next five-ten years. In the east the economic positions of China are strengthening. And logically they will be transformed into geopolitical ambitions. Due to the hunger for resources (from oil to water and territory) and after the successful modernization of its army, China will possess all the tools for active expansion. Even the negative scenario will not help Moscow – if China is weakened by economic crisis or collapse because of internal instability and social tensions, such chaos may spill over the border and this is not beneficial for Moscow either. Nearby there is another neighbor – North Korea with its non-transparent nuclear pro-

gram, unstable regime and vague prospects. And there is also an unresolved territorial dispute with Japan, which increases its military capabilities.

In the south the massive change of elites and regimes in Central Asia is only a few years away. It would be perfect, if the process takes a moderate form – a peaceful and painless evolution, like in Azerbaijan or Turkmenistan. However, a different scenario can be assumed – the increase in Islamist sentiments, tough inter-clan disagreements and growing conflict potential between the countries. One may remember here the rivalry for regional leadership between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the water disputes, or the landmines at the borders dividing some Central Asian states. At the same time, the green corridor for drug trafficking from Afghanistan will be open – the situation there is far from ideal settlement. Here also comes a new nuclear weapon state – Iran. For Tehran it is no longer the matter of gaining this status, but the more issue of timing and scale of its nuclear program. Meanwhile, many problems remain unsettled in the Caucasus – and the history of the last 20 years indicates that Russia cannot resolve them by herself.

Further in the west we witness the deterioration of relations with Ukraine. As 2017 approaches and the pro-Western strategic course in the Ukrainian policy retains, the increase in tensions will be inevitable (unless Moscow suddenly changes its ideology). It will be even worse if Kyiv is unable to keep the situation under control and fails to preserve the territorial integrity of the country. Such split, the prospects of which make happy many experts and politicians in Moscow, may actually be filled with sorrow – Russia is not ready to accept the eastern regions of Ukraine. If we go slightly further north along the map, we face the confrontation with the Baltic states. There is no normalization here as well, even though there were many windows of opportunity for that in the last 18 years.

Finally, at the Far North there is a potential conflict around the Arctic region, which is now a lucrative target for the Scandinavians, the United States, the EU, and Russia.

It may sound sad, but present-day Russia has no friends. The *regiment of boy-soldiers* – Belarus, Venezuela, or Nicaragua – is not effective in times of serious crises. Even in less sensitive situations – recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia or principle agreement on sending Belarusian troops in the conflict zone within the CSTO collective rapid deployment forces – the decisions of Minsk are mainly not in favor of Russia. And the *partners* in Latin America are so far away that their support is not tangible.

It is quite difficult to expect the backing of the United Nations. The organization proved long ago that it was not able to cope with the task of guaranteeing peace and stability. The right of veto, which blocks any initiatives, forces the United States, NATO, and even Russia and China to circumvent the UN and the international law. Some countries are more elegant in such actions (e.g. the physical elimination of the Chechen terrorists in Qatar), some are less (this is why the United States is often accused of unilateralism), but it is clear – the UN is the wrong place to take timely and quick decisions. Thus, any serious operations can be legitimized only *post factum* on the international arena. Besides, until the United States remains the key donor for the UN system, it would be naïve to wait for the equal, unbiased and balanced approach of the international organizations – this runs counter to the nature of human beings and organizations, which are made of human beings after all.

Hence, even if Russia resists this future, tomorrow will come anyway. And in the conditions of global economic crisis it may come even sooner than expected. At least, there are some nervous fluids in the atmosphere, just like in the 1930s.

Under these circumstances, it is high time Russia accessed the risks and threats. Endless repetition of mantras rooted in the Soviet past will hardly assist the country in getting out of the crisis, join the Top-5 economies of the world and become a true global leader, as it is stated in the *Strategy 2020*.

The burden of the problems is so heavy that any speculations about Russia's self-reliance are a harmful aberration. Aging nuclear arsenal, immense dependence on imports (including food), failing Soviet infrastructure, exhausted oil and gas fields (investments in new fields and surveys are low), demographic problems, the pressure on businesses and the lack of entre-



preneurship, delay in technological development and the small number of commercialized innovations – this list can last forever.

There is no time for illusions. Russia needs allies and partners, it needs the network of its agents of influence in the world, since the leadership today relies on intellectual potential, on the ability to provide attractive models and proliferate them.

Mankind has not yet invented other forms of obtaining allies beside:

- domination and the use of military force (suppress);
- economic power (buy);
- attractive and inspiring development pattern (lead with one's own example);
- compatibility of interests (your tasks are the goals for the subordinates).

It is obvious that none of these mechanisms is a magic stick. The allies come and go, betray and sell you in conformity with the century-old theory – there are no eternal friends, there are eternal interests.

However, the combination of these four methods may be effective. Realistic assessment of the Russian resources indicates that the ratio of the abovementioned tools should be 20–25–15–40 percent, at least, at the current stage. In the future it may be changed in favor of this or that element.

And as far as the interests are concerned, Russia is doomed to cooperate with Europe and NATO. By the way, Russian leaders – Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev – have repeatedly argued that we belong to the European civilization. Russia's national interests are quite simple – i.e. security of borders and neighboring territories, economic and social stability, demographic improvements, prevention of crime, extremism and terrorism, as well as environmental safety. None of them contradicts the NATO objectives, prevents Moscow from cooperating with the Alliance and with the West, which face the same problems. Moreover, Russia's *genuine values* do not contradict the Western values – it is enough to check the list of *indigenous values* mentioned by President Medvedev in his Address to the Federal Assembly in 2008.

Secondly, "NATO will die soon." During the last 40 years of NATO's existence, it has always been called into question. NATO lives in permanent crisis – withdrawal of France in the 1960s, missile crisis and gas crisis in the 1970s and 1980s, loss of the mission after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union in the 1990s, capabilities gap between Europe and the United States in the 2000s... and now the potential failure in Afghanistan... It seems that the Alliance has no people to fight for it – fewer and fewer volunteers join professional armies, conscripts have no motivation, defense budgets in Europe are decreasing (and will be further cut due to the economic crisis).

However, NATO does not cease to exist. And it is much easier for the allies to seek compromises within this structure than at some alternative platforms. The Alliance remains attractive for new members and becomes more and more global. To expect NATO to die is to make illusions again, which will only lead to disappointment. One has to think about building relationship with the Alliance rather than to wait for its alleged demise.

There is one more issue related to this approach. Why does Russia fear so much the threat of NATO, if the organization is not effective, useless and close to collapse? This is not logical. Even less logical will it be, if one takes into account that NATO never or nearly never used its military force for combat purposes, but mainly for deterrence. The attempts to use the force – in Bosnia, Kosovo, or Afghanistan – immediately faced heated debate and resulted in the establishment of the *coalitions of willing* that comprised only some members of NATO.

One should also remember that NATO exists as far as the consensus of the parties allows. It is not a corporate entity, it does not possess its own armed forces. To a large extent, it is a political club, which brings together the countries with a certain set of values and helps to integrate politicians and military from different nations, teaches them to speak common language, pro-

vides for coordination. At the same time, this is the weak point of the Alliance – NATO is always reactive, since its members find it difficult to agree in beforehand on some hypothetical situations. NATO cannot prevent a new genocide somewhere in Rwanda, since it takes a lot to come to terms and send the contingent. Is it worth being afraid of such *paper tiger*? The answer is clear – no. But one should make maximum use of Alliance’s capabilities in one’s own interests.

Thirdly, “NATO is the U.S. puppet and the only thing the United States wants is to weaken Russia.” Conspiracy theories have the right to exist, but should not become the policy base. Washington has a strong influence on its allies, but it is also dependent on them. And the split over the war in Iraq demonstrated such link.

Russia is no longer a key priority of the U.S. foreign policy – this fact is mentioned by many Russian and Western politicians. It is not reasonable then to assume that each U.S. action is somehow meant to affect the positions of Russia, or that Moscow is in the center of Washington’s policy. Many negative implications of U.S. activities are rather caused by Washington’s clumsiness than by deliberate anti-Russian intentions.

After all, the United States even with its unilateral policy is more predictable than some of Russia’s allies – Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, or Tajikistan. And it is much easier to predict the policy of the United States or to agree on something with Washington than with some of Moscow’s partners in the CSTO, or with China. Both parties – Russia and NATO – should agree to be more transparent with respect to each other and should demonstrate greater respect to each other’s interests – this will turn the problem into opportunity.

NATO, on its part, should also get rid of some myths. First of all, it has to learn to respect Russia’s psychology – from historically inherited Great Power mission to suspicion with respect to the military alliance, which 60 years after the establishment remains an adversary which does not keep promises. There are traditionally two major disappointments – the pledge not to expand given to Gorbachev and the attack against Serbia (even after ten years it is not yet the matter of history and it is stuck in the minds of the Great Power, which voluntarily and deliberately withdrew itself from the Balkans).

The Alliance should be patient to such psychological aspects, since they are real in their consequences. It is not paranoia, as some experts in the West assume. It is mentality that should be respected. So far it sounds as if Russia is unpredictable and the Alliance does not want to listen to and to accept the concerns of Moscow. However, this is not true. And any claims that Russia has not voiced its position cannot be taken seriously – Vladimir Putin’s speech in Munich, joint statements by Medvedev and Sarkozy, unambiguous formulas in the Foreign Policy Concept and the Foreign Policy Review of the Russian Federation are quite eloquent.

Secondly, NATO should stop building dividing lines following the will of radical politicians in some Eastern European countries. The problem of NATO expansion is not that it reached the Russian borders, but that it stopped at the Russian borders. All talks about Russia’s non-compliance with the democratic criteria and, hence, about inability to invite Moscow to join the Alliance are full of mischief. The criteria do not have any objective parameters and by formal features Russia (even with the Stalin Constitution of the 1930s) shows full compliance with the democratic framework. Or at least, Moscow’s behavior is not worse than the actions taken by the regimes in Tbilisi or in the Baltic states.

There is a need for an open dialogue and Russia should be involved in it on an equal basis, not as a parvenu, as a stranger which has to face the consolidated position of others. The NRC has failed to overcome this estrangement. Quite often it is a matter of interpretations, language, intonations, etc. NATO’s *body language* is regarded as the construction of new dividing lines and the Alliance has to undertake some efforts to explain to Moscow all the nuances of NATO’s behavior. Russia should be more actively involved in NATO projects, even if it resents them at first – the mutual lack of trust can be overcome only through such joint work. After all, the art of the dialogue is not in making agreements with the friends, but in meeting halfway with the opponents.

An eloquent example of the NATO-Russia confrontation is the recent exercises conducted in Georgia. It was known long beforehand about these exercises, they had a peacekeeping mis-



sion and did not only cover the members of the Alliance, but also a number of PfP nations. Moreover, Russia was repeatedly invited to take part in the event and, hence, to clear any doubts about the potential threat they posed to Moscow. However, Russia once again chose the image of a humiliated and insulted partner and froze all the agreements on restoration of relations with the Alliance.

Even though politics know no moral limits, it is not particularly ethical to conduct the combat exercises on the recent battlefield soaking with blood. On the other hand, what can be more effective than such exercises in the conditions so close to real combat? And besides, why wasn't this issue raised in fall or winter 2008? Why would Russia wait until the very last moment and then suffer from hysteria? The military, diplomats and politicians are well aware of the fact that such large-scale multinational events are not prepared within one month and cannot be easily moved to another date or cancelled.

The parties once again demonstrated the lack of flexibility. Russia helped its adversaries to make an aggressive bogus out of it. At the same time, one can imagine what a strong blow it would have been for the Georgian regime with its purely anti-Russian course, if Moscow eventually had agreed to participate. And Russian soldiers and officers would have had a chance to station legitimately on the territory of Georgia. Moreover, this would have no impact on the Kremlin's action in South Ossetia or Abkhazia.

Another disproportional response is the reaction to the spy scandal, which Moscow read as a new insult from the Alliance with appropriate serious political implications. Wants it NATO or not, but the Alliance will have to learn how to mitigate such nervous feedback from Moscow and this would probably be the most complicated part of building the dialogue.

Thirdly, NATO-Russia relations should eventually get the economic basis, which will be more reliable than any empty political declarations. Such cooperation may extend from strategic airlift to modernization of arms and joint efforts to ensure the security of energy supplies, police and military training, etc. The lobby which is interested in the development of partnership should be created on both sides – so far there are no such influence groups.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Before any projects are taken up, Russia's top-down bureaucratic culture should be considered. There should be reached general political consensus and clear sign should be sent to the entire bureaucratic system – NATO and Russia are no longer adversaries.

So far all this is fixed at the level of declarations, but has not yet become a part of actual policy. This means the eradication of anti-NATO rhetoric from the Russian doctrines, as well as the anti-Russian rhetoric from the speeches and actions of the Allies. Such mood should be further enhanced with the active public diplomacy, reciprocal expansion of NGO networks, intensification of military-to-military contacts and PR-activities to change of tone in the media in Russia and in the West.

It is obvious that many problems emerge today due to poor communications. The Russian media are not presented in the West, the foreign media are not popular with the Russian public. There are no heated discussions in the style of Gorchakov or Chicherin – both parties avoid any straight talk and often lack brilliant orators that would have professionalism and courage to participate in such debate. NGOs and think tanks are not the dominating force in the dialogue, so this communication channel is closed as well.

However, everything is quite achievable – the Soviet Union gave us the examples of the policy of détente, including improvement of relations with Western Germany in the 1970s. Another example is Armenia and NATO – mechanisms used there enable Yerevan to keep its self-sufficiency and independence in foreign policy and security matters, maintain good relationship with Russia and the Alliance at the same time without risking sovereignty of Armenia or spoiling its ties with each side. The Armenian military and diplomats only benefit from studying in the Russian universities and in the West.

Which are the areas where the progress is more probable after such political consensus is reached? Just like the current Russian government anticrisis plan, the roadmap for NATO-Russia relations may comprise seven priorities.

First of all, these are the ratification of the CFE Treaty and broader discussion on European security platforms. There is no problem in ratifying the adapted CFE but for the political will of the NATO states, which actually once agreed even to persuade the Baltic nations to join. It is clear to everybody that the adapted treaty reflects the reality, will not pose a threat to security of any nation and, on the contrary, will help to disarm and set up improved mechanisms for reduction and limitation of arms. This is, by the way, quite topical in the era of global financial crisis. So ratification of the CFE Treaty is just a formality (just as the elimination of the Jackson-Vanik amendment), which should easily be passed and should not push away the future.

Besides, there is no need for putting forward a separate NATO security concept, as if it was aimed against Russia and Dmitry Medvedev's proposal on the comprehensive European security treaty. On the contrary, if we want to come to some consensus, NATO initiative should be "sold" as a constructive response in development of the Russian ideas, i.e. with "win-win" logic, as some new ideas that would contribute to the general debate.

Secondly, the parties should go on with the development of the joint TMD system. It will be a protection shield for Europe anyway, whenever the United States builds its strategic missile defense. Russia and NATO has already accumulated substantial knowledge and experience in this area and it should be quickly converted into some tangible system – with early warning centers, radars, interceptor missiles, etc. Again here it is the political will that is needed – the military has mostly come to the agreement on the matter (successful staff exercises, the advantages of the Russian air defense systems, etc.) and moreover, such project could be one of the elements of the aforementioned economic basis).

Thirdly, there is an ideal mutual understanding in the area of emergency operations. Russia and NATO keep saving each other vessels, protecting oil platforms, training people in securing the nuclear power plants, and so on. Cooperation in this sphere should be expanded and commercial agreements (Russian antifire aircraft or NATO bathyscaphs) should go beyond national selfishness.

Fourthly, Russia and NATO should eventually find a hotbed of conflict for joint peacekeeping operation. Positive experience gained in Bosnia should not be forgotten, it should be increased. Such test range could be Moldova, where the conflict with Transnistria moves to some settlement. However, it would be better to find a more neutral and less sensitive place – be it Africa, or the Middle East, or some other part of the world, where the scope of the dangers is unambiguous and immediate action is needed. This would help the parties to build on combat experience and interoperability, just as it happened once in the Balkans. Moreover, Russia should not limit this interoperability to one specially designated brigade only – more Russian units should be involved in such joint activities.

Fifthly, Afghanistan seems to be the common headache for both parties. Therefore, instead of playing muscles in Central Asia and putting Kyrgyzstan in a difficult position of choosing between the two giants, the parties should focus on stabilizing Afghanistan. Russia should not be involved militarily, but joint antidrug programs, training courses for the Afghani armed forces and police, intelligence sharing and consultancy (e.g. Soviet combat track record in dealing with the militants in Afghanistan), mild forms of pressure on the Afghani government, etc. should be used.

Sixthly, the parties should develop a joint approach towards frozen conflicts. Probably each of them should be treated individually. But it is clear that it makes little sense nowadays to oppose the recognition of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia – their independence is a fact and they are economically sustainable entities which do not want to live together and to have any deals with their once "mother states". However, the federation model has not yet exhausted its potential with respect to Moldova. And Nagorno-Karabakh may be resolved as well if conflicting parties feel the real pressure from the mediators.



To support this, Russia and NATO may sign the agreement providing security assurances and fixing the new borders of Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, these small nations may pledge to maintain neutrality and avoid from getting into blocs. Such elegant solution to the current deadlock is possible. After all, their military significance is extremely low, they are too poor to be preoccupied with militarization and costs of merging with any alliance. And the neutral status does not prevent them from adapting the best practices and trainings from both NATO and Russia.

Finally, Russia and NATO should think of one or two realistic and nice PR-projects; the ones that will help to radically shift the public opinion on both sides in favor of cooperation. The ongoing secret war for the Arctic region is an example of extreme rivalry. Instead it would be good to start up joint exploration and patrolling (e.g. against illegal fishing, environmental control, etc.) and think of the same treaty with respect to the Arctic as there is with respect to the Antarctic or to the Moon, which are the assets of mankind as such. Another project could be joint fight against piracy – and not only near the shores of Somalia, but also in the Strait of Malacca, for example, where this problem is no less topical. Obviously, there is a huge area for creative ideas and specific PR-initiatives here.

Hence, there are opportunities for partnership. In the future, as the relations transform, one may speak about closer cooperation patterns, including Russia's accession to the Alliance, in order to prevent the aforementioned threat to the Russian security. However, one may say even now – if there is political will, the parties have the chance to step over the mistakes of the past, not to focus on stereotypes and start building constructive relations.

Any alternative to this would mean the weakening of Russia and Europe, including exhaustion in the race for prestige, growing tensions on the continent aggravated by the economic crisis. There is less and less time left for deliberations – the international relations enter the era of intense action.



Notes

¹ Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg /Kehl on 4 April 2009, p. 35, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-4D9E9176-AB08D213/natolive/news_52837.htm (last visited on April 5, 2009).

² As Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Duma Committee for International Affairs, mentioned at the Forum “Strategy 2020. New Tactics”, “Foreign policy cannot be a goal in itself. It is an instrument that serves for solving specific tasks and depending on the character of these tasks, foreign policy can be confrontational, or aimed at cooperation.” <http://edinros.er.ru/er/text.shtml?72275/100026> (last visited on April 5, 2009).

³ As it is reported by the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM), “most of the interviewed experts agree that even few statements that appear in the Russian press or on TV mainly concern protocol events, or still have negative tone (e.g. the reports on Georgia's and Ukraine's accession to NATO).” *Perception of NATO by the Russian public* (Moscow: VTsIOM, 2006), p. 7.

⁴ According to VTsIOM, 58 percent of Russians have negative attitude towards NATO. The same picture may be found in the polls in the last 15 years, as the analysis of the database of surveys indicates. VTsIOM, Press Release No. 1191, April 2, 2009, <http://wciom.ru/novosti/press-vypuski/press-vypusk/single/11670.html> (last visited on April 5, 2009).