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THE EUROPEAN SECURITY TREATY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION–UNITED STATES–NATO TRIANGLE

A year ago, in November 2009, the world celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which divided not just Germany but the whole of Europe. But has Europe actually become united and secure since the end of the Cold War? Unity and safety has been proclaimed as the main priority by all the members of the European security system—but despite the cooperation of institutions the European nations have established, the continent still remains divided. One of the key problems here is the continuing political divide between the expanding Euro-Atlantic community and the *other Europe*, which lies to the east of the Russian border. In its attempts to protect its vital security interests, Russia is still facing a lack of understanding in the West.

The Western nations, which are trying to construct their own zone of stability, still suspect Russia's European policy of imperialism and brutishness. They see the recent military conflict with Georgia as a prime example of that policy. Military confrontation between Russia and the West has now been replaced by military cohabitation. And as the war in Georgia has demonstrated that cohabitation is no guarantee against military–political conflicts on the European continent. The West showed solidarity with what it saw as poor little Georgia falling foul of a disproportionate Russian military response. That solidarity has raised the prospect of new confrontation scenarios. After all, it is not Georgia's military strength that Mikhail Saakashvili was betting on. He counted on Western support, especially the support of the United States. His clear intention was to play Russia and the West off against each other.

THE CAUCASUS CRISIS AND THE IDEA OF TREATY

The crisis in the Caucasus has been a real blow to the European security system—but things are seen very differently in the Western nations and in Russia. It was none other than Russia who faced Western accusations of upsetting the status quo and breaking the rules. *Unacceptable* and *disproportionate* were some of the milder terms used by Europe to describe the Russian response. Washington was even less diplomatic, laying the blame for the Caucasus crisis squarely on Russia. In actual fact, everyone realized perfectly well who started the war. But politicians in the West preferred to keep that to themselves: behind the radical shifts that took place in the Georgian conflict zones, the changing geopolitical outlines of the Russian giant were clearly taking shape. It was not just Western criticism in itself that the Kremlin, the majority of the Russians and, of course, the Ossetians and Abkhazians themselves found so insulting. It was the apparent Western notion that whatever happens, it is always Russia's fault. That perception started slowly to change only a year later, when an international fact-finding mission led by Heidi Tagliavini confirmed that the initial Russian military response to the Georgian attack against Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia was justified—although the subsequent actions of the Russian troops were deemed disproportionate.

The crisis in the Caucasus is seen as a watershed moment for the European security system, both in Russia and in the West. Moscow had never been happy with that system, and it kept saying so to the Western partners. Russia continued to oppose NATO's policy of eastward expansion; it spoke against the recognition of Kosovo's self-proclaimed independence, and against



A N A L Y S I S

America's plans to station elements of its anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system in Europe. The Kremlin made it perfectly clear that the West was on the verge of crossing Russia's *red lines*—it suffices to recall Vladimir Putin's statement in Munich in February 2007, calling for *honest dialogue*. In the West, those statements were described as unacceptable and provocative. U.S. presidential candidate John McCain went as far as to say that the speech was the most aggressive by any Russian leader since the end of the Cold War.

In other words, before the war in Georgia, Russia couldn't get the dialogue going, and its concerns remained unheeded. And, as one European paper put it, "following the Russian occupation of parts of Georgia and Moscow's recognition of the two separatist entities, the question suddenly arose of whether Russia is still a partner of the West, or has it become an enemy again."¹ So while the West is regretting the collapse of the existing security system after the Georgian crisis, and while it wishes that it could *enter the same river twice*, Moscow is arguing even more vehemently that things cannot go on like that. Russia views the conflict in Georgia as a watershed event which calls for a search for new answers to security challenges. The dilemma remains the same, but it has become far more pressing. Either we build a united Europe based on shared security and cooperation—or we allow the situation to degenerate into a new iteration of the Cold War, with the philosophy and strategy of mutual containment that will inevitably rely on military-political instruments.

Following the crisis in the Caucasus, at the top of the European security agenda is the question of the viability of the Russian idea of signing a legally binding European Security Treaty (EST). Many experts have opined that after the Georgian events, the chances of that treaty being signed have dwindled to zero because the West no longer believes in Moscow's good intentions, and that Russia is increasingly driving itself into isolation. But, as the Russian leadership continues to stress, there is simply no other way than to move together towards overcoming the crisis, establishing cooperation and mutually beneficial practical partnership, building cooperation mechanisms and working together.

As President Medvedev stressed in October 2008 at the Evian international conference, the conflict in the Caucasus has demonstrated the failings of the existing European security architecture. He also formulated the key principles of the proposed EST. The topmost of them, the principle of *equal security*, is based on three negatives: no to ensuring own security at the expense of others; no to taking any steps (as part of any military alliances or coalitions) that can weaken the unity of the common security space; and no to developing military alliances to the detriment of the security of other members of the treaty. The EST idea relies on the formation of a *network security architecture*, which brings together nations, international organizations, and alliances around the common tasks and objectives of countering the existing challenges and threats, especially the military-political ones. It is in the area of *hard security* that the deficit of mutual trust and cooperation is especially acute, hampering the creation of a reliable and comprehensive security system in Europe.

The Russian initiative is essentially an attempt to overcome the existing and deepening divisions between the West and the East, between the EU-NATO-U.S. and Russia, between *them* and *us*. It is an attempt to find a solution to the question of how to make Russia part of the European security architecture if it cannot be part of the twin pillars of that architecture, the expanding NATO and the EU. That question has remained unanswered since the end of the Cold War and is now becoming increasingly urgent. To many in the West, the answer is obvious. Russia is invited to join the system of Western values and gradually to integrate itself into the Western (Euro-Atlantic) world. But Russia does not see itself as part of the Euro-Atlantic system, and it is trying to find a model of bilateral rapprochement and equal cooperation that would not be based on blocs and alliances.² That is the whole philosophy of the proposed EST.

The official Russian line is that the European nations cannot feel completely at ease, even if they are members of NATO and the EU, unless vital Russian interests are taken into account. Many in Europe understand that proposition quite clearly, so Moscow has every reason to expect some real interest in discussing the initiative it has put forward. Of course, large international projects such as this one require unity of the political will among the European leaders, so the prospects of these projects are difficult to predict. But work on the proposed EST should be viewed not as one of several possible directions of structural reform, but as a monumental task of dismantling the containment systems inherited from the Cold War and creating a common system of equal and shared security covering the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The next logical question is what Russia's initiative means in practice to its European partners. The difficulties here are great, even without taking the effects of the Georgian crisis into account. Each one of the OSCE members to whom the Russian proposal is addressed needs to see what added value that proposal offers to them. They need to understand how that proposal can be balanced against the other priorities, including the interests of the twin Euro-Atlantic pillars, the EU and NATO. Will this new Russian approach have any adverse effects on the viability of the Western security institutions, whose importance their members do not tend to underestimate in any way?

The proposed new pan-European security architecture therefore cannot be positioned as an alternative to the existing one. The current system does not need to be replaced, which would be an impossible task anyway. What it needs is a transformation. The treaty should be viewed not so much as a new mechanism for resolving problems and differences but as a product of the ongoing efforts to build confidence and strengthen cooperation between Russia and its partners in every single area of their relations.

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ROLE

So what are the lessons of the Caucasus crisis, and what is going on in the relations between Russia and its European partners? First of all, these relations have normalized, and fairly quickly. The EU has recognized that it is not prepared to allow its disagreement with the Kremlin's policy on Georgia to affect all the other areas of Europe's relations with Russia. The existing general policy and approaches will remain unchanged. Also, for all the talk of the EU's weakness, of its internal squabbles and lack of unity, Brussels played a very important role during the crisis, which was welcomed both in Russia and in the West.

The EU stepped forward when all the other players in Europe were either unwilling or unable to take part in efforts to resolve the conflict. The UN and the OSCE proved too weak, unable to move quickly or take the initiative. The United States resorted to blocking Moscow's proposal to hold an emergency meeting of the Russia–NATO Council, and relations with NATO were subsequently frozen. Not content with its outspoken criticism of Russia, Washington also made several practical steps. It signed an agreement with Poland on stationing ABM elements on Polish territory; the Department of State initiated unilateral sanctions against Rosoboronexport, the Russian arms exports monopoly; and the agreement on peaceful nuclear energy cooperation was put on hold.

Meanwhile, the EU also demonstrated its relevance to its own member-states. Some of them, such as France, which held the rotating EU chairmanship, used the situation to maintain cooperation with Russia and strengthen the EU's common foreign and security policy. Others, such as Poland and the Baltic states, wanted Moscow to be punished and the EU to follow Washington's hard line. They welcomed the opportunity to leave the actual responsibility to Brussels and Paris, and settled for demonstrating their tough stance at various NATO and OSCE gatherings.

The EU undertook the extremely important role of a mediator in the conflict, playing the good cop in Western contacts with the Kremlin. Brussels put aside the idea of imposing any sanctions on Moscow, showing instead its willingness and ability to work constructively while others—such as the United States and NATO—took the hard line. In addition, the vacuum in the security dialogue between Russia and the West, which came about following the 1999 war in Yugoslavia, was filled to some extent by growing contacts between Russia and the EU under the new European Security and Defense Policy project (ESDP).

At the time, that dialogue was limited to more or less just keeping the relations afloat—but during the Georgia crisis the EU proved its ability to deliver actual results. Brussels obviously has a rather limited say on international security issues. Nevertheless, that European lead in the relations between Russia and the West became a welcome new development, and the EU now has a much greater role as a Russian partner in the Euro–Atlantic.

Another important thing to mention is that the crisis in the Caucasus led to Russia and the West making, for the first time, some practical steps to meet each other half way. That progress too was achieved as part of the Russia–EU dialogue, which remained fairly constructive, unlike the Russia–NATO relationship.

For the first time, Russia and the EU, which essentially represented the West, managed to agree on a subject that was causing serious disagreements between the two sides. The



Medvedev–Sarkozy plan demonstrated how an agreement can be achieved despite serious differences. Up to that point, there had been no real attempts at compromise in the political dialogue between Russia and the EU. There were briefings and exchanges, there were disagreements, but there was no real will to seek serious compromise.

In another first, Russia gave the green light to an ESDP operation on CIS territory. That is a very important and serious practical change in Russia's security policy and in its political relations with the EU and the West as a whole. Clearly, neither the United States nor NATO can expect similar support for their military activity in the post-Soviet space.

Finally, President Medvedev sent Russian helicopters to support the EU mission in Chad, signing a decree to that effect on September 1, 2008, the day of the opening of the emergency EU summit on the Caucasus crisis. That was yet another precedent, following numerous unfulfilled declarations of both sides' willingness to develop practical cooperation in peacekeeping, including in the area of air transport. The first statements to that effect were made by Russia and the EU back in October 2000.

Nevertheless, all these precedents and achievements are hardly enough to proclaim a new era in security relations between Russia and the EU or the West as a whole. The August 2008 shock therapy did not really bring any radical improvements in the chronic malaises. Political dialogue is developing, but in truth it has merely been restored to the pre-crisis level.

Meanwhile, looking at the roadmap for building common external security space (which is being discussed during Russia–EU meetings), there is a window of opportunity. The roadmap says that on many issues, the two sides can reach common political ground. But clearly, that requires further development of the institutional base. Brussels keeps telling us that this is impossible and unrealistic, given the institutional specifics of the European Union. But is that really so? The answer is both yes and no. Where there is a political will, there is a way. To illustrate, Brussels had said in the past that the EU could never agree to creating any special institutions for cooperation with Russia—but just such an institution was then set up and is now operational. It is called the Permanent Partnership Council.

Has there been any real progress in political cooperation between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space, including Georgia? Not really. The EU mission in this region is fairly weak owing primarily to the fact that Europe's interpretation of its mandate differs from Russia's. As a result, there is no real cooperation or coordination between Russia and the EU in this area, and things are unlikely to improve any time soon. In Moldova, coordinated action between Russia and the EU following the unrest in April 2009 was truly instrumental in stabilizing the situation. But later on, Moscow and Brussels once again retrenched to their earlier positions and proved unwilling to search for a common solution. For example, the EU supports the aspiration of the new Moldovan government to replace the Russian peacekeepers with a civilian international mission—essentially an EU mission.

Russia, of course, continues to insist that the current format of negotiations and of the peacekeeping operation must remain unchanged. A month after unrest broke out in Chisinau, the EU unveiled a new program called Eastern Partnership, which includes six post-Soviet republics: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Moscow immediately expressed concern that this new EU policy could run counter to Russian interests, and many commentators spoke about a clash between Russian and EU interests in the post-Soviet space.

With the exception of the operation in Chad, there have not been any notable practical examples of cooperation between Russia and the EU. The Russian helicopter contingent in Chad completed its tour of duty and was transferred to the disposal of the UN—that, essentially, was the whole scope of the Russian-EU operation. For now, the two partners don't see any further opportunities or scenarios for cooperation. True, they are working together to counter piracy off the coast of Somalia. But in actual fact, the EU is conducting its own independent operation called Atalanta, while the Russian ships are conducting their own anti-piracy operation in the region. So this is not so much cooperation as general coordination between all the participants in the anti-piracy effort.

At the same time, Russia's assistance to the EU during the Chad operation clearly should not be seen as a mere gesture. It was a serious event that gave the two sides some valuable experience, which will help them expand cooperation in many other areas, including information exchange, standardization, military–technical cooperation, etc. But for that to happen, such examples of practical cooperation between Russia and the EU should not be mere one-off episodes. Both

parties need to identify and use opportunities for further joint projects (in areas such as combating piracy). That, however, requires political will.

RUSSIA AND NATO

Relations between Russia and NATO are facing similar problems, although their military-political agenda is much broader. Unfortunately, the “new era in cooperation between Russia and NATO,” which was proclaimed by the two sides in May 2002,³ ended in the same way as all the previous “new eras”: a big freeze. In both episodes, the *unfreezing* was spearheaded on the part of NATO by a new secretary-general, whose arrival helped to turn the page on the latest crisis. So what are the conclusions that can be drawn from this?

First, the hopes pinned eight years ago on the creation of the Russia-NATO Council have come to naught. Second, the areas of practical cooperation also remain fairly limited, and the actual damage wrought by scaling back the relations for political and ideological motives is not all that great. It must be noted though that there have never been such ups and downs in the Russia-EU relationship. But there are also areas of mutually beneficial (or rather, mutually inevitable) cooperation, such as on Afghanistan, which remain unaffected by the latest crises. And finally, both Russia and NATO are interested in achieving a speedy normalization of this relationship, which plays an extremely important role in both sides’ security policies and strategies.

By now, political dialogue and cooperation have been restored—but questions about their future nature still remain. Russia will not be content with a purely mechanistic restoration of the old relations because it had never been happy with them to begin with, especially with the work of the Russia-NATO Council. That council had essentially turned into nothing more than a venue for holding briefings, during which Moscow voiced Russian concerns while NATO listened politely and did nothing.

One typical example is the Warsaw speech by the former NATO secretary-general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, made in March 2009, when the alliance celebrated the 10th anniversary of the accession of the first three countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Scheffer said the date also marked the end of the Cold War. That speech was, in a sense, the handover of the outgoing secretary-general to his successor, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Although the expansion of NATO and its military infrastructure remains one of the key Russian concerns, the alliance still rejects the notion that said expansion represents new division. Despite the recent war in Georgia, which was in many ways fuelled by the Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the Georgian leadership, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is still confident that “Thanks to NATO’s enlargement and partnership policies, alongside those of the European Union, our continent has never been more stable and more secure.”⁴ He claims that the alliance did listen to those of Russia’s concerns about enlargement that NATO considered legitimate (though it’s not clear what exactly those concerns, to which NATO ostensibly listened, actually are). The rest of the Russian objections were branded as misplaced, and Russia was clearly told that Europe cannot remain hostage to the old concepts of *spheres of influence*. The conclusion the former NATO secretary-general drew was that such an approach had worked very well: in just five years, the alliance had grown from 16 to 26 members (now 28), and it also managed to deepen its relations with Russia in the process.

Viewed from Russia, things aren’t all that rosy. From the Russian point of view, NATO continues to expand and develop its potential and infrastructure, while Russia’s objections remain completely unheeded. As for claiming, against the backdrop of an obvious crisis in the Russia-NATO relations, that these relations have somehow become deeper, such claims are spurious and insulting.

Scheffer admits that following the war in Georgia, many believe that this *double strategy* of EU and NATO expansion is no longer sustainable. Some even think that from being a solution, that expansion is turning into a problem for European security. So how can Moscow accept that strategy? Even Scheffer himself has described Russia as one of the three key challenges in defining the way forward for NATO. Clearly, without Russia’s acceptance, the Russian part of this strategic equation is never going to work.

It has to be said that even before the war in Georgia many realized that this *double strategy* became unsustainable following the *colored revolutions* and the arrival of new regimes in Georgia



and Ukraine. That development forced NATO to decide whether the two countries should be offered membership. Washington worked hard to persuade its NATO allies at the Bucharest summit in April 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine should be given Membership Action Plans (MAP).

But France and Germany refused to follow Washington's lead. They were backed by a number of other EU nations, including Italy, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. Granted, the main argument used by the *European opposition* was that neither Ukraine nor Georgia was reformed or stable enough to be given an MAP. The unresolved conflicts in Georgia were seen as a particularly serious obstacle. But, quite importantly, Moscow's objections were a serious part of the Europeans' considerations. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, giving Ukraine and Georgia NATO membership would have inevitably led to a severe deterioration in our own relations with NATO, with its leading member-states and with our own neighbors.⁵ Berlin and Paris accepted that Russia should not be given the right of veto on this issue—but neither do they believe that it would be right to ignore Russia's serious concerns and upset the existing balance between Europe and Russia, the balance of power in Europe. French Prime Minister Francois Fillon said Europe should follow Vladimir Putin's example and have an honest discussion with the Kremlin about security problems, taking into account Russia's recent demonstration of good will – namely, its offer of allowing transit of supplies for the international mission in Afghanistan via Russian territory.⁶

After the Bucharest NATO summit, any decision on Ukraine and Georgia was postponed indefinitely. In December 2008, the North Atlantic Council confirmed the decision not to offer MAPs to either country. And at their anniversary summit in Strasbourg and Kehl on April 3–4, 2009, NATO leaders simply reiterated their earlier statements made at the Bucharest summit, saying that Ukraine and Georgia would become members at some point, but without any indication of when exactly that might happen.

This significantly changes the situation in the relations between NATO and Russia, now that the increasingly contentious issue of further NATO enlargement is off the immediate agenda. *First*, neither Ukraine nor Georgia will be able to meet the membership criteria any time soon. *Second*, the crisis in the Caucasus has radically altered the situation in the post-Soviet space and created new barriers for Ukraine's and especially Georgia's entry into NATO. *Third*, the new U.S. administration has undoubtedly learnt lessons from the foreign policy fiasco of George W. Bush. It has taken a far more balanced approach on this and other issues that had previously caused serious disagreements between the United States and Europe.

President Barak Obama is not making any attempts to lean on France or Germany, whose objections against Ukraine's and Georgia's admission into NATO have only become stronger and are now firmly a part of their foreign policy. *Fourth*, the clear priority for Europe in the enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic institutions is the Balkans. The admission of Albania and Croatia into NATO at the Strasbourg summit is seen by France and Germany as a far more significant result of the enlargement policy than the extremely contentious, premature and unjustified proposal by George W. Bush regarding Ukraine's and Georgia's membership.

Georgia cannot hope to become a NATO member any time soon—at least so long as it continues to lay claim on Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As for Ukraine, there is no domestic consensus in the country on many issues, including NATO. Under its new president, Viktor Yanukovich, Kiev will stop knocking on NATO's door so insistently. All these considerations have made it possible for Russia and NATO to develop their relations based on the existing status quo and amid much lesser tensions—although rivalry between Russia and the West in the post-Soviet space has not gone away.

Moscow has long expressed its unhappiness with the work of the Russia-NATO Council, both officially and at the level of experts. The decision to create the council was seen back at the time as a breakthrough towards new relations of equality and partnership, and not just between Russia and NATO. It was seen as a model for the entire Russian-Western partnership, including relations between Russia and the EU. Moscow has long urged NATO to give the council a greater practical role, and to turn it into an efficient body for producing joint policy and decisions. In response, NATO continued to insist that it is quite happy with the existing format, stressing the Council's important role.

The essence of Russia's complaints is that NATO member states tend to form a united front at the Council and agree their positions between themselves before every meeting rather than speaking as individual nations, which was how things were supposed to be. Russia is often unable to get its partners to agree to put on the agenda of the council the issues it really wants to discuss. In Moscow's opinion, the council has failed to come up with any serious cooperation projects. It is quite telling that NATO rejected Russia's request to hold an emergency session of the council to discuss the military conflict with Georgia, although such a procedure is stipulated in the Declaration of Rome in the event of crisis situations. The reason for the refusal was that NATO members needed time to hold internal consultations and agree a united position on the issue.

Following the resumption of the council's work and its first (informal) sitting held at the level of foreign ministers on July 27, 2009, it became clear that NATO countries are now ready for a productive discussion with Russia. NATO leaders sent signals to that effect during the summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, where they declared their readiness to resume dialogue and cooperation with Russia. "We therefore stand ready, in the NATO–Russia Council, to assess possibilities for making it a more efficient and valuable instrument for our political dialogue and practical cooperation," the summit declaration reads.⁷ It appears that NATO will take into account Moscow's unhappiness over the council's agenda-setting procedure and its failure to discuss Russia's concerns in a constructive way. "We are committed to using the NATO–Russia Council as a forum for political dialogue on all issues—where we agree and disagree—with a view towards resolving problems, addressing concerns and building practical cooperation."⁸

In December 2009, the council approved the decision to conduct a joint review of the challenges and threats of the 21st century. That is something Russia has long insisted on, but could not get NATO to agree. The council also adopted a document on further development of its internal mechanisms. Russia–NATO military contacts will also resume. In accordance with the agreed plan of action for 2010, the two sides have resumed practical cooperation programs, including measures to improve operational compatibility, search and rescue at sea, cooperation in fighting piracy, ABM, air traffic control, and other areas. New opportunities for military–technical cooperation have opened up, including projects to upgrade Russian-made Mi helicopters.

In February 2010, a group of NATO *luminaries* led by Madeleine Albright paid a visit to Moscow. The group was formed by Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen to work on a new strategy for the alliance, which is supposed to be adopted at the Lisbon summit in November. The visit is quite understandable, given Moscow's special interest in NATO's strategies. "On the whole, further development of our partnership with NATO will largely depend on the direction of the work on the NATO strategic concept," Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.⁹ But the main significance of the visit lies in the fact that for the first time, the future reform of NATO will be discussed with Russia. For what seems like the first time in many years, the Albright group's visit demonstrated NATO's willingness to *hear and listen*, as she herself put it. In order to do this listening and hearing, the group met not only Russian officials but the Russian expert community as well. One of the key issues it was interested in was the Russian vision of the Russia–NATO Council. Russian experts confirmed that they consider the council to be ineffective, primarily because up until now it has been used mostly as a forum for political dialogue. If relations between Russia and NATO are to acquire the nature of real strategic partnership, the council needs to be transformed into an institution for joint decisionmaking.

NATO now seems to be serious about the idea of attaining a new level of relations with Russia and reforming the Russia–NATO Council. That is one of the priorities of the ongoing work to develop the new NATO strategy:

At this point, the immediate goal is not finding the precise formula for reaching out to Moscow, but beginning a strategic conversation that makes clear that NATO members are sincerely committed to anchoring Russia within the Euro–Atlantic community. The conversation can begin by exploring ways to make more of the NATO–Russia Council. NATO members should pick up on Moscow's call for fresh thinking about "new European security architecture".¹⁰

U.S. VECTORS OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

The United States remains an extremely serious factor in the European security system and in the relations between Russia and Europe. Barak Obama's foreign policy is radically different from that



of his predecessor. George W. Bush's strategy essentially amounted to unilateralism and an aspiration to hegemony, which was based on confidence in America's dominance as the world's only superpower and its military supremacy. As a result, the use of force was Washington's method of choice for dealing with international problems.

The departure of the new administration from the Bush doctrine can be explained by America's increasing inability to achieve the objectives it has set for itself, as well as growing domestic and international criticism of U.S. policy. Even Washington's key allies were increasingly willing to join that chorus of criticism. The previous administration's refusal to take the interests of its allies into account, its attempts to play on internal European divisions, its lack of interest in multilateral institutions, including NATO—all of that had an adverse impact on the U.S. allies' willingness and ability to support Washington on the international arena. One of the long-term consequences of the war against Iraq has been a weakening of the EU and its foreign policy capabilities.

Barak Obama's policy of new multilateralism, as opposed to forceful unilateralism, the attendant changes in his administration's foreign policy priorities, and a number of steps already made in that direction are seen in both Europe and Russia as a new window of opportunity. Europe views it as a chance to strengthen the trans-Atlantic alliance, and Russia as a chance for rapprochement with the United States. Moscow hopes this new climate will help to resolve some of its most bitter disagreements with America and with the West as a whole.

Now that Washington seems interested again in having strong allies who support America's *responsible leadership*, the EU has an opportunity to strengthen its security and defense policy, and to bolster the European pillar of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Proposals have been made on creating new instruments to achieve these goals: within the EU itself (permanent command staff structures), between the EU and NATO (a replacement of the existing *Berlin* + agreements with more effective instruments), and between the United States and the EU. For that latter task, as part of NATO reform, Europe and the United States could set up a new trans-Atlantic political council as a way of institutionalizing the existing relations between the U.S. Secretary of State and the EU High Commissioner for foreign and security policy.

Such a move would make Russia more interested in cooperation on security and defense with the Europeans. For Europe and Russia, reconciling bitter disagreements with the United States and Washington's return to political multilateralism creates a perfect climate for developing partnership, which is clearly in their mutual interest. In the conditions of Europe's strategic dependence on the United States, Russian pressure on Europe leads not to closer cooperation between the two, but to Europe's even greater dependence on Washington.¹¹ Franco-German opposition to George W. Bush's plans of speeding up the integration of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO was just an exception that proves the rule. Of course, one of the considerations behind that decision was that the price of admitting the two countries into NATO would be too high for Russian-European relations. But it is not the United States itself that the Europeans found the strength to say no to. It was a lame-duck outgoing US administration. By that time, the political bankruptcy of the Bush team was blindingly obvious, and his messianic proclivities were already bordering on megalomania. It was more or less predetermined that any future US administration would treat its allies with greater respect. The new policy Europe has begun to build in the context of the changing trans-Atlantic climate is not directed against America—it is actually aimed at forging closer ties with it once again.

Similarly, Barak Obama's "reset" of America's relations with Russia, as well as Washington's return to trans-Atlanticism, open up new prospects for the Russia-NATO relationship. Some say it would be wrong to exaggerate the power of the *Obama effect*, considering all the constraints that are holding the president back, as well as the difficult legacy of George W. Bush. They are probably right. But that does not mean that this power should be played down, either. Real positive changes in US policy must be welcomed and supported in order to reinforce the new trends of multilateral cooperation on security.

The Obama administration's decision to abandon previous American plans for stationing strategic ABM elements in Europe should not be seen as part of the "reset" with Russia. That decision was made because Washington had reviewed the modalities of its own national security programs, not because it yielded to any objections from Moscow. But be that as it may, the decision has removed one of the main stumbling blocks in Russian-American relations and opened up prospects for Russian involvement in developing Euro-Atlantic cooperation on ABM. That cooperation can substantially change the nature of military-political relations between Russia

and the West, laying the ground for moving away from the old strategy of mutual containment and towards real strategic partnership. NATO is increasingly coming to the opinion that “with Russia, NATO must seek to avert the continuation of zero-sum competition, instead mapping out a practical vision of programmatic cooperation.”¹²

Proposals on building a shared ABM shield, which would not only provide defense against missile threats but also bring NATO and Russia into practical partnership, have already been put forward. Russia is prepared to discuss them and, according to President Medvedev, say yes to them if they are serious. As Sergey Lavrov said, “in the Russia-NATO Council framework, we have long had a fairly detailed proposal on a collective theater ABM system. In fact, the proposal is ready, as far as the actual text of the agreement goes. We are already in a position to make practical steps.”¹³

The signing of the new START treaty in Prague on April 8, 2010 by Russia and the United States was hardly a revolutionary achievement. But without making that small step, we would not have been in a position now to look towards new horizons. The new treaty is not a “reset” in itself—but without it, no “reset” would have been possible at all. Had the two sides proved unable to solve long-overdue problems and implement in practice the agreements reached by the two presidents, had they not seized the opportunity to build trust, the agenda of further partnership would have been devalued. But now, thanks to recent rapprochement with Moscow on issues of strategic balance, nuclear non-proliferation, Iran and others, Barak Obama’s new policy on Russia has been vindicated. That enables the U.S. administration to continue following that strategy and keep Russia high on the list of Washington’s foreign policy priorities. By the way, the U.S. Senate has already formed a special group for relations with Russia.

Following the signing of the new START treaty, which recognizes the link between offensive and defensive strategic weapons (albeit verbally rather than in any concrete detail), Moscow and Washington can take a fresh look at the ABM issue and any potential venues for cooperation in this area. The two sides have already begun consultations on this issue, including Russian proposals on alternative ways of countering possible missile threats. Moscow hopes that “an agreement will be achieved that would enable Russia, the United States and Europe to work together on analyzing missile threats and countering them.”¹⁴

On April 6, 2010, the U.S. unveiled its new nuclear policy headlined “From Confrontation to Minimal Containment.” Barak Obama, the latest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has often spoken of his aspiration for a world without nuclear weapons. But in practice, America views maintaining strategic balance with Russia and the policy of nuclear deterrence as a key element of NATO collective security. These considerations are preventing Washington from accepting growing calls in Europe (including Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway and the European Parliament) for a withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from the continent. The United States views those weapons as an anchor that keeps the European ship from taking an independent course, and a bargaining chip in any future disarmament talks with Moscow.

In any event, Barak Obama is not ready for unilateral disarmament. Washington will expect something significant in return for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Europe. The issue of American tactical nuclear weapons (240 ballistic bombs) stationed in Europe was on the agenda of the NATO Council meeting in Tallinn on April 22–23, 2010. Anders Fogh Rasmussen argued at the meeting that American nuclear presence in Europe was an important component of the strategy of effective deterrence.¹⁵ Washington says it will abide by any collective decision made by NATO in order to avoid a split in the alliance. But it is well aware that many NATO members, primarily the Central European countries, will never support an American pullout from Europe. The strategy of a “reset” with Russia, which was welcomed with great enthusiasm in Europe and backed by NATO, is obviously being balanced against the need to maintain *elements of containment* just in case.

IS THE EST REALLY NECESSARY?

So how does this all tally with the Russian idea of signing a new European Security Treaty? President Medvedev sent a draft of the proposed EST late last year to all the would-be participants, including international organizations such as the OSCE, NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the CIS, all of which have a role to play in the European security system. Is there any real chance of progress being made in this area?



There have been some clear positive changes since the initiative was put forward. Previously, Moscow was often criticized—sometimes quite fairly—for lacking any constructive approach to security policy. The EST is the first concrete Russian proposal on the European security architecture based on a cooperative approach. As a result, there has been a significant change of emphasis in Russian foreign policy. Existing concerns, which have already been voiced on more than one occasion, are not being allowed to take the center stage. The new focus is on looking for ways and mechanisms of strengthening a comprehensive system of partnerships. Russia's proposals are in line with the interests of its partners, because despite the existing differences (on NATO enlargement, Georgia, etc) they are opening up a positive agenda for the long term and forming a new climate in the relations between Russia and the West. That is already producing tangible results in Russia's cooperation with Euro-Atlantic institutions and the OSCE in the format of intergovernmental relations. The Russian initiative has also been backed by the CSTO and the CIS.¹⁶ That will allow President Medvedev's cooperative approach to be used in the post-Soviet space as well, reducing the degree of tensions between Russian and the West and removing the foreign policy dilemmas faced by the CIS nations.


Tangible effects of the Russian initiative also include the Corfu process.¹⁷ Many view that process as a way of pushing the EST proposal off the agenda and channeling the European security dialogue in another direction. There is some truth in that. The Corfu process, where military-political aspects of security are increasingly dominating the general security debate, can be viewed as a competitor to the EST proposal. Moscow is finding it difficult to explain why exactly new forums for this debate are required. But on the other hand, Russia believes that the two political processes are quite compatible. The Corfu process is already moving in the direction Moscow had previously urged: namely, overcoming the asymmetry in the European security system, with *hard security* taking a back seat, and non-military activity focusing on the Eastern zone of the OSCE.

Moscow has faced accusations from the West that by pushing its EST initiative, it is ignoring the significance and potential of the main pan-European institution, the OSCE. Russia's response to that criticism has been quite constructive. First, Moscow supports the Corfu process. Second, it considers the OSCE to be an important partner in the context of the EST and one of the possible platforms for debate. Third, it says that the OSCE's weakness can be overcome through reform. To that end, Moscow proposes that the OSCE should be made a subject of international law. Under the current Kazakh presidency, Russia has already submitted specific proposals, including a draft OSCE Charter. On the whole, as President Medvedev stressed in his speech at the Brookings Institution, "the proposed treaty is not aimed against any existing organizations, that is not the idea. This is not some cunning Russian plan against NATO or the OSCE. What we are proposing is that the existing security system in Europe should be augmented by a more efficient set of legal instruments."¹⁸

Russia is expecting constructive responses from its partners, but it has also adopted a fairly flexible stance. The question often addressed to Moscow is, if you are really serious about the idea of the European Security Treaty, why then have you proposed a draft that is so obviously a work in progress? The Kremlin expects understanding, but it does not insist on the proposed EST as the only possible way of reforming the European security system. That means that Moscow is ready for a broad discussion and will not insist so rigidly on its own proposals, as so often happened in the past. The EST is important more as a process than as an actual result that is expected any time soon. The actual outcome of that process may yet take a very different shape.

In essence, the main Russian goal has already been achieved: the *Russian issue*, the place of Russia in the united Greater Europe, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, is now becoming important not just to Russia itself but to its Western partners as well.¹⁹ These partners are gradually becoming less suspicious that the EST proposal is just a tactical ploy by devious Moscow rather than a genuine new strategy. Tactical maneuvers are important, of course—there can be no politics or diplomacy without tactics. But Russia's bets in this game are much greater than any possible tactical winnings. Russia cannot become a developed democratic nation and a truly influential international player without comprehensive modernization. And that modernization cannot be achieved without Euro-Atlantic partnership, especially partnership with Europe.

From that point of view, the time for decisive action has come. But this task, which has truly historic proportions, requires not only decisiveness, political will and clarity of purpose. It also requires time. No-one in Russia is counting on rapid revolutionary changes. What is important is the aim, the trends, the prospects and the direction of change that is gradually taking shape. Real

opportunities are coming up to put an end once and for all to Cold War legacy, with its old strategy of containment and zero sum game, and to rebuild the relations within the Russia–Europe–USA triangle and in the entire European security system. 

NOTES

¹ Jauvert Vincent, “Les faucons de la Grande Russie,” *Le Nouvel Observateur* 2290, (25 Septembre, 2008), p. 28–30.

² Statement made at a meeting with German politicians, parliamentarians and community leaders on June 5, 2008, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/320>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

³ Statement by the Russia–NATO Council, May 28, 2002, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-dos.nsf/8aa6d005cdf4b79432569e70041fdc5/432569d800223f3443256bc80034e512?OpenDocument>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

⁴ Speech by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at the Seminar on NATO Challenges and Tasks Ahead in Warsaw, Poland, March 13, 2009.

⁵ “Russia Will Never Allow Ukraine and Georgia to Get NATO Membership,” *Obozrevatel*, April 8, 2008, <http://obozrevatel.com/news/2008/4/8/229901.htm>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

⁶ Speech made by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, April 3, 2008, <https://pastel.diplomatie.gouv.fr/editorial/actual/ael2/bulletin.gb.asp?liste=20080403.gb.html#Chapitre2>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

⁷ Declaration of the Strasbourg-Kehl summit, April 4, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natolive/news_52837.htm, last accessed July 12, 2010.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Statement and Q&A session by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov following the Russia–NATO Council meeting in Brussels (official record), December 4, 2009, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-dos.nsf/8aa6d005cdf4b79432569e70041fdc5/432569d800223f34c3257684003e48cc?OpenDocument>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

¹⁰ Kupchan Charles, “Decision time: NATO’s hard choices,” *NATO Review* 2009, p. 2.

¹¹ This is confirmed by Zaki Ladi, a reputable French political expert. See: Zaki Ladi, “La crise sonne-t-elle la fin de la superpuissance américaine?,” *Les Echos*, 2008, 13 Octobre.

¹² Kupchan Charles. Decision time: NATO’s hard choices. *NATO Review*. 2009. № 2.

¹³ Opening statement and Q&A session by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at a news conference following an unofficial meeting of the foreign ministers of the Russia–NATO Council on Corfu, June 27, 2009, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-dos.nsf/8aa6d005cdf4b79432569e70041fdc5/432569d800223f34c32575e4002716bd?OpenDocument>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “U.S. Urged to Remove Tactical Nukes in Europe,” *Global Security Newswire* April 22, 2010, http://gsn.nti.org/siteservices/print_friendly.php?ID=nw_20100422_3466, last accessed July 12, 2010.

¹⁶ Statement by the foreign ministers of the CSTO on cooperation over the proposed European Security Treaty, March 25, 2010, <http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index.htm>, last accessed July 12, 2010; Results of the meeting of CIS foreign ministers (analytical memo), March 26, 2010, <http://cis.minsk.by/main.aspx?uid=16162>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

¹⁷ A statement to that effect has been made by V.I. Voronkov, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Department for Pan-European Cooperation: “The unofficial ministerial meeting on Corfu convened at the initiative of the Greek OSCE presidency was an important milestone in the implementation of President Dmitry Medvedev’s proposal on the European Security Treaty.” Voronkov Vladimir, “European Security Treaty After Corfu,” *Security Index* 1 (Winter 2010), p. 61.

¹⁸ Meeting with representatives of American NGOs, academia and political circles, April 14, 2010, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/7454>, last accessed July 12, 2010.

¹⁹ Gomar Toma, “NATO and the ‘Russia Issue’,” *Russia in Foreign Affairs* 2 (March–April 2010).

