

Conference

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Some Thoughts on European Security and Defense Policy, as Framed in a New Geopolitical Setting

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(Summary report of the contribution)

Thank You, Dmitri, for Your presentation, which as always resonated a deep-level analysis of your subject. I enjoyed listening to You and I was very much stimulated by your thoughts. Instead of criticizing or opposing, I would like to further your thoughts, because it is important to think together, we Europeans and Russians about that important issue of European security.

Of course we have to realise that European security became a concept with varying and fuzzy content and connotation: our perception of security is a mutant. Poststructuralists would say that European security became a “floating signifier” or even an “empty signifier”.¹ Especially the so-called “Europe” (the European construction as it was established and developed after World War II) is deeply confused about what security really means. Since the end of the Cold War , the Atlantic democracies have found it more difficult to balance collective defence (including nuclear defence) and collective security. Of course security is about guaranteeing protection against war and conflict. But should security be guaranteed by military means?

The population in Europe is deeply divided about this, but among the political and diplomatic elites there is a growing consensus about the idea that Europe should arm itself, that it should give up its reluctance on military initiatives and that it should military manifest itself on the world scene; that is what the previous Secretary general of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said in his “State of the European Union” before the Flemish Parliament in Brussels, just a few weeks ago. Europe cannot afford itself a twenty first century version of neutrality light, he said, referring to the current Secretary General, the Danish Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who is pleading for a missile defence system from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

And then I ask myself: what about soft security (guaranteeing security by non-military means as economic cooperation, human rights protection and Rule of Law building) that has been developed as pertaining to the very identity of European integration thoughts and even of the European Union itself ? What part is the nuclear playing in this, now that mutual deterrence is at least officially not on the agenda any longer? Whole domains, as for example the energy sector are “securitized” and “human security” became a most relevant concept as well.

Some argue that soft security was a luxury, that the European Union could afford, because NATO was there to guarantee hard security with its military means and with its art. 5 on collective defense. This is a question of deep concern: is NATO indispensable to protect Europe or does Europe need its own institutionalised military after all those years of soft security, in order to avoid transatlantic dependency? At NATO's 2010 summit planned for this month November, the alliance's members intend to adopt a new "strategic concept". Nato's relationship with Russia is at the top of the agenda. There are proposals "to bring Russia in" (into NATO). How will NATO react to the proposal of some scholars as Charles A. Kupchan, professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations, that a vision for bringing Russia into the Euro-Atlantic space is readily within reach: Russia should become a member of NATO.² Russia's eventual admission to the alliance would be, in their view, the logical completion of a Euro-Atlantic order in which NATO is the primary security institution. Having embarked on the process of enlarging NATO when the Soviet bloc collapsed, the Western allies should now, in this view, do their best to conclude that process by integrating Russia and other members of the CIS into the alliance. No way, Moscow is not willing to discuss the possibility that NATO could serve as the umbrella for a pan-European security structure. The Russian military doctrine of February 2010 sees NATO and its actions as one of the most serious dangers to Russian security.

To bring Russia into NATO is one option, but there are many other options for pursuing a pan-European security order:

- fashioning a treaty between NATO and the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a defense organisation within the CIS that can be considered as a counterbalancing organisation for NATO;
- elevating the authority of the OSCE of which Russia is a member, together with the European countries and the US. OSCE was the only pan-European security organisation that was created during the cold war, and that survived.
- picking up on Russia's proposal for a new European security treaty.

The Russian Proposal for a New Security Architecture

What to think about this proposal of a new security architecture launched by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in 2008 ³, repeated four months later during the World Policy Conference in Evian and published on the Kremlin website as a draft of a legally binding European Security Treaty? ⁴

This two year old proposal is perhaps the most important foreign policy initiative since independent Russia came into being. Allow me to limit myself to one of the most crucial questions in this. What can be our reactions as Europeans (distinguished from US and NATO points of view)? After all, Russia is our immediate neighbour.

I. We have to take into account changing realities of the European security landscape. Medvedev and Lavrov were right when they argued in their proposal for a new European security order that the post-second world war order in Europe is over and that we need to look at a new geopolitical playing field. New arrangements are unavoidable.

II. NATO is problematic in a post-Cold War European environment. There is the Russia-NATO Council but when it comes to major issues Russia is not involved. Russia was neglected in the recent past. NATO divides us in Europe. After German unification, promised

that NATO would not expand to the eastern part of Europe were not kept. The importance of Kosovo should not be underestimated. From 1999 (Kosovo) the nature of NATO has changed, according to Russia. Russian leadership considers the US and EU support to the independence of Kosovo at the beginning of 2008 as a manifestation of a new era of international relations guided by the principle of “game with no rules”, where issues are resolved on an ad hoc basis and democracies can choose to go to war as a policy of political expediency nicely wrapped in human rights rhetoric. That is why the military response to Georgia’s attack on the breakaway province of South Ossetia in August 2008 has been considered as a proportionate and legitimate action by Russia. The enlargement of NATO was perceived by Moscow as a de facto roll-back of Russia’s influence in Europe. The circulation of Russian bomb fighters above the North Sea these days has everything to do with ideas, constructions on a pan-European security.

III. Do not underestimate the strength of ideas in international relations and geopolitics. Sovereign democracy is an extremely important concept in this sense. Robert Kagan wrote an article in the Washington Post under the title: “New Europe, Old Russia”. He argues that while Europe can only be effective in guaranteeing security when member states come together and delegate a part of their sovereignty to the supranational level, Russia is still living in the nineteenth century, where state sovereignty was all important. Russia’s strategic culture is focusing on sovereignty, which leads to a very pragmatic concept of foreign policy, which claims freedom of behaviour in international security policy. ⁵ The doctrine of Sovereign Democracy claims that Russia is not willing to comply to any rules or attitudes. Russia is nostalgic of the interstate relations of the 19th century, because it needs this “starting point” to deploy its new hegemonic thinking, States remain important, but there are multiple stakeholders. Washington’s sense of mission under the label of “democracy promotion” was opposed by Russia’s self-prescribed model of “sovereign democracy”. But what is “old lady Europe” saying about this important issue in international relations?

IV. Inclusiveness is one of the major principles of the Medvedev proposal on a new security architecture, and this principle is also related to China. How to tie China in Euro-Atlantic relations: the Shangai Cooperation Organisation tries to answer this. But this answer is not involving “Europe”. And what about Central Asia? Russian leaders call the region “nasha devoshka” (our girlfriend). Russia’s reasoning goes as follows: “You, China, are friends: a friend does not touch another’s girlfriend”. No organisation should disappear, according to the Russian proposal, but other organisations such as SCO and CSTO should be included. In this way the international community will legitimise those institutions it did not recognise until recently. The process is not institutionalised. Do we need that? How will this kind of organisation reach decisions with so many actors.

V. The major question is how to understand this initiative as a strategic move. Was it a preliminary and unexpected climax of what started in 2008 or was it an inconclusive endpoint? Since the turn of the millennium, the Kremlin has not only undertaken a course of internal consolidation, but it has also succeeded in restoring a component of external power projection toward its Near Neighbourhood to its foreign policy portfolio. This new strength was made most bluntly manifest in the 2008 war with Georgia, which was accompanied by the tacit termination of NATO’s eastward enlargement.

Medvedev’s proposal for a new pan-European security treaty is in any case a proposal for

revision of Europe's (Euro-Atlantic) security structures. As a justification for this proposal, Lavrov referred to the Russian perception of a two-class society in the pan-European security space. While the principle of indivisible security was a political commitment for the OSCE's fifty-six member states, NATO offered its members legally binding assurance. In Lavrov's view this would lead to an inevitable collision between the pan-European and bloc-based approaches, and to the fragmentation of the common European space.

Russia, it can be assumed, knows perfectly well that this so-called proposal for a new security architecture is not acceptable for the west. It did not have to wait for the newly appointed Secretary-general of NATO to say "NATO is here to stay". A few days after the publication of the draft treaty on the Kremlin website, the Kremlin sent another draft treaty (this document has still not been made public) only to members of the NATO-Russia Council. [6](#) This proposal is remarkably one-sided. The draft leaves out entirely the topics of arms control and military sufficiency. The whole sphere of soft security, which constitutes the third basket of the OSCE (human rights, democracy and the Rule of Law) is simply overlooked. The treaty forgot to mention the stationing of foreign troops on the territory of another party to the treaty. Against the background of the CFE controversy about the presence of Russian troops in Moldova and Georgia, this oversight seems unsurprising;

Failure of this proposal can turn into a success for Russia. All this has to be framed against the background of the Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and the offer made to Russia by the US of a fresh start in their bilateral relations. But Russia sets the agenda, and after refusal of the west to re-think the whole setting, Russia makes itself legitimated to build its own security construction. This is chess playing of the best kind: Russia as a good chess player thinks ahead. If You do not recognise it, we will do it on our own. 20 states see Russia as a potential strategic partner. Security talks can take place in the framework of the existing institutions. Who talks about the existing arms control regimes? New treaties will be concluded! But the agenda is set: "the journey is just beginning" (Lavrov 2009). We find ourselves in a changing landscape, without realising it and properly reacting to it. The three new Russian doctrines (Military concept, Security Concept and Foreign Policy concept) of end 2000 resonate a completely changed Russian strategic orientation, and we have to view the proposal for a new security architecture in that context. Moreover some authors suspect Russia of using these official doctrines as propaganda directed towards the West. [7](#)In this interpretation they do not express the real patterns of thought. Following one of the ideas of Lenin, the West is told what it wants to hear.

A Wakeup Call for Europe

This is a wakeup call for Europe: we have to act as geopolitical visionaries, because the geopolitical setting has fundamentally changed.

Let me share with you some insights on the matter of a new European security architecture.

-Russia's concept of freedom in international relations. Should it be countered by starting a triologue between the EU, Russia and Turkey, as the European Council on Foreign relations recently proposed? Perhaps this is not such a bad idea, as the current institutions are dead-locked and Russia is questioning their legitimacy.

- An upcoming phenomenon of Finlandisation can be observed in Russia's neighbourhood: the neighbours of Russia take on a neutral status (as many Finlands and Switzerlands as

possible around Russia). Ukraine decided not to join NATO. Enlargement of NATO with Georgia has been put on hold as well.

-There is a strategic vacuum between Russia and the Eastern EU-members. Central Europe has to be observed very carefully. It is not because they became members of the European Union that they changed their camp: look at the percentages of their energy dependency on Russia. Look at that distorted relation between Poland and Russia, look at new tendencies in Hungarian foreign policy towards Russia.

-The objective of keeping the OSCE as the central European institution responsible for elaborating a concept of an all-encompassing security model should not be left aside. The so called Corfu process (informal OSCE ministerial meeting 27 and 28 June 2009), which succeeded in keeping the debate within OSCE but also to extend it to the two remaining OSCE baskets was frustrated in its schedule by the Russian leadership. This may reflect Russia's now more than ambivalent stance towards the "human dimension" of the OSCE. Three days before the start of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting and four days before the upcoming meeting of foreign ministers of the NATO-Russia Council in Brussels, the Kremlin on 29 November 2009 issued the revised treaty document on a new European security architecture, comprising fourteen articles. The OSCE was clearly set aside as the wrong forum for a discussion. The rushed release of the draft treaty, the lack of coordination with the Greek chairmanship on the Corfu process, and (last but not least), the exclusive concentration on hard aspects of security can be seen as indicators that Russia refuses to accept the OSCE as the correct forum for dialogue. What about Kazakhstan's leadership of OSCE? On 11 June 2010 close to the OSCE summit: Kazakhstan accepted chairmanship of SCO. The OSCE December summit in Astana under the presidency of Kazakhstan did not bring a breakthrough. What will result out of this? A condominium US-Russia-Europe or a global directorate for global security?

Russia has broader geopolitical horizons. Moscow is an important player in negotiations with Iran and North Korea over their nuclear programs and wields considerable influence in Beijing. In June 2009 Russia hosted the first BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg, suggesting that Moscow can help shape the character of the West's intensifying interactions with emerging powers.

Can a security community be created (in the words of Karl Deutsch) on the European territory? Russia's strategic culture is not going for cooperation but for a great power approach, which excludes cooperation out of mutual interest (cfr. Hobbes: the dilemma freedom versus security). CSTO is on the same legal footing as NATO. [8](#)

Is it possible to restart a security dialogue with the Kremlin? Then in any case with a better understanding of the Russian political regime: democratisation is not the starting point but the way Russia sees political authority, national identity and national interests. How Russian elites see themselves is a most important issue for understanding foreign policy (a European nation? A great power?).

Energy is another big issue: energy security means something different for Russia. Nabucco and the Norwegian pipeline will not be there for decades, which means that the West will be dependent for decades. Why not repeat what has been done in Helsinki? Group the issues of cooperation and difference in different baskets and organise a system of communicating

vessels (energy security and other matters of common interest , terrorism for example). The key issue is economic interdependence.

There is a deficit of trust. What can be trust building measures? What to think about the concept of Russia's modernisation, as it is pictured by the report "Russia in the 21st century: visions for the future (January 2010) by the Institute for Contemporary Development (INSOR), a think tank close to the Kremlin. "The status of Russia as a strategic ally of the EU in the foreseeable future also places the conversation regarding EU membership in a new, forward looking context. With a substantially changed NATO, Russia has successfully concluded negotiations on its accession to the alliance, which will stimulate its further positive transformation. A qualitatively new contractual Russia –NATO partnership has already been created, leading to significant reform of the OSCE".

NATO could tackle one of Russia's most urgent concerns: the imbalance of conventional forces in Europe to the disadvantage of Russia. What does Russia mean by modernization of our armaments? ("we must focus on the modernization of our armaments. The Russian army is in a disastrous state, but simultaneously we should not underestimate Russia's military potential. Notwithstanding non-proliferation treaties and arms reduction treaties, Russia remains an important nuclear power. The Caucasian crisis, the Georgian aggression and ongoing militarization make this task a top priority of our state"). ⁹

A prospective security debate in Europe should range from arms control, energy security, environmental security and financial security, to unresolved conflicts in Eurasia, terrorism and drug-related crime to WMD proliferation, the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the problem of radical islamization in Central Asia. Moscow's insistence on legally binding solutions is misleading to the extent that a treaty cannot serve as a substitute for political solutions. To find possible solutions it is necessary to intensify the debate by jointly identifying common ground as well as diverging perceptions. As the need for cooperative security measures increases, Europe should grasp this opportunity.

¹ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London & New York, 2001.

² Charles A. Kupchan, "NATO's Final Frontier. Why Russia should join the Atlantic Alliance", *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2010, 100-112.

³ Dmitri Medvedev, Speech at meeting with German Political, Parliamentary, and Civic Leaders, berlin, 5 June 2008; available at www.mid.ru (this was less than a month after his inauguration as President of the Russian Federation).

⁴ Available at <http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/11/223072.html>

⁵ Lantis, Jeffrey S., "Strategic Culture and National Security Policy", *International Studies association* (2002), 111.

⁶ Ulrich Kühn, "Medvedev's Proposals for a new European Security Order: A Starting Point or the End of the Story?", *Connections, The Quarterly Journal*, vol.IX, number 2, Spring 2010, p. 1-16.

[7](#) Marian Leighton, *Soviet propaganda as a Foreign Policy Tool*, New York, Freedom House, 1991, , p. 8.

[8](#) Neumann, Iver and Heikka Henrikki, “grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice. The Social Roots of Nordic Defense”, in: *Cooperation and Cionflict: Journal of the Nordic intyernational Studies Association* 40, nr. 5, (2005), 16.

[9](#) Mc.Dermott, Roger, “The restructuring of the Modern Russian Army”, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 22, nr. 4 (2009): 485-501.