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Analysis

Moscow Seeks to Renegotiate Relations with the West

By Andrei Zagorski, Moscow

Abstract

Russian foreign policy appears to be going in circles. Each new president begins by emphasizing – or repairing – the relationship with the West, only to end his time in office by questioning and jeopardizing it. It remains an open question if Putin's successor will seek a new accommodation with the West.

Under Yeltsin and Putin: Warm Beginnings, Difficult Endings

Boris Yeltsin declared in December 1991 that the new democratic Russia might consider joining NATO. Although the text of his address to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council was retroactively revised because the request met with a lack of understanding, Yeltsin's first term in office was characterized by his determination to see Russia accepted as a full-fledged member of the community of democratic industrialized nations; not least because the West largely had to underwrite his policies, as well as his re-election in 1996 in both political and financial terms. Yeltsin's second term in office was, however, overshadowed by a number of controversies, including the two Chechen campaigns, the eastward expansion of NATO, the dispute over the status of Kosovo and the war in former Yugoslavia, the future nuclear balance between Russia and the US, and, particularly, US plans to build a missile defense system. The legacy of Yeltsin's policy towards the West just before his resignation at the end of 1999 was a grim one. "Russia fatigue" was spreading in the West, and the US opposition complained that Russia had been "lost," while even Yeltsin himself talked about the advent of a "cold peace" at his last appearance before a Western audience at the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999.

Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, began his tenure in 2000 by repairing the heavily-damaged relationship. Russia's economic stabilization, energetic communication with Europe, and especially the immediate announcement of almost unlimited support for the US in fighting terrorism after the September 11, 2001 attacks marked the beginning of a new course. For a while, former disagreements seemed to have moved far into the distance. But this was only a brief interlude before the disputes returned to center stage at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007.

It is remarkable that the issues currently at the center of controversy are the same as in the latter years of the Yeltsin presidency. The main stumbling blocks are still Kosovo, NATO's eastward expansion, conventional forces in Europe, US plans for missile defense, and policies towards Russia's neighbors. Similarly to Yeltsin's statements in 1999, Putin is threatening a confrontation with the West in his final year in office. While he has not used the term "cold peace," he has conjured up the prospect of a new arms race in Europe.

Admittedly, political parallels can often be misleading. The mere fact that two successive presidents have evolved in the same direction does not mean that this pattern is set in stone. It does not fully apply to Yeltsin's predecessor, Mikhail Gorbachev, the first and last president of the Soviet Union, though Gorbachev did ultimately make the same evolution. In his case, though, skepticism and criticism of the policies of the West, particularly of the US, only came to the fore after his tenure was disrupted by the 1991 coup and the breakup of the Soviet Union. Had Gorbachev remained in office for a longer period, it is conceivable that his views might have changed during his time in the Kremlin as well.

The question now is how Putin's successor will act. Will he, like Putin in the early days of his first term in office, conclude that no sensible modernization policy for Russia is possible in confrontation with the West? Will he therefore have to, and wish to, begin his tenure by repairing relations with the West? Or will he rather continue the policies pursued recently by Putin, which have been more critical toward the West? This question is all the more important because most, if not all, of the decisions pertaining to the current disputes will be made during the incumbency of Putin's successor (assuming that Putin will indeed cede power at the end of his second term, an outcome that still appears to be uncertain).

Return to the late 1990s

It is notable that the current difficulties between Moscow and the West are driven by almost exactly

the same topics that shaped the disputes of the late 1990s. One prime example is the status of Kosovo. In 1998, during the debate in the run-up to the war in the following year, Moscow argued vehemently that any solution apart from independence for Kosovo was possible on the condition that Belgrade agreed. Otherwise, Moscow threatened, it would veto any decision of the UN Security Council. The introduction of UN administration for Kosovo in 1999 only postponed the resolution of this question, which has now returned to the focus of the world's attention.

Arms control has also provoked contention. From 1999 to 2002, the dispute between Moscow and Washington over nuclear arms control escalated. The debate focused on US plans to establish a rudimentary missile defense shield and to abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty concluded by the Soviet Union and the US in 1972 – an agreement that the Russian side had promoted as the cornerstone of the overall system of treaties governing the limitation and dismantling of strategic nuclear weapons. In 2002, Russia accepted the US abrogation of the ABM Treaty, calculating that it had sufficient means to overcome any potential US defense system. Now, however, Russia has reacted to US plans to deploy parts of the global missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic within six or seven years by revisiting the controversy.

Already in the early 1990s, after the Warsaw Pact had been dissolved and particularly after the eastern expansion of NATO, Moscow felt that the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty put it at a disadvantage. Furthermore, since the beginning of the first Chechen campaign in 1994, the Russian military had felt constrained by the limitations imposed on its southern flank by the CFE Treaty. Over the course of two years in the 1990s, the necessary adaptations were negotiated. First, the "flank" provisions were loosened for southern Russia. In 1999, the adapted CFE Treaty was signed. While the adapted treaty did not take into account the Russian desire for rigid collective restrictions on the categories of heavy weapons that could be deployed by NATO members as the alliance expanded eastward, lower ceilings were agreed upon for individual states. Furthermore, Moscow received assurances of a special arrangement for Central Europe under which foreign (NATO) troops could only be stationed there if the national troop levels had been reduced accordingly.

The adapted CFE Treaty is not yet in force because the NATO states have linked its ratification to the implementation of Russia's long-overdue "Istanbul Commitments" – the withdrawal of its troops from Georgia and Moldova. Nevertheless, Moscow has little reason for complaints: The current 26 NATO members have 20 percent less manpower and equipment today than the treaty signed by the 16 NATO states in 1990 allowed them to maintain. The ratification of the adapted treaty by the NATO states has long been among Moscow's major stated policy goals; not least because the treaty is to be opened to admit other states such as the Baltic countries, which are now NATO members, but not signatories to the CFE Treaty. However, it is not only NATO's linkage with the "Istanbul Commitments" that has now convinced Moscow to suspend the application of the CFE Treaty as of December 12, 2007. The demands laid out by Moscow at the Special Conference on the CFE, held June 12–15, 2007, go far beyond these issues and are evidence that the Kremlin is aiming at a fundamental renegotiation of the treaty.

In doing so, Moscow is returning to proposals for which it failed to win support in the 1990s. The Russian government is seeking again to establish collective ceilings for the heavy weapons of an expanding NATO that would not exceed those of the "old alliance" as of 1990. Furthermore, it is aiming at having the flank restrictions for Russia lifted altogether.

Both topics – the US missile defense shield and the CFE Treaty – are seen in Moscow as being linked to the issue of NATO's eastwards expansion for two reasons. First, the Kremlin rejects NATO's open-door policy, which would allow former Soviet republics, including Ukraine and Georgia, to become NATO members as another challenge to the status quo. Second, NATO's eastward expansion is linked to the construction of US bases in Bulgaria and Romania and to the planned missile shield projects in the Czech Republic and Poland. These policies are seen as violations of the promise made by NATO states in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, according to which no substantial combat forces would be stationed in new member states. Now Russia is also aiming at a binding definition of the term "substantial combat forces" within the framework of the CFE Treaty.

Unlike in the 1990s, the relationship between Russia and the EU is also subject to controversy today. In addition to the highly politicized debate on energy security, pipeline routes, and Gazprom's success in buying into the networks supplying European gas customers, the focus here is also on Russia's desire to renegotiate the basis for its relations with the EU. By concluding a new partnership agreement, Moscow is obviously aiming to shake off the conditionality of the agreement that has been in force since 1997, which stipulated that progress in mutual cooperation

is dependent on the implementation of political and economic reforms in Russia. The new agreement, the Kremlin hopes, would instead seal an unconditional global political partnership of equals between the two sides.

Not only are there noticeable parallels between the current controversies in relations between Russia and the West and the disputes of the late 1990s; there are also clear indications that Russia intends to reopen talks on the agreements that it accepted then but now seem disadvantageous, since Moscow agreed to them in the past decade from "a position of weakness." At the same time, however, it is obvious that Moscow continues to act defensively as a status-quo power that cannot maintain the status quo. This is clear, for example, in the case of NATO's eastward expansion, where Moscow is trying to hold the "red line" it drew in the 1990s. It also applies in the case of the vehement rejection of the US missile defense shield, which has nothing to do with the Russian missile arsenal as far as technology or defense policy is concerned, but certainly has the potential to make obsolete plans for cooperation on missile defense between Russia and NATO that have been discussed for years. In both cases, what is noticeable is Moscow's intention to renegotiate the fundamentals of relations with the US, NATO, and the EU. Putin's Russia clearly feels much more confident than Yeltsin's did.

Confidence Based on Oil at $70 a Barrel

There is a difference between ruling a country that is the world's number one exporter of energy at a market price of $70 per barrel of oil, and doing so at a price of $14. This difference also shapes the self-awareness of the political class in Russia, which is now largely recruited from former members of the intelligence services and the military. The difference is to be found not least in the external perception of the country. An example is a recent CNN series on "Rising Russia" that aimed to present the changes the country has undergone in the past seven years.

There is only little now to remind one of the country that just ten years ago was "a consumer of security from the West's point of view," that was in transformation "from an authoritarian system with a planned economy to a democratic and free-market system and [from] the Soviet Union to a Russia that was trying to compensate for the loss of its status as a global power by foreign-policy escapades" and that was primarily characterized by political instability and a potential for chaos, according to Russia analyst Hans-Joachim Spanger. In Europe particularly, Russia is increasingly seen not just as an irreplaceable supplier of energy, but also as an indispensable, though not exactly uncomplicated partner in regional and global policy matters. No reasonable solution to any of the world's major problems seems feasible without Moscow's support, whether the issue be the final status of Kosovo, a settlement for the Middle East conflict, or negotiations concerning the nuclear programs of Iran or North Korea.

Thanks to Russia's current economic growth, flood of revenues from energy exports, and ability to pay off its debts, there is a new sense of confidence in the political class that is increasingly becoming aware of Russia's need to prevail and sustain itself in competition with the West.

All the talk about a "democracy deficit" in contemporary Russia, according to the Russian political elites, is only an exercise in political deception by the West. Such debates only aimed to "gain control over Russia's natural resources" by "weakening the state's institutions, its ability to defend itself, and its autonomy," according to remarks made by the chief ideologist of the Putin regime, Vladislav Surkov, in a speech before the Russian Academy of Sciences in June 2007. The newfound confidence of the political class (and the changed external perception of Russia) has caused Moscow to increasingly distance itself from the "other" Russia of Yeltsin. The country is no longer the weak and apathetic "sick man of Europe" forced to accept certain developments due to circumstances. Russia aims to return to the global stage and is trying to find its former strength, whether through the power gained by energy exports or in investment in a new generation of military technology.

The theory of a resurgent Russia nurtures the illusion that Moscow might be able to stop further changes in the European status quo and particularly in its immediate vicinity, and possibly reverse some of the concessions it was forced to make under Yeltsin. The aim of redefining relations with the West and Europe and to renegotiate the basis of this relationship is not at all incompatible with this theory. However, only little time remains for Putin himself to translate this wish into reality. Should his successor come from the immediate circle surrounding Putin (and where else would he come from?), will he wish and be able to continue this course, or will he attribute greater importance to repairing the relationship with the US and Europe? This question cannot be answered for another year. Nevertheless, it is clear that the answer depends not only on the personality of the successor; it also depends on the West's response to Russia's new self-perception.

Must Relations Between Russia and the West be Renegotiated?

There is every reason to rejoice in the fact that Russia is doing better than a decade ago. Global politics is well off without another "sick man," especially a big one with nuclear weapons. There is no reason to believe that Russia, after a brief or longer interlude, will return to the political trajectory of the early Yeltsin years. At the same time, there is no reason to believe that the only "other" path will lead Russia to confrontation with the West and a new arms race. Its new self-perception and increased international standing will not suffice to catapult Russia back into the center of global politics. Conversely, a new deterioration towards an arms race or a Cold Peace is improbable not only because of Russia's structural deficits. The reality of Russian politics is very different from the picture painted by official rhetoric. The ineffective pressure on Ukraine and Georgia as well as the failure of Moscow's attempts to push Iran towards cooperation with the international community or to use its contacts with Hamas to win back a significant role in the Middle East peace process instead indicate the narrow limitations of Russia's return to global politics.

While Russia's resurgence is evident, it is far less powerful than is generally assumed, as Rajan Menon and Alexander Motyl correctly point out. What has changed is the fact that Putin is playing the strongman and that the increase of energy prices has supplied the political class with funds allowing them to act more confidently. But the new rhetoric is not enough to make Russia strong. Therefore, for the foreseeable future, the West will continue to have to deal "with a Russian petro-state that is weak, boisterous, and potentially unstable." The challenge of a new self-perception among the Russian political class is not that "Russia is too strong to handle, but that it is too weak to make a reliable partner." In this difficult phase of self-assertion, Moscow should not be unnecessarily alienated by "red lines" drawn by the West; at the same time, the latter need not concede to all of Russia's demands, which are often perceived as diktats. If Moscow should decide in the coming year to withdraw from the CFE Treaty, that would certainly be regrettable. Moscow should not, however, be prevented from doing so at all cost. The only conclusion would be that despite its rhetoric, Moscow (rightly) has no problems with the US and NATO if it is prepared to give up the only instrument that restricts US deployments in Europe and of NATO forces in the new member states.

Translated from German by Christopher Findlay

About the author:
Andrei Zagorski is a leading researcher at the Center for War and Peace Studies of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO).

Literature cited in the text:

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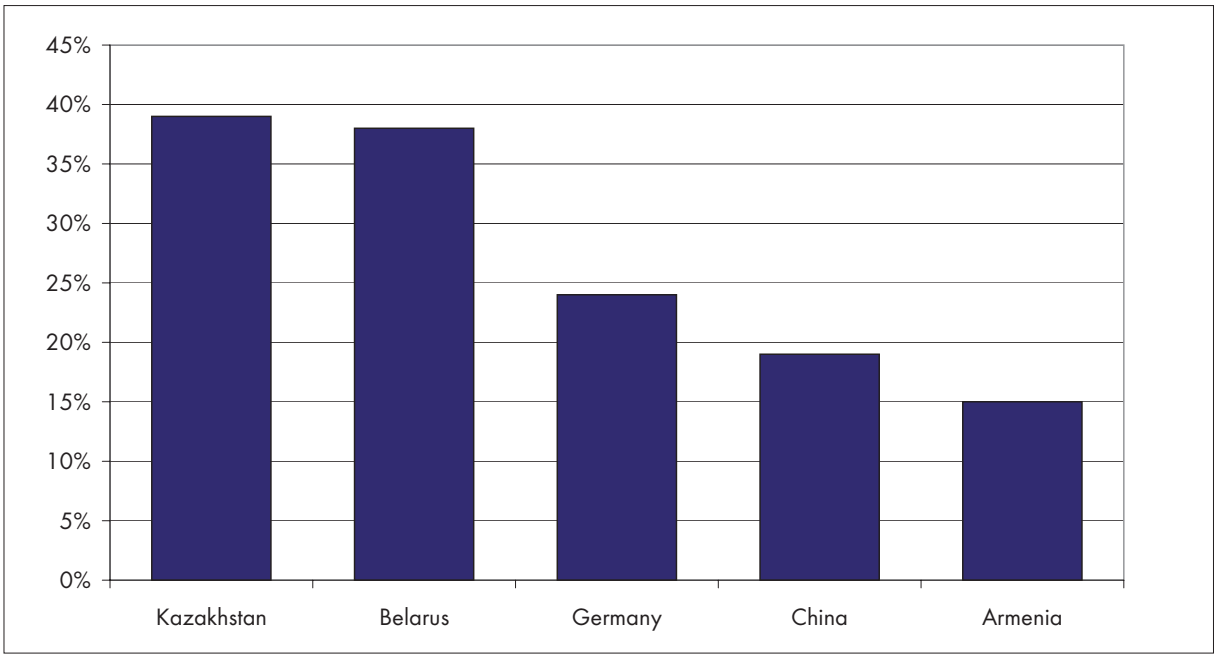
- Vladislav Surkov, "Rossiiskaia politicheskaia kultura. Vzgliad iz utopii" [Russian political culture: An utopian perspective], http://www.er.ru/news.html?id=121456

Tables and Graphs

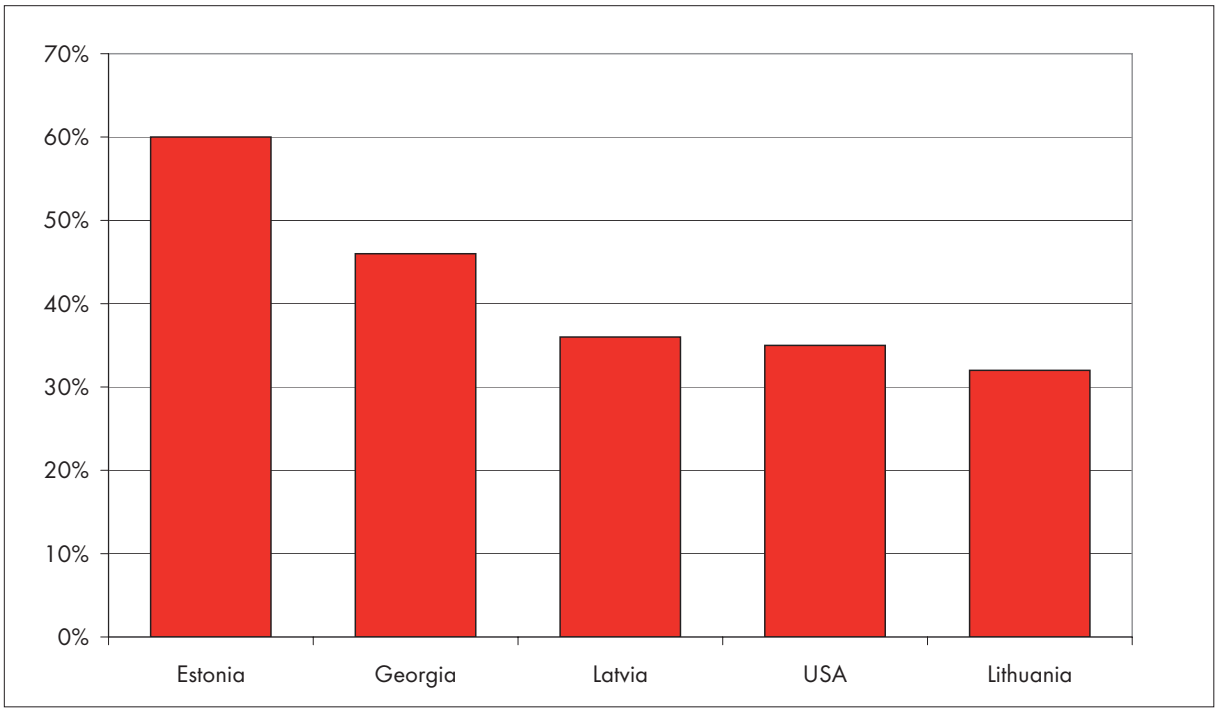
Friends and Enemies, International Relations: Opinion Surveys

Name Five Countries that Could Be Called Friends or Allies of Russia (May 2007)



Source: http://www.levada.ru/press/2007053003.html, *31 May 2007*

Which Five Countries are in Your Opinion the Most Hostile and Most Unfriendly in Relation to Russia? (May 2007)



Source: http://www.levada.ru/press/2007053003.html, *31 May 2007*

Friends and Enemies of Russia (May 2007)

Name Five Countries that Could Be Called Friends or Allies of Russia

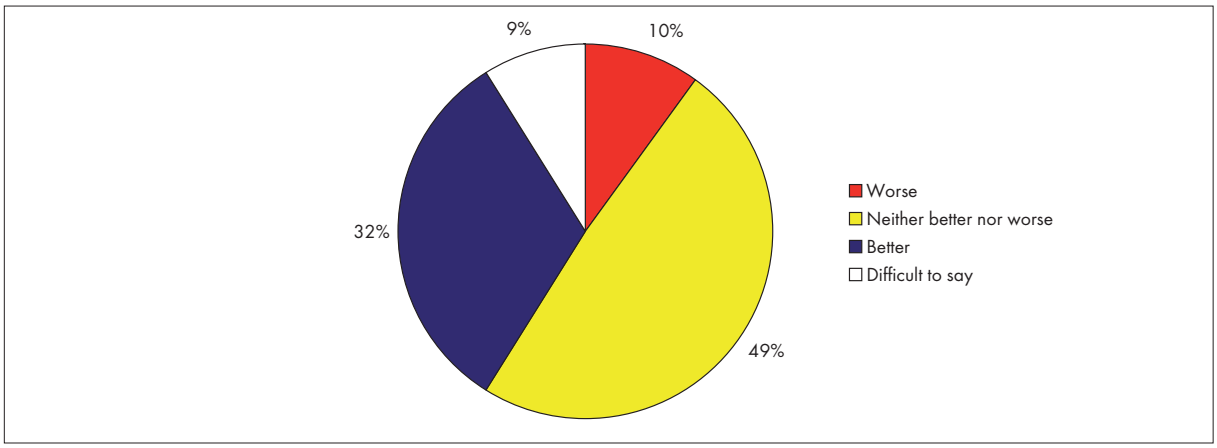
	2007	2006	2005
Kazakhstan	39%	33%	20%
Belarus	38%	47%	46%
Germany	24%	22%	23%
China	19%	24%	12%
Armenia	15%	14%	9%
India	14%	15%	16%
Ukraine	11%	10%	13%
France	9%	8%	13%
Bulgaria	9%	10%	11%
Turkmenistan	8%	2%	2%
Italy	8%	7%	6%
Tajikistan	7%	3%	3%
Kyrgyzstan	7%	7%	5%
USA	6%	5%	11%
Uzbekistan	6%	6%	4%
Finland	6%	6%	1%
Azerbaijan	5%	7%	5%
Japan	5%	6%	4%
Moldova	4%	4%	2%
Poland	3%	4%	5%
Serbia	3%	4%	3%
Turkey	3%	3%	2%
Australia	3%	1%	3%
UK	3%	4%	3%
Israel	3%	3%	5%
Iran	3%	4%	2%
North Korea	2%	3%	3%
Latvia	2%	1%	2%
Slovakia	2%	2%	2%
Egypt	2%	1%	2%
Canada	2%	2%	1%
Czech Republic	2%	2%	2%
Lithuania	2%	1%	1%
Sweden	2%	3%	3%
Georgia	1%	3%	2%
South Korea	1%	2%	1%
Hungary	1%	2%	3%
Rumania	1%	1%	0%
Iraq	1%	2%	2%
Afghanistan	1%	1%	1%
Syria	1%	1%	1%
Estonia	0%	1%	0%
None	10%	13%	10%
No answer	18%	15%	14%

Which Five Countries are in Your Opinion the Most Hostile and Most Unfriendly in Relation to Russia?

	2007	2006	2005
Estonia	60%	28%	32%
Georgia	46%	44%	38%
Latvia	36%	46%	49%
USA	35%	37%	23%
Lithuania	32%	42%	42%
Ukraine	23%	28%	5%
Poland	20%	7%	4%
Afghanistan	11%	12%	12%
Iraq	8%	9%	10%
Iran	7%	7%	6%
Belarus	5%	2%	2%
Azerbaijan	4%	4%	5%
UK	3%	5%	2%
Moldova	3%	9%	2%
Israel	3%	4%	3%
China	3%	3%	4%
Japan	3%	4%	6%
Germany	2%	2%	3%
Tajikistan	2%	3%	1%
Rumania	2%	2%	2%
Czech Republic	2%	1%	1%
Armenia	2%	3%	4%
Bulgaria	1%	1%	0%
North Korea	1%	0%	1%
Turkmenistan	1%	1%	1%
Turkey	1%	1%	1%
South Korea	1%	0%	0%
Slovakia	1%	0%	0%
France	1%	1%	0%
Kazakhstan	1%	2%	1%
Uzbekistan	1%	2%	1%
Hungary	0%	1%	1%
India	0%	0%	0%
Kyrgyzstan	0%	1%	2%
Finland	0%	1%	6%
Australia	0%	0%	0%
Egypt	0%	0%	1%
Canada	0%	1%	1%
Serbia	0%	1%	1%
Italy	0%	0%	1%
Sweden	0%	0%	0%
Syria	0%	0%	1%
None	2%	4%	5%
No answer	17%	19%	15%

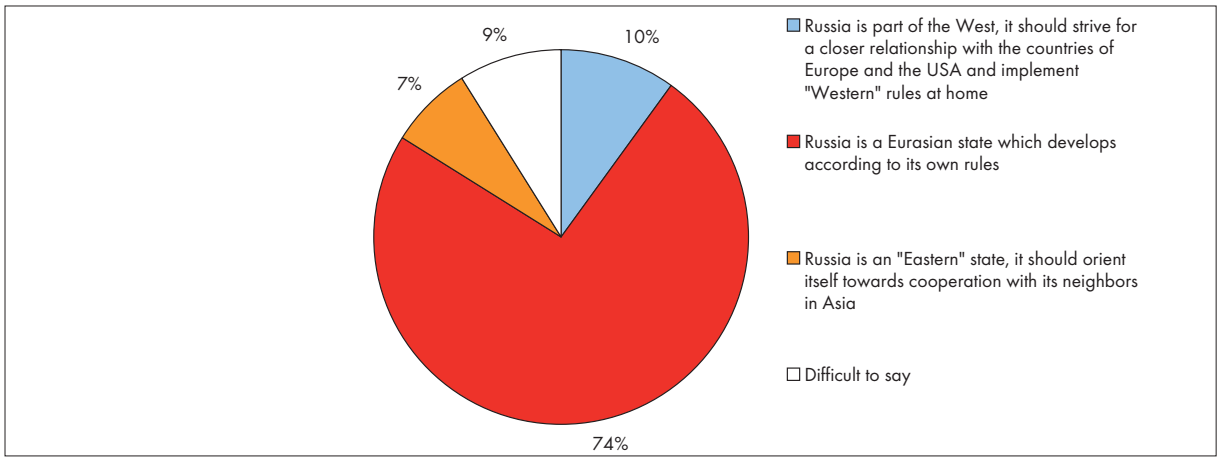
Source: http://www.levada.ru/press/2007053003.html, *31 May 2007*

Are Relations Between Russia and the Majority of Other States Today Better, Neither Better Nor Worse, or Worse Than They were During the Yeltsin Era? (August 2007)



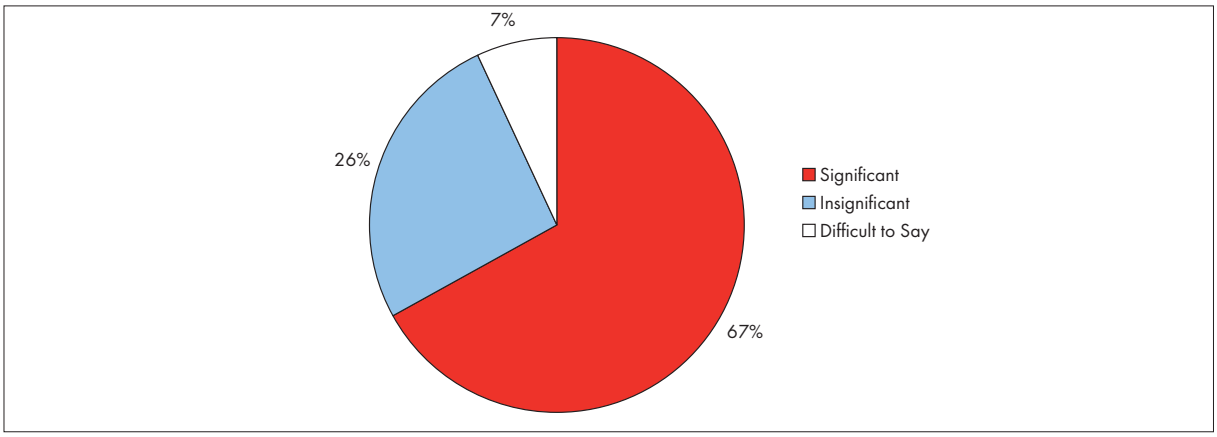
Source http://www.levada.ru./press/2007081001.html, *10 August 2007*

With Which of the Following Statements Do You Agree? (August 2007)



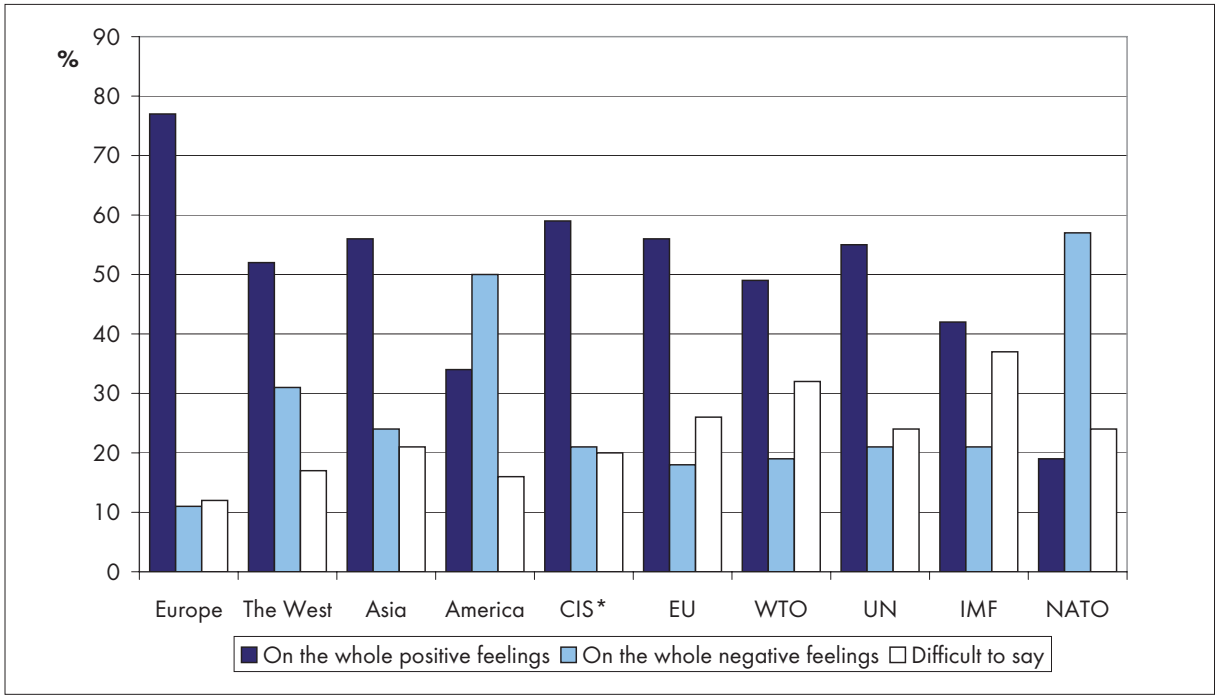
Source: http://www.levada.ru./press/2007081001.html, *10 August 2007*

What is Russia's Influence in International Affairs Today? (August 2007)



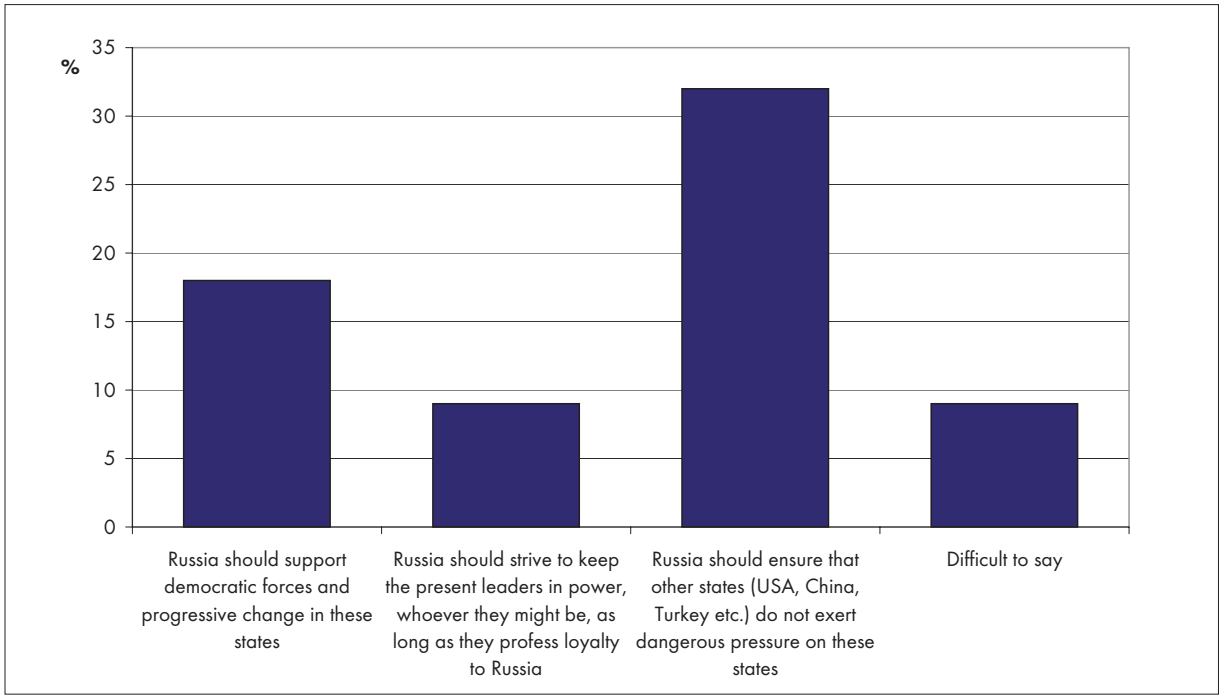
Source: http://www.levada.ru./press/2007081001.html, *10 August 2007*

Which of the Designations Below Evoke Positive Emotions and Which Designations Evoke Negative Emotions? (one answer on every line) (March 2007)



** Commonwealth of Independent States*
Source: http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/4208.html; *16 March 2007*

What Policy Should Russia Pursue Regarding the States of the CIS? (August 2008)



Source: http://www.levada.ru./press/2007081001.html; *10 August 2007*

Analysis

The EU and Russia: Stumbling from Summit to Summit

By Sabine Fischer, Paris

Abstract

Russia-EU relations are in crisis. The EU-Russia Summit on May 18 in Samara ended without tangible results, providing further evidence that both sides are drifting apart. The situation has not improved since then. By planting a Russian flag in a titanium capsule on the seabed under the North Pole, Moscow opened a new symbolic battlefield with "the West." However, mutual economic and political interdependencies make it very unlikely that a "New Cold War" will emerge. At the same time, both sides have to change and adapt their policies if they want to return to a constructive partnership.

Tough Times for EU-Russia Relations

Relations between the EU and Russia today are in very bad shape. The two sides' inability to open negotiations on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) during the May Summit in Samara was only the latest evidence of the mounting problems, which have accumulated in recent years. Commentators on both sides interpret the latest developments (not only in EU-Russia relations, but in the relationship between Russia and "the West" in general) as the possible beginning of a "New Cold War."

The German government, which had made the improvement and further development of relations with Russia one of the central goals of its EU presidency, finally had to accept a summit without tangible results. Repeating the experience of the Finnish presidency, Chancellor Angela Merkel had no choice but to announce relatively minor deals in the fields of trade and trans-border cooperation, while the burning problems remained unsolved. In contrast to preceding summits, however, both sides traded blows, openly demonstrating disagreements over political developments in Russia and the course of EU-Russian relations. With the Portuguese traditionally setting different geographic priorities for their EU presidency term, the meat issue between Russia and Poland unsolved and upcoming elections in Russia, it remains to be seen whether the parties will make much progress at the next summit in Mafra in the latter part of October 2007.

Bones of Contention

The concrete causes underlying the failure of the Samara Summit where the Polish-Russian meat conflict and the turmoil surrounding the movement of the Soviet war monument in the Estonian capital Tallinn at the end of April, shortly before Russia celebrated its traditional World War II Victory Day on May 9. The meat issue had strained relations between Russia and Poland since autumn 2005, but came to the fore of the European debate when Warsaw issued a veto against the opening of the PCA negotiations in September 2006. While Moscow insisted that Polish meat did not meet Russian import standards, the Polish side accused Russia of abusing trade relations in order to exert political pressure. Extensive mediation attempts by the Finnish and German EU presidencies did not succeed in softening the parties' positions. Until one month before the summit, Poland's hard-line approach toward Russia had little support within the EU. Some of the other Central Eastern European members, namely the Baltic States and the Czech Republic, voiced cautious support without, however, explicitly joining the Polish veto. Other member states criticized the veto, expressing concerns about stable relations with Russia.

Shortly before the summit, and fortunately for the Polish Government, the meat issue was replaced as the main bone of contention by a far more symbolic conflict between Russia and Estonia. The Estonian government's decision to transfer Tallinn's Soviet war monument to a military cemetery outside the city center provoked harsh reactions among ethnic Russians in Estonia and from the Russian government. After violent demonstrations in Tallinn, Russian youth organizations close to the Kremlin besieged the Estonian embassy in Moscow, forcing the Estonian ambassador to leave the country temporarily. At that point, shortly before and during the Samara Summit, the EU finally reached a common position. While reactions to the movement of the war monument had been rather ambivalent, displaying approximately the same cleavages as responses to the Polish-Russian meat conflict, the unfriendly treatment of an ambassador representing an EU member state finally forced the other member states to rally around Estonia and clearly criticize Russian actions.

Both the meat and the monument conflicts seem to be temporary phenomena. However, they reveal structural changes in Russian and EU policies, which strongly affect their bilateral relationship.

The EU Takes a Harder Line on Russia

The Eastern dimension of the EU's foreign policy has undergone significant changes since the 2004 EU enlargement. After an initial period of re-orientation, these changes have become more tangible since summer 2006.

Before 2004, EU member states could be divided into two groups regarding relations with Russia. One group, containing some of the bigger member states like Germany and France, emphasized Russia's economic importance and supported a pragmatic relationship safeguarding EU economic interests instead of criticizing authoritarian tendencies in the Russian political system. The other group, most explicitly represented by Great Britain, denounced anti-democratic tendencies and human rights violations in Russian domestic politics and regularly – although with little effect – spoke out in favor of a tougher approach towards Moscow. However, between 1992 and 2004, no EU member perceived an immediate security threat emanating from Russia. As a consequence, the debate about Russia within the EU almost completely lacked classical geopolitical and security considerations. This de-securitized discourse on Russia came to an end with the accession of the Baltic States, Poland and the Czech Republic. Central European states and societies share a traumatic and violent history with Russia, which leads them to an extremely critical attitude towards Moscow and to a policy of "containment" of Russian influence in Europe.

The inclusion of the Central European perspective shapes the overall European political process on two levels. The new EU members pushed for a more active EU policy toward the states adjacent to EU and Russian borders. Furthermore, they took a much tougher stance in direct relations with Russia, on a bilateral as well as on the EU level. The new members saw the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine as a window of opportunity to accelerate the democratization of a key country in the so-called "common neighborhood" and its closer alignment with the EU. From their perspective, such a development promised not only a desirable spread of democratic values beyond EU borders, but also a significant improvement of their national security. Consequentially, the Baltic States and Poland pushed vehemently for strong EU involvement to support the democratic forces in Ukraine during the conflict over the presidential elections, and they succeeded. After the victory of Viktor Yushchenko, they strongly supported the new Ukrainian government's attempt to build a democratic regional coalition with Georgia and Moldova outside the Russian sphere of influence. Domestic developments in Ukraine after the March 2006 elections, when Yushchenko lost much of his power, and the parallel stagnation of Ukraine's policy of democratic regional leadership weakened the regional vector of the new members' eastern policy. On a bilateral level, however, the influence of the new members on EU policy toward Russia has become stronger than ever.

Thus, enlargement has added a new dimension to the Russia-policy of the EU, which is characterized by strong historical and security components. The new Central European members have effectively influenced the development of the EU's relations with its big eastern neighbor several times since 2004. As a consequence, it has become even more difficult for the EU members to forge a united position regarding Russia. Combined with the EU's inability to adopt a constitution since the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the rise of the new members has led to paralysis of the Union's eastern policy. Nevertheless, after the European Council in June there is some hope for improvement. The compromise on a new treaty (replacing the constitutional project) promises to bring more unity to European foreign policy making, potentially strengthening the EU's position vis-à-vis Russia. However, the ultimate outcome of this project depends on further intergovernmental negotiations within the EU and its future remains uncertain.

Russia Has Less Respect for the EU

Russia's foreign policy has evolved in recent years as well. A new Russian self-consciousness as a global actor, an "energy superpower" and center of gravity in a multi-polar world shaped these changes. This development was accompanied by a changing image of the EU, which forms the basis of Russia's policy towards Brussels and the EU member states.

The *Russian Federation Foreign Policy Review*, published by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March 2007, sheds light on Russia's current understanding of the EU. Economically, Russia still sees the EU as its most important partner. However, on the political level, the Review emphasizes bilateral relations with individual EU members. Not surprisingly, Russia particularly seeks to develop ties with countries that advocate a pragmatic Russia policy within the EU and figure as Russia's most important economic partners.

This policy marks a shift in the way the Russian elites perceive and talk about the EU. During the

1990s, Russia's leaders did not see the EU as an independent political actor on the international stage. However, at the beginning of his first term, Putin made economic and political relations with the EU his top priority, thus signaling Russia's new recognition of it as a political actor. At the same time, the EU expanded its foreign policy influence by further developing its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and preparing its eastern enlargement, which boosted its political weight in the post-Soviet space. For a period of three to four years, Moscow's foreign policy elites seemed to be getting used to the idea that supranational institutions in Brussels could play a role independent from the member states' capitals.

Now, however, Moscow is less inclined to view the EU as an important actor. The reasons for this loss of interest are partly to be found within the EU, namely in the constitutional crisis and the paralysis of decision-making processes described above. But the shift also is a function of the fact that Moscow, according to its new self-understanding as a global power, claims to act with utmost independence. The harmonization of values and norms, which is at the core of EU identity and foreign policy, is contradictory to this concept. A third reason for the Russian elite's downgrading of the EU's status is the Russian leadership's changing understanding of global politics. The perceived decline of U.S. capacity to shape international developments according to American interests broadens Russia's room for maneuver. These two developments are perceived as mutually reinforcing and weaken, from a Russian perspective, the EU as a supranational actor. As a result, bilateralism is now the dominant approach in Russia's relations with the EU and its member states.

A Difficult Global Context

The global context of EU-Russian relations is reinforcing the growing distance between the two sides. This dimension has been gaining importance in recent years for several reasons: The U.S. has intensified its activities on the territory of the former Soviet Union in the framework of the global fight against terror – and by doing so has provoked increasing disapproval from Russia's leaders. Moscow is also concerned about the efforts of some of the Central Eastern European EU members to build up close relations with the U.S. The ongoing debate about deploying parts of an American global missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic has proved this once again. It has fuelled the historical conflicts between Moscow and its western neighbors, and added to the fragmentation of the EU's Russia policy. Additionally, Russia's new self-understanding, together with its changing perceptions of the EU and the U.S., produce a greater readiness in Moscow to confront Washington on a global level. During Putin's first term, the EU seemed to replace the US as the focal point of Russian foreign policy, after the heavily U.S.-oriented Yeltsin years. Now, Russia has returned to a "U.S.-first" policy, without, however, necessarily striving for cooperation and mutual benefit. This new approach does not take into consideration the EU's transatlantic sensitivities. Global conflicts like Kosovo, Iran, and the missile defense system, in which Russia and the U.S. find themselves on opposite sides of the political fence, thus have an immediate impact on relations between Russia and the EU.

What Comes Next?

The current crisis does not imply a "failure" of Russia-EU relations. The assumption that a "New Cold War" is looming on the horizon between Russia and "the West" is simply wrong. Political and economic interdependencies alone, which have constantly been growing between Russia and the EU, but also the U.S. since 1992, do not allow for mutual isolation of both sides. The context of a globalized world, in which these interdependencies evolve, also prevents renewed isolation.

The current crisis is not the first, and maybe not even the worst, in the EU's relations with Russia. Surprisingly, historical memory does not seem to reach back to the quarrel between Russia and "the West" over the Kosovo War in 1999, which was solved not the least thanks to Putin's pragmatic approach before and after the terrorist attacks against the United States in September 2001. Nonetheless, Russia and the EU face a period of serious stagnation and conflict in their relationship, which is very unlikely to end before the presidential elections in Russia in March 2008.

Improving EU-Russian ties depends on a number of factors. Moscow has to find a constructive basis for its relations with the new EU members. Developments before and during the Russia-EU Summit in Samara made it very clear that the Central Eastern European member states have sufficient weight to influence decision making in Brussels to Moscow's detriment. Russia has clearly overestimated the potential of its bilateral approach, and this overreach is likely to repeat itself in the future.

The current EU with 27 members has to find a common position on what kind of relationship or partnership it wants to have with Russia. Achieving such a united position has only become more complicated as the union has grown. Furthermore, the EU should be aware of the fact that its policy can have geopolitical implications, which might not be intended collectively, but can be perceived as a potential threat by Russia.

The EU also has to recognize the limits of its influence on domestic developments (not only) in Russia and put this in due proportion to its goals. The EU must also take into account the global/transatlantic context of EU-Russia relations.

Quick solutions are not on the horizon and policy makers should think in terms of years rather than months. At the same time, neither side can afford to turn its back on the other. Therefore, relations between Russia and the EU will not come to an end or fail, but develop more slowly and remain characterized by recurrent conflict in the foreseeable future.

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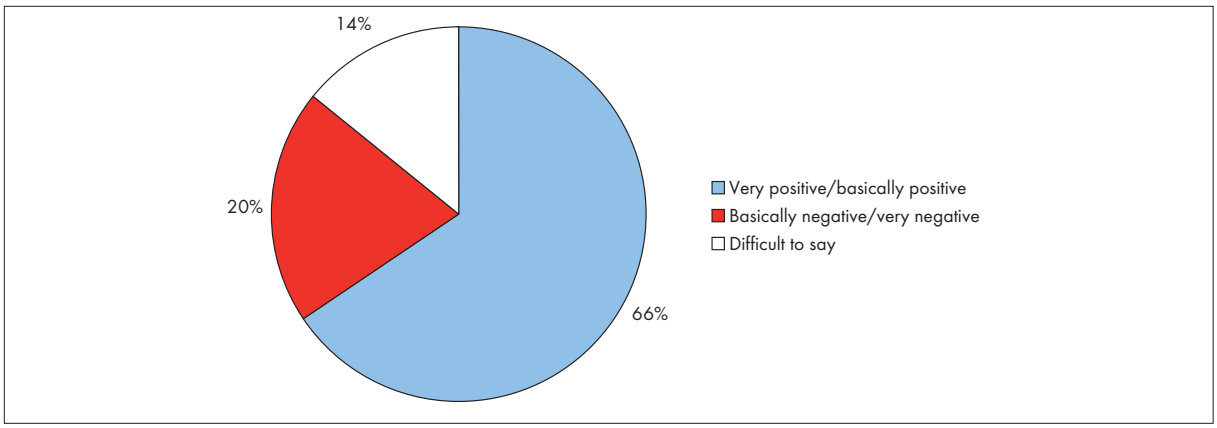
Tables and Graphs

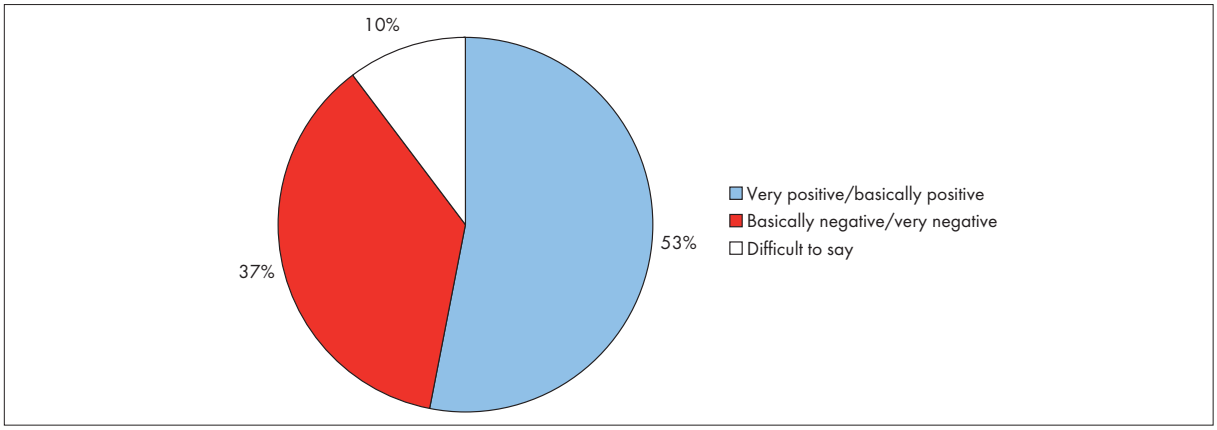
Attitudes Towards the EU and the USA

On the Whole, What Are Your Feelings Towards the European Union? (August 2007)



Source: http://www.levada.ru/press/2007081001.html, *10 August 2007*

On the Whole, What Are Your Feelings Towards the USA (August 2007)?



Source: http://www.levada.ru/press/2007081001.html, *10 August 2007*

Analysis

Prospects for Developing NATO – Russia Relations

By Andrew Monaghan, London

Abstract

The NATO-Russia relationship has gone through an important evolution. Following the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council, a bureaucratic framework has been built up in which cooperation can develop across nine areas of mutual interest. Yet political tensions have become increasingly evident in the last few months. These difficulties have emerged against a background of frustration with the progress of practical relations. As the relationship becomes ever more complex with new problems adding to old tensions, both sides need to commit to developing the relationship more actively.

Progress and Problems

NATO – Russia relations have come a long way. From the regional confrontation in northern and central Europe of the Cold War years, the relationship has since passed through controversy and then cooperation in south eastern Europe to one of a more global aspect. Relations and even collaboration extend to the Mediterranean, the Trans-Caucasus region and Central Asia. Indeed, instead of being locked in confrontation, NATO and Russia are now partners, linked by the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). Established in 2002, the NRC meets regularly and provides the trappings of equality for Russia in the relationship, bringing together 27 members, rather than 26 + 1. Both sides have now established a presence with the other, given the Russian mission to NATO headquarters and an office at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and NATO's Liaison Mission and Information Office in Moscow.

The NRC's five-year anniversary provides an opportune moment to evaluate the progress of this evolution, especially given the tensions that have become all the more apparent this year, repeatedly noted by analysts and the media in both NATO member states and Russia. Western commentators depict the development of a new Cold War, pointing to Russia's aggressive Soviet-style rhetoric, while Russian media sources describe the relationship as a "poor peace" and "bitter friendship." Official statements are also more frank than usual. Though stressing the need for cooperation, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer recently noted Russia's confrontational tone and the need to "lower the volume" in NATO-Russia diplomacy. For his part, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted both the successes and problems in the evolution of relations and stated flatly that the work ahead would not be easy. Disagreements over the status of Kosovo, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, US ballistic missile defense plans, and Russian statements about re-directing its missiles at sites in Europe illustrate the difficult agenda.

This article traces the evolution of the relationship, looking first at the progress made and some of the cooperation achieved before turning to the difficulties, which are both political and practical in nature. The key point to emerge is that though the difficulties are both numerous and high profile, the achievements made are important steps forward which could not have been envisaged just a few years ago. Though the partnership is uneven across the different areas of cooperation, the relationship is now on a different footing compared to the years of confrontation. Moreover, despite significant differences over several important issues, there is no ideological gulf between NATO and Russia as there was during the Cold War and there is an established mechanism for discussing problems.

NATO-Russia Cooperation

The NRC provides the basic framework for a broad range of cooperative programs across nine areas. Progress has been made in all nine areas, particularly in military-to-military cooperation, albeit to varying degrees in others. In recent times, there has been visible progress in theatre missile defense (TMD), with a series of yearly command post exercises and exchanges of information and ideas between NATO and Russian experts leading to the development of a common operational doctrine. Additionally, there has been cooperation in civil defense and emergency management and nuclear munitions security, with joint exercises being held in both areas.

The two sides have also cooperated in submarine search and rescue. A framework agreement in this area was signed in 2003, and Russia subsequently participated in the major NATO exercise Sorbet Royal in the Mediterranean in 2005. Russia plays a

part in the NATO-led Submarine Escape & Rescue Working Group. Indeed this framework provided the basis for the UK-led team which rescued the Russian submersible off the coast of Kamchatka in 2005, one of the high points of both UK and NATO military cooperation with Russia. Russia is also contributing to NATO's Operation Active Endeavour, naval operations in the Mediterranean to demonstrate NATO resolve and solidarity. Such cooperative measures – this list is by no means exhaustive – provide an important background to understanding the current situation.

NATO-Russia Problems

There are, however, a complex range of problems, both conceptual and practical, which have limited the progress of the relationship. Indeed there is some disappointment among important constituents on both sides with the extent of the achievements to date. Several "direct" problems in the NATO-Russia relationship have been enflamed further by a series of "indirect" problems in the broader context which have become part of the NATO-Russia dialogue. Indeed both direct and indirect problems are serving to exacerbate each other: disappointment with the slow and uneven progress in the relationship spills into the wider international situation; tensions in the wider international situation serve to entrench and perpetuate direct problems.

Key small, but nonetheless important, practical problems hindering the development of the NATO-Russia relationship include linguistic, budgetary and technical constraints. There are too few translators to facilitate the joint exercises, reflecting a wider shortage of personnel on both sides who speak the relevant languages. There are also differences in equipment standards, training techniques, and doctrinal assertions between NATO and Russia which have affected interoperability.

Though clearly each side is important for the other, each has a number of other important priorities, some of which have tended to push the development of the NATO-Russia relationship into the background. NATO, for instance, is deeply involved in Afghanistan and is attempting to establish a more effective relationship with the European Union (EU).

Moreover, NATO is also still undergoing important internal transformation. While this transformation in itself absorbs considerable attention, importantly it also means that Russia is becoming increasingly a priority for NATO. NATO's enlargement to include new members from eastern and central Europe has meant that the concerns these states have about Russian policy become part of NATO's agenda. The arrival of the new members has not been a wholly positive development for the relationship, given that it has brought the tensions that exist between Russia and these states to the NATO-Russia agenda. Furthermore, it has served to highlight the differences within NATO about how to deal with Russia. A number of member states press for a more robust, critical approach towards Russia, while others seek more cooperative relations with it. This lack of consensus within NATO creates a practical difficulty for the development of the relationship: without consensus, NATO lacks effective policy-making with regard to the relationship. A lack of coherence on NATO's part thus serves to weaken the functioning and development of the relationship. The inability to formulate a coherent policy also provides ammunition for those in Russia who argue that NATO is more about talking than action and therefore not a major priority to be actively pursued.

For its part, Russia, though attempting to re-establish itself on the international stage, is still preoccupied by many domestic issues, including economic development. Moreover, Russian elections are approaching, both absorbing political attention and slowing the development of foreign relationships. The Russia electoral cycle is beginning to pose other problems for the development of NATO-Russia relations because it highlights the fact that apart from a handful of individuals at the summit of the decision-making executive, there are few constituencies within Russia that really support such a relationship. The Russian Defense White Paper of 2003 illustrated well the ambiguity within the Russian military establishment about NATO. While partnership with NATO and the NRC is emphasized, and large scale war with NATO is excluded from the list of likely conflicts, NATO is still considered by many in the Russian military establishment to pose a threat. There is also serious opposition to NATO among political and public circles, and its image is still associated with that of the enemy. Such perceptions become particularly salient as Russia heads to the polls: the increasing rhetoric from Moscow about the international situation and Russia's foreign relations is largely aimed at a domestic audience and connected to securing votes. Moreover, the point that it is only a rather narrow section of the Russian establishment that seeks to develop cooperation actively with NATO signals NATO that the majority of Russians are not really interested in developing a relationship and are simply treating NATO as an international actor rather than a real partner.

It is against this combination of progress and disappointment and a relationship structure that is not fully supported by either side that a number of unre-

solved political problems have come to the fore – some of which are new, some of rather longer heritage.

Though Russian officials reacted favorably to NATO's Riga summit declaration, Russian opposition to elements of NATO's transformation continues to stand out. First, NATO enlargement is extremely unpopular in Russia. Russia has objected to previous rounds of enlargement and still opposes the development of NATO infrastructure on the territory of new member states. Further enlargement, and particularly the discussion of potential membership for states such as Ukraine and (especially) Georgia, seems particularly fraught with complexity for the NATO-Russia relationship. Second, though initially supportive of NATO operations in Afghanistan, many in Russia question and do not accept the increasingly active role that NATO has adopted internationally, particularly its operations outside Europe, arguing that NATO is simply a tool to facilitate US unilateralism on the international stage. This wide-ranging opposition has raised questions about the desirability of developing cooperation and therefore interoperability: where would such cooperation be possible? If some Russians have argued for peacekeeping cooperation in areas of the former Soviet Union, many oppose such efforts, some vehemently. If it is not possible to find areas to cooperate, why enhance interoperability?

Likewise, there has been an extension of the old agenda into new problems. Enlargement is associated with democratization – and thus increasingly a conceptual difference between NATO and Russia. De Hoop Scheffer recently challenged Moscow's objections to NATO enlargement, questioning why Russia should object to the rule of law and democracy approaching Russian borders. Furthermore, the NATO-Russia relationship is being drawn into complex international issues such as the US missile defense shield and energy security which represent important risks for the development of relations. Energy security particularly has been brought on to NATO's agenda as a result of concerns among some member states about Russia's role in supplying global energy needs. Though there is potential for cooperation, for instance in civil defense and emergency management, there are also concerns in Russia about the use of NATO military assets and the role NATO might play.

Conclusions

The relationship currently has a rather paradoxical appearance. Bureaucratic relations have been developing and the foundation for a partnership exists. Indeed there has been some important military cooperation. This, it should be remembered, is in itself a major step forward given the longer term historical context.

Yet, alongside these accomplishments, there are several important political tensions which can stall or reverse this progress, and relations have clearly become more complicated in 2007. Moreover, to judge by official pronouncements, both sides are taking a rather passive approach to the relationship: each side places the emphasis for relations on the other. NATO officials note that this partnership can go as far as the Russian government is prepared to take it. Recently, Lavrov stated that the limits of cooperation will "depend on the course of NATO's own transformation." Both sides seem to believe that their own actions in the relationship are sufficient and that the other needs to do more.

But to continue to develop the relationship – and make it bear positive fruit – both sides must take a more active stance and make positive contributions. Progress requires more resources and more effective use of them: as note above, the lack of language skills should be remedied. Politically, both sides could further clarify their agendas regarding the other; currently each side seems to be either not explaining or talking past the other regarding its intentions. If NATO's transformation has not been clearly understood in Russia, it is also the case that NATO, broadly speaking, does not understand Russian frustrations.

The important point for both sides in the immediate future is to protect the institutional structure built up so far and not let political tensions undermine the progress made. The NRC was established to facilitate dialogue. As the NATO Secretary General has stated, it is a forum not only for agreement, but also for serious, open and frank discussion on issues about which NATO and Russia do not agree. The mechanism must be used to calm tensions and prevent any over-reaction to them. Accomplishing these goals will not be easy since the two sides must manage both the old agenda of unresolved problems and also a complex new agenda at a time of considerable mutual misunderstanding.

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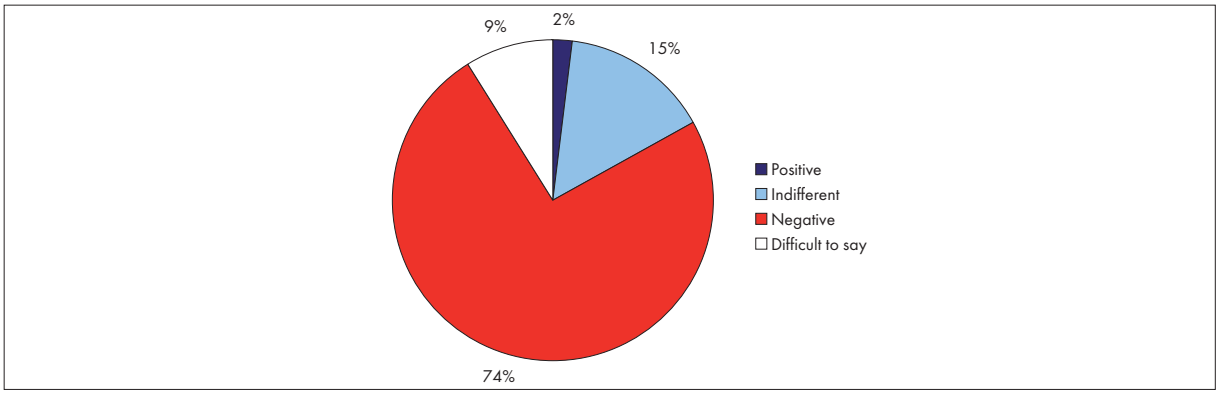
Tables and Graphs

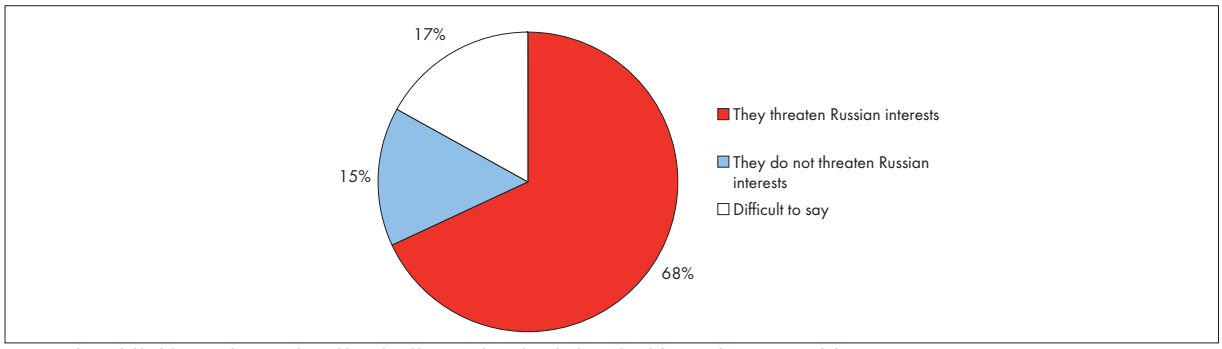
Russian Opinions on the Plans of the USA to Station Anti-Missile Systems in Eastern Europe

What is Your Attitude Concerning the Plans of the USA to Station Anti-Missile Systems in Eastern Europe - Positive, Negative or Indifferent? (May 2007)



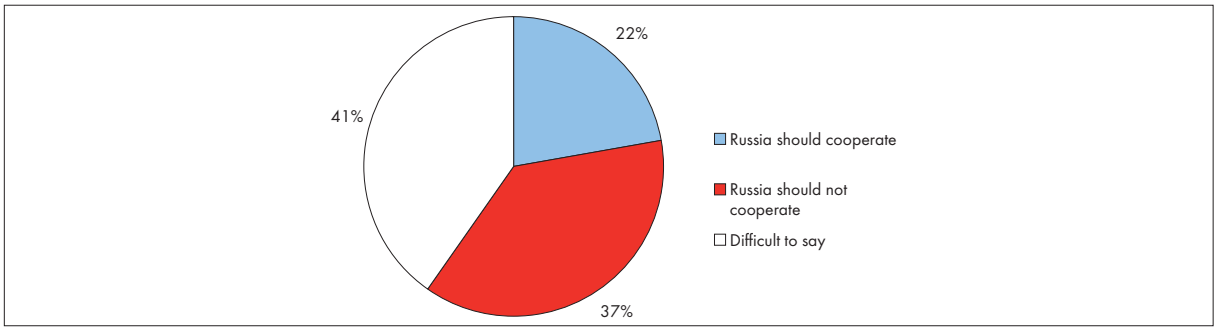
Source: http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/international_relations/cold_war/nato_east/d071823, *3 May 2007*

In Your Opinion, Do the Plans of the USA to Station Anti-Missile Systems in Eastern Europe Threaten Russian Interests? (May 2007)



Source: http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/international_relations/cold_war/nato_east/d071823, *3 May 2007*

The USA has Suggested that Russia Cooperate with the USA in the Area of Anti-Missile Systems. In Your Opinion, Should Russia Cooperate with the USA Concerning Anti-Missile Systems? (May 2007)



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About the Russian Analytical Digest

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Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen

Founded in 1982 and led by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Eichwede, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to socialist and post-socialist cultural and societal developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Research Centre possesses a unique collection of alternative culture and independent writings from the former socialist countries in its archive. In addition to extensive individual research on dissidence and society in socialist societies, since January 2007 a group of international research institutes is participating in a collaborative project on the theme "The other Eastern Europe – the 1960s to the 1980s, dissidence in politics and society, alternatives in culture. Contributions to comparative contemporary history", which is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

In the area of post-socialist societies, extensive research projects have been conducted in recent years with emphasis on political decision-making processes, economic culture and the integration of post-socialist countries into EU governance. One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular email service with nearly 15,000 subscribers in politics, economics and the media.

With a collection of publications on Eastern Europe unique in Germany, the Research Centre is also a contact point for researchers as well as the interested public. The Research Centre has approximately 300 periodicals from Russia alone, which are available in the institute's library. News reports as well as academic literature is systematically processed and analyzed in data bases.

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public.

The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS), offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students, and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Comprehensive Risk Analysis and Management Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

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