

Analysis

Europe Needs a New Security Architecture

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Abstract

It is time to renew Europe's security architecture. Current security policy institutions all stem from the 1970s and were created to face a different reality. After the end of the Cold War, instead of creating new institutional structures which would be able to cope with the new world order, the West extended the influence of the existing ones. Moscow's proposal for a Helsinki-2 comes at the right moment and is worth discussing. Europe once again needs to reach a fundamental agreement on a conceptual framework similar to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which comprised several "baskets". If Russia and the EU intend to play an important role in the 21st century, they will have no choice but to cooperate with each other closely. Creating a model of interaction requires developing new intellectual approaches and overcoming old stereotypes and threat perceptions inherited from past centuries.

An Outdated Security Model

A characteristic of the current international situation is that the obvious growth of different forms of competition is combined with increasing economic interdependence among the competitors. This circumstance makes nonsense of the fashionable comparisons with the "Great Game" of the 19th century, the run-up to the First World War or the Cold War period.

The financial crisis, which has affected all countries, has at least one positive side: discussions about the need to modernize global governance have been revitalized since everybody understands that the present framework is unable to cope with coming challenges. Not only economic, but security ones as well.

All institutions dealing with security have their roots in the previous epoch; that is, they were established for an entirely different reality. After the Cold War, the West focused efforts on spreading the influence of its institutions, which had proved their efficacy in the years of ideological confrontation, rather than on creating structures for a new world order.

But the West's peaceful expansion, which was perceived as natural and almost automatic, was in fact only possible because that period of time was unique. Russia was in a geopolitical coma and unable to resist while China concentrated on its own development and had not yet focused on assuming a global role. As soon as Russia woke up and China became a powerful force, what had been taken for granted in the 1990s became an acute problem. Now some organizations are not only failing to reinforce stability, but actually weakening it. Thus, NATO expansion has transformed from a means to export security into a catalyst for serious conflict, which we recently faced in Caucasus.

Developments in recent months demonstrated that European politics is a complex phenomenon. There is a

close interconnection between all aspects of European life – for example, talk about economic integration is impossible in isolation from security issues. Fears are graphically manifest in the energy sector. The politicization of any discussion about Russian gas supplies stems from the fact that the pan-European security architecture does not instill confidence in some countries.

Such things happen on both sides. It is very difficult for Russia to conduct a normal business dialogue with Ukraine because NATO and the entire range of related problems and emotions are looming in the background all the time. Meanwhile, countries like Poland and the Baltic states, which deep in their hearts do not trust the guarantees that NATO and the European Union have given them, see an emerging Russian expansionism and the specter of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in everything.

In the first weeks of 2009, we witnessed how damaging this mutual politicization might be for energy security. Ukraine, suffering from the economic crisis and the long mismanagement of its leadership, decided to turn difficult negotiations into a major European crisis by endangering gas transit to the EU. The Ukrainian calculation was that EU customers would blame Russia and afterwards help Kyiv to secure better conditions. Russia, caught by surprise, responded by cutting supplies entirely. Two weeks of muscle flexing in Kyiv and Moscow considerably damaged the reputations of both sides as the combatants terrified Europe with their irresponsibility.

The causes for this conflict between the two neighbors were both political and economic. Political tensions are especially high since the Ukrainian president overwhelmingly supported Georgia in the August war, including with military means. This background angers Russia and inspires Russia to respond harshly to

everything Kyiv does, provoking Ukraine to use this situation for its political purposes. Economically, the energy relationship between Russia and Ukraine was never built on transparent rules. Ukraine never paid market prices for natural gas, while Russia never paid market-based transit fees. Deals were based on a variety of other factors – political interest, personal relations, corrupt schemes, and both sides benefited a lot. Now we see that this model is exhausted and hopefully the new pricing formula will bring stability to the European energy complex.

The Idea of Helsinki-2

Without creating a security system that all the participants trust, an economic breakthrough is most likely impossible. That's why Moscow's proposal for a Helsinki-2 is right on time and worth discussing. It is difficult to deny that so far this proposal lacks "meat" – concrete substance which could serve as a starting point for consultation. But when Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko first introduced the idea of an all-European process in 1966, it also lacked everything but the Kremlin's wish to finally legitimize the geopolitical results of WWII. The result of a process, which continued for nine years, was the establishment of important principles suitable for all parties at that time.

Europe again needs a basic agreement on a conceptual framework, which like the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 would include different baskets. Areas that need work include: military guarantees, borders (particularly acute since none of the post-Soviet countries can claim that its borders are fully and finally secure), the economy, energy, humanitarian guidelines and even the democracy question. Of course, it is impossible to formalize democracy in one document, but it might be possible to remove this notion from use as a geopolitical instrument as we saw during the "democracy promotion" campaign of the previous US administration.

Russian Foreign Policy: The Impact of the Georgian War and the Financial Crisis

What is the current mood shaping Russia's foreign policy? Two crises that have occurred in recent months, one after the other, have had a huge impact on it. The Russian-Georgian war in August and the upheavals on the global financial markets are not related. Yet, both events, each in its own way, have contributed to Russia's formulation of its national interests. One can say that the two crises have established a conceptual framework of interests, defining a vector for the indispensable and boundaries for the possible.

Georgia's attack on South Ossetia and the world's reaction to Russia's response have created a new situation in Russian politics and public opinion. Perhaps, for the first time since the Soviet Union's break-up, Moscow found itself in a situation where it had to act without regard to the possible costs of the world's reaction. Conflicts had taken place earlier, too, but, as a rule, decisions had been made depending on how they could affect relations with "strategic partners". Russia came out of the Georgian war ready to defend its vital interests, regardless of foreign partners' reaction and of how much support Russia could expect from them in the future. But there must be clear criteria for judging what interests are vital and should be upheld, whatever the cost. The second, financial crisis has played an important role in this regard.

The financial instability that has rapidly spread throughout the world has shown the degree of global interdependence and the limits of economic and, as a consequence, geopolitical capabilities. It turned out, for example, that the huge financial resources accumulated over the years of sustained economic growth may be enough to alleviate the consequences of national crises. Yet, they are not enough for implementing the major geopolitical projects planned in recent years.

The Need for Enhanced International Cooperation

The reality of the crisis will cause countries to set priorities, rank their intentions, and give up secondary tasks in favor of more important ones.

There are a few major areas we need to work on.

As mentioned, a conceptual framework should be reinstated. The world needs a broader agreement on how to define key notions of international relations, including sovereignty, criteria for the use of force, territorial integrity and rights for self-determination, and conflict resolution. Many principles have been undermined in recent years. Of course, one can say that all such concepts were already laid out in several documents adopted during the late 20th century. But all agreements need to be refreshed and readjusted from time to time, especially since the entire environment around them has changed.

The level of security has decreased since the late 1990s, when the first full-scale war of the new era broke out in Yugoslavia. We need to return to a strategic agenda and address the different aspects of it in a comprehensive manner, rather than piece-by-piece. Such issues as non-proliferation (including Iran), arms control and missile defense should be discussed in the same basket,

where Russia and the U.S. would be leading counterparts, but other important actors, including first of all the EU, but also China and India, should be included. Europe's unwillingness to participate in strategic debate, leaving it to the US and Russia, turned out to be counterproductive. Europe has grown too strong economically and too important internationally to remain silent about vital matters on the international security agenda.

Changing Foundations for Russia-EU Relations

European institutions are not appropriate for the goal of strengthening peace. The OSCE has been heavily criticized before, but the Georgian crisis demonstrated that this body unfortunately is dysfunctional. Whether the OSCE should be reformed or replaced is a decision for a new all-European process. If participants come to the conclusion that this organization can be improved, the military basket should be restored in full format in order to discuss issues such as the future of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

NATO should not be considered as a universal security body, which can automatically expand eastwards. Unlike in the 1990s, when the European geopolitical situation was unique, now the alliance is not an instrument for spreading stability, but promotes instability. Countries outside NATO, which are concerned for their security, should be given the strongest-possible security guaranties from all great powers involved, so that all of them are equal guarantors with clear responsibilities.

The links between the economy and politics are evident as never before. Interdependence *per se* is no guaranty for sustainable development since it frequently turns into a source of mutual insecurity and mistrust. The relationship between Russia and the EU, especially in the energy sector, is a glaring example of that. Similar problems are visible in the relationship between the U.S. and China.

The principles that served as a foundation for the Russian-European rapprochement in the early 1990s have been exhausted as the circumstances have changed. In those years, many believed that Russia would integrate into the existing system of United Europe, accepting its norms and rules without claiming membership in the European Union. Later, Russia's priorities changed, and the EU found itself in an awkward position from the conceptual point of view.

The EU viewed Russia as a civilizationally-close partner and an immediate neighbor. The format of the

European Union's relations with such countries provides for an integration paradigm – in other words, their smooth involvement into the political, legal and economic space of the European Union, with the prospect for full membership (for candidate countries) or close dependence and special preferences.

Moscow has declined these options, while the EU has been unable to offer anything else. Russia also does not want to have purely mercantile relations with the EU, like those between the EU and China, because it claims a unique status – and not without grounds, considering the cultural closeness and economic intertwining of Russia and Europe.

The discussions on a new agreement to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which were restarted after the Nice summit, will be long and painful, as mutual understanding is at a very low level, while the parties' interest in the final result also leaves much to be desired. In any case, one should not expect the parties to work out a basic treaty in the years and decades ahead. The parties would rather produce an interim document that will set up a situational compromise and make interaction between them more effective.

The processes of geopolitical self-identification are continuing both in Russia and the European Union. Moscow is groping for its role in world politics. It would like to be a powerful independent pole of influence, but it does not have enough strength for that. At the same time, Russia cannot integrate anywhere, as it is too large and independent.

There is no clarity about the European Union, either. The institutional reforms, intended as one more step toward making the EU into a consolidated political alliance, have once again stalled. Even if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, nothing would basically change. Meanwhile, at least some of the EU members seek to enhance the union's political role and independence. The role that France played in the political settlement of the Caucasus crisis on behalf of the European Union has encouraged many people in Europe. At the same time, it is not difficult to imagine the position in which the EU would have found itself if the conflict had occurred during the EU presidency of Poland or Estonia.

The contradiction faced by the EU is the contrast between the Union's economic might and its relatively modest political role, not only in the world, but even in Europe. For the European Union as a political actor, there are various possibilities. Such issues as the deployment of U.S. strategic facilities in Europe, the solution of problems with energy transit countries (above all Ukraine), or peacekeeping and observer missions in lo-

cal conflicts should be resolved first and foremost with the participation of the EU, because all these issues directly affect the interests of the European Union. For the time being, with rare exception, the EU avoids interfering in conflict situations, leaving it for the United States, Russia or its individual member states to settle them.

Interdependent Interests Make for Close Partners

The changes in the international arena are creating new conditions for all. Europe may quite soon discover that it is losing its position as the US's main partner, while Asia replaces it. It will be an unpleasant realization, undermining the traditional horizon of European politics. At the same time, possible US attempts to gain European aid in strengthening American dominance over all the world (which in Washington's eyes is what the new era of trans-Atlantic solidarity should mean), may make Europe resilient on its own. Russia meanwhile will need to face the reality of a gloomy demographic situation, the lack of promising opportunities to diversify its economy, and its real influence in the future world.

The interdependence between Russia and the EU stems from the late Soviet period, when Europe be-

came the main market for Siberian hydrocarbons. The infrastructure built in the period from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s (particularly, the system of gas pipelines), predetermined the geo-economic interdependence of Europe and Eurasia for decades to come. There is no reason to believe that energy flows in this part of the world will basically change their direction in the foreseeable future, so Russia and the EU are destined to maintain a close partnership. The recent crisis over Ukrainian gas transit is just another proof of a shared interest in common solutions, but there is still no readiness to find them.

During the next few decades, Russia and the European Union are destined to closely interact with each other if they want to play important roles in the 21st century. However, the creation of a model for such interaction requires novel intellectual approaches and the renunciation of numerous stereotypes inherited from the past century. The construction of a new "Greater Europe" on the basis of Russia and the EU is a task comparable in scale to that which the architects of European integration set themselves after World War II. In those years, almost no one believed in its success either.

About the author

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