

## “The Russian View of NATO’s Political Agenda”



Session at the Royal High Institute for Defence  
Brussels – Thursday 19 February

The speaker began the session by emphasising how difficult it was for Russia to establish a relationship with NATO. Russia in the early 1990’s wanted to avoid confrontation and found a common denominator. The commitment of NATO not to position substantial troops in the new member states (which was broken later on) provided a good starting point. Russia had to freeze the relation because of the violation of international law by NATO in Kosovo. After 9/11 Russia tried again to find new forms of cooperation. The agreement signed focused on: fighting new challenges; cooperating as equal partners and working together in the NATO-Russia Council.

Cooperation in 19 areas began. The most important ones were: 1. missile defence; 2. air space initiative (ICAO); 3. fighting narcotics; 4. extensive military cooperation (e.g. Russia’s participation in NATO naval operations conducted under Art. 5). During the Georgian War, Russia asked for an emergency session of the NATO-Russia Council but the decision was blocked by one NATO member state. NATO froze all forms of cooperation and thus interrupted conflict resolution on the political level. By now NATO countries realized that this was a mistake. Russia also wants to “reset” relations. There is a need to be listened to especially after NATO expansion (note: not enlargement) undermined security. At the moment there is no security for all, especially not for Russia.

The speaker also commented on the Bucharest Summit and claimed that the decision to bring Ukraine into NATO was not democratic as there is no majority for this step amongst the Ukrainian population. Further, he claimed that the CFE Treaty has nothing to do with the Istanbul Commitments, as they are just bilateral commitments. Russia suspended the CFE Treaty because NATO didn’t respond to anything. The build-up of a missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic against an alleged Iranian threat would be wrong. In the second shorter part of his speech the speaker focused on the perspectives of NATO-Russian relations. He emphasized the will of Russia to cooperate, especially in the NATO-Russian Council. The permission given to NATO to transport non-lethal goods to Afghanistan through Russia was presented as an example for Russia’s good will. There

were also many opportunities to work together on missile defence issues, if the U.S. would stop their missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The Q&A session focused on Georgia. It was claimed by the speaker that FM Lavrov had never said “Russia will do everything to prevent Georgia’s NATO membership”. Instead Georgia’s claim that 80% of its population would be in favour of NATO membership was wrong. Abkhazia and South Ossetia had not taken part in the referendum. Russia had foreseen Georgian military action. There was a Georgian military build-up taking place for four years. During this period Georgia had not accepted any mediation. It was Russia who stabilized the region for years. It was Russia who paid the pensions. One to two million people became Russians (even the Georgian FM has a Russian passport). It was Russia who prevented a civil war. Because of Georgia’s claim to start the war again Russian military presence is needed for the future. Asked what the legal basis for recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia would have been, the speaker asked in return: “Tell me, what is the legal basis for Kosovo?” Concerning NATO “expansion” it was highlighted that NATO is a military block whose bases came closer and closer to the Russian border. The relationship with NATO would have worsened significantly after the Baltic’s had become members. With its “expansion” NATO has created security for itself at the expense of Russia. Russia was never invited to become a member because no one wanted to have another France in NATO. France would have pushed ESDP because it felt U.S. hegemony. In addition any cooperation between the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and NATO was blocked by NATO countries because of the alleged domination of CSTO by Russia. But one should keep in mind that all CSTO members are sovereign nations. The speaker also pretended to be astonished that NATO-Russia cooperation concerning Afghanistan would not have been utilized better. Russia would have offered extensive help to NATO. This cooperation would be in the interest of both actors.

Russia’s aid to Kyrgyzstan would have nothing to do with the announced closure of the U.S. air base in Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. didn’t want to pay what was asked for and they behaved badly in the past. It was a sovereign decision of Kyrgyzstan. Russia is not interested in Iran possessing nuclear weapons. Russia would therefore actively engage in the group of 6 and would favour a patient approach without any threats. Pressure would only lead to counter-pressure. The international community would have to show to the Iranian people that a civilian nuclear option would be supported. Closely related to this topic is the build-up of the U.S. missile defence system in Europe. It is not about the 10 interceptors we are talking about at the moment. It is about multiple kill vehicles and more warheads in the near future. Therefore the program should be stopped now. Otherwise it would increase unpredictability and undermine strategic stability. If Iran should really be on the way to have nuclear missiles in 15-20 years, an American ally will destroy them before. If security is needed, do it with Russia. In general it is important to understand: 1. Don’t push Russia in a corner – it will respond. 2. In the international financial crisis we are all in the same boat because Russia has become part of a globalized world.

## “The American View of NATO’s Political Agenda”



### Session at the Royal High Institute for Defence Brussels – Thursday 19 February

This presentation focused on European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and the American response to this process. Firstly it was noted that the administration of President Obama is still developing its approach to European security in general – and in particular its approach to ESDP and the NATO alliance. That being said – a framework of the American position was laid out.

The United States does not view the European Union and NATO as competing – zero sum game entities. The American position is not NATO or the EU but rather NATO and the EU. America is willing to talk to the EU with reference to European Security. While the US will continue to view NATO as an institution to deal with security issues at large – it recognizes the increasing political strength of the EU institutions and the increasing political will of European Union member states to stake out a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that reflects European values. This approach reflects a traditional American pragmatic view on problem solving – using the strengths of both institutions to get things done.

This view was supplemented with a discussion regarding European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). The US supports ESDI if it works in harmony to fund and increase both capabilities and capacities best designed to counter today’s security challenges – mainly irregular warfare activities. The US welcomes such investment in areas such as strategic lift (both air and surface), Command, Control, Computers, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR), tactical mobility – particularly rotary wing

aviation – and the implementation of doctrine and force structure changes that enable military units to fight full spectrum operations (beyond the traditional aspects of territorial defense). The US does not support the duplication of efforts (that NATO already has sufficient capacity) such as Headquarters for political purposes only.

Three major areas were discussed where the US and Europe have common interests. First, the struggles in South Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the surrounding countries of the region is a generational struggle. It is in the common interest of both the US and Europe to create conditions of stability in this region in order to enhance our own security. This struggle will be measured in decades and generations vice months and years. Both the US and Europe need to communicate this to their respective populations who do not understand the why and the nature of how this conflict is emerging. Both risk losing popular support for these policies. Secondly, the speaker addressed Russia. Russia is still searching for its own identity – even 20 plus years after the fall of communism. The west (US and EU) and bilateral (US – Russia) (Russia with various EU Members) and (Russia-NATO) have a mixed record. While members of the Atlantic Alliance and EU feel there has been some success in this strategy – the Russians see it a different way. Russia sees its security interests as not being addressed and sees EU and NATO as the two principle European Security institutions – neither of which they have a formal role to play in. The US and EU need include Russia as a player in European security. This does not mean Russia gets to dictate or dominate the European security agenda – but it needs to have a voice. Otherwise we risk further isolation of Russia and potential radical behavior.

The third issue addressed was Transnational Terrorism. Both the EU and US have common interests in challenging Transnational Terror organizations. In particular is the recognition that Islam and the Islamic world is going through its own internal struggles and political developments – very similar to Christianity up to the Enlightenment and Renaissance period of the 16-18 century. This period was a very violent one for Christianity – with such events as the Spanish is going through its own violent period – where the voices of moderates and radicals are struggling for control and establishing an Islamic identity. This struggle effects both the US and EU (as well as the Islamic world) – and is likely to play out for the next 2 plus generations. Again, returning to an earlier theme – the speaker articulated that both EU and US political leaders need to articulate this point to our populations – in order to gain their understanding for this challenge.

Prepared by Konstantine Otkhmezuri

## “France and the New Trans-Atlantic Deal”



### Session at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Paris – Monday 16 February

The presentation was structured in three sections: global context, US-EU relations and the role of France in the transatlantic dialogue.

### **Global context**

The world is now confronted with a systemic and governance challenge stemming from the incapacity of the institutional system built after 1945 (UN, World Bank, IMF, NATO) to cope with the new economic, political, security and social problems of our time. How to act collectively in the spirit of legitimacy and effectiveness? The answer lies in more coordination of public and private actors and in better use of the added value of all existing institutions. The US is an indispensable actor, Europe has made much progress in economic integration, but less in the political one, BRIC countries' request for more power needs to be matched by increased responsibilities, and one needs to bring into the system struggling countries such as Belarus, Cuba, Iran and Venezuela. The old saying that globalization weakens states seems to not hold true anymore, if we consider the call for more state intervention to address the ongoing financial and economic crisis. The key issue is yet how to transfer multipolarity into effective multilateralism? The answer depends on five factors: 1) the attitude and the type of leadership exercised by the US; 2) relations between the EU

and the US; 3) reform of international institutions; 4) their effectiveness; 5) the degree of justice and legitimacy. The election of the president Barack Obama raised high expectations in the world, but they need to be managed and tuned down due to the US constraints (budgetary, institutional and political establishments, power politics etc).

## **US-EU relations**

The US and the EU need to engage into a strategic dialogue and forge a common vision and a strategic agenda related to how to better work collectively in international organizations, how to address the current financial crisis, to restore confidence between Russia and the West, to stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan, to advance a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem as well as to the Iranian nuclear ambitions. The US and the EU need to make the best of the current global context and preserve their unity while trying to deliver policy responses to global policy problems. The US was never so supportive of the ESDP as it is now. However, some EU states still want to further rely on US security guarantees.

## **Role of France in the transatlantic dialogue**

France favours both a strong EU defence and a strong NATO. EU and NATO need to complement and not duplicate each other. Against this background one needs to understand France's decision to reenter the integrated military structure of NATO, which is accompanied by an intense domestic political debate. Both the Gaullist and the leftist politicians ask whether it is worth for France coming back into NATO, whether France will lose its capacity to choose or how much influence will thus France have in the Alliance. But in reality France never left the Alliance. Its reintegration into NATO military structure will increase its power and make it more reliable in the eyes of the allies.

## **Conclusions**

2009 will be a challenging year: the financial and economic crisis ask for immediate and effective answers; the Iran issue will come to "maturity"; progress in Afghanistan is to be made. Quintessential is that the US and the EU take the leadership and work together to successfully address these key issues.

Prepared by Konstantine Otkhmezuri