Russia and the Eastern Partnership States in a New European Security Architecture

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President Dmitry Medvedev's European security initiatives of 2008-2009, culminating in his draft European Security Treaty of November 2009, sparked considerable debate regarding the potential and desirability of a new European (really Euro-Atlantic) security architecture. Generally, a rising cooperative mood in Russian-Western relations has set the tone for such deliberations. Still, formal progress has not really been achieved and the most difficult issues of Euro-Atlantic security have not been seriously addressed. Outstanding issues mainly involve the states of post-Soviet Eastern Europe, currently members of the European Union's Eastern Partnership (EaP) program. What progress has been made on issues of Euro-Atlantic security cannot be regarded as irreversible, unless: a) cornerstone components (like the new strategic arms control treaty, New START) are finalized and b) a road map for resolving difficult issues is established. Progress on these issues requires two things: political goodwill and new proposals for rational, realistic, and legitimate solutions to the challenges of the Eastern Partnership states.

New European Security Architecture in 2010
Initiated by Russia, the discussion on Euro-Atlantic security architecture has been given new scale and depth by some recent ideas in Europe and in the United States, which, in some respects, are bolder than the Russian one. A proposal by influential and respected German politicians regarding Russian membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization[1]; French scholar Hélène Carrère d'Encausse's suggestion of a special privileged status for Russia in its relationship with the European Union (*Le Figaro*, March 11, 2010), and even U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's January 2010 ideas on joint security cooperation[2]—all were either unimaginable or seen as liberal wishful thinking just a year before. Today, however, these and other proposals are topics of substantive dialogue and even political-military bargaining.

The discussion on a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture is far more substantive than Medvedev's European Security draft treaty. That document itself is

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[1] http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,682287,00.html
[2] http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/January/20100129153002eaifas0.2912409.html

criticized in Russian expert circles for its lack of concrete substance and is deemed unlikely to be realized in its present form. Key phrases of the draft (e.g., "significantly affecting security") need further clarification. It contains no suggestions on how to provide transparency and trust. Still, the draft has some merit: its emphasis on the indivisibility and inclusiveness of Euro-Atlantic and European security must indeed be the foundation of a Euro-Atlantic security architecture

At the same time, the position of the six states of post-Soviet Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) in this security architecture is more uncertain than ever before. Near- to mid-term prospects for their membership in NATO and in the EU are not realistic. However, preserving the status quo does not enhance European security, nor does it correspond to the security interests of Russia. These days, the states of post-Soviet Eastern Europe are not failed states strictly speaking, but they definitely have lost their way, which recently seemed so clear-cut and simple: to follow the path of Central Europe. Now, local leaders are hedging their bets between the West and Russia. This balancing game is always being recalibrated. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych is playing the game closer to the Russian pole. Belarus is moving crablike in the opposite direction. Moldova tries to play the game along the lines of "preemptive implementation," introducing things like biometric passports and tighter border controls (initiatives welcomed by Brussels), but with no promise of anything in return. Meanwhile, the states of the South Caucasus have little incentive to make pre-accession reforms, equivalent to strenuous warm-up exercises that risk injury before the start of the actual game.

Despite its much heralded introduction in the spring of 2008, the EU's Eastern Partnership has already lost much of its significance. European (and especially German) observers stress that the financial crisis has once again re-focused the EU's "Eastern policy" on Russia, putting on the back burner both the Eastern Partnership and post-Soviet Eastern Europe more generally. Cornelius Ochmann of the Bertelsmann Foundation writes that internal developments in the EU (specifically the Greek crisis and the teething problems of the EU External Action Service) have minimized internal resources and are diverting attention from foreign policy.[3] This has been compounded, according to Ochmann, by internal developments in EU partner states, especially Ukraine, which make it difficult to implement the Eastern Partnership. Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Russia is once again at the forefront of Germany's Eastern policy. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the former German foreign minister and current chairman of the Social Democratic Party, restated the significance of Russia in Germany's Eastern policy in a March 2010 parliamentary motion bearing the title "Modernization partnership with Russia: Joint security in Europe through greater cooperation and interaction."[4] In an April 2010 foreign policy speech, Germany's foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, did not even mention the Eastern Partnership.

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[3]http://www.alleuropa.ru/fileserver/2010/46/The_Future_of_the_EasternPartnership_Seen_from_a_German_Perspective.pdf
[4] http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/011/1701153.pdf

To include post-Soviet Eastern Europe into European and Euro-Atlantic developments, therefore, it is necessary to make up for the failure of the. One of the most natural and timely ways to do so is via the security domain.

Prerequisites for a Breakthrough

Progress in discussions over a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture is due to a remarkable coincidence of factors and interests: objective and subjective, internal and external, and political and security. Of special significance is a renaissance of pragmatism and *realpolitik* in world politics. This is partly a compensatory phenomenon. The countries of Central and East Europe are seeking to make up for ten to fifteen years of illusions and neglect. They are compensating for delays and distortions in their own nation-state and national identity building projects.

This *realpolitik* is also of a geo-economic rather than a geo-political nature. One of the basic reasons for the shift to *realpolitik* is a U.S. strategy toward sharing global responsibilities, which is likely to strengthen. The scale of new global threats, risks, and challenges has already made transatlantic partners overcome their discord and foster a new, coordinated, and more effective approach to sharing the burdens involved in balancing the rise of new world powers.

Transatlantic allies need cooperation with Russia in order to provide, first, for Euro-Atlantic security and coping with instability in potential conflict regions and, second, for sustainable economic development in the face of the rise of Asian powers. With Russia included in the Euro-Atlantic space, Russian policy may become much more predictable and the space for geopolitical rivalry may diminish. The end of the financial-economic crisis and the eventual large-scale use of alternative energy resources (like solar energy and shale gas), combined with new revolutions in energy-saving technologies, may weaken the competition for resources and transit routes or transform it into a technological competition. This latter eventuality could have a ruinous impact on the Russian economy; it is thus not by chance that Russian authorities are focused on modernizing through cooperation with advanced economies.

Thus, a new beginning in the Euro-Atlantic security realm is due to sensible selfishness and pragmatism both in the West and in Russia. Because of these aligning motivations, there may appear a structure, or rather a *network*, by which Russia will become closely associated with NATO. This process will not be revolutionary but evolutionary: no expansion, no enlargement, and probably no new organizations. Its format may focus less on structure and more on action, with the aim of building trust. Of crucial importance in the initial and interim stages of this process are the cornerstone elements involving traditional arms control matters: ratification of the New START treaty in the nearest future, but also joint ballistic missile defense and the rehabilitation of the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty.

In this new situation, the post-Soviet states of the Eastern Partnership are de facto in one boat with Russia and the West. With closer cooperation between the West and Russia, the countries between them lose both levers and incentives for political maneuvering. The experiences of the last 20 years are likely to strengthen their pragmatic approach toward political, security, and economic policy (witness, for example, the recent Polish-Russian rapprochement and Ukraine's drift toward Russia).

Both the states with official policies or goals of neutrality or non-alliance status (Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus) and the states of the South Caucasus (with their conflicts and non-recognized territories) require the special attention of Euro-Atlantic partners (including Russia) and guarantees of security.

What Is To Be Done?

To make up for the failure (or at least weakness) of the Eastern Partnership program, the EU could instead offer a partnership for modernization, which would include Russia as well as the Eastern Partnership members. This could provide more options for socioeconomic transformation throughout the region while simultaneously strengthening the stimulus for Russia's own sociopolitical modernization.

It will not be by a cardinal restructuring of existing institutions or through spectacular breakthroughs that the difficult challenges of the Eastern Partnership states will be resolved. It is far more preferable, rather, to improve upon existing institutions and the quality of their interaction. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- Elaborate a balanced and comparatively unified mechanism of conflict resolution and peacemaking in the wider Euro-Atlantic region to provide for more effective results and to avoid domination of particular states or regional institutions in different regions (e.g., Transniestria, the former Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan).
- Establish a South Caucasus mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) headed by representatives of relatively neutral European member states, which will make the mission's mandate regarding the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia also neutral.
- Strengthen the mandate of the OSCE to take concrete measures to prevent conflict even without a consensus among the organization's members, in order to be able to take timely steps and avoid escalation of conflicts.
- Form joint peacekeeping forces that would be made available for United Nations operations and would include NATO, EU, and CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) rapid-reaction forces.
- Provide for equal participation of the EU, NATO, and the OSCE in the settlement of conflicts over Transniestria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, providing at the same time equal participation for Russia on further negotiations over Kosovo.
- Establish regular and close cooperation between the CSTO and NATO in preventing drug trafficking from Afghanistan.
- Establish regular and close cooperation for emergency situations.