



A STRATEGIC CONTINUATION, A TACTICAL CHANGE

RUSSIA'S EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY

Marek Menkiszak

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THESES

The collapse of the Soviet bloc's structures (the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact) and then of the Soviet Union itself in 1989–1991 was a kind of geopolitical earthquake in Europe. The main political and legal successor of the USSR, the Russian Federation, had to determine its place in the European order that was being formed, including the security sphere.

The new Russia, which inherited from the USSR its membership in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and the newly established North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), declared its attachment to European democratic values, suggesting that it was ready to embark on close co-operation and, at some point in the future, even join the European and Euro-Atlantic security structures (including NATO) that had been formed during the Cold War era in opposition to the USSR.

However, Russia's Soviet legacy also included elements of its strategic culture, political concepts and a significant share of personnel whose views had already been formed. This, in turn, meant that both the will and ability of Russia's most senior state authorities to put these declarations into practice were highly uncertain. Even though, due to the economic crisis and process of disintegration, Russia turned out to be weaker than the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s, it did not relinquish either its status as a powerful state or the related idea – viewed in maximalist terms – of political sovereignty (even from the West). The government elites of the Russian Federation (like the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his aides before them) wanted to create a new security architecture in Europe. If constructed according to Moscow's concepts such an architecture would lead to marginalisation or disbanding of the existing Western security structures (especially NATO) and curbing the US presence and influence in Europe. Above all, it would ensure Moscow's *de facto* participation in the decision-making processes concerning European security. In addition, Russia did not wish to relinquish

its objective of maintaining its zone of influence in the post-Soviet area (temporarily excluding the Baltic states). It was ready to use military force to foment and capitalise on political and ethnic conflicts in this area to achieve this goal. It also launched a political campaign to counter the efforts of Central European countries – the former (involuntary) participants of the Soviet bloc – to join NATO, attempting to create a more or less formal buffer zone in this region.

The overriding goals of Russia's European security policy have remained unaltered, regardless of the various initiatives taken by Moscow: strategic control of the post-Soviet area, the existence of a security buffer zone in Central Europe and the transformation of the existing NATO-based security system in Europe in a manner that would maximise Russia's political and security influence and minimise that of the USA.

What has changed and been diversified are the institutional solutions Moscow has employed in an attempt to achieve these goals: basing European security on the OSCE (predominant in its policy in the 1990s) or as part of a special partnership with NATO (mainly in the first decade of the 2000s) or through attempts to use the European Security and Defence Policy to enhance security co-operation with the EU.

Over time, the Kremlin's ambitions were gradually curtailed after Russian foreign policy had suffered further defeats. When it was launching the campaign against NATO enlargement eastwards, Moscow initially concentrated its efforts on the Visegrad Group countries, then on the Baltic states and finally, as the enlargement process continued, on Ukraine and Georgia. Initially, the security buffer zone in Central Europe was intended to separate the areas of NATO and Russia (and other CIS countries). However, when this proved impossible, it was to be established inside NATO on its eastern flank.

From today's perspective, it can be concluded that none of the strategic goals of Russia's European security policy have been

achieved. Even though Russia has created economic, political and security structures controlled by it in the post-Soviet area, their range, effectiveness and scale of real control of the member states' policy is far from meeting Russian expectations. The NATO–Russia Founding Act, which imposes quite imprecise restrictions on the deployment of the Allied forces on NATO's eastern flank, albeit politically dead, is still formally respected by NATO. However, the regular reinforcement of the Allied (and bilaterally US) military presence on the eastern flank – formally as part of the so-called 'regular rotation' – undermines the buffer zone idea. Regardless of discussions that recur from time to time, Russia has also been unable to create any European security system as an alternative to the existing one, especially a system that would offer Moscow veto power.

Furthermore, the aggressive and revisionist foreign policy that has been sustained since the second half of the 2010s on President Vladimir Putin's initiative has led to a crisis in relations with the West, in some respects even more serious than the one that prevailed during the Cold War era. The causes of this include: Russia's *de facto* withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) regime; undermining the system of measures for building trust and security in Europe (blocking further adaptation of the Vienna Document and violations of the Treaty on Open Skies); the erosion of the system of nuclear weapons control, provoked by Russia due to violating the INF treaty and, most importantly, Russia's acts of military aggression in Europe (in 2008 against Georgia and in 2014 against Ukraine), involving real territorial annexations and Russia's numerous military provocations and 'hybrid' actions against NATO member states and non-aligned countries.

At present, Russia needs to choose: whether it should continue the present confrontational approach in its European security policy or even toughen it, thus taking the risk of increasing political, economic and security costs, or seek *détente* with the West,

probably at the expense of certain concessions (including those as part of the Minsk process covering the conflict with Ukraine in Donbass), and by starting once more to honour at least some of the agreements concerning European security.

Moscow's decisions may be affected by a number of factors. The most essential of these seem to be the factors linked to the domestic situation in Russia, possible personnel changes inside the Russian government and an evolution of the perception and understanding of the international and regional situation by the Russian government. The present aggressive policy pursued by Russia seems incapable of being altered without major changes in these areas.

INTRODUCTION

1989 marked the beginning of a short but intense period of thorough geopolitical changes in the eastern part of Europe. The simultaneous weakening and liberalisation of the communist regime in the USSR led by Mikhail Gorbachev, the gradual limitation of Moscow's economic and political support but also its shrinking control over the countries in the Soviet bloc and domestic political crises inside these countries led to a rapid downfall of the communist governments in Central-Eastern Europe. The military, economic and political structures of the Soviet bloc were dissolved within a timeframe of just two years¹, and the Soviet Union itself ceased to exist in December 1991, to be replaced with fifteen new independent states. The Russian Federation became the main successor to the USSR as it, albeit seriously weakened, inherited a large section of the Soviet empire's resources and had to redefine its interests in the new post-Cold War European and global order that was being formed.

In the 1990s, during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, troubled by domestic crises and involved in conflicts in the post-Soviet area, Russia was attempting to find a *modus vivendi* with Western states and structures and to create a new model of European security architecture that would suit it. In turn, in the 2000s, after Vladimir Putin took power, the manner of governing the country gradually became more and more authoritarian and Russia became increasingly assertive in its foreign policy. Russia's conflict with the West has been escalating since the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. As Moscow gained strength due to the boom in the energy markets, it became ever more ready and willing to use the armed forces as an instrument of its policy.

¹ The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon, an economic integration structure of the Soviet bloc) was self-dissolved in June 1991. In February 1991, member states of the Warsaw Pact (a military bloc formed by the USSR established in 1955) decided to disband its military structures, and in July 1991 to dissolve it completely.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea and a part of Donbass provoked the most serious crisis in Russian-Western relations since the end of the Cold War, which remains unresolved to this day.

On the thirtieth anniversary of the dramatic developments of 1989 which changed Europe, it is worthwhile to sum up this period in regard to Russia's European security policy also, and to pose the following questions:

- What were and what are Russia's strategic goals in this area?
- Has Russian policy changed and, if so, to what extent?
- What has Russia managed to achieve?
- What kind of policy is Russia likely to adopt in the sphere of European security?

This text is a modest attempt to answer the questions presented above and a voice to add to the discussion concerning Russian policy, which poses a serious challenge to Europe, including Poland.

I. DOES RUSSIA HAVE A STRATEGY?

In discussions concerning Russia's policy, including security policy, the following question is often asked: does contemporary Russia have a political strategy and a precise comprehensive plan to implement it or is its policy reactive and opportunistic, based on a variety of tactics, while it attempts to achieve what seems possible at a given moment?²

Apparently, the truth lies somewhere in between: the small government circle focused around President Vladimir Putin guided primarily by their personal interests most likely does not have a long-term and precise plan of attaining political goals, including in foreign and security policy. However, it does have a vision of the optimal state of affairs which should be pursued and from which the general strategic goals originate; it has a vision based on a particular perception of the world and strategic culture. The flexible tactics are subordinated to the implementation of these goals. The Russian political elite, responding to the changing circumstances and employing the centralised authoritarian governance system which makes it possible to quickly make or change decisions without the need to take into account the views of other political circles or public opinion, is able to skilfully use various occasions as they arise and so-called 'windows of opportunity'.

At the same time, the authoritarian government model, the composition of the government team among which former secret service officers predominate³ and restrictions in public debate that also

² This issue has been raised, e.g. by A. Monaghan, 'Putin's Russia: shaping a 'grand strategy'?', *International Affairs* 2013 (September), vol. 89, issue 5; A. Kolesnikov, 'The Russian Regime in 2015: All Tactics, No Strategy', Carnegie Moscow Center, 9 September 2015; P.B. Doran, D.N. Jensen, 'Putin's Strategy of Chaos', *The American Interest*, 1 March 2018; M. Kofmann, 'Raiding and International Brigandy. Russia's Strategy for Great Power Competition', *War on the Rocks*, 14 June 2018.

³ For more detail see: *Putin for the fourth time. The state of and prospects for Russia (2018-2024)*, [series: "OSW Reports"], Warsaw 2018.

concern foreign and security policy frequently result in erroneous judgements, failures and, as a consequence, even outcomes which are the opposite to what was desired. This is especially evident in the area of European security in the broad meaning of the term.

So how can Russia's goals in its European security policy be determined? Analysing almost 30 years of Russian policy in this area, four such general goals of geopolitical and geostrategic nature can be distinguished:

1. Strategic control of the post-Soviet area (temporarily excluding the Baltic states)
2. Creating a security buffer zone in Central Europe
3. Minimising the US influence and presence in Europe
4. Maximising Russia's influence in Europe

All of these goals are interlinked; the last two in particular may be viewed as 'coupled'. So how should these goals be understood and what are the signs that the Russian government elite is making efforts to achieve them?

1. Strategic control of the post-Soviet area (temporarily excluding the Baltic states)

This goal needs to be understood as Russia's desire to influence the foreign, security and domestic policies of most of the post-Soviet states (especially Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which are perceived in Moscow as the key countries), setting them on a track that suits the interests defined by Moscow. This means, in particular, that these countries could not enter into political and military alliances and economic integration agreements that are recognised by Russia as hostile or competitive (above all the structures formed by the West) or develop close bilateral

co-operation, in particular, in the area of security, with leading Western countries (most notably the USA). At the same time, these countries would participate in similar structures controlled by Moscow and adopt a policy of the closest possible friendly co-operation with Russia⁴. These goals were specified directly in *Russia's strategic course in its relations with the States-Participants of the Commonwealth of Independent States*, adopted in September 1995: CIS member states should be obliged to refrain from participating in unfriendly⁵ alliances and blocs, and the entire CIS area was recognised as a 'Russian zone of influence'⁶.

In the final years of the USSR's existence, the economic and then political liberalisation initiated by the then Secretary General of

⁴ This kind of Russian approach is illustrated, for example, in Russian definitions of 'good neighbourly relations'. One of them was used in 1992 by the then chairman of the Russian Parliamentary Commission for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Lukin: "The democratic Russia does not fear sovereignty and independence of its new neighbours (...). It does not intend to impose its government system on them or interfere with their internal affairs in any other manner. However, it does have the right to expect them to unconditionally respect human and civil rights of the Russian-speaking population living there (...). It also has the right to expect them to refrain from making any moves that are hostile towards Russia and not to admit third countries' activity in their territory that would pose a threat to Russian security, and is ready to offer any assistance to its neighbours to protect their own security in bilateral and multilateral forms." V. Lukin's speech during a seminar on Russia's foreign policy towards the 'closer abroad', Moscow, 6 October 1992, 'Внешнеполитическая стратегия России в „ближнем“ зарубежье', *Дипломатический Вестник* 1992 (November), nos. 21–22. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, made a reference to the same approach in his speech in the Russian State Duma in November 2014: "Each state has a sovereign right to choose its economic partners on condition that this does not infringe upon legitimate interests of its neighbours." See 'Выступление и ответы на вопросы Министра иностранных дел России С.В. Лаврова в рамках «правительственного часа» в Государственной Думе Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации', 19 November 2014.

⁵ Implicitly: towards Russia.

⁶ *Стратегический курс России с государствами-участниками Содружества Независимых Государств, Утвержден Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 14 сентября 1995 г. № 940*. Although the term 'unfriendly alliances and blocs' has not been defined, it could be clearly concluded from the context of the then Russian political rhetoric that this concerned above all the USA and NATO.

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (and from 1990 also president of the USSR), Mikhail Gorbachev, unleashed numerous tensions and conflicts which had been frozen and which were latent at the intra-republic and inter-republic levels. A clear majority of the republics demanded more and more independence from the Moscow-based centre. This process gradually turned into a 'sovereignty parade': the republics, one after another, would proclaim declarations of sovereignty, and some of them (like the Baltic states and Georgia) even declarations of independence.

The Soviet government's reaction was chaotic and involved a whole array of actions: from the use of violence (as in Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia and Azerbaijan) through to negotiations. The most far-reaching initiative was the attempt made by Gorbachev and his aides to adopt a new union agreement that would lay the legal foundations for a 'renewed' USSR, functioning under a changed name. This neo-USSR would to a great extent preserve the bonds between the republics in key areas. Subsequent variants of the agreement (the draft version of 1990 resembling a loose federation model and the one from 1991 envisaging a model more inclined towards a confederation) provided, amongst other things, for maintaining unitary armed forces and for conducting a common foreign and security policy. Even though these attempts were unsuccessful (the process of disintegration within the USSR suddenly accelerated after the so-called 'Moscow coup' in August 1991), they still manifested the desire to maintain a uniform strategic space within the boundaries of the former USSR.

The political ambitions of the leader of the RSFSR, Boris Yeltsin, led to him coming into conflict with Gorbachev and the Moscow-based centre under the slogan of 'sovereignisation' of the Soviet republics⁷. After the Moscow coup d'état, he took the political initiative and led the process to signing an accord between

⁷ For more detail see: W. Marciniak, *Rozgrabione imperium. Upadek Związku Sowieckiego i powstanie Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Warszawa 2001.

Russia, Belarus and Ukraine in December 1991 at a villa in Viskuli, Belavezhskaya Pushcha National Park, setting up the Commonwealth of Independent States known as CIS (which was joined by eight other republics two weeks later – the exceptions being the Baltic states and Georgia). This accord put an end to the USSR (the declaration that the USSR as a geopolitical entity ceased to exist and the provisions on foreign policy coordination were particularly important); agreements concerning, amongst other issues, common armed forces and control of the strategic nuclear arsenal were signed within two weeks or so⁸.

However, it turned out to be impossible to maintain a common strategic space encompassing the CIS area. The Soviet Army was the first to disintegrate; political control of its units was gradually taken over by the governments of the individual republics. This happened partly due to the stance taken by Russia, which eventually in May 1992 decided to form its own armed forces. Similarly, other goals of defence policy have not been achieved to a significant extent as part of the CIS:

- building a common protection of the ‘external borders’ (i.e. in fact a border of the former USSR) – by the end of the 1990s, Russian soldiers were forced to withdraw from the ‘external’ borders of all CIS countries (except for Armenia);
- creating ‘joint CIS peacekeeping forces’ – the only essential example of the short collaboration in this area was the

⁸ See *Соглашение о создании Содружества Независимых Государств; Соглашение о совместных мерах в отношении ядерного оружия; Соглашение между государствами – участниками Содружества Независимых Государств по Стратегическим силам; Соглашение между государствами – участниками Содружества Независимых Государств о статусе Стратегических сил; Соглашение между Республикой Армения, Республикой Беларусь, Республикой Казахстан, Республикой Кыргызстан, Российской Федерацией, Республикой Таджикистан, Туркменистаном и Республикой Узбекистан о Силах общего назначения на переходный период; Соглашение об Объединенных Вооруженных Силах на переходный период.*

participation of Kazakh and Kyrgyz companies in the ‘peace-keeping forces’ dominated by Russian units in Tajikistan in the early 1990s; the troops which used this name before, and which have been stationed to this day in Georgian Abkhazia, consist exclusively of Russian soldiers;

- creating a common CIS air defence system – the only fully functional element of this system is co-operation between Russia and Belarus (this system also functions to a limited extent in the case of Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).

The agreements signed in December 1991 concerning joint control by four countries (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan) of the post-Soviet strategic nuclear arsenal remained on paper – operational control was maintained by Russia, and the process of withdrawing strategic missiles with nuclear warheads from other countries to Russia in order to destroy them ended in 1996.

At the same time, as early as the spring of 1992 Russia made an attempt to organise the post-Soviet area as regards security according to new rules. The main manifestation of this was the signing of the Collective Security Treaty on Russia’s initiative in May 1992 in Tashkent (its provisions suggested that this was more of a defensive alliance) by Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan⁹, which was joined by Belarus (from 1994) and temporarily by Georgia (1993–1999) and Azerbaijan (1993–1999). The overriding goal of this agreement, from the viewpoint of Moscow’s interests, was a form of deal: in return for political loyalty and refraining from entering into alliance with the USA and NATO, the member states were offered security guarantees by Russia, opportunities to train officers at Russian military universities and promises to supply weapons and other military equipment at preferential prices.

⁹ Uzbekistan withdrew from this deal in 1999 to re-join it in 2006 and withdraw from it again in 2012.

However, the Tashkent Treaty remained a loose and mostly political structure, and its functioning was restricted to regular official meetings and military exercises on a limited scale. It was only after Vladimir Putin took power that this treaty began to be institutionalised in the 2000s. In September 2003, the agreement establishing the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO, Russian ОДКБ), which had been signed a year before, came into force. The political and personnel structures of the Treaty were formed on the grounds of this agreement, and the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Forces were created in 2009. These moves were intended to give the impression that a structure analogous to NATO was being formed that could be both a partner and an opponent to the Alliance. Russia's political, personnel and military dominance in this structure, the limited scale of military integration and operational co-operation do not make it similar to NATO but rather turn it into one of the tools of Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet area¹⁰.

The processes of military integration with Russia are the most advanced in the case of Belarus, where joint forces and an integrated air defence system were established. However, the CSTO did not become a collective security system. It played virtually no role in settling conflicts in the post-Soviet area in which Russia was generally involved as both a party and a formal arbiter (armed forces of the Russian Federation were engaged in the 1990s in the civil war in Tajikistan and in the Georgia-Ossetia, Georgia-Abkhazia and Moldova-Transnistria conflicts). Troops operating under the aegis of the treaty did not intervene even when they were expressly asked for help (Kyrgyzstan asked for it during the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflict in summer 2010).

¹⁰ For more detail see: J. Norberg, *High Ambitions, Harsh Realities. Gradually Building the CSTO's Capacity for Military Intervention in Crises*, FOI, Stockholm 2013; R. Weitz, 'The Collective Security Treaty Organization: Past Struggles and Future Prospects', *Russian Analytical Digest*, 21 July 2014, No. 152.

Table 1. Russian military engagement in external conflicts in the post-Soviet area in the 1990s.

Country	Period	Character of Russia's engagement
Moldova	1990–1992	weapon supplies and direct military support (14 th Army) provided to Transnistrian separatists against Moldovan government troops, deployment of so-called 'peacekeeping forces'
Tajikistan	1991–1992/1996	weapon supplies and direct military support (201 st Mechanised Division) provided to the post-communist government and the Popular Front against the Islamic opposition, deployment of so-called 'peacekeeping forces'
Georgia	1992–1993	weapon supplies, undercover engagement of Russian officers, soldiers and air forces on the side of Abkhazian and Ossetian separatists attacking Georgian troops, deployment of so-called 'peacekeeping forces'

The conflicts specified above can be branded as post-colonial: they were to a great extent a result of the collapse of the USSR, while Russia was trying to control this process and mitigate its consequences. In turn, the nature of the Russian-Georgian five-day war in August 2008 was completely different, since it can be recognised as the first Russian 'counter-offensive' war: Russia decided to wage it with the intention of blocking the process of violating the Russian zone of influence by the West – the very same zone, to be clear, that had been unilaterally defined by Moscow.

President Putin's speech at the NATO summit in Bucharest in March 2008, in which he threatened that Ukraine would disintegrate and Georgia would face harmful consequences if they became integrated with NATO, may be viewed as a warning

that such moves would be made by Russia¹¹. Moscow recognised NATO's initial consent to Kyiv's and Tbilisi's participation in the Membership Action Plan (MAP), a programme preparing for NATO accession, as the beginning of such integration.

The staggering decision of the NATO summit to postpone a concrete decision concerning the participation of two new countries in the MAP to the end of 2008, coupled with the adoption of a political declaration on the future NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia, made Moscow inclined to take decisive measures. The war provoked by Russia which led, to Moscow's recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (*de facto* Russian protectorates) shocked the West. Even though the government opposed to Moscow maintained power in Tbilisi, the war was a strategic success for Moscow. This was because the leading NATO member states reaffirmed their conviction (and the USA became convinced) that neither Georgia nor Ukraine should gain entry to the Alliance in the foreseeable future. Russia was not punished for its brutal violation of Georgia's territorial integrity, and friendly dialogue was maintained. The new US administration in 2009 initiated the so-called 'reset' with Russia, and the EU came up with the Partnership for Modernisation offer for Moscow.

Russia's made consistent efforts to create political and economic integration structures under its control, with the intention of maintaining strategic control of the post-Soviet area. In the first half of the 1990s, attempts to rebuild integration ties covering all

¹¹ "Ukraine in the form existing today was created in the Soviet period. It received territories from Poland – after World War II, from Czechoslovakia and Romania – and not all of the Black Sea border disputes with Romania have been resolved to this day. Ukraine also received vast territories from Russia in the east and south of the country. It is a complex state structure. And if we add NATO-linked and other issues, the survival of Ukraine as a state is uncertain at all", see President Vladimir Putin's speech at the NATO summit in Bucharest, [in:] R. Kupiecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO–Federacja Rosyjska w świetle dokumentów*, PISM, Warszawa 2018.

or a definite majority of CIS member states (including as part of the Economic Union Treaty of 1993) proved unsuccessful. Therefore, starting from the mid 1990s, Russia developed a so-called 'multi-speed integration' strategy that was intended to enhance integration among groups of states: the best illustration was provided by the agreements concerning a Russian-Belarusian-Kazakh customs union, signed in 1994–1995. These efforts were intensified in the 2000s, when new, deeper integration projects emerged (see Table 2)¹².

Considering Ukraine's (geo)strategic significance and potential, Moscow had a particularly strong desire for it to participate in the integration structures within Moscow's orbit. However, Kyiv refused to join the EAEC, and Ukraine's participation in the CES project was thwarted by the Orange Revolution in 2004, while attempts to force Kyiv to join the Customs Union (and temporarily successfully blocking its association agreement with the European Union) ended up in another revolution in late 2013/early 2014. This was the factor which triggered Russian aggression against Ukraine and the present crisis in Russia's relations with the West¹³.

¹² For more detail see I. Wiśniewska, *Eurasian Integration. Russia's attempt at the economic unification of the post-Soviet area* [series: "OSW Studies", no. 44], Warsaw 2013.

¹³ For more detail see M. Menkiszak, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, Transatlantic Academy Paper Series, Washington 2016; M. Menkiszak, 'Miński dylemat Rosji', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 2018, no. 2.

Table 2. Eurasian integration structures initiated by Russia in the 2000s

Structure	Participants	Date of adoption of basic documents	Formal beginning of operation
Eurasian Economic Community (ЕАЕС, Rus. ЕврАзЭС)	Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan (2006-2008)	October 2000	May 2001
Common Economic Space (CES, Rus. ЕЭП)	Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan	September 2003	-
Customs Union (CU, Rus. Таможенный союз)	Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan	October 2007 / November 2009	July 2010
Common Economic Space (CES, Rus. ЕЭП) [further stage of the CU]	Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan	December 2010 / November 2011	January 2012
Eurasian Economic Union (ЕАЕУ, Rus. ЕАЭС) [further stage of the CES]	Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (from 2015), Armenia (from 2015)	May 2014	January 2015

2. Creating a security buffer zone in Central Europe

This goal needs to be understood as bringing about a situation in which the Central European countries (EU and NATO member states that used to be part of the Soviet bloc) will form an

area where special arms control regulations will apply, imposing stricter restrictions on their military capabilities than those pertaining to other regions of Europe, in particular, regulations excluding the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, troop deployments from other NATO member states (especially US) or the creation of significant military installations within their territories.

Towards the end of the 1980s, Soviet policy towards the countries belonging to the Soviet bloc was mainly aimed at cutting the costs of maintaining the 'empire', for example, through reduction in the numbers of Soviet troops and by making economic relations more market-oriented. However, the greater degree of autonomy the countries inside the bloc enjoyed did not mean that Moscow was ready to give them *carte blanche*, especially in the area of security. The 'Autumn of the Nations' in 1989 and the fall of the communist regimes in Central Europe did not change this situation fundamentally either. Although the weakening USSR did not vigorously oppose the dissolution of the Soviet bloc's structures (the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact in 1991), it still treated this area as its zone of influence.

What did change were the instruments for maintaining the zone and controlling it. The intention was to control it by means of new inter-state treaties containing security clauses, preventing the countries of the former bloc from entering into 'hostile alliances', and by maintaining special bilateral economic bonds on 'market' terms (including in the energy sector) as a way of leveraging Russian influence. This approach on the part of Moscow was unofficially branded as the 'Falin-Kvitsinsky Doctrine'¹⁴. It was illustrated by a secret document from the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet

¹⁴ Yuli Kvitsinsky served in the period discussed herein as a deputy minister for foreign affairs of the USSR, and Valentin Falin served as a secretary of the Central Committee and the head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Union devised in April 1991, which was leaked to the West and contained the following provisions:

“No potential threat to the military security of the Soviet Union may originate from the Eastern European region under any circumstances. Regardless of how the situation develops in the countries of this region, it must remain free of foreign military bases and armed forces. (...) It is necessary to counteract our former allies joining any other military blocs and groupings, above all NATO, and in the future probably the Western European Union also, and also their participation in any treaties that may lead to the deployment of any foreign armed forces in these territories. (...) The issue of energy exports to Eastern Europe must be viewed as a very important instrument of our general strategy in this region”¹⁵.

The draft versions of new inter-state treaties sent by the Soviet government to the Central European states in late 1990/early 1991 can be viewed as an attempt at implementing this doctrine. These drafts contained clauses prohibiting, for instance: entering into hostile alliances and agreements against one another, a ban on deployment of foreign troops and a ban on offering (post-)Soviet bases for use to foreign countries¹⁶. The only country in the region

¹⁵ *Rzeczpospolita*, no. 137, 14 June 1991 (a reprint from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), quoted from: J. Strzelczyk, *Ucieczka ze Wschodu. Rosja w polskiej polityce 1989–1993*, Warszawa 2002.

¹⁶ Article 3 of the draft treaty presented by the USSR to Poland in March 1991 provided that: “The Soviet Union and the Republic of Poland shall not take part in any military and political alliances targeted against one of the Parties or enter into agreements that contradict the goals of this Treaty. The Parties shall not provide any bases, places of stationing or any other infrastructure, including premises provided to the Polish Party in connection with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory of Poland, for use by any alien armed forces. Any activity that may pose a threat to the goals and principles of this Treaty is inadmissible in the territory of both Parties, nor is it admissible to use their territory for aggression or any other actions involving the use of violence against the other Party.” Quoted from: J. Strzelczyk, *Ucieczka..., op. cit.*

to have agreed to signing a new bilateral treaty of this kind was Romania¹⁷.

The government of the 'new' Russia formally dissociated themselves from the legacy and policy of the USSR, and agreed to sign inter-state treaties that did not contain such controversial provisions. After a long period of disputes and negotiations, they finally agreed to a gradual withdrawal of the former Soviet Armed Forces troops from Central European countries (this process was finally completed in 1995). However, both the policy strategy papers that Russia adopted and the political actions that it made may be viewed as proof that Moscow was unwilling to accept the idea of Central Europe having a special status.

Such proof is provided, for example, by the provisions in the initial outline of the Russian Federation's foreign policy, approved by President Yeltsin in April 1993. It stipulated that: "Eastern Europe is important for Russia not only as a **historical zone of interest** [highlighted by the author] (...) It is our current strategic task to counteract the transformation of Eastern Europe into a specific buffer zone isolating us from Europe. At the same time, we cannot allow Russia to be ousted by Western countries from the Eastern European region, which seems to be a real threat."¹⁸

The clearest practical manifestation of this line of thinking was Russia's disagreement with Central European countries' NATO accession. From the moment that this option began to be considered (in 1993) in the political debate among the key member states of the Alliance (in response to demands formulated since

¹⁷ The content of the treaty was revised in April 1991 after the collapse of the USSR.

¹⁸ Quoted from: 'Główne założenia koncepcji polityki zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej zatwierdzone dekretem prezydenta Borysa Jelcyna z 23 kwietnia 1993 r.' [in:] R. Kupiecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO-Federacja Rosyjska...*, *op. cit.* The term 'Eastern Europe' was treated as equivalent to countries of the former Soviet bloc in the then Russian political nomenclature.

1991 by some countries in the region), the Russian government waged a massive diplomatic and propaganda campaign aimed at demonstrating the alleged harmfulness of such moves; probably the longest list of Russian objections concerning this issue was the report by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, 'Problems of NATO enlargement', which was made available to the general public in November 1993¹⁹.

One element of that campaign was a letter in September 1993 from President Yeltsin to the leaders of the key NATO member states warning against NATO enlargement eastwards and suggesting that NATO should establish closer co-operation with Russia²⁰. When the US concept of the Partnership for Peace programme was adopted (1994) by NATO (the Alliance's co-operation with countries from the former Soviet bloc and other non-member European countries), Russia made efforts to ensure that it became an alternative to NATO membership and not a stage on the way to membership. At that time Russia proposed 'cross-security guarantees' (from Russia and Western countries) to the Central European states²¹.

When, towards the end of 1996, Moscow became aware of the fact that it would not manage to block the NATO accession of the first group of Central European countries (Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary), it embarked on intensive talks with the USA and NATO concerning a special co-operation agreement. It was to include provisions imposing the obligation on the Alliance to limit the military consequences of the eastwards enlargement

¹⁹ See 'Problems of NATO enlargement'. A report presented by the head of the federal Foreign Intelligence Service, Yevgeny Primakov, at a press conference in Moscow on 25 November 1993 [in:] *ibidem*.

²⁰ See: *ibidem*. (English translation: 'Russian President Boris Yeltsin's Letter to US President Bill Clinton', *SIPRI Yearbook 1994*, Oxford University Press 1994, pp. 249-250).

²¹ See *Poland in Russian foreign policy*. Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Andrey Kozyrev at the Polish-Russian conference 'Towards a new partnership', Kraków, 23 April 1994 [in:] *ibidem*.

and guarantees that none of the former Soviet republics would join NATO (in practice this, in particular, concerned the Baltic states and also Ukraine). Russia also insisted on a prohibition for NATO on the use ‘post-Soviet’ military infrastructure in the territories of its new member states²². The result that was achieved (in the form of NATO declarations followed by the NATO–Russia Founding Act of May 1997) was not entirely satisfactory to Moscow. This was owing to the documents containing declarations (political, and thus not legally binding) of non-deployment of weapons of mass destruction in the territories of the new Central European member states and of the absence of any intention of permanent stationing of substantial combat forces (no clear definition of these terms or geographical scope were provided)²³. This agreement did not guarantee to Russia that further enlargement would not take place. Furthermore, NATO managed to convince the Kremlin to formally accept the freedom of choice of alliances (or of not entering into alliances) by individual countries.

Russia entered into another round of the struggle for restricting the military consequences of NATO enlargement to Central Europe in 1996–1999, at the forum of the Vienna negotiations concerning the adaptation (revision) of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE of 1990). During the negotiations, Russia insisted, amongst other issues, on setting new limits covering the permitted array of weapons and numbers of military

²² See R. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door. How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, Columbia University Press, 2002; A. Загорский, *Россия в системе европейской безопасности*, Москва 2017.

²³ The key sentence of the document was: “NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement **rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces** [highlighted by the author]. Accordingly, it will have to rely on adequate infrastructure commensurate with the above tasks.” See R. Kupiecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO–Federacja Rosyjska...*, op. cit. [English version: *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, 27 May 1997).

personnel in the Central European region, which would make it possible to not only reduce the military capability of the countries in the region but would actually prevent the deployment of allied forces there. The solutions adopted in this case (ACFE of 1999) were also a compromise. The treaty (which ultimately did not enter into force) allowed for limited contingents of allied forces to be temporarily stationed in Central European countries. Russia also did not manage to push through the demand that the treaty should also cover the Baltic states²⁴.

The political and legal situation regarding this issue also remained unchanged during the next wave of NATO enlargement eastwards in 2004. Before six former members of the Soviet bloc (Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) received invitations to join the alliance, NATO and Russia signed (in May 2002) another political document enhancing bilateral co-operation which reiterated the formulae from the Founding Act²⁵. Regardless of this, Moscow did not alter its critical stance on NATO enlargement, although when the Baltic states became members of the Alliance (in March 2004) its reactions were limited to political and rhetoric expressions of dissatisfaction and attempts at reducing the military consequences of the enlargement²⁶.

²⁴ For more detail see A. Kobieracki, Z. Lachowski, J.M. Nowak, *Między równowagą sił a bezpieczeństwem kooperatywnym w Europie: adaptacja reżimu CFE do nowego środowiska międzynarodowego*, Centre for International Relations, Warsaw 1999; Cf. Z. Lachowski, *The Adapted CFE Treaty and the Admission of the Baltic States to NATO*, SIPRI 2002; A. Загорский, *Россия в системе...*, op. cit.

²⁵ *Stosunki NATO–Russia. Nowa jakość. Deklaracja szefów państw i rządów państw członkowskich NATO i Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Rzym, 28 maja 2002 [in:] R. Kupiecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO–Federacja Rosyjska...*, op. cit. (English version: *NATO–Russia Relations: A New Quality. Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation*, 28 May 2002).

²⁶ Russia, for example, protested against the building of new military installations in the Baltic states and suggested that these countries should sign agreements on avoiding dangerous military activity that would set restrictions concerning NATO activity.

In turn, the Russian government reacted very harshly to any manifestations of – even temporary or symbolic – deployment of Allied forces in the territories of the new Central European member states (in practice, these were US forces as a rule). This was so in the case of the rotational presence of the US contingents in the air and marine bases in Romania and Bulgaria since 2007, which initially mainly involved transit of US forces to and from Afghanistan) or the symbolic presence of US forces in Poland, and even the temporary presence of the unarmed battery of Patriot missiles in Poland. The same concerned all larger exercises of the Allied forces in Central Europe.

However, what raised the greatest concern in Russia (which entailed its diplomatic and propaganda campaign) were the US plans, crystallised from around 2000, to deploy elements of the US missile defence system in Central Europe, aimed at protecting US and NATO forces from a possible future nuclear missile attack from Iran.

Although Moscow would vary the arguments for its objections from time to time (from the improper, in its opinion, trajectory of the missiles, through the threat to Russia's strategic nuclear capability, up to the possibility of deploying offensive weapons as part of the system), the actual reasons behind its resistance were the expected geopolitical and geostrategic consequences of the implementation of these plans. Deployment of elements of the US missile defence system would mean that permanent US military installations of strategic significance would appear in Central Europe (in the first project concept in Poland and the Czech Republic and in the second – in Romania and Poland). In turn, their presence would make the USA inclined to intensify its engagement in the region's security.

Given this situation, it is not surprising that neither the inclusion of the aforementioned project in NATO's missile defence plans nor the reductions in scope on two occasions (in 2009 and 2013) of

plans linked to the system (including the US abandoning the final phase of its improvement in defensive capabilities) have caused a change in Russia's stance. Neither did its attitude change after Washington offered it the option of monitoring future installations and conducting inspections on site, nor did the readiness of the US–NATO side to coordinate the system's operation with Russian systems make any difference²⁷.

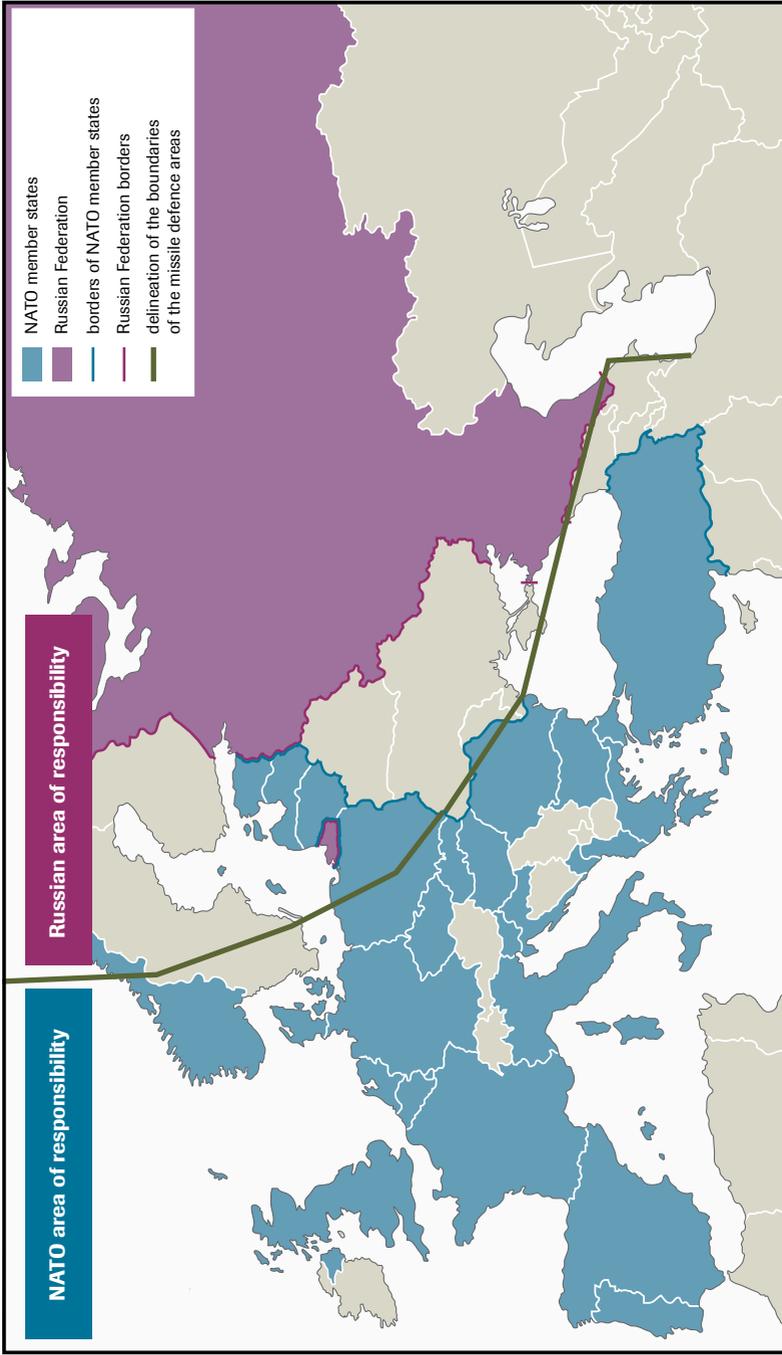
In turn, the demands from Russia, formalised in November 2010, for establishing a joint Russia–NATO missile defence system, to jointly manage it and divide the defence area into sectors where Russia would control the area above the eastern part of Central Europe and Scandinavia (see Map 1²⁸), proved unacceptable to NATO.

Regardless of the intensive talks and repeated protests and threats from Moscow, it did not manage to block the launch of the missile defence component (Aegis Ashore) in Deveselu, Romania in 2016. Nevertheless, it constantly insisted on postponing or blocking the launch of the identical component in Redzikowo, Poland, the construction of which began in 2016. In February 2019 (after the INF treaty had been mutually suspended by the USA and Russia – see further in this text), the Russian Ministry of Defence demanded that the USA should destroy the Mk-41 launchers deployed in Deveselu (the key part of the Aegis Ashore installation), claiming that they violated the Russian-US treaty. The Russian-US dispute over the INF Treaty was, apparently, closely linked to the Russian political goals outlined above (both creating a buffer zone in Central Europe and restricting US presence in Europe).

²⁷ For more detail see R. Weitz, *Deja vu with BMD: The Improbability of Russia – NATO Missile Defense*, Russie.Nei.Visions, No. 67, IFRI, Paris, January 2013.

²⁸ For more detail see A. Загорский, *Россия в системе...*, *op. cit.*

Map 1. Russian concept of sectoral missile defence in Europe



Source: Views of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation on the Missile Defense Issues, presentation by the head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation General Nikolai Makarov at the conference 'Missile Defense Factor in Establishing New Security Environment', Moscow 2012.

The Russian-US dispute over the INF Treaty²⁹

The Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces signed in December 1987 by the USA and the USSR (it came into force in June 1988, the Russian Federation became its key successor) forbade the USA and the USSR (Russia) from possessing, producing and flight-testing ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles (and their launchers) with ranges from 500 to 5500 km, and provided for the decommissioning of existing arsenals. It did not cover missiles launched from ships and aircraft. The parties implemented the provisions of the treaty in 10 years.

After 2000, as the USA initiated the missile defence project (including in Central Europe), Russia began suggesting that it might for this reason, and also due to the development of missile defence programmes by some Asian countries, withdraw from the INF Treaty. This threat was formulated openly by key individuals, such as the head of the Russian Armed Forces General, Yuri Baluyevsky, in February 2007 and President Putin in October 2007.

In the same year Russia developed and in 2008 tested (in violation of the INF Treaty) a new intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missile (9M728) with a presumed range of at least 1500 km, based on marine-launched Kalibr missiles (which are not prohibited by the INF). As the development work was continued, another ground-launched cruise missile (9M729), with a presumed range of at least 2500 km, was developed. Both missiles were adjusted for launching from

²⁹ For more detail see J. Gotkowska, A. Wilk, ‘The US intends to quit the INF treaty’ [series: “OSW Analyses”], 23 October 2018; J. Gotkowska, ‘The end of the INF: the beginning of tough negotiations’ [series: “OSW Analyses”], 12 December 2018; M. Menkiszak, ‘Russia’s game of shadows around the INF’, [series: “OSW Analyses”], 6 February 2019; *Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, 27 June 2019.

modified Iskander system wheeled platforms (which, as a standard, launch short-range ballistic missiles).

According to intelligence information revealed by the USA towards the end of 2016, two battalions of new 9M729 missiles were accepted for service, and two more were accepted in 2018. In this way, Russia aggravated the situation of strategic imbalance in Europe to the detriment of NATO. Russia rejected the accusations of violating the INF Treaty that had been raised by the USA since 2013 and failed to respond to injunctions to start respecting it again. Russia itself accused the USA of alleged violations of the treaty by constructing combat drones (not envisaged in the treaty), using ballistic target missiles for missile defence exercises (which do not qualify for the definition of the treaty-prohibited missiles) and installing in Europe the ground versions of the Mk-41 anti-missile launchers, capable of launching intermediate-range ship-launched Tomahawk missiles (these launchers are capable of this only after adaptation).

On 20 October 2018, the US President Donald Trump announced that the United States would quit the treaty due to violations of the treaty by Russia and the fact that the treaty did not cover China. On 4 December 2018, the US stance was formally backed by other NATO member states. The Russia-US (on 15 January in Geneva) and Russia-NATO (the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council on 25 January in Brussels) meetings, during which this issue was raised, turned out to be fruitless. Since Russia rejected the US accusations and reminders to begin respecting the treaty once more and failed to comply with Washington's ultimatum regarding this issue, on 1 February 2019 the USA gave notice that it was terminating the INF Treaty, suspending the implementation of its obligations thereunder, to which Russia responded with an analogous decision on 2 February. Six months later, on 2 August 2019, the treaty lost effect.

3. Influence and presence in Europe: minimising that of the USA and maximising Russia's

These two interlinked goals need to be viewed as a desire to achieve a condition in which the USA, which is seen by Russia as a strategic opponent, will gradually reduce its military presence in Europe to a minimum and disengage from its activities in defence of the continent. Russia, in turn, will gain the ability to co-decide on the key European security issues, in an optimal scenario through formal mechanisms offering it the right of veto.

The notion of Russia as a participant in a collective security system in Europe, vested with full rights, was not a novel one. Formally, it was supported, for example, by the Soviet Union after the end of World War II. Beginning in 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev returned to the idea of a new European security system by promoting the idea of a 'common European home'³⁰. In both cases the main obstacle, in Moscow's perception, was the USA and the creation or maintenance of the political and military bloc (NATO) in which Washington had the dominant position.

As the USSR neared its demise, Moscow saw in such documents as the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990) the germination of a new European security architecture based on the CSCE processes and rules, eliminating the division into blocs that had

³⁰ Gorbachev claimed, for example, that: "We support complete withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territories of other countries (...) We support liquidation of all military blocs and promptly starting a political dialogue between them to achieve this, we support building the atmosphere of trust which will exclude any unexpected situations. (...) Europeans will only be able to cope with the challenges of the coming century if they join their efforts. We are convinced that what they need is a united Europe - peaceful and democratic, maintaining its entire diversity and faithful to the commonly shared humanistic ideals." See Speech by Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 6 July 1989 [in:] R. Kupiecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO-Federacja Rosyjska...*, *op. cit.*

formed during the Cold War period. In an ideal variant, the structures of both the Warsaw Pact and NATO would have been disbanded, yet the asymmetry of the political legitimacy meant that only the former ceased to exist.

Russian diplomacy returned to the idea of a 'new European security architecture' shortly after the collapse of the USSR. Chronologically, the first serious project of this kind was the *Pan-European Partnership Concept*, presented in 1994 by the then Russian minister of foreign affairs, Andrey Kozyrev³¹. Pursuant to this concept, the institutional reform of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe³² was expected to turn it into a central structure and basis of European security. Its proposed new authority (named in proposals as the Permanent Committee or Security Council, formed by 'European powers' that obviously included Russia) was to regulate the key security policy issues and coordinate the operation of other structures in this area (NATO, WEU, EU, CIS). In turn, the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC, a body established on NATO's initiative towards the end of 1991 for dialogue between NATO member states and countries from the former Warsaw Pact) was, upon becoming independent from the Alliance, to gain similar coordination powers in the military sphere. It does not need to be added that creating a system like this would in practice have meant marginalisation of NATO (and possibly its future disintegration), while on the other hand it would have guaranteed Russia genuine influence over decisions concerning European security (and thus it would also have enabled it to block NATO enlargement).

³¹ See: *Poland in Russian foreign policy*. Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Andrey Kozyrev at the Polish-Russian conference 'Towards a new partnership', Kraków, 23 April 1994 [in:] *ibidem*; Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Andrey Kozyrev at the meeting of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), Istanbul, 10 June 1994 [in:] *ibidem*.

³² The OSCE was established in the process of the institutionalisation of the CSCE at the end of 1994.

Regardless of the frosty reception these Russian proposals received, Moscow was unrelenting in pushing through the new security architecture concept as part of the discussion on the ‘new comprehensive European security model for the 21st century’. One element of the Russian proposals (made in 1996) was the European Security Charter (ESC). Russia wanted this to be a new – and ideally legally binding – document intended to codify the principles and the foundations of the new security order in Europe. The ‘indivisibility of security’ was the most important principle for Moscow; this principle was interpreted so that ‘security cannot be achieved at the expense of others’ security’. In practice, Russia believed that the principle of ‘indivisibility of security’ offered it the right of veto with regard to NATO enlargement (which, as it claimed, posed a threat to its security)³³. The ESC was signed in 1999 in the wake of lengthy discussions at the OSCE forum, but only as a generalised political document that, in principle, reiterated the provisions of the previous documents adopted as part of the CSCE and OSCE.

The initiative put forward in June 2008 by the then Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev (the so-called ‘Medvedev Initiative’), clearly drew upon the ESC idea. At that time, he came up with the proposal of convening a pan-European conference with the intention of developing a European security treaty. Moscow returned to this concept once more after the hiatus caused by the Russian-Georgian war; in November 2009 it presented a draft treaty³⁴ addressed to all European states and organisations (including the USA and Canada). It envisaged introducing a rather complex system for regulating conflicts in Europe that (contrary to the declarations of its authors) would provide an alternative to the UN system. Key elements of the system included a facility for acknowledging reservations by individual countries regarding other countries’ security and defence

³³ For more detail see A. Загорский, *Россия в системе...*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ See Draft European security treaty, Moscow, 29 November 2009 [in:] R. Ku- piecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO–Federacja Rosyjska...*, *op. cit.*

policies, which would launch a multi-stage dispute resolution procedure. This multi-stage process, combined with numerous opportunities for sabotaging the process, rendered the proposed mechanism ineffective and could thus serve Russia's overriding interest, namely that of blocking potential US and NATO decisions in the realm of security. At the same time, this would strip Europe of any chance of having an effective means for resolving crises (such as the Russian-Georgian war in 2008). For this reason, the Russian initiative was watered down and subsequently halted in the course of endless discussions, mainly at the OSCE forum (including the so-called 'Corfu Process').

Key provisions of the Russian draft European security treaty

The draft European security treaty was a rather brief and generalised document consisting of 14 articles. It imposed the obligation on all its participants (covering North American, European and CIS countries and the multilateral structures: the EU, the OSCE, NATO, the CSTO and the CIS) to be guided in their policy by the principle of equality and indivisibility of security understood as not ensuring security for one entity at the expense of others' security. The document obliged all parties to refrain individually and collectively from any actions that might infringe upon the security interests of other participants; not to use their own territories and the territories of other participants to launch or support military aggression on the territory of another participant or any other actions that might harm its security; to take measures as part of multilateral structures to comply with these principles; to provide information on actions taken by one party in the area of security in response to a motion from any of the other participants; and not to make any international commitments that would be contrary to the provisions of the treaty.

The draft also envisaged a response mechanism in the event of any disputes. It offered the opportunity to each of its participants

which perceives that its security interests are – or may be – violated to conduct consultations with the participants concerned and, after holding the consultations, to convene (following a motion from at least two participants) a conference of the parties. Decisions taken in the conference would be binding upon the participants, provided that at least 2/3 of the parties took part in it and the decisions were passed by consensus. In the case of military aggression against one of the participants, the party being the victim would have the right to convene an extraordinary conference of participants, the decisions of which would be binding, provided that at least 4/5 of the parties participated and the decisions were passed by consensus.

The treaty would be open to be signed by North American, European and CIS countries and the multilateral structures: the EU, the OSCE, NATO, the CSTO and the CIS, and would come into force upon being ratified by at least 25 countries or structures. Other countries or structures could join the treaty subject to consent from all the participants. The draft also envisaged that each of its participants could withdraw from it, if it deemed that exceptional circumstances posing a threat to its interests had emerged.

While looking for opportunities to transform European security in a manner that would suit its interests, since the late 1990s Moscow had also been keeping a watchful eye on the deepening integration inside the European Union and its development as part of the European Security and Defence Policy. Russia, most likely, saw these processes as an opportunity for increasing European autonomy in the field of security, which in practice would mean a gradual reduction of Europe's dependence on the USA. This was clearly put, for example, in 2009 by the then Russian ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, who stated: "Therefore, a strong and independent Europe is in our [Russia's] interests. And developing the EU's military capabilities and security policy is an important factor in European and global security. Time has come for Europe

to stop behaving like an occupied continent and to start expressing a political will of its own”³⁵.

The security dialogue launched in 2000 was thus one of the priority areas of the Russia–EU dialogue. As part of establishing closer co-operation with the West after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, Russia and the EU agreed (in October 2001) to create regular formats for operational dialogue concerning security issues. However, the lack of serious successes in developing the ESDP and the repeating crises in Russian–Western relations made the EU less and less appealing as a partner to Russia in this area³⁶.

The dialogue between Russia and the EU in 2003–2005, based on the ‘common spaces’ concept, led to several ‘common security spaces’ being defined, including the Common Space of External Security (it envisaged co-operation in combating terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control, resolving international crises and peacekeeping operations) and the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice (offering room for co-operation in dealing with ‘soft security’ threats, including combating organised crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration, etc.), and even signing a series of political documents in May 2005 known as ‘road maps’ for the implementation of the four ‘common spaces.’ However, these documents were merely general declarations of intentions which led to operational co-operation only to a limited extent, let alone political integration³⁷.

The idea of further institutionalisation of the dialogue between the EU and Russia in the area of security was resumed a few years later as part of the search for ways of establishing closer European–Russian

³⁵ D. Rogozin, *How NATO could improve its relations with Russia*, Europe’s World, Spring 2009.

³⁶ For more detail see M. Menkiszak, *Russia vs. the European Union: a “strategic partnership” crisis* [series: “OSW Studies”, no. 22], Warsaw 2006; А. Загорский, *Россия в системе...*, *op. cit.*

³⁷ See the text of the documents in *EU–Russia Road Map for the Common Spaces*.

co-operation during the presidency of Medvedev, who gave many Western politicians hope that Russia might return to the path of liberal reforms and constructive co-operation with the West. In June 2010, a Russian-German declaration was signed in Meseberg that included a proposal to set up a new body for consultation and coordination in the area of European security: the Russia–EU Permanent Security Committee³⁸. However, this proposal was not backed on a broader scale inside the EU. When Berlin realised that Moscow had no political will to constructively resolve the Transnistrian issue (which Germany treated as a test of Russian intentions regarding the PSC), the concept of establishing a Russia–EU Permanent Security Committee was finally abandoned.

The aforementioned Russian moves in relations with the EU fitted in with the broader concept of Russian–European co-operation known as ‘Greater Europe’³⁹. For a long time, it remained merely an ambiguous slogan used by both President Yeltsin (in 1997) and President Putin (in 2001 and 2005); its economic aspect was developed by the latter in November 2010⁴⁰. The concept was based on the assumption that Russia (or a Eurasian integration bloc that it created) and the EU might reach an agreement concerning limited integration offering an exchange of benefits to its parties (European capital and technologies to Russia, and Russian raw materials, geopolitical depth and military potential to Europe). In fact, this was a project aimed at dividing Europe into two blocs: western (dominated by Germany) and eastern (dominated by Russia) with the intention of ousting the United States from Europe and competing with the USA and other global economic centres. Plans to

³⁸ See the text of the declaration (in the Russian version) in *Меморандум по итогам встречи Президента России Д.Медведева и Федерального канцлера Германии А.Меркель 4–5 июня 2010 года, г.Мезеберг*.

³⁹ For more detail see M. Menkiszak, *Greater Europe. Putin’s Vision of the European (Dis)integration* [series: “OSW Studies”, no. 46], Warsaw 2013.

⁴⁰ See ‘Россия и Европа: от осмысления уроков кризиса – к новой повестке партнерства’ – an article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 November 2010; German version see: ‘Von Lissabon bis Wladivostok’.

build this shady geopolitical construction were, however, thwarted by the crisis which broke out between Russia and the EU in 2014 as a result of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Given this situation, the Russian government began to employ the concept devised among a group of pro-Kremlin experts, known popularly as 'Greater Eurasia.' It envisaged enhancing economic and political co-operation between Russia, the Eurasian Economic Union and China, in addition to the ASEAN countries and possibly the EU (provided that the latter lifted sanctions imposed on Russia)⁴¹.

However, it was not just Europe or Eurasia that served as points of reference in Russian security concepts. Even though the USA has long been viewed by Russia as its strategic opponent, and NATO as an instrument of US policy (one of its functions being to ensure that most of Europe is subordinated to the USA in terms of security), Moscow, being aware of the political reality, would from time to time make attempts at gaining influence over European security by establishing closer co-operation with the Alliance.

Halting the process of eastwards NATO enlargement was one of Russia's priorities. Moscow's objective was to convince the US and other governments that special partnership and co-operation with Russia represented an alternative solution. At the same time, viewing itself as a great power, Russia was reluctant to co-operate in the forums of multilateral structures linked to NATO, such as the North Atlantic Co-operation Council⁴² or Partnership for Peace, a program functioning since 1994. In practice, NATO pursued a parallel policy of 'rewarding' or rather 'compensating'

⁴¹ These ideas were in fact to serve as a cover story for the increasingly asymmetric relations between Moscow and Beijing that were to Russia's disadvantage, and at the same time as a kind of deterrent with regard to the European Union. For more detail on this issue see: M. Kaczmarek, W. Rodkiewicz, 'Russia's Greater Eurasia and China's New Silk Road: adaptation instead of competition' [series: "OSW Commentaries"], no. 219, 21 July 2016.

⁴² NACC was established in December 1991 to be transformed into the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in May 1997.

to Russia for the subsequent stages of its enlargement, tightening privileged partnership and developing institutions with it. This process began in 1995, and its major stages included: signing the declaration in Noordwijk aan Zee (May 1995), the previously mentioned NATO–Russia Founding Act (May 1997) which gave rise to the NATO–Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) and the Rome Declaration (May 2002), as a result of which the NATO–Russia Council (NRC) was established⁴³.

Even though a dozen or so specific co-operation committees had been established and numerous documents had been signed, and despite temporary operational NATO–Russia co-operation on resolving the crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo (as part of the SFOR and KFOR forces in 1996–2003), Russia was generally disillusioned by this co-operation. The dialogue and co-operation structures that had been built, contrary to Moscow’s intention, did not become forums for co-deciding on European security that would give Russia at least an informal right to veto the Alliance’s decisions (although, under pressure from Moscow, the NATO–Russia Council (NRC) formally withdrew from the so-called ‘pre-coordination’ of the stances of the Alliance’s member states in most of the specified areas).

Russia’s determination to ensure that it had the ability to formally co-decide on European security was so strong that it would probe on several occasions whether it would be possible to begin a discussion on its membership in political (but not military) NATO structures. This option had already been tested by Mikhail Gorbachev in the spring and summer of 1990. In turn, Russian Federation governments would repeatedly raise this issue over the years: in December 1991 (a letter from President Yeltsin to the participants of the NACC meeting); once more in early 1995 (during the meetings of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Kozyrev

⁴³ Texts of the documents in R. Kupiecki, M. Menkiszak, *Stosunki NATO–Federacja Rosyjska..., op. cit.*

and his deputy Georgy Mamedov); in March and June 2000 (interview with President Putin for the BBC and statements from the Secretary of the Security Council, Sergey Ivanov); in 2001 (statements by Putin and Sergey Ivanov between July and October); in 2006 (during Putin's talks with NATO secretary general); and in 2009 and 2010 (statements from President Medvedev)⁴⁴. One may notice that this usually happened at politically game-changing moments, giving rise to Moscow's hopes that a new *modus vivendi* could be agreed with the West.

These initiatives had precedent behind them. It is worth noting that in 1954 the Soviet government applied for NATO membership before it decided to set up the Warsaw Pact. However, both in 1954 and following the collapse of the USSR, this was more of a negative stance: a desire to block unwanted moves from the Alliance (the FRG's accession to the Alliance in 1954, and blocking or neutralising the process of eastward NATO enlargement in the 1990s and 2000s), or as an argument for the thesis that the West lacks a constructive stance on Russia. It does not need to be added here that Russia – emphasising its sovereignty and great power status – did not manifest any desire to adapt itself to NATO standards in the political sphere (let alone military).

4. Russian policy: continuity or change?

Over a period spanning almost thirty years, regardless of the changing political regimes, reshuffles inside the government elite and among the most senior officials and changes in the international situation, Moscow has been attempting to implement the same strategic goals with regard to the West and NATO. Is it therefore possible to speak about changes in its approach to this issue? In the author's opinion, changes in the Russian policy are evident in three aspects.

⁴⁴ Texts of Yeltsin's letter and fragments of Putin's interview and Medvedev's speech in *ibidem*.

Firstly, variations in Russian tactics and a variety of institutional forms of conducting foreign policy may be seen. In an attempt to gain strategic control of the post-Soviet area (which is conventionally referred to as the ‘CIS area’), Russia would put forward numerous projects envisaging co-operation and integration in security and defence and politico-economic areas, with slightly different membership configurations. It would push through further integration stages without waiting until the specified short- and medium-term goals had been achieved. In some cases, enlarging the integration area was treated as a priority even at the expense of complicating the implementation of agreements that had already been adopted.

Russia has also come up with various proposals and demands with regard to Central Europe – be it ‘cross-security guarantees’ or restricting the military consequences of NATO membership, which all served the same strategic goals in any case.

The variability of Russian tactics can most easily be discerned in the different models and variants of the new security architecture in Europe. By responding to changes in the situation and through modifying its definitions, Russia has been able to smoothly transfer from attempts at building this architecture on the basis of the OSCE to attempts based on having privileged relations with NATO, while in the meantime testing out the option of enhancing security co-operation with the EU.

Table 3. Major Russian initiatives affecting European security

Year	Initiative put forward	Key entities to implement the initiative
1989	Common European Home	CSCE, NATO and Warsaw Pact member states (following the disbanding of the blocs)
1994/1995	Pan-European Partnership Concept	CSCE/OSCE, NACC (after detaching from NATO)

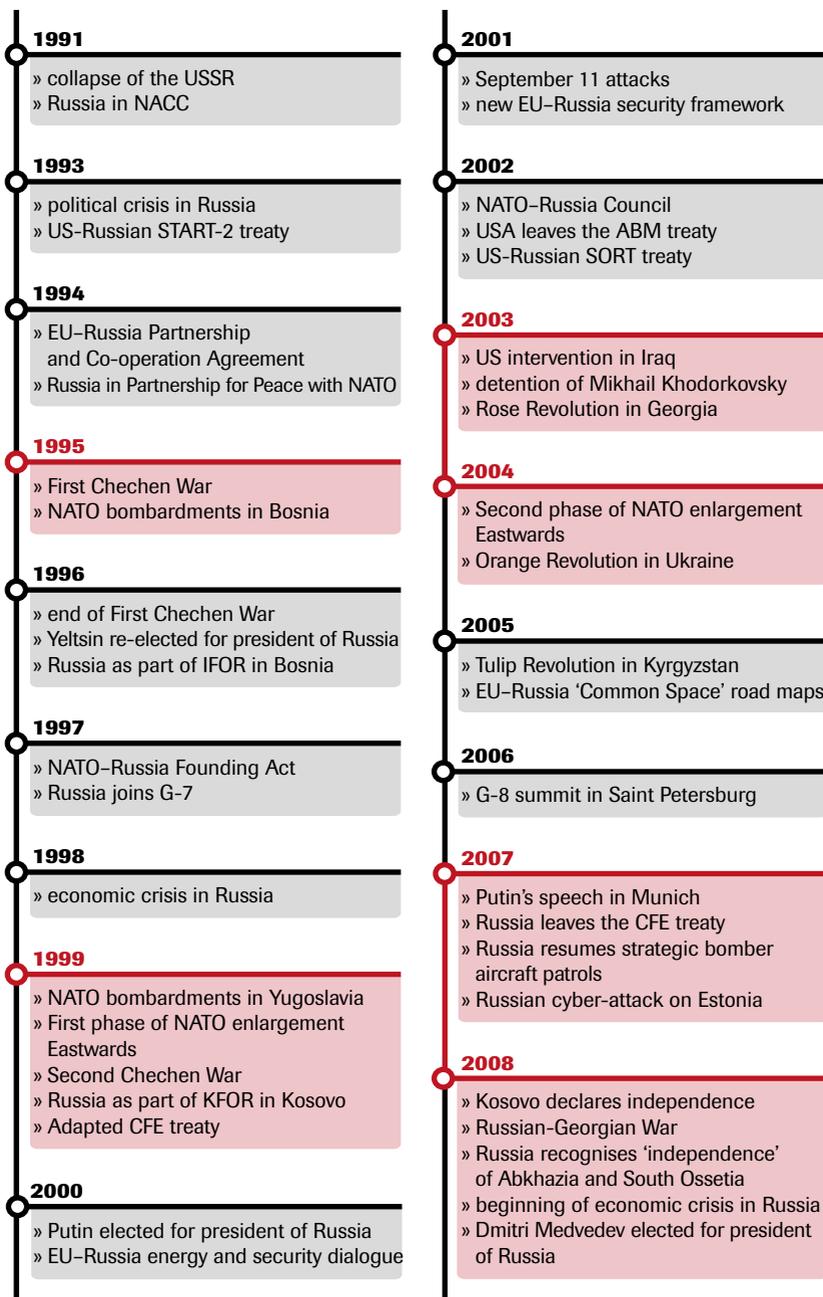
Year	Initiative put forward	Key entities to implement the initiative
1995	privileged partnership with NATO	Russia and NATO
1996	European Security Charter	OSCE
1997	privileged partnership with NATO	Russia and NATO (PJC mechanism)
1997	Greater Europe	Russia, EU, European countries
2000/2001	EU-Russia security dialogue, Greater Europe	EU and Russia (mechanism of ambassador meetings with the PSC Three)
2002	privileged partnership with NATO	Russia and NATO (NRC mechanism)
2003/2005	EU-Russia common spaces, Greater Europe	EU and Russia
2008/2009	European Security Treaty	OSCE area countries and organisations
2010	Political and Security Committee	Russia and EU
2011	Greater Europe	EU and European countries Russia and Customs Union (planned Eurasian Economic Union)
2015/16	Greater Eurasia	China, Russia, Eurasian Economic Union, possibly EU member states

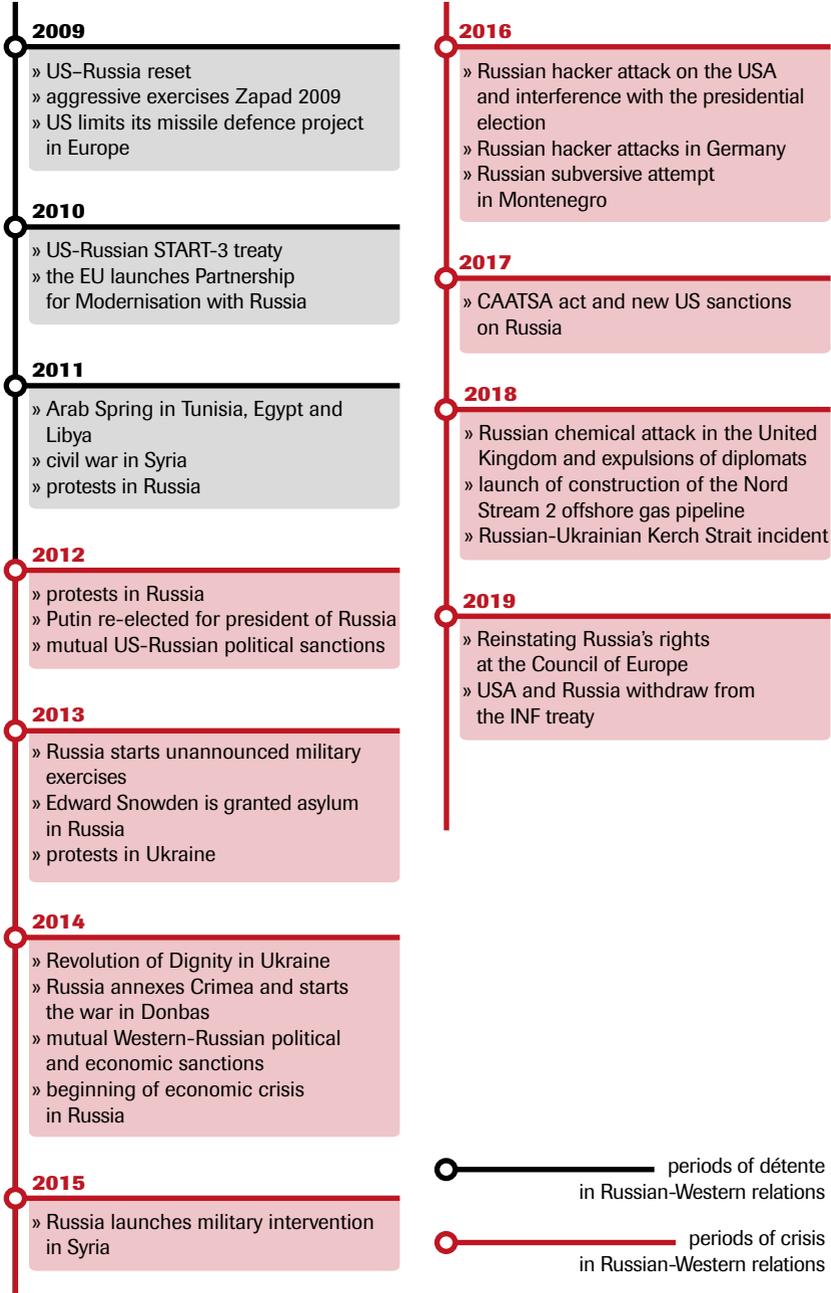
Secondly, there has been a noticeable long-term trend of diminishing ambitions in Russia's European security policy. This is especially evident in the case of Russia's policy towards Central Europe. In the final years of the USSR's existence (1989–1991), Moscow attempted to cut the costs of maintaining its sphere of influence in the region (even at the expense of disbanding the

structures of the Soviet bloc), yet it did not want to give this up completely. Hence its attempts to impose on Central European countries a peculiar model of limited sovereignty in the area of security and defence policy. In the next stage (1992–1997, or 1992–2002 in the case of the Baltic states), Russia already lacked any ambition to impose security clauses envisaging unequal treatment on the countries in the region: its goal was to prevent them from joining NATO and to create a buffer zone in the region separating it from the NATO area. Finally, when, after more countries in this region had been invited to join NATO, the enlargement process proved impossible to halt, Russia made efforts to negotiate at various political forums that sought to curtail the military consequences of the enlargement and thus establish a kind of buffer zone but this time inside NATO, on its Eastern flank.

A similar evolution can be tracked in Russia's policy with regard to the post-Soviet area. As the USSR declined, Moscow's goal was to reform the union state while maintaining close bonds and some aspects of the common institution. When the collapse of the USSR had become an undeniable fact, Russia initially tried to maintain elements of the common space (especially military). When this proved impossible, it made an attempt at creating new structures for co-operation between most of the countries in the post-Soviet area. However, when it became obvious that co-operation within a larger group was dysfunctional, it adopted the multi-speed integration tactic. Even though the goals of the next integration projects were increasingly ambitious, Moscow at the same time increasingly had to give up pushing through political integration and replace it with economic integration, while offering its partners more and more benefits (and/or threaten them with increasingly serious consequences) to convince them to participate in its projects.

PERIODS OF CRISIS AND DÉTENTE IN RUSSIAN-WESTERN RELATIONS





Thirdly, regardless of the noticeable fluctuations in Russia's relations with the West (USA and NATO/EU), one can see a long-term tendency towards cooling relations transforming into a state of quasi-cold war between Russia and the West.

The recurrent crises in Russian-Western relations: in Chechnya and Bosnia (1994–1996), Kosovo (1999), the crisis over the 'colour revolutions' (2003–2005), over Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (since 2013), turn out to be ever more acute and give rise to increasingly detrimental outcomes. The Russian government's attitude to the West is also worsening on a regular basis. The short period of 'pro-Western romanticism' (1991–1992) was followed by a period of more pragmatic relations with the West, marked by increasing assertiveness on the part of Russian policy – up to the Kosovo crisis, when Russia for the first time recognised the West as a potential threat. After a short warming of relations when pro-Western sentiments could be observed in Russia (2001–2002), President Putin responded to the 'colour revolutions' in a manner that suggested that he recognised that the threat posed by the West was of a systemic nature.

After several years of Russia's unsuccessful attempts to divide interests and influence with the West, Russia launched a 'counteroffensive' starting from 2007. Another short period of détente during Medvedev's presidency (2009–2011) ended when Putin began to feel personally endangered due to an alleged 'US conspiracy' (from later 2011 in connection with political protests in Russia). Then the conflict escalated on both sides. In this context, the 'Revolution of Dignity' (or Maidan Revolution) in Ukraine, subsequent Russian aggression against Ukraine and the intervention in Syria were also seen in Moscow as elements of a proxy war with the USA (and more broadly with the West)⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ For more detail see M. Menkiszak, *Russia's best enemy. Russian policy towards the United States in Putin's era* [OSW series: "Point of View", no. 62], Warsaw 2017.

II. SUMMARY OF THE RUSSIAN POLICY AND ITS PERSPECTIVES

An evaluation of the implementation of Russia's strategic goals as mentioned above leads to the conclusion that Moscow has not been successful.

It cannot be claimed that Russia has maintained or rebuilt its strategic control of the post-Soviet area ('CIS area'). Russia has strong influence (especially in the security and defence field) only in the case of two countries in this area: Belarus and Armenia. Russian troops are stationed in these countries (to a limited extent in Belarus), and these two countries are engaged in close military and security co-operation with Russia (Belarus to a greater extent than Armenia). However, Moscow's re-integration ambitions have been visibly curbed by local government elites, even in the case of these two countries.

Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime in Belarus has mastered to perfection the art of capitalising on Russia's geopolitical and military interests, in order to receive economic support from Moscow in various forms. It is forced to manoeuvre between the periodic crises in mutual relations and ostentatious rapprochements. However, another crisis in Russian-Belarusian relations has been evident since the second half of 2018. This crisis is more serious than the previous ones and was in fact provoked by Minsk's resistance to Moscow pushing through a significant deepening of political and economic integration of the two countries (which might involve even setting up a confederation or even full 'unification' of the two states). Armenia heavily relies on Russian security guarantees, and its strategic economic sectors are controlled by Russian entities. Regardless of this, it has managed to maintain pragmatic relations with Western countries (cf. e.g. CEPA, the political agreement signed with the EU in 2017) and to change the government elite contrary to Moscow's will (the opposition leader, Nikol Pashinyan, took power in 2018 as a result of a peaceful revolution).

Russian influence is smaller, albeit still noticeable, in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (whose labour markets rely on workforce migration to Russia) and in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, which are wealthier and stronger than the former two countries. However, the strengthening Chinese influence in these countries and local leaders' attempts to diversify external relations pose an increasing challenge to Moscow. In turn, regardless of the fact that political and economic relations are maintained, Russia's influence is limited in Georgia, Moldova and Uzbekistan (though it has been strengthening here recently) and is reduced to a minimum in Turkmenistan (which is to a great extent oriented towards China) and in Ukraine (which is in fact at war with Russia).

The failed attempts at subordinating Ukraine may be regarded as Moscow's ultimate defeat. It is true that Russia occupies Crimea (which has essentially improved Russia's geostrategic position in the Black Sea region and temporarily given rise to a marked improvement in Putin's popularity ratings) and part of the Donbas region (where it set up its rogue protectorates: the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics). Nevertheless, it has not managed to force Ukraine to participate in the Eurasian integration project or to prevent progress in Ukraine's integration with the EU (signing the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement and introduction of the visa-free regime). At the same time, its moves resulted in strengthening pro-Western sentiments among the Ukrainian public and elites and an almost complete liberation of Ukraine from its energy dependence on Russia⁴⁶. In the present situation it is impossible to conceive a Ukraine back under Moscow's strategic control, other than as a result of a military conquest (something that Russia – at least for now – is not willing to countenance). Meanwhile, each Eurasian integration project propagated by Russia will be flawed without Ukraine's participation.

⁴⁶ For more detail see M. Menkiszak, *Miński dylemat Rosji*, *op. cit.*; S. Kardaś, T. Iwański, *From vassalisation to emancipation. Ukrainian-Russian gas co-operation has been revised*, [series: "OSW Commentaries"], no. 263, 7 March 2018.

In the case of Central Europe, it is difficult to claim that a buffer zone exists inside NATO. The NATO–Russia Founding Act (including its provisions on military restraint that met Russian demands halfway) is still formally binding and is in principle respected by NATO, even though Russia has breached most of its provisions⁴⁷. In spite of this, the decisions taken by the USA and at the NATO summits in Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016) to strengthen the Alliance’s eastern flank by means of the forward rotational military presence (four multinational battalion combat groups in the Baltic states and Poland and rotational presence of a US brigade with command in Poland in addition to US forces in Romania) resulted in an Allied military presence that despite remaining asymmetric is nonetheless substantial and permanent (a total of around 9,000 soldiers). One element of this presence is in the form of missions aimed at protecting the airspace of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia by Allied forces (Baltic Air Policing), permanently maintained since 2004, and the US and NATO missile defence system bases (Aegis Ashore) that have been built (in Deveselu, Romania) and the one currently under construction (in Redzikowo, Poland).

Another unsuccessful goal was that of ousting the USA from Europe and bolstering Russian influence. In fact, quite the reverse is taking place, at least in the area of defence. Regardless of existing tensions in trans-Atlantic relations (which Moscow has been trying rather ineptly to capitalise on), since 2014, US military

⁴⁷ Russia, in particular, violated the following principles envisaged in the Act: developing partnership for the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area; respect of human rights and civil freedoms; refraining from the use of force or threat of using it; respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders of other countries; conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes; mutuality and transparency of co-operation with NATO; co-operation on the adaptation and implementation of the CFE Treaty; moderation as regards the structure, potential and deployment of armed forces; transparency, mutual trust and predictability as regards armed forces; improving arms control systems and trust building measures. See [Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation](#), Paris, 27 May 1997.

presence has gradually been increasing and Washington's defence co-operation has been enhanced, not only with Central European countries but also, amongst others, with the Nordic states (including Sweden and Finland, which are formally unaligned). Moscow has been listening attentively to the demands for 'strategic autonomy' (from the USA) voiced in some leading EU and NATO member states (especially France and Germany)⁴⁸. Despite this, the new initiatives covering defence co-operation between European countries (both inside and outside the EU) do not as of yet pose any threat to the functioning of NATO or co-operation with the USA, which are still the key security guarantors in Europe⁴⁹.

In this context it can be stated that Russia's influence in Europe is shrinking, especially in the area of defence (the situation is slightly different in the case of the energy sector, one symbol of which is the development of the controversial project of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline running from Russia to Germany). Moscow has not managed to create any model of European security architecture that would provide an alternative to NATO or other Western structures; it has not even been able to guarantee itself the possibility of formally (or at least informally) co-deciding in this field. At the same moment that its practical co-operation with NATO and the EU was frozen, its prerogatives in the Council of Europe (its Parliamentary Assembly) were reduced⁵⁰, and the

⁴⁸ For example, on 11 November 2018, President Putin in an [interview for the Russian television RT France](#) backed the idea expressed by the French president, Emmanuel Macron, to form a European army, sharing his opinion about Europe: "This is completely natural that they want to be independent, self-reliant and sovereign in the area of security and defence".

⁴⁹ For more detail on some initiatives see J. Gotkowska, *The trouble with PESCO. The mirages of European defence* [OSW series: "Point of View", no. 69], Warsaw 2018.

⁵⁰ Since representatives of the Russian government had threatened that it would leave the Council of Europe and the related system of protection offered by the European Court of Human Rights from which Russian citizens benefit, on the grounds of an informal deal negotiated by Germany and France, the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe passed a resolution on 17 May 2019 suggesting reinstating Russia's full rights in the Council of Europe, and on 26

mutual political and economic sanctions resulted in trade restrictions (especially Western investments in Russia), so that it found itself in a state of semi-isolation from the West.

Russia has not only failed to achieve its strategic goals but even – due to its aggressive policy – has provoked effects contrary to those intended. What can we expect in this situation? Has Moscow learnt any lessons from this?

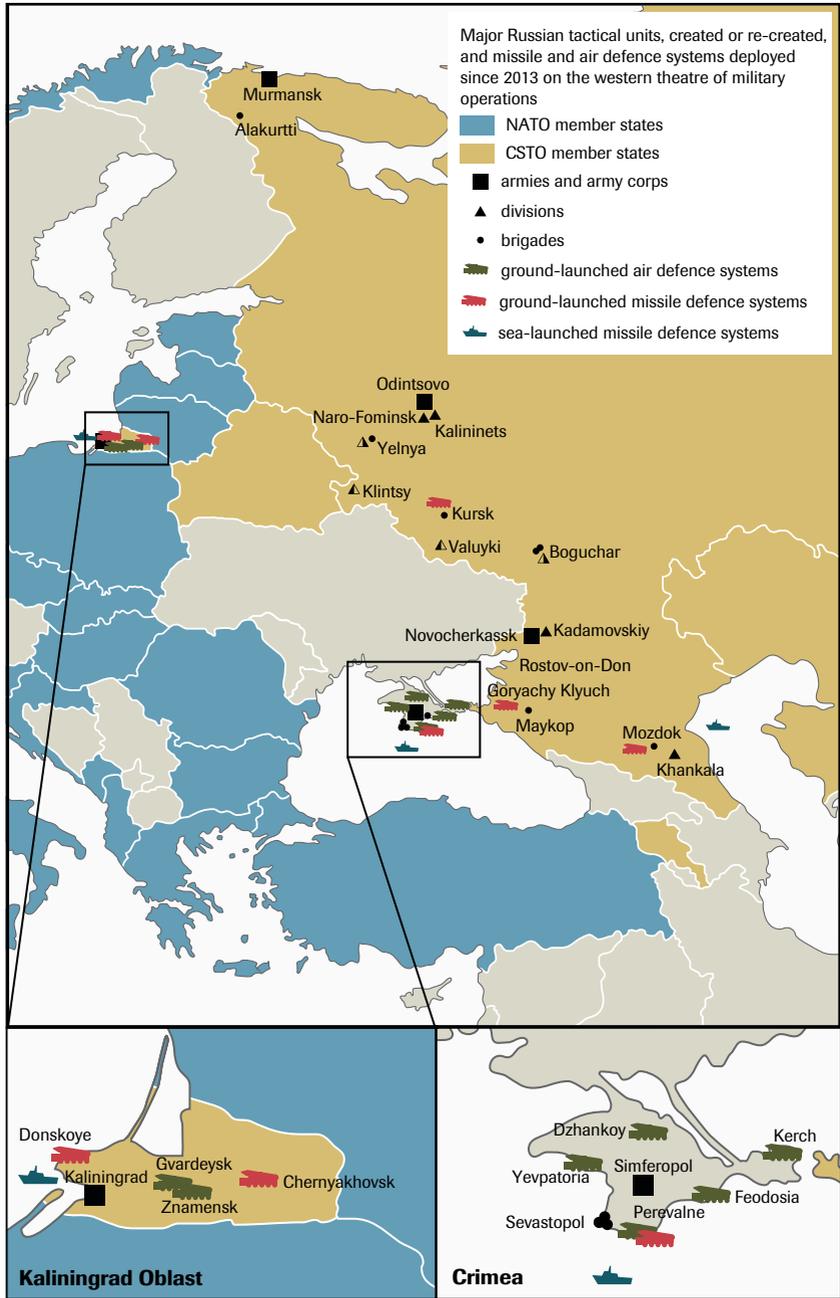
In the author's opinion, there are no serious grounds to conclude that Russia has completely given up its desire to achieve the aforementioned strategic goals. Apparently, it believes that this remains possible but will take much more time.

For the time being, Russia is continuing its aggressive policy. This involves continuation of the Russian armament programme, in particular, strengthening its military potential in the Western strategic direction. Examples of this include the formal establishment of a new tank army; the establishment of three new mechanised divisions; increasing militarisation of the Kaliningrad Oblast and occupied Crimea; holding massive previously unannounced military exercises with aggressive scenarios⁵¹.

June 2019, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe confirmed by a majority of the votes that the Russian delegation's rights at this forum had been reinstated.

⁵¹ For more detail see *Putin for the fourth time...*, *op. cit.*

Map 2. Militarisation of the Russian western flank



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At the same time, Russia has not given up its demands that NATO should discontinue the rotational presence of Allied forces on the eastern flank and withhold the construction of elements of the missile defence shield in Central Europe. Furthermore, Moscow still fails to respect the adapted CFE Treaty, violated (before its suspension) the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) and continues to violate or circumvent the Treaty on Open Skies and the OSCE's Vienna Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures at the same time refusing any further adoption of the latter (see Table 4).

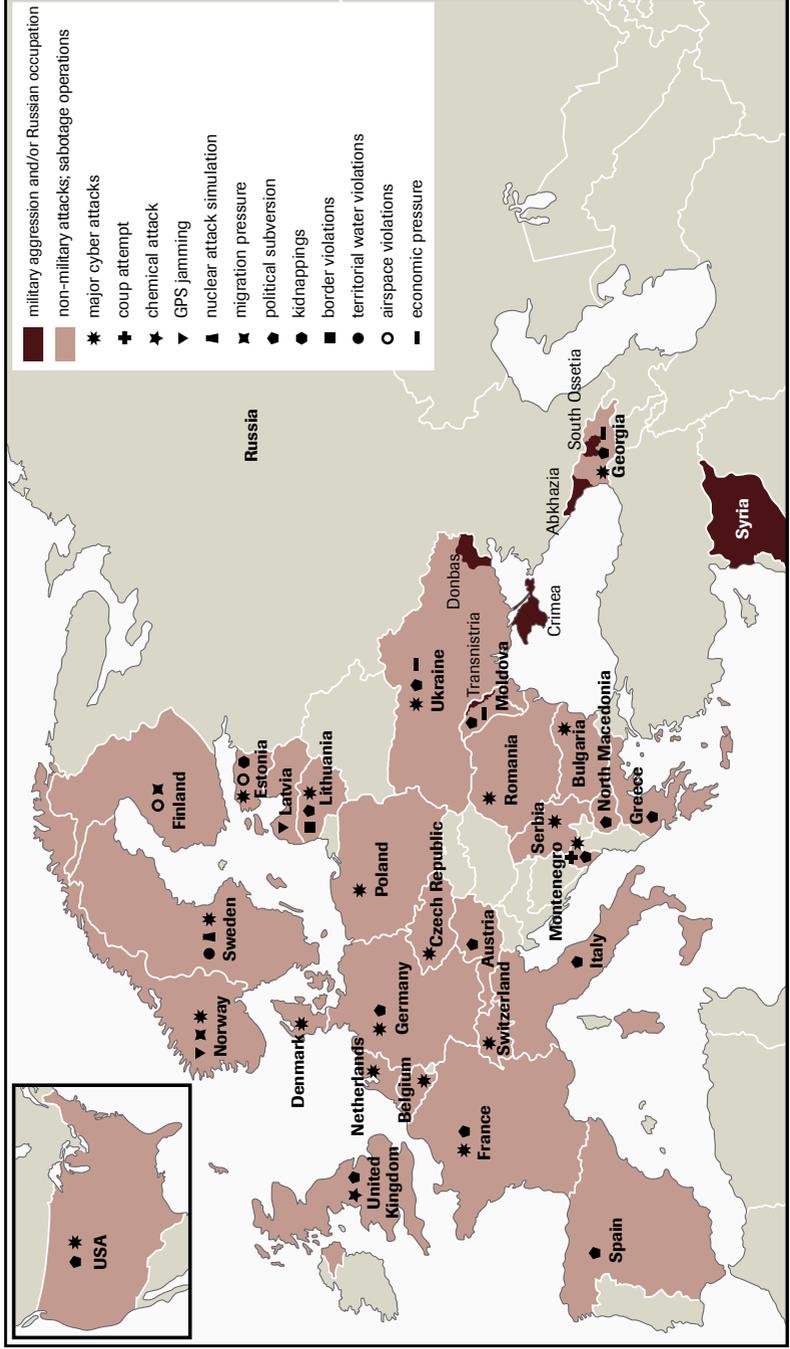
Other signs of Russia's increasing aggressiveness are repeated cyber-attacks (including on critical infrastructure), massive propaganda campaigns and local attempts at destabilising the political situation (as in Germany and Montenegro), collectively referred to as 'hybrid actions'.

Table 4. Major signs of Russia's violation of the arms control system in Europe

Agreement	Agreement date	Agreement subject	Agreement status	Description of Russia's breach
Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF)	Signed on 8 December 1987. Came into effect on 1 June 1988	Ban on production, flight-testing and deployment of ground-launched missiles with ranges of 500 to 5500 km; total destruction of existing arsenals of the missiles and launchers	concluded for an indefinite period; implemented; concerned the USA and the USSR (currently Russia and temporarily also 11 other post-Soviet countries); in February 2019 the USA and Russia suspended the implementation of the treaty; for this reason, the treaty expired on 2 August 2019.	Starting from 2007, Russia has tested the ground-launched versions of its see-launched Kalibr missiles with a range of up to 1500 km; starting from 2013, it has tested a new version of a ground-launched cruise missile with a presumed range of at least 2500 km.
Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (ACFE)	The original treaty was signed on 19 November 1990. The adapted treaty was signed on 19 November 1999	Setting quantitative limits for five categories of conventional arms and the number of military personnel, determining national and territorial levels	The original treaty came into force on 9 November 1992. The adapted treaty did not come into force. Ratified by Russia in 2000	Russia failed to comply with the so-called 'Istanbul Commitments' linked to the treaty (to reach a compromise and completely withdraw Russian troops from Moldova and Georgia). Russia stopped sending data concerning its armed forces as part of the treaty partly after 2007 and completely since 2014.
	On 13 July 2007 Russia 'suspended' its participation in the Treaty.		Was not ratified but in fact respected by NATO member states.	

Agreement	Agreement date	Agreement subject	Agreement status	Description of Russia's breach
Vienna Document (revised)	The original document was signed in 1990 as part of the CFE	Determining a catalogue of confidence and security building measures, including clearing up non-standard military operations, notifications and monitoring military exercises in Europe	In force; revised (supplemented) during the OSCE's subsequent review conferences.	<p>Since the last revision of the VD (2011), Russia has not agreed to its further revisions.</p> <p>Russia violates/circumvents the VD for example by holding previously unannounced military exercises (from 2013) and by artificially underrating the declared level of the number of military personnel which requires accepting observers by dividing the exercises into series.</p>
Treaty on Open Skies	Signed on 24 March 1992	Creating a system of mutual observer flights as part of verification of arms control in Europe and North America	Came into force on 1 January 2002; remains in force.	<p>Russia fails to fully comply with the obligation to provide information on military activity and accept observers during exercises according to the VD standards.</p> <p>Russia imposed restrictions on the flight route length from designated airports (thus making a complete flyover of the Kaliningrad Oblast impossible).</p>

Map 3. Russian military aggression and 'hybrid actions' in Europe



Russia has also maintained its military presence in some Eastern European and South Caucasian countries (member states of the OSCE and Council of Europe) contrary to their will. On the one hand, these are remnants of Russia's involvement in the 'post-colonial wars' in the 1990s but also a result of hostile measures launched later (on Georgia in 2008 and on Ukraine in 2014) and Moscow's political decisions (recognising the 'independence' of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea and the *de facto* occupation of part of Donbas).

At present, Russia has to make a choice between maintaining (or even toughening) the confrontational approach it has adopted in its European security policy so far or seeking, at the expense of some concessions, at least a partial compromise with the West.

The factors suggesting that the existing confrontational approach will be continued include the make-up, strategic culture and mentality of the narrow government circle led by Vladimir Putin. Its members, originating primarily from Soviet secret services, tend to believe in conspiracy theories and think in terms of worst-case scenarios, are attached to the anachronistically interpreted idea of Russia as a great power, and usually view international relations as an arena where nations and countries are fighting for survival. They are convinced that the West (and especially the USA) poses a threat to their power and at the same time they are determined to maintain this power. Given this atmosphere of deep distrust of the external environment and the awareness of the weaknesses of the Russian state and the serious challenges it needs to face in various areas, the strategy of compensating for the relative (mainly economic) weakness with militarisation of the state, augmenting its military potential and aggressive foreign and security policy, seems to be their overriding idea concerning the approach that needs to be taken with regard to the West and some of the neighbouring countries.

Domestic policy challenges have also had an impact. In a situation where the government, given the ineffectiveness of the authoritarian system, market fluctuations and negative socio-economic trends, is unable to offer the public any prospects of sustained improvement in their living standards, it is tempted to compensate for this with the illusory sense of military strength and great power status, to distract public attention from domestic issues by provoking external conflicts and attempting to mobilise public opinion against alleged external enemies as part of the 'besieged fortress' myth.

Last but not least, a whole array of phenomena and trends in international politics also makes the Kremlin inclined to continue its approach. The most important of these (and this is closely watched by Russia) include the multidimensional crisis of the West as a community (increasing trans-Atlantic tension between the USA and its other allies, the noticeable weakening of NATO), the USA (political crisis and intensifying isolationist trends) and the European Union (political, social, economic and ideological crisis and also growing significance of the forces which back the policy of concessions towards Moscow). On the other hand, Russia is pinning its hopes on the increasing potential and influence of the non-Western world, especially China, which is viewed as Moscow's natural ally in its global rivalry with the USA. This makes the Kremlin inclined to 'wait out' the crisis with the West until it can be overcome as a result of growing weaknesses or even to escalate the confrontation, including within the territory of Europe, with a view to exploiting any 'window of opportunity' created by an apparent crisis. It is worth adding that Russian diplomacy constantly reiterates a wide array of demands corresponding to Russia's European security policy goals as outlined above, making the 'normalisation' of relations and cessation of political or military confrontation dependent on the fulfilment of these demands.

What may make the Kremlin inclined **to seek an ease in tensions in its relations with the West** is the concern about the growing

costs of its current confrontation: political, economic and security-oriented. Apparently, the key factor in this case is the fear of escalation of the political conflict with the USA, leading to further toughening of the US sanctions on Russia. Potentially, the sanctions may seriously harm the Russian economy, worsening the social situation and adding to internal instability. This gives rise to natural concerns about threats posed to the system of government and individually to those members within government circles in Russia.

At the same time, the increasing tension inside the trans-Atlantic community, particularly as viewed from the Kremlin's perspective, may encourage Moscow to make attempts to selectively ease tension in relations with individual leading European countries (especially Germany, France and also Italy) based on existing and new business offers and projects and political dialogue, hoping that this will lead to an erosion of the European sanctions system and trigger an influx of European investments, capital and technologies so badly needed by the Russian economy.

Russia has been making attempts to achieve all this but so far it has refused to make any concessions or revise its policy. However, to bring about a genuine normalisation of relations with the West (especially the USA), Moscow would certainly have to make some limited concessions, including, as part of the Minsk Process, those concerning the conflict with Ukraine in Donbas (for example, on the grounds of the initiatives put forward so far regarding the UN mission) and by beginning to respect anew some of the agreements concerning European security (as regards measures for building confidence and security) and possibly some new initiatives in this area also. Russia might, for example, make more specific the idea of package resolution of disputes regarding conventional and nuclear weapons control.

Moscow's decisions will be affected by a number of factors, both external and internal. The most essential of these seem to be the

factors linked to the domestic situation in Russia, possible reshuffles inside its government team and an evolution in the perception of the international and regional situation among the most senior Russian officials. Unless major alterations are made in these areas, a serious change in Russia's present aggressive policy appears impossible. Apparently, only a serious domestic crisis in Russia that would entail a replacement of the government elite may offer any chance (albeit not a guarantee) for a positive – as viewed by the West – revision of Russian policy, including that concerning European security.

In turn, if the Western community does not manage to maintain its unity based on common interests, standards and values, and especially in the case of further erosion – and even disintegration *in extremis* – of the trans-Atlantic bonds and the political and defence-based European and Euro-Atlantic structures (especially NATO), Russia, regardless of its relative weakness, may succeed in the longer term in achieving at least part of its present strategic goals in European security policy, which will be detrimental to Europe and to Russia itself.

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