



Time to reassess the European security architecture?

The NATO–EU–Russia Security Triangle

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Abstract

NATO will celebrate its 60th anniversary in April during a highly symbolic summit hosted jointly by France and Germany. In contrast to previous key summits in 1999 and 2004, today the allies have to deal with a transformed and oppositional Russia, besides a fast-evolving security environment. A few months ago, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev issued a proposal for a new security treaty. The proposal has added a further element to the catalogue of security disputes causing relations with Washington to deteriorate, among which missile defence continues to be one of the most divisive.

This paper analyses Russian pressures on security issues and the way the EU and NATO have been addressing them. It is argued that tensions over missile defence are closely related to NATO's enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia and to arms control (the Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe), and that these issues are poorly tackled at the multilateral level. Aside from the positive moves already undertaken by the Obama administration towards Russia, it is difficult to foresee any rapprochement in the existing incompatibility of views on the legitimacy of NATO. In this context, the role of the EU in improving the security dialogue with Moscow is substantial.

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THE NATO–EU–RUSSIA SECURITY TRIANGLE

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Introduction

“Europe, North America and we in Russia need a new security treaty. So this is our proposal” (Lavrov, 2009). These words by Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister, are a reminder of the renewed Russian desire to reshape security relations and institutions in Europe. This idea was launched by President Dmitry Medvedev last June and is recurrent in the serious and polarising security-related disputes over the US project to extend missile shields in Europe. Additionally, the Russian–Georgian war has created a more difficult environment for relations with the Kremlin. As far as relations between the European Union (EU) and Russia are concerned, significant changes have occurred. After a ‘reflection period’ from September to October 2008, the agenda for cooperation has refocused on core interests (trade and energy). In parallel, a new agenda on security is taking shape. Despite a comprehensive cooperative dialogue, producing concrete results mainly on economic matters and trade, the political outcomes have not been satisfying for either partner. This is particularly noticeable in the ‘common space of external security’,¹ or more broadly in the political difficulty of achieving a renewed partnership.

Both the EU and Moscow express divergent views on an array of security issues, ranging from the so-called ‘common neighbourhood’ to NATO enlargement. There is a need to evaluate the current stalemates in the European security dialogue and the possibilities for developing the dialogue into a problem-solving tool – taking into account the influential role of the main European security actors. The creation of a real partnership is a task at the core of the security triangle that underlies EU–Russian relations, US–Russian and NATO–Russian relations. But given the renewed political distance, furthermore aggravated by the Georgian crisis, what are the prospects for achieving such a partnership?

The political context is vital to understanding the current difficulties and the linkages among the common security problems in Europe. Among the most visible issues are the unilateral initiative by the US to install a missile defence system in the Czech Republic and Poland, Kosovo’s independence and the EU-accession aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia. Ten years ago, despite Russian opposition, NATO was able to enlarge to countries of the post-Soviet space. The 60th anniversary summit of the alliance will occur in a transformed security landscape and give rise to reflection about NATO’s doctrines. The recent Munich Security Conference held in February 2009 launched the new US administration’s stance on Russia and security. A few months ago, Medvedev’s foreign policy was still taking shape. The present circumstances are thus

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¹ The 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is the legal basis for EU–Russian relations. A new framework of cooperation was established at the St. Petersburg summit in 2003. Since then, Brussels and Moscow have cooperated in four areas (the so-called ‘common spaces’): a common economic space; a common space of freedom, security and justice; a common space of cooperation in the field of external security; and a common space on research, education and culture.

particularly prone to novelty and change, and consequently it is pertinent to address the new Russian pressures on European security in light of the anti-missile dispute and the main connections with other security concerns informing the difficult relationship with the Kremlin.

1. Missile defence: The tip of the iceberg

The anti-missile issue is mainly a bilateral one and is poorly addressed multilaterally because of flaws in the existing security architecture. The Bucharest NATO summit in April 2008 voiced the support of the European member states for an anti-missile shield.² There is nonetheless discomfort among the allies about building such a system that may be perceived as directed against Russia. There is now a shared feeling that the US will actually postpone the missile defence project.³ The discussion about the implementation of a missile shield in Europe has provoked intense transatlantic debate mainly since 2007, although it is an old issue in a new context. It is part of the arms control and arms reduction talks that began during the cold war. Later, Washington expressed its intentions to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 but faced Russian opposition to this move. The main US argument for the shield is a change in the perception of threats at the global level and a need to develop efficient defence systems. After 11 September, the Russian–American bilateral relationship improved and in December 2002, the US unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty. In the US missile defence project, the European sites would together become the third location in the US system, complementing the other two in Alaska and California. As far as the EU is concerned, Brussels is not an appropriate forum to discuss the issue since the EU lacks competence in the matter. Furthermore, issues falling under the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) are approved under the unanimity voting procedure, which allows each member state to impose its national views and block decisions.

The idea that Russia should participate in the missile defence system and contribute to a pan-European device is often advanced by the defenders of the American proposal. It is also often accompanied by the idea that Russia should join NATO, which is presented as a panacea for all the security problems in Europe. In view of the history of relations between Russia and its NATO counterparts, it is hardly likely that the alliance along with its 1990s adaptations could be seen as more attractive to Russia now than before, considering Russia's global resurgence. On the contrary, Moscow is questioning this legacy of the 1990s and is seeking an appropriate role in the European security architecture. There are two opposing and contradictory stances being taken. On one side, Russia wishes to engage in a substantive discussion about the pertinence of NATO, in view of its belief that the alliance is erecting a new Berlin wall (Putin, 2008). On the other side, the West sees NATO as an entirely new organisation, which has adapted to the new geopolitical situation and is no longer a threat to Russia. The debate about missile defence obscures another (avoided) discussion about the fact that NATO could represent a bloc against other countries. At the very least, the two stances are evidence that Moscow has

² See the Bucharest Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council (Bucharest, 3 April 2008), Press Release (2008)049, NATO, Brussels, 3 April 2008 (retrieved from <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html>).

³ Derived from a source at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, February 2009. Joe Biden's discourse in February in Munich mentioned the need to press a "re-start button" to re-launch relations with Russia (see Blitz, 2009). According to *Le Monde*, 7 February 2009 ("A Munich, Joe Biden donne le ton de la nouvelle diplomatie américaine."), Biden has resumed the prudent position already developed by Obama, with the newspaper quoting Biden as follows: "Nous allons continuer à développer nos défenses antimissiles (...), à condition que la technologie fonctionne et que le coût en vaille la peine. (...) Nous le ferons en concertation avec nos alliés de l'OTAN et avec la Russie."

not been offered a satisfying role in the organisation, which it permanently perceives as a threat or at minimum an advantage that could be used against its interests.

The main questions raised in the debate about the necessity of a missile defence system in Europe fall into two categories. Political and technical arguments are used to defend or attack the project.⁴ From a technical point of view, the feasibility and effectiveness of such a device is questioned, as is the proven existence of a threat posed by an eventual Iranian nuclear bomb. From a political point of view, the risks of proliferation and an arms race are discussed, as is the real purpose of the extension of the US Ground-Based Midcourse Defence (GMD) system in Europe. Whether Europe needs such a system, against whom it might be directed and the consequences for arms proliferation are critical questions to be considered. Until now, bilateral discussions have been preferred to multilateral methods as a means to address them.

The discussions between Washington and Moscow are a principal diplomatic tool to overcome the Russian opposition. In the transition from President Vladimir Putin to successor Dmitry Medvedev, there has been continuity concerning the stance adopted. Since May 2008, the new Russian president has erected a diplomatic fence against missile defence in Europe. In late spring 2008, these efforts were complemented by Putin in his role as prime minister when he visited France. Nonetheless, the 2007 talks and the 2008 informal summit in Sochi maintained the possibility of a compromise. In June 2008, in his first visit to a Western country (Germany), Medvedev underlined two leitmotifs of the Russian foreign policy. First, NATO enlargement would seriously damage relations with Russia; second, the transatlantic approach is no longer suited to addressing security challenges in Europe. He proposed the creation of a 'European security pact' that would link all the parties. He summarised the main idea of renewing the existing security architecture and mentioned the need for a 'breathing space', namely to discuss Kosovo and the missile defence system (Medvedev, 2008). Indirectly, President Medvedev has urged a reshaping of the existing dialogue but without enlarging NATO and with Russia taking on a new role. This is the first time such a proposal has been advanced and defended, in an elaborated and more gentle tone (even if we can assume it entails a rejection of the role the US has been playing in Europe).

Putin and Medvedev have echoed each other in their visits, since they constitute a tandem leadership. A few days before Medvedev's German visit, Putin expressed similar ideas in Paris. He argued that Iran is not a nuclear threat; furthermore, he repeated that NATO perpetuates the bloc logic and he referred to the military bases installed in Romania and Bulgaria as contradictory to the collective proclaimed goal of arms limitation. The extension of the US system is seen as deepening this latter tendency (De Hoop Scheffer, 2009). That he opposes NATO enlargement in principle is in accordance with the more refined argument presented by Medvedev: Russia challenges the current alliance and its role in Europe.

Missile defence is therefore not an isolated, controversial question and it should be understood in a broader panorama, where the actors (particularly Russia) link different issues as a means to achieve goals. In the case of Russia, recovering from the humiliation of the Yeltsin years is an important factor. Yet, the issue of security at its borders is more consistent and goes beyond political post-imperial symbolism. The elections of 2007, which had blurred the interpretation of Russian foreign policy, are now over and it is clear, mainly since the August war in Georgia, that the Kremlin intends to reassert its role in the 'near abroad' and globally.

⁴ See for instance Slocombe et al. (2007), Webb (2008), Muller (2008) and Krause (2007).

2. Disentangling the security issues

Two main issues are advanced by Russia in connection with the anti-missile system: Russia's decision to suspend the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and its opposition to further eastern NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia. The latter is also connected to Kosovo's proclamation of independence in February 2008, with the Kremlin arguing that it sets a precedent for other separatist entities in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow further supported these regions, which led to escalating tensions between Abkhazia and Tbilisi from March 2008 onwards. After the Georgian–Russian war, Moscow recognised the independence of the two entities. A solution to these frozen conflicts, or at least their stabilisation, is fundamental for any Georgian transatlantic aspirations. During his term, President George W. Bush made several diplomatic efforts to support the Ukrainian and Georgian ambitions in this regard. Still, a number of European allies were against this proposal and consequently NATO endorsed the prospect of entry but delayed it with no precise schedule being set.

For Moscow, this NATO outcome was not satisfactory because membership was merely postponed (while continuing to be encouraged) and because the allies decided to complement the anti-missile project with a system developed by the alliance to cover the geographical area left out by the US plans. It is interesting to note that the division among the allies is similar to the divergences among the EU member states towards Russia. For instance, France and Germany are key partners for Russia in Europe and are inclined to take a prudent and conciliatory stance, mostly when strategic interests are at stake. In April 2008, the summit represented an achievement to help determine Bush's legacy in foreign affairs. The confirmed reinforcement of the contribution of the allies to the Afghan theatre positively balanced the summit. Yet, this does not hide the identity crisis of the organisation, which is still struggling for a broadly accepted *raison d'être* both internally and externally. Russia's increasing prominence on the NATO agenda has provoked an unexpected result. A few days before the summit, the NATO secretary general underlined that it has helped to keep the alliance united much more than expected.⁵

Why is NATO perceived as a threat by Russia? Russian Ambassador to NATO Dmitry Rogozin has perhaps expressed the most radical Russian views about the alliance as well as about Kosovo. His remarks even led to an argument with the Agence France-Press (AFP), which Rogozin accused of distorting his speech. He denied the quotation in which he allegedly advocated the use of force to impose respect for international law in Kosovo.⁶ The fact that Putin appointed this outspoken nationalist politician to the post in January 2008 is representative of Moscow's determination to voice its opposition to the adaptations of the alliance and to a new missile defence system in Europe. For Rogozin (and hence Moscow), NATO expansion and missile defence “pose a clear and present danger to Russia” (Osipovich, 2008). While still president, Putin voiced the same idea when he threatened to target missiles at Ukraine, should it join the alliance (Belton, 2008). For the Kremlin, these two issues are closely linked to the equilibrium of forces in Europe. The French and German caution at Bucharest in delaying the NATO Membership Action Plans for Georgia and Ukraine reflected the desire to preserve relations with Moscow.

These events also demonstrate that this third post-cold war enlargement differs from the previous ones of 1999 and 2004. Russia is now able to reject the status quo it had previously

⁵ “Nato closes ranks”, Editorial Comment, *Financial Times*, 4 April 2008.

⁶ Letter by Dmitry Rogozin to the chief editor of the AFP in Paris dated 25 February 2008. Details of Rogozin's speech are reported by the news agency RIA Novosti (retrieved from <http://www.rian.ru/pressclub/20080222/99667207.html>).

accepted because its position in the balance of power has changed. At least partially, there is a strong signal that Russia counts and that the ‘common neighbourhood’ is also a Russian affair. French Prime Minister Francois Fillon expressed a view held by some EU and NATO member states when he explained that France was against this accession because it was not “the right answer to the equilibrium, to the relations of power in Europe and to the relations between Europe and Russia” (Zecchini, 2008), although in doing so he committed a media blunder. Ahead of the Bucharest summit, Washington deployed bilateral diplomatic efforts to smooth the Russian opposition to the summit agenda. The summit took place on 3 April, the day after the NATO–Russia Council met, and on 6 April there was a bilateral summit at Sochi. This sequence of meetings has been interpreted as a turning point that was intended to settle Bush’s legacy at the end of his mandate and at the end of Putin’s turn as president.

The other topic of discussion was the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1993 (START II) of 1993, which has not been implemented because Russia withdrew from it immediately after Washington withdrew from the ABM Treaty. This agreement is especially relevant because it prohibited intercontinental missiles with multiple re-entry vehicles (MIRVed ICBMs). These kinds of missiles change the capacity to deter and to deliver a first strike, since the capability for destruction is increased by the multiple warheads carried by a single missile. The previous START I Treaty is due to expire in 2009, and it has had a fundamental role in the destruction of strategic nuclear weapons in the US and Russia. After the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002, the idea of a START III became unfeasible. Instead, the ‘Moscow Treaty’ (more specifically, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty or SORT) was signed in 2002 between the two parties. It is meant to limit the number of operationally deployed nuclear warheads until 2012. The parties also signed a joint statement in parallel with the SORT Treaty, which creates a Consultative Group for Strategic Security. Consultations should cover confidence-building measures and transparency measures, as well as other strategic issues of mutual interest.⁷ The Russian side complains that Washington did not discuss in advance the European development of its missile defence, notably in this consultation framework (Pikayev, 2008). There are thus two nuclear treaties regulating relations between Washington and Russia, but positive interactions are needed for their replacement in the short term. On 6 March, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov agreed on a ‘work plan’ to replace the START Treaty, ahead of the foreseen first meeting between US President Barak Obama and Medvedev in April in London (Lander, 2009).

Another treaty that is connected to the missile shield irritant between the two countries and European countries is the 1990 CFE Treaty. This agreement established a cooperative restraint in Europe in the field of conventional armaments from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains. An adapted version was signed in 1999 at the Istanbul summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit.⁸ A component of the CFE Treaty is also the setting of national ceilings in the ‘flank’ regions, such as the Russian North Caucasus. This legally binding framework is weakened by specific conditions from the Russian side and recent evolutions. The NATO allies have not ratified the Treaty. They are waiting for Russia to comply with the adapted CFE flank provisions and the commitments it assumed at the Istanbul summit

⁷ See the list of “US–Russian bilateral treaties and agreements” on the website of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, Washington, D.C. (retrieved from http://www.nti.org/f_WMD411/f1b2_2.html). See also the “Text of the Joint Declaration” on the website of the White House, Washington, D.C. (retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020524-2.html>).

⁸ The 30 parties in the 1999 CFE Treaty are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK and the US.

regarding the withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgia and Moldova. Moreover, in December 2007 Moscow decided to suspend its implementation for several reasons (Socor, 2007). Russia is concerned by the fact that the Baltic States are now NATO members and have not yet ratified the 1999 adapted version of the CFE Treaty (they are not party to the 1990 version because at the time they were part of Soviet Union), as this situation could allow unrestricted NATO deployments there. Among the list of reasons presented, the most important is that Russia challenges the Treaty itself and seeks a total renegotiation to advance its own favourable terms. The Russian demands have therefore escalated in the context of Moscow's opposition to the US missile defence system. The deployment of Russian forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia further complicate any observance of the CFE Treaty.

3. The effects of Russia's resurgence

Mostly since 2007, Moscow has begun a process of resurgence in the international scene. The main reason is its economic performance and income from energy resources. This shift reveals a stronger Russia and it is very important for Russia's image and perception as a world power, especially after the frustrations of the Yeltsin period. It can be taken for granted that Russia is an unavoidable partner to deal with on security issues in Europe and that there is a strong interdependence between the EU and Russia. Yet this relation is asymmetric and even if Russia is geopolitically important for the EU and the US, it is itself very dependant on the EU at least economically. The use of its energy leverage as a central instrument of foreign policy reflects Russia's strategic orientation, contrary to what has been perceived as a lack of coherence and consistency in the Kremlin's foreign policy choices. The approach used to advance positions towards transit countries such as Ukraine or Belarus (i.e. gas supply cuts) is criticised by the EU. Moscow uses its energy resources as a means but the interdependent relationship with Europe remains because Russia needs European markets. The January 2009 crisis exposed this state of play.

The management of this interdependency is nonetheless political. So far, EU member states have embarked on privileged bilateral solutions, undermining EU consistency. Energy has been highlighted since 2006 because Russia has been pursuing its recovery through its energy income and re-investment (for instance, in the oil and gas fields of Sakhalin-II and Shtockman). This rapid shift expresses a nationalist tendency away from the previous imposition of difficult economic policies. Even if this process is criticised for being an instrumentalist use of the state by the oligarchs, it is still a common aspiration among Russia's domestic actors and among domestic players in other countries in general. Dealing with these circumstances in a politically pragmatic way seems easier today because energy is high on the agenda for desired cooperation and because since 2007, the EU has been making progress in the development of a common energy policy. If multilateralism does not work for the moment on energy, it is difficult to argue against the bilateral approaches taken by Russia and EU member states. Political will is therefore crucial to defining common interests in the highly competitive sovereign domain of the member states, even if cooperation is needed for long-term stability in energy security. Hence, NATO's willingness to discuss energy security problems – even if for the time being the alliance is not seeking a specific role on the issue – is politically sensitive for member states and in the relations between the EU and Russia (Monaghan, 2009).

There is little doubt that missile defence in Europe would alter the existing equilibrium and the deterrence capacities. According to Webb (2008), it would undermine diplomacy and multilateral arms control in favour of a unilateral use of force, as in Iraq. The American agenda of missile defence “does not fit with the cooperative security model that Europeans support” (ibid.). Arms proliferation is also a risk pointed out by the opponents of the system. But for the US, it would improve its capacity to deter an eventual attack from Iran or North Korea. Once more, two conflicting views emerge. On the one hand, one can argue that the missile defence

would represent a deterrent, avoiding the risk of an attack or the determination to develop nuclear weapons.⁹ On the other hand, one can argue that a vicious circle would emerge (similar to the arms race of the cold war) and alternative weaponry would be developed to counter the deterrence effect of the missile shield. The fact that Russia is engaging in a military build-up is already seen as a sign in that sense (Muller, 2007). Moreover, the Russian reliance on nuclear armaments, and apparently weak investment in conventional forces, has been used by the US to justify the necessity of a modern nuclear deterrent.¹⁰ This has been an additional US argument besides the primary motives concerning Iran. This point can also be viewed as an inconsistency in the discourse, since Washington has repeatedly declared that the planned missile shield is not directed against the Russian Federation.

There is a need to further discuss in a collective manner the consequences of such a system and its implications for the future of the ESDP and relations with Russia. Although member states retain sovereignty on the issue and they are allowed to engage in bilateral moves with Washington, there has been increasing unease in Brussels. The specificities of the integration process require at least consultation, not to mention the growing appeal of European internal solidarity, especially with respect to Russia. Although the ESDP does not cover missile defence, Javier Solana stated that “the treaties in force allocated sovereignty over this issue to the member states, but this must be compatible with [the] EU’s general interest in security”.¹¹ The ESDP is influential in defining the EU’s role as a global actor in the medium and long term. In the common space of EU–Russian cooperation on external security, the two main aspects are crisis management and non-proliferation. Sergei Ryabkov identified a divergence of views only on a few issues, concerning separatist entities (Ryabkov, 2008).¹² Non-proliferation is thus an essential part of the cooperation agenda. Russia ranks first among non-EU countries undertaking the greatest number of meetings with the EU, at all levels. It is also a special NATO partner. Nevertheless, there is a vacuum in the existing European security architecture, which fails to link the several multilateral and bilateral forums on missile defence and other related issues.

The way the Kennebunkport summit (July 2007) and the EU–Russia summit in Samara (May 2007) ended are still relevant in characterising the current state of play: political and security interdependency is recognised but the ‘arm wrestling’ goes on. The achievements are reduced even if the communication channels remain open. It is still necessary to clear the tensions in order to manage relations that are more constructive with member states of the EU and NATO. This was the idea presented by Clinton to Lavrov, in an unsuccessful attempt at playful diplomacy. During their meeting in Geneva in March 2009, she presented him with a red plastic button emblazoned with word ‘reset’ (but the Russian version read ‘overcharged’, owing to a mistake in translation) (Lander, 2009). The fact that two EU member states are involved in the Russian dispute with Washington to install the missile defence system further complicates matters. This is a particularly sensitive issue, since Russia has been seeking closer cooperation with the EU in defence since 1999. Moscow feels that the EU has not reciprocated and it would consider greater EU involvement in European security a way of provoking a reassessment of the role of the US in NATO and Europe.

⁹ Thränert (2007) develops a refined argument about the deterrence effect of the missile defence, notably as a tool for crisis management. It is also interesting to note a Russian argument on the matter of deterrence, being that Moscow’s assistance to Iran in the development of civil nuclear technology helps non-proliferation, as Russian control of the production process and recovery of the wasted fuel prevents its use for military purposes.

¹⁰ See the article, “Pentagon Says Russia is Upping Nuclear Ante”, *Moscow Times*, 11 June 2008.

¹¹ See “Solana: ‘CFSP must be compatible with EU strategy’”, *EurActiv.com*, 8 June 2007.

¹² Ryabkov was director of the Department of European Cooperation of the Russian Federation’s ministry of foreign affairs. He is today the deputy foreign minister.

4. The Europeans and the Medvedev proposal

The issue of how to read Russia and consequently how to deal with it is a recurrent theme in Western concerns. This question has gained renewed importance since 2006, because of Russia's resurgent power, which can be seen in the energy disputes but also in the ability of the Kremlin to oppose undesired developments such as NATO enlargement and more vigorously in the August 2008 war in Georgia. There is disagreement over how to interpret Russian power. So far, NATO allies and EU member states have demonstrated a wait-and-see attitude towards the Medvedev proposal to reshape the existing security architecture into a new European security pact.

To analyse the ongoing debate provoked by Russian security discourses, two elements have to be weighed: Russian discourses against the Kremlin's capacity to deliver on them. The Medvedev proposal is still vague and sometimes inconsistent. From the EU side, nobody sees a consistent Russian plan. Even so, discourses need to be interpreted under the scrutiny of Russia's ability to manifest the desired outcomes. Here we assess this capacity in the security field.

Moscow has experienced a significant improvement in its ability to oppose some crucial decisions in the last three years. The Medvedev proposal has to be put in the perspective of a new Russian policy, formulated in an ad hoc, discursive manner and delivered by Putin in Munich in 2007, and then formalised into a doctrine in July 2008. The doctrine formulated in 2000 has therefore been replaced informally by Putin followed by Medvedev. The current president has adopted a line of continuity by supporting Russia's assertiveness and rejecting NATO's key role in Europe. Still, his attitude has been more balanced and turned towards the modernisation of the country. In May 2008, his speech in Berlin appealed for the creation of a new European security pact but without specifying the *modus operandi*. Since then, he has been repeating his invectives against the alleged American unilateralism and the US responsibility for the global financial crisis. He has also underlined the Russian *ouverture* with respect to designing a new legal framework suited for a multipolar world. In Evian on 8 October 2008, he stressed that "the Euro-Atlantic vision today needs a positive agenda. The events in the Caucasus have only confirmed how absolutely right the concept of a new European security treaty is today. It would give us every possibility of building an integrated and solid system of comprehensive security."

On 31 July, a presidential decree was formally endorsed, clarifying the signs of change previously visible, as underlined above. The new concept of foreign policy states the following objectives of the Federation:

International developments in the field of international relations in the beginning of the 21st century and [the] *strengthening of Russia* have required *reassessment* of the overall situation around Russia, rethinking of the priorities of the Russian foreign policy *with due account for the increased role of the country in international affairs*, its greater *responsibility* for global developments and related possibilities to *participate* in the implementation of the international agenda, as well as in its development (emphasis added).

In concrete terms, three interrelated security issues have been addressed and opposed by Russia, with some success: 1) the missile shield, 2) NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, 3) and the CFE Treaty. They are dealt with in different forums, at bilateral and multilateral levels. The existing security architecture makes it difficult to discuss missile defence outside the bilateral US–Russian dialogues (as mentioned above). Actually, there are several streams of security dialogues that do not necessarily overlap. For instance, the EU lacks competences under Title V of the EU Treaty to discuss hard security matters. Member states are hence able to pursue

national aims in bilateral talks with non-EU countries. NATO enlargement is a more divisive topic among member states compared with the US plan to extend missile defence in Europe, with disagreements on enlargement leading to a delay in offering Membership Action Plans to the candidates. Concerning conventional armaments, there is a shared concern about the Russian decision to suspend its adherence to the CFE Treaty since December 2007. To sum up, the EU member states have been supporting missile defence in NATO, but have been cautious about enlargement and worried by the CFE Treaty issue. One can translate these tendencies as mixed messages towards Moscow, in a balance of negative and positive decisions concerning the Kremlin's stances on the three disputes.

The European responses so far highlight that contrary to what happened in the 1990s, these long-lasting and recurring disagreements are now to be dealt with taking into account a real Russian capacity for influence. Immediately after his election, Obama received a clear signal from Russia in relation to US plans for the anti-missile system: "I believe it is best for him to know what to expect from Russia in case this decision is taken." With these bitter welcoming words, Ambassador to the EU Vladimir Chizhov sent a reminder that Moscow has means at its disposal, namely the possibility to install missiles in Kaliningrad. As far as the decision on NATO enlargement is concerned, in practice it has been maintained but with the offer of annual programmes of cooperation instead of Membership Action Plans.

Simultaneously and informally, the NATO–Russia Council resumed its meetings, which were suspended after the August war. The official resumption took place in March 2009. These decisions illustrate further the mix of accommodative and firm responses. This dual stance is apparently contradictory. It can be understood by accounting for several elements. For example, even if NATO's secretary general recognises that there is no alternative to an engagement with Russia, the alliance has reiterated simultaneously its support for the Washington missile shield. The Russian suspension of the CFE Treaty adds further difficulties to the chapter on arms control. Nonetheless, the US needs to rely on Moscow's backing in the Afghan theatre, especially for the transportation of logistics.

The EU has not been answering the Russia's call since the 1990s for fundamental re-thinking about transatlantic relations and European security. On the contrary, Brussels has invested much more in economic cooperation with Russia, while the US–Russian relationship has focused on security. Indeed, in the 1990s, Russian foreign policy had largely been pro-European, based on the existence of a European ideal. This trend lasted until the beginning of the first mandate of former President Putin. Moscow considered that there was a trade-off between the EU and NATO, at least from a long-term perspective. Lindley-French (2003) underlined that after the cold war, NATO tried to become more political, while the EU tried to become more military. Nevertheless, the EU's role and evolution is perceived as a possible alternative to NATO (and the US) in Europe, a stance rooted in the Gorbachev idea of a 'common European house'. Putin made a similar appeal in September 2001, in his address to the Bundestag. NATO still represents a challenge to Russian interests, despite the *modus vivendi* experienced (in the NATO–Russia Council, for instance). That notwithstanding, Moscow has had to avoid a situation whereby it would have no access to an institution whose role is important for European security.

In that sense, security is entering into the EU–Russian relationship as a new issue to debate. It is too early to foresee how the discussion of the European security architecture and the need to redefine it will influence Moscow–Brussels relations. It is a complex issue since it implies discussion about the roles of NATO, the US, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The Union has not responded to it yet, at least in a consistent manner, which may be explained by internal disagreements: a passive wait-and-see posture (more specifically to wait for Obama's turn)

versus an active one (i.e. to present an EU offer). The EU still needs to be taken more seriously by Russia on security affairs, and the US shadow affects it.

There is today a window of opportunity for the EU to have a greater and more defining role in this forthcoming debate on security, which Russia would most likely welcome. Selectivity is ever more used in the relationship, leading to a prioritisation of trade and energy for instance. A resurgent Russia, however, introduces the need for the EU to devise a new and consistent model of cooperation with Moscow, while pursuing the management of real interdependencies.

5. Conclusion: Back to the future

The missile defence dispute highlights the shortcomings of the various security dialogues underway and the need to develop a more efficient multilateral dialogue. EU–Russia, NATO–Russia and bilateral relations with Washington are crucial forums for European stability. The current irritants occur in a broader, deteriorated political context that creates distance instead of political convergence. The EU and Russia have not yet clearly defined their roles in the European security architecture. The cooperation model is still open to construction. Against this background, the two elements that are most needed today are the ability to adapt and the will to do so.

Paradoxically, despite the approximation experienced since the end of the cold war, the Russian Federation is a more difficult and perhaps a less cooperative partner than the uncertain Russia of the 1990s. Today, there is a shared responsibility to come up with alternatives that are acceptable to all parties and to interact positively and in a less confrontational way.

The definition of Russian interests is informed by Russia's negative feelings towards NATO and by its assessment of the added value of its European choices. The pan-European ideal of a Europe less linked to the US and to the alliance is enduring. Still, the way Russia pursues this goal depends on the acceptance of the status quo, which is based on the Russia's perception of its vulnerability in the balance of power. Since the second mandate of President Putin, it has been under re-evaluation. An anonymous diplomatic source in Moscow underlines that the current Russian discourses reveal high aspirations, but they are disconnected from the actual Russian fragilities. Relative power seems out of line with the high stakes at play. That being stated, Russia has experienced a lot of change throughout the Putin years and it is still a rapidly evolving actor. Predictability is not a main characteristic of Russian politics yet and this factor is certainly uncomfortable for international cooperation. Furthermore, Russia does not accept any interference in its near abroad. Ahead of last summer's war, this was already emphasised by Medvedev, at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in 2008, when he declared that Russia and Georgia could solve the problems by themselves (Kishkovsky, 2008).

The EU and the NATO allies should not ignore Russian calls to pan-Europeanize the current dialogue, further reforming the existing security institutions. There is a need to go back to the past in order to move ahead. The 1990 Charter of Paris and the 1996 Lisbon declaration issued by the OSCE are cornerstones in the framing of the following idea: a Europe united by common values and the indivisibility of its security. President Medvedev's 2008 appeal to launch a new security treaty in Europe is an encouragement to face imperfect achievements in the reshaping of the institutions. It also raises concerns since the appeal could reflect an unrealistic wish to alter existing structures fundamentally¹³ and to weaken the role of the US in Europe, instead of reforming relations and institutions, such as NATO and the OSCE.

¹³ Sergey Lavrov, foreign affairs minister, drew comments in this concerning way at the 12th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2008.

The bottom line of the disagreement on security issues lies in a deep incompatibility of views, besides the flaws in the Russian concept of security architecture. On the one hand, the Kremlin does not recognise the legitimacy NATO's existence in the post-cold war world. On the other hand, the allies do not even question NATO's *raison d'être*. The secretary general's recent remarks embody this situation when he acknowledged that he is willing to engage in a dialogue on the Medvedev proposal but that he considers the existing security architecture "satisfactory" and "balanced" (De Hoop Scheffer, 2009).

How could the EU and NATO improve its security dialogue with Russia? Even if the Union is at a disadvantage because it is not yet entitled to discuss issues such as missile defence or the CFE Treaty (owing to Title V of the EU Treaty), it still has other virtues with which to maintain a constructive dialogue with Russia. The cooperation framework has been valuable even if it needs to be improved to produce concrete cooperation at the ESDP level. An agreement on exchange of classified information is needed to move ahead in that direction. Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty could be an important tool to deepen the CFSP/ESDP, provided member states are willing to do so. Hard security issues and divisions among Europeans about the neighbourhood (on the degree of engagement and further enlargements) create doubts on the Russian side about the advantages of closer links to a non-cohesive EU. Only a more robust Union as a global actor could offer something to Russia in these fields. Yet despite Russia's sceptical views of the EU project, it is an important part of the security architecture, most notably as other channels have been deteriorating (the US and NATO).

Political confidence is a crucial element that needs to be further advanced. For instance, it would be a precondition to accept the transparency and confidence-building measures necessary to cooperate on missile defence. Each actor still has to create a satisfying role for itself to assume its responsibility in Europe. Where and how Russia fits into the regional structure of cooperation is a recurrent theme. This can only be addressed taking into account the imperfect *acquis* of security relations and institutionalised dialogue. For that purpose, two sides of the same coin are needed. On heads, even if Western countries have divergent views on Russia's evolving position, "Russia will matter in the foreseeable future, and that is why it is important to read it right" (Trenin, 2007). On tails, Russia has to find a constructive role and place in spite of the unavoidable fact that NATO is still a key player in Europe and that the EU is embedded in a transatlantic dimension. This is especially important at a time when the EU is expanding its delimitation to the Black Sea region and trying to foster a closer partnership with Eastern Europe, and as NATO is about to re-conceptualise its mission during the forthcoming Strasbourg–Kehl summit. These new aspirations and policies are emerging in a changed context in which Russia is communicating and acting differently in comparison with previous summits in 1999 and 2004.

The recent sequence of events that launched the new US foreign policy under Obama is indicative for interpreting the forthcoming era of US–NATO–Russia relations. The annual Munich Security Conference, held in February, sent the first mutual signals and smoothed the escalation surrounding missile defence. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy also seized the high-level opportunity to issue a common declaration in which two main aspects were underlined: the entanglement between the Union and the Atlantic alliance and the need to reconstruct a partnership with Russia (Merkel and Sarkozy, 2009). Russia is thus at the centre of current security concerns. Two questions remain open: What role can the EU play in bridging transatlantic cooperation with relations with Russia? And what impact will the Strasbourg–Kehl summit have on security disputes, such as enlargement and missile defence? Is it really expectable to be able to press any 'reset button' with Moscow when NATO's agenda is about further legitimacy and Russia's agenda is about reshaping a contested security order?

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EPIN is a network of European think tanks and policy institutes with members in most member states and candidate countries of the European Union. It was established in 2002 during the Convention on the Future of Europe, by a consortium of think tanks led by CEPS. Its first role was to follow the work of the Convention. More than 30 conferences in member states and candidate countries were organised in the following year.

With the conclusion of the Convention, CEPS and other participating institutes decided to keep the network in operation. EPIN has continued to follow the constitutional process in all its phases: 1) the intergovernmental conference of 2003-04, 2) the ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty, 3) the period of reflection and 4) the intergovernmental conference of 2007. Currently, EPIN follows: 5) the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty and – should the treaty enter into force – 6) the implementation of the Treaty.

The EPIN Steering Committee takes the most important decisions. Currently six member institutes sit on the Steering Committee, namely CEPS (Brussels), DIIS (Denmark), ELCANO (Spain), Europeum (Czech Republic), Notre Europe (France) and SIEPS (Sweden).

Status quo

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EPIN organises two major conferences in Brussels per year as well as ad hoc conferences or other activities in member states. The network publishes the EPIN Working Paper series and other papers, which primarily focus on institutional reform of the Union. The network follows the preparations for the European elections, the EU's communication policy, and the political dynamics after enlargement, as well as EU foreign policy and justice and home affairs.

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