

## spotlight europe

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# Cooperation with the Kremlin

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The proposal from Russian President Dmitri Medvedev for a new European security architecture enlivened the debate about the relationship between the EU and Russia. Yet, under the term security, the Russians understand something different than the EU with her concept of soft power. New forums are needed in order to finally come to a common understanding about future affairs in the region.

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin wall, the West has failed to effectively incorporate the Russian Federation into security institutions in Europe. The consequences of this deficiency reach from the recurrent reigniting of “frozen” conflicts and gas rows to a growing inability in Europe to successfully confront common challenges of the 21st century. This realization, coupled with the new security orientations that accompanied administration changes in both Washington and Moscow, offers a chance to harmonize EU policy and relations with the United States, Russia and the Eastern neighborhood.

Latest concessions of the Obama administration in Eastern Europe show the extent to which the United States will

have its hands tied in potential conflicts between Russia and the “near abroad”. The cancellation of the placement of anti-missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic not only marks a turning point in relations between Washington and Moscow, but also signalizes at least in the medium term a fundamental alteration in the security situation on the eastern borders of the EU. This evolving security reality demands a more proactive role of the EU in fostering positive cooperation with Russia in the common neighborhood in general and in conflict prevention in particular. A combination of existing and developing instruments lend themselves to this end: the Eastern Partnership (EaP), the dialogue over President Medvedev’s proposal for a new European security architecture, a new “[Euro-Atlantic Security](#)

Council” within the OSCE, the Four Common Spaces and a new partnership agreement between the EU and Russia.

## Dmitri Medvedev’s Security Strategy

Initially put forward in June 2008, President Medvedev’s proposal for a “new European security architecture from Vancouver to Vladivostok” must be considered in the context of other security

Ukraine, such a position rejects the endeavors of these countries to acquire NATO membership or accept military bases from western countries.

Much more detailed than the guidelines for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, the national security strategy from May 2009 serves the purpose of creating a common basis for the work of various actors in the security sector. However, it is precisely the lack of coordination and synthesis of the different sections in this document that alludes to interministerial disagreement on security.

In this respect, the security strategy of the Russian Federation under Medvedev remains relatively ambiguous as to what extent the document will actually guide the relevant security actors.

Most apparently, the national security strategy accentuates the importance of national economic development for

the security of the country: socioeconomic goals comprise 5 out of 7 of the measurable criteria by which progress in the security situation will be measured in the future: unemployment, Gini coefficient, the development of consumer prices, national and foreign debt of the state as a percent of GDP and the level of resources provided to sectors of health, culture, education and sciences as a percent of GDP. Only the last two points refer to military power: the annual level of innovation in areas of military and armament and the degree to which human resources can be guaranteed in areas of military, technology and engineering.



documents and statements of his administration. Of these, the most important include the five guiding [foreign policy principles](#) of the Russian Federation, announced in an interview with Euronews in September 2008 and the [National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020](#), ratified by presidential fiat on May 12, 2009.

After the war in Georgia, two of the five guiding principles deserve particular attention: point 4 emphasizes the protection of Russian citizens also abroad as a foreign policy priority and point 5 defines certain regions as “regions of privileged interest” for the Russian Federation. In the case of Georgia or

Despite both the weight given to the concept of security through development apparent in the strategy document until 2020 and the recognition of the importance of soft power, the Russian leadership has thus far perceived national economic development only as a means to enable its assertion on a global scale rather than as a means to ensure long-term stability through increased prosperity on its borders, as is the case in the EU security strategy. In the context of the “sphere of privileged interests” rhetoric, Russia offers the countries of the common neighborhood with the EU few incentives for convergence with the Russian development paradigm.

Because in his speech in Berlin, President Medvedev explicitly appealed to the EU member countries to participate in a summit on the topic as individual countries rather than in blocks or as a group, many western countries responded with the suspicion that the proposal served merely to “divide and conquer”. Moreover, many of the later defined details of the [draft proposal](#), finally published on the Kremlin website November 29, 2009, lacked originality. These aspects included: 1) respect for the territorial integrity of all countries; 2) prohibition of the use of force as well as the threat to use force; 3) insurance of equal security for all (this point alludes to restrictions on military alliances such as NATO that threaten, according to Medvedev, the security of some non-members) and; 4) the rejection of an exclusive right of one state or organization to maintain security in Europe (yet a further reference to NATO).

In particular, points 3 and 4 aim unmistakably at the weakening of NATO’s role in Europe and the first two points already exist in international law. However, a novelty does exist in the legally binding character proposed in which all of these points would be unified. For the security dilemma in the EU neighborhood, the first two points carry

special relevance. Against the background of the war in Georgia, in which Russian troops advanced beyond Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Georgia proper, central and eastern European countries condemn Russia for a lack of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of their countries. While the [“Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia”](#) found Georgia responsible for the first strike in the conflict in South Ossetia, it admonished Moscow for its disproportionate reaction and illegal invasion into Georgian territory beyond the enclaves.

Interestingly, the proposal from President Medvedev focuses exclusively on hard security and military defense, which fundamentally diverges from the comprehensive EU security concept based on “spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights” as the best means to ensure security. While one could argue that the EU can only afford to focus on soft power because of the hard security guarantee from the United States and NATO, the fact remains that the security reality in Europe over the last decades has changed normative perceptions in the EU about the desired means and ends of a secure Europe.

Although aspects of democracy and human rights do not find explicit mention in Moscow’s proposed treaty, President Medvedev offered the EU an open dialogue about these issues in June 2008 during his stay in Berlin and underlined the [“humanistic ideals and values that are shared by all of Europe and are an integral part of the culture of Russia and the unified Germany.”](#) He moreover appealed to a common European identity and foundations of democracy, which also in Russia find their roots in Roman, Germanic and French law.

II

## And the EU?

When it comes to relations with its eastern neighbors and with Russia, both “old” and “new” member countries struggle to come to agreement on the proper course. While Poland, Estonia, Sweden and England tend toward scepticism in dealings with Russia, Germany, Italy, France and Hungary actively seek deeper cooperation. Not able to establish concordance as a union, member states often conclude bilateral agreements with Russia rather than collective ones. One can only hope that through the Lisbon treaty and the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy the EU will become more consistent not only in its strategic documents, but in practice as well. So that the EU can act with a unified voice and meet regional as well as international challenges, new forums are needed which promote a process of vetting the many diverging security interests and perceptions and building consensus. After all, as the [European Council on Foreign Relations emphasized](#), the EU’s most powerful leverage lies in its unity.

III

## Incorporating Russia

An overarching lack of consequence and a common perception of security interests in the shared neighborhood presents the most significant hitherto existing challenge for EU policies toward the Russian Federation. In regards to modernization promotion in the neighboring countries for example, the EU continually insists that the EaP is not aimed against Russia. Objectively, that is true. However, in the politics of security, perceptions of intentions outweigh the importance of the intentions themselves. In exactly this manner, Moscow can argue that it poses no threat to Central and Eastern European countries. As long as these countries feel threatened, they will

have a reason to block the further incorporation of Russia into European institutions. Consequently, it is imperative that the EU replace the practice of “clarification” of intentions with practical confidence-building measures in order to bring these diverging perceptions closer together in the long term. In a first step, cooperation in areas of shared interest such as conflict prevention, energy security and economic cooperation have the most potential for success.

While both the EU and Russian Federation identified these areas as those of common interest, the EU only then can expect constructive cooperation with Russia when Moscow perceives that its security interests are being taken seriously. Although President Medvedev welcomes the latest antimissile defense decision, the point of the matter is not just whether the EU, US or NATO make a decision in Moscow’s favor, but whether Moscow is allowed to participate on level with these actors in an institutionalized decision-making process.

Despite the isolated concessions and the rhetoric of perezagruzka, the perception in Moscow persists that the US “will never allow the Europeans or the Russians access to the button,” as [Dmitri Rogozin expressed in Berlin](#) this November. For this reason, it would be an illusion to expect that Moscow will settle for their position within the framework of the NATO Russia Council. Regardless of the actual intentions of NATO or the US, due to Russia’s perceptions of them, its incorporation into the security architecture in Europe must occur independently from but parallel to NATO: independently because a new council is needed that Russia can help shape from the very beginning and parallel because most EU states still see NATO and its US participation as the preferred institution for providing security in Europe. While it would run contrary to European interests to devalue NATO, the EU should not wait for a proposed solution from Washington,

but rather take the initiative to explore possibilities for a more effective and institutionalized inclusion of Russia in the future of European security.

Due to the broad participation in the OSCE, the organization should seize the suggestion of the Aspen European Strategic Forum and found a “Euro-Atlantic Security Council” within the OSCE. The new council would encounter more acceptance in Moscow and could improve the reputation of the organization on both a political and working level as one that is quick to act and dynamic in its responses. In particular, this council could formulate a common security strategy for new, shared security challenges. The fight against narcotics trade and Islamic extremism would lend themselves as pilot projects. Although the NATO-Russia Council could also deal with these topics, Moscow does not feel adequately included in decision-making processes and treatment of them in a new council would have a different character.

Just as NATO is currently revising its strategic concept, a Euro-Atlantic Council could formulate a common concept and threat perception with the difference that Russia would also enjoy decision-making rights on the topics defined as falling within its mandate. Fundamental questions of NATO enlargement and others would still reside in NATO while the main responsibility for areas defined by the new strategic concept could be anchored within the new Euro-Atlantic Council. The new council could, for instance, deal with the changes to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), necessary since the last NATO enlargement, in order to reach progress in an important area of hard security. Furthermore, it is worth consideration whether certain decisions of the Euro-Atlantic Council could be executed through projects within the framework of the EaP.

## IV

### The New Ostpolitik

Through the incorporation of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, the EU moved into a wider neighborhood, reaching the Black Sea and thus directly bordering not only the frozen conflicts of Southeast Europe, but also those of the Caucasus. Consequently, a new security policy that would effectively combat the insecurity of neighboring states reached a heightened level of prioritization. Launched in May 2009, the Eastern Partnership served as an attempt to utilize the EU’s soft power strength not only for prosperity but for stability promotion in the region and the effective resolution of frozen conflicts that would reach beyond the ad hoc nature of previous EU involvement in conflict resolution. In order to succeed in this endeavor, the EU must retain its legitimacy as a soft power by excelling at that what it does best: trade and economic spheres, development, environmental and consumer protection policies and the area of culture.

Indeed, the EaP offers an approach for a solution to the prior inadequacies of the ENP. Firstly, the “eastern European neighbors” receive the necessary prioritization in comparison to “Europe’s neighbors” in the Union for the Mediterranean, as the EaP will receive an additional 75 percent increase of funding through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Beyond this symbolic value however, the EaP, if successfully carried through, will lead to more convergence with the EU without promising membership, but also without eliminating this possibility in the future. Moreover, because of more tailored agreements, more self-responsibility and ownership ensues and further convergence with the EU gains an increasingly performance-based character.

The EaP presents a new approach to Ostpolitik precisely because it does not

propose old patterns of integration, but rather offers a convergence that depends on the reform will of the individual state.

membership question open for the time being, which enables it to offer gradual incentives through additional convergence

funds. Instead of relinquishing all possibilities for influence at once, the EU offers incentives for various policy areas such as for a visa regime or for a free trade zone.

Concerning the further development of the EaP, which does not envision the institutionalized participation of Russia, the biggest challenge for the success of the initiative consists of the diverging perceptions of security interests of Russia and the EU. The EU speaks about stability and implies long-term modernization that leads to stability and the resolution of frozen conflicts. Russia on the other hand, concentrates on hard security. On an official level, Moscow regrets that the EU rarely addresses hard security issues explicitly in its conversations about its eastern neighbors. Where security notions converge, namely in crisis management, the EU and Russia could work together within the EaP. The conflict in Transnistria offers promising possibilities for a first step in security cooperation in the shared neighborhood. Furthermore, rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia could be utilized to encourage a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As Russia plays a central role in both conflicts and Moscow expressed desire to

cooperation in the area of crisis management, resolution of these conflicts—

### EU Policy Instruments in the East



**Eastern Partnership**

- Founding in May 2009 Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.
- Projects in the areas of trade, energy security, internal and judiciary affairs, science and culture. EU seeks to strengthen reform course in these countries.  
By 2013 600 Million Euro flow to partner countries.
- But: Prospects for EU accession not included.



**New European Security Architecture according to Medvedev**

In November 2009 details of the proposal from summer 2008 were published on the Kremlin website.  
Military Security in Focus:

- 1) Respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries.
- 2) Prohibition of the use or threat of force.
- 3) Insurance of equal security for all.
- 4) The rejection of an exclusive right of one state or organization to maintain security in Europe.



**„Euro-Atlantic Security Council“ within the OSCE**

- Proposal from the Aspen European Strategy Forum, to date not implemented.
- Objective is the creation of a platform for security cooperation between the EU, Russia and North America independent from NATO.
- The Council could formulate and pursue a common strategy for shared security challenges.
- Hope of strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE.



**Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**

- Old PCA concluded in 1994, new agreement urgently needed. "Ständige Partnerschaftsräte" sind dabei wichtige Gremien.
- "Permanent Partnership Councils", serve as important bodies to date in areas of Justice and Home Affairs, External Relations, Energy and Cultural Affairs.
- "Exceptionally ambitious", covers a comprehensive range of political, commercial, economic and cultural cooperation. Respect for human rights and democracy lies at the core of the agreement.
- A new agreement could prepare the way for Russia to join the



**Four Common Spaces between the EU and Russia**

- Initiated at the EU-Russia summit May 2003 and concretized with roadmaps at the summit in 2005, builds upon the PCA.
- Focuses on economic issues and the environment; freedom, security and judiciary issues; external security; and research, education and culture.
- Concrete projects, for example creation of a European Studies Institute in Moscow for the preparation of Russian experts for economics and administration in EU affairs.

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Whereas the older members of the EU possess few carrots or sticks to induce reform in new member states, it leaves the

in addition to the immediate added value—would send a signal to the EU that Moscow is serious about its constructive proposal for a new European security architecture.

So that in a best case scenario, the convergence of the Eastern European neighborhood countries could coincide with convergence with Russia in areas of common interest, the EU needs a new PCA with Russia. At the moment, too much overlap exists between the outdated PCA from 1994 and the four common spaces, which have been implemented since 2005. The EU would be well advised to evaluate which of the four spaces (Common Economic Space, Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, Space on External Security and that on Research, Education, Culture) have made progress thus far and in which of these spaces advancements can be expected. The EU should then foster these areas.

Due to the absence of the US in the common space on external security, cooperation in this area has been ineffective. Against this background, this common space lends itself all the more to a more inclusive forum such as the proposed Euro-Atlantic Council, as security issues in Europe will not be managed without the US and NATO in the near future. In the PCA as well as the four common spaces, economic cooperation presents the area with by far the most progress and potential for its successful further development from a standpoint of mutual interests. As suggested by Moscow political scientist Andrei Zagorski, the EU could work to merge the sectoral economic dialogues into a new partnership

agreement and thereby induce a targeted promotion of these areas. Moreover, further cooperation in the complementary area of Freedom, Security and Justice, which seeks to improve the legal conditions for a gradual liberalization of trade relations, could set the groundwork for Russia to join the WTO and lead to more convergence with the neighborhood and with the EU. Following entry into the WTO, a free trade zone could be gradually established.

Through the modernization and diversification of the Russian economy as well as through the growing middle class that this would generate, the EU can most effectively contribute to long-term political modernization. Also, the potential impact of increased exchanges in the area of culture and civil society presents an aspect of convergence between Russia and the EU that should not be underestimated. Visa facilitation on an EU level would be the most important single step toward advancing these exchanges.

It will prove difficult if not impossible to receive a positive reaction from Moscow to the Eastern Partnership as long as the overarching relations, in particular in the area of security, remain unsettled. For this reason, the EU should respond positively to Dmitri Medvedev's proposal and engage in dialogue with Moscow in order to produce a more detailed version. After all, one should not forget that the Helsinki Accords from 1975 emanated from a Soviet proposal. Through dialogue and joint revision as well as concretization of the proposal, a mutually beneficial agreement could emerge.

**For Further Reading:**

Margarete Klein: Der russische Vorschlag für eine neue gesamteuropäische Sicherheitsordnung: ernst zu nehmender Vorschlag oder Spaltungsversuch?. In: Russland Analysen, No. 175, July 2009

Marcel de Haas: Medwedews Sicherheitspolitik: Eine vorläufige Einschätzung. In: Russland-Analysen, No. 186, July 2009

Hans-Henning Schröder: Ein strategisches Sammelsurium. Medwedews „Strategie für die nationale Sicherheit Russlands bis zum Jahre 2020“. In: Russland-Analysen, No. 186, July 2009

Aspen European Strategy Forum, Aspen Institute Deutschland: [Russia and the West: How to Restart a Constructive Relationship. November, 2009](#)

Susan Stewart: EU Relation with Russia and the Eastern Neighborhood. In: Peter Ludlow (Hrsg.) Setting EU priorities 2009, European Strategy Forum, September 2009

**Responsible**

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