

The EU's Crisis Management From The Russian Perspective

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Non-military mechanisms of conflict prevention are the main priority of Russia in the security sphere. The Russian Federation since the beginning of its post-Soviet history has acquired significant experience of intervention (directly or indirectly) into ethnic conflicts in different parts of the former USSR. Since 1992 Russia has lost more than 150 peace-keepers in different parts of the former USSR and other countries of the world. Experts should evaluate the effectiveness of Russian interventions in conflicts in South Osetia, Abkhazia, Nagornyy Karabakh, Transnistria, as well as into the civil war in Tajikistan, where about 150 Russian peace-keepers were killed. It is too early yet to say that all the conflicts are over, but it can be argued that all these conflicts are to some extent manageable and conflicting sides are now more likely to meet each other over the negotiating table. Russia has to play an important role in regional peace-keeping if it wants to fulfil its intention to play a significant role in European and world politics. Peace-keeping operations help Russia demonstrate political and military power in the post-Soviet space.

In contrast to the experience of the CIS, the border between Russia and the European Union is the most tranquil interstate border of the Russian Federation. For many years Russia has experienced no threat from the opposite side of this border. Moreover, the European Union member-states are the most important partners of Russia in international economic relations. President Vladimir Putin has several times confirmed the special status of partnership with the EU and Russia's intention to be part of European politics and economy. In his view, expressed at the Annual Address to the Federal Council of Russia (3 April 2001), 'The direction towards integration with Europe is becoming one of the major directions of our foreign policy'. Such explicit and concrete statements were never uttered by Russian leaders on this issue before Putin became President.

It is characteristic that in practice all official statements about Russia's attitude to military co-operation of the EU countries have been made not by the minister of foreign affairs or the minister of defence of Russia. They have been made by the former secretary of the Security Council of Russian Federation Sergey Ivanov, who in April 2001 was appointed minister of defence. He mentioned several times that the European Foreign and Security Policy is an issue of special concern to Russia due to its possibility to improve security in the continent in general. Critics of Russian foreign policy, reacting to this generally positive Russian position, often speak about its real essence - wait and see politics. To some extent I do agree with that position, but with one comment. For Russia, as well as several other leading nations in the world, it is not clear if the EU has enough political will to follow this path to its logical end - the total responsibility of Europeans for security in the continent.

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NATO's eastward enlargement to the Baltic states is continuing to be a very important issue for Russian foreign policy, even more important than issues of the architecture of European security, with its growing role for the European Union. First of all - Russia is not totally sure that there is 100% guarantee that "Baltic" enlargement will take place in reality in 2002. There are arguments against the enlargement not only from the Russian side, but from some other countries which are members of both NATO and the EU. An important argument for Russia's final acceptance of the enlargement is the thesis that Russia has to be swayed by its economic interests. The access of its national resources to markets of countries which are NATO members, will in the final stage of discussion allow economic arguments to prevail over all others. We think that in practice Russia's dependence on European markets is not so obvious. A major share of the currency inflow to Russia from European markets is related to the export of energy. Oil, which is one of the key Russian export goods, is traded on exchanges, and so fears that NATO countries will be able to organize a boycott of Russian oil exports appears highly unlikely - particularly as the UN would never support the boycott.

The situation with Russian natural gas is totally different - Russia is dependent on Europe in this issue. But even here there is not much choice for both sides: Russia trades natural gas at world market prices via an existing system of pipe-lines. A decision by Europe to replace Russian natural gas with gas from Norway or Algeria would be a very costly one and in opposition to the current tendency of the EU to develop dialogue with the Russia energy sector. Thus it is too early to discuss the real interdependence of Russia and Europe. We have to create this interdependence, and such problems as NATO enlargement to the Baltic states or the military operation in Kosovo and lack of will to defend Macedonia make the task more complicated.

Moreover, the issue of the membership of Baltic states in NATO may complicate international relations in the Baltic Rim. As we know, at the moment Denmark is an active proponent of enlargement to all three Baltic states, but Finland and Sweden are trying to distance themselves from the problem, simultaneously convincing the leadership of Latvia and Estonia of the importance of developing better relations with Russia. Russia is actively supporting this tendency. For Moscow, it is an objective and very positive tendency that Northern and Western Europe do not perceive it as a source of military threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of three Baltic states. For this reason regular statements by Estonian leaders (chief of Estonian Defence Forces Admiral Tarmo Kouts and Vice-Chancellor of the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Harri Tiido for example), on the opportunity to deploy on its territory nuclear weapons after becoming a member of NATO, are perceived in Moscow as a provocation, aimed at a further deterioration of already very cool bilateral relations.

NATO enlargement to the Baltic states will force Russia to undertake reactive measures, which from a military and political point of view affect the whole Northern European region. The strategic purpose of Russia in several regions of the world, and particularly in Northern Europe, has remained the same over the last ten years. Russia aims to secure the status quo that existed at the moment of collapse of the USSR in the form of a balance of power between the West and the East within the very important European region. NATO enlargement will totally destroy the balance, which was very favourable for Moscow. There are enough serious and unsolved problems in the Baltic region from the Russian point of view (securing Russian economic interests in the region and the Russian-speaking minority are the most important), and so Russia's interest in the Baltic Rim is

permanent. As the best scenario, NATO membership of the Baltic states will freeze the current positive dynamics in Russian-Latvian and Russian-Estonian relations, as well as the development of links between Russian regions in the Northwest and Estonia. Russia will have to revise the priorities of its transport politics, which allow private companies to export goods through sea ports in Leningrad and Murmansk region. The optimum scenario for Russia is delay or total rejection of the idea of NATO enlargement to the Baltic states. It will allow Russia and European nations to come back to Russia's idea of 1997 on joint security guarantees to three Baltic states.

Russian media and politicians evaluate the situation in Macedonia in March-April 2001 as a tremendous failure of NATO, as NATO's disgrace, whose effect will change European security politics in the near future. In fact, NATO was not able to fulfil its obligations towards Macedonia. This country was a loyal partner of the alliance during the operation in Kosovo, and the hope of its leadership was that NATO would protect its territorial integrity and internal stability in the future. The developments in both Kosovo and Macedonia show that NATO is ready to kill for peace and security in Europe, but NATO is not able to send troops to die for the same peace and security. As a result, we have seen a defensive, but non-military alliance - something totally different from what we have learned about NATO in the past.

What are possible tasks for the EU's military (rapid reaction) forces? We still don't know. Obviously, they will not be able to receive the UN mandate for peace-keeping operations in the former Soviet Union without Russia's support. For Russia, which aims to achieve a status quo in world politics, the reconstruction of the UN and UN Security Council's role is today the top strategic priority. It is likely that European countries are also concerned in keeping the UN as the basic international forum for discussing problems of international security and defining the 'rules of the game' in world politics. In theory, joint peace-keeping and crisis-managing operations by Russia and EU may be a solution. But at the moment there is no such spot on the map where the EU may use its new military forces. All conflicts in the former USSR are now 'low-intensity conflicts', but there is the quite clear possibility of their resumption, especially between Abkhazia and Georgia, in Nagornyy Karabakh and in Tajikistan. Probably, there is only one exception - conflict between Moldova and Transnistria. But due to recent political developments in the country (the return of Communists to power and beginning of full-scale political dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol), the EU's intervention into the conflict seems very unreal and out-of-date. Neither Transnistria nor Moscow will welcome it, and Chisinau probably shares this attitude.

According to the prevailing opinion of Russian political elite, NATO is initiating a growth in the role of the use of force in contemporary international relations, trying to change the existing system of international security in the interests of a small group of states. 'Routine' bombardments of Iraq, which became a reality under the new Administration in the USA, are one of the most dangerous threats to stability on the planet, and this threat is coming from the only superpower in the world. Reacting to this transformation, Russia has changed in the year 2000 all major documents (Concepts and Doctrines) which regulate Russia's position in world politics and define Russia's perception of threats to national security. As Sergey Ivanov stated in an interview: 'The priorities of threats to national security of Russia did not change. But what did change is the scale and level of [Russia's] national life's work.'

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The role of the USA in European politics in the new century is continuing to be unclear for Russia. The USA continues to be the leader of NATO. In practice this role extends to it becoming *de facto* the largest European country. As a result, the European nations can not be totally independent in decision-making in some of the most important spheres of politics and security. The history of the previous five decades demonstrates that the alliance of Western Europe and USA is very stable and firm. It was able even to pass the test of the disintegration of the USSR and collapse of the Warsaw Pact. However, with lowering of the share of military problems within the general complex of problems of European politics, the USA mission in Europe is changing. The need to establish different regimes for international trade, investment, protection of the environment is now beginning to replace the fixed mutual obligations of military allies. New regimes are not centred on firm and fixed obligations, and their effectiveness will be tested by dozens of large and small problems, which sovereign countries face regularly on the international arena. It is too early and too difficult to predict if there will be a 'common interest' of Europe and USA in the solution of trade disputes, conflicts related to the agrarian sector of economy, etc. We think that the near future will demonstrate whether the USA is willing to continue to be a 'European country', or whether Washington is reorienting its foreign policy towards more economically attractive and politically dangerous regions, such as the Pacific Rim or South Asia. The question which was formulated 10 years ago continues to be important: can NATO exist in a situation in which it lacks a powerful rival to shape the attitudes of its political elites and its public opinions? There is no such rival yet, and all attempts by the Baltic states to present Russia in this role fortunately failed.

Surprisingly enough, Russian generals are among the most active proponents of European defence initiatives. As the first deputy Head of the General Staff Colonel-General Valery Manilov said in an interview: 'We consider the idea as very promising and important for providing security in Europe. Even more, we think that realization of this type of ideas should become the basis for a stable world in the XXI century. We are taking into account that Europe can not reject trans-Atlantic links and should build its own security system according to these links. But from the other side, Europeans have to keep in mind Russian-Asian aspect of security problems.'

The inevitability and historical determination of EU enlargement needs analysis in details, and the thesis about the unity of Europe which was popular in early 1990s is not so resonant within Europe today. Enlargement is a very costly process and so EU citizens would like to know what exactly the benefits will be at the final stage of the eastward enlargement. Obviously, the EU enlargement is inevitable and profitable for all participating countries in the long run. It may take a long period of time, or it may start soon, but in forms that differ from original expectations of Central and Eastern European countries. Russia's position can be characterised as the following: it is too early to speak about continent-wide co-operation and partnership. Generally speaking, Russia does not believe in 'co-operation' with the West, after learning many hard lessons of relations with the West in the 1990s. The most probable and economically rational variant of enlargement is the following: it will take about 8 years even for leading nations in Central and Eastern Europe and lead to formation of a sort of "division of labour" between (1) Western Europe, (2) Central and Eastern Europe (including three Baltic states), and (3) former USSR countries. The ideal plan for Western Europe is the following: the creation of transport infrastructure, that allows Europe to compete with other major centres of economic power in the world via access to natural resources of former USSR republics (Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan), treatment of their resources in Central

and Eastern European countries by western companies, and production of high-tech goods in Western Europe. In this manner the European Union will be able to solve the problems which appeared during the Nice 2000 European Council in very sharp form. It is already impossible to stop the process of enlargement, but it is politically very damaging to endow new members with the same rights enjoyed by current members of the EU.

In these conditions, the Eastern European countries have an objective interest in the implementation of enlargement. New democratic nations will receive huge investments in heavy industry in the initial stage, and at some time - full membership in the EU. For the Russian Federation the prospect (supply of natural resources to Central and Eastern Europe) is not very attractive, but, most probably, there will be no choice for Moscow. The capacity of Russia's internal market is still very limited, and modest internal demand for goods does not attract much needed investments for the development of a wide range of modern branches of industry.

Conclusions

The main and the most important 'weapons' that the European Union has in the field of conflict resolution are financial-economic resources and the ability to provide economic assistance. Probably, the EU will try 'to buy' peace in some parts on the periphery of Europe. The role of the new European army will be to observe that all conflicting sides will respect the conditions of the 'purchase'. Currently, Russia is not able financially to follow the same policy in the CIS territory. It is important to strengthen the continuing suspicion of the CIS leaders to any new Russian initiative in the security sphere. There is 'nuclear integration' under formation now on the post-Soviet space, which includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgiziya, Tajikistan and Armenia), and a readiness to reconstruct military co-operation with Russia. It is quite difficult to predict how far these military contacts go. In practice, Russia is ready to guarantee the territorial integrity of these states, but at the moment a more real option is to give such guarantees on a bilateral basis. The then secretary of the Security Council Sergey Ivanov in January 2001 expressed Russian policy well: Russia will give a special priority to bilateral links and does not evaluate as profitable integration processes within CIS frameworks. We think that participation of the EU states in conflict resolution in the CIS appears hardly possible in the near future. There is only one serious sphere of interconnection of Russia and EU: crisis management in the Balkans. But in a situation in which Russia is losing influence in the Balkans, these contacts and co-operation are more profitable for the EU, and less so for Russia. Objectively speaking, Russia should react to military co-operation within the European Union negatively. At least until now, Russia has constituted an equal partner with the EU in establishing international security institutions on the continent and participating in their functioning. We think that Russia's official position will quite soon become more negative towards the creation by the EU of its own military forces. But currently, the possibilities of the EU to act effectively in crisis management on the European continent are not clear. Russia is pausing before reacting. Only in a situation when Russia's voice is taken into account in shaping EU crisis management policy will Russia's position be more favourable towards the European Union, and their contacts constructive.

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