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Redesigning Europe? The Pitfalls and the Promises of the European Security Treaty Initiative

Since President Dmitry Medvedev's assumption of office in the spring of 2008, two major documents central to understanding Russian national security and European policy aspirations have been published.[1] Both outline Russia's grand design (and its internal inconsistencies) in some detail. From the very beginning of the Medvedev presidency, a specific and determined desire to redefine the organizing principles, logic, and architecture of European security has gathered momentum. This is embodied, above all, in Russia's proposed Treaty on European Security. Russia's intense dissatisfaction with the existing European security order is not in question, nor indeed is it unprecedented. But what is unclear is whether the circumstances and manner in which this dissatisfaction has been expressed give grounds for other actors (states and international organizations such as NATO, the EU, OSCE, and CSTO) to respond seriously to this proposed root-and-branch revision of the existing order.

This contribution provides an overview and assessment of the so-called "Medvedev plan". It describes Russia's stated rationale for the proposal and recounts how Russia has utilized conferences and meetings to give speeches aimed at publicizing and propagating its core content. It also provides an overview of the reactions and assessments of states and analysts to this proposal, many of which seek to uncover a hidden agenda and purpose to the treaty proposal.[2] The machinations of competing state bureaucracies in Rus-

1 *Kontseptsiya vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [The Foreign Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation]. Approved by the President of the Russian Federation, D.A. Medvedev, on 12 July 2008, available online at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/357798BF3C69E1EAC3257487004AB10C; and *Strategiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda* [The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020]. Approved by a decree by the President of the Russian Federation on 12 May 2009. No. 537, available online at: http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html.

2 Among the many recent studies that examine this proposal, see in particular: Manuel de la Cámara, *European Security and EU-Russian Relations*. Real Instituto Elcano ARI 76/2009, 14 May 2009, at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/Elcano_in/Zonas_in/Europe/ARI76-2009; Sandra Dias Fernandes. *Time to reassess the European security architecture? The NATO–EU–Russia Security Triangle*, EPIN Working Paper 22, 31 March 2009, at: http://aei.pitt.edu/10744/01/1820.pdf; *Euro-Atlantic Security: One vision, Three Paths*, East West Institute, June 2009, at: http://www.ewi.info/euro-atlantic-security; Yuri Fedorov, *Medvedev's Initiative: A Trap for Europe,* Association for International Affairs, Research Paper, Prague 2/2009, at: http://www.amo.cz/publications/medvedevs-initiative-a-trap-for-europe-.html?lang=en; Toomas Hendrik Ilves, European Security Architecture and Eastern Europe, in: *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*, 2-3/2009, pp 70-73; Bobo Lo, *Medvedev and the new European security architecture*, Centre for European Reform Policy Brief, July 2009, at: http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/pbrief_ medvedev_july09.pdf; Andrey S. Makarychev, *Russia and its "New Security Architecture" in*

sia – the realm of the Kremlinologists – are dealt with only briefly in this chapter, as the key determining dynamic lies in the unity at the top of the leadership chain (the coherence of the Putin-Medvedev nexus) and its determination to promote the Medvedev plan as major Russian policy project.

The Evolution of an Idea: From Selective Ambiguity to Ambiguous Selectiveness

Russia's European policy under President Medvedev has been identified with the plan to conclude a Treaty on European Security. In the eleven months between May 2008 and April 2009, President Medvedev delivered three speeches to foreign audiences whose primary purpose was to highlight the treaty proposal. Notably, however, details of the initiative's content did not increase from one speech to the next. It may be that reactions were too diverse to allow Moscow to move forward and consolidate its intentions. Alternatively, the Russian leadership may have launched the proposal in the form of a bare-bones concept to gauge how the world at large, and above all the major players of the Euro-Atlantic area, would react to it. Conditional and cautious acceptance of the need for the Treaty and perhaps even agreement on some of its proposed provisions would then provide a suitable negotiating framework that Russia could drive forward. Whether Moscow had a master plan from the outset and knew what it wanted to achieve would be difficult to ascertain. But it was probably cognizant of the goals it wanted to pursue and had an idea of what was achievable and what was not.

The timing of this initiative seems to have been chosen with care. First, it was announced hot on the heels of President Medvedev's assumption of office. This served a dual purpose – the new proposal could be identified with a new president, and could graphically demonstrate a break with the foreign policy of his predecessor. Second, the US – which Russia regards as its most important strategic counterpart – was preparing for presidential elections widely expected to herald a changing of the guard in Washington. As a result, leading think-tanks throughout the Euro-Atlantic space were busily elaborating new models of international relations for a post-Bush order, and Moscow could tap into that process. Third, transatlantic relations were in flux. The main players in Euro-Atlantic security were gradually overcoming the divide caused by Iraq, and a process of transatlantic realignment around shared interests and values could only be accelerated by the impetus a new adminis-

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Europe: A Critical Examination of the Concept, CEPS Working Document No. 310, 5 February 2009, at: http://aei.pitt.edu/10760/01/1790.pdf; Andrew Monaghan, *Russia's "Big Idea": "Helsinki 2" and the reform of Euro-Atlantic Security*, NATO Research Report, NATO Research Division – NATO Defence College Rome, 3 December 2008, at: http://www.ndc.nato.int/ research/series.php?icode=3; and Sergey Karaganov, The Magic Numbers of 2009, in: *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2/2009, at: http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/ printver/1279.html.

tration in Washington would inject. A fundamentally new expression of Russia's dissatisfaction with European security had a chance to influence and shape perceptions and policies in this fluid context. Fourth, Russia could argue that the Georgian crisis of August 2008 only served to underline the proposal's central contention: The crisis itself demonstrated the structural limitations of the existing European security order.

The initial announcement was made in Berlin during President Medvedev's first visit to Germany and contained two elements: the need to convene a general European summit in which all European states would participate as individual countries, putting aside allegiances to outmoded blocs or other groups, and which would begin the process of drafting an agreement; and the creation of "a regional pact based, naturally, on the principles of the UN Charter, which clearly defines the role of force as factor in relations within the Euro-Atlantic community".[3] President Medvedev stated that a legally binding treaty – the end goal of this process – would not only encompass states, but also that "organisations currently working in the Euro-Atlantic area could become parties".[4] From further comments that President Medvedev made on the same occasion, it was clear that Russia was – not surprisingly – strongly opposed to the role NATO plays in Euro-Atlantic security.

At this early stage, much remained uncertain about the Russian proposal. For example, it was not clear what the role would be of the summit convened to launch the process. Such events normally represent the culmination of a process, and hence require significant advance preparation and diplomatic negotiations, as evidenced by the 1973-1975 process that led to the Helsinki Summit and the Final Act. In addition, the tacit aim of the summit (and therefore of the process to be launched by the summit itself) appeared to be the artificial abolition of existing allegiances and alliances, which, to Russia's consternation, embodied an exclusionary, status-lowering, and marginalizing asymmetry that arose at the end of the Cold War, when the institutions of the East (which the Soviet Union dominated) were abolished and those of the West adapted to changed conditions. This in turn is explained by historical and organic development processes during the Cold War.[5] Furthermore, this state-centric approach appeared to undercut the notion that the treaty would also incorporate intergovernmental organizations active in Europe as signatory parties. This apparent contradiction may stem

3 President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, *Speech at Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders*, Berlin, 5 June 2008, available online at: http://www.president.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type82914type84779_202153.shtml.

4 Ibid.

5 The most pointed characterization of the difference was offered by John Lewis Gaddis when he wrote that the transatlantic connection that developed between the US and Western Europe was "empire by invitation" whereas the allegiance that developed in the East was "alliance by imposition". See: John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know*, New York 1997, pp. 26-53.

from Russia's desire to raise the status of and gain international legitimacy for Russian-dominated organizations operating in the post-Soviet space that have played a lesser role in European affairs, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). If multilateralism is regarded as a positive development in Europe, the same logic should apply to the post-Soviet space. Lastly, it was unclear what the future role of the only pan-European intergovernmental institution, the OSCE, should be. President Medvedev did not clarify whether Russia supported its continued existence or whether it would be swept away by his *tabula rasa* approach.

Before the next phase in the evolution of President Medvedev's concept, the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia illustrated that the post-Cold War European security architecture was, as Russia contended, unable or unwilling to prevent or manage conflict in Europe. Even though there has been no reliable independent assessment of liability for the war, it is clear that the two parties share responsibility for not having come to a peaceful resolution of their long-lasting conflict. Despite the fact that war is an unacceptable and illegal method of conflict resolution, the events in Georgia shattered a 15-year stalemate and resulted in a new status quo that may be unwelcome for many but will contribute to stability in the long run. In addition, some elements of the European security architecture contributed effectively to the settlement of the conflict – namely the EU, as represented by its presidency. However, the war also demonstrated that the OSCE, due to its foundational principle of consensus-based decision-making, was ineffective – as any intergovernmental organization would be in such circumstances. There is a classic trade-off here: Decision-making based on consensus is democratic, but the price of this is reduced effectiveness. When the parties involved in the decision-making process disagree, they have no choice but to seek compromise – a process that may lead to an endless stalemate. Every intergovernmental institution based on the consensus principle would inevitably face this dilemma, and replacing one organization with another would only displace rather than eliminate it.

In October 2008, President Medvedev expressed his reservations with the existing European security order in more specific terms, underlining the necessity to create a new system organized around a new Treaty on European Security. He raised general reservations concerning the structure and functioning of the international security system, as well as concrete grievances generated by the decisions and actions of the West between 1999 and 2008. Among the former category, two appear particularly important: unipolarity, including a "unipolar decision-making process"; and a "bloc", or more concretely "NATO-centric approach" that has "shown its weakness".[6] The con-

6 President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, *Speech at World Policy Conference*, Evian, 8 October 2008, available online at: http://www.president.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/10/08/2159_type82912type82914_207457.shtml.

crete grievances consist of a longer list that begins with the failure of the US to co-ordinate its actions on Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Taliban regime and moves on to the US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and the establishment of ABM deployment areas in Europe, as well as military bases along Russia's borders. NATO's "full steam ahead" expansion, with the extension of offers of membership to Georgia and Ukraine and the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo's independence end the list.[7]

Most of these decisions could clearly be interpreted as hurting the interests of some states, including the Russian Federation. It is for every state to decide which of the policy decisions of other sovereign actors are contrary to its own national interests and, taking into account the constraints of international law, to decide how to react to such decisions. In addition, it is axiomatic that the concentration of power in the international system represents a significant *de facto* reduction of the sovereign rights of states. The predecessor of the Russian Federation, the Soviet Union, was the counterpart of the United States in the bipolar international order – it may thus be more difficult for Russia to accept the change of its status in the international system than other states, as it has fallen the furthest.

In the same speech, President Medvedev further elaborated his concept of a European Security Treaty, summarizing five elements of his initiative. First, he confirmed the basic principles of intergovernmental relations in the Euro-Atlantic area, in particular "the commitment to fulfill in good faith obligations under international law, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of states", and then alluded to "respect for all of the other principles set out in [...] the United Nations Charter". Second, the "inadmissibility of the use of force or the threat of its use in international relations" was especially underlined, as was "the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic space" with an emphasis on negotiated settlements. Third, the President outlined his "three no's": A prohibition on ensuring "one's own security at the expense of others", on acts by military alliances or coalitions that could "undermine the unity of the common security space", and finally on the "development of military alliances that would threaten the security of other parties to the Treaty". Fourth, according to President Medvedev "it is important to confirm in the Treaty that no state or international organization can have exclusive rights to maintaining peace and stability in Europe". Fifth, the idea was advanced "to establish basic arms control parameters and reasonable limits on military construction". The need for "new cooperation procedures and mechanisms in areas such as WMD proliferation, terrorism and drug trafficking" was also raised.[8]

The presentation represented a quantum leap in terms of adding detail and substance to the generalities previously outlined by the Russian side. While the principles advanced closely tracked those enshrined in Article 2 of

7 Cf. ibid.
8 Cf. ibid.

the UN Charter, two additional basic principles of international law – respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the right to self-determination of peoples – were neither codified in the Charter nor mentioned by President Medvedev. Their absence promotes a return to a state-centric system of international law, as enshrined by the principles in the 1945 UN Charter, which protects sovereign states rather than peoples or individuals and eliminates the advances made in international law during the last sixty years, disregarding the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. The Helsinki Decalogue, though not legally binding, encapsulated the evolution of international law between 1945 and 1975 and reflected the value system shared by the then 35, now 56, CSCE/OSCE participating States. It is highly unlikely that the major changes proposed by the Treaty would be agreeable to most of them.

Several other elements of the initiative are subject to interpretation. There is little or no opposition to the notion that no state or international organization should "have exclusive rights to maintaining peace and stability". However, the institutions and organs of international organizations that would gain authority in the international system under the proposed Treaty take substantive decisions based either on veto power or on consensus. The UN Security Council is an example of the former, the OSCE of the latter. Consequently, such bodies may well become paralysed. Respect for due process may therefore increase respect for international law while potentially resulting in less international stability.

It is also worth taking a closer look at President Medvedev's "three no's". The first, that no state should ensure its security at the expense of others, paraphrases the classic security dilemma: that efforts to maximize one's own security minimize the security of others. The second states that no coalition or alliance should undermine the unity of the common security space. This means that once the Treaty on European Security has been concluded, the *de facto* or *de jure* subordination of alliances or coalition of states to the "common interest" would follow. This raises several questions central to security in Europe. What are states, their coalitions or alliances allowed to do if the actors in the "common security space" cannot agree on collective measures? What decision-making mechanism would apply and adjudicate under these circumstances? Given that the consensus principle would be in operation, does this not imply that stalemate and paralysis would be the prevailing trend, with the result that stability in Europe would be weakened rather than strengthened.[9] The third "no", the "development of military alli-

9 It is worth remarking that this aspect of the plan triggers historical echoes. In the early 1990s, the Russian Federation recommended that existing institutions be divided into two categories. The UN and (the then) CSCE would become "mandating institutions" able to determine what "mandated institutions", including NATO and the EU, would be allowed to do. This idea gained no traction, and, following the enlargement of both of the "mandated-institutions", it is hard to envisage their member states now embracing any such subordination.

ances that would threaten the security of other parties to the Treaty", also raises interpretative questions. Who decides whether a certain activity threatens the security of other parties? The states that plan to carry out the activity or those that claim to be negatively affected? Will the rule of consensus apply, or will an individual party to the Treaty have the right to veto the decision of the others? Fundamental differences of perception already divide states in the region. For many, the decisions President Medvedev cites as attempts to marginalize and exclude Russia – the NATO operation in Afghanistan, the enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance, the development and potential deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems – are regarded as critical contributions to international security and stability.[10]

Just a few weeks later, at the Russia-EU summit in November 2008, President Medvedev further elaborated his initiative by stating that the pan-European summit meeting was to take place under OSCE auspices – a suggestion already proposed by President Sarkozy at the Evian meeting in early October. He also specified which institutions should be involved at the summit meeting. The list included the EU and NATO as well as the CSTO and the CIS. Last but not least, in an unprecedented move, the Russian leadership announced that until a special global agreement on ensuring European security was signed, "we should all refrain from taking any unilateral steps that would affect security".[11] This aimed at freezing the international security situation, including the political status quo. Such a move, following the declarations of independence of Kosovo, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, may well be in the interest of most players in Euro-Atlantic security. It gains time and may therefore help to reconcile some of the differences in perception, security policy, and practice.

The change in Washington brought about by the inauguration of Barack Obama reinforced the notion of a strategic pause, and underscored the need to calibrate the extent to which a revision of US politics generates new opportunities. While Washington's European policy appeared to change less radically than its policy towards other strategic theatres, the logic of symbolically "resetting" US-Russia relations suggested that here at least more change (in

10 Another historical echo comes to mind. When in the early 1990s the Soviet Union became willing to conclude new bilateral treaties with its former East-Central European allies on friendship and co-operation, the draft text of the Soviet initiatives regularly included a clause according to which neither side would join an alliance directed against the interests of the other. It was obvious that accepting this would have curtailed the freedom of the smaller states more than that of the Soviet Union, as the latter certainly did not need an alliance to provide for its security. While most East-Central European states rejected the Soviet offer, the question was raised as to who would decide whether an alliance was directed against the interests of the other. Consequently, and in light of historical experience, it is very unlikely that such a proposal could serve as the basis for further exchanges, let alone a treaty.

11 President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, *Statement and Answers to Journalists' Questions after the 22 Russia–EU Summit*, Nice, 14 November 2008, available online at: http://www.president.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/11/14/2126_type82914type82915_209207.shtml.

rhetoric, attitude, and atmosphere, at a minimum) than continuity might be expected. Even though no breakthrough has been achieved during the first seven months of the Obama administration, there are some grounds for optimism.

When President Medvedev held his next major speech addressing the European Security Treaty in Helsinki, in April 2009, he was aware of some of the new US administration's policy intentions. As a consequence, he often mentioned the idea of a long-term vision embodied by the Treaty in conjunction with current policy issues where a breakthrough was considered possible. In addition, President Medvedev appeared to adopt a more inclusive approach to generating discussion of the Treaty proposal: He invited "all states and organisations operating on the European continent to work together to come up with coherent, up-to-date and, most importantly, effective rules of the game".[12] He reiterated that neither "NATO nor the EU seem fully appropriate, because there are countries that do not belong to either. The same applies to organisations such as the CIS or CSTO." The President recognized that there was one organization in Europe that was ideally positioned to host such a summit: the OSCE. Russia was not an enthusiastic supporter of this organization but was "ready to try" to organize the meeting at the OSCE. The President used this forum to highlight that "there is a problem with the OSCE as well. The problem is that recently the OSCE has focussed on solving partial, sometimes even peripheral security issues". The President also drew attention to the fact that a summit should be adequately prepared: "We need to prepare for it and the level of expectations is quite high, as is, incidentally, the level of distrust for the idea. I have repeatedly had to answer questions from our various partners".[13] That was the first recognition that states would not go into a summit meeting as if it were a "blind date", but would need to answer the question: "Why do we need this and are our current arrangements not enough?"[14]

These comments indicated that President Medvedev understood that the summit would not be supported without a well-defined agenda and an adequately prepared draft document. Bearing in mind the complexity of the matter, this would require the launching of a new negotiating process. The opposition to the OSCE being used as the forum to discuss the new agenda is a clear continuation of the longstanding Russian rejection of the domination of European security by soft security (human rights and democratization), despite the fact that it is in this "human dimension" that the OSCE has achieved many successes.

12 President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, *Speech at Helsinki University and Answers to Questions from Audience*, Helsinki, 20 April 2009, available online at: http://www.president.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2009/04/20/1919_type82912type82914type84779_215323.shtml.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

Almost a year after the first indication that Russia was seeking to launch a process to reconsider European security architecture and initiate a new European Security Treaty, the Russian Federation arrived at a point where it had to specify what exactly it was proposing, and more specifically, the purpose of the proposed summit meeting, how it would contribute to the elaboration of a Treaty on European Security, and, most importantly, how would it relate to the current security agenda and the existing web of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. The proposal had yet to move beyond rhetoric and become operational. For nearly a year, President Medvedev had taken the lead and associated his European policies with the European Security Treaty initiative. The "operationalization" of the initiative had to take into account the details of the reality of international relations. At this point, the Russian foreign ministry which had hitherto played practically no visible role became involved in the process.[15]

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov used the opportunity to combine seeking support for the European Security Treaty idea with outlining Russian policy on a more concrete set of issues. He noted that Europe had failed to make the indivisibility of security a reality over the last 20 years, highlighting numerous violations of respect for the principle "to refrain from strengthening one's own security at the expense of the security of others".[16] He argued that Russia intended to create an "integral security space" within the Euro-Atlantic area based on shared norms and standards that should apply to every context.[17] Lavrov advocated these principles as the basis of relations between

15 This understanding that the Russian Foreign Ministry's lack of engagement in the European Security Treaty process demonstrates reserve or perhaps even "latent opposition", is not particularly well-founded. Firstly, in recent years the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been involved more in implementing policy than in policy-making. Secondly, as several elements of the European Security Treaty proposal did not move beyond the declaratory level, the role of the Foreign Ministry remained limited to collecting feedback on the proposal and thus indirectly helping to shape its elaboration. The fact that Russian diplomacy, given the constraints imposed on the country in general and on diplomatic practice in particular by the financial crisis, the effects of which were exacerbated by Russia's budgetary dependence on energy exports, may find it extremely challenging to achieve even partial success on the basis of the President's plan is a separate matter. For a consideration of possible reservations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see Fedorov, cited above (Note 2), a very insightful paper, especially p. 24. On the effects of the financial crisis on Russia and on other structural weaknesses of the country, see Dmitry Medvedev's article, *Go Russia!* of 10 September 2009, at: http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/09/10/1534_type104017_221527.shtml.

16 Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Opening Session of the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, *The challenges of "hard security" in the Euro-Atlantic region. The role of the OSCE in establishing a stable and effective security system*, PC.DEL/480/09, Vienna, 23 June 2009. p. 1.

17 The Russian Federation wants to eliminate double standards and recommends the establishment of pan-European conflict resolution standards instead. Foreign Minister Lavrov illustrated the point by reference to the modes of conflict resolution applied in Kosovo, on the one hand, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, on the other. "In one case, an ethnic conflict provides a basis for recognizing the independence of a territory, and what is more a territory that no one has been threatening during the last ten years, while in another case territories whose populations have been the victim of repeated armed aggression and provocations in recent years are denied this right." ibid. p. 5.

states, echoing what President Medvedev had said eight months earlier. These principles correspond to a system focused on state sovereignty, although the "right of peoples to determine their own fate"[18] is also included. It is important to note, however, that there is no reference to the right to self-determination of peoples.[19] Lavrov repeated the President's three "no's", adding a further commitment to "respect the right of any State to neutrality".[20] As far as the European security agenda was concerned, Russia's preference was for greater attention to be paid to hard rather than soft security matters. Lavrov argued that indivisible security has not been achieved in Europe because the OSCE was not allowed to deal "with the entire range of problems in the Euro-Atlantic area […] on the basis of […] an open system of collective security in the region".[21] His key message was that arms control, confidence-building, restraint, and reasonable sufficiency in military doctrine should play a more important role on the agenda than they have hitherto.

The Chances of a Fair Assessment

When analysing the reception granted to the European Security Treaty initiative, it is necessary to take into account that Russia, as the successor state of the Soviet Union, suffered the most severe loss of international status with the end of the Cold War. Its accommodation to the post-Cold War system was only apparently successful for a short period: Ultimately, it could not accept the status of junior partner to the West. In addition, the "basket of capabilities" that had underpinned Soviet global superpower status – including nuclear military power – was in decline in every respect, rendering Russia's post-Cold War goal of recognition as an independent pole within a multipolar world increasingly harder to attain. This context provides the objective foundation of Russia's dissatisfaction and frustration, and increasingly drives its revisionism.

According to its own narrative, Russia has been unfairly treated, constantly humiliated and subordinated by the West since the end of the Cold War. Under Yelstin and Kozyrev in the early 1990s, it failed to receive due recognition for its co-operative attitude, its Western-oriented transformation, and its contribution to security, including nuclear stability. In the late 1990s

18 Ibid.

19 The original Russian version of the presentation reflects this difference more starkly. It speaks about "prave narodov rasporyazhatsya svoei sud'boi" rather than about the "printsip samoopredeleniya narodov i natsii". Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii, S.V. Lavrova na otrkytii ezhegodnoi konferentsii OBSE po obzory problem v oblasti bezopasnosti, Vena, 23 iyunya 2009 goda: *Vyzovy zhestkikh bezopasnosti v Evro-Atlantike. Rol' OBSE v sozdanii ustoichivoi i effektivnoi sistemy bezopasnosti*, p. 5, available online at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/2fee282eb6df40e643256999005e6e8c/aded9c34ee795d2bc32575de003decd1?OpenDocument.

20 *Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov*, cited above (Note 16) p. 6.

21 Ibid. p. 2.

under Yeltsin and Primakov, Russia failed even to gain sufficient recognition as a regional great power. After 11 September 2001, the *quid pro quos* in return for realignment and intelligence co-operation in fighting international terrorism were not forthcoming. Throughout the two George W. Bush administrations, Russia understood that the US regarded it as an unreliable partner that should be monitored suspiciously and, on occasion, treated harshly. Western institutions rapidly enlarged membership to the east, integrating states that had formerly – and unwillingly – constituted a buffer between the West and the Soviet Union. Institutions in which Russia had a well-established constitutional status – not least the UN Security Council – were ignored by the US. The agenda of the CSCE/OSCE changed and gained a bias that was not welcomed by Russia. Russian documents are not short of concrete grievances that punctuate this narrative of exclusion and marginalization. In short, the direction taken by European affairs threatened many Russian interests. However, the fact that the Russian leadership, under Vladimir Putin in particular, perceived that Russian state interests were being undermined is unfortunate, but not necessarily illegal, illegitimate, or unacceptable. Indeed, in some cases Russia has become hostage of its own thinking: The narrative of restoration and renewal in the 21st century following chaos and disintegration in the 1990s is dependent on accusations of Western encirclement and hostility.

Given the seriousness of some grievances and the frequency at which they were raised, it would be foolish to dismiss them all as without foundation. There is bipartisan consensus in the US that the George W. Bush administration gave grounds for some of Russia's concerns and also contributed to a generally poor atmosphere in US-Russian and more broadly Western-Russian relations. According to two former Republican Secretaries of State "fairness requires some acknowledgement that the West has not always been sensitive to how the world looks from Moscow".[22] In the view of the current Secretary of State, relations were characterized by "a rather confrontational approach toward Russia in the previous [US] administration".[23] In recent years, the US has inadvertently contributed to Russia's conception of itself as a state that is systematically bullied by Washington. Consequently, when Russia advanced a treaty initiative with the aim of addressing exclusion and marginalization, it deserved a fair hearing (and perhaps more) from some of its Western partners, who were conscience-bound to judge it on its merits. Such reactions were indeed forthcoming and may have encouraged Russia to further elaborate its initiative rather than continue merely to float it as a trial balloon. Despite reservations concerning Prime Minister Putin's real policy goals, and concern over President Medvedev's lack of actual autonomy,

22 Henry A. Kissinger/George P. Schultz, Building on Common Ground With Russia, in: *The Washington Post*, 8 October 2008, p. A19, at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/07/AR2008100702439.html.

23 Hillary Clinton, *Interview with Mark Mardell of BBC*, 6 March 2009, at: http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/03/120108.htm.

many states were prepared to give the new Russian president the benefit of the doubt.

Medvedev's initiative can be commended for breaking with the past insofar as it no longer merely reiterates objections to specific decisions taken by the West that Russia has had to endure. Instead, it conceptualizes its rejection of the development of Russian-Western relations over the last twenty years in systematic terms, advancing a framework that reflects its dissatisfaction as a whole, and suggesting a solution to the problem identified. Thus, although certain elements of the initiative were judged unacceptable by many actors in the Euro-Atlantic area, some were worthy of consideration.

The Medvedev initiative challenges the existing status quo in three main domains: first, the political and territorial status quo and the means traditionally used to achieve change; second, the basic principles of the post-Cold War international system, including the role of force and the resolution of international conflicts; and third, the evolution of the system of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, with an emphasis on NATO. Let us examine each in turn.

The Political and Territorial Status Quo in Europe

The Russian Federation has had to manage the transformation of both the territorial and political status quo since the end of the Cold War. Such adaptation is usual during periods of systemic change – it constitutes the backbone of mankind's historical development. Yet the fact that such events occur frequently does not lessen the trauma for states that are affected by them, particularly those states that experience a resultant contraction and loss of political influence. The Russian Federation, the Soviet Union's most important successor state, had been in continuous territorial expansion since the 16th century but now faced three challenges to its territorial integrity.[24] First, the dissolution of the Soviet Union reversed Russian and Soviet territorial gains. Second, between the mid-1990s (the outbreak of the First Chechnya War) and the re-centralization of Russian administration under President Putin, the fragmentation of the Federation was a constant threat. Third, Russia had little influence over changes to the territorial status quo beyond the former Soviet space. The processes that ultimately led to the independence of Kosovo and Montenegro are key recent examples.

The political status quo has also been transformed. The entire process of post-Cold War democratization of East-Central Europe and then the Western Balkans occurred hand in hand with the process of Westernization. The institutional dimension of this process was manifest in the eastern enlargement

24 The unification of the two German states is not considered one of these challenges. Russia could not contest this process, as the Soviet Union had given its assent on a number of instances. Here the dispute centred on whether Russia was promised no eastern enlargement of NATO by way of compensation.

of Western organizations ranging from the Council of Europe to the European Union and NATO. Russia did not challenge those changes as long as it also thought it could find its place among European democracies. Interestingly, Russia reacted pragmatically to democratic transition, but was challenged by the concurrent reorientation of allegiance, and the move of many states from a *de facto* non-aligned status to NATO membership that accompanied the enlargement of Western institutions. When Russia realized it could not prevent strategic reorientation, it attempted to exact as much "compensation" for its perceived and declared loss.[25]

Bitterness accumulated as the process of Western integration moved from East-Central Europe to the Western Balkans, but the real sea change in Russian attitude and perception occurred when, in parallel with the consolidation and centralization of state power and the economic recovery in Russia, the transformation process extended further into the former Soviet space. The so-called colour revolutions that occurred in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan between late 2003 and early 2005 suggested that the newly independent states could strategically realign themselves with the West.

It has been a longstanding policy of the Russian Federation to maintain the status quo: Ongoing and disadvantageous shifts in power relations would only exacerbate Russia's loss of influence and further undermine its interests. Influenced by the fact that the George W. Bush administration made the "freedom and democracy" agenda the centrepiece of its foreign policy, Russia drew the conclusion that revolutions and other types of democratic transformation processes were primarily driven by external influence.[26] Though external factors were significant, necessary internal prerequisites included a lack of performance legitimacy on the part of the regime, a relatively high degree of media freedom, a vibrant civil society, and unity among the political opposition. Democratic transformation is an organic process that may be fostered, but it can hardly be imposed. As President Obama noted: "No system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other. That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people".[27]

The Medvedev plan reflects this overriding concern. It aims to freeze the status quo temporarily with a view to eventually stopping all change. This aspiration is understandable, but it is built on quicksand. It assumes that external actors and forces have a central if not dominant role as drivers of the

25 Notably, the NATO-Russia Charter of 1997, and the agreement on the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002 both served to contribute to Russian acceptance of the 1999 and 2004 NATO enlargements.

26 Although it is impossible to ascertain what Russia learned about the activity of foreign states in the Ukrainian and Georgian transformation processes, it is notable that those with longstanding experience of state security, particularly in the intelligence field, tend to rely more on conspiracy theories than others.

27 *Remarks by the President on a New Beginning*, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt, 4 June 2009, available online at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09.

ongoing ideational, institutional, structural, and systemic transformation processes in the post-Soviet space, ignoring the role of internal state elites and societies and their strategic preferences. It also suggests that it is acceptable to curtail the freedom and political choice of other nations. If accepted, it would also mean that no further entity could seek and gain recognition in the Euro-Atlantic area as sovereign state. Though this would have some positive impact on stability, it would also freeze change and exclude certain solutions to protracted conflicts such as the one in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Legal Foundations of Euro-Atlantic Security

As noted above, the Medvedev plan places an almost exclusive emphasis on the classical principles of international law, centring on the protection of state sovereignty and the prohibition of the threat or use of force.[28] This occurs at the expense of those basic principles that protect subjects other than the state. It entails a *de facto* return to a decades-old system based on unlimited internal sovereignty and the denial of modern international law's contribution to a range of different processes, from decolonization to human security. This implication is certainly not acceptable to many states in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Medvedev proposal suggests that only the "old" principles, (those codified in Article 2 of the UN Charter) such as sovereign equality and non-interference in domestic affairs, matter in the Euro-Atlantic context. This also reflects a selective attitude towards the UN Charter, as it disregards the principles enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter, the purposes of the United Nations.

Some experts assert that the non-intervention principle ceased to apply in the OSCE context several years ago.[29] For this to be so, either the Helsinki Decalogue has become partly invalid or overwritten by elements of the *acquis* adopted later, or the consensus of the participating States has modified the rules *de facto*. However, as the Helsinki Decalogue has been in place since its adoption in 1975 and some participating States regularly refer to the consistency of the ten principles it enshrines, it has clearly neither been overwritten by aspects of the *acquis* adopted later, nor revised *de facto*. Consequently, just as the position advanced by the Russian president's plan cannot serve as the foundation for a pan-European treaty, neither can extreme claims based solely on the right of self-determination and human rights be selectively applied. Russia's partiality highlights the ongoing inability of all the participating States to work together in order to arrive at a compromise that preserves the integrity of the basic principles. The implicit recognition that a norm-based international system offers lasting advantages over one that

28 This shortcoming of the Medvedev plan was also noted by Fedorov, cited above (Note 2), p. 12.

29 See, for example, Arie Bloed, CIS presidents attack the functioning of the OSCE, in: *Helsinki Monitor* 3/2004, p. 220.

is based on the law of the jungle is not to be belittled. It both underlines the changes that have taken place in power relations and represents a reaction against the arbitrariness that has prevailed in recent years.

Euro-Atlantic Institutions

Russia's foundational assumption is that the structure of Euro-Atlantic institutions does not function properly. This impression is not widely shared. Most states understand that the post-Cold War institutional structure did not come about by design but rather through evolution and that, though it undoubtedly contains certain redundancies,[30] it can hardly be replaced by a new structure based on a grand design.

Russia complains that the European security structure is NATO-centric, which suggests that its dissatisfaction stems from the fact that other institutions do not play as important a role in European security as NATO does. It is difficult to dispute perceptions – indeed, contrasting them with reality would be defeated on the ground that the "reality" proffered itself only represents an alternative set of perceptions. Rather, two points should be taken into consideration. First, international organizations, including institutionalized military alliances such as NATO, act upon the will of their masters, the member states. Second, the impression that European security is NATO-centric depends partly on the definition of security in the contemporary European context. The more it is narrowed to defence matters, the more convincing the claim of NATO-centrism becomes. If these two points hold, then the Medvedev initiative should address more fundamental questions. Why has NATO survived the fundamental rearrangement of European security following the end of the Cold War? Why do many European countries hold the view that NATO does make a useful contribution to European security and hence that membership has a certain attraction and value? Why has NATO enlarged?

When one studies official Russian statements and considers the observations of analysts, it is easy to gain the impression that Russia has a rather singular vision of the North Atlantic Alliance. More often than not it regards NATO as the transmission belt of its largest military power: The alliance is seen as unquestioningly implementing US policy. If this is so, why was the Iraq operation non-NATO? Have all new and prospective members been manipulated, if not brainwashed? Why, in some cases, has NATO accession been confirmed in referenda with a large majority of the popular vote? Russia rejects the obvious: Accession countries perceive enlargement as a net positive contribution to their security; NATO accession is understood as a diplo-

30 In addition to an endless list of scholarly articles, it is worth highlighting a collective effort: *Towards Complementarity of European Security Institutions: Achieving Complementarity between NATO, EU, OSCE and the Council of Europe*, Report of the Warsaw Reflection Group, January 31-February 1, 2005, Warsaw 2005.

matic success, stabilizing governments that achieve it; and, "the admission of new members is proof that NATO continues to be attractive".[31]

It would be futile to juxtapose Russia's position on NATO's "internal decision-making structure" with the formal rules and regulations of the Washington Treaty. Though there are major differences in power and influence between individual members, Russia's determination to maximize the importance of the US while minimizing the influence of other NATO members, and to ignore NATO's complexity, leads to unfounded conclusions and misguided policy prescriptions. NATO is the essential component of the transatlantic link; it represents the security framework of choice for a large number of its member states, especially those concerned by asymmetrical security challenges emanating from Russia. Indeed, it is these states that most persistently question the purpose of the European Security Treaty initiative.[32] While the prevailing view in Russia holds that the deterioration of military security in Europe began with the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, some NATO states argue it started with the five-day war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008.

Russia claims to be dissatisfied with a European security agenda that focuses on issues of "marginal importance" at the expense of hard security matters (though they continue to be relevant). It contends that the OSCE has lost the balance between its dimensions, overemphasizing the human dimension, democratization, and intrusive election observation activity, and refuses to rebalance itself. This led to Moscow establishing conditions for the observation by OSCE election monitors of its legislative and presidential elections that were entirely unacceptable to the OSCE, as they would have made it impossible for monitors to ascertain whether the elections were free and fair.

It is not entirely clear what the priorities of the politico-military dimension should be. Russia regularly highlights two areas in need of attention: the peaceful settlement of disputes and arms control. As far as the former is concerned, Moscow seems to focus on a narrow understanding of conflict settlement, one that follows the high-intensity conflict phase. This approach does not require the application of major resources, and it is the conflict parties themselves that determine which institution they entrust with conflict settlement. A broader approach to the conflict-management cycle would acknowledge that the OSCE is endowed with insufficient resources to render it a suitable agent for multidimensional post-conflict peacebuilding, which incorporates the human dimension that Russia underplays. Nevertheless, it is for the OSCE participating States to decide whether to give priority in conflict management to a pan-European organization or to an institution with a smaller circle of members and, thus, more cohesion.

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31 Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, *Speech on the 41st Munich Conference on Security Policy*, 12 February 2005, available online at: http://80.86.3.56/archive/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_konferenzen_archiv=&menu_2005=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=143&.

32 Estonia is a case in point.

Arms control has lost its former prominence on the OSCE agenda. The OSCE has not adopted a single pan-European CSBM package this century. The CFE process (associated with the OSCE to a degree) resulted in first a stalemate and then complete suspension. In the Bush and Putin years, Russia's insistence on a matter of principle collided with US pragmatism. The George W. Bush administration adopted a largely negative approach to European arms control: "We are against negotiating new traditional style arms control/CSBMs, although we MAY be willing to consider specific proposals if there is a clear security need to be addressed."[33] A number of pragmatic, concrete initiatives were agreed, such as documents on small arms, man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), and WMD proliferation, though addressing the explosive remnants of war is more of a knowledge- and resource-transfer project than anything else. Russian initiatives to address arms control issues, ranging from navies to rapid reaction forces, have not gained widespread support. Russia's relatively strong voice in European arms control affairs is due in part to the ill-considered policy of the Bush administration, which demonstrated little sensitivity to Russia's often symbolic attachment to a number of agenda items. It is now open to question whether participating States are willing to accept a pan-European arms control forum as a lesser evil. If they continue to insist that Russia demonstrate a need for such a forum, then European arms control, including the CFE process, will sink into oblivion.

Although there is no consensus as to whether the OSCE is in crisis,[34] it has certainly enjoyed greater influence in the past than it does today. Given that Europe is the continent with the highest degree of regional integration, it is remarkable that the only security organization in which all the states of the region participate does not play a more prominent role. While it may not be the most appropriate time at which to undertake a major change in the structure of European institutions, thinking innovatively about the role of the OSCE or a successor organization would be worthwhile. It has been argued that, on the basis of the Medvedev initiative, "the OSCE would be transformed into an Organization for Collective Security and Cooperation in Europe (OCSCE) and would acquire new functions, including military-political ones, while it would not have Cold War genes."[35]

President Medvedev's initiative appears to have two levels. It asserts that European unity is the goal and to that end insists that preference be given to pan-European integration over less inclusive groups, and NATO in particular. At the same time, Russia welcomes the possibility that regional or-

33 *Statement by US Permanent Representative Ambassador Julie Finley*, *As delivered at the morning session of the High Level Consultations*, Vienna, 13 September 2005, p. 3, available online at: http://osce.usmission.gov/media/pdfs/2005-statements/hlc_09_13_05.pdf.

34 For two generally opposed views, see David J. Galbreath, *The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, Wilton Park 2007, particularly chapter 7: "Crisis? What Crisis", pp. 128-133, and Pál Dunay, *The OSCE in crisis*, Chaillot Paper no. 88, Paris 2006.

35 Karaganov, cited above (Note 2).

ganizations such as the CIS and CSTO, which are firmly under its leadership, could secure pan-European recognition, parity, and legitimacy. It is difficult to square such an apparently self-serving circle. Will greater unity be achieved through the further fragmentation of European security by the increase in the number of institutions?

The "Reset Button"

The Obama administration has left no doubt that it would like a new beginning with Russia, declaring its intention to push the "reset button" in the two countries' mutual relations. This is partly explained as a reaction to the ill-fated policy of its predecessor, and partly by a number of objective reasons. There are basically two interpretations of the Bush administration's Russia policy: Either it did not exist, or it was simply ill-conceived. If it existed, it was based on ideological prejudice: It associated Russia with the Soviet Union and regarded Moscow as a rival that was seeking to increase its regional and global influence fuelled by the export of hydrocarbons. Either way, the belittling of Russia's potential as a troublemaker and a partner proved counterproductive.

The contours of what Washington would now like to achieve, however, are not fully clear a year into Obama's presidency. The US seeks a strategic dialogue and would like to re-establish a community of interests centred on pressing global issues that constitute shared threats, including preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism and the drug trade, or addressing non-European regional security matters – not least Afghanistan,[36] Iran, and North Korea. Washington is also anxious to reduce its and Moscow's nuclear arsenals, which together amount to 95 per cent of nuclear weapons in existence worldwide. In sum, Russia is primarily important for the US as a partner in global and nuclear affairs.

Where co-operation may be highly problematic is in areas and issues that lie closer to Europe, primarily in the former Soviet space. One of the most divisive issues in Russian-US relations regards the status of unresolved conflicts in the Black Sea region and the South Caucasus. The rest of Europe is largely peaceful, integrated in Western institutions or, like the Western Balkans, has a prospect of Western integration in the medium term. As Vice-President Biden pointed out, "the United States will not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. We will not recognize a sphere of influence. It will remain our view that sovereign states have the right to make

36 This is illustrated by an agreement signed by presidents Obama and Medvedev at the July 2009 Moscow summit, which allows 4,500 flights through the Russian airspace to facilitate the re-supply of Afghanistan.

their own decisions and choose their own alliances".[37] Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has resulted in a new status quo that is supported by the populations of all three. Interestingly, the situation that emerged after August 2008 offers the promise of lasting, though somewhat volatile, stability. For though Abkhazia and South Ossetia may complicate things, they do not represent insurmountable barriers to co-operative US-Russian relations.

Russia's continued opposition to the accession of former Soviet Republics to NATO is legitimate, but it must be grounded in respect for the sovereignty of its neighbours and not advanced through tactics verging on blackmail. As there is little consensus in NATO over enlargement to Georgia (questionable territorial integrity) and Ukraine (lack of public support), there will be no NATO enlargement in the former Soviet space in the foreseeable future. However, the US cannot formally promise that there will be no NATO enlargement to the East for three reasons. First, such a declaration would curtail the freedom of choice of potential candidates for membership. Second, it would result in a loss of NATO leverage over potential members. Third, it would also limit the freedom of the 27 other NATO member states to adopt a different position from that of the US. Russia will continue to instrumentalize "Western expansionism" for propaganda purposes, highlighting its opposition to a process that will not take place to demonstrate its power to effectively prevent NATO enlargement to the Russian electorate and its partners in the former Soviet space.[38]

The Russian Federation had high hopes after the change of administration in the US and found Washington's conciliatory statements reassuring. Moscow understandably expects that co-operation will gather pace and a breakthrough will be forthcoming. This expectation does not acknowledge the structural constraints that continue to be present on both sides. Neither the Russian leadership nor the US is united in support of making major concessions to achieve a breakthrough. Furthermore, Russia has demonstrated sensitivity to even marginally critical comments on its potential and role in the international system.[39] This is particularly true with regard to Europe, where

37 Biden, quoted in: Helene Cooper/Nicalas Kulish, U.S. Rejects "Sphere of Influence" for Russia, in: *New York Times*, at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/world/europe/07iht-07munich.20001384.html?_r=1.

38 Irrespective of the fact that NATO enlargement to the east is hardly imminent, the US strongly argues for the success of enlargement: "It is our view that those states who have joined NATO are more free, more prosperous, more stable, and more secure than they were before. We believe that this is ultimately also in Russia's interest. I would note that these states have joined NATO of their own free will […] that NATO is a defensive alliance and that, indeed as a result of enlargement, in fact, NATO has reduced its military equipment levels across Europe." *Remarks as delivered by Bruce Turner, Director, European Security and Political Affairs, Department of State to the opening session of the ASRC*, 23 June 2009, p. 3, available online at: http://osce.usmission.gov/media/pdfs/2009-statements/st_062309_asrc.pdf.

39 US Vice President Joseph Biden expressed the following view on Russia: "They have a shrinking population base, they have a withering economy, they have a banking sector and

the US and Russian positions are far apart, and the US faces co-ordinated opposition from a number of its allies. Russia needs to acknowledge the constraints that the US is up against, to avoid regarding America's smaller partners as identical copies of the US (a phenomenon Foreign Minister Lavrov characterized as "cloned states"), and to assume that the "reset button" could mark the shortest honeymoon period in the history of US Russian relations.[40]

Conclusions

The launch of a process involving political negotiations between all of Europe's states and intergovernmental organizations that would lead to a European Security Treaty is central to President Medvedev's European policy. This initiative reflects both the direction in which Russia would like European security architecture to develop and Moscow's mounting dissatisfaction with political and institutional developments since the end of the Cold War, particularly since 1999. It aims to freeze the political and territorial status quo in Europe, as change would tend to further diminish Russia's power relative to the West. Although Russia's weight in the international economic system measured in terms of its contribution to global GDP has increased during the last five years thanks to its rich natural resource base, this is outweighed by its decline relative to the US and larger EU member states in politico-military importance.

This initiative seeks to establish a normative base for European security through the codification of a set of basic principles that closely resemble those of the United Nations Charter. However, principles that have enriched international law during the last six decades, including the right to self-determination of peoples and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, are marginalized. This selective application of norms is not supported by many states in Europe, which seriously undermines the proposed new normative base of this treaty.

Russia faces a dilemma when it tries to define the role of European security institutions in this system, and particularly the role of the OSCE. Although Moscow is dissatisfied with the OSCE's activities, it regards it as a lesser evil compared to traditional Western institutions, especially NATO. As the OSCE is the only pan-European institution, Russia argues that it should play a central role on the most integrated of all continents. However, in real-

structure that is not likely to be able to withstand the next 15 years, they're in a situation where the world is changing before them and they're clinging to something in the past that is not sustainable." Cited by Lynn Berry, US Vice President Biden hits nerve in Russia, in: *The Washington Post*, 27 July 2009, available online at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/27/AR2009072701154.html.

40 An author at a critical Russian website observed that the US Vice President had told the truth and that this offended the Kremlin. See Aleksandr Golts, Biden skazal pravdu, Kreml obidel'sya [Biden told the truth, the Kremlin was offended], in: *Ezhednevnyi zhurnal*, 27 July 2009, available online at: www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=9313.

ity, Russia's acceptance of the OSCE will depend upon how willing the Organization's participating States prove to be to accept a renewed emphasis on hard (military) security – a source of real concern for Russia – at a time when the relevance of military security for many European countries is in sharp decline. As the OSCE's *raison d'etre* is to embody a comprehensive approach to security, the human dimension cannot be marginalized by Russia's cherry-picking of issues, particularly when many other participating States consider it central to European security.

The launch of Russia's European Security Treaty initiative was well-timed to influence and shape the strategic adjustments to the international security agenda that occur with each new US administration. However, the initiative appears to have lost steam. The more specific it became, and the more it addressed immediate concerns, the less radical the potential outcome appeared. It contains requests that, while redundant, can be presented as diplomatic victories: What state would refuse to respect international law? Similarly, is it likely that NATO will press for the accession of Ukraine and Georgia in the near future?

It is too early to conclude whether the European Security Treaty proposal is primarily a tactical initiative whose main purpose is to demonstrate that there is no chance of turning Europe into a collective security area. If it is, then Russia will gain freedom and additional legitimacy to build its own zone of influence even more overtly than it has done since President Boris Yeltsin's second term. This could then result in a redivision of Europe and the long-term coexistence of two groups of states operating on the basis of partly different principles: market democratic versus market authoritarian. Even though this division is not a preferable scenario and would curtail the freedom of choice of some states in Russia's orbit, it does not threaten a fully fledged East-West confrontation. In this sense, the less the initiative is discussed and debated, and the more it is dismissed out of hand, the greater is Russia's moral authority and the stronger its legitimizing narrative for returning to a division akin to the type reached at Yalta and Potsdam, but incorporating the realities of the early 21st century.

Assuming, however, that the reception is lukewarm rather than freezing cold, the initiative may also serve some more mundane practical purposes. These may include some rebalancing of the various dimensions of the OSCE, the attribution of greater importance to its politico-military dimension and, conceivably, the possibility of an OSCE summit. It may lead to the launching of arms-control negotiations. And last but not least, it may contribute to providing Euro-Atlantic legitimacy to the CSTO, an organization that operates in those seven post-Soviet states that co-ordinate their political line more closely with Russia than do some others. In sum, the Medvedev plan may be a sufficiently ambiguous catalyst to drive forward a new process, but its very ambiguity, its internal inconsistencies, and Russia's inability to state what it

wants as clearly as what it does not undercut the basis for consensus as to the role, mission, and duties of an overhauled European security architecture.