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**REPORT OF THE  
TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY SYMPOSIUM 2009  
"US-EUROPE-RUSSIA SECURITY RELATIONS:  
TOWARDS A NEW COMPACT?"**

*by Sofia Chiarucci and Sara Raffaelli*

Report of the Transatlantic Security Symposium 2009, organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in cooperation with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), with the support of Compagnia di San Paolo, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EU-ISS), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Rome Office, German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF-US), Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NATO Public Diplomacy Division

*Rome, 22 June 2009*

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## **Introduction**

Moved by the conviction that any serious reflection on the future of European security should take into consideration Russia's contribution to it, the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) of Rome organized a Transatlantic Symposium on US-Europe-Russia security relations.

Four main issues were brought under scrutiny:

- The role of the EU, NATO, and Russia in the 'European security space';
- The potential for cooperation in nuclear arms controls, missile defence and non-proliferation;
- Energy security; and
- The prospects for a new encompassing security compact.

The 2009 Transatlantic Security Symposium is the second of a series of annual meetings, focusing on the state of affairs of the transatlantic security relationship.

The event was organised in cooperation with the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EU-ISS) of Paris, and was sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF-US), the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Rome office, the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin, and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It took place in Palazzo Rondinini, Rome, on June 22, 2009.

This report provides a summary of the papers presented in the first three sessions of the conference and the discussion which took place during the meeting.

## **Sessions**

### ***1. The EU, NATO, Russia and the European security space: Towards a new architecture?***

**Vladimir Baranovski's** paper explored the viability of the concept of a 'European security space'.<sup>1</sup> It concludes that a new architecture for European security can be built, provided that the specific role of Russia in the European security space is

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Baranovsky, "Russia's Approaches towards Security Building within the Euro-Atlantic Zone". Vladimir Baranovsky is Deputy Director, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Moscow.

accepted and that Russia's 'vital' interests in the former Soviet space are recognized. Elements of convergence, it is noted, coexist with areas of disagreement. Some issues, such as NATO's enlargement, are still very sensitive and controversial. Russia and NATO, the paper stresses, should recognize that they both suffer from security and psychological complexes. Both parties should recognize the importance of committing to long-term security measures and goals, abiding by the norms they both contributed to establishing from the Helsinki conference of 1975 onwards. In fact, a common European security space can be created if the spirit of Helsinki is revived and the Helsinki accords are updated and further built upon.

NATO enlargement is perceived by Russia as a threat to its national security, despite NATO's efforts to convince it of the opposite. Russia sees NATO enlargement to countries formerly belonging to the Soviet Union as completing a process of 'encirclement', the first phase of which – NATO enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe – has already been imposed upon Russia. The resulting loss of influence in the post-Soviet space deriving from further enlargement would directly undermine Russia's 'vital interests'.

Yet, the NATO-Russia relationship remains crucial. New approaches need to be explored in order to revamp cooperation after the breaking point reached after the Georgian war of August 2008. A solution could be to upgrade the NATO-Russia Council, endowing the latter with more extensive prerogatives and stronger decision-making mechanisms. While stepping up strategic talks, Russia should be engaged in issues where it shares a common interest with the West. Cooperation against terrorism in Afghanistan is a case in point. Moreover, in order to limit the NATO-centric character of the current European security architecture, the US and Europe could consider investing in other institutions, starting with the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OCSE), which already provides a larger and more comprehensive framework for security cooperation. This has been, after all, the proposal put forward by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev since taking office.

What seems to be clear is that, possibly to a greater extent than in the past years, there is an interest on the part of the US and Europe, as well as on the part of Russia to work out new arrangements for a more stable and peaceful European security space, including, if possible, creating a European Security Treaty to that end. Given that different views coexist as to the actual content and shape of the new arrangements, the most promising path seems to be to explore different solutions and try out different formats of cooperation instead of focusing exclusively on certain organizations or planning to set up new ones.

Participants firmly agreed that a 'New Cold War' is very unlikely to unfold. However, agreement did not go much further. The notion that Russia 'is back' was questioned by some. Views differed, moreover, as to the implications of the comeback: are Russia's goals expansionist once more, as seemed to be the case after World War II, or is Moscow simply aiming to protect its vital interests along its borders? Most participants agreed at least that Russia is a necessary component of the European security space and that without cooperation with Russia, the very notion of European security becomes uncertain.

The discussion, therefore, concentrated on the conditions and the logic of cooperation. Some participants emphasized the prospect for several 'win-win' types of solutions, starting with arms control. Others presented a bleaker scenario. The issue to them is *whether* cooperation can be realistically reached given that Russia's 'comeback' has been accompanied by a new assertiveness in foreign policy, often challenging American and European interests and policies, especially in Eastern Europe. Even if the Cold War is over, some noted, the West and Russia are still debating strategic and security issues that were of great salience during the bipolar era, like the deployment of military forces in Europe, the size and development of nuclear arsenals, as well as the acceptability of spheres of influence and their extensions. This could be the indicator that in many respects we are still in the stalemate of the Cold War, and that the only goal truly within reach is coexistence, not cooperation. Others objected to this view, arguing that Russia's security concerns and the West's are largely integrated today. The challenge is to convince Moscow to play the part of the 'responsible stakeholder' in a European security space which has to be inclusive. One participant underlined that Russia has developed an even stronger interest in building a partnership with the West as threats originating from its more unstable borders to the south and east have grown since the end of the Cold War.

While nobody questioned the benefits that would derive from enhanced cooperation, views differed significantly as to how to achieve it. Some stressed that the Cold War strategy of 'containing' Russia's aims might not be completely outdated considering the re-emergence of a 'neo-imperialistic' orientation in Moscow, at least as regards its most immediate neighbourhood. Only by containing Russian power, some argued, can cooperation be explored in some key strategic areas. Others noted that containment and engagement are by definition opposing concepts and cannot coexist within the same strategy. A European participant noted that cooperation with Russia becomes more difficult, the more political the level of discussion. By the same token, the more technical the issues, the easier cooperation becomes. This is well exemplified by Afghanistan and counter-terrorism, where cooperation was maintained even when US-Russian relations were at an all-time low. In the case of NATO enlargement, however, where political considerations are pre-eminent, cooperation has been very hard to achieve.

Several participants questioned the suggestion that technical cooperation can act as a substitute and not only a complement to political cooperation. Many, in fact, agreed that some common principles, if not a common vision of the political future of Europe, are needed if a true partnership between the US, Europe and Russia is to be built. Not only can new institutions not be created without prior political agreement, but even existing ones, such as the OSCE, are bound not to be used to the full, if their mission remains the object of disagreement.

The notion, supported by some, that the EU would have a comparative advantage in dealing with Russia because it is viewed in Moscow in more favourable terms than NATO was questioned by some Russian participants. One participant noted that the 'Eastern Partnership' that the EU recently launched with countries of the former Soviet Union is seen with sincere concern in Russia.

One of the arguments often repeated by the Russian participants was that the West should choose its future approach to Russia carefully because Moscow has, in fact, several strategic options besides cooperation with the West. Other Russian participants contended that Moscow is deluding itself if it thinks that it actually has partners in the East because in fact it has only very fragile or less important relationships, starting with the one with China.

It is a matter of fact, some other participants noted, that Russia is not exactly the strongest among the so-called BRIC countries (Brazil, India, Russia, China). An American participant pointed out that Russia's share of world GDP is stationary around 3%, but that the financial and economic crisis seems to have affected the Russian economy more than the other rising economies and Western ones.

## ***2. Nuclear arms control, missile defence, and non-proliferation: Exploring the potential for US-Europe-Russia cooperation***

**Andrew Kuchins'** paper explores the content of the treaty potentially replacing START 1 and other possible areas of cooperation in which progress can be made.<sup>2</sup> The paper identifies nuclear security and non-proliferation as issues where an agreement is both highly desirable and reachable, but it points out that the Iranian question can become the source of tensions. As far as nuclear arms reduction is concerned, Moscow seems willing to accept limitations provided that a certain equilibrium is kept in the Russian-American nuclear balance. At the same time, however, US plans for a missile defence system in Europe are seen by Moscow as an attempt to undermine the strategic balance. Even if this issue were solved, for the time being only a limited reduction in nuclear arsenals seems possible, at least until negotiations become multilateral and include the other nuclear states.

While Moscow's concerns about nuclear armaments are focused mainly on China, Washington's priority is Iran. Despite the efforts to act as a mediator with Teheran, Moscow actually has little leverage. Linking the urgency of building the missile defence system more closely to the imminence of the Iranian nuclear threat, as the Obama administration has done, could have some chances of success. Working out such a deal is not easy, however, as much will depend in any case on developments in Iran, which are highly unpredictable at the moment. A deal between Russia and the US extending from arms reduction to missile defence would not only boost cooperation in other fields but also put Moscow in a stronger position to influence the future organization and course of European security.

Participants discussed the decision to resume talks toward a new START treaty taken by Russian President Medvedev and US President Obama at the G20 summit in London. It was pointed out that the US president has called for a world free of nuclear weapons. The approaching expiration date of the START 1 Treaty only makes the issue of nuclear forces reduction more pressing. While both Russia and the US agree on non-

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, "Getting Trans-atlantic Security Right: Nuclear Non-proliferation and Strategic Stability". Andre C. Kuchins is Director and Senior Fellow, Russia and Eurasian Program CSIS, Washington

proliferation and arms control as general goals, their specific interests might still be different. A participant argued that the Americans see nuclear arms as a relatively useless instrument. The US was defined as a 'post-nuclear power'. Russia, on the contrary, seems to resemble a traditional nuclear power more, which considers its nuclear capability as a key instrument for guaranteeing its security and sovereignty. If this perspective is correct, then arms reduction becomes a question for tough negotiation, and for Russia it could involve accommodations in other areas not necessarily related to strategic armaments. However, Russia seems to have at least some economic incentives to proceed swiftly towards reducing arms weapons.

Some participants stressed that Russia should be convinced that the anti-missile program has been conceived against Iran. One participant stressed that with the new Obama administration taking a softer approach *vis-à-vis* Teheran, Moscow might be concerned about being excluded from a potential US-Iranian deal. Many participants, in fact, argued that American and Russian interests towards Iran are not necessarily converging, even if they overlap to some extent. It was noted, for instance, that Iran is of crucial importance to key sectors of the Russian economy, making Moscow more tolerant towards Teheran. Russia is not totally disinterested with respect to the Iranian-US rivalry, as it has carved out the role for itself of possible mediator between the two, while gaining from Teheran special privileges in a region which the US finds it extremely difficult to penetrate. This complex system of balances which translates into some advantages for Moscow would be fundamentally altered if US-Iranian cooperation became a reality.

Consensus gathered around the fact that the current window of opportunity to reset Russian-American engagement in arms reduction should not be allowed to close. Some discussants observed that the issue is inherently bilateral and that Europe would only have a very marginal role, if any. Not only is Europe less central to the main equation, but it also faces problems of internal consistency between its 25 non-nuclear-weapon states committed to non-proliferation and disarmament and the two nuclear-weapon states, France and Britain. As far as NATO is concerned, many participants argued that it is hard to imagine how it could come up with a position even only slightly divergent from that of the United States. As a result, arms reduction seem to be a transatlantic issue in only a very limited way – the level is actually global, but the negotiations are primarily bilateral. Nevertheless, a few participants, including some Americans, stressed that as the main transatlantic forum, NATO should be kept actively involved in future discussions, especially in consideration of the new 'strategic concept' which is supposed to encompass such issues. A possible way out, one participant suggested, is to keep the negotiations bilateral at present and broaden them at a later stage. Again, there seems to be a consensus that the top priority is replacing START1 with a new all-encompassing treaty. This will likely be the catalyst for further and more inclusive negotiations.

### ***3. Energy security: What options to build long-term trust?***

In his paper on the Russia-EU energy relationship, **James Sherr** contends that Moscow and Brussels approach the issue of ‘energy security’ in a fundamentally different way.<sup>3</sup> The author underlines how the energy sector is seen by Russia as an instrument of influence both within and outside the country. The Russian economic model of vertical state integration clashes with the EU’s market economy model. As a consequence, the Russian energy sector is unable to fully integrate with the larger external energy market (Russia has nonetheless attempted to extend its ‘system of understandings’, that is, a system based on personal connections rather than the rule of law, to Europe). Acknowledging the systemic nature of the energy problem, Sherr suggests treating the issue not as a purely economic matter and recommends turning the Ukraine-Russia energy relationship into an EU-Russia-Ukraine energy relationship; interconnecting European infrastructure networks; and upgrading the infrastructure of the EU member states. Secondly, the author points out that regulations must be enforced within the EU space and disagreements that internally divide EU countries overcome. According to Sherr, frustration in negotiation and dialogue with Russia is determined not only by Russia’s behaviour but also by the EU’s inability to find a common position among its member states.

Participants remarked that gas is not a scarce resource. However, its transport has become an issue of strategic concern. The unbalanced EU-Russia interdependence has both political and economic dimensions, as recently attested to by the two energy crises between Russia and Ukraine. The crises showed that the EU does not really have a grip on energy matters which are not strictly related to its members and that current European regulations do not provide a useful toolbox for achieving a final solution to the problem. Most European participants agreed that, since the latter is systemic, it has to be tackled with more robust approaches.

Participants recalled that the Kremlin has opposed the so called ‘anti-Gazprom’ reciprocity clause proposed by the European Commission, claiming that the strongly vertical integration promoted by Gazprom is nothing but the first guarantee to ensure European energy security. Additionally, even recognizing that Russia wants to diversify its supply toward the East, it was argued that Europe remains by far its main source of revenue. Thus, if Gazprom thinks in commercial terms, there would be no reason to fear a reduction in its deliveries to Europe, several Russian participants pointed out. Nevertheless, there is widespread concern in Europe that Moscow could use the EU market as a pawn to be sacrificed on the table of its strategic interests. Some participants expressed regret that some EU member states prefer to clinch bilateral deals with Moscow instead of pursuing a European path. They emphasized that Europe should make it a priority to lay out a truly workable energy strategy.

Projects like Nabucco, the Trans-Caspian pipeline and the agreement signed by Italy, Greece and Turkey to construct a European Natural Gas Southern Corridor to transport natural gas from East to the West by 2012 are all attempts to reduce European energy dependence. Yet, few in the field are fully convinced of the commercial viability and actual feasibility of these projects. Diversifying the sources of energy is nonetheless considered worthwhile as Iraq and Turkmenistan are emerging as major gas reserves in

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<sup>3</sup> James Sherr, “Energy security: the Russia-EU Dimension”. James Sherr is Head of Programme, Russia and Eurasia, Chatham House, London

the world, largely still waiting to be exploited. A participant remarked that the EU's priority is infrastructural interconnections. Thus, the problem becomes a pre-eminently European one, as it will be solved when the EU passes from words to deeds and starts working towards the establishment of a truly integrated European energy market.

In fact, many suggested that Europe has to be 'blamed', too. The European Commission's limited mandate has not allowed for concrete integration into a single energy market. Though agreeing that abolishing monopolies and enacting more stringent rules to pave the way for the convergence of national markets should be the main aim, European countries continue to pursue exactly the opposite strategy. Energy markets are still regulated through national legislation. Additionally, since many doubt that Moscow will ever ratify the European Energy Charter, this is another reason for Europe to work on its own energy integration so as to be able to dialogue with Moscow from a position of greater strength.

#### ***4. What prospect for a new security compact?***

The final session of the symposium was a wrap-up part to discuss the most important points raised during the debate further and to consider various future scenarios. Emphasis was put on the concept of a European security space as the context within which to solve the many issues that have still not been settled. Nevertheless, only limited consensus was reached on how to get there, the discussion highlighting more divisions and tensions than expected.

Willingness to improve the current regime of arms control does not automatically translate into greater transatlantic cooperation. In fact, it is not clear where and how the European Union and NATO can fit in it. It was agreed that negotiations should at least lead to the adoption of a new START Treaty – after this bilateral deal, there would be more room to engage other actors through a multilateralization of negotiations. In many respects, Iran was singled out as the key issue. It was argued that by working on closer US-Russian cooperation in this dossier and by more clearly linking ballistic missile defence to the nuclear Iranian threat, even the Iranian question could develop positively, provided the internal situation worsen.

With regard to energy security, attention was drawn to the danger of Moscow making use of its resources to reach revisionist goals. As controversial as the relationship between the Kremlin and Gazprom may be, however, the company may still keep behaving like a commercial entity, even if state-controlled. In that case, the debate should focus on energy as a primarily economic issue, to be kept separate from more political concerns. It was recalled that at least in the short/mid term, Russia does not seem to have any other viable option than to make its deliveries to Europe.

Several participants argued that, despite energy, Russia's international weight might be shrinking. Russia's economic performance is fairly poor if one excludes revenues from energy. Investing in one sector only is also a dangerous choice for long-lasting and sustainable growth. Other great powers, such as China and India, seem to be more reliable and capable of delivering when it comes to global security issues, thus relegating Russia to a second rank position. Nevertheless, several participants, and not

only Russian ones, confirmed that Russia maintains a prominent role in regions that are critical of US and Europe security, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

Another issue at stake concerns what some call the “Eurasian” security dossier which has seen two main developments in the past years: NATO-Russia cooperation and the process of NATO enlargement. In this regard, a Russian representative claimed that the first thing to do is to unblock the static relationship. The Euro-Atlantic security zone has already been enlarged to the largest possible extent beyond which the historical Russian paranoia of being encircled could be hardly mitigated.

The transatlantic relationship was questioned as well. It was pointed out that the range and direction of US priorities do not always converge with Europe’s. Issues like Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East preserve a pre-eminent place among the plethora of US concerns, but seem to be lower on the list of European priorities. An American representative, moreover, pointed out that the impact of the financial crisis combined with the decline in US power could lead Washington to deeply revise its commitments to Europe, choosing various forms of disengagement which could in turn make the EU-Russia relations more relevant and central. In other words, while the notion of a European security space seems to be useful – and perhaps even more so now than twenty years ago – the actors playing in it and their combinations can significantly evolve over time, and this too has to be fully taken into account when envisaging future scenarios

It may still take some time for a new European security architecture to come into being, but it is most urgently needed. Despite several sources of disagreement, no participant questioned the basic point that the establishment of a ‘new European security architecture’ fully incorporating the changes that have taken place since the end of the Cold War would be a superior alternative to a US-Europe-Russia relationship informed by logics of containment or confrontation. Nobody seems to be nostalgic about the Cold War and its much praised ‘stability’ based on frozen conflicts, the division of Europe, and the threat of mutual assured destruction. Nobody, moreover, seems to see anything to be gained by any party from open confrontation.

Opinions diverged, however, as to the exact principles governing the European security space, with views ranging from those prevalent in Western countries where spheres of influence are seen as outrageous Cold War relics, to more traditional views seeing the European security space as the meeting place of traditionally defined territorial national interests. In the latter case, what truly matters is not the birth of some community between Russia and the West but the establishment of a concert of powers, like the ones which dominated the European scene at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In sum, beside disagreeing on several more technical issues, what divided participants was whether the European security space has to be a democratic space as well, or whether it can be defined according traditional geopolitical criteria. In this sense, and perhaps only in this one, the deeper cleavage that emerged between Americans and Europeans, on the one hand, and Russians, on the other, led some to conclude that if the Cold War really is over, then some of the questions that accompanied it or even defined it, have never been fully settled.