

Russia Towards Enlarging NATO

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Russia's relations with NATO are undoubtedly one of the most important factors organising Moscow's strategy and political thinking. The NATO enlargement issue has a particular influence upon them.

The viewpoint of the alliance and the states interested in NATO membership is that NATO enlargement is not aimed against any state or any group of states, and the talks with Russia (without the right to veto the Alliance's decisions but also without surprising Moscow of its decisions) ought to be conducted parallel with the dialogue with countries aspiring to the membership. This restriction is necessary as the Kremlin's negative attitude delayed the Alliance decision concerning Poland's, Czech's and Hungary's accession. Despite a popular "no veto, no surprise" principle, the relations with Poland were NATO priority. These relations influenced the strategic balance in Europe. Also the question of shaping the partnership basis, evolution directions and the place of the Alliance in the European security architecture were at stake.

Russia has been opposing not only to further NATO enlargement but also the existence of this defence alliance. It has suggested a concept of establishing new relations between international security structures. Russia presented the proposal of such a security system model during the OSCE conference in Budapest in December 1994 and justified it with the necessity to prepare a conception basis for future security architecture. In fact, the aim of this initiative was to introduce a construction into the conference agenda, which would place Russia better in the process to create a post-Cold War security system in Europe. It also included the legitimisation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a "counterbalance" to NATO and subordination of NATO and Western European Union to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The latter one was supposed to be strengthened and to change into a quasi-UN, an elite decision structure as its real centre. Thus Russia would automatically gain recognition of its privileged position.

The most important body in that concept was to be the OSCE Executive Committee, where, like in the UN Security Council, Russia would sit as a permanent member with the right to veto. Thus, in such a situation, NATO would be able to be enlarged. The Alliance, however, with the effective system of common defence (which it is today) would change into a common security system dealing with solving conflicts between its members, with Russia playing a leading role there. In other words, the Kremlin's strategic aim is to "dilute" the western defence structures and, in particular, to weaken the USA position in Europe and to ensure for Russia the possibility of co-decision in European politics (especially in the security area). This, in fact, would give Russia the right to veto all crucial decisions concerning security undertaken by NATO, the WEU or the European Union. Russia could become a mediator in conflicts and encounters (e.g. concerning minorities) not only in central and Eastern Europe

but also in the western part of the continent. In such a situation, the question of NATO enlargement would lose its importance.

In the co-operation offer, directed by NATO to the OSCE states, the USSR, and then Russia was always placed on a privileged position. Its readiness to co-operate with the Alliance, however, did not keep pace with opening the western structures onto the co-operation in the security area. Ignoring the changes taking place in the Alliance, Moscow still treats it as an organisation strengthening American influences in Europe and directed against Russian strategic interests. Such was the Kremlin's reception of "The Study on NATO Enlargement", which also referred to relations with Russia, and which held the Alliance position agreed in Noordvik (May 31, 1995), and also in suggested later confidential documents adding details to framework assumptions. It is stressed that further development of mutual relations should be conducted independently from NATO enlargement, keeping a general parallel character of these two processes, though. Russia's membership in the Alliance may be considered, however, if it becomes a state of stable democracy, which in practice is hard to imagine.

Soon after this document publication, Russia warned the West that in case of this process continuation, some instruments could be used to balance the unfavourable for Russia effects of the Alliance approaching the Russian borders. Russia's entering the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), joining the Partnership for Peace (June 22, 1994) and signing the declaration on mutual relations with NATO did not change the Kremlin's perception of the Alliance. An advantage, however, resulted from establishing the relations, was that both sides gained permanent dialogue instruments which became useful while, e.g. planning Russian membership in Implementation Forces (IFOR) and in continuing their mission in Stabilisation Forces (SFOR).

At the end of 1996, the Russia – NATO dialogue entered a new stage, measured both by the intensity of mutual contacts and by new proposals on mutual relations as well. Its intensification was favoured by the approaching summit in Madrid, the vision to invite first countries to hold initial-accession talks and also the USA tough position that NATO enlargement would take place in spite of Moscow's veto. Russian politicians' statements, dating from the turn of the year, seemed not to leave great chances to work out a serious compromise with NATO by that time. In fact, everything what the Alliance had offered was rejected, including deepening military co-operation by exchanging liaison officers in major NATO command structures, and also instituting political consultations. In place of secondary, in Moscow's opinion, western concessions, a real co-decisive voice in politics was demanded. The effect of these endeavours was an agreement signed in Paris on May 27, 1997. Either side recognised the agreement as its own success, interpreting differently its particular points and the legal status.

This document is called the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. This act is a practical step to consolidate the institution of NATO – Russia political – military consultations to build mutual trust. A wide definition of the dialogues areas and potential common endeavours should stabilise the co-operation in the European security area, taking the oddity out of the relations between Russia and the West. Since that time the ad hoc contacts received a permanent

institution, in the framework of which both sides gained the possibility of working discussions on problems of interest, without setting initial conditions for themselves. From today's perspective, this document is a promising potential, the real value of which, however, will be verified by time, and, first of all, by both partners' position towards problems of European security environment.

It is worth stressing that none of this document articles limits, *de iure*, the freedom of activities of any of the agreement sides. From that point of view, it is also essential that the Alliance remains an independent organisation in the whole range of their competencies. The process of consultations with Russia, however, is carried out independently in the framework of NAC activities and has no formal influence on its decisions. Including Russia to take decisions strategic for NATO such as nuclear policy, the Alliance enlargement, intelligence co-operation, defence doctrine, or joint military policy, is also difficult to be possible. Nevertheless, bases were created for Russia to express its opinions, in the areas defined in Chapter 3 of the document, which will be taken into consideration by the member states, but not binding, to make NATO decisions. Thus, it will be possible to discuss Russia's immediate and co-decisive influence on the alliance policy (and vice versa) in the areas (probably enlarging) in which: firstly, the sides will look for agreement; secondly, it will be reached. Although the agreement would be favoured in the biggest number of areas, it would be difficult to suppose that this could be carried out automatically and without any limitations. The document, however, does not make the unanimity absolute, leaving both sides the right of independent actions.

During many months of Permanent Joint Council (PJC) functioning, the Russian side tried openly to block the issue of NATO enlargement on that forum, pointing, first of all, to supposed negative effects of moving NATO military infrastructure in the direction of Russian borders. NATO side consequently replied that that area of issues had not been included in the consultation subject matter as both the Alliance enlargement and the infrastructure on new member territories issue would remain the Alliance internal matter. It is difficult to assume, however, that the Council forum will not in future be used by Russia to present its arguments against next stages of NATO enlargement.

The Council ministerial meetings (more than ten held so far) are the place of particularly animated and not free from controversies discussions.

Establishing in Moscow in February 1998 Documentation Centre for European Security Matters became an important event. The military co-operation was developed in an intensive way, although some problems could not be avoided. The results of co-operation in peace operations and preventing natural calamities are particularly worth noticing.

The NATO – Russia co-operation has developed since their participation in peace operation in Bosnia. From the political point of view, Russian participation in a NATO potential operation in Bosnia was of crucial importance, allowing presenting a single front of the international arena main actors facing conflicts destabilising it. After long-lasting negotiations, in mid October 1995, the Russian military mission consisting of general staff officers

under the command of General Leontiy Shevtzov was installed in the SHAPE Headquarters in Mons. These officers participated in working out general criteria of the Russian contingent participation in the IFOR operation. General Shevtzov was appointed the highest Russian commander in the theatre of operations and deputy commander of IFOR (later on SFOR).

Poland's, Czech's and Hungary's entry into NATO did not lead to tensions between NATO and Russia, nevertheless it strengthened anti-western attitudes in the Duma. NATO enlargement gave arguments for anti-western nationalists in Moscow, who block the START II agreement and other nuclear disarmament initiatives in the Duma. This makes the Russians look for new partners on the international arena such as China, Iraq, Serbia which, in turn, threatens coming back to the Cold War atmosphere while President Yeltsin keeps reminding about the threat of war.

The most important crisis between Moscow and Brussels was evoked, however, by NATO intervention in Yugoslavia and by the new Alliance strategy adopted soon and the declaration of further NATO enlargement (the Baltic states including).

After freezing the relations with NATO, Russia almost immediately blocked just started START II ratification process. At the same time, suggestions to provide military aid for Serbian "brothers" appeared in military circles. Giennadiy Sielezniov, Duma's Chairman, electrified the world with the news of targeting Russian nuclear missiles into NATO countries taking part in the operation against Yugoslavia. This threat, groundless as it appeared, was effective as a temporary propaganda measure. The rumours were spread about probable locating of tactical nuclear arms on the territory of Byelorussia and about Yugoslavia joining the Union of Byelorussia and Russia. It was announced that seven Black Sea Fleet vessels were sent in the area of conflict. The Parliamentary Defence Commission and the General Staff postulated the revision of national security concept and suggested a provision that in the state of threat case, Russia reserves for itself the right to, so called, preventive nuclear attack. Moreover, the Defence Minister, Igor Siergieyev announced that Russia may correct its defence doctrine and would "analyse" the plans of armed forces reductions in order to diminish the threat connected with the possibility of the Baltic states entering NATO. The Minister's statement meant strengthening the assault forces at the cost of support units. The doctrine changes may refer both to using strategic nuclear forces (including the right to use nuclear weapon as the first) and in the army as a whole as well. The new doctrine was supposed to be ready in three months. Siergeyev stated that the present situation did not favour the ratification of the START II agreement, although the defence ministry had favoured its ratification some time before.

Such Moscow's reactions can be understood in the first days of Kosovo conflict. According to Moscow's commentators, NATO undertaking the operation against the Serbs without the UN Security Council mandate questioned the world deal created after the Second World War. Russia, that inherited from the USSR the right to veto, could still feel a world superpower in the framework of this system. At that time, not only the Security Council was not called but also Russia was not asked for its opinion. Furthermore, Russian negative opinion was ignored from the very beginning. In that situation, the air

strikes were received, in the first response, as the attack against Russia, and the Kosovo conflict as the war against Russia and its international position.

The Council for Foreign and Defence Policy, an influential non-governmental organisation consisting of more than a hundred politicians, scientists, journalists and independent politicians, voiced a similar opinion. Assuming that Moscow should not be involved in the conflict, the Council suggested, among others, immediate renouncing the Russia – NATO Act. It was also advised to accelerate the integration process with Byelorussia, military integration including, and also to increase efforts to modernise strategic and tactical nuclear arms, and also to increase expenditures on research on modern anti-aircraft and antimissile arms. The Council also stressed that "it would be a suicide to attempt to start the armament race in nowadays' conditions. The suggested solutions, according to the Council members, should not lead to suspend Russia's international contacts, to raise international sanctions on Yugoslavia and to sign by Moscow treaties with states recognised by international public opinion as renegades." To sum up, the idea is to adopt Russia to a new forces deal which appeared after NATO enlargement.

According to Moscow, the West, by conducting the operation in Yugoslavia, showed its picture of "a new world deal", with the USA and NATO playing the role of a policeman. In that situation, Moscow must take defensive actions against being pushed to the regional power role. Let's make the issue clear. The idea of "Slavic brotherhood", as "Niezavisimaya Gazieta" wrote in the first days of the conflict, may seem attractive but, in that case, what counts is very concrete and pragmatic geopolitical decisions, dictated by strategic, historical and national Russian interests, and not by Yeltsin's or Primakov's will. These interests, as Moscow's politicians claim, require accelerating the creation of a common united with Byelorussia state, complete support of Ukraine and other states of the former USSR in order to rebuild, as fast as possible, the previous strong and controlled by Moscow political ties.

After the first nervous reactions, Russia actively participated in solving the conflict in Yugoslavia. When it became clear that NATO operation would take longer than it had been expected, the tone of western politicians changed entirely. Almost immediately they started to prove that the conflict in Kosovo could not be solved without Russia. In Washington, "the constructive attempts' of Russian mediation were discussed, and Javier Solana in his letter published in the "Kommersant Daily" newspaper complained about Russia breaking relations with NATO (due to air strikes) and declared that the Alliance was ready to renew the relations immediately. "I urge Russia to do the same," he appealed.

Although Yeltsin once again stressed his negative standpoint towards force methods saying that: "the USA and its allies tried to prove the world that that conflict could be solved with a dictatorship method --imposed by force. Now we see that unsuccessfully. Moreover, using the ultimatum by NATO, the tendency not to agree to any compromise, made the field of manoeuvre narrow for diplomatic solutions possible to accept." Nevertheless, he was not against these callings. He agreed to send a military contingent to Kosovo, though he stated that "thanks to Russia's intensive and constructive attempts, the real conflict solving may start, that it is possible to find a way from a dead end street and to look for a peaceful solution."

Such Russia's position brought substantial benefits as the conflict in Kosovo contributed to including Russia to G8 group. It is a gift for Czernomyrdin's and Yeltsin's constructive, as it is said in diplomacy, role during the bombardments in Yugoslavia. Although the Russians called that action an aggression and threatened that that conflict could change into a world war, they, in practice, did not support Miloshević and together with Finland they lead to an agreement, which, in fact, is NATO victory.

On May 5, 1999, the G-8 Group Foreign Ministers reached an initial agreement concerning locating in Kosovo international, civilian and peacekeeping forces under the UN authority. Apart from that, they also worked out a common strategy to solve the conflict in Kosovo, based on conditions raised by NATO and taking into consideration the postulate to introduce a temporary UN administration in Kosovo.

Russian politicians urged to select a separate sector in Kosovo for their soldiers. The Alliance decidedly rejected this demand being afraid that it may lead to the division of Kosovo into the Albanian part (where KFOR are stationed) and Serbian (controlled by Russia). Finally, an agreement was reached. Russian troops will play a special role within KFOR and will operate in American, French and German sectors. Russian officers will be represented on all levels of command. Marshall I. Siergieyev stressed that the agreement provided for leaving Russian peace forces in Kosovo under Moscow's entire military and political control.

Russian generals were not delighted, generally speaking, with some points of the agreement. General Leonid Ivashov (the chief of the Main Department of MoD Foreign Co-operation) reproached that it contained many unclear matters and a lot depended on the partners' good will, NATO in particular. The generals laid claims to Czernomyrdin that he abandoned Moscow's concept, which was to stop Yugoslavia's bombardments immediately, and the demand to leave the UN the way to finish the conflict.

Yeltsin sent Russian troops abroad not only without the Parliament agreement (which is not important in Russia) but not informing the highest civilian authorities. Here raises a question if this means a new arrangement of power in Russia and if generals have a greater influence upon Yeltsin than the government. Russian armed forces do not have Napoleonic traditions and, in fact, they never played an independent political role, however, the precedent of the fact in Prishtina is so encouraging that it may become a routine of Russian politics.

This is a rather unpleasant hypothesis. If generals like Kvashnin (the Chief of General Staff) join Yeltsin's civilian aides, dominated by financiers like Bierezovski, then the West ought to take into consideration the episode in Prishtina in evaluating democracy chances in Russia.

This agreement is, in fact, a compromise between the standpoint of the seven richest western countries, six NATO members including, and Russia. Both sides may feel satisfied: Russia – as, in spite of its visible economic and political weaknesses and also domestic problems, it proved that no solution in the Balkans is possible without Russia. NATO, in turn, as it managed to persuade the Russians to return to the common front with the Alliance, that they once (during the conflict in Bosnia) created.

Since the beginning of the Kosovo conflict there were two fighting standpoints that can be defined as "ideological" and "pragmatic". Communists, nationalists and some generals supported the first one. For the "ideologists", NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia confirmed an aggressive character of the Alliance, the main aim of which, as during Socialist times, is to be Russia's expulsion from regions, recognised as Russian area of influence. Therefore, as the pro-Serbian radicals claimed, Moscow must help Miloshevitich and do its best to oppose to NATO aggressors, even risking "great war". "Today the Serbs, tomorrow Russia " was their repeated motto.

"Pragmatists", Yeltsin and the government including, were more thoughtful. Indeed, the President often used rhetoric of confrontation, however, at the beginning of the conflict, he clearly defined the borders he was not going to cross: he was not going to withdraw unilaterally from the sanctions against Belgrade, Russia was not going to engage militarily on Miloshevitich's side. The pragmatists claimed that they could not afford any war adventures and they could not be isolated, due to financial reasons, from the West. Russia, however, should participate, having the same rights, to solve the conflict in Kosovo to ensure its interests best. Thus Russia would be able to prove that it is still a power and without it no conflict in the Balkans (and not only there) can be solved.

Such an approach facilitated political solving of the crisis but, in fact, the differences between the "ideologists" and "pragmatists" standpoints had a tactical and not programme character. Actually both of them interpreted Russian national interest in the same way – according to the 19th century geo-politics principles, which divided the world into the zones of influence.

This also explains why, in the final stage, after reaching the agreement which enabled stopping the air strikes on Yugoslavia, Moscow – this time due to Yeltsin's initiative, again severed the relations with NATO, arguing about the peace keeping force command structure and division of Kosovo into zones. Even at one moment, Russia threatened that it would agree with Belgrade the principles of its presence in Kosovo without the Alliance.

In spite of some western diplomat's statements, the changes of Moscow's standpoints cannot be explained by only the needs of their domestic political fighting. This is a successive stage of the same illness that made Russia so eagerly oppose to Poland, Czech and Hungary to enter NATO, later on it blocked the peace talks at Rambouillet, which resulted in Kosovo conflict. Russia still cannot define its place in the world. Moscow political elites, the mentioned above "pragmatists" and "ideologists", in fact, perceive NATO and the West in the same way, as rivals, competitors and threat. They can see their national interests mainly in geo-political categories, and not in social and economic, due to the common sense. And only a few have the courage to remind that not the number of missiles, tanks and aircraft decides on the power of the state, but the speed of economic growth, the level of population education, political institutions stability or the citizens quality of life.

The war in Kosovo, undertaken without asking Moscow its permission, reminded fundamental significance of these elementary truths. Vladimir Lukin, the chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote recently in the "Moskovskie Novosti", that Russia, striving for settling the conflict in Kosovo according to its

own scenario, did not take into consideration that its possibilities are significantly limited; that it can produce next meaningless diplomatic notes and statements or it can use nuclear blackmail, but nothing more. The result of this was only sending demonstratively a spy vessel. Russia lacked a realistic and serious plan to resolve the conflict which would be an alternative to the Rambouillet programme. Such a plan was not presented, Lukin continues, due to the lack of reasonable concept but because its realisation would require substantial means that Russia could not afford to, struggling with its own ill economy and the army on the border of collapse. There is only one conclusion here: raising the wave of anti – western hysteria does not have any sense.

While evaluating the Russia – NATO encounters of the last months, Yeltsin stated decidedly that Russia does not aspire to confront NATO and the USA. The president warned against such thinking among higher officers. Yeltsin said that Russia did not want a conflict with NATO but also was not going to strive for the Alliance favours. The Russia – USA relations are in "a very fragile, delicate, and difficult" point, but, according to the president, Moscow could not afford an isolation. Although the president once again criticised NATO for the military operation against Yugoslavia, he acknowledged, however, that Russia should maintain relations with the West. He explained that Russia's attitude towards NATO was a "delicate and difficult" issue. "We will not quarrel with NATO but we also will not favour them," he said.

Soon, the new Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov stated for the first time that Yugoslavian authorities were jointly guilty for the outbreak of the conflict in Kosovo, and some of their movements were not to be accepted. Belgrade, in his opinion, did not undertake right political steps in order to normalise the situation in Kosovo, did not propose a wide autonomy for the province, which would decrease the tension. The change of evaluation was put in practice.

Four months after suspending the co-operation with NATO, Russia decided to renew the official relations with the Alliance on July 23, 1999.

The Alliance diplomats claim that the Russians changed their standpoint in order to have their influence on the situation development in Kosovo. Another motive might be the will to receive western financial and economic support. President Clinton's administration is very willing to continue the co-operation with Russia, as it is one of its greatest achievements in foreign policy. Hence the Americans were able to grant a great aid from the International Monetary Fund and other financial organisations under the condition of renewing Russia's co-operation with the Alliance.

Moscow tries to make up the threats resulting from NATO increasing independence and its enlargement undertaking actions aiming at building, together with China and India, an anti-American strategic triangle and accelerating the integration with Byelorussia.

As K. Buchan writes in the "Financial Times", since the USA left the war in Kosovo with a strengthened status of a world superpower, thus other countries try to tie Guliver. In spite of the fact that Russia, China and main European allies of the USA are liliputs in comparison to American military power, but they are not powerless in diplomacy. Kremlin does not make it a secret that its strategic goal is to reduce Washington's influence and leadership on the world scale. While looking for an alternative to American domination in the world,

Russia tends, among others, to enter into friendly relations with China and India. That idea, put forward by Prime Minister at that time, Yevgieniy Primakov, to create a strategic triangle joining Russia with India and China, although seems to be too far reaching, deserves a serious consideration, even though it has not been yet proposed officially. Firstly, it creates a perspective of a counter-balance to appear in something that becomes a dangerously unipolar world, as could be seen in the case of "Desert Fox" operation carried out almost entirely only by the USA. Secondly, it gives an opportunity to ease some most persistent tensions in that area of the world. Pakistan, for instance, would not raise so many alarms reacting to an Indian – Russian defence agreement signed in 1998, if also China, which maintains friendly relations with Pakistan, signed that agreement. Politicians from the Indian governing party, who somehow do not realise that their anti-Chinese rhetoric means either admitting their weakness, or is an attempt to raise a national hysteria, could become more thoughtful.

According to Russian foreign ministry, a global advantage resulting from even a loose Moscow – Delhi- Beijing connection would provide another option for the prisoners of the unipolar system. It could favour appearing other poles, in the Middle East or Latin America for instance, and would encourage Europe to take a more independent course. Only a multipolar world may bring back some authority, respect and importance for the United Nations, now unfortunately playing a rather marginal role.

Primakov's plan is obviously against conventional wisdom calling for the need of alliance between India and Japan, two big democratic countries, both of which voice fears of China.

It is not very probable, however, for Japan to engage in any strategic Asian alliance. Apart from that, Russia, China and India need American capital, market and influence in order to adverse the USA. India also knows that the USA alone can restrain countries that would like to deepen or raise problems troublesome for American citizens. Thus Trans-Himalayan partnership would mean rivalry with America utmost, without challenging it. Easing the tensions in this part of the globe would suppress American troubles in the area of police controlling and it could be the reason for which Washington would warm to Primakov's idea.

Russia tries to launch Primakov's idea, at least partly. NATO intervention in Kosovo fostered it. In case of China, the new NATO doctrine of humanitarian intervention evokes a civilisation mission, unilaterally proclaimed by Europe in the 19th century, which led to China break up and a series of Western interventions. After these humiliations, Brezhnev's doctrine came out in the 20th century, which proclaimed Kremlin's right to punish, with the use of military force, these communist regimes, which strayed from the course of ideology. In fact, China decided to renew its relations with the United States in 1971 in order to oppose Brezhnev's doctrine.

This policy of close relations between the United States and China is questioned in both capitals at present. Although the last signs show that the tension has lessened, China feels humiliated by the USA, and it is not only connected with bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. Kosovo showed the USA acting for changing the status quo in Europe through armed interference

into independent country matters. Articles in Chinese press expressed fears that Washington may react in the same way in case of Chinese claims towards Taiwan or Tibet, controlled by China.

The Beijing's reaction stressed that although "China continues an independent foreign policy of peace" but "it is ready to develop diplomatic relations with all countries in the world." This reaction, however, did not exclude accepting Primakov's idea. B. Yeltsin attempted to implement the idea at the five Asian states' presidents meeting (Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, Russia and China) in Bishkek on August 25, which, in fact, was a Russian – Chinese summit. Yeltsin arrived in a combative mood in order to, as he explained, "fight against the followers of the West". Russian Foreign Minister, I. Ivanov explained what Yeltsin had in mind that Yeltsin expressed merely his negative opinion on Western domination in the world politics. Not for the first time, President Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Ze-min showed their uniformity of views against the USA domination on the international arena. They launched their own concept of "multipolarity", i.e. several co-ordinate centres of political influence in the world. "Some states attempts to create a new world order, convenient only for them, can be noticed," Russian President said in Bishkek. He did not conceal that he meant the US, first of all.

It was stressed in the summit declaration that one of the main tasks should be to increase the UN importance to handle crisis situations. In this way, Moscow and Beijing wish not to repeat the situation when NATO states conducted armed intervention in the Balkans regardless the Security Council.

The mentioned above enigmatic statements probably mean the standpoint: let us wait and see how the United States will react in human rights and political dissidents case in China, in Taiwan case, how Japan will explain rising the rank of its military connections with the USA (particularly after a univocal support of "Desert Fox" operation by Japan) and how India will act in the role of a nuclear power.

If the triangle project were adopted, then Russia would appear as China's defender. But that is not the only point. What is more significant is the fact that China is perfectly aware that it needs two things to develop successfully: a substantial influx of western capital and unlimited access to western, American in particular, technologies. Can China get the money and technology from Russia and India? Is Russia ready to defend India and China? Or in that arrangement they would receive a subordinate position as Russia is not strong enough for another role. I think that actually it would end with Yeltsin's threats and the demonstration of Russian – Chinese unity, this would not change the arrangement of power on the international arena though.

On April 2, 1997 at the anniversary of signing the Association of Sovereign Republics (ASR), the presidents of Byelorussia and Russia signed a treaty on creation the Union of Byelorussia and Russia (UBR), developing the assumptions of ASR: "in order to reach a real integration in economy and in other areas of social life". According to Ivan Antonovitch, the Byelorussian Prime Minister at that time, the final goal of the unification process is to be a Byelorussian – Russian confederation.

Chief Russian media treated signing the document on the Union of Byelorussia and Russia with restraint. President Lukoshenka's statements

were quoted where he praised Hitler's government, repressions of Byelorussian power apparatus on opposition were mentioned, also the attention was drawn to the cost of integration.

Political significance of creating the UBR is much clearer in the context of Russia's opposition towards enlarging NATO. On the one hand, it was to prove that Moscow is capable "in advance" to approach its military and political infrastructure on the Bug River line. On the other hand, it proved that Kremlin agreed to move the Alliance onto the East. There were many circumstances showing then, that Moscow would implement, first of all, these agreements which would bring the most advantages at the least cost. It might have been supposed then that the priority would be to realise military and military-political agreements, strengthening Russian presence in the area neighbouring the enlarging NATO eastern border. Analyses of Byelorussian National Front independent opposition experts prove that the Union of Byelorussia and Russia is merely a stage in the Russian Federation re-integration policy. Kremlin's far-reaching goal is not to allow Ukraine and the Baltic states to enter European institutions. It is difficult to expect, however, economically unreal Russian – Byelorussian "integration", not to provide these countries next arguments concerning the need to come closer to western political and security structures.

The statute of the Union was sanctioned on May 23, 1997. It was declared there that the Union is "called on the principles of sovereign equity of the state members of the Union, on democracy and respect of human and citizen rights". The sides outlined also further way which would lead to "voluntary union of countries ... basing on expressing the nations free will". It was also included in the statute that "the legal basis of the Union functioning is the agreement on the Union of Byelorussia and Russia of April 2, 1997". The statute does not say about unification of these two countries, even in the longer perspective. Thus Byelorussia maintains entire sovereignty.

Article 15 of the UBR Statute lists the matters to be conducted together. These are: working out the basis of the Union politics; implementing union economic, social, environmental and cultural programmes; co-ordination of foreign policy and foreign trade policy in the common interest area; ensuring common security of the member states; fighting against corruption, terrorism and other crime; creating legal – normative basis for the Union (working out legal basis of economic, social and cultural development; unification of member states legal standards, ensuring employment, and others).

The next integration act allowed Yeltsin to maintain integration initiative taken from national – communist opposition. It was also a response to the progress in NATO integration and uncompromising attitude of the West concerning NATO enlargement.

The Russian – Byelorussian integration process was accelerated when the presidents signed the declaration announcing a new union state creation on December 25, 1998. Neither the Duma nor the government representatives were present at the signing ceremony as it exceeded the limits of what the parliamentarians had wanted. Premier Primakov realised the significance of that declaration in case it was implemented. Russian economy would not stand such an effort and he, as the chief of the government, would be responsible.

Although the provisions of previous integration acts were never fully put forward, Lukashenka ensured that this time it would be different; "you can't get married three times and remain a virgin", he said a few days after signing the declaration.

It was announced in the declaration that by the year 2000, Russia and Byelorussia would have a common budget and common currency. Government and supra-national administration bodies would be created. Russian and Byelorussian citizens would receive equal rights: they would be able to choose and be chosen to joint authorities. Also companies would get equal rights. The end of 1999 would introduce appropriate legislation changes.

Due to tendency of the situation in the world, supported by the USA and NATO, the Union could and should, according to its creators, become a nucleus around which should be formed a centre of economically independent, of a high level of self-sufficiency state, capable of effective tackling economic and political problems. The union of Byelorussia and Russia should become a natural counterbalance to strengthening unipolar international deal, an effective tool to break an aggressive Trans-Atlantic monopoly, an integration nucleus of a new state unification.

Communist opposition, that seems to accept the Russian – Byelorussian unification as an accomplished fact and plans to rebuild the USSR, greeted the declaration with enthusiasm. In G. Sielezniov's opinion, it has to be taken into account that Ukraine, which is "a strong Slavic country and eternal Russian ally", will join the Union by 2000.

Alexander Kabakov, a journalist from the "Kommiersant" claims, however, that signing this document means nothing. It is neither an agreement, nor a treaty, only a declaration. And according to Kabakov, a declaration "in our language" is only a statement. Our legislative authorities are not crazy enough to make a law basing on this declaration. This document is a populist gesture mainly to please Byelorussian public. If Russia is going to unite with Byelorussia, that means that Lukashenka is not a horrifying monster as he looks. He would become more acceptable in the eyes of some western politicians. These are at least Lukashenka's motivations.

Statements appeared in Moscow's press that this agreement opens Lukashenka the way to presidential elections in Russia, and for Yeltsin it enables him to do efforts to become the leader of the future "union state".

In sum, the most essential issues included in the integration documents can be divided into two groups.

In the first one there were confirmed: the announcement of common information space, which, in fact, exists; common energy system (which has always been common); common foreign policy (in relation to Iraq, Serbia, NATO enlargement both diplomacies did not differ).

The second group excludes really hitherto existing co-operation (common: budget, tax system, currency, and citizenship). Their institution would lead to a federation state, however:

- They are contrary to both Byelorussian constitutions, both the one of 1994 and recognised by international community and opposition and the one of 1996 confirmed in a non-constitutional referendum;
- They are contrary to Byelorussian legislation.

No wonder that the matters of every day life were included in a legal international treaty on equal citizen rights whereas everything concerning supra-national structures was included in a non-binding declaration "On Further Unification of Russia and Byelorussia".

Integration experiences show that Moscow does not foster the unification with Minsk. Lukashenka understood this although he earlier dreamed about approving together with Yeltsin the draft of "Agreement on Byelorussia and Russia Unification into a Union State – the Union of Sovereign Republics" at the Kremlin in April 1999. He threatened that if Moscow still delayed the unification, then Minsk would improve its relations with western countries; he stressed that it was his last appeal for the integration.

Lukashenka was supported by G. Sielezniov who expressed hope that Russia and Byelorussia final unification would take place in 1999. In June 1999, some newspapers announced that "the process to create a uniform state of Russia and Byelorussia became real". Also Prime Minister Stiepashin at the meeting of UBR Executive Committee confirmed the allies' mutual strategic significance and announced the unification of both countries to take place in the autumn. The deputy Prime Minister N. Aksjonienko stated precisely that it was not the union but confederation to be taken into consideration.

I don't suppose that in spite of anticipated further integration steps, the unification in a single state would take place. Byelorussia is for Moscow important only as "a window onto the world" – a convenient transit corridor for Russian raw materials and western products (the transit between Russia and Kaliningrad District including), a bridgehead of Russian business expansion into the West, buffer zone where it would be possible freely to manipulate NATO with an argument "of locating elements of military shield"; an imitation of the USSR rebirth, important for a significant part of President Yeltsin's and his followers' electorate. Russia is not going to make special efforts to help Byelorussia in its economic crisis.

The document on the Union of Byelorussia and Russia stipulates, among others, for military integration, which would enable creating coalition armed forces. The mentioned above agreement was developed on December 16, 1997 in Minsk by Byelorussian and Russian defence ministers who signed a package of bilateral military agreements, military co-operation agreement including. Creating a common defence space including western regions of Russia and the area of Byelorussia was supposed to be the effect of these agreements. NATO infrastructure approaching Byelorussian borders was recognised as a threat to Byelorussia's and Russia's security.

These signed agreements sanction legally existing close co-operation between the defence ministries. However, the convergence in time to sign the mentioned above agreements with the events in Brussels and Copenhagen must have been a successive manifestation of Russian and Byelorussian integration intentions for the external and internal use (In favour for communists and the military).

Russia was aware that its zone of political, economic and military influences was decreasing quickly:

- Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary had already been invited to NATO and signed accession protocols;
- The Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) with determination to be found in the "second wave" of NATO enlargement;
- Also Ukraine approved of the integration with the West and close co-operation with NATO;
- More and more CIS countries, Caucasian and Middle Asian republics including, began tightening their co-operation with the West, the USA in particular.

In 1998 the next two documents on military co-operation between Russia and Byelorussia were signed. The first one, the agreement on common ensuring regional security in military area, develops the provisions of the UBR Agreement and Statute on ensuring security and maintaining high armed forces combat capability taking into consideration the Tashkent Treaty provisions. The agreement created legal framework and principles to form regional troops groupings. The other document, the Agreement on Military Co-operation, strengthens legal basis of this co-operation and normalises the range of mutual relations in political-military, military and technical-military areas, including working out state orders and safeguarding common actions concerning Russia's and Byelorussia's military defence in the common military-strategic space framework.

In April 1999, Łukashenka confirmed that Russia and Byelorussia decided to open a common group of troops basing on existing units stationed in the area of Orsha and Smolensk. The Russians reviewed and found some objects, former strategic air force base at Bykhovo including. Moreover, he explained that it was connected with the necessity of both countries defence actions co-ordination due to the threat from NATO, which came close to the UBR borders. Bzhest (Brześć), and not Smolensk is a common border of Russia and Byelorussia, Łukashenka announced during his talks with Yeltsin.

Moscow Military District (MMD), which area of responsibility neighbours Byelorussia, was chosen for the integration with Byelorussia. It means that in the time of threat the Command of Moscow Operational – Strategic Direction and Byelorussian General Staff should conduct joint command over troops on the threat directions. The necessary conditions already exist. MMD and Byelorussian General Staff have similar troop structures, they are equipped in identical combat ordinance, communication and command systems. Moreover using the troops according to unified operational plan and combat regulations is planned. The co-operation is facilitated by the fact that the commanders of both sides graduated from the same Moscow military academies. The decision has been taken that the MMD and Byelorussian General Staff exercises will be carried out at the same time and in close staffs and troops co-operation.

More details were added to the mentioned above agreements during minister Siergieyev's visit in Minsk on April 23, 1999. There were signed, among others, an agreement on foreign activity of defence ministries after NATO enlargement,

on ensuring real security in military area, on common use of Russian and Byelorussian infrastructure and the information exchange.

The integration maturity of Russian and Byelorussian armed forces were expressed in strategic command-staff exercises "Zapad – 99" conducted on June 21 – 26, 1999. For the first time they had a coalition character. The manoeuvres had been planned in 1998 and according to the Chief of General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, Gen. J. Baluyevski, they were not the "demonstration of muscles" connected with NATO actions against Yugoslavia. There participated commands of five military districts (assets of Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts), three fleets, Strategic Missile Troops and Byelorussian Air Defence. The area of exercises reached Central Asia and the border with China.

As it results from the exercise contents, the Byelorussian army is considered as structural unit of the Russian Federation Armed Forces. Accepting such a structure by Yeltsin confirms again information of possible fostering military structures integration of the sides, and Russian generals do not conceal that these actions are connected with NATO enlargement onto the East.

Military co-operation in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) develops in the most effective way in the air defence area.

Russia, not giving up the CIS Air Defence system, started actions in a smaller circle, basing on bilateral agreements. It is easy on the Byelorussian territory as the air defence systems are connected, and "no single information line were liquidated, keeping them to company – battalion level. While performing common combat duties, we send information to each other, analyse our actions in case of extraordinary situations". Byelorussia is also the only country with which the Russian air forces exchange information on the situation in the air space in an automatic regime. Both sides stress that maintaining post-Soviet air defence system is particularly important after drawing conclusions resulting from using NATO air force in Yugoslavia.

Military experts of Moscow "Izvestia" claim that NATO countries military activity forces Russia to increase military technology supplies to Byelorussian ground and air forces. It was expressed in agreements signed in April 1999 concerning, among others, assembling in Byelorussia (in Orsha near Baranovitché) fighter aircraft Su-27. This is, however, a matter of the future. According to specialists, the preparations will take about five years.

Byelorussia's intentions to create a modern army can be proved by the fact that at the beginning of 1999, Byelorussian consortium "Bieltiekhexport" and consortium "Aniey" (Moscow) signed a 15 million USD, due to which Byelorussian firms will conduct repairs and modernisation of "Osa" air defence systems and shooting systems "Saman", which Byelorussian army is equipped with. Byelorussia also spreads the production stock of its military – industrial complex with a close co-operation with Russia. The most successful contracts of the last years include the co-operation of Byelorussian Mechanical – Optical Consortium (BielOMO) with Russian companies producing armoured technology equipment.

Russia finds favouring NATO and the West orientations of former Warsaw Pact states and former Soviet republics as a sign of "flanking" it by the North

Atlantic Alliance (it assigns an inspiring role to the USA), which is harmful to national security interests. Such an evaluation of the situation impels Russia to foster the integration with Byelorussia. Expanding the military co-operation between Russia and Byelorussia confirms earlier forecast that Russia would be mainly interested in those areas of co-operation which would bring it the biggest benefits at the least cost.

There were not serious controversies in Russian – Byelorussian military co-operation as the co-operation between Minsk and Moscow has never been broken off. After some deterioration period when Byelorussia was led by a democrat, Stanislav Shushkievitch, the co-operation was fostered again in Lukashenka times. The president of Byelorussia often admitted that his army protects Russian borders from Riga to Kiev. So far, Byelorussia is the only republic of the CIS states which has reacted positively to Boris Yeltsin's statement to create a close defence alliance to respond to probable NATO enlargement including Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Due to creating common defence space, Moscow can ensure:

- Maintaining military presence in Byelorussia through its officers and Byelorussian military personnel educated in military academies in Russia;
- The possibility, in case of threat, to move its military infrastructure to Byelorussian western borders (the borders of enlarging NATO), and in this way "improving its strategic position in the western direction";
- Strengthening its position in the dialogue with NATO, also with Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states.

According to Russian side evaluations, the both countries armies defend together air space areas, carry out joint combat duties in the Air Defence system, Russian planes are authorised to use Byelorussian air fields and facilities in Vileyka and Baranovitche. Byelorussian anti-aircraft troops conduct missile and rocket combat shooting on Russian military ranges and fields. Finally, due to the Russian General Staff plan, in case of an armed conflict with NATO, Byelorussian armed forces automatically change into a general military army and operate in joint troops group.

Today's Russia – NATO relations do not express former hostility which is replaced by mutual observation and restrained contacts with substantial distrust.

Russia mostly maintained its negative attitude not only towards the NATO enlargement issue, but to NATO itself. It still regards at exclusively as a military block, even if not hostile towards Russia, but competitive. Moscow consequently rejects arguments that NATO should be treated as increasing European security zone, as according to Russian politicians it is pure rhetoric. The Russians claim that something different is more important: firstly: Russia is placed outside such a security system, which leads to its political and military isolation; secondly: NATO enlargement will contribute to the change of the European continent power balance, deepening still unfavourable for Russia proportions. During the Soviet times the relation of conventional forces was 3 : 2 in favour of the USSR, at present it is 3 : 1 in Russia's disfavour, and after admitting new members, the Alliance advantage will be four-folded. Thirdly; as the Russian experts state; regardless how NATO would justify its decision,

NATO enlargement will move its influence zone to the east, and for Russia, still aspiring to the role of the world superpower, geopolitics is the most important.

The feeling of threat increased in Russia after NATO intervention in Yugoslavia. Kosovo became a symbol of Moscow's post-Cold War frustrations. The capitulation of Yugoslavia, Kremlin's traditional friend (not taking into consideration Tito times), stressed Russia's weakness and strengthened the distrust towards the USA and NATO. Among some politicians it even evoked hostility, which may bring back nationalistic and socialist Russia, related to European fascism of the thirties. It would be a sad end to Clinton administration politics which consists in supporting Russian reforms and attracting Russia to the West.

A coincident played a role in these processes. Changing NATO from a military defence alliance into an institution prepared to impose its value by force took place in the same months when three former USSR satellite countries joined it (Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary). It undermined the assertion constantly repeated by the USA and its allies that Russia should not be afraid of NATO enlargement, as the constituting it treaty claims that the alliance is a purely defence institution.

Russia does not pose a military threat for the USA and NATO. It is doubtful if after the unsuccessful operation in Chechnya, it can still threaten seriously even its neighbours. However, as long as Russia sees the USA and NATO as a rival and adversary, it may cause damage to their security and interests without raising armed confrontation.

Nothing indicates and in the foreseeable future Moscow would be able to be cured from that anti-NATO, or strictly speaking anti-American illness. On the contrary. Judging by Moscow's politicians' and political analysts' statements who analyse the directions of Moscow's foreign policy development, this illness intensification can be expected "after Kosovo". They again talk about creating anti-western coalitions and again the concept of "suppressing" NATO, also in nuclear aspect, returns. Politicians demand also defining Russia's "regional security borders" (so a new zone of influence) and returning to the principle of "power balance ". Russia, as Moscow's experts claim, should break the hitherto existing ties with the alliance, stop its support for Germany's membership in the UN Security Council and give it to India. It should also develop its strategic partnership and military co-operation with Beijing, Delhi and Islamic countries as well as maintain an "active military and economic co-operation with Belgrade". The after Kosovo programme calls for "building new relations in Central and Southern Europe and also with post-Soviet states which are afraid of NATO or look for a counterbalance for growing influence of Germany and Turkey". It is also suggested to establish closer ties with those Western European countries that express their fears of the USA and Germany increasing influence on our continent. Adopting a new model of co-operation in the security area with the Commonwealth of Independent States, first of all with Ukraine, is proposed. Alexander Lukin, a lecturer at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote in the "Niezavisimoya Gazieta" that Russia might use many military measures. Although its financial possibilities are limited, but these measures would be a serious obstacle for the NATO expansion. According to Lukin, Russian president signed appropriate decisions concerning air forces and military

satellite modernisation, reform of nuclear strategic forces, increasing its importance in the state defence system, and also accelerating works on low power nuclear missiles possible to use on the battlefield. This programme is like a Cold War horror. These actions, however, are being considered by quite a large number of Russian political elites – not only communist ones.

What can NATO do to find the right response to all these Moscow's challenges?

Firstly: isolation policy or punishing Russia would probably lead to the both continents, Europe and Asia, destabilisation. Therefore, despite present Moscow's standpoint and growing anti-western attitudes there, the reconciliation with Russia should be still the USA and NATO long-term-strategic goal.

Secondly: we should do everything we can to change the present superpower mentality of Russian governing elite and society. The Russians have to be proved, on all levels, that the Alliance is not aimed against anybody and should not be feared of. On the contrary, it is an area of stability and security. NATO enlargement, against which Russia opposes so much, provides, in fact, advantages as it creates foreseeable and stable international environment on its western flank, it allows Russia to focus on solving its domestic problems without any damage to international security. The wiser Russian politicians understand this perfectly but still voice the argument of supposed NATO threat either due to purely tactical reasons, or to divert the public opinion from other, real problems. There are, however, more serious reasons. Imperial ambitions, nostalgia for the former USSR power, the feeling of historical injustice due to the last years' events and the wish to rebuild the empire still live in Russia. We reject strongly these motives of opposition against NATO enlargement, as they pose a threat to our security and are, in principle, contrary to the deepest European values, the idea of peaceful co-operation of sovereign states including.

Therefore, it is the most important for us to support consequently a democratic direction of transformation in Russia, such as support for market reforms, help to build effective and democratic state institutions, fighting against numerous pathologies.

Russia, for its own good, has to put up with the loss of the empire and abandon a traditional tendency to territorial expansion and extending its domination over its neighbours, without their permission. Only full integration of Russia's western neighbours, the Baltic states including, with NATO defence structures may block its expansion in future and lead to desired changes in traditional Russian mentality. Therefore NATO enlargement is the key to the future co-operation between Russia and the West. Any changes to appease the appetite for Russian nationalism will bring results opposite to the desired ones. Only admitting to NATO all aspiring states situated between the present NATO border and Russia may lead Russian resources and energy onto its domestic front, enabling it to overcome its domestic problems and get over the present deep crisis. The perspective of admitting into NATO such countries as Rumania, Bulgaria and also Hungary's allied commitments baffled dangerous attempts to create accomplished facts in Kosovo by unilateral introduction of Russian armed forces there.

Exhausted Russia, busy all the time with suppressing rebellions on its outskirts, is not very eager to spoil its relations with NATO. But its tendencies to superpower restitution, auctioning the faithfulness to these tendencies by competing power groups and the influence of military – arms complex push Russia to sever these relations. Thus we deal with a contracting party which is not stable, often uncertain and with little credibility, whose way to success is long and paved.

It must be taken into consideration that the USA – Russia relations will improve and worsen periodically, depending mainly on how Russia will struggle with the heritage of its past and what kind of politicians will lead it.

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