

# Evolving Russian Foreign and Security Policy: Interpreting the Putin-doctrine

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Writing about Russian foreign policy is always topical, but particularly in recent years as Russia has markedly increased its foreign policy profile, undoubtedly the most powerful Russia in world affairs since the demise of the Soviet Union. Russia has also made radical shifts in some traditional areas of its foreign policy. Additionally, in 2008 Russia will elect a new president who will formally put an end to the Putin-era.<sup>1</sup> Thus, a preliminary evaluation of the Russian Federation's second president's foreign policy performance seems appropriate at this juncture.

In this article I do not aim at a systematic analysis of the 8 years of Putin being in office, rather, I would like to focus on those points that reveal the novel content of what sometimes is termed "Putin-doctrine" with some emphasis on East-Central Europe. In doing so, I will start by analyzing the contours of the new Russian security policy taking shape since 2003. Further, I will examine Russian-European relations and within that I put a special emphasis on the Russian policy towards Central Europe. Finally, I try to characterize the tremendous changes in Russian foreign policy since 2006.

## THE CONTOURS OF A NEW RUSSIAN SECURITY POLICY – THE "IVANOV-DOCTRINE"

Shortly after Putin's coming to power, first as prime minister, then as president, Russia adopted three new strategic documents: the national security strategy (January 2000), the military doctrine (April 2000), and the foreign policy concept (June 2000). These documents are characterized, first, by the fact that they are standard modern documents of the post-Cold War era, second that they preceded the 9/11 attack, and third, that they were elaborated in the Yeltsin-period. All these factors suggested a need for renewal by the new president of Russia, and this moment arrived in late 2003. The Russian defense leadership held a so-called enlarged meeting – with the participation of president Putin – on October 2, 2003, and made public a document that presented the Russian security perspective with unprecedented openness and in an unprecedentedly detailed manner, partially reaffirming, partially changing

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1 Although anything can happen in politics, but there seems to be more and more evidence that Putin – in accordance with the Russian constitution – will not run for the presidency for a third term, in spite of the fact, that there have been numerous speculations and even initiatives to, in some way or another, circumvent this constitutional restriction.

the previously mentioned security documents. The 73-page document was entitled "The topical tasks of the development of the armed forces of the Russian Federation."<sup>2</sup>

The document contained six chapters and numerous illustrations covered the following items:

- The new phase of the development of the Russian armed forces
- The role of Russia in the world's military-political system
- The evaluation of the threats affecting Russia
- The character of contemporary wars and military conflicts
- The tasks of the Russian armed forces
- The priorities of development of the Russian armed forces

The main elements of the defense minister's report can be summed up, as follows. First, according to the authors of the document current world politics can be characterized by several key trends. Globalization tendencies have produced new threats (e.g. proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, drug-trafficking, etc.). Military force is applied more and more outside traditional military-political alliances. Instead ad hoc coalitions have increased in importance, with economic aims now often serving as war cause. In line with this, the role of non-state actors has grown in formulating world politics and the foreign policies of individual countries.

Second, the document identifies the regions that are considered as belonging to the "natural interests" of Russia from the point of view of national security. These are: Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Pacific. In this regard, what is of most interest, is the fact that - if taken at face value - Russia does not identify itself as a global power but rather as an actor interested in regions smaller in scope, from which whole continents are missing (like Africa or South America). This self-definition keeps Russia in a much more realistic dimension, as far as her international role is concerned, and makes her vision somewhat similar to the self-perception of the European Union.

Third, in addition to the usual classification of the threats as external and internal, the defense minister's report introduces a quite new category - "trans-border" threats. These are considered a growing concern and are defined by the document as a kind of threat which by its form is internal, but by its substance (sources, instigators, executors) is external. Examples include the support of groups aiming at later actions in Russia, support of groups whose purpose is the overthrow of Russia's constitutional order, hostile information activities, organized crime, international drug trafficking, etc.

Fourth, probably the main message of the report - formulated in different but consistent statements - is that the role of military power in safeguarding security not only remains, but is even growing. According to one characteris-

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2 "Актуальные задачи развития вооруженных сил российской федерации," 11 Октября 2003 [[http://www.redstar.ru/2003/10/11\\_10/3\\_01.html](http://www.redstar.ru/2003/10/11_10/3_01.html)].

tic formulation, to safeguard “the security of the Russian Federation by only political means (membership in international organizations, partnership ties, political influence) is more and more impossible.” In comparison to the strategic documents of 2000, this is the biggest change.

Fifth, as to nuclear weapons, the document does not say anything new in comparison to previous strategic documents (it is obviously not the task of such a report), which already included the first use of nuclear weapons under well-defined conditions. What is novel in this regard are the new arguments in favor of the role of these weapons as a means of deterrence. According to the logic of the authors of the report the use of military force without Security Council mandate has given impetus to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons included. Furthermore, nuclear weapons are considered by more and more states as a usable kind of weapon, and the threshold of the use of nuclear weapons has been lowered lately. The conclusion is that in this newly evolving situation Russia should rely considerably on its nuclear capabilities, which means Moscow’s explicit return to nuclear deterrence.

Sixth, as to NATO, – although the media made much of it – the report does not offer too much that is new, but certainly uses unusual wording. The document, besides briefly describing the existing framework of cooperation between NATO and Russia, does state that there are differences of opinion between the two sides regarding two issues, the Eastern enlargement of the alliance and NATO’s participation in military conflicts. The most controversial statement asserted that Moscow expects that the alliance “take out the directly or indirectly anti-Russian components of its military planning,” or if NATO remains in the future “a military alliance with offensive doctrine” then Russia carries out “radical changes in its military planning ... including the Russian nuclear strategy.” No doubt, what we have here is nothing other than the blunt expression of how the lessons of the NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia made their way into Russian security thinking. The unusual wording is not a return to the rhetoric or the practice of the cold war era, but rather a crystal-clear expression of the difference of opinion and perception on major developments in international security.

Finally, as to the reform of the armed forces, the main message of the report is that the reduction of the army has reached the level where further significant reductions are not expected. Putting it into perspective, it means that after reducing from 2.75 million men (1992) to 1.6 million (1996), reduction in force should bottom out at the level of one million by 2005.

The real importance of this document can be summarized as follows. First of all, it can be excluded that this was just an ad hoc political signal from the Russian political leadership. It is known from several sources that the document had been under preparation for a longer period of time, with the involvement of a whole range of experts (General Staff, Ministry of Defense, the presidential office, parliamentary fractions) and not only from the officialdom, but also from the influential Karaganov-body, the Council for Foreign

and Defense Policy (*sovet vneshnei i oboronnoi politiki*), and academic institutions dealing with international relations and security policy. After the publication of the Ivanov-report no serious academic discussion took place challenging the views expressed in the report, on the contrary, a number of analytic statements were issued along the same lines. For the same reason, it cannot be asserted that the report could have served the individual political ambitions of Defense Minister Ivanov, or in a wider sense the interests of the military-industrial lobby, or the hard-line military. Nor can it be interpreted as a kind of PR-activity timed for the 2007 December elections. President Putin's presence at the meeting (his introductory and closing remarks) is also an indication that the document reflects the well thought out position of the whole Russian political-defense leadership.

To sum up, while not rewriting formally the still valid series of strategic documents accepted in 2000 the current report brings in one fundamental message: if the world is evolving in the way it is perceived by the authors of document – increased likelihood of the use of military force, increased role of the nuclear weapons, decreased role of the main security institutions, the legitimization of preventive strikes – Russia cannot stop it, but rather accepts these new rules of the game and will act accordingly. What we are witnessing is not a Russian return to cold war, or the beginning of a new assertive Russia, but rather the *proliferation of the new post-bipolar security rules of the game* and their adoption for use by Moscow. It is the essence of the Ivanov doctrine.

In early 2007 the Russian Security Council announced that the military doctrine would be revised in order to reflect the “strengthening of military blocs, especially NATO”<sup>3</sup> in international relations, but this has not happened as yet.

It is also worth noting that right after the Beslan hostage-taking tragedy of 1-3 September 2004, President Putin delivered a speech<sup>4</sup> that contained important foreign policy messages, elaborations on the 2003 doctrine. The first to be mentioned, is that the Russian president expressed his nostalgia for the Soviet Union in an unprecedentedly straightforward way. This was something more than just a personal emotion. In the context of the speech, it was clear that he wanted the restoration of the lost international position of the Soviet Union to the maximum possible level. There was also a brand-new element in the speech, namely, anti-Westernism. Once he concretely mentioned the West in connection with which Russia “cannot defend itself,” and at another place the context also suggested a major anti-western attitude.

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3 Viktor Yasmann, “Russia: Reviving the Army, Revising the Military Doctrine,” 12 March 2007 [www.rferl.org].

4 Putin's Beslan speech can be found at the presidential web-site's archive [http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/09/76320.shtml].

This was followed, in the wake of the Beslan events, by widely echoed announcement of Chief-of-Staff Baluevskii<sup>5</sup> that Moscow was ready to make preventive strikes on terrorists anywhere in the world. Later, this was softened, in a way that such an operation can only be performed with the previous consent of the leadership of the given country.

### SOLVING THE DILEMMA OF RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARD EUROPE: THE "MISSING MIDDLE"

The main problem of the Russian policy towards Europe in the post-bipolar world could be characterized as the "dilemma of the missing middle." This means that Russia, at different levels, had very differing means of asserting its interests. While, at the level of global politics, through its veto right in the UN Security Council, and at the level of the post-Soviet space, through its traditional relations, multi- and bilateral leverages Russia could substantially influence the security situation, at the "middle level," in Europe, Moscow was deprived of almost any means to assert its interests throughout the nineties.

Moscow tried to handle this problem by way of institutionalizing its presence in Europe. Russia was, of course, a member of the OSCE, and later became a member of the Council of Europe, but the main effort was to build institutional relations with the two main hard security organizations, namely NATO and the EU. The first major step was made in connection with NATO, when in 1997 the two sides signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act, providing privileged relations with Moscow in comparison to other partners of the Alliance. This document introduced a new institution, the so called NATO-Russia Permanent Council which was also unprecedented in the Alliance's external relations. In the Putin-era, in 2002 a further step strengthened Moscow's position in Brussels: under a new name, the NATO-Russia Council was upgraded, and since then on, Moscow became a quasi-member of NATO. Although without a veto, Russia got the right to participate in the decision-making process of NATO in a number of fields, putting her on equal footing with the full-scale members in the so called "format of 20."<sup>6</sup>

As to EU, formally-institutionally, Russian-EU relations have been well elaborated and structured. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1994 came into force in December 1997 and not only substituted for

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5 Baluevskii's statement can be found at [<http://www.origo.hu/print/nagyvilag/20040908/ororszorszag.html>]. Hungarian National News Agency reported it after the meeting between Baluevskii and James Jones, at that time commander of NATO Allied Joint Forces on 8 September 2004 in Moscow.

6 It differed from the 1997 format which was characterized as "19+1 format," and meant that on a given issue first the 19 members of the Alliance elaborated a common position which was later discussed with Russia. In the new format all issues were discussed without a prior common NATO-stance.

the old Soviet-EC agreement, but went beyond simple trade regulation and increased and widened the scope of interaction between the two entities. In 1999, both Moscow and Brussels went further in concretizing their respective policies, by adopting the EU's Common Strategy on Russia, on the one hand, and the "Medium-Term Strategy for the Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union (2000-2010)" of the Russian government, on the other. This evolution led to a mutually positive conclusion on both sides that Russian-EU relations had reached a new era. The PCA regulates trade relations on the basis of MFN treatment and of the gradual elimination of quantitative restrictions, enhances economic cooperation in the field of energy, transport, environment etc. and promotes justice and home affairs cooperation in the field of drug trafficking, money laundering and organized crime. Finally, it introduced increased and institutionalized political dialogue at all levels.<sup>7</sup>

The EU's Common Strategy was due to expire by June 2003, and the EU decided to extend the document by one year. Later – on 14 June 2004 – it was decided that the Common Strategy would not be further extended and it is being replaced by the development of the so called "four spaces" agreed at the St Petersburg summit with Russia in May 2003, namely, the "common economic space," the "common space of freedom, security and justice," the "common space of external security" and the "common space of research and education."

Indeed, judging by the basic documents regulating Russian-EU relations, other high level declarations and the ongoing practices, one can conclude that the basis for future partnership exists, and this basis consists of profound interests on both sides. However, there is a striking asymmetry between the two sides' focus: while Russia wants this partnership predominantly for economic reasons, the EU's main interest lies elsewhere, in the field of soft security: stability, democracy building, ecology, etc.<sup>8</sup> This is explained, first of all, by the different interests of the two entities. Europe – meaning the enlarged EU – for

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7 This latter comprises annual meetings including two presidential summits, the cooperation council at the ministerial level, cooperation committees at senior official levels, and sub-committees on technical issues.

8 The priority areas of the Action Plan which was elaborated for the implementation of the EU's Common Strategy are, as follows: foreign policy, economic dialogue, civil society, rule of law, democracy, the "Northern Dimension" [[www.eurunion.org/news/speeches/2000/001116/c.htm](http://www.eurunion.org/news/speeches/2000/001116/c.htm)]; Chris Patten, commissioner for external relations, in a recent speech summarized the areas of cooperation, as follows: trade and investment, health and environment, organized crime, Russia's place in the world [[www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/ceeca/news/ip\\_01\\_72.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/news/ip_01_72.htm)]; finally EU's proposed agenda for the latest summit enlists the following topics: investment climate, WTO accession, trade issues, environmental protection, nuclear safety, organized crime, stability in Europe, disarmament and non-proliferation [[www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/russia/intro/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/index.htm)].

Russia appears as an economic partner, which is a traditional perception of the EU. It is the region that is the main consumer of Russian raw materials and energy products. On the other hand, aside from its exports of natural resources, Russia is a negligible economic partner, but a highly important security factor. Although the possible areas of cooperation between EU and Russia have already been addressed,<sup>9</sup> Russia's first and foremost goal in its partnership with the EU is to adopt a modernization model with the help of which it wants to become a decisive actor in international politics. Within the big "area asymmetry" (economy vs. other issues) there is an additional asymmetry, namely, in the field of economic relations, first of all in trade relations. The enlargement of the EU has further increased the basically asymmetric relationship between the two entities. Before the enlargement, the EU represented Russia's largest trading partner accounting for 36.7% of Russia's imports and 33.2% of its exports, while Russia was the EU's sixth largest partner with 3.3% of its imports and 1.9% of its exports. After enlargement the numbers are: 48.26% (the EU share of Russian imports) and 56.72% (the EU share of Russian exports), 9.09% (imports from Russia) and 5.3% (exports to Russia) in 2005, the first full year of the enlarged EU.<sup>10</sup> This means a significant increase in all areas of trade, further deepening Russia's dependence on the EU, while for the EU, Russia has become trade partner No. 4.

According to the regime of the PCA there are two highest level meetings per year. These regular events have demonstrated that the institutional links are well established and function well. In the course of these meetings a wide range of issues have been touched upon and considerable progress has been made. In the Putin era the EU-Russia summits were markedly productive. The first summit of the Putin era – the fifth after the PCA entered into force – was held in Moscow in May 2000 and proved to be a "business as usual" type of meeting without any real novelty. The following summit resulted in two innovations in the form of two dialogues: first it started the so-called energy dialogue, that put negotiations about this important sector on a regular basis, and second, it opened a new dimension in cooperation in the domain of security policy by adopting a joint declaration on "strengthening dialogue and cooperation on political and security matters in Europe."<sup>11</sup> The seventh summit in May 2001 went on to continue cooperation in the security and economic field. As to the first, the two sides reaffirmed to make "foreign and security policy matters a regular feature of the agendas,"<sup>12</sup> as to the second, this summit

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9 During the visit of the EU troika (Russian word in EU vocabulary!) to Moscow in February 2001, a "Russian-EU forum on foreign and security policy" was organized where foreign minister Ivanov and EU high representative Solana also addressed the issue. See: [www.strana.ru/worldview/press/2001/02/16/982312673.html](http://www.strana.ru/worldview/press/2001/02/16/982312673.html)

10 [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/russia/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/russia/index_en.htm)

11 Joint declaration on strengthening dialogue and cooperation on political and security matters in Europe, [www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/russia/summit](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/summit)

12 [www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/russia/summit](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/summit)

initiated something that has become the major characteristic feature of EU-Russian relations by now, namely the “policy of spaces,” it decided to formulate the concept of common European economic space. The following summit was the first that occurred after the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001, so it was largely dominated by the topic of terrorism. Among others, a separate statement was adopted on international terrorism. The issue of the common European economic space, the energy dialogue and the dialogue and cooperation on political and security matters were also kept high on the agenda. The sixth summit in the Putin era – in November 2002 – produced a major result by the EU’s formal recognition of Russia as a “market economy” which was an important milestone on the road to WTO membership. The next (10th) high-level meeting brought about a breakthrough in the long standing issue of Kalinin-grad by adopting a set of measures called the Facilitated Transit Document (FTD) scheme valid from 1 January 2003.

Institutionally, the most important development – up until now – occurred during the summit in St. Petersburg in May 2003 which created the Permanent Partnership Council instead of the previously existing Cooperation Council, thus providing a more effective strong body. It can be regarded as a kind of equivalent of the NATO-Russia Council, although with much less Russian involvement in the decision-making process.

In Russia’s European policy East-Central Europe occupies a special place. East-Central Europe literally occupies a central position in the system of relations between Russia and Europe. This position is unique: the one-time Soviet allies have joined the basic West European institutions, and by now they have become the borderland of the West towards the post-Soviet space. As it is usually referred to in a well-known maxim, East-Central Europe’s status has changed from the Western periphery of the East, to the Eastern periphery of the West.

There are two opposing views on the issue whether there is any Russian strategy towards the region. The first – and this is held by the majority of the Russian academic and foreign policy establishment – is that there is no Russian strategic approach toward Central Europe, the only difference between them is that part of this group urges the elaboration of a strategic vision, another part does not consider it necessary. The opposing view holds that Russia has a well-formulated strategy towards Central Europe, and its content can be summarized as “new imperialism.” The main proponent of this approach is Janusz Bugajski, who wrote a book on the Russian East-Central European relations entitled *Cold Peace*.<sup>13</sup> The American analyst summarizes in six points Russia’s

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13 Bugajski is one of the best known American analysts on this topic and an exemplifying figure of the radical critique of Russia; see Janusz Bugajski, *Cold Peace. Russia’s New Imperialism* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004). The fact that Bugajski is not a marginal holder of this view is supported by the endorsement of the book by Zbigniew Brzezinski, who wrote that “Russia’s policies towards the countries of the former Soviet Bloc are still being influenced by an ominously imperialist nostalgia” [[www.greenwood.com/catalogue/C8362.aspx](http://www.greenwood.com/catalogue/C8362.aspx)].



alleged strategy in Eastern Europe: to achieve preeminent influence over foreign policy orientation and security policy; to strengthen economic benefits and monopolistic positions, while increasing dependence on Russian energy supplies; to limit the scope of western institutional enlargement in the European CIS; to rebuild a larger sphere of influence, and finally, to weaken transatlantic relations.<sup>14</sup>

The evolution of Russian-East-Central European relations in the post-Cold War era<sup>15</sup> has been a process of their “standardization.”<sup>16</sup> This has included the following elements that characterize the present state of affairs, as well. First, ECE has radically been devaluated and has found its naturally low place in the system of priorities of Russian foreign policy.<sup>17</sup> Second, as a matter of fact, the region has lost its autonomous value from the Russian perspective, and is approached indirectly, i.e. in the context of Russian European or NATO policy. Third, instead of the previous bloc approach Russian policy handles these countries individually or regionally – that is, differentiation has come to the fore. Fourth, these relations have been de-militarized, and, de-ideologized. Finally, all major problems that had to do with the Soviet past (Warsaw Treaty, Soviet interventions, the consequences of troop withdrawal, the inherited debts) have been settled.

The standardization process evolved by the following trajectory:

- 1990-91 – Attempts at limited sovereignty under the “Kvitsinskii-doctrine”
- 1992-94 – Democratic neglect under the “Kozyrev-doctrine”
- 1995-2000 – Rediscovery of the region in the NATO-EU enlargement context
- 2000- present – Geo-economic approach under the Putin-doctrine

The current stage of the Russian policy towards East-Central Europe is best characterized by the geo-economic approach under the Putin-doctrine. The geo-economic approach is embodied, first of all, in active economic policy towards the region. The main fields of this new “economized” Russian policy are, first of all, the energy and finance sector.<sup>18</sup>

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14 This includes European post-Soviet states, the Baltic states, Central Europe and the Balkans.

15 On this topic the author has published an article “The Rediscovered Backyard: Central Europe in Russian Foreign Policy,” *Eager Eyes Fixed on Eurasia*, 21st Century COE Program Slavic Eurasian Studies, no. 16-1 (Sapporo: SRC, 2007).

16 The expression belongs to Gerhard Mangott, “Russian Policies on Central and Eastern Europe: An Overview,” *European Security* 8:3 (1999).

17 For example, as opposed to the 1993 version of the foreign policy concept, the 2000 version does not refer to Eastern/Central Europe as a region of vital Russian interest. See, *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik* 3 (1993).

18 The existing Yamal pipeline in Poland, and another planned gas pipeline through Poland and Slovakia, as well as the increased Russian share of Hungary’s chemical industry are illustrative examples of this.

There are two opposing answers to the question whether energy policy is a special Russian foreign policy instrument, and if so what is its content? One school of thought says that – as one analyst put it – “For the Kremlin, energy has come to represent the principal tool in foreign policy, with Moscow using energy to interfere and influence domestic political processes across Europe and elsewhere, and halt geopolitical shifts such as expansion of NATO and the EU.”<sup>19</sup> Others describe Russian energy policy as “energy imperialism,”<sup>20</sup> or as an “energy weapon,”<sup>21</sup> and recommend a tough EU response in order to let Russia “understand its future as Europe’s preeminent energy supplier is at risk.”<sup>22</sup> The representatives of this approach also refer to the problem that Russia does not ratify the Energy Charter (practically depriving western companies from participating in the Russian energy market), and to unkind gestures of high-level Russian representatives who publicly entertained the idea of redirecting Russian supplies to North America and China.<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, Polish Defense Minister Radoslaw Sikorski commented on the planned Northern Pipeline between Russia and Germany through the Northern Sea in an unusually harsh tone: “Poland has a particular sensitivity to corridors and deals above our head. That was the Locarno tradition, that was the Molotov-Ribbentrop tradition ... We don’t want any repetition of that.”<sup>24</sup>

The other approach suggests that “the fear of Russia is exaggerated and there is no evidence of a malicious political intent in recent Russian energy decisions.”<sup>25</sup> I subscribe to this second approach. Russia makes no secret that it wants to use its energy potential for its domestic and international rise. As the Russian official Energy Strategy reads: “Russia owns significant energy resources ... that is the base for economic development, instrument of domestic and foreign policy. The role of the country in the international energy markets defines, to a large extent, its geopolitical influence.”<sup>26</sup> In my opinion, one can hardly find anything wrong in this statement. They represent clearly the national interests of Russia.

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19 Borut Grgic, *Russian Energy Strategy: Risk Assessment for Europe*, Occasional Paper, no. 4 (Ljubljana: Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006), p. 5.

20 Victor Yasmann, “Russia: Moscow Gets Tough with the EU,” *RFLRL Feature Article*, 5 June 2006.

21 Keith C. Smith, “Security Implications of Russian Energy Policies,” *CEPS Policy Brief* 90 (January 2006).

22 Citation from Michael Emerson, director of CEPS in Ahto Lobjakas, “EU: The Energy Dilemma – with or without Russia,” *RFLRL Feature Article*, 22 March 2006.

23 Alexandr Miller, head of Gazprom warned EU ambassadors in Moscow, in “Gazprom smotrit na Zapad,” *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 7 June 2006.

24 Cited in Cheney, “Russia is Blackmailing Europe,” *Guardian online*, 14 June 2006.

25 Citation from Julia Montanaro-Jankovska in Ahto Lobjakas, “EU: The Energy Dilemma – with or without Russia,” *RFLRL Feature Article*, 22 March 2006.

26 “Энергетическая стратегия России на период до 2020 года” (Moscow, May 2003).

The main question is if Russian energy policy has been used for direct political purposes, or for blackmail against Europe and Central Europe. There has not been any case, when Russia could have used this instrument in Europe. There have been cases when it was used for direct political influence, but exclusively within the CIS-space, and only vis-à-vis such countries that wanted to enjoy preferential low prices and were willing to accept special political relations with Moscow (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova). In my opinion, the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute of 2005 was overwhelmingly misinterpreted by politicians, and misrepresented in the media. Although the Russian steps against Ukraine did not lack a certain political element (the timing before the March 2005 parliamentary elections) and spectacular moves (the well-publicized stop of supply), the whole issue, in its essence, was a local business dispute over the price and the Ukrainian practices of re-export for extra profit. Russia did not decrease its delivery to Europe (including Central Europe), and had no intention of blackmailing Europe. On the contrary, it is in Russia's best interest to maintain stable energy relations with Europe. Russia can hardly find alternative markets without immense investments that would put into question the whole endeavor.

The Russian policy towards Europe successfully handled the dilemma of "the missing middle." With regard to NATO and EU strong institutional structures have been established, while in the region of the former Warsaw Treaty alliances Russia managed to position itself strongly in the field of economy.

## **2006: A YEAR OF TREMENDOUS CHANGES IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY**

2006 was a year of tremendous changes in Russian foreign policy. These changes resulted in a qualitatively new phase of Russian foreign policy. This new quality can be grasped in three aspects: the forming of a new Russian national ideology, the new emphases of Russian global foreign policy and the radical shift of the Russian CIS-policy.

As to the first, it was deputy prime minister, and defense minister Sergei Ivanov, who made public the basis of the new Russian national ideology. It is composed of three main components: sovereign democracy, strong economy and robust military force.<sup>27</sup> "Sovereign democracy" was originally coined by Vladislav Surkov, the main Kremlin ideologist, in order to counter Western criticism of Russian democracy usually referred to as "*managed democracy*." Sovereign democracy means, first of all, a special Russian model of democracy, and secondly this concept holds that there is no political sovereignty without economic sovereignty. As to the latter, it does not exemplify isolationism. According to Surkov, economic sovereignty should be used to integrate Russia into the world economy. Although another deputy prime minister and possi-

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27 "Sergei Ivanov vydvinul kontseptsiiu natsional'noi idei Rossii," 13 July 2006 [www.km.ru].

ble successor to Putin, Dmitrii Medved'ev distanced himself from the wording of sovereign democracy – claiming that any adjective used before democracy brings in a special taste as if it were not genuine democracy – it seems that this concept will be a basic one in the elite's new ideological stance.

In Russian global foreign policy, 2006 has witnessed further increased emphases on the following issues:

- New balance of power with the United States,
- New arms control talks with the United States,
- Increased importance of military force,
- Efforts to have Russia recognized as an energy superpower,
- No compromise on territorial issues.

As to the new balance of power with the United States, this is not a completely new aspiration by Moscow, but Putin formulated this thesis strikingly during the Russian ambassadors' meeting in June 2006 by saying that "the principle 'what is permitted to Jupiter is not permitted to an ox' is unacceptable for Modern Russia."<sup>28</sup>

As to new arms control talks with the United States, Putin considered the post-cold war era the period of "stagnation" and called for a new round of such negotiations.

Increased importance of military force, has been on the rise since the publication of the so-called Ivanov-doctrine in 2003, but the 2006 presidential message to the parliament formulated for the first time that the Russian armed forces should be capable of fighting simultaneously at three levels: globally, regionally and in local conflicts.<sup>29</sup>

To have Russia recognized as an energy superpower by the outside world, has been one of the most successful foreign policy issues of Moscow in recent years. In spite of the fact that Russia's membership in WTO is still pending, or that Moscow is still not inclined to ratify the Energy Charter with the EU, it is beyond doubt that Russia has established itself as a superpower with an additional pillar, leaving behind the era when she was a one-dimensional – only military – superpower.

The "no compromise" Russian approach on territorial issues has to do with the Russian Far East. Moscow has settled all major territorial disputes, or minimized them with almost all its major and minor neighbors in Europe and in Asia, so the only remaining problem of this kind remains with Japan. There are three moments that shed light on why Moscow has rejected for the long run any compromise solution on the "Southern Kuril islands" in Russian or "northern territories" in Japanese terminology. Firstly, Moscow has made public grand investment plans in the Kuril islands and Sakhalin. Secondly, the first ever sizable (5,000 troops) strategic military exercise was organized

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28 RFL/RL NEWSLINE 10:116 Part I, 28 June 2006.

29 [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/05/10/1357\\_type63372type63374type82634\\_105546.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/05/10/1357_type63372type63374type82634_105546.shtml)

on the Kamchatka peninsula – an exercise which is clearly, not an antiterrorist exercise. Thirdly, the Russian border patrol reacted harshly when trying to get hold of a Japanese ship in Russian waters disputed by Japan killing one of the crew.

The final component that signals the new quality of Russian foreign policy has to do with Moscow's policy in the post-Soviet region. 2006 witnessed a double radical shift in this policy in terms of the Russian approach to the frozen conflicts in the region and the pricing policy of energy materials. In the case of the previous, the traditional Russian policy used to aim at keeping the status quo, thus influencing the countries involved. After the declaration of independence by Montenegro, however, Moscow first publicly formulated that these frozen conflicts should be solved by referenda, thus changing the decade and a half long status quo. The price of Russian energy delivered to the post-Soviet region, had traditionally been politically calculated, meaning much cheaper price levels in comparison to the world market, expecting loyalty in exchange. Announcing a radical departure from this approach Putin proposed at the ambassadors' conference in June 2006 a switch to "principles applied in world economy and trade." The switch to a market economy base in energy pricing means a brand new policy in the post-Soviet region and places Moscow's capability to assert its interest on a far more effective base.

In sum, the above described changes that have become the dominant and characteristic features of Russian foreign policy, mean that Russia's role in world politics should be reevaluated. One has to get rid of the still surviving stereotypes. Russia is no longer a declining, disintegrating country suffering from permanent identity crisis. One has to take into account Moscow more than ever in modern international politics. Russia should be perceived as an evolving great power with ever clearer identity, with an increasingly strong economic base, knowing its ambitions and able to assert them more effectively.

### CONCLUSION: COLD WAR VS. NORMAL GREAT POWER

In early 2007 President Putin participated in the prestigious Munich international security conference, where he delivered a remarkable speech. He made use of the conference format, and in a very open explicit manner – unusual for politicians – elaborated on the Russian perception of world security affairs. Most western commentators qualified it as a return to Cold War rhetoric. Actually, he simply summarized well-known Russian security policy concerns, and visions on unipolarity, US unilateralism, international law and the use of force, NATO-expansion, missile defense, etc. The main elements of the Russian vision on international politics and the role Moscow is to play are, as follows:

- *the revision of the Yeltsin-era military doctrine*: accepting the new rules of the game in international security policy, allowing for the use of force

more flexibly, increasing the role of more professional army in safeguarding national interests, reaffirming nuclear deterrence, allowing for preventive strikes;

- *a new kind of anti-Westernism*: counterbalance the US in military terms, and keep Western Europe away from internal human rights issues;
- *double track handling of NATO*: on the one hand, integrating into it, on the other hand, criticizing its enlargement and the redeployment of military hardware closer to Russia;
- *returning to Europe*: solving the dilemma of the “missing middle” by institutionalizing relations with NATO and EU, and by economic presence in the enlarged Europe;
- *elaborating a national ideology*: based on the thesis of sovereign democracy, strong economy and robust armed forces;
- *building a second pillar of global importance*: becoming an energy superpower;
- *modernizing relations in the CIS-region*: rejecting the strategy of reintegration, building influence on a market basis.

This is the core of the Putin-doctrine. To put it simply, the Putin-doctrine basically means the reconstruction of Russia both domestically and internationally as a normal great power.