

After the Caucasian war: engaging, not containing Russia

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK)

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Dembinski, M., Schmidt, H.-J., Schoch, B., & Spanger, H.-J. (2008). *After the Caucasian war: engaging, not containing Russia*. (PRIF Reports, 86). Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-284213>

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Bruno Schoch / Hans-Joachim Spanger**

After the Caucasian War: Engaging, not Containing, Russia

PRIF Reports No. 86



**Peace
Research
Institute
Frankfurt**

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ISBN: 978-3-937829-78-4

Euro 10,-

Summary

The Caucasian war has put the issue of Russia's place in the European security system onto the international agenda as a matter of the utmost urgency. For far too long the West has dismissed this issue and subordinated Russian interests to other challenges such as the preservation of its freedom of action.

Security in Europe cannot be obtained in the absence of, or even in opposition to, Russia however. Russia therefore has to be included in the organisation of European security. This is all the more true in view of the paradox that economic cooperation has become indispensable for both sides, while the opposite has gained acceptance in security policy: the eastward expansion of NATO and the EU excludes Russia, which for its part wavers between its claim to be allowed to help shape the system with the same rights as other countries and its frustration at being marginalised. We are critical of this mindset of exclusion and confrontation, which has contributed to the growing assertiveness in Moscow. This must be reversed. Therefore we propose a pan-European process of rapprochement. This should be jointly initiated by the leading protagonists Russia, the USA and the European Union – properly taking their differing interests into account.

After the victory in the Caucasus, Russian President Medvedev proclaimed a new doctrine, which has to be interpreted as a claim for an exclusive sphere of influence. In so doing he was modelling himself on Washington examples, which Moscow was also emulating in another respect – in the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia announced along the lines of the Kosovo model. Yet contrary to the West Russia did not even attempt to follow the procedures for conflict resolution. The war in the Caucasus brought Russia back onto the stage of European power politics with aplomb. However the message was not that Moscow had lost interest in security cooperation. Instead Russia was seeking a cooperation which would no longer be conducted under conditions laid down by a unipolar hegemony of the West, but in recognition of a multipolar variety of interests. It is marginalisation and humiliation by the West which have significantly contributed to Russia's alienation and not only its authoritarian development, as so often claimed.

In the USA, Russia's entry into war on 8 August 2008 was seen to be a turning point. While hardliners of various political persuasions held the Kremlin responsible for the war and suspected that Soviet-imperialist power politics were in the offing, followers of a pragmatic-realist orientation argued in favour of a policy towards Russia, which would take common interests into account and therefore renounce a further expansion of NATO. The Bush administration barely concerned itself with Moscow at all. Blinded by its own military strength and by the vision of an irresistible triumphal march of liberalism, Washington embarked upon a dual strategy after 9/11: it called for the democratisation of Russia and ignored Moscow's voice and its desire for recognition. The Bush administration snubbed Moscow, by dismantling arms control treaties and doing everything in its power to speed up the formation of the alliance on Russia's borders. To his credit, George W. Bush omitted to make decisions after the Caucasian war, which could have unduly restricted his successor's room for manoeuvre. The latter's policy on Russia is as

yet not apparent, however it will be stamped by an atmosphere in which the certainties of liberal progress and unrivalled American supremacy have lost much of their sparkle.

Relations with Russia are one of the most important tasks for the EU. Traditionally it has sought to accomplish these by creating dense networks of contractual regulations. Meanwhile there is doubt about the “strategic partnership” with Russia as the EU has admitted Central East European states, some of which are in favour of outright confrontation with Russia. The war in the Caucasus has further intensified these differences and led the EU to the brink of a blockade. However, the French presidency managed to demonstrate unusual capacity for action. Nicolas Sarkozy negotiated the Six-Point Peace Plan for ending the fighting, created the necessary conditions for withdrawal of Russian troops from “core Georgia” by dispatching a European mission, and initiated a process capable of contributing to conflict resolution in the form of the Geneva Discussions. Nonetheless, the EU-internal consensus called for compromises: Brussels so far has been concerned with keeping its relations with Russia and the Ukraine harmonious, but geostrategic considerations concerning the containment of Russia are increasingly gaining ground. These result among other things in the planned association agreement with Kiev and in the rapprochement with Belarus. Meanwhile the EU managed to define its own contours in comparison with the USA, since its conflict management in the Caucasus along with its efforts to reach an understanding with Russia are in direct contradiction to the Bush government, which unilaterally backed Georgia and unequivocally distanced itself from Russia.

The Caucasian war did not only carry separation too far, it also offers opportunities for renewed cooperation with regard to security policy. This requires a *Grand Bargain* with Russia. We argue in favour of introducing a process of pan-European rapprochement, capable of moderating conflicting security concerns in such a way that they can be overcome one by one. Constituent elements would be the strengthening of European institutions, revival of arms control and multilateral conflict regulation in the Caucasus.

One connecting factor is Medvedev’s proposals for a European security conference and security treaty. Although most European states see their security as guaranteed by NATO and the EU, Russian interest in becoming involved must be taken into account. Medvedev’s proposals therefore deserve a response. In our view, the OSCE represents a suitable framework for such a conference, which could be revived in a second founding act as a pan-European security organisation. An OSCE reinforced in this way would establish rules under which the differences between Russia, NATO and the EU could be dismantled. At the same time, the EU should intensify its involvement beyond its eastern borders and in so doing emerge from the shadow of NATO in the field of joint crisis management. A third round of expansion of NATO to include Georgia and the Ukraine should in our opinion be put off for the foreseeable future. It would reward irresponsible behaviour by one candidate and is appropriate neither for strengthening the security of the alliance nor for improving stability on the continent.

Since confidence between Russia and the West is lacking, and mistaken perceptions of strategic intentions are putting security in Europe at risk, arms control must be revived. After long years of neglect, including the dismantling of existing international treaties and regimes, there is now a considerable need to make up lost ground. This applies to conven-

tional and nuclear weapons as much as to missile defence. In all three fields negotiations must be initiated, which reliably record the cooperative intentions of both sides and thus serve as a tool for common European security.

Finally, there needs to be regulation of the secession conflicts in the Caucasus. Russia stands alone in its prompt recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Paradoxically, this offers opportunities for an agreement. In analogy to the UN-initiated attempts to find a mutually acceptable solution to the Kosovo conflict, negotiations must include all parties, in addition to Russia and Georgia also South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Furthermore, the “Standards before Status” formula may help to keep focus directed towards urgent humanitarian issues.

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1. Introduction

As brief as the war between Russia and Georgia in the Caucasus was, its effects will be felt for some considerable time. For Georgia it was simply one more vain attempt forcibly to recapture territory lost long ago, while for the newly fledged Russia it was its first war with a neighbouring state. However, it is not only for this reason that international reactions have been focused on Russia, in many cases losing sight of the trigger: Georgian aggression. In actual fact the war redrew the map of Europe, be it by severing Abkhazia and South Ossetia from the Georgian national state, or by Russia's concurrent return to the stage of European power politics.

The Caucasian war revealed that the issue of Russia's place in the European security hierarchy – as hotly disputed as it has been unresolved since the historical turning point of 1989 – can no longer be dismissed. This question over consequences with regard to political order for the European continent forms the focal point of this report. It is consequently not concerned with traditional rivalries between external powers or ethno-political conflict constellations in the Caucasus, nor with their real subjects and victims: the people of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Georgia. We focus instead on the issue of how relations between the West and Russia are to take shape in a European peace order often evoked since the end of the East-West conflict.

This issue generated tension in the dispute over NATO expansion just as in the dispute over the principle of countries' territorial integrity in the case of Kosovo. Until recently the West was relying upon Russia eventually giving up, due to a lack of power to carry things through, and falling in line with the West's course of action – a calculation which worked for a long time. Moscow's harsh reaction in Georgia however unmistakably marks the end of this acquiescence. The days in which Russia could be treated as a *quantité négligeable* are over. After the gun-smoke in the Caucasus has dispersed a fundamental truth from the era of détente policy is now also coming back into view: there will be no security and peace in Europe without Russia, and none at all in opposition to Russia.

As true as this insight might be, it does not solve the problem of how the relation must be shaped in order to ensure cooperation and peace. There is no magic key for this, which can overcome in a single turn the differing interests within the West as well as between the West and Russia. European cooperation and security have, moving on from West to East, increasingly found their institutional bases in the European Union and NATO, of which most states are members or would like to become members. Russia in contrast remains an outsider to both and is nurturing the claim to be allowed to help shape the system with the same rights as others. The members of the club on the other hand go to considerable lengths to maintain its exclusivity against Russia. This is particularly true of those East Central European countries who consider their "return to Europe" to be a kind of changing sides from the western front of the east to the eastern front of the west and correspondingly nurture it in a militant way.

The opposite model of the magic key is gradualism, an approach adopted by this report. We suggest organising a process of pan-European rapprochement which might at least harbour the opportunity of moderating pan-European contradictions in such a way that they may one by one be overturned. Economic exchange is a crucial component in this, achieving year on year higher figures. The fact that both sides are indispensable to each other for this needs no elaboration. Things are different in security policy, which has so far demonstrated a predominantly centrifugal dynamic. This needs to be reversed. We discuss a series of measures which make this possible. Beforehand, referring to the Caucasian war, it is necessary to get to the bottom of what causes concern to the main protagonists in European security, Russia, the USA and the EU, as a prerequisite for preventing this report's proposals from gathering the dust in the same place where many designs for European security are languishing in obscurity.

2. War as father of all things: Russia's metamorphosis

Although the odd jarring note might be put down to rhetorical rearguard skirmishing, from the Russian perspective the war with Georgia launched a virtually cathartic effect, in illustration of which the Russian president did not shy away from citing particularly intimidating examples. Thus 8 August 2008 had "almost" the same effect for Russia as 11 September 2001 did for the USA: it did not necessarily change the world, but more importantly changed Russian policy, which lost its last "illusions" about the nature of the present international system.¹

This is not a new refrain, to which the Moscow leadership has happily sung along since the middle of 2006. Even more remarkable is the paradoxical outcome of the brief asymmetrical war. It considerably deepened the gulf between Russia and the West and led to open wrangling over zones of influence. Furthermore Russia has also destroyed another, until now carefully nurtured, illusion by adopting the West's course as justification of its military intervention as well as of its unilateral recognition of both Georgian breakaway regions: Moscow referred specifically to the principles of "humanitarian intervention", "responsibility to protect" and "national self-determination", which it had to date denounced as flagrant violation of international law and flimsy legitimising formulae for geostrategically motivated expansion by the West. It has also systematically reinforced both in the form of the "five principles", announced by the president on 31 August 2008 and frequently reaffirmed since, as the "Medvedev Doctrine":

(1) Russia recognises the primacy of the fundamental principles of international law, which define the relations between civilised peoples.

1 Transcript of the Meeting with the Participants in the International Club Valdai, 12.9.2008, GUM Exhibition Centre, Moscow, in: www.kremlin.ru (16.9.2008).

(2) The world should be multi-polar. A single-pole world is unacceptable. Domination is something we cannot allow. We cannot accept a world order in which one country makes all the decisions, even as serious and influential a country as the United States of America. Such a world is unstable and threatened by conflict.

(3) Russia does not want confrontation with any other country. Russia has no intention of isolating itself. We will develop friendly relations with Europe, the United States, and other countries, as much as is possible.

(4) Protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, wherever they may be, is an unquestionable priority for our country. Our foreign policy decisions will be based on this need. We will also protect the interests of our business community abroad.

(5) As is the case of other countries, there are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbours. We will pay particular attention to our work in these regions and build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbours.²

If these principles summarise recent events, the Caucasian war actually represents a turning point, as it sheds a whole new light on the protection of Russian citizens and the reiteration of international law. The claim for an exclusive sphere of influence represents a no less public renunciation of the “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation” to which Medvedev gave his blessing only in July of the same year. The only constant cultivated since Yevgeny Primakov’s days as foreign minister is multipolarism, which appears to the Kremlin to be an objective global trend as well as what it actually wants. The whole thing is garnished with the threat that the partnership relations with the USA and the EU depend first and foremost on themselves, because, “They have a choice”.³

Even that is a repeat of Western formulae, where multipolarism has lost the smell of undue insubordination even in Washington. Furthermore Moscow’s adherence to international law differs from Washington’s only in that the USA in its continuous and so far sometimes vain efforts to comply has admitted in very concrete and public terms to having violated them, while Russia behind a veil of compliance with the law nonchalantly does the opposite and in the Caucasus does not even attempt to comply with the established procedures. There is therefore little point in denouncing Russia’s relapse into the supposedly antiquated balance of power of the 19th century and allowing the West to shine in the post-modern sparkle of universal values, or in scenting the musty instincts of the Soviet power in Moscow, towards which the West holds out the sublime self-determination of free peoples. Both come back with a vengeance in journalistic and some

2 Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Rossiya, NTV, 31.8.2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (16.9.2008). The final item, as Medvedev clarified on request, is not limited to neighbouring states alone, because “our priorities do not end there”.

3 Ibid. Medvedev directed a similar statement to the new US administration in his first speech to the Federal Assembly only one day after the election of Obama – a diplomatic signal, which demonstrates in its pointed efforts anti-American hardening in Moscow as much as considerable over-estimation of Russia’s own abilities (Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 5 November 2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (10.11.2008)).

official statements in the West, as if the certainties of the Cold War were good for an anchor against the new confusion.

The discrepancy is not so great that it might justify the newly cultivated Manichaeism. Furthermore the gulf between ambitious Moscow claims and Russian reality reveals how quickly clarity becomes obscured under closer examination. Clear elements are only to be found in several principles, where in the wake of Putin's domestic Thermidor something similar has happened in the realm of foreign policy. Thus it ought to be evident now that the vision of Russia as ultimately part of the West is obsolete.⁴ This expectation of liberal internationalism was from the very beginning just as illusionary as Francis Fukuyama's postulate that history was at an end with the victory over the socialist system – quite apart from the fact that this expectation had at no time determined Western policy towards Russia. Admittedly Russia sees itself as an autonomous gravitational centre in a multipolar cosmos, but its gravitational force even in the narrow orbit of the CIS remains so small that no formative power in international politics can be derived from it – and Moscow still shies away from being banded together with the “axis of evil”.⁵ The only charm about this lies in the fact that Moscow is in this way able to guarantee itself the privilege of swinging between the other centres of power China, the USA and the EU, yet without clear-cut preferences. As uncertain as it is whether Russia is ready or able to form a coalition, it is also unclear how it envisages international architecture – beyond the uneasiness with which Russia approaches the unipolar nature of the status quo. As far as alternative suggestions have been substantiated, – for instance in the form of the European security conference, the commitment to the UN system and the demand for a new international financial architecture – all that shows through is the vigorous effort to get rid of the inferior position in which Russia perceives itself to be trapped. Its revisionism is consequently broad enough to justify quite different possibilities for action. In the proposal for a European security conference called for by Medvedev only a short while after he took up office both the need for involvement in the organisation of European security and the effort to limit spheres of influence show through.

2.1 Respect and equality – the logic of multipolarism

A basic premise of Russia's current foreign policy is the country's perception of being – besides the USA and China, as well as to a lesser extent India or Brazil – the only country

4 This was ascertained by a critic some time ago, who called for the West “to calm down and take Russia for what it is: a major outside player that is neither an eternal foe nor an automatic friend.” (Trenin 2006: 95).

5 This is true despite the fact that Medvedev has recently indicated that “any” state which strives for friendly relations with Russia will receive a “friendly response” (Transcript of the Meeting with the Participants in the International Club Valdai, 12.9.2008, GUM Exhibition Centre, Moscow, in: www.kremlin.ru (16.9.2008)). So in this way, adopting zero-sum logic, Moscow is cultivating relations with one or two governments which like Venezuela, Syria or Iran are specifically being isolated by the USA. In the case of Venezuela this not only includes sizeable arms deliveries, but also joint naval exercises in the Caribbean in November 2008.

capable of having a “truly independent foreign policy”. This assessment admittedly sounds as if it is based on the size of the country, its wealth of natural resources and its nuclear weapons. In actual fact however, it pertains more to the economic performance, since it is directly derived from the “growing economic and military potential” which “does allow us to be firmer in standing up for our national interests”, as expressed by Putin in early 2008.⁶

Moscow leaves no doubt about how – and how much – its self-confidence has increased since 2006. At the beginning of Putin’s second tenure in 2004 the Kremlin was still on the defensive, due to the colour revolutions in the CIS, the mass protests against social reforms and the Yukos crisis, that it was barely able to withstand the criticised marginalisation by the USA. Nevertheless the distancing from the West had its origins back then, gradually taking the place of the demonstrative support offered after 9/11.⁷ In so doing the growing self-awareness was feeding not on military strength, which in the case of conventional troops overtops only the CIS armies and in the case of nuclear weapons provides scarcely more than a minimal deterrent. Instead it resulted from “steady progress towards becoming one of the world’s economic leaders” as Putin boasted.⁸ This would be thanks to a unique growth achieved in the past only by countries such as Taiwan, Malaysia or Singapore. The widely propagated outcome: by 2007 Italy and France had already been overtaken in terms of economic performance. Admittedly this is calculated according to purchasing power parities which favour poorer countries. If based on the US dollar exchange rate, Russia would find itself still at the level of Spain, to say nothing of the serious difference in per capita income. Nonetheless it comes as no surprise that after the permanent petitioning to the IMF, EBRD and World Bank, and the humiliating treatment by economic advisors such as Larry Summers or Jeffrey Sachs, economic recovery is perceived to be a triumph, not only in the political class with their dreams of being a great power which feed off this, but also in the minds of Russian citizens.

Economic success is flanked by political stability. In Putin’s summing up of his presidency it counted as the “greatest achievement” referring to the fact that the state after its privatisation by the oligarchs gathered around Yeltsin’s “family” had once again become empowered. In the eyes of the West however it was only possible to achieve this success at the cost of democratic liberties – the core of the antagonistic interpretations which have since divided East and West in their assessment of Putin’s course. The West sees a nexus between Putin’s authoritarian domestic course and his appreciably confrontational policy

6 Transcript of Annual Big Press Conference, 14.2.2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (21.2.2008).

7 According to Medvedev the West at that time was gambling away the “historic chance” to “deideologize international politics and create a genuinely democratic world order”, as the USA only had its sights set on consolidating its role as a world power (President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, Speech at World Policy Conference, Evian, 8.10.2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (10.10.2008)).

8 Ibid. Russia’s growing strength as a “one of the world’s economic leaders” and the necessity arising from this for an “active foreign policy”, had already been emphasized by Putin in June 2006 in his speech to Russian ambassadors (Speech at the Meeting with the Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation, 27.6.2006, in: www.cdi.org (4.8.2006)).

abroad. For Moscow though this stance against Putinism simply underlines that the West has no interest in a strong Russian partner, but contrary to official rhetoric only in a weak subordinate. The key to these opposing narratives is the diverging perception of the 1990s. While for Russia the period after the in Putin's words "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the past century" resembled teetering on the brink of the abyss, the West interpreted it as a departure for new shores. And while from Moscow's point of view Russia's new rise and emancipation from Western efforts at colonisation began with Putin, the same thing appeared to Western capital cities as democratic regression and the restoration of Soviet great power ambitions. This is complemented by additional notes of discord such as the end of the Cold War as triumph of the West or as Russian offer of cooperation.

At the latest since Putin's legendary speech to the Munich security conference in February 2007 the "return of Russia to global politics, the global economy and finance as an active, fully-fledged actor" belongs to the standard repertoire of officially announced self-affirmation (Lavrov 2008: 10). In the view of Moscow's political class, however, this is not being sufficiently noticed or appreciated elsewhere. It is for this reason that they are tying their demands for a hearing, for equal participation and for consideration of their interests together with the rejection of any kind of "lecturing" and the "colonial-style restrictions" handed down from the 1990s.⁹ The demand for a multipolar world order is based on this. Occasionally, Moscow recognises that, because of the USA's military entanglements, the shock waves of Western financial markets and the rise of the BRIC states, weights have shifted in such a way that a multipolar order is naturally forming itself. First and foremost, however, the present world order is greeted with dissatisfaction because Russia has no appropriate place in it.

Criticism of the USA is correspondingly militant. The *unipolar moment* is said to have made the world less secure and precipitated practically all institutions of the world order into the crisis – which in the Russian debate quite a few associate with the emergence of multipolarism and its inherent risks to stability.¹⁰ Reservations have been well known since Putin's Munich speech. In this he quite categorically criticised the USA, which "has overstepped its national borders in every way", and condemned the "disdain for the basic principles of international law" as well as the "almost uncontained hyper use of force" which was precipitating the world into the "abyss of permanent conflicts". Resolving international conflicts in this way from the point of view only of "political expediency" was "extremely dangerous". It could only be countered by a multipolar-based participation within the

9 Thus Vladimir V. Putin, Transcript of Annual Big Press Conference, 14. 2.2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (21.2.2008).

10 Cf. e.g. *Mir vokrug Rossii: 2017. Kontury nedalekovo budushchy*. Council for Foreign and Defence Policy; State University for Economy; Rio-Center, Moscow 2007.

boundaries of international law and beyond the “hierarchical vertical” with which the USA practised its “dictatorship” and its “imperialism”, also lamented by Putin in 2007.¹¹

Yet a multipolar order is emerging not by decree from Moscow but through the formation of opposing alliances. The alliances Moscow has struck to date have not proved to be all that impressive, however. Both the “Collective Security Treaty Organisation” as part of the CIS and also the “Shanghai Cooperation Organisation” are characterised by limited effectiveness and almost unlimited contradictions, united only by the smallest common denominator to keep the USA out of their own affairs. Foreign Minister Lavrov therefore has a “collective leadership” in mind, which does not exclude individual leadership but only “among equals”. Equal rights are the decisive criterion, and respect the form of intercourse: “Any other form of relationship for us today is unacceptable”. This precondition had been – a “paradox and tragic at the same time” – fulfilled at the time of the Cold war.¹² Institutionally it has been realised best in the UN system with the Russian veto as well as in the form of the G8. There is not much more to be learned about it in Moscow. Only justified *ex negativo*, alternative concepts remain in the dark, beyond the *petitum* of being “just and democratic” by means of collective decisions.¹³

The Caucasian war lent a whole new meaning to the Russian postulates of equality, for now Moscow was practising and declaiming the very same thing that it had been reproaching Washington for doing until now: an open declaration of its own sphere of influence and the less open turning away from the principles of international law. This is true of the state sovereignty which Medvedev compromises using arguments from the arsenal of humanitarian intervention: preventing a “humanitarian catastrophe” and the “right to self-determination”. It is also true of the territorial integrity which Medvedev saw as having been forfeited in the case of Georgia: “We have taken the same course of action as other countries took with regard to Kosovo”, embellished with the astounding finding that, “according to international law, a new state becomes a subject of law, as the lawyers say, from the moment it gains recognition from at least one other country.”¹⁴ In contrast to Western practice in Kosovo, Russia has not made the slightest effort to enlist the aid of the UN in at least lending some legitimacy to its violation of both principles. In future it will no longer be possible to dedicate itself to the power of justice with anti-hegemonial ambitions and thereby formulate an antithesis to Western justice of power. It is not by chance that none of its CIS allies wanted to follow Russian recognition. They

11 Press Statement and Answers to Journalists’ Questions Following Talks with Greek President Karolos Papoulias, 31.5.2007, in: www.kremlin.ru (8.6.2007).

12 Speech by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Moscow Carnegie Center, 21.6.2007, in: www.carnegie.ru (28.8.2007). The guidelines are given in more detail in a foreign ministry document published in 2007 “Obzor Vneshney Politiki Rossiiskoi Federacii”, Moscow, 27.3.2007, in: www.mid.ru (21.5.2008).

13 The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12 July 2008, in: www.mid.ru (15.8.2008).

14 Interviews given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Rossiya, NTV, 31.8.2008, and to BBC and CNN, 26.8.2008 in: www.kremlin.ru (16.9.2008).

find themselves in a similarly inferior position relative to Russia as Russia finds itself in relative to the USA, and they view themselves therefore as just as dependent on the protection offered by the standards of international law.

2.2 Cold War beyond systemic conflict?

The combination of revisionist self-image and omnipotent self-confidence induced Russia, when Saakashvili opened a *window of opportunity* in the Caucasian war, for the first time to let military actions follow and in so doing achieve the desired impact. Meanwhile, the West and Russia are still passing the Cold War buck to each other and at the same time denying this by pointing to their common interests and the lack of ideological antagonism. However, the more often both sides' relations are rhetorically squeezed into the framework of the Cold War, the more obvious it is that their dealings with one another will be confrontational. Furthermore, efforts to create a meaningful reason for the mutual separation will be all the more emphatic.

In Moscow, the premise still applies that one is simply and quite pragmatically pursuing one's own interests contrary to the "ideologisation of the world" cultivated by the West with its export of democracy. Indeed the political class in Moscow does perceive the world in the light of classic realistic premises, but meaningful ideological formulations are increasingly on the move. The fantasies about a special path based on the model of Eurasism, originally driven by inferiority complexes, have been dispelled by the self-confident assertion of a global competition between several models: the West no longer has a monopoly over globalisation, instead a "marketplace for ideas" and a world market for values and development models has sprung up.¹⁵

In the middle of 2008 Foreign Minister Lavrov even set this competition in a world historical context commensurate with Russia's size: according to this, the end of the Cold War marked the end of a 400-500-year-long period in world history, which had been dominated by European civilisation or the "historical West". Now in contrast an alternative existed, that either the world adopted Western values and became a "Greater West", or – the Russian view – competition would become "truly global", including also "values and development models" (Lavrov 2008: 8). In July 2008 this became part of Russia's official foreign policy concept, referring to "contradictory trends" of our time among other things as follows: "It is for the first time in the contemporary history that global competition is acquiring a civilizational dimension which suggests competition between different

15 Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S. V. Lavrova na XV Assamblee Soveta po vneshney i oboronnoy politike, 17. März 2007, in: www.mid.ru (16.6.2007). The "efforts to create democracy" in the CIS therefore represent to all onlookers merely a "geopolitical game", since the "main criterion of democratic development" is represented by readiness to follow the foreign policy of other powers. Cf. on the context of these comments also Fyodor Lukyanov, Increasing Supply on the World Values Market, in: *The Moscow Times*, 11.4.2007, p. 9.

value systems and development models within the framework of universal democratic and market economy principles.”¹⁶

The model Russia will introduce into this global competition is not mentioned however. Instead, the common universal framework indicates that Moscow is seeking to withdraw from the antagonism which, as has been duly noted in Russia, Robert Kagan for instance conjures up in the form of an “authoritarian capitalism” with echoes of Wilhelmine Germany or the Tenno system in Japan (Kagan 2008). In so far as Moscow takes part at all in such debates, it adheres to a continental European model of a welfare state as opposed to Anglo-Saxon *laissez faire* which slips smoothly into the anti-hegemonic rhetoric – social practice in the Wild East of course looks quite different.

This de-ideologised competition between political concepts is all about Russian emancipation from the phantom pain of subordination, just like multipolarism to begin with. Following the Chinese “harmonious world” Moscow was also putting the case in favour of recognising the “multiformity of the contemporary world” without imposing “borrowed value systems”. For a “different, unifying approach would lead to interventionism – a strategy that is hardly realistic, since its effectiveness can be achieved only in a transition toward global imperial construction.” (Lavrov 2008: 11).

Moscow’s response to the colour revolutions which it ascribes to this kind of mindset and to Western complaints about the growing value gap consequently focuses entirely on the geostrategic elements of democracy promotion. Indeed the USA has applied double standards in the selection of its allies, which amounted to nothing more than pointed acts of obedience with regard to foreign policy, in which Iraq engagements guaranteed a knightly accolade. For Putin this was proof enough that in the “ever more complicated and tougher” world “lofty slogans of freedom and an open society are sometimes used to destroy the sovereignty of a country or an entire region” Russia counted as a particularly important target in this because of its “God-given” resources.¹⁷

As part of this, the time of trouble – and weakness – in the 1990s is contrasted with Russia’s re-emergence under his leadership. Thus Putin had already complained in the run-up to the St Petersburg G8 Summit in 2006 that “a whole system” had been set up in order to influence Russian foreign and domestic policy. It is a quite different story today:

“And in the last three, four or five years and based on the changes in the situation of the Russian economy then these means of influencing Russian society began to disappear. And some of our partners very much wanted to keep something in place so that they could con-

16 The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12 July 2008, in: www.mid.ru (15.8.2008). This also was put forward in justification of current disputes: “The reaction of the historical West to the prospect of losing its monopoly on the fashioning of global processes is being expressed in particular in the continuing psychology and politics of “containing” Russia, including selected historical ways into this, especially the Second World War and the post-war period.” (Lavrov 2008: 8).

17 Vladimir V. Putin, Speech at the Expanded Meeting of the State Council on Russia’s Development Strategy through to 2020, 8.2.2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (21.2.2008).

tinue this influence. Little remains from the previous tools of influence, and it seems to me that they have chosen their line of attack on purpose.”¹⁸

He denounced elections as an instrument of Western democratisation policy as a new form of “colonialism” designed to strip Russia bare: “Today, ‘civilisation’ has been replaced by democratisation, but the aim is the same – to ensure unilateral gains and one’s own advantage, and to pursue one’s own interests.”¹⁹ The Kremlin counters this with “sovereign democracy”, a term which Vladislav Surkov, Putin’s Mastermind on domestic policy, coined in February 2006. Since this time there is no longer any defensive affirmation of western values being pursued as universal ones, but instead their offensive particularisation, emphasising that they must be realised in harmony with the national political culture. What this means however in practical terms, beyond the legal nihilism lamented by Medvedev and the corruption repeatedly attacked by Putin, is also far from clear.

Consequently the doctrine recently reaffirmed by Medvedev, that “Foreign policy is (...) only a means for achieving internal political goals”, throws up more questions than it answers. He thus turned against the conception popular in Moscow of a “foreign policy as an end in itself”, seeking to allot it the task of guaranteeing stable external conditions abroad for a stable domestic development.²⁰ In actual fact Russian politics has difficulty demonstrating the damage done to the country’s domestic development by the West, especially since without it all the fine temples to consumerism would swiftly turn to dust. It is therefore not convincing to distance itself quite so militantly from the USA and the EU and seek proximity with those whose sole achievement consists of being at loggerheads with Washington. One might sarcastically conclude from Medvedev’s *petitum* that turning away from Western postulates of democratisation ultimately only serves the objective of not letting anyone meddle in the “bureaucratic revenge” which followed the turmoil of the 1990s.

However the West is by no means free of such contradictions. On the one hand its declared objective consists of seeking to “westernise” Russia, in line with its fundamental democratic convictions. On the other hand it is insisting on keeping Russia out of NATO and the EU, therefore out of those organisations which lend Europe its “Western” form and which in other post-socialist cases have been stylised into guarantors of democratic choice.

Right now, however, Russian foreign policy is being fundamentally challenged rather unexpectedly on the domestic front. Thus not only the Caucasian war with its subsequently announced arms build-up conceals the risk of sacrificing the progress made in recent years to foreign policy adventures. Furthermore there is the acute danger that in the light of the global financial and economic crisis the achievements will remain an epi-

18 Interview with ZDF Television Channel, in: www.kremlin.ru (15.7.2006).

19 Putin’s address to the Federal Assembly at the end of April 2007, in: www.kremlin.ru (6.6.2007).

20 Transcript of the Meeting with the Participants in the International Club Valdai, 12.9.2008, GUM Exhibition Centre, Moscow, in: www.kremlin.ru (16. 9.2008).

sode. If the Moscow stock exchange were a measure of Russian self-confidence, this should have seriously deteriorated, as since Medvedev's assumption of office in May 2008 listed companies have forfeited 70% of their value. This is a loss in the magnitude of USD one trillion and could not be shored up even with state rescue measures of more than USD 200 billion. It is a similar story for energy prices: when a barrel of oil cost USD 10, Moscow complained that it was merely a "raw materials appendix" for the West and that it was being patronised. When the price rose to USD 140, Russia viewed itself as an "energy super power" and claimed due respect. In the meantime this price has once again fallen to a mere USD 40 and thus far beneath the limit guaranteeing a positive balance of payments and budget.

Of course the self-confidence of the political class in Moscow did not dwindle quite as rapidly as the stock exchange, especially since the fate of others reinforces the illusion of possibly being able in its shadow to attain a global leadership position in economic terms as well. Nevertheless the financial crisis has revealed the vulnerability of the Russian economy. Russia, like all other globally active national economies, is at the mercy of the shock waves washing through international financial relations. Moscow must therefore decide: will it use the crisis as a lever for its multipolar vision and be happy to conjure up the end of the domination of "one economy and one currency" as well as the necessity for a new multipolar financial order?²¹ Or is it seeking to focus on the pragmatic proposals with which it reacted in a fully cooperative spirit to the G20 efforts in favour of a reform of the international financial system? Clearly the Russian leadership is having difficulty in finding the balance between rhetorical tub-thumping and subdued practice.

3. One war among many. The USA and its relation to Russia in the light of the Caucasian war

In the United States the Russian intervention of 8 August 2008 was felt in many ways to be a "turning point" for bilateral relations. Whether this characterization proves appropriate, and in what sense, remains to be seen. So far, the Caucasian war has elevated Russia's status in American perception. During the 1990s and even during the early years of the new century, the US political elite perceived Russia as a regional power at best, and as a power occupied by manifold internal challenges ranging from the proliferation risks of the allegedly leaky Russian nuclear weapons arsenal to the danger of outright state failure. Even as high energy prices facilitated the consolidation of Russian state power, and as Russia was again perceived more as a challenge than a potential partner, the majority of American observers continued to note a serious discrepancy between Moscow's new assertiveness in the area of foreign policy and its still weak power base (cf. Spanger 2007).

21 Speech at the Russian-German public forum, the Petersburg Dialogue, St. Petersburg, 2.10.2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (7.10.2008).

In the American debate on the causes and consequences of the Caucasian war, two broad positions can be distinguished. The first is represented by liberal interventionists, neo-conservatives, and defenders of US supremacy. In their view, the Kremlin bears sole responsibility for the war in the Caucasus. Russian aggression is seen as the direct expression of its strategic objective to roll back Western influence in the region of the former Soviet Union.²² “Russia’s government actions in Georgia constitute just one front of a comprehensive campaign to reassert Russian dominance in the region through both coercive and cooperative means”, states Michael McFaul, Barack Obama’s advisor on Russia and now Senior Advisor on Russia in the National Security Council.²³ This assessment is shared by many Republican Senators and Representatives who perceived a direct line from Budapest 1956 to Prague 1968 and to Gori²⁴ and warned against a domino effect, which could affect the Ukraine and the Baltic states next.²⁵

The Bush administration essentially adopted this view. Its leading members blamed the Russian strategy for intimidating Georgia as motive for the outbreak of the war,²⁶ and stressed the risk of further attempts by Moscow to apply pressure against its “near abroad”.²⁷ Consequently, the administration dismissed any responsibility on the part of the United States both for Georgia’s actions and for the deterioration in relations with Russia. In a detailed analysis of the causes of the war Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued that the USA had not only treated Russia as an “emerging partner” but had also respected it as a “great power”.²⁸ The underlying reason for the deterioration in relations

22 Cf. Ronald D. Asmus/Richard Holbrooke, Black Sea Watershed, in: Washington Post, 11.8.2008, A15; Robert Kagan, Putin Makes his Move, in: Washington Post, 11.8.2008, A15.

23 Michael McFaul, Prepared Statement, U.S. Congress House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings: U.S.-Russia Relations in the Aftermath of the Georgia Crises, 9.9.2008, p. 2. Going one decisive step further, Zbigniew Brzezinski compared Russian policy out of hand with that of Stalin and Hitler. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Russlands Vorgehen ähnelt dem Hitlers [Russia’s actions resemble those of Hitler], in: Welt Online, 11.08.2008.

24 Cf. John McCain, We are all Georgians, in: Wall Street Journal, 14.8.2008. See also Thaddeus McCotter, Russia’s Invasion in Georgia. What to do about Moscow’s attack against its neighbour, in: Washington Times, 11.8.2008. McCain’s intervention in favour of Saakashvili appears in a dubious light however, since it has filtered through that his security policy advisor Randy Scheunemann with his lobbying firm “Orion Strategies” was rewarded handsomely by Georgia for representing the country’s interests in Washington. Cf. Matthew Mosk/Jeffrey Birnbaum, While Aide Advised McCain, his Firm Lobbied for Georgia, in: Washington Post, 13.8.2008, A3.

25 Lindsay Graham/Joe Lieberman, Russia’s Aggression Is a Challenge to World Order, in: Wall Street Journal, 27.8.2008.

26 Daniel Fried, The Current Situation in Georgia and Implications for U.S. Policy, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Washington D.C., 9.9.2008.

27 See Richard Cheney, Vice President’s Remarks at the Ambrosetti Forum, 6.9.2008, in: www.whitehouse.gov (17.11.2008).

28 Condoleezza Rice, Secretary Rice Addresses U.S.-Relations at the German Marshall Fund, Washington, D.C.: 18.9.2008, in: www.state.gov (17.11.2008).

was therefore “Mr. Putin's turn toward autocratic rule at home and his revival of old imperial pretensions abroad”.²⁹

Adherents to this position share the view that Russia must pay a price for its “aggression”. Demanding a strong reaction, however, has been easier than outlining concrete measures. Apart from supporting Georgia’s reconstruction and rearmament as well as calling for a boycott of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi the proponents of a hard line have had difficulties in proposing measures that would hurt Russia more than the United States.³⁰

The second position is adopted by representatives of the liberal spectrum, pragmatic realists and the few supporters of an isolationist course who back an interest-based way of dealing with Russia. The latter see the war as a corroboration of their long-standing criticism of Bush’s costly world policy which involves the risk of dragging the USA unnecessarily into the disputes of others. Instead of blaming Russian ambitions, they stress the danger of aligning America with unreliable foreign powers, as former presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan bluntly put it: “If the Russia-Georgia war proves nothing else, it is the insanity of giving erratic hotheads in volatile nations the power to drag the United States into war.”³¹

Proponents of the liberal camp and the pragmatic-realist approach have for a long time argued for a policy towards Russia which is based on common interests. They hold American negligence – of Russia’s concerns and interests – at least partly responsible for the deterioration of relations between America and Russia.³² Thus former Obama advisor Samantha Power denounced the long list of Russia’s humiliations, beginning with American triumphalism over the Cold War victory, through NATO expansion, to the recognition of Kosovo.³³ Francis Fukuyama passed a similar judgment: “Diplomacy, such as it was, consisted of persuading Russia to accept all of the items on our list and telling them their fears and concerns were groundless.”³⁴

From this perspective two aspects of Bush’s policy appear particularly problematic. On the one hand there is the unbalanced assessment of both conflicting parties’ democratic qualities. While independent observers similarly give a critical assessment of both countries’ democratic credentials, the Bush administration castigated a return to authoritarian rule in Russia while lauding the Georgian president as a beacon of democracy in the re-

29 Robert Kagan, *Power Play*, in: *Wall Street Journal*, 30.8.2008; similarly also Richard Cheney, Vice President’s Remarks at the Ambrosetti Forum, 6.9.2008, www.whitehouse.gov (17.11.2008).

30 Richard Holbrooke, *What the West Can Do*, *Washington Post Online*, 22.8.2008, A17; Ariel Cohen, *Dealing with Russia*, *The Heritage Foundation*, Briefing Paper, 15.9.2008.

31 Patrick J. Buchanan, *Who Started Cold War II*, *Medium*, 19.8.2008. Similar also Ted Galen Carpenter, *What Russia Wants*, in: *The American Conservative*, 22.9.2008.

32 Cf. Steven L. Myers, *No Cold War, but Big Chill over Georgia*, in: *New York Times*, 16.8.2008.

33 Samantha Power, *A Question of Honor*, in: *Time*, 14.8.2008.

34 Francis Fukuyama, *Russia and a new democratic realism*, in: *Financial Times*, 3.9.2008.

gion.³⁵ On the other hand there is the over-estimation of American power which has immunized the Bush-administration against the possibility that Russia could challenge American moves like NATO enlargement in its neighbourhood. This feeling of unparalleled strength has also led to the uncritical support of Georgia and thus the “irresponsible encouragement of the Georgian president” in his actions.³⁶ As a result of this misguided policy, the Bush administration has seriously damaged America’s reputation. It allowed Georgia’s leadership to believe that their country was a close U.S. ally only to let the country down when push came to shove.

According to this view, the lessons of the war are obvious. The United States is by far not as omnipotent, and its appeal not as irresistible, as some neo-conservatives and neo-liberals seem to assume. It therefore follows that the USA could no longer ignore Russian interests; instead a *modus vivendi* must be created, based on the plain facts of power politics and on stated common interests.³⁷ A practical consequence of this insight offers itself straight away: the USA should resist any further NATO expansion, which might not result in extra security either for the USA or for the alliance or for the newly admitted countries.

3.1 End of history and American primacy as models

The August 2008 crisis marked the lowest level in US-Russian relations during the Bush-administration. Although this relationship had improved, atmospherically speaking at least, when President Bush enhanced Russia’s status after 9/11 to that of a strategic partner in the war against terrorism, it has deteriorated since then. The US has contributed to this deterioration through a policy of benign, and at the end of his reign even of malign, neglect of Russia’s concerns and sentiments. The Bush administration terminated the ABM Treaty, in Russia’s view the cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, kept commitments in the area of strategic nuclear arms control as limited as possible, and delayed progress in conventional arms control in Europe. Moreover, in the face of Russian protests, it pushed through the recognition of Kosovo, the stationing of elements of its national missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic and the decision to deploy combat troops in Romania and Bulgaria. Last, but not least, after NATO had admitted a

35 Paul J. Saunders, Georgia’s Recklessness, in: Washington Post, 15.8.2008, A. 21; same author, Lessons of the Russian-Georgian War and its Implications for U.S. Policy, Testimony before the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 10.9.2008, in: www.nixoncenter.org/georgiatestimony.doc (17.11.2008).

36 Dimitri K. Simes, Talking Sense on South Ossetia, in: The National Interest, 8.11.2008. See also Anatol Lieven, The west shares the blame for Georgia, in: Financial Times, 14.8.08. Anthony Cordesman of the Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies takes the same view: “[...] we almost certainly played an inadvertent role in convincing a ‘rabbit’ that it could provoke a ‘bear’. If anything, we are lucky that the ‘bear’ did not eat the ‘rabbit’” (A. Cordesman, The Georgia War and the Century of “Real Power”, Commentary, CSIS, Washington D.C.).

37 Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Shultz, Finding Common Ground, in: International Herald Tribune, 30.9.2008; Ronald Steel, A Superpower is reborn, in: New York Times, 24.8.2008.

second wave of new members in 2001, the Bush administration convinced some of its rather reluctant European partners to accept the application of Georgia and the Ukraine to the Membership Action Program in a third round of NATO enlargement. The speed with which the United States pursued the admission of both countries is all the more surprising since both would be net consumers of security and since the stability of the democratic order in both countries remains fragile.

Two underlying factors help to explain this puzzling negligence with regard to Russia's concerns and interests: the liberal belief in progress and the idea of unrivalled American supremacy. The perception of a secular trend towards democracy, already evident in Francis Fukuyama's "End of History", affected America's policy towards Russia in two ways. On the one hand, it blinded the administration to the risks of NATO enlargement. Dire warnings that a rapid accession of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO could unravel political stability in the Ukraine and regional stability in the Caucasus were dismissed. Instead, the administration painted the picture of a virtuous cycle. The prospect of NATO membership would accelerate the inevitable progress towards democracy and political stability in both countries. And as stable democracies, they would behave cooperatively and peacefully towards their neighbours, thus contributing to the benevolent effects of NATO enlargement.³⁸

On the other hand, the belief in key tenets of the democratic peace theory prepared the ground for the switch from benign to malign neglect of Russia. As the consolidation of state power in Russia went hand in hand with a revival of authoritarian tendencies, the theoretical concept that domestic political order and foreign behaviour of states are closely related led to the practical consequence of a decrease in room for cooperative policies.

The first guideline for the defence of American supremacy – the Defense Planning Guidance developed at the Pentagon in 1992 – was not endowed with any official status.³⁹ It nonetheless became the political blueprint for the objective of sustaining America's unrivalled dominance for the foreseeable future (Krauthammer 2002/03). Again, this perception of unparalleled strength and the political will to sustain America's predominance affected US policy towards Russia in two ways. On the one hand, it suggested that Russia's interests could safely be ignored (Asmus/Kugler/Larrabee 1995: 20-24). On the other hand, it demanded the avoidance of binding arms control commitments (Bolton 2007: 54-82) as well as active measures to hedge against the possibility of a resurgence of a potential competitor.

In the Bush administration the pragmatic-realist wing appeared initially to set the tone. Thus Condoleezza Rice (2000) asserted a narrow understanding of American inter-

38 For example, Dick Cheney's claimed that it was difficult "to imagine a better kind of neighbour (...) than a stable, developing democracy", and that it would be even better if these neighbours would also join NATO. Richard Cheney, Vice President's Remarks at the Ambrosetti Forum, 6.9.2008, in: www.whitehouse.gov (17.11.2008).

39 Patrick E. Tyler, US strategy plan calls for insuring no rivals develop, in: *New York Times*, 8.3.1992.

ests against the idealistic flights of Clinton's foreign policy, while Richard Haass summed up the necessary consideration to be given to other great powers with the formula that in world policy "order is more fundamental than justice" (Dueck 2004: 526). The shock of 9/11 however helped the advocates of American supremacy and the representatives of the neo-conservative orientation to break through, with their concept of foreign policy linking ideas of hegemony with liberal belief in progress (Schmidt/Williams 2008). With their rise American foreign policy assumed a Janus-faced nature, on the one hand promoting worldwide democracy, and on the other seeking to defend military supremacy.⁴⁰

This double-edged policy inspired and overburdened not least the process of NATO expansion. On the one hand the latter stages of NATO expansion were closely linked with the idea of a triumphal march for democracy. While the first step of this process aimed at stabilizing already established democracies, in the third round of expansion the Bush government proposed as proof that the accession criteria will be met simply the declaration of belief in democracy.⁴¹ On the other hand NATO expansion was also always a precaution against any potential rival. Thus although in theory NATO extension was intended to run in parallel with ever closer relations to Russia, in practice expansion served not least as a "hedge" against a Russia that "might once again emerge as a regional bully"⁴² (Asmus 2002: 297).

The USA never did resolve this ambiguity. Washington supported the NATO offer of a parallel deepening of relations with Russia and the creation of the NATO-Russia Council as a joint consultation committee.⁴³ Even membership was not out of the question in principle. However Russia received only *voice* and no *vote*. Furthermore cooperation was limited to areas of common interests such as the fight against terrorism and proliferation. The core area of collective defence and issues like the stationing of missile defence systems in Eastern Europe, the involvement of the Baltic States in NATO's integrated air defence system or future NATO expansion remained unaffected. As this process unfolded Russia's interests were bit by bit pushed back.

40 Cf. White House, National Security Strategy of the United States, Washington 2002; George W. Bush, Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy, Westpoint, 1.6.2002, www.whitehouse.gov; 17.11.2008.

41 Defence Minister Rumsfeld by his visit to Tbilisi only 12 days after the Rose Revolution reaffirmed the American desire to smooth the way into the alliance for Georgia. Cf. Tom Warner, Rumsfeld points Georgia towards NATO Membership, in: Financial Times, 6./7.12.2003.

42 Greg Craig and Ronald D. Asmus, The Rewards of a larger NATO, in: Washington Post, 19.02.2007.

43 In the mean time there are more than 25 working groups and committees on among other things cooperation against terrorism, on proliferation, peace missions, tactical missile defence (one of the few "beacon projects" of NATO-Russian cooperation), defence reform, in the field of logistics, in the event of military accidents and civilian emergencies, as well as academic cooperation for peace and security (www.nato-russia-council.info (8.7.2008)).

3.2 A new Cold War?

The Caucasian war called into question fundamental assumptions in American policy towards Russia. The prospect of NATO membership obviously did not allow the USA to exert any moderating influence on the Georgian leadership and did not lead to responsible behaviour by Georgia. Thus, this experience not only cast doubt on the assumption of a virtuous circle; the continuing fragility of the coloured revolution governments called into question the whole idea of a secular trend towards democracy.

Furthermore the war demonstrated that Russia's interests could no longer safely be ignored. Instead, Moscow demonstrated that it possesses the means to react to challenges in its vicinity and that it is ready to lend emphasis to its "red lines". Even if the diffusion of power away from the United States might not be as pronounced as some observers assume (Zakaria 2008; Haass 2008; Calleo 2008) the war nevertheless called into question the conception of unparalleled American strength.

At first glance, the Bush administration remained unconvinced by this. Instead the government indicated that in its understanding only Russia "had the choice", either of fitting in with the American world of the 21st century, or of risking isolation and insignificance.⁴⁴ The practical steps to which the administration committed itself after lengthy consultations, however, remained rather limited.⁴⁵ Thus on 8 September the President informed the US Congress of his decision to withdraw a civil nuclear cooperation agreement. Although the agreement was of financial interest to Moscow, it remains debatable whether the abrogation of the agreement will hurt Russia's or America's interests more. In addition the government reached a *fait accompli* agreement with Poland on the stationing of missile defence systems. Finally it offered humanitarian and economic assistance to Georgia adding up to USD 1 billion. This program would dwarf the already substantial economic and military assistance of approx. USD 100 million per year on average that the United States has provided over the last 17 years and made Georgia the third biggest recipient of American foreign aid after Israel and Egypt.⁴⁶ Washington also agreed to a resumption of military assistance, although it has not yet been decided whether the assistance will include heavy equipment like armour and air defence systems.⁴⁷ Furthermore Washington committed itself to breaking off cooperation with Russia in NATO and tried to bring Ukraine and Georgia closer to the alliance. Nonetheless the outgoing Bush government has given only a temporary response with these measures, and has left the next

44 Condoleezza Rice, Transatlantische Einigkeit gegenüber Russland [Transatlantic Unity against Russia], in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24.9.2008, S. 10.

45 Cf. Thom Shanker/Steven Lee Myers, U.S. Rules out Unilateral Steps against Russia, in: New York Times, 9.9.2008.

46 Steven Lee Myers, White House Unveils \$1 Billion Georgia Aid Plan, in: New York Times, 4.9.2008.

47 C. J. Chivers/Thom Shanker, Georgia Eager To Rebuild its Defeated Armed Forces, in: New York Times, 2.9.2008.

administration enough room to develop relations with Russia in either one or the other direction.

In contrast, President Barack Obama accepted the above-mentioned changes and is shaping American policy towards Russia in a situation in which the liberal belief in democratic progress and the idea of unrivalled American supremacy have lost their sparkle and their practical relevance. The new President acted swiftly to normalize relations with Russia. Contacts within NATO were resumed, the President signalled the resumption of strategic arms control negotiations, and Vice President Biden announced that the administration would “press the reset button and revisit the many areas where we can and should work together with Russia”⁴⁸

4. The Caucasian war divides the European Union

For the USA relations with Russia are one problem among many, for the European Union it is the “most important, perhaps even the central task of European politics” (Sapper 2002: 40). This task is, as the Caucasian war painfully demonstrates, also most difficult to achieve. Developing a constructive relationship with Russia has on the one hand become more difficult due to Russia itself, which has also moved away from the West in terms of foreign policy following Putin’s domestic political Thermidor. On the other hand, it is due to enormous differences in perception within the EU concerning Russia and the nature of the Russian regime as well as differences concerning relations with Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia.

The Caucasian war further intensified these opposing views. Nonetheless the EU proved itself capable of action in its management of the crisis. The French Presidency succeeded in negotiating a ceasefire, creating the preconditions for a Russian withdrawal of troops from core Georgia. Furthermore, Nicolas Sarkozy arranged the deployment of the European EUMM observer mission and convinced the conflicting parties to commit to a political process aimed first of all at a settlement of practical issues. This successful conflict management will in all likelihood lead to a stronger European presence in the whole region. In contrast to Bush’s reaction the European approach aims for dialogue and inclusion, not for the exclusion of Russia. However success may have its price. In order to forge a common position among the 27 member-states and guarantee the capacity to act, compromises were necessary, which poses the risk that the EU could find itself obliged to take a harder line against Moscow.

The loudest criticism of Russian action in the Caucasus came from some of those countries which have moved from the Western front of the East to the Eastern front of the West. While Hungary, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic were as reticent as Bulgaria and

48 Helene Cooper/Nicholas Kulich, Biden Signals U.S. Is Open to Russia Missile Deal, New York Times, 8.2.2009.

Romania, exceedingly harsh tones came from Poland, the three Baltic States and parts of the political class of the Czech Republic. According to the Polish President, “Russia has yet again shown its true face”. Without consulting on the European level he called upon his colleagues from the Baltic States to undertake a journey of solidarity to Tbilisi even while fighting was still going on.⁴⁹ In their view the war threw a spotlight on the dangers of Russian revisionism, which directly threatened all countries of the former Warsaw Pact. Through its decision not to offer Georgia any concrete membership perspective, NATO had even encouraged Russia in its military policy of spheres of influence. Against the backdrop of this analysis Poland and the Baltic States declined to return to *business as usual* after the war.⁵⁰ The resumption of negotiations concerning a new partnership agreement was to be suspended and Russia excluded from the G8.⁵¹ Instead everything should be done to smooth the path for Tbilisi and Kiev into NATO and eventually into the EU. Furthermore the government in Warsaw agreed to the stationing of American missile defence systems and signed a Declaration on Strategic Cooperation, intended to forge a strong bilateral relationship with the United States beyond NATO. As a concrete result of this agreement, both sides decided to deploy a battery of Patriot missiles, including the operating crew of US troops.⁵²

Clear criticism also came from some of the “old” EU members. Thus British foreign minister Miliband called for the EU to organise its engagement with Russia in such a way as “to demonstrate the costs of adventurism and aggression”,⁵³ and had the support of the conservative government of Sweden.

Germany and France assumed the opposite standpoint, supported by Italy and Spain, which in 2003 still belonged to the “new” European camp. Most understanding for Russian action in the Caucasus was summoned up by the conservative Berlusconi government, only moderately criticised by the left-wing opposition. In Germany also, a cross-party consensus emerged according to which both Russia and Georgia were to blame for the outbreak of the war. Isolation of Russia was to be avoided, and the prospect of its institutional inclusion was to be maintained.⁵⁴ Admittedly Angela Merkel repeated the decision of the Bucharest NATO Summit on her visit to Georgia.⁵⁵ However she insisted that the admission of Georgia to the Membership Action Program should be viewed as a rather long-term perspective. The opposition parties rejected a confrontational path even

49 Das Parlament No. 35/36 of 25.8./1.9.2008, p. 17.

50 Valentina Pop, EU-Russia talks likely to resume in November, in: EUobserver, 22.10.2008, 3.

51 Andrew Rettman, EU-Russia ‘business as usual’ impossible, Lithuania says, in: EUobserver, 19.8.2008; Römpczyk (2008).

52 Washington Post, 21.8.2008, p. 9.

53 David Miliband, Die Invasion war nicht gerechtfertigt [The invasion was not justified], in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 20.8.2008, p. 10.

54 Andreas Schockenhoff: Russlands Wahl: Partner oder Widerpart [Russia’s choice: partner or adversary], Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 16.9.2008, p. 10.

55 Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 18.8.2008, p. 1.

more resolutely: the FDP, the Greens and the Left (the former Party of Democratic Socialism) are agitating just as strongly for the continuation of the dialogue with Russia, as they are warning against the consequences of US missile plans and NATO expansion.⁵⁶ In this way Berlin finds itself aligned with the French government, whose policy is dictated by the slogan “No to sanctions, yes to dialogue” (Besancenot 2008).

4.1 Between economic interests and political blockade

These discrepancies in the evaluation of the causes of the war and the question of appropriate reactions reflect fundamental differences between European states in their policy towards Russia. Hence, forging a common line has increasingly become a challenge. In the 1990s this was even easier to accomplish than in recent years. In 1994 the EU concluded the “Partnership and Cooperation Agreement” with Russia and in 1999 adopted a “Common Strategy”. Both were based on the vision that Russia would gradually fall into line with the European model of political order. Based on the assumption that Russia would accept the *acquis communautaire*, both documents envisaged the creation of a pan-European economic and social space. However, in contrast to the Association Agreements that the EU had concluded with the East European states, the prospect of Russia becoming a member was not part of the plan (Arbatova 2006: 106).

This approach became moot as Russia turned away from the West and began to define itself as an independent great power. Nonetheless the EU held on to its strategy of developing a dense contractual relationship. This strategy seemed not the least appropriate, given the dramatic rise in economic interaction and mutual dependence: the EU is by far Russia’s most important trading partner, and Russia the third most important partner of the EU. However, the quest for a new contractual framework was made more difficult by the acceptance of East European states into the EU in 2004. Despite growing internal differences, the EU and Russia managed to reach an agreement in the following year on creating four “Common Spaces” for cooperation.⁵⁷ However implementation of this agreement failed to come up to expectations (Adomeit/Lindner 2005). More importantly, the renewal of the basic “Partnership and Cooperation Agreement” was blocked by the differences within Europe. In November 2006 Warsaw exercised a veto against new negotiations, followed by Lithuania, with the result that it was not possible to begin discussions until June 2008, only for them to be suspended once more in the September.

In contrast, the other non-EU states in Eastern Europe – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the three Caucasian countries – lack economic weight. Nevertheless, the EU made sure that the relationship to democratically oriented countries in this group develops at least formally in parallel with that to Russia. In this spirit the EU decided to conclude a

56 Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22.8.2008, p 2 and 27.8.2008, p 2.

57 As well as for the economy, a common space of this kind was to be created for the areas of freedom, security and justice, also for research, education and culture, and for external security.

“Partnership and Cooperation Agreement” with Kiev in 1998. However this bilateral relation remained secondary in importance. The adoption of the “European Neighbourhood Policy” in 2004 did not alter much about this. Within this framework for cooperation between the EU and its Southern as well as Eastern neighbours, relations to individual countries will develop according to their level of economic and political reforms and their ability to accept parts of the *acquis communautaire*. However it makes no provision for membership and has only been allocated modest funding: € 11.2 billion for the period 2007-2013, about a third of which is reserved for projects with the East European neighbours (Bendiek 2008). In the area of security, the EU has so far only played a minor role with the civilian Rule of Law Mission to Georgia (EUJUST THEMIS, July 2004 until July 2005) and the equally modest civilian Border Assistance Mission to support Moldova and the Ukraine (since December 2005).

The authoritarian change of direction in Russia would probably have been sufficient to exacerbate differences in Eastern policy within the EU-15. However, the inclusion of the East European members aggravated divergent views on Russia within the EU and complicated the search for a common approach. Since then, the EU has been split into “strategic partners” of Russia versus “critical pragmatists” and “new cold warriors” (Leonard/Popescu 2007). More importantly, the EU has to come to grips with the fact that there is now a group of member states, consisting of Poland and the Baltic states, which rejects the traditional EU approach towards Russia on grounds of principle.

Great Britain became embroiled in a series of conflicts with Russia – from the dispute over the status of the *British Council* in Russia to that over the murder of Alexander Litvinenko –, without however using the EU to further its own interests. In Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands criticism of Russia was based on strong human rights traditions, in the case of Sweden also on the conservative political line of the government in office. But these countries, too, are endeavouring to get a common EU line of action.

Instead, Poland and the Baltic States are not afraid to bring the EU into position against Russia on bilateral disputes. Their demand for a strict separation from Russia meets with agreement across all party boundaries. This consensus is more strongly rooted in national trauma than in current conflicts. In the Polish case there is also the geostrategic interest of playing a role of its own in the area east of its border, which inevitably aggravates differences with Moscow. Economic interests or the level of energy dependence as such do not account for this difference of opinion. Poland and the Baltic States would be the most seriously affected by a deterioration in European-Russian relations, as is illustrated by the energy dependencies alone: Poland obtains about 70% of its natural gas from Russia; the Baltic States are entirely dependent on Russia for their energy supply.

Given these changes in the composition of member-states, a shift of Europe’s Eastern policy is clearly on the cards. Still depending on unanimous decisions on important issues, one would expect that the smallest common denominator in EU’s Russia policy will shift away from a cooperative approach towards Russia.

4.2 Successful crisis management despite European differences

Despite this pessimistic expectation, the EU proved surprisingly capable of action. The European capacity for action in the crisis was encouraged by three factors. Firstly a swathe of European common ground existed despite all differences. Thus criticism of Russia's military action even by supporters of a strategic partnership intensified in so far as it was disclosed that Moscow not only was seeking to restore the *status quo ante* but was also pursuing more far-reaching objectives.⁵⁸ The EU was united over the cornerstones of a programme for overcoming the crisis: Russia must withdraw its troops, the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia would not be recognised, and the resolution of the Bucharest NATO summit would not be revoked *pro forma* at least. Finally the EU would intensify its commitment to the independence and democratic orientation of the countries in its neighbourhood programme.⁵⁹

Secondly, and more importantly, Nicolas Sarkozy made clever use of the institutional opportunities of the EU presidency, so as to establish the Union in a common position. He convinced the EU foreign ministers to acknowledge the outcome of his negotiation efforts in the form of the Six-Point Agreement and shroud this document in a European mantle.⁶⁰ The European Council upheld this line of action at its extraordinary meeting on 1 September 2008. Building on this plan, the French Presidency negotiated the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia except from the territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, pushed through the decision to deploy the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) which launched its operation on 1 October, and facilitated the beginning of talks in Geneva on humanitarian issues and measures to improve security and stability in the area.

Thirdly, this capacity for action was achieved thanks to compromises with the group of EU-countries critical of Russia. The first concession was not very far-reaching: negotiations over the new Partnership Agreement were suspended, and their resumption made conditional on keeping the Six-Point Plan. However at the EU-Russia summit on 14 November the resumption of talks was announced, although the requirements of Russia's critics had not been met. Under dispute are the possible interpretations of the European Council's resolution of 1 September that Russian troops should withdraw "to the positions held prior to 7 August".⁶¹ Member-states critical of Russia understand this to include the 7,000 soldiers which Russia has stationed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In contrast, member-states favouring a rapprochement with Russia do not insist on such a withdrawal as a precondition. An EU delegation under the leadership of Council Presi-

58 Leigh Phillips, EU leaders condemn Russia in shadow of Kosovo, in: EUobserver, 26.8.2008; Financial Times, 18.8.2008, p. 1.

59 Financial Times, 28.9.2008, p. 1.

60 Council of the European Union: Press Release, Extraordinary Meeting General Affairs and External Relations, 12453/08, Brüssel, 13.8.2008.

61 Council of the European Union, Conclusions of the Chair: Extraordinary Meeting of the European Council of 1.9.2008 in Brussels, 12594/08, Brussels, 6 October 2008.

dent Sarkozy after discussions with Georgia and Russia about the implementation of the Six-Point Plan confirmed the withdrawal of Russian troops from “core Georgia”, but said nothing of the stationing of additional troops in both rebel provinces.⁶² Essentially this implies that not only the conflict over the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia will remain frozen; the intra-European issue of whether the EU should make the normalization of its relations with Russia dependent on compromises on South Ossetia and Abkhazia will also continue to simmer under the surface.⁶³

The second compromise concerns the attitude towards neighbouring countries, in particular the Ukraine. Here the addition of a series of small steps could signal a change in direction. While the EU made efforts until the war to run relations with the neighbouring countries in parallel to those with Russia, geostrategic considerations have since been pushing themselves in, and the EU is beginning, at a formal level at least, to prioritise relations with the Ukraine above those with Russia. After the war, the EU enhanced the “Eastern Partnership”, originally dating back to a Swedish-Polish initiative of summer 2008. Its enhancement in political value by the war is illustrated by the urgency with which the EU has since pursued it: the European Council ordered the commission to present proposals on this by November, much earlier than originally envisaged. Furthermore it is becoming apparent that the EU under the impact of the war is placing a new main focus for its neighbourhood policy here.

The organisation of bilateral relations makes the new priorities more obvious. With the planned Association Agreement the EU was giving the Ukraine a signal. Before the war, talk was merely of replacing the existing “Partnership and Cooperation Agreement” signed in 1998 with a “New Enhanced Agreement”, which among other things was to include a free-trade zone conforming with the WTO. The draft of this agreement, however, fell far short of the demands by Poland and the Baltic States to open up the prospect of membership to the Ukraine. However, one day before the EU-Ukraine summit on 9 September the EU decided to offer an Association Agreement – this form of contract implied up to now the prospect of membership.⁶⁴ In the case of Ukraine the agreement will evade the membership issue. Nonetheless the EU has thereby symbolically taken an important step towards the advocates of expansion.

Furthermore the EU is carefully examining possibilities of a rapprochement with Belarus. This process was also accelerated by the war, and here too Poland and Lithuania were

62 Cf. Council of the European Union, Council Conclusion of Georgia/Russia. 2897th External Relations Council meeting, Luxembourg, 13.10.2008.

63 A similar issue arises in connection with the EU observer mission (EUMM Georgia). The mission’s mandate states that the EUMM monitors the conflicting parties throughout Georgia. *De facto* their area of jurisdiction is currently restricted to “core Georgia” however. Cf. Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of 15 September 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM Georgia, in: Official Journal of the European Union, Brussels, 17.9.2008.

64 Council of the European Union, EU-Ukraine Summit Paris, 9 September 2008, 12812/08, Brussels, 9.9.2008, p. 3.

the driving forces.⁶⁵ The French Presidency invited the foreign minister of Belarus to a discussion with the EU Troika on 13 October on the sidelines of a Council meeting, which subsequently decided to lift travel bans against members of the Belarusian leadership including their president for an initial period of six months.⁶⁶ The current Czech presidency is considering inviting Lukashenko to an extraordinary meeting of the European Council with the Eastern partner countries. The EU is justifying this rapprochement with the release of political prisoners. However the truth of the matter for the EU countries critical of Russia is the geostrategic motive of building a European counterweight to Russian influence. In this context the European Council decided to relax sanctions against Uzbekistan and negotiate a comprehensive free-trade agreement with Moldova.

In spite of these compromises the EU has been able to stay its course of engaging Russia and continuing negotiations. This course of action is markedly different from earlier patterns of behaviour. While the Europeans during the Yugoslavia conflict rapidly regained their trust in American leadership, and in the Iraq crisis organised their own division, the EU is currently pursuing a distinctive policy, which contradicts the American stance. The opportunities for a cooperative Russia policy ought to improve, as the United States, too, pursues a more pragmatic course in its relations with Moscow.

5. No alternatives to cooperation: recommendations

The Caucasian war has with alarming consequences stimulated old reflexes which demonstrate how deep the gulf between Russia and the West has become over recent years. The calls for punishment, sanctions and isolation of Russia have become familiar but rapidly prove themselves to be unfounded. In the end the financial crisis revealed that, on the contrary, the inclusion of Russia in the management of the global crisis is necessary. This applies no less to the other issues pushed into the shadow by the financial crisis, whether these be the supply of natural gas and oil to Western Europe, or the prevention of nuclear armament by Iran and North Korea, not to mention global challenges such as climate change and transnational terrorism. The list is well-known and the subject of manifold efforts, although often without recognisable consequences.

The task must therefore be to try to get to the bottom of shared and divergent interests and openly state what these are, from energy to security policy. This on the other hand requires the West to bury its policy of continuing to marginalise Russia as a *quantité négligeable* once and for all. The unmistakable message from the war in the Caucasus is that Russia is back on the stage of European order and power politics.

65 Philippa Runner, EU states still keen to relax Belarus sanctions, in: EUobserver 30.9.2008.

66 Cf. Council of the European Union, Press Release, 2897th meeting of the Council External Relations, 14137/08, Brussels, 13.10.2008.

The signal was however not that Russia is no longer interested in a cooperative security policy, but only that the conditions which have so far been determined very one-sidedly should be newly defined. It will not be possible to accomplish this either harmoniously or in a single effort. Instead a process of rapprochement must be organised, in which pan-European conflicts are moderated in such a way that they can be resolved one by one. This is the current core task of security policy, for it is here that the centrifugal dynamic has developed; a dynamic that has to be reversed. There is plenty of room for manoeuvre here: even risk assessments, once bashfully edged into the place of threat analysis by NATO, is now devoted to quite different topics other than Russia.⁶⁷ Readiness to enter into dialogue appears to be limited however in the face of hardened conflicting viewpoints. This makes it even more important to identify suitable components on whose basis the relationship can be readjusted and improved. Apart from the reform of European institutions and conflict resolution, these components should include arms control in the narrower sense. Cooperation in arms control can create not only trust and stability, but also be suitable as a cornerstone of an associative process. And, not least, it is a matter of a clear priority in terms of a *Grand Bargain* between the West and Russia.

5.1 The organisation of common European security

More than 15 years since the beginning of the new millennium, Western security policy remains caught in the mindset of the Cold War. This has contributed to increasing cohesion within one part of the European continent, while the gulf with Russia on the other hand has deepened at a breathtaking rate – with centrifugal repercussions also in the West. The war in the Caucasus therefore has a long prior history of differences in security policy. It is a history of unilaterally broken promises and misunderstandings on both sides, nourished by Western hyper-power ignorance and resulting in interests further drifting apart. It began at the end of the East-West schism with pan-European visions, which Gorbachev had clothed in the “Common European Home” formula whereas the West European countries referred to a concept of a “New European Peace Order”. Both promised that, in the future, the security of all European states would be inextricably linked, and both maintained that the Soviet Union would have to find a suitable position in it. In practice, however, a post-war order in accordance with these visions was never seriously considered.

Thus it is no accident that Russian president Medvedev took up these pan-European ideas with his proposals for a European security treaty on 5 June 2008.⁶⁸ Even though it is

67 Even if after the war in the Caucasian region there were ruminations in NATO over whether and in fact how it might be possible to defend a country such as Estonia, or even what would need to be done in the event of a violent secession of the Crimea.

68 If they were not entirely linked to the even older demands for a pan-European security conference, as proposed (unsuccessfully) for years by the Soviet leadership under Leonid Brezhnev, before finally resulting in the formation of the CSCE/OSCE.

impossible to turn back the clock, the proposals indicate readiness to cooperate and - in connection with the Caucasian war - reinforce the alternatives facing Western security policy: the continuation of a unilateralism which wavers between disregard towards Russia and the desire to contain it, thereby willingly or unwillingly strengthening the confrontational reflexes of both sides; or revival of the multilateralism once widely proclaimed, which could in the future also be measured in practice against the objective of common European security.

It is true that Medvedev's idea of a European conference between individual nation-states disregards the fact that in the view of almost all European states their security has nowadays found its physical expression in the form of NATO and the EU - and therefore lays itself open to the accusation of intending to drive a wedge into Western structures just as the former USSR sought to. Moreover the precursor - the model of the CSCE - is not relevant in so far as an organised East-West dialogue had to be established at all in the first place in the 1970s.

In this respect the prospects of realising Medvedev's proposals are limited, but they demand a response all the same. This has not been forthcoming so far, which underlines the disinterest and conceptual lack of imagination of Western politics. Yet, in the form of the OSCE, an institutional framework already exists, which is suitable for taking up Russia's legitimate interest in being involved in the organisation of European security with the same rights as others. It would have to be revived as a pan-European security policy organisation, as its operational importance had historically unfolded only in the eastern part of the continent, where - from the Russian perspective - it had limited itself far too much to the democratic principles of the Paris Charter. The pan-European conference proposed by Medvedev could therefore lead to a second founding act and to an operationally enriched Charter in terms of security policy.

Furthermore a revived OSCE would not replace either the EU or NATO. It would however specify regulations and procedures in accordance with which both these organisations might also proceed, if they extended beyond their area of application. In this sense it would be conceived as a European collective security organisation on the one hand, and on the other also as an organisation which functions as a platform for global action. For both cases there is a whole series of particularly difficult issues to resolve. This does not only apply to terrorism; moreover the Caucasian war has made it clear that the management of secessions and the easing of tensions between national self-determination and territorial integrity are conflicts not yet overcome either in Europe or anywhere else.

5.2 European neighbourhood policy as a stabilising tool

Under the impact of the Caucasian war the European Union significantly intensified its involvement in Eastern Europe. Conflict mediation, the stationing of UN observers in Georgia, but also the conclusion of an "Association Agreement" with the Ukraine or the acceleration of the "Eastern Partnership" are just as important milestones in this development as the debates about sanctions against Russia.

As welcome as it is that the EU under French presidency is turning not only inwards or southwards but also decisively to the East, it is no less important that it engages itself with the objective and the tools which will contribute towards stability in the region and improve conditions for gradual transformation. This is, in light of the different preferences in the EU, not a simple matter of course. A key role is now in store for the Ukraine, as relations with it will form the basis of the decision as to how the Eastern dimension of EU policy will be conditioned by Russia: in the sense of a containment, or even roll-back of Moscow or in the sense of its inclusion. Even George F. Kennan, the father of containment, expressed considerable doubt about the wisdom of this Western policy which was so promptly put into practice in the early years of the Cold War. Nowadays such a delimitation and exclusion of Russia is absurd and irresponsible.

Admittedly the EU can assert that its policy is conditioned by universal principles alone, which it is representing as a community of democratic values. It must however be aware of the fact that these universal values can quickly evaporate in the politically volatile landscape of Eastern Europe and reveal their geostrategic connotation in the perception of local protagonists. The ostentatious solidarity with Georgia, highlighted afresh by the EU's willing generosity at the Paris Donors' Conference in fall 2008, illustrates just as well as the ambivalent behaviour towards Belarus that there are important deficiencies in this regard on the part of the EU.

Such risks reveal themselves also in the shaping of relations with Ukraine. Certainly the new "Association Agreement" does not significantly go beyond other agreements to date, and in contrast to other EU "Association Agreements" it does not open up the possibility of membership. Nonetheless, the question of membership was put on the agenda again after the war. Poland and Sweden, supported by the Baltic States and Great Britain, are campaigning for fast-track membership negotiations, while others are keen to leave it at institutional rapprochement or partial or modular integration.⁶⁹ But already, even if only symbolically, there is now a clear difference between the Ukraine and Russia. This is all the more surprising in light of Brussels' careful attempts in the past to adhere to strictly parallel treatment in its institutional and contractual relations with both countries – although back then the Ukraine was the latecomer. If the deepening European-Ukrainian relations are heading towards a modular integration, this would have substantial repercussions on Russian-Ukrainian relations, which ought not to be ignored. The resumption of negotiations concerning the new "Partnership Agreement" with Russia is therefore welcome, and it should be shaped in such a way that EU policy towards both countries remains considerate of both.

The same is true of the EU's intensified activities on the political and security policy levels. These are in no way limited to the Caucasus, but find expression also in the proposal of involving the Ukraine in the European Battle Groups. In the case of plans such as these, the aim of just socialising potential members must retreat behind the requirements

69 For more on the models of partial or modular integration cf. Karakas 2005; Maurer 2007.

of joint crisis management. Consequently, Russia's participation in European crisis operations would be just as desirable, as was decided most recently in the case of the EUFOR mission to Chad. Two concrete recommendations arise from this. On the one hand, the EU should use its partnerships with a creative will matching its own economic commitment. The unmistakable message to all partners must be that conflicts within and between countries ought not to be handled using force. On the other hand, the EU should in principle be prepared to assume the role of intermediary - as it did in the Caucasus - in conflicts between these countries and Russia. This means by definition that it cannot be partisan, but must remain available for discussion to all sides.

Even if the EU is temporarily ill-equipped politically and institutionally for such a task, this indeed suggests that NATO can no longer maintain its claims to determine security policy exclusively. Moreover on the issue of future expansions, the EU could also step out of the shadow of NATO, which has always assumed supremacy to date. Russia has raised few reservations in this regard in the past – a political asset which should not be gambled away.

5.3 No NATO expansion

The resolute Russian response to Georgian aggression in South Ossetia reinforced the red line which Russia had drawn for NATO and its expansion plans – a line which in 2004 had been nonchalantly overstepped in the case of the Baltic States. In retrospect Medvedev described this as “demeaning”: “We cannot tolerate it any longer. For us this is a very difficult decision but we won't continue to tolerate it, and there should be no doubt about it.”⁷⁰ Comments such as this are grist to the mill for those who are pushing forward a forced expansion under the banner of the demand that Russia should not be granted any veto. However NATO does not need any self-assertion rituals with underlying intentions which are only too obvious. Instead it must weigh up its decisions against two key criteria: the democratic standards of its members and the gain in security promised by new members – security gains to the alliance as well as to the whole European continent with regard to the common security being pursued. This sequence is significant because it links new members in a threefold way, thereby preventing automatic mechanisms to obtaining membership, while also limiting the risk of being dragged into unwelcome adventures.

Taking a closer look at the two candidates under these premises, it quickly becomes clear that there can be no question of becoming a NATO member for the foreseeable future –

70 Transcript of the Meeting with the Participants in the International Club Valdai, 12.9.2008, GUM Exhibition Centre, Moscow, in: www.kremlin.ru (16.9.2008). In the “Foreign Policy Conception” this sounded much more reticent, since in this Russia was confirming its readiness to consolidate relations, despite the notified NATO expansion to Georgia and the Ukraine and although this contravened the required principles of cooperation towards “equal security” and the prevention of “new dividing lines in Europe”. The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, 12.7.2008, in: www.mid.ru (15.9.2008).

beyond general declarations of good faith, to which Russia must also be entitled to lay claim. Particularly when examining the case of Georgia, the unholy alliance between universalism of democratic values and geostrategic interests in some Western countries and especially in the USA becomes discernible.⁷¹ Having only a few years ago been qualified under the *failed states* category, Georgia is now suddenly being fêted as one of the “beacons of post-Soviet democracy” – a grotesque misjudgment of the situation. Georgia’s democracy is not a jot less “virtual” than that in Russia and the other CIS countries (Wilson 2005). This is also true *mutatis mutandis* of Ukraine, where the added difficulty arises that the transfer of stability – more contentious in the case of NATO expansion than that of the EU – mutates into a transfer of instability. Not only does a broad majority of the population continue to reject membership, it would also endanger the delicate balance between the centrifugal parts of the country.

These risks call into question the security gain pursued for the benefit of the alliance and the continent. The Georgian president has demonstrated how quickly NATO can be drawn into a conflict, but also how much politicians in their readiness for conflict are goaded on by the imagination of a powerful alliance at their back, with these actors’ lofty democratic tendencies finding their real expression in nationalistic irrationalism. The situation is no different for pan-European security: as long as the deciding criterion for a country’s acceptance consists of its being useful as an “anchor of stability” against Russia, this contributes towards deepening the rift in Europe and stirring up Russia’s sense of isolation. Seemingly naive appeasement rhetoric à la Cheney, claiming that the best thing for Russia’s security interests would be stable democracies along its borders, is of no help in this situation. It rings rather hollow, if efforts are being made in favour of Georgia’s becoming a NATO member, despite flagrant violation of the latter’s own oft vaunted principles; this way, military adventurism is being honoured after the event.

Instead of offering Russia military cooperation primarily as compensation for the fact that the alliance is continuously drawing closer to its borders, as has so far been the strategy, this relation must be inverted: in the sense of the *Grand Bargain* it is the security policy cooperation with Russia which deserves priority, while a NATO expansion is subordinate to this as an interlocking institution. With regard to the common security postulates this also requires Russian security interests to be taken seriously. As a minimum requirement the failings of the past would need to be corrected and formerly agreed compensations implemented. This includes the cooperative rules for expansion of the alliance, which were already recorded in 1997 in the NATO Russia Founding Act, according to which the alliance sought to expand East in a political, but not a military, sense. In this the alliance committed itself to not deploying any tactical nuclear weapons or stationing any “substantial combat forces” from either land or air forces of original NATO countries on the territory of new members. Not only was it never specified what should be understood

71 Just as in the inverse sense, Russia’s rejection by the organisations of the transatlantic democracies was justified less on the grounds of democratic inadequacies than with arguments concerning geography and history, geopolitics and power politics.

by “substantial combat forces”,⁷² but at the end of 2005 the Bush administration, bypassing the alliance, also engaged in bilateral negotiations with Poland and the Czech Republic about cooperation on strategic missile defence, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania about the stationing of American troops.⁷³ Even if both are aimed at the Middle East, from Moscow’s point of view this meant that the agreement not to undertake any military expansion of NATO into the new member states had been circumvented.

Furthermore the tasks of the NATO Russia Council must be enhanced. Military cooperation gained a concrete form for the first time in this forum in 2002. As a tool of security policy rapprochement it is not only indispensable for continued crisis management, but also for the revival of arms control.

5.4 Revival of arms control

The creation of the NATO Russia Council in 2002 did indeed intensify military cooperation with Russia, but it cannot replace arms limitations. The latter, however, was the US position as the Bush administration ended negotiated arms control by referring to the fundamental change in the security landscape. Between partners, the argument went, bilateral arms control was redundant and limited the chance of being able to react appropriately to new threats from rogue states. Russia cannot subscribe to this argument due to its military inferiority. Furthermore, there is the formative experience that it was the nuclear strategic arms control with the United States during the Cold War which enabled the Soviet Union to join the ranks as superpower with equal rights.⁷⁴

More important however is the possibility that in the area of arms control the experiences of the Cold War can even be put to productive use: not as a melodramatic threat of coercion, but as a constructive lesson. For at that time arms control established principles and developed processes which are still useful nowadays for credibly putting into action

72 It is true that as early as in 1998 NATO had come to an agreement internally about a working definition for land and air forces. However not until the end of March 2008 were negotiations over a definition offered, and in addition this was restricted to land forces (cf. NAC Statement on CFE, Brussels 28.3.2008, in: www.nato.int (23.10.2008)). The Russian side in turn proposed its own version of a definition on 17 July 2008: 41 tanks, 188 armoured combat vehicles, 90 artillery systems and 24 systems each for the categories of combat aircraft and combat helicopters. The same applies to the transparency mechanism under discussion since 1997 for large military infrastructure measures, which has likewise not yet materialised.

73 The stationing of US combat forces in Bulgaria and Romania began in 2008. Current plans for Romania are for up to 1,700 and for Bulgaria for up to 2,500 soldiers (Stars & Stripes, 27.7.2008, in: www.stripes.com (23.10.2008)). After the bilateral agreements of 2005 and 2006 up to 5,000 US soldiers would have been allowed in each case. Since the US missile defence troops in Poland and the Czech Republic count as “combat support units”, from an American perspective they are not covered by the restriction on not stationing any “substantial combat troops”.

74 This is what has sustained Russian enthusiasm for military equality until today: “The balance of power is the main achievement of these past decades and indeed of the whole history of humanity. It is one of the most important conditions for maintaining global stability and security.” Vladimir V. Putin, Interview with Arab Satellite Channel Al-Jazeera, 10. February 2007, in: www.kremlin.ru (9.4.2008).

the good intentions declared on all sides. Especially in the case of a dramatic asymmetry in power relations, arms control is indispensable for ensuring military stability. It generates transparency, accountability and confidence in the intentions of the opposite side, by limiting individual military capabilities and room for manoeuvre. Arms control is therefore fundamental for a renaissance in security cooperation with Russia.

5.4.1 Strategic arms control and missile defence

Although the capacity for mutual destruction no longer dominates threat perceptions, nuclear strategic arms control nevertheless remains the decisive referential framework. Its corner-stone is the START I Treaty of 1991 with its elaborate verification regime. In contrast the SORT Treaty of 2002 only codifies already planned reductions to between 1,700 and 2,200 nuclear warheads, subject to no monitoring of any kind. Since the START Treaty expires on 5 December 2009, the most important achievement would thus become invalidated: the verification regime, which to date allows both sides reliable insights into the nuclear-strategic dispositive. Of course the Bush administration also wants to retain this regime, but rejects restrictions and contractual regulations. The Russian government on the other hand is calling for a follow-up treaty with an upper limit of 1,500 warheads and constraints on their delivery systems. This would allow the reductions of the SORT agreement to remain valid, which must be seen as the minimum goal of strategic arms control. Only in this way do prospects exist for maintaining the non-proliferation regime and for increasing pressure on the remaining nuclear weapon states no longer to evade arms control. In light of the vision of a nuclear-free world shared by Barack Obama and the Democrat majority in the US Congress these cuts seem entirely realistic and have already been proposed.

A pre-condition would admittedly be an agreement over missile defence. This represents a particularly contentious issue for Moscow in view of the unkept American promise to cooperate as well as the American rejection of Russian offers for joint use of radar bases in Azerbaijan and Southern Russia. If it is not to come to an abandonment of the stationing of US defence systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, the United States must stand by its verbal offer of 11 October 2007 to postpone the activation of defence bases until Iran carries out a long-range missile test. Moreover, the Polish and Czech governments must be induced to agree to permanent monitoring of the bases by Russian personnel. For a bilateral coupling with the major Western ally comes at a price – which, beyond dispersing the hypothetical Iranian and amorphous Russian threat, is the actual objective of the Polish and Czech governments. And finally, the United States must agree to negotiations over the limitation of its national ABM system and the often-announced creation of a joint defence with Russia in order reliably to assure Russia that the American objective is not merely to get out of its secured second-strike capability.

5.4.2 Disarmament of tactical nuclear weapons and reinforcement of the INF Treaty

Without sacrificing security, NATO is able to dispense with the threat of nuclear first-strike capability and withdraw remaining tactical nuclear weapons. At the end of the East-

West conflict, both superpowers had at their disposal several thousand of these weapons, which were not covered by the INF Treaty. Instead of a treaty, in 1991 both sides announced that they would withdraw all tactical nuclear weapons, except for a limited number of bombs, and either store them in central depots or destroy them. Since then the United States has reduced its systems stationed in Europe from some 4,000 to fewer than 100. Less is known about Russian measures. According to Western estimates Russia still has between 2,000 and 4,000 systems at various operational levels. This could explain why Moscow reacted with reluctance at the end of the 1990s when the Clinton administration proposed negotiations over this kind of weapon. Negotiations such as these would have the advantage of creating transparency in an area of nuclear armaments which has so far not been subject to any kind of monitoring. This has become even more urgent since Russian President Medvedev announced the deployment of short-range nuclear-capable Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad Oblast on 5 November.⁷⁵

In so doing the INF Treaty for short- and medium-range missiles (range of 500 to 5,500 km) is in jeopardy. With a range of 280 km the missiles cannot fulfil their stated purpose of eliminating missile defence in Poland and the Czech Republic. Were there to be a continued escalation, it is therefore not at all out of the question that the range would be increased and the INF Treaty thereby called into question, just as Moscow has already done once before. Furthermore the multilateralisation of the agreement would serve to further the objective of non-proliferation of missiles and associated technology (MTCR). It would take into account Russian reservation that the double zero-solution of 1987 contains incalculable security risks in view of the development of such systems in neighbouring countries such as Iran or Pakistan. Finally, regional and global incentives for destabilising missile defence efforts would be reduced. European NATO countries should therefore accede to the treaty as soon as possible.

5.4.3 Conventional arms control and military confidence and security-building measures (CSBM)

Other than for nuclear weapons, there is no longer any European arms control regime for conventional weapons. The old CFE Treaty of 1990 is a waste of paper; indeed not primarily because of its suspension by Russia in December 2007, but because of continued NATO expansion. Adjustments made in the form of the Adapted CFE Treaty signed in 1999 have not come into force, as NATO rejected the ratification with reference to the yet-to-be-fulfilled "Istanbul Commitments".⁷⁶ The importance of the Adapted CFE Treaty consists

75 A speaker of the Russian General Staff recently announced the suspension of the deployment as long as the Obama Administration is not pressing ahead with the anti-missile deployment. Moscow halts missile deployment, in: *Russia Today*, January 28, 2009, in: www.russiatoday.ru (28.1.2009)

76 The "Istanbul Commitments" are part of a separate politically binding agreement in connection with the Adapted CFE Treaty concerning the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Georgia and Moldova, which the Prague NATO Summit of 2002 extended to include the withdrawal of Russian peace-keeping forces from Abkhazia.

primarily in highlighting the military restraint which the alliance sought to impose on itself in spite of NATO expansion, so that there is a Western responsibility to act.

The real challenge of conventional arms control in Europe however is no longer represented by the East-West balance, as almost all the countries are within, and most even far below, the limitations, but by the task of preventing regional conflicts such as the recent Caucasian war. In order to meet this challenge, it has been proposed to increase military transparency, instead of imposing numerical limitations, so as to improve military crisis management. This refers primarily to the confidence and security building regime in the Vienna Document. This currently focuses on two CSBM measures: improved transparency for large military infrastructure projects as well as a lowering of the ceilings for notification and observation of military activities. First of all, however, the reasons should be investigated as to why the crisis management tools of the OSCE and the Vienna Document failed during the Caucasian war in order to learn from mistakes and thus improve crisis management.⁷⁷ Furthermore it should be taken into consideration that Moscow insists on quantitative limits.⁷⁸ Lower limits for the deployment of substantial combat troops can also increase the incentives for a cooperative crisis management in conflict regions.

5.5 Constructive conflict management and the two sides of a precedent

The most striking outcome of the Caucasian war is Russia's *fait accompli* in the form of its unilateral recognition of both secessionist territories of Georgia. In so doing Moscow chose the "same course of action" as the West had done in its day in Kosovo, as the Russian president pointed out. Doing the same with Kosovo, however, proved too much: Russia did not "have sufficient reasons" for this, as he somewhat helplessly added.⁷⁹ It is true that Moscow stands alone in its recognition, apart from Nicaragua (and Somalia). And yet, within the region effects are considerable, for Moscow's insistence on unilateral rule-making – besides Georgian intransigence – blocks opportunities for a cooperative conflict resolution. Thus, the question of how and whether Kosovo can be valid as a precedent seems all the more pertinent.

77 Neither side paid any attention to the crisis mechanism of the Vienna Document of 1999 on "Unusual Military Activities" (Vienna Document 1999: Negotiations on Confidence and Security Building Measures, Vienna 1999, Art. 16, in: www.auswaertiges-amt.de (23.10.2008)). Moreover, as every year, the Vienna Document's inspection and assessment quotas for Georgia and Russia (Chapter IX) were already exhausted by spring 2008.

78 Russian demands are as follows: (1) lifting of the flank limits for Russia; (2) lowering of the national constraints on NATO countries, so as to compensate for expansion of the alliance; (3) definition of substantial combat forces; (4) membership for NATO countries, which have not yet acceded to the CFE regime; (5) immediate commissioning or provisional application of the Adapted CFE Treaty taking into account its modernisation. Statement Regarding Suspension by Russian Federation of the Treaty of Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), in: www.mid.ru (23.10.2008).

79 Interviews with CNN and the BBC, Sochi, 26 August 2008, in: www.kremlin.ru (8.9.2008).

The Geneva Discussions, having been agreed upon after the ceasefire under the umbrella of the EU, UN, and OSCE and dealing with security and stability in the region, hit an obstacle in their initial stages in the form of the unresolved issue of status. The necessity of involving South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the negotiations is at best held open to doubt in Tbilisi; the diplomatic challenge however lies in walking the tight rope between legal principle and the practical needs for conflict resolution. As with Martti Ahtisaari in Kosovo walking the fine line might consist in appointing a negotiator with a mandate by the UN Secretary General to try to fathom out possibilities for solutions with all four affected parties.

The discussions themselves would need to focus on practical issues rather than the insoluble issue of status; from house building to medical care to the repatriation of exiles and refugees. In the wars of the 1990s over 200,000 Georgians fled from both provinces, and, in view of the hardening of ethno-territorial boundaries during the war, reintegration promises to be difficult. It is all the more important therefore to insist on standards and the cooperation of all those involved. The “Standards before Status” formula was not mistaken because it was abandoned too early in Kosovo. And the EU could support such an approach with the financial incentives which it is currently concentrating entirely on Georgia for obvious geostrategic reasons.⁸⁰

The other lessons to be learned from the Kosovo conflict apply exclusively to Russia, and they are central for its efforts at regional conflict resolution. The fact that the Kremlin disregarded Georgia’s territorial integrity in the Caucasus and immediately recognised the secession of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, gave the lie *ex post* to its long insistence upon remaining true to principles of international law in the Kosovo conflict. The indignation over this breach of law was especially great among those who had once been submitted to the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine of “limited sovereignty”. In the West, indignation was mingled also with embarrassment however, as Moscow could indeed refer to the precedent of Kosovo.⁸¹ Indeed, the parallel is striking: in Kosovo the secession took place both in open contradiction to UN Resolution 1244 of June 1999 and in rejection of the previously established principle to grant only the Yugoslav republics the right to secession once guaranteed to them by the constitution.

80 Georgia is once more receiving generous military aid from the United States in spite of its military adventure. And if an international donors’ conference promises Georgia EUR 3.6 billion, although the World Bank estimated the requirement at only 2.37 billion until 2011 (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23.10.2008, p. 6), the US is in so doing adhering to precisely that policy of spheres of influence of which Moscow is accusing it. For this money is supposed to benefit Georgia, not be used as humanitarian aid to all those people and areas devastated by the war.

81 It is immediately plain to see how Moscow took on the Western model point by point in its justification: firstly the infringement of Georgia’s integrity took place for the protection of the threatened (Russian) population, there was even talk of a “genocide” – this was already only tenable in Kosovo if events there were perceived as a direct continuation of the ethnic turbulence in Bosnia. Secondly, Moscow claimed that the war was a “humanitarian action”, as NATO had done previously in 1999. Thirdly Russia legitimised its recognition of the secessions using the precedent of Kosovo.

Both cases represent a matter of secession against the declared will of the democratically elected governments in Belgrade and Tbilisi. The contradiction inherent in the UN Charter between the right to national self-determination and state sovereignty was solved in favour of the former principle – in renunciation of many years' practice and contrary to all states' shared interest in the mutual guarantee of each others' borders. This is unquestionably a precedent.

A precedent is however also the way in which Moscow turned away from its cherished principles of international law – and here the parallels end. In Kosovo recognition was declared after persistent attempts to find an international consensus (Eide Report, Ahtisaari Plan, face-to-face discussions between Belgrade and Pristina in Vienna, Kosovo Troika). Russia on the other hand did not waste much time: a few days after the military intervention it recognised both breakaway provinces, without the slightest trace of an attempt to involve the UN or other international organisations. The West's constant emphasis that Kosovo will remain an exception may not be an actually tenable notion, but it does express interest in commonly binding rules. In contrast the Kremlin does little to mediate between power and justice. First it insisted on the principle of sovereignty under international law. Then it gave up this position overnight and aligned itself with the standpoint of pure power.

As much as it is to be welcomed that Russia has in practice overcome its formerly quite dogmatic rejection of the principle of humanitarian intervention, the recourse to unilateralism purely based on power is just as unacceptable. Russia's abrupt turning away from the principles of international law - also reaffirmed in the Medvedev Doctrine - completely isolated itself internationally. The once nurtured idea of making itself the advocate against Western power-based expediency for those in need of protection under international law is lost now in any case. Yet this isolation may also open up opportunities for agreement, which must focus on procedures acceptable to all sides and involve all four parties. Such a perspective defies the continued confrontation between conflicting legal positions obstructing any regulation. And it also opposes any policy of spheres of influence, which represents a return to the certainties of the Cold War. It must not be allowed to prevail.

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