

**Berliner Informationszentrum für Transatlantische Sicherheit (BITS)**

**Berlin Information-center for Transatlantic Security (BITS)**

BITS Research Note 01.2

ISSN 1434-7687

May 2001

## **EU-Russia co-operation in the security domain:**

### **Problems and Opportunities**

By Clara Portela

Next 17<sup>th</sup> May, high level representatives of the European Union will meet in Moscow with President Putin for the seventh EU-Russia Summit meeting. The delegation will be composed by Swedish Prime Minister Persson, and Commission President Prodi. Although the meeting's agenda is not known yet, it shall include a number of security items. It will examine modalities for potential Russian contribution to European crisis management operations, and for dialogue on security and defence matters. This will of course include the European Security and Defence Policy and conflict prevention. Also, they will review the implementation of existing projects on non-proliferation and disarmament along with the planning of further initiatives.

This agenda might be somewhat surprising, since EU-Russian relations have long been of a merely economic nature. Since the Cologne Summit in June 1999, the EU is in the process of establishing a co-operative relationship in the security domain with Russia. This new linkage, while not completely free of difficulties, offers an ample room for co-operation that both parties should not ignore. It is possible to

identify a number of questions as chances for co-operation, particularly those related to the Asian continent- of which Russia is a part. This paper will single out the EU's recently initiated involvement in the Korean peninsula as a chance for EU-Russia co-operation.

How is it that security issues have found their way into the EU-Russian forum? Do these subjects not pertain exclusively to NATO? Is there any reason to assume that co-operation between the EU and Russia, which is still at an initial stage, can handle security issues in a more effective way than other forums, or than bilateral relations? In order to give an answer to these questions, the present note will first briefly outline the development of security relations between the EU and Russia, describing the issues the Union intends to address jointly with Russia and what instruments are available to it. After that, it will attempt to identify the opportunities open to this relationship as well as the main difficulties standing in its way. Some deliberations on the prospects for EU-Russia co-operation in the security domain will follow.

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## **Record of security co-operation**

The legal basis for relations between Russia and the EU is the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA), which was signed at the European Council Summit at Corfu in 1994 but did not come into force until 1. December 1997. Previous relations had merely rested on an Agreement on Trade and Co-operation concluded shortly before the dismissal of the Soviet Union and the Agreement on Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) signed in 1991. The Partnership and Co-operation Agreement transcended for the first time the economic dimension to establish a regular political dialogue that was intended to "bring about an increasing convergence of positions on international issues of mutual concern thus increasing security and stability".<sup>1</sup> Also, this accord did not only involve the European Community as had been the case up to that point but expanded co-operation to Union level. The dialogue was to take place in the framework of a Co-operation Council set up to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

In June 1999, the Cologne European Council took a decisive step towards specifying these vague provisions on political co-operation with the adoption of the Common Strategy on Russia of the European Union, the first example of a new foreign policy instrument introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty. This framework document set out the aims which were to govern both the Community's and the individual member states' actions towards Russia. Besides the intention to promote the consolidation of democracy and market economy in Russia, the Union defined as a 'strategic objective' for its co-operation with this country "maintaining European stability, promoting global security and responding to the common challenges of the European continent". This rubric includes co-operation in two different realms: in the foreign policy and security domain and in addressing common problems on the European continent.

In response to the adoption of the Common Strategy, the Russian Government released

the "Medium-term Strategy for Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union".

Co-operation between Russia and the EU in the security domain takes place along three different strands: internal assistance to Russia on aid for disarmament and nuclear safety; co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs and co-operation in foreign policies and crisis management. As will be shown, the nature of each of these areas of co-operation, their stage of advancement and the instruments available to the Union for its implementation vary considerably.

### **Internal assistance to Russia**

Some of the numerous projects of assistance to Russia run by the Union pertain objects which are linked to security, in particular to the nuclear field. Pledges of future aid for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention<sup>2</sup> were followed by a EU Council Joint Action in December 1999 on a co-operation Programme for Non-proliferation and Disarmament.<sup>3</sup> It is designed to support Russia in the dismantling and reversion of infrastructure and equipment linked to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), such as the chemical weapons destruction project in Gornyy. The 'Northern Dimension', a EU initiative comprising a wide range of cross-border co-operation activities with countries in the Baltic region, has put a special emphasis on improving nuclear safety conditions in nuclear power stations in north-west Russia. Also, the problem of nuclear power submarines has been addressed. The nuclear safety programme of the Northern Dimension is concerned with nuclear waste and spent fuel management.

### **Justice and Home Affairs**

The Common Strategy makes explicit mention of the Union's desire to co-operate with Russia on a number of issues belonging to the area of Justice and Home Affairs.<sup>4</sup>

These include customs co-operation to fight against organised crime, money laundering and illicit traffic in human beings and drugs - even judicial co-operation has been suggested. These problems have only recently been acknowledged as threats to security, and are surely best described as 'soft' security problems. However, two developments underline the actual salience of the co-operation in this area: first, this relatively new field of European integration is beginning to make real progress. The conclusion of the border-free Schengen area requires the reinforcement of the external borders of the Union, and the EU already shares a common border with Russia. And secondly, with the prospective membership of Poland and the Baltic states, Kaliningrad will become a Russian exclave encircled by the EU. Since Kaliningrad is a region heavily affected by organised crime, it will be necessary to search for ways of preventing this region from endangering the Union's border security. The Commission recently tabled a discussion paper with a series of proposals in this respect.<sup>5</sup> The Union is running a number of projects to address these questions in the context of its Northern Dimension programme.

### **Crisis management and foreign policy**

Under the rubric "Co-operation to strengthen stability and security in Europe and beyond", the Common Strategy proposed the agreement on modalities that would enable Russia to participate in "Petersberg tasks" - the name given to prospective EU-led crisis management operations. At the Nice European Council in December 2000, some rules of consultation with Russia and Ukraine were decided: in the routine phase, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) will hold Troika meetings with these countries every six months.<sup>6</sup> When the Union contemplates the possibility of intervening in a crisis, meetings in this format should provide the framework in which participation of third countries is considered. However, these provisions are much less developed than the modalities of participation adopted for EU

applicants and NATO members which are not in the EU. In general, third countries contributing to a EU-led mission will take part in a Committee of Contributors, in which they will be, together with EU members, responsible for what the EU calls the "day-to-day management of the operation". However, the decision on the launching and termination of an operation as well as its political and strategic direction will remain exclusively with the EU's Political and Security Committee. This vagueness in the provisions seems to indicate that there is a preference for defining the modalities for Russian participation on a case-by-case basis, making them dependent on the nature and location of the crisis. In other words, it will depend on the extent in which Russia sees its interest involved and on the political leverage it could exert on the belligerents.

Finally, one should note that in the EU's document a distinction is made between Ukraine and Russia - which is not surprising considering that they form a residual category of 'neither NATO members nor EU candidates'. It is indicated that these arrangements shall be "without prejudice" to further consultation and participation mechanisms that could be concluded between the parties. The document explicitly points to the decision to institute specific consultations on security and defence matter made at the last EU-Russia Summit.<sup>7</sup> The last word regarding Russian participation in EU-led missions has not been spelt yet.

One of the five priority areas singled out by Sweden for the implementation of the Common Strategy<sup>8</sup> is co-operation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, while two others are soft security issues: nuclear safety/waste and the fight against organised crime.

### **What is in the making**

Although security relations between the EU and Russia still find themselves at an embryonic stage, further upgrading is well possible. Both parties had the possibility of

leaving the 'hard' security aspects to NATO. If they decided otherwise, they did so because they found that both had something to gain from the deal. After Russia has been attempting to engage single European powers more intensively in security questions, it now seems to have found in the EU her "second door" to the West. It is well known that Europe, not least because of its geographic location, shares more points of agreement with Russia on a number of questions - or displays a higher degree of empathy with her - than the US. In this context, one could cite for instance the sanctions policy towards countries like Cuba or Iraq, or the discussion on the construction of a Missile Defence system in the US. On the part of the EU, three main reasons account for the interest on a security linkage with Russia: First, the traditionally civilian-only EU is acquiring a defence dimension. It has already put in place new military structures, absorbed the operational capabilities of WEU and declared its readiness to conduct Petersberg missions. If the EU is determined to play a security role in future, establishing a security dialogue with other European countries, and especially with the other big player on the same continent is a matter of necessity.

Secondly, at least part of the reason why the Europeans decided to proceed with the development of a security and defence role within the EU was dissatisfaction with the policies of the US leadership. Developing a security dialogue with Russia without formal US involvement can well be seen as symptomatic of a Western European desire to shape this intercourse more autonomously. In particular, it is significant that they decided to intensify their dialogue on the disarmament question when it was clear that opposition from Russia and European NATO members has not led the US to reconsider plans on a Missile Defence system.

Finally, the EU will soon expand into the East, and this will necessarily result in an increase of the relevance of its relations with its big neighbour. Among other issues, the admission of Poland will create a second

border with Russia – apart from that already shared with Finland – the entry of any of the Baltic republics or Bulgaria/ Romania will expand the EU into what has traditionally been Russian area of influence. As a further relevant aspect, one should note that the accession of the Baltic republics will confer EU citizenship to those members of the Russian population resident in these countries.

Attentive observation reveals that EU-Russia co-operation is beginning to look very much like NATO-Russia co-operation. Points of overlap are increasing: Nuclear safety and environmental programmes are run by both organisations. Technical Assistance Programmes are up and running, and a new Co-operation Agreement in the field of science and technology between the EU and Russia is about to be signed.

In the foreign policy realm, EU-Russia declarations are beginning to include discrete joint positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Balkans, in line with the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council Declarations. These might lead in time to the "development of joint initiatives in support of common foreign objectives" as pledged for in the Common Strategy. Both parties decision to intensify their security dialogue at the last summit was accompanied by a thematic extension to issues on disarmament, arms control and nuclear proliferation. And when the EU manages to conduct crisis management mission of its own, possible involvement of Russian troops either in the operation proper or in the subsequent peacekeeping force will no longer necessarily take place within the NATO framework.

Furthermore, there have been some signs indicating a desire for what can be called a '*security rapprochement*'. President Putin's proposal on the construction of a common European-Russian Missile Defence System. On the EU's side, it is easy to recognise an emphasis on non-proliferation and disarmament. During the French Presidency, the scope of this subject in the regular consultations at expert level was extended, and a conference on the issue was

held in March. The current Swedish Presidency has included it in the five priorities with regard to Russia, and it is pushing for the implementation of the EU Council Joint Action of 1999.<sup>9</sup>

### **Why the EU is an appropriate body**

Do we stand to win anything from this nascent security relationship? In fact, it is possible to argue that the EU is better placed to co-operate with Russia on a number of security issues than with NATO.

Firstly, because the EU pools a wide range of civilian instruments and competencies which enable it to exert an influence beyond its territory, it can take a truly *comprehensive* approach to security. It can combine with national policies the Commission's action in the fields of environment, trade, external relations, and development and co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs. This partly materialises in the integrated approach to the Baltic region taken by the Northern Dimension, which involves only north-west Russian regions, or in current EU action in the Balkans. By contrast, a purely military organisation lacks instruments when it comes to non-military issues. Addressing the roots of security problems requires the use of civilian tools. The EU has a good *conflict prevention* record in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as it runs wide ranging activities in the fields of energy, water resources management and the reduction of environmental degradation.

Secondly, the EU's instruments of pressure are also of a non-military nature. As a result, they are better suited to achieve their goals without antagonising the actors it wishes to influence. The main instrument is the *conditionality* of both its assistance and willingness to co-operate. The EU's leverage is undoubtedly bigger in the case of applicant countries because it can make their admission dependent on the fulfilment of certain conditions. However, the EU has already made use of this tool in the case of Russia: the treatment of the civilian population in the Chechen crises did not

only retard the ratification of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, but has led to two consecutive revisions of the EU policies towards Russia. Among others, the European Council decided at Helsinki to reduce the volume of financial aid to Russia and to refocus the TACIS programme to core areas promoting democratic values.<sup>10</sup> A month later, calling on Russia to end the disproportionate use of force and to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid, it decided to suspend some provisions of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement and to transfer some funds from TACIS to humanitarian assistance.<sup>11</sup> Also, this non-military approach allows the EU to be far more intrusive in Russia's internal affairs and her policies towards the near abroad (as is the case with Russia's relations with Georgia<sup>12</sup>) than a solely military organisation would ever dare.

Finally, by virtue of comparison, it needs to be acknowledged that NATO's record with Russia has been largely negative. In its three years of existence, the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council has not made any substantial achievement to help both parties to overcome their differences. Rather, these relations have been shattered by NATO's failure to accommodate, at least partially, Russia's core security priorities. It was contrary to the intervention without a UN Security Council authorisation in Kosovo, and it vigorously opposed the expansion of the Alliance. As former US Secretary of State Alexander Haig said shortly before the bombing campaign against Serbia took place: "Relations with Russia have been bad for a while, and they are getting worse.(...)The 'Partnership' never existed".<sup>13</sup>

Russia's attitude to the EU is, on the contrary, much more positive. The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation attaches "key importance" to its relations with the EU, ranking it as a priority region second only to her immediate neighbours.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Russia welcomed co-operation with the EU in the security field because it

“could counterbalance...the NATO-centrism in Europe”.<sup>15</sup>

The development of security relations with Russia within the EU offers the Western European countries the opportunity of a new beginning. After all, the EU is becoming an ‘ever closer’ neighbour of Russia. This constitutes a strong incentive for Europe to take a more accommodating approach towards her.

### **Difficulties**

However, three core difficulties should be given consideration. Although the potential for security co-operation between Russia and the West is far from being totally exploited, this potential has limits.

First, although there is a manifest willingness to co-operate on both sides, security is not a priority for either in their mutual relations. The last Joint Declaration stated that the primary objective of co-operation was “to support the institutional economic and social reforms, with a view to strengthening the rule of law and meeting the democratic requirements of a modern economy and society”. Currently, the bulk of EU- Russia discussions still focus on economic and commercial questions - as was the case in the last meeting with President Putin during the Stockholm European Council last March.

Secondly, readiness to co-operate is relativised by other factors. Looking upon herself as a major power, Russia has made clear that she wishes to preserve her freedom of action. As the Medium-term Strategy puts it: “Russia should retain its freedom to determine and implement its domestic and foreign policies, its status and advantages of an Euro-Asian state and the largest country of the CIS, independence of its position and activities at international organisations.”<sup>16</sup> On the part of the EU, even if it has not been spelled out yet, the task will be to expand and consolidate this relation without endangering the transatlantic ties. This is particularly difficult, because the US is already

unsatisfied with the development of a Common European Security and Defence Policy outside the Alliance. However, the work of the EU’s Partnership and Co-operation Council can be seen as complementary to that of NATO’s Permanent Joint Council. It is possible to look at it as a division of labour, with the EU doing the soft part and leaving the heavy issues to NATO. The EU has to be careful to make this publicly clear in order to avoid misperceptions on the other side of the Atlantic.

Finally, one should not lose sight of the fact that some divergences in fundamental principles and values between Russia and the West exist and will persist for a while. Russia is “European”, but not completely Western. One of points in which perceptions vary is in the tension between national sovereignty and respect for human rights. While concepts like ‘humanitarian intervention’ have been accommodated in the West, the concept of the inviolability of national sovereignty remains unaltered in Russia. The concept of humanitarian intervention is explicitly rejected in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept.<sup>17</sup> Popular support for a humanitarian-grounded campaign such as that carried out by NATO over Kosovo is as difficult for them to understand as the Russian public’s acceptance of continuous casualties of soldiers in the Chechnya conflict is for us.

### **Prospects and Proposals**

From the above said, the following conclusions can be drawn: A security relationship between Russia and the EU is in the making. The Common Strategy provisions on security co-operation remain largely unsubstantiated. The scope for co-operation suggested reaches out to “developing joint foreign policy initiatives”, “promoting arms control and disarmament and the implementation of existing agreements, reinforcing export controls, curbing the proliferation of WMD and supporting nuclear disarmament and CW destruction”.<sup>18</sup> It also suggests the

development of co-operation with Russia in the framework of the OSCE and in the fields of conflict prevention, crisis management and conflict resolution. The Communication on Conflict Prevention recently tabled by the European Commission<sup>19</sup> points to Russia as one of the partners with whom conflict prevention action should be co-ordinated.

The agenda includes two important issues which might be agreed as soon as in the next Summit: the modalities for Russian participation in EU-led crisis management operations and the institution of consultations on arms control and disarmament issues. Both Russia and the EU can obtain substantial benefits from co-operation on these issues. The agreement on modalities for Russian participation in EU missions would make possible joint EU-Russian peace missions. Instituting consultation on arms control and disarmament will enable the EU to obtain first-hand information on the Russian perception of Missile Defences instead of being briefed only by the US in the North Atlantic Council.

Beyond, the EU should consider to extend co-operation to further fields, such as co-ordination of policies towards "third countries" such as China, the Mediterranean/Middle East. The development of a common approach to proliferators would be particularly desirable.

In this context, the Korean peninsula offers a good opportunity for a joint foreign policy initiative. Encouraged by the South Korean President, the EU is engaging in supporting the peace process, as was demonstrated by the official visits of a delegation at the highest level to North and South Korea last April. Although Swedish Prime Minister Person has stated that the EU does not intend to take the role of a mediator, it could develop in time in this direction. Moreover, the European Council decided to include the North Korean proliferation question in the discussion agenda when it made the Prime Minister's visit contingent on Pyongyang's agreement to set up a dialogue on the missile arsenal.<sup>20</sup> Involving

Russia in such a dialogue would accomplish two important goals: First, it would demonstrate to Russia the Union's genuine will to form a *strategic partnership* with her, living up to commitments made in the PCA, the Common Strategy and political declarations – not to mention numerous speeches. This move would also imply the recognition of Russia as an Asian power.

Secondly, Russian involvement would also enhance the EU's leverage in the region, especially considering South Korea's explicit acknowledgement of Russia's importance for the success of the peace process.<sup>21</sup> Adopting a multilateral approach at a time when the isolation of 'rogue' states is becoming obsolete, the EU and Russia could set a new trend. Both parties have a manifest interest in promoting multilateral approaches to global challenges and to uphold the ban on the use of force. If a joint initiative based on a mixture of technical and financial assistance, and diplomatic means could contribute to halting the North Korean nuclear programme, both Russia and the EU could benefit.

Maximising EU-Russia co-operation is a matter of necessity in view of the impending enlargement and of the acquisition of a security/military dimension by the Union. Creating a close and healthy relationship now can prevent unnecessary tensions in the future.

There is no reason to presume that Washington will disapprove an intensified EU-Russia security co-operation. As argued above, the EU's and NATO's relationship with Russia should be seen as complementary rather than competing. Further, the example of successful co-operation between Russia and the EU could constitute an incentive for NATO to ameliorate its relationship with this country, compelling it to "live up" to the standards of the Partnership and Co-operation Council in order to maintain its relevance.

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The documents mentioned in this article are all available at our internet-website: <http://www.bits.de/EURA/EURAMAIN.htm>

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Title 6 of the "Agreement on Partnership and Co-operation establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Russian Federation, of the other part", 1994.

<sup>2</sup> "Declaration by the European Union on EU Assistance to the Russian Federation related to the Chemical Weapons Convention", 21 May 1997.

<sup>3</sup> "Council Joint Action establishing a European Union Co-operation Programme for Non-proliferation and Disarmament in the Russian Federation", 17 December 1999

<sup>4</sup> "Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia", 4 June 1999, Part 4.

<sup>5</sup> "The EU and Kaliningrad", Communication from the Commission to the Council, Brussels 17.1.2001

<sup>6</sup> "Arrangements for the consultation and participation of other potential partners", Title VI of the Presidency Report on the Common Defence and Security Policy, adopted at Nice December 2000.

<sup>7</sup> "Joint Declaration on strengthening dialogue on political and security questions in Europe", Paris 30 October 2000

<sup>8</sup> The others are: support for civil society and free opinion forming and integration of Russia into the world economy. See: "Common Strategy on Russia: Presidency Work plan", 2001

<sup>9</sup> see above.

<sup>10</sup> European Council's Declaration on Chechnya, annexed to the Helsinki Presidency Conclusions, 10/11 December 1999

<sup>11</sup> General Affairs Council Conclusions, 24 January 2000. See also reference to Russia in the Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, 23-24 March 2000. However, it should be noted that these measures have fallen short from freezing the PCA altogether.

<sup>12</sup> Commissioner for External Relations Patten said recently in a speech: "the way in which it appears to be using the visa regime and its monopoly of gas supplies in its relations with Georgia are bound to provoke controversy in the European Union and to

raise some anxieties." See C. Patten: "Russia- the way ahead", 18 January 2001

<sup>13</sup> Haig, Alexander: "Correcting the course of NATO", *Orbis*, January/February 1999

<sup>14</sup> See reference to the EU in: "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation", 10 June 2000

<sup>15</sup> "Medium-term Strategy for the Development of Relations with the European Union (2000-2010)", 1999

<sup>16</sup> "Medium-term Strategy", 1999

<sup>17</sup> "Attempts to introduce into the international parlance such concepts as "humanitarian intervention" and "limited sovereignty" in order to justify unilateral power actions bypassing the UN Security Council are not acceptable. Being prepared for a constructive dialogue on upgrading the legal aspects of employing force in international relations in conditions of globalization, the Russian Federation proceeds from the fact that the search for concrete forms of response on the part of the international community in different acute situations, including humanitarian crises, must be conducted collectively on the basis of strict observance of the norms of international law and the UN Charter." See "Foreign Policy Concept", 10 June 2000.

<sup>18</sup> "Common Strategy", 1999

<sup>19</sup> Communication of the Commission on Conflict Prevention, 11 April 2001

<sup>20</sup> Council Decision of 20 November 2000

<sup>21</sup> See: Remarks by President Kim Dae-jung at dinner in honour of Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, President-in-office of the European Council, 3 May 2001

**BITS acknowledges the generous support received from the Ford Foundation for its work on NATO-Russia-EU relations and from the W. Alton Jones Foundations for its work on European Security issues.**