

Russia's "New Order" of security relations incorporating the US, Russia and the European Union

The Medvedev proposal

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Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the current US Presidential campaign, aside from the studied avoidance of any serious proposals to address the worst economic depression since the 1930's, is the fact that both major party candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, have to date been stone silent on the most pressing issue of future war or peace, namely the steps taken by the Bush-Cheney Administration to encircle Russia with a new Iron Curtain of NATO member states, including strenuous efforts to push Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, and to establish an advanced nuclear missile defense system which, from a standpoint of military strategy, far from defense, puts the world on a hair-trigger to nuclear holocaust in the few years ahead.

In this context, it is equally disturbing how the Western major media and the Washington Administration have chosen to ignore what might be a last glimmer of hope for diplomatic resolution of a looming nuclear war by miscalculation. The present policy of the Bush Administration genuinely can be called Mutual Assured Destruction, MAD, as in the brilliant Kubrick film, *Dr. Strangelove*.

Medvedev's proposals

In this context there are proposals being offered by Russia's new President, Dmitry Medvedev, however tentative, which bear closer scrutiny than the West has yet given. Since becoming President, he has begun in speech after speech to speak of a proposed "new order" of security relations incorporating the United States, Russia and the European Union. At the very least it offers a starting point for entering new dialogue rather than escalate the current NATO provocation course that the Bush Administration has followed since 2001 against Moscow. The details are worth noting, even if still preliminary.

The first outlines of Medvedev's concept for cooperation not confrontation between East and West came in Berlin in June during his talks with German Chancellor Merkel. There he proposed an all-European security pact with Russia's participation, inherently in opposition to NATO.

The West faced an entirely new possibility in 1989 as Mikhail Gorbachev allowed the Berlin Wall to collapse and soon after Russia dissolved the military Warsaw Pact alliance against NATO. At the time there was great expectation within many European capitals that a new

era of peaceful cooperation would slowly evolve as mutual trust could be established between the two major Cold War foes—the United States and Russia. It was also clear to many that the need for NATO would also vanish.

The failed opportunity

There was serious debate at that time whether in fact NATO was at all necessary in a world where Moscow had agreed to systematically dismantle its nuclear arsenal and open its economy up to the West, even including allowing the International Monetary Fund to dictate economic policy. While Moscow engaged in reducing its military forces and its nuclear stockpiles, the United States chose to maintain and even expand NATO, now to the very former satellite nations of the Warsaw Pact.

It is important to be clear as to the timing of the alleged “aggressive” turn of former President Vladimir Putin. The provocations came not from the side of Moscow. Rather they came from NATO and most especially the United States. Following the 2001 US declaration of a global all-out War on Terror, the Bush Administration has significantly escalated its efforts to achieve what any sober Kremlin strategist would have to understand as a total military encirclement of Russia by NATO member countries. We may ask what that has to do with the War on Terror as defined by the Pentagon.

In 2003 the US Administration held private talks with Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky about arranging a sale of 40% of what was then Russia’s largest oil company, Yukos-Sibneft to US oil giant Chevron, the former firm of Condi Rice. George H.W. Bush, then an adviser to the once-powerful Washington investment group, Carlyle Partners came to Moscow to lobby for the US oil firm’s bid. That would have allowed the US directly to place itself, in conjunction with the British Petroleum presence in Russia, in a strategic place within Russia’s vital energy complex.

Following the arrest of Khodorkovsky by Russian police in 2004, Russia was then faced with CIA and US State Department-sponsored and financed putsches in Georgia and then in Ukraine which brought into power politicians who had previously been cultivated by Washington and who openly advocated NATO membership.

Seen from Moscow eyes, the attempt of NATO to take Ukraine or Kievan Rus, the historic heart of Slavic Russia for almost one thousand years, along with Russia and Belarus, was not only militarily a grave threat. It was also culturally and economically potentially catastrophic given the distribution of industry and infrastructure between Ukraine and Russia dating back to the 1930’s.

However, the proverbial “straw that broke the Russian camel’s back” was the decision by Washington to pursue nuclear missile defense installations in NATO members Poland and the Czech Republic.

To add insult to injury, as Russian military spokesmen point out, not only is a missile installation in Poland and US-controlled advanced radar installations in the Czech area absurd from the alleged need to defend against what the Bush Administration alleges are “Iranian rogue missile threats.” More threatening, there would be no way for Moscow to verify that the ten US-controlled interceptor missiles in Poland were not in fact US

intermediate ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Military experts confirm there is no way to verify. A US nuclear missile would be then only minutes away from its Russian target rather than hours, leaving no window of negotiation or defense.

Missile defense is anything but “defensive.” If only one of two nuclear opponents also possesses even a primitive anti-missile capability, it would achieve the dream of Pentagon strategists since the 1950’s, namely Nuclear Primacy. Put in simple terms, it would mean Washington would be in a position to dictate terms of unconditional surrender of Russia to NATO. The way would open for a complete US military domination of the planet as, with Russia neutered, China would be able to offer little effective military defense. There are simply no other contenders that can make a credible counterweight to a sole US hegemony. That would be an unhealthy state of affairs not only for Europe and the rest of the world. It would be a disaster for the American people as well.

The Medvedev initiatives

It is in this light that the recent proposals of the Russian President and Foreign Minister Lavrov take on significance. With Washington fresh from signing the US missile shield agreement with the Czech government, over the objections of the Czech population, and a missile defense deal with Poland imminent, Moscow is trying to suggest a dramatic new architecture to the unilateral Washington one of unprecedented military build-up, militarization of space, unilateral military and political interventions from Eastern Europe to Sudan to Iraq to Somalia and beyond.

In a major speech recently in a Deutsche Bank conference in Moscow, Lavrov called for a strategic pause in the trans-Atlantic debate with a mutual freeze on controversial actions like NATO expansion, US missile defense deployments in Eastern Europe, US recognition of Kosovo, and frozen conflicts in the former Soviet Union such as around Georgia.

Lavrov proposed that Russia, the EU and the US should stop “arguing over superficial issues” like a League of Democracies replacing the UN, or spheres of influence, and focus on immediate real-life challenges where interests clearly coincide like arms control, counter-proliferation, combating terrorism. Significantly, while warning against “sliding backward into the past,” Lavrov called for trans-Atlantic cooperation to deal with the global challenges that could not be dealt with during the Cold War – fighting world poverty, hunger, and communicable diseases.

Medvedev again stressed his new concept for Russian foreign policy on July 12 in Moscow where he stated, “The evolution of international relations in the early 21st century, and Russia’s consolidation have compelled us to review the conditions around us, and revise the priorities of Russian foreign policy with respect to the country’s enhanced role in international affairs, and... the resulting opportunity of participating not only in the implementation of the world’s agenda but also in its formulation.”

Europe torn between West and East

The recent history of EU foreign relations demonstrates that as a body the 27 nations comprising the EU are split and unable to make up its mind as a unified response to

improving relations with Moscow.

In a real sense the EU political elites today are schizophrenic. On the one hand Germany and the EU as a whole seek peaceful economic cooperation with Russia, particularly in energy but increasingly in broader investment and economic terms. The Russian economy is seen more and more by European business as a prime area to invest and a booming potential market. Russia enjoys the fourth largest foreign exchange reserves in the world, near half a trillion dollars. It is the world's premier repository of raw materials and the second largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia and by far the largest natural gas producer.

Yet at the same time the EU or many of its member states are pulled to Washington, even if reluctantly, for their imagined security guarantee. Repeated efforts to create a separate European defense capability as an integral part of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty on European Union, have been met with vehement opposition by Washington, which demands the EU strictly subordinate its defense to a Washington-controlled NATO.

EU political elites are divided on the issue of building a European Super State. Its diverse member state problems—economic, demographic and ethnic—tend to push national inward-turning solutions rather than unified EU solutions. In short it is stymied at a time when, owing to the now clear depth of the financial and economic emergency which is devastating the United States, the EU must make strong clear policy choices.

The emerging new Russia?

Medvedev's various proposals are premised on a view that the old era of the Cold War, with a sole Western hegemon, Washington, that dictates terms to the rest of the world, is over. The time when Washington and what US strategists such as Presidential candidate Obama's foreign policy adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski openly call Washington's European "vassal states," would act in lock-step is past. Medvedev's recent speeches make this point as well.

In this context of a collapsing Superpower hegemony on the part of the United States, either the world faces untold chaos and likely wars of untold destructiveness. Or it can recognize the reality and discuss an entire new geopolitical global architecture.

Today's Russia, after the debacle of the Yeltsin years is clearly not intent on re-establishing some new variant of Stalinism. However, it is clearly determined to be respected as a sovereign power. It is clearly also vitally interested in extending a capitalist economic system it views as necessary for the country to survive and prosper. It is also willing to be completely pragmatic in world affairs as it has shown during the past seventeen or so years since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russia does not believe that the American power pursuit—Full Spectrum Dominance as the Pentagon likes to term it—will work. China, India, South America and a growing portion of the Middle East oil producing countries clearly share this uneasiness about America's determination to be Sole Superpower, a kind of 21st Century New Empire.

Three bold ideas

The Russian Government in this critical global conjuncture, with US Presidential elections

ahead, a growing global financial instability centered in the USA, and an EU elite confused about its place in the shifting world, is proposing three bold new ideas.

First is the creation of a unified North—a United States-EU-Russia alliance that implements coordinated security and economic policies. Russia would offer its natural resources, territorial, scientific and human potential for mutually beneficial integration with Europe and America.

Second, Russia asks that the West recognize the inevitability of the rise of non-Western powers such as especially China and cease trying to block their ascent by sabotage and military action such as occupation of Iraq and key oil sources. Washington and the EU instead should engage with the new powers using collective forums, such as the UN Security Council, to shape a non-confrontational peaceful order.

The third, and perhaps the most bold and most obvious, Medvedev proposes reshaping the present failed global economic order that was built up after 1944 around a US-dominated International Monetary Fund as a de facto neo-colonial weapon of securing cheap raw materials and imposing North dominance on Africa, Latin America and Asian nations. He proposes instead the North share some of its gains with the South before it is too late.

This would be quite a change of the present paradigm. It reminds of the burst of optimism following the November 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. No wonder that the EU is dumbfounded. It remains to be seen if they at least engage in serious dialogue with their former Cold War adversary rather than stand, as now, like deer frozen before the oncoming headlights of Russian nuclear bombers headed for Warsaw, Prague, Berlin or Paris as a move to preempt Washington's possible First Strike attack.

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