

## Russian Perceptions of the CFSP/ESDP

### FOREWORD

In the third roadmap on building a Common Space on External Security, agreed between the EU and Russia at the Moscow Summit in 2005, the European Union Institute for Security Studies was given the role of deepening cooperation with the Russian academic community in the field of crisis management. As a result, the EU ISS launched a joint research project in Spring 2006 with a Russian partner, the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Security within the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO, under the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Within this framework, the Director of the Centre, Professor Alexander Nikitin, has spent time at the EU Institute in order to draft a jointly authored report entitled *Sharing Experience in Crisis Management*. The final report will examine Russian and EU experience of and approaches to crisis management operations with the aim of exploring modalities for greater cooperation in this area.

This paper is a first product of this joint research project. The objective here was for Professor Nikitin to explore in a frank manner how Russian elites and observers view the EU, ESDP and key security developments around Russia.

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# Russian Perceptions and Approaches to Cooperation in ESDP

by

Professor Alexander NIKITIN<sup>1</sup>

Director of the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Security (MGIMO University)

President of the Russian Political Science Association

## 1. What Russia doesn't understand and always wanted to know

For an improvement of mutual understanding between Russia and the EU, it is important that EU decision-makers note some of Russia's misunderstandings (and possibly, sometimes, misperceptions) and try to close the gap in understanding through answering the following questions:

- Why the EU expends efforts and resources on conflict resolution operations in Africa (and not in the territories that border the EU) while there is so much conflict settlement work left to do in the immediate European area?
- Why is the EU so interested in becoming a mediator in Moldova and in Caucasus? To Russia, neither of these crisis areas appears to pose a serious threat to European security. Is Russia failing to grasp that there is something valid and urgent about solving these frozen crises?
- What really new contributions (in terms of principles, diplomacy, economic assistance or anything else) can the EU bring to the crisis management process in these regions (i.e. in Moldova and in the Caucasus) that has not been delivered by Russia before?
- Is this a zero-sum game logic, and is Russia expected to fully withdraw from Moldova and Caucasus before the EU can achieve results?
- Or can we rather create a 'share of responsibilities,' a spoken or unspoken agreement regarding joint (or parallel) actions in these conflict areas?
- Why not Central Asia? If the EU feels that the Caucasus and Moldova have become its 'close neighbourhood,' and if the EU has interests in DRC Congo, Indonesia and the Middle East, why then is Central Asia (which is a serious crisis area) not considered by the EU as requiring European action?
- Since the EU decided not to create a large 'European Army' and has gone instead for the option of small 'fire brigades' (battle groups), then why not combine EU 'fire brigades' with Rapid Reaction Russian/CSTO military integrative capabilities (Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the six CSTO states for Central Asia and – another contingent currently in creation – for the Caucasus)?
- How serious is the EU in 'buying' Russia's formal statement that it will *never* be interested in joining the EU as a member? Is there any significant difference between the potential consequences of, say, Romanian or Ukrainian membership of the EU, and potential Russian membership of the EU? Where is the threshold?
- Is the EU satisfied with the *mechanisms* of the EU-Russia interface? Are formal agreements and regular ministerial meetings enough? Do we additionally need a much more developed network of relations between the respective civil societies, business communities, NGOs etc in the EU and in Russia? Can the EU 'digest' closer ties, and a more 'assertive partnership,' than is currently the case?
- How can conflict resolution and conflict management be transformed from an issue dividing the EU and Russia into constructive policy efforts uniting the EU and Russia?

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis and views presented in the paper are the author's only and do not necessarily correspond to the approach of any state or institution.

## 2. The Context for the EU-Russia 'Strategic Partnership'

### ***EU Enlargement through the Prism of EU-Russian Relations***

Intensive and continuing enlargement not only moves external EU borders to the area of the New Independent States and converts areas like Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and even the Caucasus into the EU's immediate 'neighbourhood.' Looked at from Moscow's perspective, current and future waves of enlargement convert the EU into one of Russia's main immediate neighbours. No longer just the CIS, but the EU as well now figures in the 'inner circle' of the Russian 'Near Abroad.'

For about a decade, Russia officially opposed ongoing NATO enlargement. But by the logic of differentiating (and sometimes tactically juxtaposing) the EU and NATO, Russia retained a neutral or positive attitude towards previous waves of EU enlargement. The forthcoming accession of Bulgaria and Romania (in 2007) and potential involvement of Western Balkan states in the EU have not led to any different attitude from Moscow.

At the same time, Moscow notes a certain devaluation of EU membership criteria, if not on the level of principles, then in the practice of applying them to new groups of countries. There is a feeling that the category of 'a special partnership' (to which Russia belongs herself) is being eroded, that it is losing its attractiveness to remaining European non-EU countries, and that it is beginning to be perceived by candidate states as a 'crippled status' compared to full partnership. The political and economic elites of Croatia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Bosnia have started to insist that no kind of 'special partnership' or 'neighbouring' schemes can be a substitute for full EU membership, and that accession talks should be started with them without imposing the Copenhagen criteria or applying any additional requirements. This, in its turn, influences the position of Moldova as well as, in the aftermath of the 'Orange Revolution,' the position of Ukraine, who are also now asking the question: 'then why not us?'

As a result, Moscow observes increasingly blurred and *de facto* less rigorous criteria for EU membership, which now rely upon 'political necessity' just as much as upon the economic and social readiness of candidate states. In fact, the Russian official position elaborated in 1999 (that Russia neither plans nor envisages its own accession to the EU, because the differences in the economic, social and political systems are too great, and the vectors of development are different) is now slightly out of arguments, in so far as Eastern European, Balkan or CIS countries with the same type of formerly centralised socialist economies – and which are, furthermore, economically and socially significantly less developed than Russia – have started 'to qualify' for EU membership.

Thus, the former border between EU and non-EU countries (which was previously perceived as based upon *objective* differences in level and structure of economic and social development) has changed its meaning and has begun to be interpreted by Moscow rather as a politically-defined new 'Berlin Wall.' This perception of the political 'negotiability' of EU membership criteria is only reconfirmed by intensive (and essentially political) debates around the potential accession of Turkey (mostly Asian by geography and Islamic by religion) into the EU.

If (as shown by the current and envisioned stages of EU enlargement) large differences in economic levels of development, location beyond the geographical boundaries of Europe, non-Western values and beliefs, non-democratic cultures and inadequately modernised social structures are not considered as major obstacles to EU accession, then Moscow can hardly maintain its previous attitude to the EU as a highly developed and internally coherent core of Europe. This has not yet motivated Moscow to start to consider the possibility of its own membership, but it at least requires it to reassess the content and principles of the 'special partner' status. This can influence Russia's approaches to visa, customs and border control regimes between Russia and an enlarging EU. And it increases Russian willingness to fully participate on an equal footing in international security and conflict-management decision-making in a wider Europe.

### ***The Multilateral Regional Context of EU-Russian Relations***

In its perception of Russia, the European Union, being a multilateral organisation itself, still underestimates the multilateral dimension of political, military and conflict-resolution networks in which Russia is a part and/or a central integrating element. CSTO, CIS, SCO, EurAsEC, the Russia-Belarus Union – all of these constitute a multilateral environment with its own infrastructure, legal space, initiatives and limitations, which need to be analysed as important parts of the context of EU-Russian relations.

The Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) is slowly disintegrating, but it still retains residual administrative and legal integrative potential accumulated over the years. An extensive corpus of already elaborated, negotiated and concluded agreements, hundreds of CIS Model Laws, and dozens of joint CIS organs, continues to exist and has complicated procedures of elimination or waiving.

The heritage of the fifteen years of the CIS integration efforts has been inherited 'sector by sector' and converted by 'second-generation' NIS integrative structures. Military-political and conflict-resolution tasks and tools are inherited (and developed) by the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). Economic multilateral agreements and ties are extended by the Eurasian Economic Cooperation Organisation (EurAsEC, which recently merged with the Organisation for Central Asian Cooperation (OCAC). The CIS Inter-Parliamentary Union (CIS IPA) continues active operations in Saint Petersburg HQs (sessions in thematic commissions, elaboration and adoption of numerous model legislations). CIS IPA is not 'more alive' but nor is it 'less alive' than the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and WEU Parliamentary Assembly, and has a comparable mode of operations that reflects a 'common political mentality.'

From this point of view, the EU definitely underestimates and under-utilises the importance, as well as the opportunities and necessity of interacting with a group of regional interstate organisations in the NIS area, primarily, such as CSTO, CIS IPA, EurAsEC IPA. The EU *Security Strategy* (December 2003) was not seriously studied or taken into consideration while elaborating CIS and CSTO conflict management documents. In its turn, the EU security concept team never even mentions the CIS or CSTO as neighbouring security systems in the Strategy, and does not express a requirement for external coordination of conflict-management policies either with Russia (the biggest and closest non-EU conflict-prone neighbour), or with other non-EU security structures, except NATO.

Right now, when Russia is undertaking work on adjusting and rewriting its National Security Concept (and, possibly, Foreign Policy Concept as well), it seems the right time to coordinate and interface between the EU and Russia's security and foreign policy strategies. For that, a formal 'minimal mutual overlap' of principles and statements for inclusion in new security and foreign policy concepts could be exchanged in the form of policy papers between Russia and the EU.

The CSTO recently elaborated and adopted a substantial package of peace-keeping and conflict management agreements between six CSTO states, openly proclaiming (in contrast to the previous CIS stand) its willingness to undertake conflict management responsibilities in the NIS area. At the same time, this package of peacekeeping agreements was elaborated without serious consideration of EU or NATO experience and documentation, and has not been interfaced with them.

By utilising the experience obtained in the NATO-Russia Council of elaborating a generic Concept for Joint Peace Support Operations, the EU and Russia could study possibilities and ways of elaborating a *Joint EU-Russia Peace Support Operations Concept* that may cover both military and civil joint operations in conflict areas.

### **3. What does 'Strategic Partnership' mean?**

#### ***All-Azimuths 'Partnerships'***

The goals of establishing and promoting *strategic partnership* relations between the European Union and Russia, once introduced in EU-Russian basic documents of the late 1990s–early 2000s, were reconfirmed in the text of the *EU Security Strategy*. There are good and understandable reasons for urging such a goal now, as the European Union strives to confront the new threats and challenges of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Arguments in favour of strategic partnership have been well-rehearsed. At the same time, there are serious difficulties and obstacles on the way towards such a partnership, and they must be discussed and analysed with no less attention.

During the decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new independent Russia seriously reshuffled its foreign policy values and priorities. The formula of 'strategic partnership' was somewhat overused by Russia, being applied in different geopolitical directions. First of all, marking the end of the Cold War in the first half of the 1990s, Russia, in contrast with the previous Soviet ideology, proclaimed strategic partnership with the United States and the West as a whole. The first evidence of such a partnership was reflected in the early 1990s policy of the then Foreign Minister Andrei V. Kozyrev, and a second phase followed the events of 9/11, 2001 and took the form of a proclaimed 'anti-terrorist coalition.'

Secondly, in the second half of the 1990s, the relations of Russia with China, and with India – the great southern neighbours of Russia – were also redefined as relations based on strategic partnership.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, relations within the CIS between Russia and some of the former Soviet republics – now newly independent states – were no longer interpreted in terms of an ideological 'brotherhood' but in much more pragmatic terms as a rational strategic partnership. And when the mechanism of the CIS already performed its historic role as a tool for a relatively peaceful 'divorce' between parts of the

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<sup>2</sup> Foreign Minister (and later Prime Minister) E. Primakov initiated the formula of a 'strategic triangle Moscow-Delhi-Beijing,' though reactions both from China and India were cautious, and the initiative came to nothing.

formerly united country, then the nickname of 'strategic partners' was saved for the six member states of the Organisation of Collective Security Treaty (CSTO)<sup>3</sup> – those whose partnership was now really based upon legally-binding military-strategic integration.

Fourthly, both the 'Founding Act on Relations Between the Russian Federation and NATO' (1997) and basic documents of the current NATO-Russia Council (NRC) put forward strategic partnership as the format for NATO-Russian relations.

As a result, introducing the format of 'strategic partnership' for relations between the EU and Russia turned out to be less meaningful than it might otherwise have been, in so far as the very term and notion of strategic partnership was blurred in a geostrategic space starting from the USA and the NATO on one side and ending with Russia's Central Asian allies and China, on the other.

### ***Political Principles of the EU-Russian Strategic Partnership***

The 'strategic partnership' formula in the context of EU-Russia relations is understood by the Russian side as potentially incorporating the following principles:

- A constant and deep political interface between both sides, and mutual 'no surprises' policy;<sup>4</sup>
- The institutionalisation of political and military dialogue in the form of regularly acting joint organs and structures;<sup>5</sup>
- A good level of mutual transparency and information exchange;<sup>6</sup>
- Work on joint concepts of crisis response, preparation and implementation of joint or well-coordinated security actions and counter-actions;
- Elaborating standards and measures towards operational interoperability, in purely military matters, as well as in broader security sector actions;
- Joint participation in conflict resolution and peacekeeping missions;
- Working level of exchange of data and practical cooperation between Internal Affairs ministries, police organs in counter-actions against terrorism, the fight against organised crime, border-guard and customs cooperation;
- Cooperation in crisis response, civil emergency situations and between civil emergency and humanitarian assistance services and agencies.

### ***The Scope of 'Partnership'***

#### *The 'Narrow Circle' of EU-Russia Strategic Issues*

The EU and Russia are experimenting with strategic partnership in a historic period when the main security concerns and challenges to international security (Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea's nuclear ambitions, endless hostilities in the Middle East, counter-terrorist actions, etc.) lie far away from the zone of direct intersection between the EU and Russia.

In fact, Russia and the EU have a relatively limited list of issues where their security interests converge. This list may include:

- Cooperation (political and military) on final settlement in the former Yugoslavia and potential accession of the Western Balkans 'to Europe';
- Residually tense dialogue on the security implications of the Kaliningrad issue;
- Interaction on Moldova/Transdnestria settlement (Russian peacekeepers and negotiators are still there, EU border-guard observers and negotiators are already there);
- EU involvement in conflict resolution in the Caucasus (with two civilian EU operations in Georgia already underway) where it comes into direct contact with Russian interests;
- Security aspects of regulation of migration (including visas and passports issues);

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<sup>3</sup> CSTO, based upon the 1992 Collective Security Treaty, acquired a form of organisation (or political-military alliance) in 2003-2003, and currently unites as member-states Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

<sup>4</sup> Exactly this 'no surprises' principle failed to work in March of 1999 within the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council when NATO allies decided to start bombing Belgrade without a UN Security Council resolution and again in 2003, when the US-led Western coalition conquered Iraq irrespective of the negative position of Russia and some other great powers.

<sup>5</sup> Exemplified by the new NATO-Russia Council or set of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) organs like Council of Heads of States, Council of Defence Ministers, Council of Secretaries of National Security Councils, etc.

<sup>6</sup> In 2003 a direct 'protected hotline' of communication between the Russian Minister of Defence and the Secretary General of NATO was established, following the tradition of the hotline existing between the Kremlin and the US White House. Now possibly the time has come for a direct hotline to be established between Russian MFA and the head office of the EU CFSP/ESDP.

- Modes for potential participation of Russia in EU police or peace support operations in crisis areas, both inside or outside Europe, and the organisation of *joint* operations;
- Steps towards interoperability between EU and Russian crisis response tools (rapid reaction forces, peacekeeping contingents, civil emergency forces, etc.);
- New modes of border and customs control regimes at emerging borders between the EU and Russia (in the Baltic States, and between Eastern European countries and Belarus/Ukraine/Moldova);
- Cooperation of Interior ministries and police structures in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and narcotics;
- European assistance to Russia in elimination of WMD and excessive fissile materials (through Global Threat Reduction and other programmes);
- The issue of extending the adapted CFE and other arms control agreements to new EU member states, as well as of Russian compliance with the adapted CFE ceilings and quotas (including Russian military withdrawal from Moldova and Georgia);
- Less strategic questions of regional security cooperation in areas like the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea where the EU and Russia overlap and interact through participation in regional international organisations.

#### *A 'Wider' Security Partnership*

The above list contains a 'narrow' interpretation of security partnership, in so far as it includes only issues where the EU and Russia directly interface with each other in the security or military sphere. In a 'wider' interpretation such a list may also include issues of coordination of more general policy lines and principles between the EU and Russia on such global issues as:

- Policies inside the UN and coordination of positions in the process of elaboration and adoption of UNSC resolutions;
- Policies relating to crisis settlement in other areas of the world (e.g. Iran, the Middle East, the North Korean nuclear challenge, the Indo-Pakistani conflict, etc.);
- Post-conflict settlement policies in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Global counter-terrorism efforts;
- Cooperation in implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention as well as other multilateral disarmament treaties;
- Joint efforts in promotion of Missile Technologies Control Regime (MTCR) and Export Control Regime.

#### **'Value-Centred' or Pragmatic Partnership?**

It remains a controversial question whether or not the EU-Russia partnership should be necessarily based upon a deep unity of values (the *liberal* interpretation of partnership), or if it should be more pragmatically limited to coordinated actions towards common goals, irrespective of differences in values and motivations (the *conservative* interpretation of partnership). On the level of political rhetoric, it is not difficult for the Russian leadership to proclaim that Russia shares the basic values of the European Union, like political democracy, pluralism, the market economy and respect for human rights. But, firstly, these values are not yet deeply entrenched in the Russian social fabric or in the mindsets of all strata of Russian society, and, secondly, the Russian political leadership may understand and interpret some of them differently from its Western counterparts when it comes to applying such values to concrete cases. As a result, strategic partnership with the EU is mostly interpreted by the Russian side in a pragmatic conservative sense, in terms of a partnership based upon a coincidence (which may be temporary) of national interests, rather than social values.

Obviously, a strategic partnership is a weaker mode of relationship than a military or security alliance. It is a mode of interaction between actors who are significantly distanced (not only geographically, but also politically and operationally) from each other. Strategic partners are in (either broad or narrow) agreement regarding far-reaching general political goals (say, regional stability or ending certain local conflicts), but may differ in their approach to middle-range or tactical issues and policies. A strategic partnership does not require coordination of all aspects of policy. It leaves room for specificity, disagreements and reservations, unless these are on such a scale that they undermine the partnership as such.

At the same time, Moscow has a record of 'Treaties on Friendship and Mutual Understanding' with a number of countries dating back to the Soviet years (including such uneasy 'friends' as self-regarding Tito's Yugoslavia and Sadat's Egypt, not to mention North Korea or Libya), and in some such cases 'friendship' and 'alignment' were weaker and more distant than in the context of today's interpretation of 'partnership'.

In international relations, genuine partnership between two parties must be founded on their solid interaction through tested and working instruments that are able to help to resolve any dispute, rather than by the absence of disputes as such. Such an interpretation is more or less natural for the Western tradition of democracy and parliamentarianism, but is not well accepted in the Russian political establishment.

It may be a residual feature of the Soviet ideological tradition, but Moscow still often interprets partnership as a prohibition of any criticism either of or from partners. If a typical Western approach can be characterised as 'we are partners, so I can criticise you', a typical Russian approach remains 'if we are partners you must not criticise me'. The Russian side reacts nervously to any manifestations of, for example, external criticism of the state's internal policies. If the EU practice of endless coordination between member states helps foster a culture of relative tolerance, Russia remains very sensitive to the issue of 'interference in internal affairs'.

The level of globalisation of Russian politics and everyday life is lower than in EU countries. The psychology of the former superpower which is accustomed to setting international rules rather than following them is a factor of difficulty in its relations with the EU. In a sense, Russia seeks to be a subject of ESDP, but is not willing to be its object.

### ***Wrong Tactics***

#### ***Juxtaposing EU to NATO***

It may seem paradoxical after the first point made in this paper, but one of the obstacles to the normal development of the Russia-EU partnership in strategic and military affairs is the fact that the Russian political establishment fundamentally equates the EU with NATO, and considers Russian relations with the EU as a counterbalance to Russian relations with NATO (or even as a means of enacting revenge on NATO). Such a distorted picture of European affairs was formed between 1996, when the first wave of NATO enlargement became a serious perspective, and 1999, when Russian-NATO relations were going through a crisis due to the unsanctioned bombings of Yugoslavia. At that time a simplistic Hollywood-type 'black and white' image was formed, contrasting the 'return of the baddie NATO' with the advent of 'the good EU'.

In this respect, the decision on merging the WEU and the EU was very discouraging for Russia. Before, Moscow had expectations that the European Security and Defence identity would be formed quite apart from NATO, in no relation to it, and in a sense would become a counterweight to NATO. But using the WEU (which has always been closely linked with NATO structures) as a seed for future EU military capabilities undermined Moscow's expectations in this regard. And the promotion of Javier Solana, the former NATO Secretary General, to a key position in EU security was the last straw which showed to Moscow that there would be no real split between the military sides of the EU and NATO, at least no politically usable split.

This Russian attitude of seeing the EU as being intimately bound up with NATO is comparable to another tactic of constantly stressing cracks or gaps in the transatlantic relationship between the USA and European members of NATO. Both tactics represent a kind of throwback to the Cold War era when Russia sought to undermine NATO from any possible direction.

#### ***Levelling Russia to EU Standards***

The EU, in its turn, creates a problem of misunderstanding by instinctively applying to Russia a 'standard procedure' of tackling it as one of the nation-states that must coordinate its policy, values, and economic behaviour to EU standards (if not fully, then at least in principle) if Russia wants to have any interaction with the EU. Having gone through many cycles of accession dialogue with uneasy nation-state partners (Denmark, Turkey, Cyprus, Balkan and Baltic states, etc.), Brussels has elaborated a habit of perceiving a dialogue between 'the Union' and 'a State' in terms of inequality by definition. The Union is perceived as by definition more valuable (at least because it already represents 'a collective will') than any country. The fact that Russia is a vast well-armed country and a former superpower doesn't help and even worsens the gap, as far as EU member states were constantly taking precautions in the EU formation process against domination or interference of another superpower – the USA. Now some (even unconscious) precautions elaborated in relations with the USA are working against smooth relations between the Union and Russia.

#### 4. ESDP Through Moscow's Eyes

European Security and Defence Policy is not really yet perceived by Moscow as a coherent or even coordinated policy line. Excluding the narrow circle of professional decision-makers and analysts, to most of the Russian political and business elite the abbreviations 'CFSP' and 'ESDP' are still uninterpretable, and the correlation between them remains unclear. Many Russian politicians unconsciously perceive CFSP and ESDP as analogous with the failed multilateral coordination of foreign and defence policies in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

These Russian views are driven mainly by a mirror-imaging problem. Looking from Europe, policy coordination within the CIS and its numerous collective organs is seen as insignificant, and the new trend of security and defence integration of the six Newly Independent States (NIS) within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) is not 'visible' and not recognised. Conversely, looking from Moscow, the foreign policy lines and defence policies of Paris, Berlin or London are perceived as largely autonomous rather than as coordinated 'via Brussels.' Speaking in broad terms, NATO is still seen from Moscow as the security 'embodiment' of the West, while ESDP is perceived either as a modest shadow of NATO with a slightly different configuration, or as a blueprint that is still awaiting implementation.

European powers, and even the EU as a structure, prefer to deal on a bilateral basis with Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan etc., and not support 'Post-Soviet collectivism' by any formal dialogue with CIS, CSTO or even GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) multilateral structures. Russia, in contrast, in its efforts to obtain an appropriate place and role in European security decision-making, seems to prefer to act either bilaterally through long-established connections to 'old' European capitals, or to employ the G-8 mechanism, which in this year 2006 is of special importance for Russia because of the Russian presidency of the G-8 and the forthcoming G-8 summit in St. Petersburg.

With the gradual easing of tensions in Chechnya, and with not many positive dynamics currently in evidence in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 'global anti-terrorism campaign' has been relegated to the background as a cementing factor in Russian-Western security relations. At the same time, new international security challenges, like the crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear capabilities, as well as 'energy security' debates (selected by Russia as a main theme for the forthcoming G-8 summit), are potentially rather a source of dissension and conflict for the Russian-EU security interface.

After the noted failure of the early ambitious ESDP plan to create the 60,000 strong European joint armed forces (Headline Goals 2003) and later retreat to a much more modest concept of mobile EU battle groups, the most visible manifestations of ESDP coordination, from the Russian point of view, remain in the area of EU external (mostly civilian and police) operations in conflict areas. The global outreach of ESDP remains somewhat unclear to many external observers, including most Russian experts, who note that out of fourteen civilian ESDP operations undertaken in 2003-2006 only four belong to core Europe (Bosnia, Kosovo, FYROM), while five are in Africa and Asia, two in the Middle East and three in the Newly Independent States (Moldova/Ukraine and Georgia).

This global outreach of ESDP coincided with the extension of NATO's global 'area of responsibility' to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East. And in the current terminology used in Moscow, these changes represent a visible and significant rise in the role of '*non-regional actors*' in the immediate vicinity of Russia. It is not only that post-Soviet conflicts have become 'on-border' conflicts for the European Union. Looked at from the Russian point of view, Russia has now got a new powerful super-neighbour on its borders, and this neighbour is 'knocking on the door' not only from the Baltic direction, where it geographically now borders Russia, but from the Caucasian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, and Central Asian directions as well.

The Russian side has not yet elaborated any clear attitude towards the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) and new trends in reforming the European security sector. If old prejudices can be set aside, Russia can contribute to security and conflict management capabilities of a wider Europe, in so far as it has unique civil emergency capabilities, far-reaching heavy-load aviation, and some newly developed rapid reaction crisis response capabilities. At the same time, military-to-military or police-to-police cooperation remains hampered by the absence of a general political mandate for involving Russia even in the limited role of an external partner to European ESDP-led processes.

Russia feels itself (and this was clearly expressed in the most recent address by the President to the Parliament) to be in the middle of a long-term security sector reform process. EU circles seem to overlook the fact they are not the only actors of security sector reform, and that Russia as well considers itself a 'security sector reformer', having undertaken its own 'security sector reform' or elements of this (for example, training national border-guard and police forces, retraining national military elites in Russian military academies, etc.) in some surrounding CIS countries, like Tajikistan, Belarus and Armenia.

In such ESDP areas as the Rule of Law, civil protection, crisis management and conflict prevention, Russia sees possibilities for contributing some efforts and assets of its own. In the EU-Russian summits in Paris, Moscow and Brussels, as well as in the Conclusions of the Nice European Council, the initial arrangements for consultation and cooperation between the EU and Russia on crisis management were finally agreed. Although definitely a step forward in the right direction, these arrangements remain extremely limited (one Russian contact person accredited to EU Military Staff, potential proposal of limited Russian assets to the EU-led operation, if Russia agrees to the concept of operation elaborated without her participation). Notably, identical access capabilities were extended to Ukraine.

In general, despite the promising 'Strategic Partnership' formula between Russia and the EU, two relatively new security systems and military infrastructures (the ESDP-guided creation of collective European military and security capabilities, on the one hand, and Russian-centred collective military integration within the CSTO framework, on the other) are currently evolving in Eurasia on parallel tracks instead of availing of the post-Cold-War opportunity to cooperate to their mutual benefit.