



CARNEGIE MOSCOW CENTER
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Russia`s Role in Europe

By Sven Hirdman

Moscow 2006



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Introduction

Sven Hirdman was Sweden's ambassador to Russia from 1994 until 2004. For part of that period he was the Dean of the Moscow Diplomatic Corps. A fluent Russian speaker and a keen student of Russia's past and present, he was among the diplomats with the most astute understanding of Russia. The many events which he and his wife Marianne held at the Swedish Embassy on Mosfilmovskaya Street often turned into seminars with the city's most eminent politicians, academics, business people and opinion leaders actively debating the most topical issues of the day. Now

retired in Sweden, Sven Hirdman continues to be a great friend and supporter of the Carnegie Moscow Center where he spoke on numerous occasions over the years. This brochure, written specially for Carnegie, is based on his lectures at the Moscow Institute for International Relations in April 2005 and is expanded to include his wider reflections on Russia's role in Europe.

Dmitri Trenin,
Director of Studies

Russia, an old european state

For a start let us try to define "Europe". There is the *geographical* definition:

Europe is the area from the Atlantic to the Urals, encompassing the European but not the Asian parts of Russia, nor the major parts of Turkey and the Transcaucasian states, and not Cyprus.

There is the political definition, which in its simplest form states that:

Europe equals the membership of the Council of Europe, that is, it includes the whole of Russia, the whole of Turkey, Cyprus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Greenland as part of Denmark, and the overseas departments and territories of France.

There is the *civilization* concept, which says that Europe equals European civilization. For some this has a broad interpretation:

Europe encompasses the whole Western world in a historical sense, including America and other areas settled by Europeans.

Others understand it more narrowly as:

Western Europe with its current value systems.

For the purposes of this paper, I believe that the only meaningful definition of Europe is the political one, i.e. Europe encompassing all member states of the Council of Europe.

To me, Russia is first and foremost an old European nation state, an intrinsic part of European history and culture. I stress European, not *West* European. There are substantial historical differences between Russia and Western Europe, among them:

- The Tartar Yoke versus the Renaissance,
- The Orthodox church versus Protestant reform, and
- The 75 years of totalitarian society.

With the introduction of democratic freedoms in Russia, globalization, information technology and international travel,

these differences between Russian and Western societies are gradually disappearing, and Russia is becoming more transparent to its citizens and to foreigners. Transparency breeds democracy.

One striking factor remains, though, and this makes Russia different from the rest of Europe. That is the role of the State, which, if anything, has grown in recent years, and the correspondingly weak role of civil society.

Let us look at the three notions of the *State*, *Society*, and *Motherland* in Russia and in Sweden, and we will see substantial differences.

In Sweden, the *State* is a rather amorphous notion, associated with high taxes, the capital Stockholm, a few state agencies, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance. The strongest notion in Sweden is *Society*, which encompasses everything – welfare society, local authorities, the media, trade unions, traditional Swedish values. *Motherland* is a non-articulated notion of history, as well as something that is defined negatively as opposed to the EU or to immigrants.

In Russia, it is the other way round. The *State* is the strongest concept, the sacred Russian State, whose main task is to defend the Russian nation and "Russianness." This goes back in history to the Tsars owning the land and everything on it. The State should be respected but also feared, having precedence before the interests of the individual. Represented by the President and the Kremlin, it provides legitimacy to the bureaucracy.

Society in Russia is a much weaker notion as a consequence of the strong State. Russia has no long tradition of strong, well-developed non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, the personal networks of the individual Russian are by necessity much more developed than those of the individual Swede.

Motherland is a much stronger value in Russia than in Sweden. This has to do with all the sufferings that the Russian people have lived through over the centuries, threatened by annihilation on at least three instances – the Tartar invasion in the 13th century; the Polish invasion in the early 17th century; and Hitler's aggression

in the 20th century. Napoleon, I believe, was a different case. Historical consciousness and knowledge are very strong in Russia, which I see as a very positive factor bringing people together. Interestingly enough, when in 1991, in the wake of the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the International Organization of Migration made a study of the propensity of various East European peoples to leave their country, 50% of Albanians said “yes” but only 2% of Russians.

Partly because of the strong State concept, the bureaucracy works differently in Russia from, say, Sweden. What strikes me in Russia is the *verticality* of all State institutions, with bosses deciding everything and subordinates waiting for directives, anxious not to commit any formal mistakes. Horizontal cooperation is not very well developed, which sometimes creates problems, for instance in crisis management and in unforeseen situations.

Another striking factor, rooted in Russian history, is the uniformity and universality of Russian culture. People everywhere know their Pushkin and speak the same way with almost no dialectical differences all over the Russian Federation. This is very similar to the situation in France, which is also an old centralized nation state, but different in comparison with Britain, Germany and Sweden.

While the role of the State is strong in Russia, in economic terms, the public sector is much smaller in Russia than in most European states, e.g. Sweden. This leaves a great deal of room for dynamic entrepreneurship in Russia – both of a positive and a negative kind. What really has impressed me in Russia is that when, after a long period of stagnation, the Communist period, everything is turned upside-down, there are people – the entrepreneurs – who see the new possibilities much faster than the rest of us. The same was partly true after the economic “revolution” in 1998. Generally, in comparison with Western practices, I have found that the time horizons for economic and commercial decisions in Russia are often much shorter, which sometimes causes problems and misunderstandings.

Over the years I have served in Russia, I have seen many factors at play. Yes, there have been several political and economic crises.

Many of them have been serious, sharp and deep, but my point is that they have not been long-lasting. With respect to Russia, I see the following long-term, positive changes which are moving the country forward:

- openness to the outer world and the globalization process;
- generation change: in 10 years people born after 1980 – that is, those who were socialized after the fall of Communism – will be in charge;
- still remaining high educational standards and the eagerness to acquire new knowledge, particularly among the young;
- vast natural resources, which will remain in high demand on the world market; I for one do not believe that the oil price will drop below 20 USD/barrel for a long period;
- a sensible economic policy after the “best” thing that happened to Russia in the 1990s, namely the economic crisis of 17 August 1998, which instilled a strong measure of realism into Russian economic affairs.

I have traveled extensively in Russia over the last ten years and visited about half of the Federation Subjects. What impresses me is not just the extraordinary boom in Moscow, but the economic and other progress in most of Russia's provincial capitals, with a population ranging from 500,000 to 1.5 million. Although uneven, the modernization process affects the whole of Russia. The spread of mobile phones epitomizes this. In the summer of 2004, I visited the Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk regions. The rich natural resources, the introduction of new technologies and the quality of the hands-on political and economic managers should contribute to substantial growth in these regions.

One sad factor in Russian public life, to which I have devoted considerable attention, is the demographic situation. Two aspects stand out. One is the incomprehensible and depressingly low median life expectancy of new-born Russian males – only about 60 years. The other is the fact that Russia's population diminishes by about 800,000 people a year, of which about a quarter –

that is 200,000 people – die from unnatural causes, e.g. murder, traffic accidents, fires, drowning, suicide, and alcoholic and narcotic poisoning.

Turning to foreign affairs, I see Russia as a traditional European nation state trying to find its new place in shifting surroundings. What Mr. Primakov said in his Gorchakov lecture at MGIMO in 1996 still holds true, namely that Russia must first of all build up its domestic economic and political strength to be able to play a prominent role in the world arena. A lot has been achieved in this respect during the last five years, and Russia is now again taking a more active part in world politics. I will return to this subject; here, I just want to underline one aspect, namely that Russia has learned the lesson of the Kosovo crisis in 1998–1999 – that Russia must not be isolated in world affairs, but be a real participant.

I am a firm believer in the strength and tenacity of the Russian nation and the Russian people. The richness and warmth of its culture has made a strong impact on me. Over 40 years, I have seen Russia change for the better and become an open society that has very much to give to the rest of the world.

Much remains, however, to be done. The disgraceful Chechen war must be brought to a decent end, ensuring that Chechens can enjoy a normal life within the confines of the Russian Federation. The rule of law must be further developed, and the courts become independent from the political tutelage of the State and other powers-that-be. Excessive centralization should be restrained and bureaucratic interference in business reduced. State-owned television channels should regain more freedom and independence in their news coverage and commentaries. The economic and social reforms should continue in order to reach the two goals set by President Putin – to double GDP and reduce poverty.

Russia's image abroad

One cannot overestimate the importance of a country's image abroad. What we are talking about are other peoples' perceptions of another country – whether they like it or not, respect it or not, are interested in it or not, wish to go there or not. This will affect the daily decisions they take about that country – be they of a political nature or relate to business or to tourism. These perceptions based on an image may, thus, have considerable positive or negative consequences for any given country.

Russia's image abroad is very mixed, with the negative traits dominating. Of course, Russia's image varies from one group of countries to another. It is, I would say, rather positive in Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan; neutral in China and in Malaysia; but rather negative in the West, including the USA and Japan. Being myself from a West European country, and considering the immense political and economic significance of Russia's relations with the West, I will concentrate on this last aspect.

A country's image may vary considerably over time. During the Soviet years, Russia's image was bad in the West because of an abhorrence of totalitarian Stalinism and the fear of Soviet militarism and aggression; there was also a certain measure of malign ignorance, of taking bad things for granted. When Soviet power collapsed in the years between 1987 and 1994 – that is, during Gorbachev's Perestroika and Yeltsin's liberal reforms – Russia's image temporarily became better, and the country was met with a great deal of sympathy abroad for living through difficult times. This rather positive image changed for the negative with the start of the first war in Chechnya in November 1994. There was another temporary improvement in Russia's image in 2000-2003 with President Putin's first reforms and a new foreign policy, but since then the image has darkened again.

Looking at Russia's image in greater detail, I would say the following. Russia is a very well known country in the world. That is, everyone knows of Russia even if this knowledge is often based on prejudice and biased information. This is an important factor and could be much better used to Russia's advantage.

There are strong positive elements in Russia's image as perceived abroad. The most important is probably the interest in and

admiration for Russian culture, old and new. Russia is one of the truly great cultural nations of the world. Another positive factor is the interest in the Russian language as a bearer of this culture and as one of the global means of communication. Russia's progress in sports, e.g. recently in tennis, creates many fans.

I would also say that there is much sympathy for the Russian people and for all the hardship Russians have endured and still, to a not inconsiderable extent, endure. So while the image of the Russian state sometimes is negative in the West, this is not necessarily true of the image of the Russian people. Many people in the West have positive experiences of meetings with individual Russians.

Liberal political and economic reforms – when they take place in Russia – affect the image positively as sometimes do economic or technological breakthroughs.

In foreign affairs, when it does not relate to what Russia calls the near abroad, there is much cooperation between Russia and the West on classical issues such as the Middle East, the Korean issue, UN affairs, disarmament, and the fight against some forms of international terrorism, where Russia's measured approaches meet with understanding and have a positive impact on the country's international image.

However, there is a long list of factors which affect Russia's image negatively:

- The historical legacy is still strong. For some foreigners, e.g. the Poles and the Balts, it relates to unpleasant memories of Russian imperialism in times past. To others in the West it refers to the fear of war and military aggression during the Soviet period but also to the then prevailing suppression of important human rights in Russia. I would say that too many people abroad still see the Russian Federation as the imperial successor to the Soviet Union.
- The war in Chechnya is a very important component of Russia's negative image. The war has already lasted for more than ten years. Violence continues, and many innocent people suffer.

While most people will agree that a peaceful Chechnya with a large measure of internal self-rule will have to find its place within the Russian Federation, the methods by which the Russian authorities try to achieve this are not perceived as acceptable in the West.

- Russia's sometimes difficult relations with the other former Soviet republics have a strong impact on Russia's image in the West. This is to some extent part of the age-old top-dog – underdog perception, simplistic as it may be. In practice, this means that whenever there is a crisis in the relations between, say, Georgia and Russia, Ukraine and Russia or Moldova and Russia, Western public opinion and most politicians tend to take the side of the smaller countries. This is all the more the case because these countries wish to come closer to the EU and NATO, and many of their policy-makers therefore cry foul of Russia. Russia's sometimes high-handed approach to Georgia and the *faux pas* of recognizing Mr. Yanukovich as President of Ukraine in 2004 before the election results strengthened this perception in the West of imperial Russian behavior.
- Russia's relations with the Baltic states is a special case, filled with mutual recrimination. Personally, I have much sympathy for the situation of the Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia and find it disgraceful that more than half a million people should be in the position of non-citizens. Nevertheless, it is a delicate issue, and the Balts are in a much better position now to argue their case as members of the EU and of NATO. Thus, overly aggressive Russian behavior against the Balts backfires on Russia and reinforces the negative image.
- Some Russian domestic developments have a negative impact on Russia's image abroad. With globalization, new information technology and the priority given to human rights after the end of the Cold War, domestic developments do affect foreign public opinion. The negative trends in Russia which tend to get most attention in the West, besides Chechnya, are: strengthened state political control over the central TV news channels to the detriment of the opposition; state interference in election campaigns; the political vendetta against and

ensuing dismantling of Yukos; and the excessive concentration of political power in the Kremlin and the lack of strong counterbalances.

- To these man-made factors should be added the continuing inherent weaknesses in Russian society, which tend to frighten foreigners: the high crime rate, a difficult demographic and health situation, social injustice, and corruption.
- Then there are the complexities of Russian bureaucracy – the endless requirements of various permissions and licenses from a multitude of state, regional and local bodies, as well as the shifting sands of Russian laws and regulations. This complicates the life and existence of foreign business and generally of foreigners in Russia, as well as of those who wish to travel to Russia, and so worsens Russia's image. In this and in other contexts, one should remember that there is a time-lag: Although the situation is improving in Russia – e.g. with respect to business deregulation – people tend to remember and talk about the old problems.

What I have set out above may seem to some an exaggerated and unfairly negative list of Russian problems. My answer to this is firstly, that the list could have been made longer, and secondly, and more importantly, there is no divine justice in the world and certainly not in politics. Yes, the world may be unjust to Russia, as it is to several other countries; yes, there are many examples of double standards – but this is the way it is. Perceptions often matter more than so-called realities, and Russia must take this into account whether it wants to or not.

So what should Russia do, considering that the present negative image of Russia abroad is harmful to its interests? These are my proposals:

- First, there should be changes in some Russian policies and practices: how the war in Chechnya is conducted and the conflict regulated; a fairer playing field for business and media in Russia with less state and bureaucratic interference; less aggressiveness and high-handedness in dealing with the other former Soviet republics.

- Second, Russia must become much better in informing the outer world about all the positive developments inside the country: the rapid economic development and the spread of wealth; the dynamic development of Russian business; a very strong culture; well-educated modern students; and fast changes in the Russian society diminishing the differences with Western society. So far, I have not found Russia very good at informing others about itself and promoting Russian interests abroad. This is very evident in comparison with what other countries are doing, in particular the USA, France, Britain, Germany, Italy or even Sweden.
- I am sure that Russian embassies and consulates could do a much better job in promoting Russia abroad. President Putin has talked about the necessity of this. One measure that should be used much more to Russia's advantage are state visits abroad. These should not just be a personal visit by a Russian Head of State; the event must be used for a broad presentation of Russian achievements to an interested foreign audience.
- Russia should make it much easier – and not, as is often the case, more difficult – for foreigners, particularly Westerners, to visit Russia. It is very much in Russia's own interest that as many tourists and business people as possible from Western Europe and other OECD countries come to Russia and see the many positive changes here; this will help them to leave their old prejudices behind. Economically, Russia will also gain from more foreigners spending their money in Russia. I am, therefore, a strong proponent of a visa-free regime between Russia and the Schengen countries. But I will go one step further: If, as seems likely, it will take time to achieve such a mutual agreement, Russia should be bold enough to unilaterally abolish visa requirements for *bona fide* visitors from the OECD countries. There are precedents for such a policy in relations between other countries. When I have raised this proposal with some of my Russian friends, I have been told that diplomacy must be mutual, that is, all “concessions” must be mutual. I have retorted that if people believe this, there must be a misprint in Russian textbooks on diplomacy. The best diplomacy is often unilateral – when you act in your own interest and do not make yourself a hostage to the actions or non-actions of the other party.

Russia and the European Union

Let us now look at the relationship between Russia and the European Union.

The EU is an extraordinary body. There is nothing like it in the world. It is neither an intergovernmental organization, nor a confederation. It is both. In foreign trade it acts as a unitary body with full powers, in foreign policy less so. It thrives from an ambition to become more unitary, but this at the same time creates its own crises. Nevertheless, the practical integration relentlessly drives the process further. Crucial in this context was the decision to implement the concept of the Single Market, that is, *one* market for goods, services, capital and people for all the member states. True, it is not yet complete with respect to services because of domestic concerns in some countries, neither does the Euro zone or Schengen-*land* include all EU member states. However, for ordinary citizens the EU is already now essentially one market.

The EU's decision-making mechanisms are one of the great mysteries for non-members, and sometimes for members. This is, first, because there are two mechanisms at play – the Council of Ministers, where member states take the decisions, and the strong and independent-minded Commission, which is both the guardian of the Community interest and the main body for implementing the decisions. There is also the European Parliament with independently elected members and prerogatives. Second, this is because most decisions arise at the bottom of the structures in a constant give and take between many actors. Third, it is because of the striving – and often the requirement – for consensus between the EU bodies and among the member states. Taken together, this means that when an EU decision has been taken and announced it is difficult to change it. This is very frustrating to outsiders, who are jealously kept aside from EU decision processes. Russia, as well as Norway, has experienced this on many occasions. I have myself said, jokingly, that I would not like to negotiate with the EU.

How will the EU develop in the future? No one knows for certain. The referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005 rejected the new EU constitution. Where do we go from here?

I believe that the EU is fundamentally changing because of the enlargement implemented in 2004, when ten new member states

joined the Union. It was a bit like lifting the lid of Pandora's box. Now there is no way of stopping the process within the borders of Europe, politically defined. Bulgaria and Romania are set to become members in 2007. Turkey, I guess, by 2015; Croatia probably before this. Macedonia and Albania have also been given membership prospects, as I believe will happen with Serbia in due course. Other countries – like Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – are banging on the doors of the EU. The Union, suffering from enlargement fatigue, is trying to relieve this pressure and this dilemma by creating the concept of a European Neighborhood Policy, providing some but not all the benefits of membership for the poor cousins.

So, what will happen? Will the EU continue to enlarge, preserving its present monolithic structure? Or will we see a Union built in several concentric circles with only the inner one having all the attributes of an integrated federation? Or will we see more functional cooperation between different groups of member states depending on the issue? This is already the case with the Eurozone and the Schengen agreement. One can see it coming in security and military cooperation, also in some legal and police matters. I believe that with continued enlargement – which increases the differences within the EU – functional cooperation will become more attractive to member states, with the closest cooperation being among the oldest member states and a few others willing to accept their rules of the game.

Because of its undoubted success in creating a better life for the citizens of the Union, by doing away with unnecessary restrictions and opening the markets and thereby creating more wealth, the EU exerts a strong “pull” on other countries. We see this reflected in the strong urge in many countries to join the Union. Since the Union is a global success that punches with a lot of political weight in the world, there is also the attraction for many smaller and medium-sized countries to be part of this body rather than to continue in relative isolation. This may be applicable to the Balkan countries. The “pull” of the EU is obvious in all directions but not least in the Eastern dimension, where it already affects Russia's cooperation with its neighbors and its policy interests in countries such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

The EU likes to work with broad, ambitious concepts. They set out the directions and the goals for the member states, even if they are not always reached. The Single Market is one such concept, the Eurozone another. Both have proved successful. The European Neighborhood Policy is another more defensive measure. It has obvious merits, and I think that Russia is wrong to take a dim view of it, partly for reasons of prestige. When it comes to the EU concept of a Common Foreign and Security Policy, I believe it is only in its beginning stage, and I do not know how far it will be able to develop. To me, the Union's essential successes in foreign policy have been:

- a) the integration and enlargement processes in Europe, which in practice have eliminated the possibility of wars between European states – members of the EU or those striving to become members – and strengthened the rule of democracy. This is a gigantic change considering the history of Europe over the past two thousand years; and
- b) the economic and other support that the EU is providing to poorer and conflict-ridden non-European states, and also the good example which the EU integration experience provides for groups of states in other areas.

I have more doubts when it comes to defining a truly Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union with respect to all other states and all other international problems. It has not been possible for the EU member states to agree on a common policy towards the United States. Their own interests differ too much. The same may be true with respect to Russia and to China. Of course, some minimum agreement may always be found among member states on policies towards major powers, or on the most intrinsic international problems, but differences grounded in different national interests are likely to remain for a long time.

Let us now look in greater detail at the relationship between Russia and the European Union.

The Soviet Union did not for many years recognize the European Economic Community (EEC), which was created by the Rome

Treaty of 1957, looking at it suspiciously as a creature of the Cold War. In the 1970s there were some technical agreements between the EEC and the Soviet Union; however, the EEC never recognized the so-called COMECON (or Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) set up by the Warsaw Pact states. Economic relations were difficult between the market economy of the EEC and the state-planning system of the Soviet Union and its allies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of a democratic Russian Federation, a new basis had to be found between the then transformed European Union and Russia. The result was the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the PCA, signed on Corfu on 1 July 1994. Its main achievement was that it established the principle of Most Favored Nation (MFN) treatment in the trade relations between the Union and Russia. It also established an elaborate system of consultations between the two parties, defined areas of future cooperation – such as full free trade – and committed both parties to principles of good international behavior such as the respect for human rights.

Looking back at how the relations between Russia and the EU have developed, one observes a large measure of interdependence. The 25 EU member states account for more than 50 percent of Russia's exports. Russia's share of the EU's exports is considerably smaller, between 5 and 10 percent. However, several EU member states, e.g. Germany, Finland and the Central European states, are very dependent on Russian energy resources and other raw materials. Energy inter-dependence may become one of the strongest bonds in the EU-Russia relationship, reminding one of how the Coal and Steel Union brought France and Germany together. With the latest enlargement, the EU and Russia have become neighbors over thousands of kilometers with all that this entails. The partnership with Russia is one of the EU's major engagements, consuming much time and work.

Over the years, relations have become more concrete and more multi-dimensional. The parties are leaving behind the practice of issuing unilateral strategy declarations and work instead on mutually binding Action Plans. Cooperation now covers most walks of life and extends to international issues that concern both parties, e.g. peacekeeping in the Balkans and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

As the main achievements of EU-Russia cooperation in recent years, I would list:

- The full implementation of the MFN clause in trade relations between the enlarged EU and Russia through the agreements concluded last year.
- The EU's recognition in 2003 of Russia as a market economy, which diminishes the scope for anti-dumping measures.
- The agreement last year between the EU and Russia on the conditions for Russia's membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO); this is an essential prerequisite for establishing free trade between Russia and the EU.
- Russia's gradual but systematic incorporation of EU/OECD/WTO trade rules and standards in its own trade legislation.
- The partial solving in 2003 of the Kaliningrad transit problem.
- The previously mentioned agreement to work out four concrete action plans ("road maps") covering economic cooperation, internal security, external security, and cultural and scientific cooperation. These plans were signed at the Russia–EU summit in Moscow on 10 May 2005.

As the most important remaining problems between the EU and Russia I would list:

- The achievement of a visa-free regime, which I see as essential for facilitating travel and thereby improving mutual understanding.
- Working out the modalities for EU–Russia cooperation on external security, including peacekeeping operations.
- The implementation of WTO membership for Russia and establishing a free trade zone between the EU and Russia.
- Fully solving the Kaliningrad transit problem with respect to freight, energy supply and fisheries.

Then there are particularly thorny issues such as:

- Russian charges for Siberian overflights by EU airlines; and
- Frequent quarrels over veterinary regulations.

Of deeper significance is the wealth of non-understanding and non-acceptance by either party of the policies of the other party. This relates to EU criticism of certain domestic practices in Russia, ranging from the conduct of the war in Chechnya to restrictions on individual freedoms and to political influence on the media; to very different views on the situation of the Russian-speaking populations in Estonia and in Latvia; to foreign policy differences on Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and other states in the EU-Russia neighborhood. At present, I see this as the worst problem in EU-Russia relations. It is very much a problem of perceptions but also of emotions and, partly, of ignorance. In many respects, Russian society and the societies of EU member states still remain far apart. The continued globalization process should help to remedy this, as would a rapid alleviation of the cumbersome travel rules between Russia and the EU.

There is a very elaborate hierarchy of formal meetings between Russia and the EU to steer the cooperation process. The apex is the bi-annual EU–Russia summit, where the EU side is represented by the Presidency, the Commission and the Council secretariat. Then there are Foreign Ministers meetings and meetings of Political Directors and other officials. Under the PCA there are special meetings of the so-called Permanent Partnership Council (at ministerial level) and of the Cooperation Committee (at the level of deputy ministers). There is also a multitude of subcommittees under the PCA, which meet irregularly.

In addition to this, there are regular meetings in Brussels between the Russian Representation and officials from Moscow on the one hand and various functional Council committees on the other hand. In recent years, Russia has acquired a better understanding of how the EU works and how it affects Russia's interests. Concomitantly, the Russian Representation to the EU has been considerably strengthened by officials from several Russian ministries.

There is some dissatisfaction on both the Russian side and on the EU side with the consultation mechanism, which both find overly bureaucratic. Russia would like to have a closer and politically more meaningful consultation process with all the EU member states before decisions which affect Russia's interests are taken. Comparison is often made with the NATO-Russia Council. The EU, on the other hand, jealously guards its decision-making autonomy and prefers being represented by the so-called EU "Troika" in its dealings with Russia.

In Brussels, Russia is dealt with regularly by the EU primarily in two Council committees – the COEST and the PSC (the Political and Security Committee) – which meet weekly, sometimes reinforced by officials from capitals, but Russia is also discussed in other committees devoted to disarmament, human rights, other geographical areas, etc. Through the COREPER, decisions then reach the Council at the ministerial level and are sometimes ratified by the European Council at the Head of State/Head of Government level. The Commission and the Council Secretariat have their own Russian sections and are, as a matter of course, deeply involved in anything dealing with Russia. So, there is no lack of attention devoted to Russia in Brussels. One difference, though, is that the EU thrives on "low politics," with issues being brought up from below, while EU-Russia relations in Moscow are regarded as "high politics" to be solved by summits.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into full force on 1 December 1997 and which provides the legal basis for the EU's relations with Russia, will expire in 2007. It has to be replaced by a new legal document, which takes into account the evolving relationship between the two sides over the last 15 years. Considering that such a document has to be ratified by parliaments, this work needs to start soon. The Action Plans on the so-called Four Spaces are no substitute for such a formal treaty.

It seems to me that before the work on a new treaty can be finalized, the two parties – the EU and Russia – must arrive at a deeper common understanding of their long-term relationship. This raises the issue of possible Russian membership of the EU, something which comprises several elements.

First, the formal side:

According to the Treaty on the European Union, as revised in Amsterdam 1999, Article 49:

Any European State which respects the principles in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union. It shall address its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the assent of the European Parliament, which shall act by an absolute majority of its component members.

The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded, which such admission entails, shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

Article 6(1), to which Article 49 refers as a qualification for membership, has the following wording:

The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States.

That is, new member states have to fulfill the same requirements.

Then there are the so-called Copenhagen criteria, adopted by the European Council in 1993, according to which a prospective member must:

- *be a stable democracy, respecting human rights, the rule of law, and the protection of minorities;*
- *have a functioning market economy; and*
- *adopt the common rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law.*

Second, the point must be made that no country is *invited* to become a member of an organization like the EU or NATO. A prospective candidate must decide for itself whether it fulfills the formal – and informal – requirements and wishes to *apply* for membership. If the EU receives such an application, it will decide for itself whether it wishes to start the procedure and ask the Commission to investigate the matter and produce an avis on the merits or otherwise of the membership application. Thereafter, it is up to the Council and the member states to decide whether they wish to start membership negotiations. Finally, a decision has to be made and approved by parliaments as to whether the negotiation results are satisfactory and the candidate country may join the EU. Thus, there are many long hurdles. For Sweden it was a process which lasted from 1957 to 1995.

My firm belief is that the integration of Russia into European structures must continue and go deeper. Life itself dictates this, as one would have said in Soviet times. The globalization process, the integration of the world economy, the information revolution, the mobility of people, geography – but also history and culture – are pushing Russia towards this. As a first and major step, Russia has to decide by and for itself what sort of long-term relationship it wants to have with the European Union. To me, the realistic choices seem to be:

- either to apply in due course for membership, or
- go for a deepened functional relationship, such as that between Switzerland and the EU, based on a treaty of association.

These are very difficult and uncertain decisions to make. Outside factors might affect Russia. For instance, there is a new rapprochement in the relationship between Ukraine and the EU. Should Ukraine in, say, 10-15 years be accepted as a member of the EU, it is very difficult not to see Russia following suit.

Russia and European Security

Looking back at the evolving scene of European security in the post-Cold War period, two trends and two principles stand out:

1. The interplay between national assertiveness and integration. After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia, a number of peoples have been given a new chance to assert their national identity. This is a process that is not yet complete, as we see in the Balkans. At the same time, there is a very strong push for deeper integration and cooperation among the older states of Europe, a process which is influenced by the lessons of history but also by the practical necessities of globalization. The integration is so attractive and brings so many advantages, that the newly or once again independent states are anxious to jump on the bandwagon. So far, Russia and a few other states – Switzerland, Norway, Iceland – have stood outside this process.
2. The two competing principles are the ones set out in the Paris Charter of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1990:
 - a) that all European states have the right to decide their own security policies, including to which organizations they wish to belong; but that
 - b) this must not be done in a way as to lead to new (harmful) dividing lines in European security.

The inherent contradiction between these two principles has not been solved, as shown by the qualms over NATO enlargement.

Russia has developed along its own way during the post-Cold War period. When I arrived in Russia as Ambassador in 1994, there were long discussions in the media about the identity of the new state, the Russian Federation. Some talked about Russia as a Eurasian state, others about applying an American, Chinese or Swedish model for Russia. This debate – it seems to me – is now over. Most Russians, headed by President Putin, see Russia as a traditional European nation state with a long and rich history.

Over the same post-Cold War period, Russia's foreign policy has had to adapt itself to the changing circumstances. In the beginning, in the early 1990s, there were certain illusions in Russia that the West would wholeheartedly welcome Russia as a member of all the fine Western clubs. Reality and the start of the war in Chechnya destroyed this illusion. Next, in the mid-1990s, Russia tried a more independent and assertive foreign policy under the brand name of multipolarity. It failed, essentially during the Kosovo crisis of 1998-1999, when Russia found itself isolated in its position. The lessons to be drawn were that for a power the size of Russia it is not sufficient to be right in a certain sense when it comes to principles; one must not be isolated in these positions, or one will have no influence. Therefore, the more participatory foreign policy that President Putin embarked upon in the year 2000 seems to me clearly to be the right choice for Russia.

The European security scene is characterized by what the Germans call the *Alphabetensuppe*. There are so many different organizations and concepts involved: OSCE, EU, NATO, OECD, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), Partnership for Peace (PFP), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), an agreement on Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and so on. Very few people can decipher the whole lot. Nevertheless, there are two bodies which stand out when it comes to real power, namely the EU and NATO. As I discussed above, the EU is spreading its wings over the whole of Europe and acquiring new powers. How NATO will develop in the future, I honestly do not know. NATO is at the same time a military and a political organization. It remains the pillar of American influence in Europe but is also looking for new missions.

The enlargement processes of the EU and of NATO have created certain problems for Russia, which essentially is a status quo power wishing to preserve the past. The economic and other consequences for Russia of the EU's enlargement in 2004 with ten new member states, several of which are neighbors of Russia, have now largely been dealt with. Hopefully, the increased growth that can be expected in the new EU member states should be beneficial for Russia through increased cross-border trade.

NATO's enlargement has been more grudgingly accepted in Russia. Since the prospects for a new serious East-West conflict in Europe seem extremely remote, the enlargement nevertheless should be harmless to Russia's security interests. On the other hand, I for one would welcome a rapid ratification by the Western powers of the adapted CFE treaty so as to put a formal cap on the force levels in some of the new states. Generally, there ought to be a new urge to reduce force levels in Europe, particularly with respect to tactical nuclear weapons. Russia has itself recognized that there are no real military threats to Russia from the Western direction by undertaking since 1998 substantial reductions in the force levels in Northwestern Russia and in the Baltic Fleet.

The only European security organization in which all European states are members is the OSCE. At the same time, there is widespread disappointment that the OSCE has not been able to fulfill the expectations placed on the organization, and even less so in recent years. Partly, this has to do with the fact that OSCE works on the basis of consensus, which necessarily makes it slow-moving. Substantially, there are differences of principle in the attitudes of Russia and of the Western powers to OSCE, not least with respect to the application of human rights standards in the domestic affairs of member states. Even so, the OSCE conducts much useful work in several newly independent states, e.g. in Central Asia, and its specialized services, such as ODIHR (Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights), the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Media Ombudsman, are powerful instruments to assist member states. Therefore, it is sad to see the work of the OSCE often being blocked by an inability to agree on the budget of the organization.

A very positive aspect of European security is that practically all the old border conflicts in Europe have been solved or been laid to rest. The only real remaining problem seems to be Kosovo's borders.

The main problem I see with respect to European security is lingering distrust. This shows itself at several levels:

- Because of the long and difficult period of the Cold War and the preceding Second World War and because of doubts about domestic developments in the Russian Federation, there is a

certain distrust in the West regarding Russia's security policies. I am not at all saying this is a well-grounded distrust – on the contrary – but it is a fact that it exists.

- This distrust is, of course, particularly strong in the countries in Eastern and Central Europe – such as the Baltic states and Poland – which until recently were under Soviet domination. A contributing factor is the clash between different domestic and foreign forces, which we have recently seen in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. Many of the actors involved seem to be motivated by a zero-sum perspective, implying that one side's loss is another's gain. This is not necessarily so. From all sides one would like to see fewer polemical statements and hear fewer harsh words.
- In Russia there are still lingering suspicions regarding the U.S. military presence in Europe and its further intentions, and about the long-term consequences of NATO's enlargement. The establishment of the NATO-Russia Council improved the atmosphere, but there seems to me to be a need for still more transparency and confidence-building measures.
- In the Balkans there is still a lot of mutual distrust that only time and economic and social development can mitigate. I see this as one of the main tasks for the EU.
- There are other lingering ethnic and nationalist conflicts in Europe, which have not been fully solved: Northern Ireland, the Basque provinces, Transdnestr, and all the conflicts in the Caucasus. In fact, I can only recall one post-war ethnic conflict in Europe that has been fully solved. That is the South Tyrol conflict between Austria and Italy.

The last point is worth elaborating on. The South Tyrol conflict was solved because of the democratic and economic developments in both countries and because of the strong impact of economic and political integration in Europe. I therefore believe that continued enlargement of the European Union and the further integration of Russia into European structures is the best way to deal with the existing suspicions and remaining European security concerns. This should be the main task for Russia and all of us in the future.

The wider outlook

I start this section on a somewhat pessimistic note. As I look around the world, I see the following rather worrying trends:

- A **Russia** that feels vulnerable from terrorist attacks; offended and grieved by the perceived non-understanding of its problems by the outside world; and powerful because of an improved economy and strong political leadership. That is not a very good combination.
- A **United States** governed by an ideologically motivated administration for which might and self-interest often come before right, or rather which arbitrarily decides what is right.
- A **European Union** with its “digestion” problems because of the scope of the enlargement and, therefore, more concentrated on its own problems. The majority of the new members have negative experiences of the Soviet Union, which affects their present world outlook.
- A group of **neighboring countries** between Russia and the EU who want to join the EU and NATO and for this purpose turn more to Brussels and Washington than to Moscow.
- The emergence of two new, self-confident great powers – **China** and **India** – set to realize their ambitions. This affects the potentially explosive Taiwan issue and the seemingly insolvable Kashmir problem.
- Continued **nuclear proliferation** to more states. Besides the five recognized nuclear states, there may soon be five non-recognized ones. Nuclear disarmament is not making much progress.
- The intractable conflict in the **Middle East** between the Israelis and the Palestinians.
- The absence of real **statesmen** of the stature of Eisenhower, Chou En-lai, Mitterrand, Kohl, Gorbachev and Delors, to name a few of the past generation.

There are, of course, strong countervailing forces in global economic integration, in better distribution of wealth and in the gradual acceptance of a system of global norms founded on multinational conventions. My point is, though, that if political mistakes continue to be made by all sides, there is a non-negligible risk that the world might slide back into something akin to a new Cold War between the great powers. And that would be to the disadvantage of all of us. To avert such a worst case scenario we all need a forward and outward-looking Russia that will play its rightful role among the democratic states in Europe and in the world.

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Sven Hirdman
RUSSIA'S ROLE IN EUROPE

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