



NATO

OTAN

*NATO Defense College*  
*Collège de Défense de l'OTAN*

*Russia will Propose  
a New Foreign Policy Concept  
to NATO*

*Immediate Report*

*by Dr Andrew Monaghan*

---

*Research Division*  
*Rome, July 2008*

Russian president Dmitri Medvedev signed a new Russian foreign policy concept on 12 July. Moscow proposes a restructuring of the entire European security architecture. The basis of the new concept is to be outlined by Dmitri Rogozin, Russia's Ambassador to NATO, on Monday 28 July.

Medvedev outlined these proposals on 5 June in Berlin and has reiterated them in a variety of high-level formats, including to leaders at the G-8 summit (including to President Bush, but apparently not to Gordon Brown), to the OSCE, to several European leaders bilaterally and to Russian Ambassadors. They are also formally outlined in Russia's new foreign policy concept.

The proposals are to hold a grand pan-European security conference to renew Europe's security agenda and develop a new and legally binding security pact. They come against the background of a series of criticisms of the current situation. These particularly include Russia's vocal opposition to the US missile defence plans, NATO enlargement and Kosovo's independence. More broadly, Moscow posits that the current architecture is a remnant of the Cold War 'bloc ideology', serving to re-divide Europe into exclusive groups and isolated states and thus differentiated levels of security in the region.

The language of the proposals is an apparently attractive one, couched as it is in the language of a common European heritage of law, democracy and human rights, a united Europe and European integration: in sum, the OSCE's language of a Europe "from Vancouver to Vladivostok". The basis of the proposals appears to seek an inclusive approach to security to include issues such as climate change, illegal migration and global poverty – and to increase the role of international law and inclusive organisations in addressing this broader agenda. The proposals seem likely to reflect both Russian desires and the results of Moscow's discussions with a number of European governments about the flaws and limitations of the current architecture and agenda.

As such, the initial proposals are both legitimate and calculated to appeal to a broad range of states in the transatlantic community for diverse reasons, and they have received relatively positive responses from a number of European states, particularly including Italy, but also, to a more guarded extent, Germany. The specific details of Moscow's ambitious proposals remain unclear and are to be rolled out over the summer/autumn in further meetings at bilateral level and in international fora. Nevertheless, a number of points about the Russian position may already be deduced.

Background – continuity and consensus: The criticisms and proposals reflect the main trends of Russian foreign policy over the last 18 months. These have become increasingly obvious since Vladimir Putin's speech in Munich in February 2007, then with public statements made by Medvedev through the Russian presidential election and then into the formalisation of the new foreign policy concept. The key points are

- Russia's status as the largest Eurasian state, one which now has the strength and capacity to adopt a global purview and take up its international responsibilities. This includes protecting and projecting its national interests and actively proposing solutions to international problems.
- International affairs are unstable and at a moment of transition: Moscow considers the unilateral use of force by the West, particularly US-led coalitions to create the conditions for the proliferation of WMD and also to be leading to a decline in the influence of the West on international affairs. Simultaneously, as the West's influence decreases, the influence of other states and organisations is rising. The world is therefore now multi-polar, with the major "poles" competing amongst themselves.
- This multi-polar world should have more diverse geographical and "civilisational" representation, highlighting the roles of the UN and G-8.

- Moscow thus asserts the validity of “different” forms of civilisation and democracy, within which it proposes Russia as a model and valid “value centre” in its own right – particularly as a developmental model for states in the former USSR and Asia.
- Moscow’s model is reflected in the concept of “Sovereign Democracy” which focuses on state sovereignty and the right of each state to choose its own path of democratic development as opposed to western models of “imposed” forms of democracy and external intervention in state domestic affairs. Sovereign Democracy draws on the ideas of Francois Guizot and Carl Schmidt. While Medvedev declares that Russia and Europe share democratic roots, he also asserts that Russia will not be drawn into an embrace purely in line with Western definitions of democracy.

Moscow’s foreign policy, particularly in Europe is guided by opposition to the OSCE and NATO, which, while invited to be part of Medvedev’s proposals to form part of the wider architecture, are clearly and explicitly the target of Moscow’s criticisms.

Many of these views reflect a broad consensus across Moscow’s foreign policy elite. Medvedev subscribes to this consensus; he is also bound by it, and going against it would likely undermine his influence and strength as president.

Timing: While Moscow’s proposals currently remain rather vague, the timing of their announcement appears to reflect four main calculations of international affairs as they are seen in Moscow:

- The transatlantic relationship is failing. Though the US and EU share values, they disagree on how to achieve them; moreover, Moscow may see a split between US and Europe on the roles of force and law in international affairs.
- The EU is distracted by internal crisis, particularly disagreement over the Lisbon Treaty. Moreover, Medvedev has suggested that Kosovo is for the EU what Iraq is for the USA. “Federalised” Europe is seen to be under pressure.
- The USA will be heavily engaged in its own Presidential elections until early 2009.
- Moscow sees a potentially increasingly favourable constellation of European leaders in the near future, including Italian chairmanship of the G-8 in 2009, that may support Moscow’s agenda.

Aims: Specific aims will emerge as Moscow rolls out its proposals for the new European security architecture over the coming months. The over-arching aim, as stated by Medvedev, is the replacement both of “Atlanticism” as the dominant principle in the region and exclusive membership organisations which Russia has little chance (or desire) to join. Thus there is likely to be a spectrum of desired potential outcomes:

- Create a collective security structure in which Moscow is both directly involved and has a veto. The OSCE is effectively to be replaced, NATO superseded.
- Emphasise national interests and bilateral relationships in a greater Europe that is based more on interstate union than supranational structures. Medvedev has also noted that the EU does not provide a sufficient framework for this “common Europe”, so it seems that this organisation is also to be superseded.
- As such, Moscow seems likely to seek a broad canvas of issues to be included in this “greater”/“united” Europe architecture, from a reconsideration of arms control and the CFE Treaty, to energy and economic interpenetration (including upstream/downstream investments) and visa-free travel.
- More specifically, the proposals seem designed as a response to NATO enlargement, particularly to include Georgia and/or Ukraine. One aim may therefore be to secure a lesser agreement with NATO, to alter the nature of NATO-Russia relations, perhaps creating a non-aggression pact or altering the basis of NATO’s Article V commitment *vis-a-vis* Russia. More generally, Moscow’s aim is likely to be to foment, underscore and publicly highlight transatlantic dilemmas and disagreements about NATO’s

transformation and enlargement, thereby hoping to stall further enlargement, or even NATO's transformation more broadly.

In pursuing such a broad agenda across so many issues, Moscow is likely to use all the instruments at its disposal to encourage support for its proposals. It may be, for instance, that energy supply and particularly pricing will be part of a deal. Alexei Miller, CEO of Gazprom, has noted that gas prices to Europe could soon rise to \$500 per thousand cubic metres – current prices may be offered as an incentive to support Moscow's agenda.

Limitations: Foreign policy is not Moscow's top priority. Domestic problems remain the key focus for Medvedev, particularly a range of serious socio-economic problems. These include an economy that is belaboured by high levels of corruption and bureaucracy. It is also beginning to overheat: inflation has risen significantly and is currently some 14-5%, food and energy prices are also appreciably rising. Alongside this, Russia faces energy and labour shortages. The latter is only likely to become more significant since Russia face a demographic problem so serious it is considered to be an issue affecting national security. Moscow cannot afford, and does not seek, major confrontation with the West.

Conceptually, although there is broad consensus that Russia should protect its national interests, practical definitions of what these interests are and how they should be protected are limited. Moreover, the operational capacity of Moscow's elite to formulate and apply the huge range of complex details of such an ambitious proposal as a new European security architecture currently appears to remain too limited.

Conclusions: Medvedev's European security proposals are a significant development which should be taken seriously both in their own right and more broadly as an indication of the outlook for Russian foreign policy. They represent a clear challenge to the current architecture, most obviously to the three main international organisations. Where the transatlantic community sees considerable, if incomplete, transformation in Europe since 1991, Moscow sees inertia and increasing isolation. While seeking to avoid a direct confrontation with the West that it cannot afford, Moscow will therefore increasingly seek to review, and, where possible, revise the results of the end of the Cold War and 1990s.

Thus Moscow's strategy appears to be a combination of appealing rhetoric and practical proposals (such as energy pricing) to create a potential spectrum of results favourable to Moscow. At the most positive end would be the establishment of a re-structured collective European security architecture with Russian interests formalised at its core; at the other is the successful undermining of the current architecture through emphasising its tensions and dilemmas, thereby neutralising it and generating a self-destruct process which Moscow could then accentuate.

The tone and the language of Medvedev's proposals seem designed to draw attention to the "Westernising" Soviet Russia of Mikhail Gorbachov (who also used the language of a Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok) and the Russian Federation of Boris Yeltsin, suggesting that Russia is "like the West" and one with which "business can be done". Yet importantly, these positions and proposals in fact reflect a new outlook from Moscow – indeed a "new Russia" – one that is very different from these predecessors. The Russia of president Medvedev will adopt an increasingly active role in international affairs, pursuing its own interests with – if Medvedev's speech to his Ambassadors on 15 July is an indication – greater vigour and purpose.