



## EUROPE NEEDS A NEW 'RUSSIA POLICY'

### Mixing principles with power

Recently, Europeans have become more and more aware of their biggest eastern neighbour. In London, the murder of Alexander Litvinenko, a former security service officer and a fiercely outspoken critic of the Kremlin, has raised more questions about the nature of Vladimir Putin, while in Warsaw, Brussels and Helsinki, a combination of meat exports, gas security and the European Union-Russia Summit have concentrated Europeans' minds on their relationship with Moscow. Europe's relations with its Russian neighbour are probably worse than any time since the Cold War, and although this is an irritation for Europeans, it should be a more serious concern for Russians, even if they fail to acknowledge the fact. It is time for European capitals to reorder their Russian policy and galvanise their strength and determination.

Bold new thinking is required, and the three main strands of policy existing today must be cast aside. On the one hand, there has often been a lot of wishful thinking and complacency on the part of many Europeans, who have failed to understand the increasingly autocratic and malign nature of Russia's government. On the other hand, in those states once ruled from Moscow, there has been a tendency to favour a policy of isolating Russia, which is in nobody's interest. And even more recently, some have called for a hard-nosed and amoral pragmatism when dealing with Mr. Putin's Russia. All of these approaches will fail; instead, Europeans must adopt a new, confident and integrated 'Russia Policy' for dealing with Moscow.

### Europe and Russia: the geopolitical situation

When looking at the relative position of the European Union and Russia, certain longer-term trends can be identified. First, Russia is declining while Europe is expanding, and in a number of different fields. At this time, Russia is a multi-ethnic federation with a population of approximately 143 million, but poor health, alcoholism and an uneven demographic structure indicate that Russia's population is due to drop by 20%-30% by 2050, meaning that its population will be nearer 100-110 million – approximately one fifth of the European Union's current level. Financially, while in the coming years Russia's economy is due to grow significantly, it will never reach anywhere near the Europeans' output. According to *The Economist*,

while Russia's economy is roughly generating €880 billion (£600 billion; \$1.14 trillion) per year, the European economy produces €12.51 trillion (£8.46 trillion; \$16.2 trillion) per year, which is approximately fifteen times more! With additional European enlargement likely, this economic gulf could widen further in the coming years.

The strategic imbalance is also considerable, and is expected to grow further. Russia may maintain a vast array of nuclear missiles and warheads, but Moscow's armed forces are a poor cousin to those of the Soviet Union during its heyday. European strategic acquisition programmes meanwhile, in 'power projection' equipment like aircraft carriers, high-tech submarines and warships, gather apace. Britain, France, Italy and Spain are all undergoing a process of naval transformation, and European Security and Defence Policy is opening new opportunities for greater efficiency, productivity and capability, which, in turn, can only lead to more integrated European Union armed forces. Finally, and perhaps most decisively, European persuasion and attraction are wooing almost all countries in the great residual space surrounding the European Union, except perhaps Belarus, which remains trapped in a Soviet-era timewarp. So, the conclusion must be that the Europeans hold, and are likely to retain, all the cards.

Well, not quite, for Europeans are somewhat reliant on Russia's vast gas and oil reserves. 25% of the European Union's gas comes from Russia, and some eastern Member States import almost all of their supplies from Russia. Yet this fact should not overwhelm Europeans, for it is also the case that Russia is dependent on Europe to purchase a massive 80% of its energy supplies, and over half of its manufactured goods. And aside Mr. Putin, his advisors, and Russian energy corporations' blustering threats to direct Russia's energy elsewhere, such an outcome is unlikely. The enormous infrastructure built over the last two decades to supply gas to Europe is not cheap, and it cannot be rebuilt overnight. Recreating pipelines

and refinement plants would be an enormous undertaking, should Moscow decide to redirect its gas supply routes to China and East Asia. In the meantime, Europe could, plausibly, cause significant damage to the Russian economy through the enhancement of import tariffs and targeted sanctions. Europeans, therefore, should not be too concerned. The Russian Bear will never again threaten to come lumbering over the Ukrainian *Steppe*. So long as Brussels succeeds with the diversification of European energy supplies, Russia will not be able to threaten or hold to ransom the European Union.

So what is to be done? This clearly falls into a larger setting, including longer-term relations between Brussels and Moscow, which have sizable consequences for the future. In light of these developments, the European Union must adopt a fully integrated and comprehensive approach towards Russia. National policies must be subsumed into Union wide strategy. This should be a strategy whose ultimate objective is to bring Russia into Brussels' politico-diplomatic, economic, industrial, and ideational orbit. Not only is this in Europe's interests, but it is also in Russia's: alignment with the world's largest, and in many cases, most technologically advanced economy, and affiliation with a rising global power, can be no bad thing for a post-Soviet, post-1990s Moscow. Brussels' 'Russia Policy' must include three components: *contain*, *engage*, and *condition*.

## Containing Russia

There is still a lot of wishful thinking going on in some European Member States, especially Finland, Germany and Italy. Britain has also been too complacent. Those with direct experience of Moscow—such as Poles, Czechs and the Baltic Member States—need to be given special prominence and assistance in shaping Brussels' perspective on Russia. It is not so much that 'Russia Policy' should be *given* to certain Member States, but rather, that their historical experience be

acknowledged during the *shaping* of that policy. And here, Poles have tended to argue for a more robust approach to Russia. We need a Europe determined to punch with its full weight, when dealing with Moscow, mixing principles with power. In other words, Europe's 'Russia Policy' needs to be toughened-up. As Winston Churchill said in 1946: 'From what I have seen of our Russian friends and allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than weakness.'

Accordingly, Russia is not a 'strategic partner', which was the language used by the Finnish presidency of the European Union; instead, Moscow is behaving as a strategic *competitor*, for influence in the countries of the wider European Neighbourhood. The Poles have rightfully scuppered Finland's—and Europe's—appeasing of Moscow, citing an elderly Russian embargo on Polish meat products as the reason for why a 'Strategic Partnership' with Russia is inappropriate. Interesting was that France, traditionally quite accommodating to Moscow, threw its full support behind the Poles, something even London was reluctant to do. Poland's claim was a mere pretext though. One of Warsaw's strategic concerns remains an assertive Russia, and the Polish President, Mr. Lech Kaczyński, recently called for the development of integrated European armed forces *for defence*—maybe indicative of Poland's fears over NATO's decline.

This Polish approach of toughness with Russia should be welcomed and comes at a time when the European Union has to increase its leverage beyond its borders. The vestiges of Cold War mentality must be swept aside: the European Union is now *the* continental hegemon, Russia merely another surrounding country. And this must be made crystal clear to the Kremlin. Moscow's meddling in countries of paramount importance to Europe's security is unpalatable. This is for two reasons: firstly, Russian interference often supports repressive movements hostile to European values and

interests; secondly, the Kremlin's expansionism provides an escape valve for Russia's own domestic problems, meaning reform within the country is put on hold. This meddling can only be reversed with an assertive 'forward approach' from Europe, which actively operates to influence surrounding nations. Europeans must strengthen their political reach into the European Neighbourhood, and further into their 'near abroad' just beyond. Here, the reinforcement of the European Neighbourhood Policy is essential. All surrounding countries must be permeated and their political governing systems conditioned and improved through Brussels' 'Action Plans' and other forms of structured conditionality.

Ukraine, Moldova, the Former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus states (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia), Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan must all be brought under the European Union's protective umbrella. A great deal of political reform is needed in almost every one of these countries, including peaceful regime change, especially in Belarus, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. As such, the pro-European reformist governments in Georgia, Ukraine (especially the remaining 'Orange Revolutionaries') and Moldova must be promoted, supported and their ability to govern their territory bolstered. This applies especially to Moldova, which suffers from the quasi-breakaway Transnistria area, and to Georgia, with its South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions, where Russian armed forces must be withdrawn, and replaced, if necessary, by European troops; a permanent governance settlement must also be found.

As was witnessed during previous waves of European enlargement, an endpoint often facilitates more effective and speedy reforms in countries aspiring to become European Union Member States. However, many of the small and poor nations remaining on Europe's fringes will be unable to join the Union for quite some time to come. Something for consideration might include the constitution of a

'European Union Lite', a partially institutionalised grouping of countries that have been accepted as having reached a certain level of maturity, politically and economically, for accession into the European Union at some future, but distant, date. This group would be offered significant packages of aid and investment in return for successful reform and unquestioningly aligning themselves with Brussels on issues of foreign policy. 'European Commonwealth' might be a good name to designate the geopolitical space in which such countries inhabit and they could conceivably be allowed to send representatives to some of Europe's central governing institutions, providing a greater understanding of democracy's operating procedures. But full membership would only come once they had satisfied *all* of the European Union's requirements, and at a time of Brussels' choosing.

### Engaging Russia

Beginning with the murder of Mr. Litvinenko, there must not be any rush to conclusions. It is not yet known if Russia—and more specifically, Mr. Putin—is responsible for Mr. Litvinenko's demise. Given the consequences in damaged reputation during a time of poor relations between Brussels and Moscow, it seems unlikely that Mr. Putin would have sanctioned his murder. The Kremlin knows that British police and security services are highly competent detectives, and it would be a major embarrassment for Mr. Putin's regime should any plot be uncovered, especially one as bungled as this was.

Yet important questions remain. In an increasingly autocratic Russia, it is uncertain whether the Kremlin's security service is under the full command of the central government in Moscow. This could be a plot undertaken within the security service without Mr. Putin's consent. It certainly appears that someone was trying to silence Mr. Litvinenko, especially given his considerable hostility and criticism of the Kremlin, Mr. Putin and the Russian security service in particular. Finally, another potential perpetrator

could include elements from the Russian mafia or business elite, and their shadowy networks could make bringing to justice those responsible for the killing very much more difficult.

In any case, it is crucial for a full police inquiry to be carried out, in order to ascertain the facts surrounding Mr. Litvinenko's murder. In the meantime, it is necessary to work with Moscow, so that we can find who might, and who might not, be responsible for Mr. Litvinenko's murder. Should the Kremlin not be willing to play ball, then its guilt will be obvious for the whole world to see. If there is any implication, no matter how limited, the European response must be to penalise the regime of Vladimir Putin, for Russia would be guilty of an act of state terrorism on European soil.

Europe will have to engage Russia in other areas though: these include co-operation in bringing to justice other criminals involved in illicit activities, issues pertaining to environmental protection, and Islamist terrorism. Yet regarding the latter, Moscow must not be given *carte blanche* to maltreat anyone or anywhere it deems a 'terrorist threat'. The Kremlin has frequently described Chechnya as another front in the 'war on terror', but its conduct there has repeatedly been brutal and counterproductive. Europe must not hesitate in amplifying its condemnation. The rise of China, however, could have positive results for Euro-Russian relations. It is a concern to both Brussels and Moscow; indeed, the Bear's fear of the Dragon's growing claws in the coming years might even push it into a strong Europe's arms, providing Europeans with yet more leverage over the Kremlin.

### Conditioning Russia

The European Union must continue to speak out and condemn with greater resolution further accumulations of power by Mr. Putin or his successors—Russia's remaining constitutional and democratic structures must be strengthened, not reduced. Human rights abuses in Chechnya must also

be monitored and condemned and Moscow's frequent blind-eye turned towards domestic racism and the rise of extreme right-wing skinhead groups should also be challenged and damned.

Presently, however, Russia's political system remains open enough for European projects to promote civil society within the country, which is a cornerstone of successful constitutional democracy. While Mr. Putin has cracked down on organisations with foreign support, registered groups can still operate within the country. Younger Russians are particularly susceptible to the influences of the universal values and cultural practices and pursuits shared by their European brethren. Brussels must consider greater operations within Russia to reduce anti-European feeling, and to strengthen those younger generations who might one day form Russia's political leadership and guide its civil society. Not only can funding be increased to enable more Russian university students to study in European universities, but the time has also come to constitute a European version of the British Council—a *European Council for Civil Society*—a group to be funded by the European Commission and working for cultural exchange, to influence the young in Russia and, indeed, elsewhere, especially in the wider European Neighbourhood.

### **Towards a Russia transformed**

Russia offers many opportunities and many challenges to the European Union in the early years of the twenty-first century. Europeans

should recognise their position of power, and act accordingly. European Union Member States must also understand that acting together through the European Union, instead of independently as one of twenty-five, amplifies their leverage with foreign countries dramatically—so long as they have the right policy to start with. In comparison to the combined might of a united Europe, Russia is not a big wild bear but a teddy bear.

Equally, the United States has often been willing to overlook Moscow's advances, favouring instead Russian co-operation in the 'war on terror': If Europeans need to remind their American friends that Russia is not an acceptable partner, then they should not hesitate to do so. Russia must now be Europe's responsibility.

Thus, containing the Kremlin's insidious political influences, engaging Moscow in areas of shared interest and mutual concern, and conditioning Russian society with the universal values held by Europeans—and shared by many Russians, especially the younger generations—are the components that must form the essence of a successful new 'Russia Policy' for the European Union. A practical combination of contain, engage and condition must be put into operation at the earliest possible moment. Such a policy might help furnace the



**Europe must search for a new strategy**

constitutional, democratic, and wealthy Russia the world hoped might emerge after the fall of the Berlin Wall, ending any possibility of the emergence of an unstable and autocratic country, threatening its neighbours, annoying Europe, and worrying the wider world.

— James Rogers  
Cambridge, 28th November 2006

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**'In matters of national security, the best politics is no politics.'**

— Henry M. Jackson

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