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## Russia, NATO and the EU: A European Security Triangle or Shades of a New Entente?

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Andrew Monaghan

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Research Programme Russia/NIS  
©Ifri, 2006 – [www.ifri.org](http://www.ifri.org)  
Institut Français des Relations Internationales  
27 rue de la Procession – 75740 Paris cedex 15 – France  
tél. : 33 (0)1 40 61 60 00 – Fax : 33 (0)1 40 61 60 60

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## ***Russie.Nei.Visions***

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*Russie.Nei.Visions* is an electronic collection dedicated to Russia and new independent states (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan). Written up in a brief format by key experts, these policy-oriented papers deal with strategic and political issues as well as economic issues.

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**Andrew Monaghan** is the Founder and Director of the Russia Research Network, an independent research organization based in London. He is also a Research Associate at the Conflict Studies Research Centre and a Visiting Lecturer in the Defence Studies Department, based at the Defence Academy of the UK. He recently completed his PhD on Russian perspectives of the security dimensions of the Russia-EU relationship in the Department of War Studies, King's College. He can be contacted at [andrewcm@hotmail.com](mailto:andrewcm@hotmail.com)

In collaboration with its partners, Ifri is currently supporting a task force on the future of EU-Russia relations. The first workshop was held on 2 December 2005 in Paris. Four original contributions were then presented: by Andrew Monaghan (security), Thomas Gomart (neighborhood policy), Timofei Bordachev (lobbying), and Michael Thumann (energy). They were debated by Xavier de Villepin, Louis Gautier, Dov Lynch, and Dominique David. The workshop was chaired by Thierry de Montbrial.

This special issue of *Russie.Nei.Visions* gathers all these contributions in one place. At this stage, they must be read as works in progress, intended for critique and thus as fuel for the EU-Russia debate. They will be further enriched through the work of the second workshop, in 2006, and will end by issuing precise recommendations.

The four contributors would like to thank and acknowledge all the participants for their active contribution to this project.

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## Abstract

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The relationships between the EU, NATO and Russia are of great significance for all their actors and for regional security more broadly. The overlapping remit of each is complementary, and provides a potentially beneficial way to address current military and soft security concerns. And indeed good progress has been made—formal relationships have been established and there has been some practical cooperation in a number of areas. This progress is particularly impressive when considered in appropriate historical context—i.e. against the backdrop of East-West confrontation. Few would have foreseen such progress fifteen or even ten years ago. However, there is no “triangle”—ambiguity and contradiction mar all the relationships, which are dogged by a number of conflicting interests. Moreover, although the top leadership of all three entities profess the desire to enhance the relationships, it is clear that a number of constituencies on all sides do not seek similar developments, for a number of reasons. This has slowed cooperation significantly. EU-NATO cooperation therefore remains problematic, and the West’s relations with Russia are by no means past some “point of no return”, to the confrontation of the past half century.

# Introduction

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The relationships between NATO, the EU and Russia are of key importance for European security, the adjacent regions and beyond. Indeed these relationships should now be seen in an inter-regional and global context—the focus is no longer simply northern and central Europe, but also south eastern Europe, Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

Their inter-relationship provides a forum to address effectively the broad spectrum that is today's security agenda, encompassing military and soft security issues at all levels of vital, essential and general security. In fact, a Russia-NATO-EU "triangle" would in many ways represent an ideal security solution—inclusion and transparency to overcome the confrontation of the Cold War and partnership to solve mutual problems; and also the division of expertise and labor between the competencies of NATO and the EU, the representatives of military capability and civilian power respectively.

Despite the clear importance of these relationships, there is remarkably little thought given to them. The relationships are rarely placed in historical or strategic context on the one hand; on the other, there is little developed examination of the complex dynamics and details of the relationships. There is much progress in overcoming the confrontation of the Cold War. Nevertheless, continuing deep ambiguities exist in the security concepts of each towards the other, causing there to be both cooperation and confrontation between all part of the "triangle" at several levels. Indeed, there is considerable practical progress in developing these relationships—progress which deserves much more attention. Yet this progress comes against a backdrop of ongoing hostility: Russia is viewed with great suspicion, bordering on hostility, in many quarters in the West, and there are many important constituencies in Russia who view both NATO and the EU in a similar fashion. This theme of ambiguity and fluctuating support among different constituencies is key to understanding the relationships and runs throughout the paper. It is the fundamental reason why the Russia-Western relationship is making good progress in some areas but is in many ways fragile and not past some "point of no return".

This paper first looks at the progress made in the relationships and the range of cooperation between the parties, assessing the notion of a conceptual "triangle". It then considers these questions more critically, examining the flawed nature of the "triangle". The paper then changes focus to look more at the Russia-Western relationship, and suggests some historical comparisons that can be drawn to provide a contextual background and thus facilitate

understanding of the extent of progress. Finally, the paper makes some suggestions for the enhancement of the relationships.



## A European Security “Triangle”?

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The recognition of common agenda has led to the establishment of “strategic partnerships” between Russia and the EU, the EU and NATO, and Russia and NATO. The partnerships are based on the “realization that they share strategic priorities and face common challenges”.<sup>1</sup> These include terrorism, peacekeeping, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, theatre missile defense, maritime rescue, defense reform, civil defense and emergencies, and a wide range of soft security issues. And the relationships offer a potentially ideal format for European security—NATO’s military capability would complement the EU, while the EU’s civilian policing and judicial competencies would complement NATO, and a stronger relationship with Russia would broaden both the range of competencies and experience, as well as provide the best means to continue the process of overcoming the confrontation of the Cold War. Developed relationships with the EU and NATO would also create a stable western border for Russia.

Indeed, dialogue has been underway for a long time now,<sup>2</sup> and institutionalized frameworks have been established. The NATO-Russia Council (NRC), established by the 2002 Rome Declaration, built on the Russia-NATO Founding Act of 1997, and provides a forum in which Russia and NATO meet as equals at 27, rather than in the NATO+1 format. Meetings are held at least monthly at the level of ambassadors and military representatives, twice yearly at foreign and defense minister and Chief of Staff level, and occasionally at summit level.<sup>3</sup>

The Russia-EU dialogue is conducted through twice yearly summits and Permanent Partnership Council (PPC) meetings, as well as meetings at expert and working group level. Dialogue on military security issues is conducted at meetings between Russia and the EU’s Political and Security Committee.

The NATO-EU relationship is founded on the landmark document NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy), December 2002) which facilitated the Berlin Plus arrangements which form the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, *NATO-Russia: Forging Deeper Relations*, <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

<sup>2</sup> Russia and NATO dialogue was launched by the London Declaration of July 1990; Russia-EU dialogue on security issues began in the early 1990s as part of the negotiations in the preparation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1994. EU-NATO cooperation on security issues is more recent, officially beginning in January 2001.

<sup>3</sup> <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

framework for discussion and the basis for practical cooperation in crisis management.

Practical cooperation has also evolved, and more security issues are being addressed more effectively. In soft security, there is a developing relationship between Russia and the EU in a number of areas. The EU is contributing financially to environmental protection projects in north-western areas in Russia and also to health centers to tackle problems of communicable diseases such as TB and HIV/AIDS. Cooperation in border control has also improved, and posts have been established on the Russo-Finnish border and the borders of Kaliningrad. Nikolai Kuznetsov, deputy commander of Border Guard Troops in Kaliningrad, considered cooperation to have been well-organized and successful, counting the detention of 2,014 illegal migrants attempting to cross into Western Europe in 2002. He also noted success in uncovering channels for illegal migration from third countries.<sup>4</sup>

A relationship has also been established to tackle organized crime. The Action Plan to Combat Organized Crime (APCOC) focused on a number of clearly defined criminal activities, including the trafficking of drugs, human beings and stolen cars.<sup>5</sup> Signed in April 2000, the plan aimed to consolidate and reinforce public institutions and the rule of law. APCOC incorporated two important initiatives for cooperation: the EU's Drug Strategy (2000-2004) (EUDS) and Russia's Special Federal Program (1999-2000) to step up the fight against organized crime.<sup>6</sup> There is also to be an exchange of technical, operational, and strategic information between the appropriate law enforcement agencies as well as meetings of experts and training courses. Russia also changed legislation in the area of money laundering to facilitate cooperation with the EU, and in January 2004 President Putin underscored alterations to Russia's Criminal Code which established liability for trafficking in human beings in principle criminalizing such activities.<sup>7</sup> The recent signing of the Road Maps has further elaborated plans for cooperation both in Justice and Home Affairs and external security.

The NATO-Russia relationship has also produced a number of examples of practical cooperation. Indeed, Peter Williams, the first Head of the NATO Military Liaison Mission in Moscow, from 2002-2005, considers that "all

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<sup>4</sup> N. Kuznetsov, "Russian-International Collaboration on Kaliningrad's Borders", *Russian Regional Perspectives, IISS Journal*, Vol. 1, No 3, <[www.iiss.org](http://www.iiss.org)>.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see <[www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)>.

<sup>6</sup> EUDS sought to reduce over five years the prevalence of drug use, particularly among those under the age of 18 years, the availability of drugs, and the amount of drug-related crime. It also focused on the reduction of the incidence of drug related health damage, such as HIV, Hepatitis B & C. The Russian Special Federal Program was approved by the Russian Federal Assembly on 10 March 1999. It sought to intensify the fight against organized crime by reforming the criminal justice and law enforcement system, increasing financial controls, suppressing corruption, and developing international cooperation.

<sup>7</sup> For a more in-depth examination of Russia-EU security relations, see this author's *Russian Perspectives of the Russia-EU Security Relationship*, CSRC Paper, 05/38, August 2005.

the areas of cooperation agreed in Rome are now showing signs of real progress". He noted developing naval cooperation, such as Russian participation in the NATO-led Submarine Escape and Rescue Working Group<sup>8</sup> and NATO's exercise Sorbet Royal, which featured submarine rescue manoeuvres.<sup>9</sup> This cooperation demonstrated its value in Kamchatka in August 2005, when a Royal Navy unit assisted in the rescue of a stricken Russian submarine. Russian membership of the Submarine Escape and Rescue Working Group facilitated the exchange of information, and as a result, the UK team had full access to the specifications of the Russian submarine and therefore knew what equipment would be needed to conduct the operation successfully. On Russian initiative, Black Sea Fleet units will also participate in NATO's Operation Active Endeavour, a NATO maritime surveillance and monitoring operation in the Mediterranean, in early 2006.<sup>10</sup>

There has also been cooperation in confidence-building concerning safe storage and transport of nuclear warheads and material. In August 2004, again at Russian initiative, NATO experts were invited to attend the Russian military exercise AVARIYA near Murmansk. Responding to this, the United Kingdom held a NATO-Russia Council warhead safety exercise, Exercise SENATOR 2005, in Scotland, and some 50 Russian experts attended.<sup>11</sup> There has also been NATO-Russia cooperation in theatre missile defense (two command post exercises have been held and a joint operational concept is being developed), and civil defense and emergencies (an exercise was held in Kaliningrad in 2004).<sup>12</sup> In this light, NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer considered these accomplishments to provide a "solid record of achievements" on which to build.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there has of course been some cooperation in peacekeeping and crisis management. Russia and NATO worked side-by-side in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in the Balkans from 1996 to 2003 (Russia contributed the largest non-NATO contingent), and Russia has offered support to NATO's mission in Afghanistan. Russia has also established a peacekeeping brigade, launched in February 2005, with lightly-equipped and

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<sup>8</sup> A Framework Agreement on submarine crew escape and rescue between Russia and NATO was signed in February 2003. *NATO-Russia Council: Key Areas of NRC Cooperation*, <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

<sup>9</sup> <[www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/08-august/e0810a.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/08-august/e0810a.htm)>.

<sup>10</sup> Political agreement to contribute was reached in December 2004, and since then Russian military authorities have been working to meet the pre-deployment inter-operability standards applied to all participating elements. P. Williams, "NATO-Russia Military Cooperation: From Dialogue to Interoperability", *RUSI Journal*, October 2005, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> <[www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk)>.

<sup>12</sup> NATO and Russia have been developing their capacity for joint action in civil defense since 1996. A Russian proposal led to the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center in 1998, and under the NRC, the focus has been on improving inter-operability, procedures and the exchange of information and experience. *NATO-Russia: Forging Deeper Relations*, <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

<sup>13</sup> Opening Remarks by NATO Secretary General. NATO Speech: NATO-Russia Council, <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

easily deployable battalion groups to be inter-operable with NATO forces and command structures, and available to participate in Anglophone operations.<sup>14</sup> NATO and the EU have also conducted joint crisis management exercises, and NATO has begun handing over operations to the EU. Russia, too, has contributed to the EU's mission in Macedonia.

Considerable progress has therefore been made. The political frameworks exist—and have withstood political problems. Early steps in practical cooperation have also been made, and the potential for building on this progress clearly exists.

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<sup>14</sup> P. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

# Flawed Strategic Partnerships

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Despite this progress, a number of serious flaws exist in all of these relationships, undermining and limiting cooperation. As noted above, many constituencies on both sides are suspicious of the other partners' intentions, and oppose cooperation. Indeed, in some respects, the relationships are inefficient, competitive and mutually exclusive: some critics argue that the political mechanisms amount to little more than fora for discussion, and that cooperation is too limited and little more than military tourism.

Problems lie at conceptual and practical levels. Conceptually, there is an asymmetry to the triangle. One of the poles is clear—Russia. Yet the other two poles and what they seek from the relationships are less clear—not only are they not unified political actors themselves, but are often themselves riven with internal contradictions. Such internal confusion in both NATO and the EU is clearly visible in their relations with Russia, and it is highly questionable whether there is a coherent EU or NATO policy towards Russia. The EU is often considered to have two main camps regarding relations with Russia—“Russia realists”, who seek to pursue more critical approach to Russia, and “friends of Russia”, who seek better relations with it.<sup>15</sup> The coherence of the agenda is further fragmented by differing task priorities. NATO's relations with Russia are also beset by a lack of coordination and collation of programs and priorities. One expert noted that the only people who can see the whole picture of Russia-NATO relations are based in the Russian Ministry of Defense, who can then cherry-pick from all the uncoordinated proposals.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the future development of these three entities themselves as security actors is uncertain—which also means that the strategic vision for the development of their relationships remains unclear. NATO's role and identity as a security institution is uncertain. Although it is Europe's only true military alliance, its role has been changing. NATO has become more political by including more members, and more of a community than an alliance. The impact of the varying influences and needs of the new members on NATO plans and thinking is yet to be fully understood. Moreover, NATO's exact function is unclear: attempts to change its geographical perspective and become a vehicle for projecting Trans-Atlantic power on a worldwide stage

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<sup>15</sup> For further discussion of the EU-Russia relationship, see this author's “From Plans to Substance: EU-Russia Relations During the British Presidency”, *Russie.Nei.Visions*, No 5, August 2005, <[www.ifri.org/files/Russie/monaghan\\_english.pdf](http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/monaghan_english.pdf)>.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006.

have caused serious disagreement among member states over the possibility and even desirability of such a role.

This uncertainty also impacts on the EU. If the EU is clearly a civilian power with socio-economic and soft security capabilities, its military capabilities (in the shape of ESDP) and how they will evolve are less clear. EU members seem to be unsure of how much investment needs to be made in a common foreign and security policy and how much sovereignty they want to give up. Differences in security perception and the validity of the use of force undermine the ability to develop a coherent approach. The European Security Strategy of 2003 was a good instance of the problem faced—beautifully drafted, it outlines a range of security threats that the entire EU can agree upon. What should be done about these threat and exactly how it should be done (and by whom), however, remains a great deal less clear.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, there seems to be a deeper problem in EU-NATO relations—as is often pointed out, they are two organizations based in the same city but living on different planets. Competition, anxiety and inefficiency seem to dominate the relationship, and there is a need to inject real life “and perhaps even some passion” into it. There is nervousness in NATO circles about a more assertive EU establishing itself as an alternative to NATO. But there is also nervousness in the EU about being overshadowed by NATO—to the extent that some analysts have concluded that the two organizations must “ultimately go their separate ways”.<sup>18</sup> Officials have therefore recently argued that the relationship between the EU and NATO is in flux because both are jockeying for influence on the international stage. Indeed this has meant that the two organizations are “barely on speaking terms”, and there is “paralysis in the relationship”. No serious security questions are discussed because of the overlapping membership of the two (some EU members are not security-cleared).<sup>19</sup>

Russia’s future political evolution and its military potential is also unclear, especially after its presidency of the G8 in 2006 and the parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for 2007 and 2008. Its strategic concepts and defense papers are riddled with ambiguity about its relations with the West—on the one hand partnership is sought, and yet on the other the West is considered to pose a significant threat to Russian interests and perhaps to Russia itself. Clear examples of this can be found in the Foreign Policy and National Security concepts of 2000, but also in the Defense Paper of 2003.

In fact, despite the progress made, NATO and the EU are by no means past some “point of no return” in relations with Russia. If the new agenda between Russia and NATO and Russia and the EU is less problematic, then

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<sup>17</sup> *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Paris: ISS, December 2003, <[www.iss-eu.org](http://www.iss-eu.org)>.

<sup>18</sup> Speech by Lord Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> European Parliament Meeting on Defense, Brussels, November 2003; J. Lindley-French, “The Ties That Bind”, *NATO Review*, Autumn 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in J. Dempsey, “For EU and NATO, a Race for Influence”, *International Herald & Tribune*, 18 February 2005.

old problems such as Russian opposition to enlargement remain and there are clear differences of view on a number of international issues. As Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has noted in 2005, although there has been important progress in bridging analytical divides over the past three years, “we have too often found ourselves drawing distinct conclusions from the same set of objective facts, whether in Yugoslavia in 1999, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine last year or Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan this year”.<sup>20</sup> Much the same applies to the Russia-EU relationship, which is also riven with difficulties and distrust, particularly over values.

This is exacerbated by feelings of inequality in the relationship. Russian security specialists have often argued that there is a conceptual inequality in relations, particularly with the EU, and that as a result there is no partnership. Russia is viewed as a source of security threats to be dealt with, they argue, particularly by the EU. Russia, on the other hand sees itself as a victim of a variety of security threats emanating particularly from the south and east, and the EU as a potential security partner in addressing these challenges. Cooperation is therefore considered to be one sided—to the benefit of the EU, but not Russia. Sergey Kortunov summed up the views of many Russian experts when he noted that Europe “should decide ... whether Russia is a partner or a source of potential threat”. “Why does Europe detect only bad things in Russia and describe them in the media with barely concealed superiority bordering on racism?”, he asked.<sup>21</sup>

Practically, there is a certain fragility in Russia-NATO and Russia-EU relations—if there are cooperative projects and a series of success stories in the relationship, there is also a lack of diversified information and joined-up government. This means that although progress is being made, it is not as efficient as it could be. It also means that, in the words of one Russian expert, it is “vulnerable to a bad day in the Duma”, whereby the lack of knowledge of positive progress means that there is no counter to negative view points.<sup>22</sup> This is particularly so given the likelihood of new problems emerging on the international stage that may be divisive—the Iraq and Ukraine crises are just two examples of this ongoing tendency.

A series of other practical flaws further undermine the prospects for cooperation. The resources for these relationships, particularly those between Russia and the EU and Russia and NATO are comparatively meager. Funding of NRC activities is limited and unclear—one authority has noted that it remains unclear whether the Russian Ministry of Defense has a dedicated budget line for NRC expenses and NATO’s arrangements are not much clearer. Yet as cooperation begins to move ahead to joint exercises and operations, costs will soar, demanding clearer and more generous budget arrangements.<sup>23</sup> Funding arrangements in the EU-Russia relationship are also

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<sup>20</sup> Speech by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 24 June 2005, Moscow, <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

<sup>21</sup> S. Kortunov, “Kaliningrad and the Russia-Europe Partnership”, *International Affairs* (Moscow), No 2, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with the author, autumn 2005.

<sup>23</sup> P. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

very limited. Moreover, those on either side who are qualified to deal with the other partner, linguistically and professionally, are few in number.

There are also problems with each partner individually. There is much valid criticism about Russia's capability to deal with the new security agenda. This is not just due to resource constraints—although the resources dedicated to both the Russian military and soft security issues have indeed been comparatively meager. Several leading Russian analysts have been remarkably skeptical about the capability of the Russian military to cooperate with the west. As one succinctly declared, “if no-one is afraid of the Russian army as an opponent, then everyone is afraid of it as an ally because of the way that the Russian army fights, as shown in Chechnya”.<sup>24</sup> Russia needs to conduct a radical reform of the structure of its armed forces before worthwhile cooperation can take place. This was particularly the case in terms of military preparation and technological equipment.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, there needs to be a doctrinal change in the Russian armed forces, to heighten transparency and civilian control.<sup>26</sup>

In soft security, too, there are problems on the Russian side. Reform and reorganization of the Federal structure has generated confusion over authority and responsibility, and undermined the capability of the Federal authorities to gather information about the issues and then deal effectively with soft security problems. Also, the legal bases for dealing with some of these problems have proved inadequate: Russia did not have appropriate basic laws and norms for dealing with illegal migration, relying instead on a modified but inappropriate version of a Soviet law passed in 1981.

There are practical flaws on the Western side also, and a number of experts argue that Europe does not have a military security system that is appropriate for the threats it faces. General Rupert Smith, formerly Deputy SACEUR, argues that NATO is configured to fight an industrial war—but that this is inappropriate for an era of conflict “among the people”. Forces, he argues, are incorrectly configured and incorrectly used. NATO land forces were originally configured to fight a defensive battle for Western Europe, while the sea and air forces established superiority in the Atlantic and over Europe. Although the confrontation is now over, the legacy remains—the institutions and forces that the West possesses today are a product of the need to prepare for total war and to deter successfully. “The forces equipped and organized for that purpose are in the main what we currently have to work with”, and although “these were never intended for use in non-industrial conflicts, this is how they have been deployed”, Rupert Smith argued.<sup>27</sup> Other leading experts

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<sup>24</sup> A. Arbatov in N. Arbatova (ed), *Evrobezopasnost: est li v nei mesto dlya Rossii?* [European Security: is there a place for Russia?], Moscow, RUE, 2002, p. 16, <[www.rue.ru](http://www.rue.ru)>.

<sup>25</sup> V. Dvorkin in N. Arbatova (ed), *Rossia i ES: bratya po oruzhiu* [Russia and the EU: brothers in arms], Moscow, RUE, 2003, p. 8-12, 17.

<sup>26</sup> V. Baranovsky in *ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> R. Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, London, Allen Lane, 2005, p. 197.



in the UK also consider that structural reform in NATO has amounted to little more than a “re-arranging of the chairs”.

Therefore, although the triangle appears to be an ideal format for European security, capable as it is of addressing hard and soft security and involving as it does both the USA and Russia, confusion between conflicting and even competitive aims seriously undermines the potential for cooperation. In reality, the profusion and confusion of strategic concepts between institutions, the differences in approach to security (and the use of force) by individual states, and a lack of appropriate means and clear division of labor to address the common security agenda poses problems for both the Transatlantic relationship and the Russia-Western one.<sup>28</sup> There are collective security concepts, balance of power concepts and different types of “poles” in Europe. Member states have different perspectives on the use of these institutions either as central to their security or as vague formats for coalitions of the willing. The differences in approach between the USA and Europe are well known. But enlargement is adding another dimension to these problems, with the differing perspectives of the Russia-West relationship. The very reason for joining NATO and the EU for a number of the Eastern and Central European states was to escape security threats posed by Russia.

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<sup>28</sup> For a more detailed examination of the confusion of strategic concepts, see, C. Masala, “Comparing the Incomparable”, in *Security Strategies: NATO, the US and the EU*, NDC Occasional Paper, Rome, NDC, March 2005.

## Shades of Entente

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So how should we seek to understand the Russia-EU/NATO security relationship? Clearly, the ambiguities on both sides militate against the establishment of an alliance; even partnership is dubious. Nonetheless, the relationships are of strategic importance, dialogue has been institutionalized and there has been some practical cooperation. One way of understanding these relations is in historical context and by drawing some comparisons with historical precedents, in this case the ententes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly, simplistic parallels asserting exact similarity with past events should not be drawn. History does not repeat itself. And indeed the ententes themselves are often simplified to suggest a direct transition to alliance (historians note on the contrary that the ententes were fraught with difficulties, and were close to falling apart in 1914). Yet such comparisons are useful because they highlight the need for contextual perspective when analyzing these relationships and their complexity at many levels: there is both cooperation *and* confrontation in an entente relationship, yet these contradictions masked by ambiguity.

Two quotes illustrate the meaning of entente:

“The phrase *entente cordiale* proved a public relations masters-stroke. The words were vague, with none of the precision of “alliance”, and they exuded goodwill. Who could possibly be against “cordial understanding”? That the phrase concealed ambiguities was in some ways dangerous for Anglo-French relations, but that it *could* conceal them was an immense advantage”.<sup>30</sup>

“The fundamental fact of course is that an *Entente* is not an alliance. For purposes of ultimate emergencies, it *may* be found to have no substance at all. For an *Entente* is nothing more than a frame of mind, a view of general policy

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<sup>29</sup> For good examinations of these Ententes, see Neilson, K. *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; J. Siegel *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle For Central Asia*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002; T. Otte, “The Elusive Balance: British Foreign Policy and the French Entente Before the First World War”; G. Stone. “From Entente to Alliance: Anglo-French Relations, 1935-1939”, both in A. Sharp, & G. Stone, (Eds.), *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and Cooperation*. London: Routledge, 2000; J. A. White *Transition to Global Rivalry: Alliance Diplomacy and the Quadruple Entente, 1895-1907*. Cambridge: CUP, 1995

<sup>30</sup> P.M.H. Bell *France and Britain, 1900-1940: Entente and Estrangement*. London: Longman, 1996.p.40.

which is shared by the government's of the two countries, which may be or become so vague as to lose all content".<sup>31</sup>

Much the same can be said of the NATO, EU and Russia relationships. The partners seek a non-committal relationship whereby the parties are included in discussions and avoid isolation. In fact, in many ways the ententes were little more than well developed truces between hostile parties.

However, the key point to be made here is that, although there are many flaws in the Russia-EU and Russia-NATO relationships, and the relationships can be criticized, a longer-term historical perspective throws a different light on the critique. The conversion of a relationship steeped in decades of confrontation to one more akin to a cooperative relationship is difficult and takes a long time, and if there are steps forward, there are also frequent steps back. The security structures and systems on both sides were, it should be remembered, designed in opposition to the other.

Progress should not be exaggerated, but neither should the negative side. Quicker progress would certainly be welcome, but it would be historically very unusual. The conversion of a hostile confrontation into a cooperative relationship takes time and involves lengthy (usually many years), complex, and frequently difficult negotiations. Even when the agreements have been signed, negotiations on particular points within the framework of the new relationship often take many more months or years to resolve—if indeed they ever are fully resolved.

Many analysts write off the agreements and mutual strategies of the mid-to-late 1990s for being too little, conflicting or out-dated even by the time they came into force. At the time, however, the most important point was they had been signed at all.<sup>32</sup> These are foundations which can be built upon. Practical progress—or the lack of it—is also criticized. But such criticism should be in the light of the fact that very few would have predicted such progress 12 years ago.

Another reason why it is useful to draw comparisons with the historical ententes is that they highlight the complexity and problems within decision-making strata in such relationships whereby the parties are seeking to turn hostility to cooperation. The NATO, EU and Russia security relationships are driven by only a few at the summit of the executive. The positive drive behind the NATO-Russia relationship is considerably aided by a well-established personal relationship between SACEUR and General Baluyevsky, the Russian Chief of General Staff.<sup>33</sup> Another illustration of this is that the Russian side of the Russia-EU relationship has largely been driven by President Putin and his Presidential Administration. This poses two problems. First, there is no guarantee that subsequent leaders—and their personal relations—will prioritize

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<sup>31</sup> Eyre Crowe, Senior British Foreign Office Official, 2/02/1911. Cited in *Ibid.* p. 53. Emphasis in original.

<sup>32</sup> V. Shemyatenkov "Ten Years of Formal Relations between the EU and the Former Soviet Union: What is Next?" in I. Leshoukov (ed), *Desyatiletije sotrudnichestva (1988-1998): Evropeiskiy soyuz i Rossia*, St. Petersburg: 1999, p. 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> P. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

these relations. Without the drive of the leadership, the relationships may wither as other aims are prioritized. Second, it means that there is no wide basis of support in either formulation or implementation of policy decisions. In fact, the evolutions of the relationships are undermined by this in two ways, passive and active. Decades of confrontation have conditioned attitudes, and although times of confrontation have gone, the image of the other is still associated with the enemy.

In fact, there is opposition to the further evolution of the relationships and practical cooperation. This is caused by a number of reasons, not the least of which is habit—it is difficult to simply change after a long career of planning against the other to begin to work actively with it. Another reason is perceived career necessity, particularly in the Russian military industrial sector—they want to secure big deals and big funding, which can only come through positing a US-led NATO as the main opponent. Mistrust and hostility also hang over from preceding times of confrontation.

There seem to be divisions within Russia about how to perceive NATO as an organization, but few seem actively positive about it. If the President drives the Russian side of the relationship, there seems to be little support for this among three key constituencies—public opinion, the parliament and the military. Large sections of public opinion remain skeptical about NATO in diverse ways. Some are concerned about NATO's intentions both as a threat to Russia and consider it an aggressive military bloc. Others, paradoxically, seem skeptical about NATO since it is clumsy in meeting current challenges, is without a clear mission, and is hesitant about working with Russia. With the public persisting in a mostly negative—or indifferent—view of NATO, substantive interaction becomes more difficult, and even the president's field of maneuver is narrowed. Perhaps more significantly, there is serious opposition to NATO in formal political circles.<sup>34</sup> Duma resolutions suggest that NATO's doctrine is considered offensive in character and pressing towards exercising influence by forceful means without the consent of the UN.

The Russian military seems to be undecided. If the brains of the army are in favor of voting for cooperation with NATO, according to General Baluyevsky, it seems that others are not so sure. This can be illustrated by the Priorities of the Russian Military document on 2003, in which partnership with NATO is emphasized and the NRC is a priority project which has allowed a more comprehensive development of the system of NATO-Russia contacts and consultations. However, major differences are also noted, particularly with regard to enlargement and also its military operations in zones of conflict.

Moreover, if large-scale war with NATO is excluded from the list of likely conflicts, it is also clear that many consider NATO to pose a threat to Russian interests. Leading Russian analysts have pointed out that the Russian military does not seek real cooperation with the West, since this would expose their failings. Indeed, in order to protect their positions and defend their departmental interests, NATO is presented as the main threat to Russia. Moreover, the CIS (Community of Independent States) has been ruled as an

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<sup>34</sup> Speech by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Moscow, 24 June 2005, <[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)>.

area of Russian vital interest—foreign intervention in these areas is viewed with grave misgivings, and ruled out by many.

Care should be taken to not simply dismiss the Russian military and security establishment as being anti-West: the situation is more complex. Some oppose relations with NATO by choice, some are by apparent career necessity. It should also be remembered that some actively seek cooperation with the West. Many of these same elements are to be found in western military establishments, although it is worth noting that the scenario is to a certain extent asymmetric: in Russian thinking, NATO occupies an important place, either as a partner or as a potential threat. In the West, Russia seems to have dropped off the radar and become less relevant.

## Conclusions and Proposals

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The security relationships between Russia, NATO and the EU have made good progress in many fields. Viewed in the appropriate historical context, the progress that has been made in just a few years is all the more impressive. In many ways, therefore, the relationships are heading in the right direction. However, there are many asymmetries, ambiguities and flaws in the relationships. Although it seems an apparently ideal format for addressing the European security agenda, there is no real “triangular” relationship in operation: there are many continuing ambiguities over priorities and objectives in all the relationships, which undermine both the ability of NATO and the EU to develop coherent plans internally and in consequence undermine the progress of the external relationships.

Much more work is necessary both to coordinate policies and to develop practical progress at tactical and strategic levels. More resources are needed, both in terms of personnel and material: simply, more people with vested interests should be involved more effectively.

The context of the relationship also needs to be changed:

1. There should be a clearer delineation of task-responsibility and labor. An example of this might be the prioritization of EU alternatives in socio-economic security in the de facto states and Transcaucasia.
2. The partners should begin to renew their security and doctrinal thinking and act on the need to change security capabilities.
3. Work in the relationships should concentrate on developing a bank of successful projects at the grass-roots level and advertising it widely. Here, the context needs to be one of “Together, inside, looking out”, and common interests in the wider arena should be prioritized. Examples might be Moldova and the Middle East.
4. Begin to work on a redefinition of “us”—if it is no longer East vs. West, it is still far too often “us vs. them” (for example in energy and crisis management).