

*Dmitry Medvedev's Speech in Evian: reading between the lines*

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On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October this year Russia's President D. Medvedev delivered a speech at the World Policy Forum held in Evian (France). Mr. Medvedev presented Russia's recommendations to the establishment of the new security architecture in Europe and solutions to the international financial crisis. We present the analysis and the sum up of his speech.

D. Medvedev stressed three main aspects of his speech: (1) solutions to the global financial crisis; (2) situation in the Caucasus and (3) organization of international conference to discuss the security questions.

**International politics today:**

In the beginning of his speech the President presented his estimation of the current international situation:

- The world is in a transitional phase: the unreliability of the current international security system based on unipolarity was demonstrated by “the adventurous actions by the ruling regime of the small country (Georgia in this particular case)” that were capable to destabilize political situation in the entire world.
- The transitional period started 7 years ago when USA rejected the proposals of Russia and Europe to create a multipolar world and attacked Iraq. This American move meant that “a world missed its historic chance to de-ideologize international politics and create a genuinely democratic world order”.
- Stability in the world can be guaranteed only by preserving transparent and equal international relations.
- The way of thinking which prevailed during the Cold War is back in international politics again and this is a “dangerous disease”. This thinking is mainly induced by the USA and NATO which are unilaterally expanding their influence and obsessively react to the ‘naturally’ negative Russia's response.
- Current events are the peak of the Euro-Atlantic political crisis which was caused by the unipolarity of the international politics. There is an urgent need to take joint and quick actions to solve this crisis.

It is interesting that if we change countries' and political actors' names mentioned in Medvedev's speech, we would have contemporary Western discourse which is dominant in discussions on international relations. The difference is that the latter places Russia at the centre of instability in the world instead of

the USA and NATO. The words of the U.S. vice-president D.Cheney evaluating Russian behaviour during the Georgia crisis can be cited: “Russia’s actions raise doubts about its reliability as an international partner”. In other words, rhetoric in Russia and in the U.S. is an expression of the direct confrontation on the discursive level. In this battle both participants try to form a negative image of the opponent and use basically the same tools. Sad, but both sides have enough facts to support their arguments. **In this perspective, the review of the world’s political situation, given by D. Medvedev, is adequate. We just have to look at it objectively – without naming the culprits since it always raises doubts about the speaker’s aims.**

### **The Superiority of the International Law**

D. Medvedev presented the following proposals concerning the creation of a multipolar and fair world:

- The behaviour in the international politics “has to be based on collective foundations and the rule of international law”;
- The selective use of the international law (i.e. double standards) has to be abandoned;
- The use of war as an instrument to reach the political goals has to be abandoned;
- The central and coordinating role of the United Nations, as the international organization having the superior authority, has to be preserved.

The proposals mentioned above can be interpreted differently. First, all these norms have already long been the normative background of the international politics. By emphasizing the need to strengthen them, D.Medvedev concedes that they do not work. On the other hand, it is not clear, which interpretation of international law Russia’s President suggests to use. Does he offer to detail the basic international norms by concretizing them or to strengthen the enforcement of the existing ones? Such uncertainty of D.Medvedev’s comments allows us to estimate his speech as a justification of Russia’s actions in the eyes of international community (first of all in the eyes of Europe): the U.S. does not comply with the principles of international law and this is the main reason of the current crisis. Russia is a “goody”, which encourages the world to stop the abuses of the “baddy” (i.e. U.S.). Finally, the demand for multipolarity and equal opportunities for all actors shows that Russia still does not feel being an equal competitor for Washington in a struggle for global dominance. It needs allies and it is easier to find them in a multipolar world.

### **Economic Crisis**

The motif of a multipolar world continues in D. Medvedev's reflections on the international financial crisis. According to the Russian President, the crisis was caused by the "economic egoism of a number of countries <...>. As far back as 1990 showed the inefficiency of a unipolar economic model <...>. The example of the USA, and others too, has shown that it is just one step from self-regulated capitalism to financial socialism. What's more, we see them ready to nationalize one asset after another. Factors for stability in this situation would be the creation of new financial centers and strong regional currencies". D. Medvedev provides the EU and the Euro as the examples of such stability. Finally, according to the President of Russia, it is important to include other financial centres, such as China, India, Brazil, Mexico, RSA, into decision making process of international financial markets. It is obvious that on the discursive level such curtsies to the European Union and other players are an attempt to form a positive image of Russia in their eyes. **Russia realizes she is isolated internationally after the conflict in Georgia. Now Russia needs new friends** and it is evident in D. Medvedev's rhetoric towards the EU. Finally, a call for new models of global financial order arises from merely pragmatic Russia's interests: **the current financial crisis severely hit Russian stock markets. Russia, who never maintained good relations with Western financial institutions, now wants to find alternative sources of support.**

### **Russian-European Alliance**

One interesting aspect, noticeable throughout the speech, is a clear attempt to play up to the European countries and to the EU as independent actor in international politics. Of course, a considerable part of the praise delivered to the French President N.Sarkozy can be written off as a tribute to the organizers of the event. But Russia's desire to distract Europe from the United States and to make it Russia's ally cannot remain unnoticed: "I think we could also start discussing together the future of our common European continent. By this I mean Europe's role in the global economy and the establishment of a just world order. Historically, Russia is part of European civilization and for us, as Europeans, it matters a lot what values will shape the future world". Recalling V.Putin's discourse of the 'sovereign democracy' and the right to determine the rules of the game, according to which Russia wants to play, these words seem to be especially interesting. The supporters of Eurasism and nationalism in Russia probably were outraged by the selection of the terms their President used. However, the recognition of Russia's European roots is not in contradiction to Russia's special way of development. Interesting enough D. Medvedev emphasizes Russia's belonging to Europe namely when talking about economic matters. Knowing that Russia is economically dependant on Europe and has relatively weak ties with the United States, such discourse demonstrates that **Moscow aims to highlight its economic commonality with Europe. However, this**

**European commonality has nothing to do with European values – European democracy, human rights, the rule of law and etc.** This proves the old suspicions concerning the friendship between Russia and Europe – it is strong as long as it benefits Russia. It means Russia will attempt to take from Europe as much as possible (in terms of technological innovations and investment) and will give in exchange nothing more than a facade friendship. **In this context, common civilizational roots between Russia and the EU represent D. Medvedev’s rational and pragmatic position towards the EU.**

European Union receives a bunch of compliments when it comes to the conflict in Georgia: “I want to stress once again the positive role of the European Union in proposing a peaceful solution to the Caucasus crisis. At a time when other forces in the world had no good will or ability to do this, we found in the EU an active, responsible and pragmatic partner”. Again **pragmatism is emphasized**. Such rhetoric reflects the image of pragmatic Russia that V. Putin started to create. We can recall that the rise of gas prices for Belarus and Ukraine has also been based on the “wish to convert to the pragmatic economic sanctions”. Knowing the moods prevailing in some EU capitals – namely the priority of economic benefit in relations with Russia - these D. Medvedev’s words only prove that Russia seeks to strengthen this economic way of thinking and to benefit from it. And since the economic interests in “old” and “new” Europe clearly differ (especially in the energy sector), **emphasis on pragmatism in EU-Russia relations should be regarded as an attempt to divide Europe from inside by contrasting the actors having different economic interests and possibilities.**

### **The New Security Agreement of Europe**

The idea of a new security agreement expressed in a number of D. Medvedev’s and V. Putin’s statements is an attempt to change the current situation which Russian President names as “harmful NATO-centrality”. Russia proposes specific actions for the reconstruction of the Euro-Atlantic security area which would be established in a new security agreement:

1. It is necessary to clearly define the basic principles of security in the Euro-Atlantic area. These are genuine fulfilment of international commitments, respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the countries as well as compliance with all principles of the Charter of UN.
2. It is vital to clearly determine the principle of non-use of force in international relations. It is necessary to ensure that this principle is treated the same way by all actors. It is also indispensable

to give the priority to the diplomatic way of decision making in international relations which would take into account positions of all sides and maintain the mutual respect.

3. Equal security warranties for all countries are needed. In order to reach this goal one has to stay close to the principle of three “no”: it should be prohibited to create a unilateral security at the expense of other’s security; actions that weaken the unanimity of common security area should be abandoned (especially having in mind all military unions and alliances); the expansion of existing military alliances cannot be allowed if it increases security costs for other sides of the agreement. Moreover, today the most important thing is to solve the military-political security issues, since “hard security” matters the most.
4. The agreement must ensure that no country including Russia and no international organization has exclusive rights for peacekeeping in Europe.
5. It is appropriate to foresee the basic criteria under which control of military industry could be carried out. New mechanisms and procedures in such areas as control of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking and terrorism should be established.

The analysis of the elements of the new Euro-Atlantic security architecture proposed by Russia confirms several key points:

- Russia feels underestimated and marginalized from the formation of the global security architecture. This causes discontent in the country that sees itself as a ‘great power’ and expects to get appropriate attention and play appropriate role.
- Russia believes that the main obstacles for its return to the circle of ‘big powers’ are the United States of America and NATO which play too important role in European security issues. Leadership of the U.S. in military industry is also seen as a hindrance to Russia’s return to the ‘great power’ status. Proposals to increase the control of military industry and to reject European security monopoly possessed by NATO confirm this proposition.
- Seeking to eliminate the obstacles mentioned above, Russia offers Europe to refuse excessive bounds with the USA. From the Russian point of view, this proposal should be very attractive to Europe which has a long history of debates on strengthening EU’s ‘hard power’ and limitation of the U.S. role. The proposal to refuse military means in international politics implies Russia’s fear that the West (i.e. US) are able to respond military to Russian aggressive actions in the post-soviet space.

- The three “no” principles clearly demonstrate that NATO expansion is seen as the biggest threat to Russia’s national security. Respectively, Moscow is creating more and more obstacles for Ukraine’s or Georgia’s membership in the alliance. As the conflict in South Ossetia showed, use of military force is not rejected.
- Finally, talks about “respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the countries” can signify that Russia would agree with the current division of spheres of influence in the world.
- Focus on the “political independence of states” makes one to remember the fact that recently Russia used economic rather than political instruments to reach its foreign policy goals. Such trends imply that Russia’s behaviour will remain unchanged – investment, trade restrictions and energy blackmail is likely to remain Russia’s most important ‘weapons’.

## Conclusion

From the Russian point of view, the time has come to change the existing world order. Kremlin believes that USA is too influential in the international world today. The consequence is too little space left for Russia. Russian perception of its role in the world (identity) is incompatible with the “little brother” status. The only way to satisfy Russia’s identity needs is the creation of a new world order. In this new order the relative ‘weights’ of Russia and the U.S. should change. It is noteworthy that, at least in the medium term, Russia’s goal is clearly confined to “weight-equalization”. In other words, we **can not talk about Russian neo-imperialism as a desire to become the dominant power in the world.**

It seems that Russia is aware of its limits. The consequence is the priority given by Russia to its relations with Europe. Since NATO is the most important link connecting EU to the U.S. already half a century, Russia seeks to remove this connection and create two new ones: between Russia and the EU and between Russia and the U.S. The priority, without doubt, is given to the European dimension. In a new Russian discourse the new world vision is identified as multipolarity. In a multipolar world there is no place for NATO as a guarantor of international security. Development and strengthening of relations between Russia and Europe is an alternative to Europe which Russia is proposing as the substitute to the Euro-Atlantic vector. From the EU positions the proposal could be very tempting. Europe is seeking to establish itself as a ‘great power’ equivalent to the U.S. Moreover, cooperation with Russia is very important for the EU’s energy sector. The majority of Europeans do not like Washington’s actions (Kosovo, Iraq) as well. Therefore, Russia has really a good potential. Especially having in mind the recent proposals made by the President of France to create a common economic space between the EU and Russia. We can also recall

the German Chancellor's words in St. Petersburg that Ukraine and Georgia aren't yet ready to be a part of NATO.

The ongoing financial crises, internal problems of Russia, the unclear position of the EU, the coming Presidential election in the U.S.– all these factors will determine the final answer to the question, whether Moscow will succeed in forming the new world order. But it is always good to have in mind Russia's objectives in assessing its future actions.