

RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATES (2000-2012)

PARASCHIVA BĂDESCU*

*"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia.
It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.
But there may be a key, and that key is Russian national interest."*

Winston Churchill

Abstract. *Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the independent Russian Federation has followed several distinct foreign policy trajectories, finally resorting to assertiveness and promotion of the foreign policy objectives, according to the vision of its national interest. The dynamics behind this foreign policy are based on the main Russian objective to be seen as one of the most important actors in the global politics of a multi-polar world and an unchallenged power in the region. The study analyzes the context and evolution of Russia's foreign policy, its interests, priorities and challenges.*

Keywords: *Russia, foreign policy, priorities, concept, strategy, relations, security, CIS, EU, USA.*

Foreword

Since its emergence as an independent state, Russia has followed three distinct foreign policy stages: it frequently sided with a coalition of Western states against those whom it viewed as threatening its interests and values; it adopted a defensive attitude, balancing its national revival through promotion of some multilateral alliances; finally, it resorted to assertiveness and promotion of its foreign policy objectives¹.

* Ambassador, Head of OSCE Mission in Montenegro (2006-2010), Deputy Head of OSCE Mission in Serbia-Montenegro (2005-2006), Head of OSCE Centre in Turkmenistan (2002-2004); paraschiva.badescu@netmedia.ro.

¹ Andrei P. Tsygankov, San Francisco State University, "Change and Continuity in Russia's Foreign Policy", *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 109, 8 March 2012.

In the early 1990s, Russia's foreign policy was marked by inconsistency, almost unreserved acceptance of the Western agenda, a policy of large cooperation with Western states. Boris Yeltsin had even formulated the idea of Westernization as a matter of international strategy. The idea included radical economic reform (the so-called "shock therapy", gaining a full-scale status in transatlantic economic and security institutions, such as EU, NATO, IMF, G-7. On this vision was based the new foreign policy concept prepared in late 1992 and promulgated in April 1993. But this vision was soon met with a strong opposition, advancing a vision of national interest. Without implying any confrontation with the West, it was meant to defend the image of Russia as a strong state, with a distinct role in the world. The appointment of Y. Primakov as Foreign Minister signified the victory of this vision. The priorities of the new foreign policy included improving relations with non-Western countries and integrating the ex- Soviet space under Moscow's control. It aimed to develop more balanced relations with the West, without affecting the relationships with China, India and the Islamic world. The National Security Concept of 1997 recommended that Russia maintain equal distancing in relations to the "global European and Asian economic and political actors" and presented a program for the integration of CIS efforts in the security area. It was the result of Kremlin's reaction to the Western unwillingness or inability to provide the expected assistance, as well as to the decision to expand NATO eastward, excluding Russia from the process. At the same time, the domestic situation – dominated by disorder, corruption, and poverty that followed the reforms – was not conducive to Russia's assertiveness. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union new conflicts have emerged in the Russian periphery.

NATO's intervention in Kosovo/Yugoslavia imposed by the US in 1999, which ignored Russia's position, was a blow to its vision as a great power. Since then, Russia has been searching for its identity and place in the world.

The arrival at Russia's leadership of the president Vladimir Putin marked not only a turning point in Russian political development, but also in its strategic direction: pursuing a sovereign and independent foreign policy, Russia embraced a new framework of strategic interaction with the United States; emphasizing the European dimension as a priority in its foreign policy, Russia did not support the United States' military intervention in Iraq, but joined the France and Germany-led coalition of those opposing the war. Russia's foreign policy was oriented toward its assertiveness as an important player on the global scene, challenging the US policy as the only global leader. Reacting to Washington's decision to deploy elements of a missile defense system (MDS) in Europe, Putin announced his decision to declare a Russian moratorium on implementing the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, according to which Russia should withdraw or reduce its military forces deployed in some areas. At the same time, Russia started to strengthen its energy position on the world markets by building the pipelines in all geographical directions, raising prices for its oil and gas etc.

According to some political analysts, the main feature of the Russian foreign policy is its ambition to be considered as one of the global political superpowers and the indisputable regional power, an ambition transposed in the following

actions: the achievement of the status of superpower; the establishment of the perception on Russia as an important player in multilateral cooperation and the strengthening of its role in the ex-soviet space².

Russia is now far from what it was during Yeltsin. Security forces are strong again and Russia is dominating the ex-soviet space. Its main opponent – USA – is busy with other issues, and Europe is weak and divided. Certainly, Russia is still economically dysfunctional, but this might be changed. For the time being, it is strong in the near abroad, without being able to solve the “inherited“ problems this space is confronted with.

Russia has become economically stronger and politically more stable. As a result, its foreign policy is stronger. Many Western political analysts see it as rather a return to the anti-Western attitude, than a strategy. One has to admit, however, that Russia's foreign policy is more consistent, than it is generally acknowledged. During the last decade, Russia has developed its own vision on the global evolutions and is promoting a foreign policy agenda aimed to strengthen its interests on the long term. The foreign policy directions are predictable for a number of years, may be decades, which represents new opportunities, as well as challenges for its international partners.

Russia's Foreign Policy – from Unipolarity to Multipolarity

In 2000, president Putin stressed that Russia was not able to defend its national interests: domestically weak, it was economically dependent on foreign loans. The *Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept*³ – a document adopted in 2000 – contains an ensemble of views on the content and main areas of Russia's foreign policy activities to overcome this situation. It stresses that the international situation at the beginning of the 21 century requires the reevaluation of the issues related to the foreign policy priorities, as well as possibilities and resources to its implementation. The supreme priority of the course of Russia's foreign policy is to protect the interests of the individual and the society. Within this process, the main efforts should be directed towards attaining the following objectives:

– A reliable security of the country, the preservation and strengthening of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the reaching of firm and prestigious positions in the world community, fully consistent with the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power, as one of the most influential centers of the modern world, necessary for the growth of its political, economic, intellectual and spiritual potential;

– The influence upon general global processes with the aim of forming a stable, just and democratic world order, based on generally recognized norms of international law, including, first of all, the goals and principles of the UN Charter on fair relations of partnership among states;

² Stanislav Secieru, *Rusia după imperiu: între putere regională și custode global*, Editura Institutului European, Jassy, 2008.

³ Vladimir Putin, *Vneshnopoliticheskaya konceptsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii/The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation*, <http://www.mid.ru>, 28 June 2000.

- The establishment of favorable external conditions for a steady development of Russia, for improving its economy and enhancing the living standards of the population, the successful enabling of democratic transformations, strengthening the basis of the constitutional system and respecting individual rights and freedoms;
 - The building of a belt of good neighborliness along Russia's borders, promoting the elimination of the existing and preventing the emergence of potential centers of tension and conflict in the adjacent regions of the Russian Federation;
 - The identification of joint interests with countries and interstate associations in the process of implementing the tasks defined by Russia's national priorities and, on this basis, the building of a system of partnership and relations of alliance in order to improve the conditions and parameters of international cooperation;
 - The upholding in every possible way of the rights and interests of Russian citizens in the country and abroad;
 - The promotion of a positive perception of the Russian Federation in the world, the propagation of the Russian language and culture of its people in foreign states.
- After an analysis of the global situation, the document stresses that Russia's interests are also directly linked to tendencies, such as:
- The globalization of the world economy, which, along with opening possibilities for progress, presents some dangers, especially for economically weaker states, and increases the probability of financial and economic crises on a vast scale.
 - The intensification of the role of international economic and political institutions and mechanisms (G-8, IMF, World Bank and others) led to the growing interdependence of states and the need to enhance management of the global financial and economic system in the contemporary conditions.
 - The development of regional and sub-regional integration in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, Africa and Latin America. Association and integration are acquiring a growing importance in the world economy, becoming a significant factor of regional and sub-regional peace and security.
 - Military and political rivalry among regional powers, growing separatism, ethnic, nationalist and religious extremism. Integrationist processes, in particular in the Euro-Atlantic area. Attempts to belittle the role of a sovereign state as the fundamental element of international relations generate a threat of an arbitrary interference in internal affairs. The proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction is acquiring serious dimensions.
 - Unresolved or potential regional and local armed conflicts represent a threat to the international peace and security. Growing international terrorism, transnational organized crime and illegal trafficking in drugs and weapons exert a significant influence on global and regional stability.

The threats related to these tendencies are aggravated by the limited resources of support for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, making it difficult to uphold its foreign economic interests and narrowing the framework of its influence abroad. Starting from Russia's responsibility in maintaining the world peace and security at the global and regional level, the development of a foreign

policy activity both bilaterally and multilaterally would seek a reasonable balance between Russia's objectives and its possibilities to achieve them. The priority would be given to those with real significance for Russia's national interests, while the scope of participation in international affairs must be adequate for the strengthening of the country's positions.

The document emphasized the following *priorities of the Russian Federation in resolving global problems*:

1. *Building a New World Order*

A stable system of international relations based on principles of law, mutual respect and mutually advantageous cooperation, in which the UN must remain the main center for regulation of international relations in the 21 century. This implies:

- strict observance of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, including the preservation of the status of the permanent members of the UN Security Council;
- a rational reform of the United Nations, seeking to develop a mechanism for rapid reaction to world developments, including the enhancement of its potential for conflict prevention and settlement;
- the extension of the UN Security Council by including new permanent members, first of all influential developing countries.

2. *Strengthening International Security*

– Further decrease of the role of force and use of force in international relations, along with the enhancement of regional stability. Strict fulfillment of the commitments assumed in compliance with treaties and agreements on limitation and reduction of armaments, and participation in negotiation to conclude new agreements consistent both with its national interests and the security interest of other states. Readiness to consent to further downsizing its nuclear potential on the basis of bilateral agreements with the United States in a multilateral format.

– The implementation of the US plans to create a national missile defense system will inevitably compel Russia to adopt adequate measures for maintaining its national security at a proper level.

– Support of regional stability by participating in the processes of downsizing and limitation of the conventional armed forces, as well as adopting confidence-building measures in the military field.

– International peacemaking forces are an effective instrument for the resolution of the armed conflicts. Only the UN Security Council has the authority to sanction use of force for the purpose of achieving peace. Attempts to introduce concepts such as “humanitarian intervention” and “limited sovereignty” in order to justify unilateral use of force actions, bypassing the UN Security Council, are unacceptable.

3. *Development of International Economic Relations*

– Supporting the development of the national economy and the broad integration in the system of world economic relations.

- Active work to attract foreign investments in the priority spheres of Russian economy.
- Ensuring the preservation and optimal use of Russian property abroad.

4. Human Rights and International Relations

- Ensuring respect for human rights and freedoms on the basis of international law.
- Protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens and compatriots from abroad on the basis of international law and bilateral agreements.
- Development of the international cooperation in the humanitarian exchange area; improvement of the participation in international conventions and agreements in the human rights area.
- Further bringing the national legislation in line with international obligations.

5. Computer Support for Foreign Policy Activities

Regional Priorities

- Ensuring the development of multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in accordance with the objectives of national security. The emphasis made on the development of good neighborly relations and strategic partnership with these states. Concrete relations with each of them will depend on their openness and readiness to take into account in a due manner Russia's interests, including in terms of guarantees of rights of Russians living in those countries.
- Encouraging narrower associations, primarily in the framework of the Customs Union and the Collective Security Treaty; at this stage, Union of Belarus and Russia is the highest form of integration of two sovereign states.
- Priority attention to joint efforts for the settlement of conflicts in CIS states, and development of cooperation in the politico-military area and in the sphere of security, particularly in combating international terrorism and extremism.
- Development of economic cooperation, including the creation of a free trade zone and implementation of programs for joint rational use of natural resources. Elaboration of a status of the Caspian Sea which would enable the littoral states to launch mutually advantageous cooperation in using the region's resources on a fair basis, taking into account the legitimate interests of each other.
- Preservation and augmentation of the joint cultural heritage in the CIS states.
- Relations with European states are a traditional priority of Russia's foreign policy. The main objective is the creation of a stable and democratic system of security and cooperation in Europe; further balanced development of the multi-functional character of the OSCE; full use of the decision-making potential, accumulated by the organization since the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act.
- The adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe should become an effective instrument for European security and for developing confidence-building measures, including their extension to naval activities and those of coalition of states.

- Further participation in the activities of the Council of Europe.
- Relations with the European Union (EU) are of key importance. The ongoing processes within the EU have a growing impact on the dynamic of the situation in Europe. These are the EU enlargement, the common currency, the institutional reform, joint foreign policy and policy in the field of security, as well as a defense identity. As these processes are an objective component of European development, Russia will seek the respect of its interests, including through bilateral relations with individual EU member states. For Russia, the EU is one of its main political and economic partners, and it will strive to develop an intensive, stable and long-term cooperation. The character of the relations with the EU is determined by the framework of the June 24, 1994 Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation. Concrete problems, primarily those related to the process of the EU extension and reform are dealt with on the basis of the Strategy for the Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the EU, approved in 1999, and the EU Eastern Partnership.
- Russia considers that, on a number of parameters, NATO's political and military guidelines do not coincide with its security interests and occasionally directly contradict them. This primarily concerns the provisions of NATO's new strategic concept, which do not exclude the conduct of the use-of-force operations beyond the zone of application of the Washington Treaty without the agreement of the UN Security Council. Russia maintains its negative attitude towards NATO's expansion, particularly close to its borders.
- Russia will make efforts to overcome existing difficulties in relations with the US, to preserve the infrastructure of the Russian-American cooperation. Despite the existence of serious, and in a number of cases, fundamental differences, Russian-American interaction is the necessary condition for the amelioration of the international situation and the achievement of the global strategic stability. Above all, this concerns problems of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as prevention and settlement of the regional conflicts. Only through an active dialogue with the US – considers Russia – could the issues of limitation and reduction of strategic nuclear weapons be resolved. It is of mutual interest for the two countries to maintain regular bilateral contacts at all levels, without interruptions and setbacks in the negotiating processes on the main political, military and economic matters.
- An important resource for Russia's defense of its national interests in European and world affairs is its interaction with states of Western Europe, primarily with influential ones such as the UK, France, Germany and Italy.
- The main objective in the relations with the states of Central and Eastern Europe is the preservation of the existing human, economic and cultural ties, the overcoming of crisis situations, and providing impetus to cooperation in accordance with the new conditions and the Russian interests.
- There are good prospects for the development of relations with the Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Russia wants to put these relations onto the track of good neighborliness and mutually advantageous cooperation. An indispensable condition is the respect by those states of Russia's interests and concerns, including the rights of the Russian-speaking population in those countries.

– As for the Black Sea region, the Caucasus, and the Caspian Sea basin, Russia intends to steer a purposeful course toward transforming it into a zone of peace, security, stability and good neighborliness, which would help to advance Russia's economic interests, including related to the routes of pipelines.

– Particular attention is given to transforming the Balkans into a region of peace, security, stability and good neighborliness, supporting the coordinated efforts of the international community in the process of reconciliation and development of the countries from the region.

– Asia enjoys a steadily growing importance in the context of the entire Russia's foreign policy, due to its direct interest in this dynamically developing region and the need for an economic upturn in Siberia and the Far East. The emphasis will be on Russia's active participation in the main integration structures of the Asia-Pacific Region – the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, the regional forum on security of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Shanghai Group (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan), in whose creation Russia played an active role.

– Developing friendly relations with China and India is one of the important directions in the Russian foreign policy. Russia seeks to develop mutually advantageous cooperation with China in all areas. The main objective is to bring the scale of economic interaction at the level of political relations.

– A stable development of relations with Japan, the attainment of a true good neighborliness corresponds to the interests of both countries. Russia will continue a search for a mutually acceptable solution to formalize the internationally recognized border between the two states.

– The protracted conflict in Afghanistan creates a real threat to the security of the CIS states and directly affects Russian interests. In cooperation with other states concerned, Russia will make consistent efforts with a view to achieve a lasting political settlement of the Afghan problem, interdicting the export of terrorism and extremism from that country.

– Russia will work to stabilize the situation in the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf area and Northern Africa, taking into account the impact of the situation in the region on the overall situation in the world. Russia intends to pursue an active participation in the normalization of the post-crisis situation in the region. Russia's priority in this context will be to restore and strengthen its positions, particularly the economic ones, in this region of the world, which so important for its interests.

– Russia considers as necessary to develop relations and a political dialogue with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and with sub-regional organizations and to use their capabilities for enabling Russia to join multilateral economic projects on the continent.

– In Putin's view, the situation of Russia was equivalent to a conditioned sovereignty, which required a long-term strategy to re-establish its full sovereignty. This strategy is known as the "*Putin's Plan*" – implemented in four phases. At the heart of the plan lies the concept of "sovereign democracy". To become a truly sovereign country, Russia had to become economically competitive, and this required a democratic governance.

Overcoming the Unipolar World

In his speech to the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy (February 10, 2007)⁴ Putin focused the attention of the participants on the U.S. efforts to achieve global dominance. Putin laid the blame for many of the world's problems on the United States, and its desire to construct a unipolar international system through the use of force, accusing Washington for the acute evolution of the crises on a global level and a dangerous infringement of the international law, which contain the risk to glide toward an unipolar world. In his opinion, the United States have overstepped the limits in nearly all arenas. The main reason of Putin's attack were the US plans to develop a Missile Defense System in Central Europe, which would lead to a new arms race. Instead of the dominance of one nation, Putin stressed the need for a new global security architecture, that would incorporate the interests of many different international actors, the importance of preventing the militarization of space, providing ways for non-nuclear states to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear energy, encouraging investment in the underdeveloped countries, ending the practice of certain Western governments in using the civil society (NGOs) to destabilize regimes they dislike.

This position was considered a manifestation of a *new realism* inspired by the *realist offensive*, present in the Kremlin's policy since Vladimir Putin became president; this way of thinking is based on the idea to restore the Russia's status of great power from the interior, by accelerating the economic reforms, and from the exterior, by participating in maintaining the regional and global security, and keeping strategic independence, in which a nuclear arsenal has a fundamental role.⁵

Continuity, Return towards the East or Euroasianism

After his election as president, in March 2008, Dmitry Medvedev's first trips abroad were to China and Kazakhstan. Only in June of the same year, Medvedev made a visit to Germany, where he spoke of his foreign policy priorities and presented a number of new proposals on pan-European military and energy security⁶. Medvedev, also, pointed out that divergent approaches to human rights issues can lead to conflicts, rejecting the idea that nations can be "made" to conform to Western standards and calling for a true dialogue on human rights issues.

Like his predecessor, Medvedev also undertook a review of Russian foreign policy, reflected in the document on the *Foreign Policy Concept*, signed on July 12, 2008⁷. The new concept highlights that Russia's primary goal must be to

⁴ Vladimir Putin, *Vystuplenie i discussii na Munchenskoj konferentsii po voprosam politiki bezopasnosti*, www.kremlin.ru, February 10, 2007.

⁵ Rodica Dinulescu, *Argumentul nuclear în politica externă a statelor*, pp. 88-89, Editura Institutul European, Jassy, 2011.

⁶ Dmitri Medvedev, *Speech at the Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders*, http://www.kremlin.ru, June 15, 2008.

⁷ Dmitri Medvedev, *Kontseptsia vneshnei politiki Rossijskoi Federatsii*, http://www.mid.ru, July 12, 2008.

continue to modernize and to create conditions that are conducive to the country's integration into the global economy. Secondly, it must forge a crisis-resistant international system. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept reaffirmed the vital role of the United Nations in the international policy. On the regional level, Russia seeks to move from "good-neighborly" relations with the CIS states to "friendly relations", and perhaps even to "strategic partnerships and alliances" with those who are ready for it. The goal is to transcend, once and for all, the Cold War division of Europe and "guarantee the unity of the Euro-Atlantic region from Vancouver to Vladivostok". The new Foreign Policy Concept reaffirmed the role of Russia as an active actor in the global policy. This document states that: "International developments in the field of international relations at the beginning of the 21 century and Russia's strengthening have required a reassessment of the overall situation around Russia, a rethinking of the priorities of the Russian foreign policy taking into due consideration the increased role of the country in international affairs, its greater responsibility for global developments and related possibilities to participate in the implementation of the international agenda, as well as in its development".

At the meeting with Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to International Organizations, on July 15, 2008, D. Medvedev⁸ highlighted the main priorities of the new Foreign Policy Concept, such as: resisting attempts to advance national or group of states interests at the expense of international law; establishing rather a positive than a negative agenda for Europe, that would include an intensive economic interaction; promoting a collective leadership of some important actors as the basis for a new world security architecture; establishing open systems of collective security in different regions of the world; encouraging Russia's partners to "psychologically adapt" to the reality that Russia today is very different from the USSR.

President Medvedev stressed, also, that it is in the interest of the Russian democracy that democratic standards be respected by a growing number of countries, but these standards must be defined jointly, taking into consideration all views. Russia will insist on fairer principles of cooperation, the development of relations between free nations on a solid basis, with a strict application of the principles of international law. Russia intends to establish special alliances for modernization with its international partners – the EU, the US, Germany, France, and Italy. Similar relations are envisaged with China and India.

The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation calls to jointly resolve a large specter of issues, including those in the field of security, poverty reduction, food deficit, fighting diseases, increasing energy efficiency, financial stability and, naturally, joining efforts to prevent any armed conflict. It envisages the establishment of a balance in international relations; respect for international law; reform of international institutions and strengthening of the UN neutral role; concluding a Treaty on European Security; fighting terrorism; continuing

⁸ Dmitri Medvedev, *Vystuplenie na soveshchanii s poslami i postoyannymi predstavitel'yami Rossiiskoi Federatsii pri mezhdunarodnyh organizatsiyah*, <http://www.kremlin.ru>, July 15, 2008.

integration processes within CIS; developing a strategic partnership with the EU.

The document on Foreign Policy Concept highlights that “Russia will continue to seek the strengthening of principles of multilateralism in international affairs, the development of an architecture of international relations that would be based on the recognition by the international community of the principles of security indivisibility in the modern world and would reflect its diversity”. However, the multilateralism does not seem to be a principle solidly rooted in the Russian foreign policy. Every time when national interest of the foreign policy will require unilateral modalities of action, Russia would not hesitate to use them, as it was the case with the Russian-Georgian conflict, in August 2008, which led to the reaction of the Western states. Also, the continuing presence of the Russian troops on the territory of some former soviet republics leads to a feeling of skepticism about Russia’s real commitment to the affirmation of globalism and multi-polarity. There are, however, voices considering that the extension of the agreements on the presence of Russian military bases in Armenia, Ukraine and Kirghizstan presents advantages both for Russia and for security of the respective countries and regions.

Less than a month after the adoption of the new concept, the Georgian crisis broke out, being a test for the new president and his foreign policy. The Western reaction in support of the Georgian president was considered more than double standard. In the opinion of the Kremlin authorities, the security architecture has demonstrated its vulnerability, and August 8th should be considered of the same significance as the date of September 11th, because it was demonstrated that the security of the contemporary world needs the involvement of all constructive forces, and the war in Caucasus eliminated any illusion regarding the efficiency of the system of the world security⁹.

On this, in its opinion, unilateral approach to the crisis, Russia was determined to seek for a “truly universal system of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic space”, which would apply “the same rules to all”, granting that no country could strengthen its security at the expense of the security of another country. Not a single state or international organization has an exclusive duty in maintaining regional stability.¹⁰

In the following period, Russia made efforts to consolidate a common vision on this issue, which was reflected in different documents and agreements.

On August 31st, 2008, in an interview to leading television channels, President D. Medvedev listed five principles of Russian foreign policy:

1. The primacy of the basic principles of international law which define interstate relations.

2. The multipolar world. Unipolarity is unacceptable. Domination is inadmissible. A situation in which all decisions are taken by one country, even with high authority, such as the United States of America, can’t be accepted. Such a world is unstable and threatens with conflicts.

⁹ Dmitry Medvedev, during the debates of the Valdai Club, in *Soci, Mediafax, Agerpres*, September 12, 2008.

¹⁰ <http://www.mid.ru/2008/09>.

3. Russia does not want confrontation with any country. Russia is not going to be isolated. Russia will develop friendly relations with Europe and the United States of America, as well as with other countries of the world.

4. Russia's absolute priority is the protection of its citizens regardless of their residence. It will protect, also, interests of its business community abroad.

5. Russia, just like other states, has regions of privileged interest – countries with which Russia has traditionally had cordial relations – from its near abroad, and intends to extend them.

In a speech at Moscow University, while reaffirming Russia's commitment to the Foreign Policy Concept, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov addressed a stark message to the West related to its interference in the CIS's affairs: "To us, the CIS space is not a 'chessboard' for playing geopolitical games. This is a common civilizational area for every people living here, one that keeps our historic and spiritual legacy alive. Our geography and economic interdependence give tangible competitive advantages to all the Commonwealth countries ... The response of some Western countries to the South Ossetia crisis clearly illustrates a deficit of morality. Those unable to accept the truth and justice simply cannot, no matter how hard they try, represent the whole European civilization, not to speak of the incompatibility of that approach with other civilizations and cultural traditions"¹¹. In the opinion of the Foreign Minister S. Lavrov, the existing international order is fundamentally unstable, thus accusing the Western system dominated by the US for the braking out of the financial crisis. The post-crisis political and economic environment offers new opportunities for multipolar diplomacy. The main criterion for being successful in this environment would be the capacity to take into consideration the interests of the small and medium countries, which are not represented in the G-20 and other elite clubs. Russia must support this by consolidating its mutually advantageous relations with the main global and regional powers, by the interpenetration of economies and cultures, by identifying external sources for its modernization, by creating alliances and focusing on objective advantages of competition, created by those who have participated in the integration processes.

The same year, at Evian (France), D. Medvedev reiterated the Russian vision, according to which "transparency and equality in the international relations would be the basis for stability in the world"¹². For this purpose, he proposed the adoption of a *European Security Treaty*, which should be based on the following principles: clear affirmation of basic principles for security and interstate relations in the Euro-Atlantic area, according to the UN Charter; inadmissibility of the use of force or the threat to use it in international relations; guarantees for truly equal security, according to which the security of one country cannot be ensured at the expense of the security of others; no country or group of countries could pretend to have exclusive prerogatives in maintaining peace and stability

¹¹ Sergei Lavrov, Speech delivered at MGIMO (Moscow University), on September 1, 2008 – <http://www.mid.ru>.

¹² Kremlin. Ru/October 8, 2008 – Speech at World Policy Conference.

and, finally, the establishment of a joint framework to define basic arms control parameters and reasonable military limits in European context¹³.

According to the Russian president, this system should be the same for all states, without establishing zones with different level of security, a system which would ensure in a stable and legally binding form new common security guarantees. The Russian president has also mentioned that different approaches on human rights issues could lead to conflicts. Rejecting the idea that the nations could be “founded” upon the Western standard, he called for a real dialog on the human rights issues.

In November 2009, the Russian government formally presented two different, but complementary documents: a draft of the “European Security Treaty”¹⁴ has been circulated to all member states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and to various international organizations; the second document, entitled “Agreement on Basic Principles Governing Relations among NATO member states and Russia in the Security Sphere”, circulated to NATO members. The West had a cautious reaction. NATO Secretary General stated that although he is open to discussing the proposal, he believed that there was no need for new treaties or legally binding documents, NATO will preserve the framework for Euro-Atlantic security. At the OSCE Summit in Astana (December 2-3, 2010), there was also no interest shown for these proposals. Although both NATO and EU, politely, stated that they would study these proposals, there was no real intention to do that. The assumption was that the Russian strategy is designed to veto NATO expansion and supplant both the Alliance and the OSCE¹⁵. US Secretary of State H. Clinton said that: “Although we believe that some of Russia’s proposals contain constructive ideas and welcome the opportunity to engage a serious dialog with Russia on this issue, the United States does not see the need for new treaties and believes that discussions of European security should take place within existing forums for European security such as the OSCE and the NATO-Russia Council”¹⁶.

Since then, Russian proposals have not been the object of European security debates, Western partners trying to address Russian concerns within the existing structures – NATO and the OSCE. Moscow requested, also, a formal mechanism for Russian participation in the EU Commission for Foreign and Security Policy and presented to NATO the idea to revisit the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe¹⁷.

To understand the scale of EU – Russia cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy, we should analyze their strategic interests and points of interference. EU and Russia have the points of interference in three different regions, without

¹³ <http://www.edi.org/russia/johnson>.

¹⁴ *Draft European Security Treaty*, November 29, 2009, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/275>.

¹⁵ Dr. O. Bakreski, B. Avramovska, Z. Nikolski, *The Changing Strategic Standing of Russia and International Security*, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/27004-russia-geopolitics-security>.

¹⁶ Hilary Clinton’s Remarks on the Future of European Security, U.S. Department of State, January 29, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/136273.htm>.

¹⁷ *Kommersant*, March 15, 2010 – <http://www.edi.org.russia/johnson>.

mentioning the areas of conflict in the former soviet republics, considered by Russia as the zones of its legitimate interest. The zones of interference would be: the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe (countries non EU/NATO members) and Central Asia. In a document issued by the experts of the European Council on Foreign Relations¹⁸ Russia's interests to draw towards the EU through so called *Westpolitik*, would be:

- Assertion of its European identity;
- Economic development as the main objective of the openness towards the European West;
- Development of the strategic cooperation with the US, while maintaining strong contacts with China, India and Basil;
- Concerted efforts for strategic cooperation with some European states, primarily Germany, by accepting new EU realities;
- Keeping political and economic influence in former communist states, now EU members, through influential agencies from the past and new agencies. However, these activities should be transparent, according to the national legislation and the European norms;
- Attempt to create strategic investments in all ex-communist states, often being covered by firms established in the UE;
- Attempt to create economic opportunities through differentiation of prices on energy sold to different EU states, avoiding the EU regulations.
- Experts conclude that Russian threat perceptions are complex and constantly evolving. And, like the EU, Russia's foreign policy elite today has a very different view on threats and European order from that it had just a few years ago.

After the Reset – Pax Medvedica

For Russia, a very important issue was whether the United States are really interested in “becoming friends” with Russia. The reaction came unexpectedly soon. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, in February 2009, Vice president Joseph Biden stressed that: “It’s time to press the *reset* button and to revisit many areas where we can and should work together with Russia”. Since then, the US would cooperate with Russia in identifying a common approach to international security, though there have been different approaches in many problems. As a sign of goodwill, the Georgian and Ukrainian accession to NATO was removed from the agenda; the issue who is responsible for the break out of the crisis between Russia and Georgia dimmed, and for a year the US did not offer military assistance to Georgia.

The offer for *reset* was made in a package with other proposals. As a result, diplomatic confrontation with the West ceased and a system of cooperation was created, as it was the case with establishing an efficient international coalition against the nuclear program of Iran. The main objective of the reset policy, as it was presented by the Vice president J. Biden¹⁹, was to reduce international tension

¹⁸ “ECFR – The Spectre of a Multipolar Europe”, <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa>, August 8, 2012.

¹⁹ J. Biden speech at the Munich Security conference, 2009, <http://www.state.gov>.

and eliminate the threat of military confrontation, to renew the verification procedures in the START Treaty and to prevent frictions between Western countries and Russia due to their activities in ex-soviet space. The results of this policy have confirmed the expectations: the bilateral atmosphere has been improved, the threat of the military confrontation significantly reduced.

The efforts to restart the US-Russia cooperation covered large areas of issues. In 2010, the START Treaty and a new agreement on cooperation in establishing AMD system in Europe were signed; the supply of Russian armament to Iran ceased; the rights to transit Russian territory by NATO troops to Afghanistan were enlarged; close cooperation in reacting on the crisis in Kirghizstan and commercial relations in the field of energy have been extended. On September 8th, 2010 the Russia-US Memorandum on cooperation in Antarctica was signed. It must be said that these were not new initiatives, but constituted the finalization of the suspended negotiations.

Resetting relations with the US and their new approach brought tangible results: Moscow and Washington decided to work together in order to reduce their nuclear arsenals and exclude the proliferation of nuclear arms to other states.

2010 – The Change in Russian Relations with the West

In the spring of 2010, a confidential document leaked to the Russian press. It mentioned the change of the Russian Federation's foreign policy orientation, towards closer relations with developed countries, particularly the US and the EU. The focus was on economic development, not on military cooperation. Particular attention would be given to strengthening relations with main world powers on the basis of economic and cultural interpenetration. Among the elements regarding pro-western orientation were accession to the World Trade Organization and negotiation of the visa liberalization regime with the EU in order to facilitate the flow of investments, ideas and labor force. The modernization agenda of the country was considered as a foreign policy priority, with the main objective to intensify relations with the OECD countries, respectively with the West, the US being on the top of the list. Modernization was necessary for Russia's resurgence and keeping up its role as a major actor in the world.

“The Programme for the Effective Exploitation on a Systemic Basis of Foreign Policy Factors for the Purposes of the Long-term Development of the Russian Federation – drafted by the MFA and approved by the President Medvedev – contains a new foreign policy doctrine, which is characterized by abandoning the division of states into “friends” and “enemies”, trying to promote a policy of pragmatic interests, based on the aspiration toward economic modernization, which means – *détente*”, wrote *Rusky Newsweek*, on May 9th, 2010. The document contains very ambitious aims, including the economic conquest of the Baltic states, the acquisition of the companies in Central Asia, which have been part of the former soviet industrial military complex, continuing the development of relations with China and India.

However, though the authenticity of the document was not contested by the MFA or the presidency, it was not formally presented. Also, in February 2010, a new military doctrine was publicly presented, reflecting an anti-Western approach on such issues as the expansion and growth of NATO's role, deployment of foreign (US) forces in Russia's neighboring countries, anti-missile defense and others. The document on foreign policy has a more polished language, focusing on the economic aspects, avoiding a warlike rhetoric. However, a careful reading leads to the conclusion that the foreign policy objectives are closely linked to those of military doctrine. Some provisions in the document are of concern. For instance, it stresses the development of the cooperation with those UE states "which are positive towards the Russian Federation, primarily Germany, France, Italy and Spain", which means distinguishing them from the new EU members, those from the East.

In general, the foreign policy document clearly emphasizes Russia's sphere of interest, highlighting the need to consolidate the CIS (former soviet) space and to "actively reject" the attempts by the forces from outside the region to interfere in Russia's relations with the CIS states. It calls for supporting the Organization of the Treaty for Collective Security and strengthening the presence of the Russian Navy in Crimea/Black Sea, and for promotion of the Russian language and culture along its borders.

Russian plans – to enlarge its economic presence in the Baltic region – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia –, as well as the provisions to "promote the strengthening of the Russian business in the strategic sectors of the Romanian economy", or to include Ukraine "in the orbit of economic cooperation with Russia", speak for themselves.

In 2010, the Russian foreign policy priorities were linked to the main governmental priority – *the agenda for modernization*. Russia started to consider its foreign policy as a resource in this respect, looking for closer relations with countries which could contribute to the achievement of this objective.

At the meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations, on July 12th, 2010, President Medvedev highlighted that "it is in the interests of Russian democracy for as many nations as possible to follow democratic standards in their domestic policy, but such standards should be developed jointly, taking into account the views of all interested states". Following the line of Putin's speech in Munich, Medvedev said that Russia will insist for "fairer principles of cooperation, building relations between free nations on a solid foundation, and the firm principles of universal international law".

Russia intends to establish "special modernization alliances with its main international partners – such as Germany, France, Italy, the European Union in general, and the United States." "Creating incentives for integration – in Medvedev's opinion – is based on shared modernization imperatives"²⁰, which are necessary to face the challenges common to all and which do not know frontiers. Similar relations are envisaged with China and India.

²⁰ D. Medvedev, *Speech at meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations*, <http://www.kremlin.ru/> July 12, 2012.

“The world, probably, needs new rules, new schemes of interaction and a new understanding of the situation we are in, – stated president Medvedev’s press secretary Gleb Pavlovsky – because there are no more blocks, conflicts between socialist and capitalist regimes, or ideological disputes. There is the only a common civilization“. He named it simple – “Pax Medvedica”²¹.

By attenuating Russia’s fear to be isolated or misunderstood, the reset in US-Russia relations allowed to Russian authorities to pay more attention to its own long term agenda on the creation of a new world order, which led to highlighting that, in its approach to this issue, Russia starts from its *status as unique energy superpower*. Russia treats energy as the main security issue, an important trump and instrument in its foreign policy. It is highlighted by the resolution, in 2010, of its dispute with Norway over the North-European shelf. Division of the shelf among Norway and Russia – two European countries big energy suppliers which did not sign the European Energy Charter – opened the path for the joint commercial exploitation of the Barents Sea. Russia is looking for developing energy markets with China, US and Europe.

Moscow seems to be determined to give up the concept based strictly on the national security and foreign policy interests, by promoting a new multipolar security architecture, in which the risks would be shared and largely assumed. It has to be mentioned that energy resources – oil and gas – have been often used by Russia as political instruments. Ukraine and other European countries got “a clear political message” that Russia would use its energy resources as a political instrument to promote national security interests.

Russia’s revival in its foreign policy is demonstrated by its initiatives in different strategic areas of the world.

European Priorities of the Russian Foreign Policy

Approaching Europe remains a priority issue of the Russian foreign policy. Some analysts think that the European Union would continue to be suspicious about a partnership with Moscow. The Russo-Georgian conflict in summer 2008, as well as the energy crisis fed this defensive European attitude, which led to the reorientation of the Russian foreign policy interests towards the East²².

However, there is an area where the interests of the two parties are crossing: energy resources. In order to avoid a new energy crisis, Russia and the European Union intensified the dialog in this area, and the process resulted in the signing of the Memorandum on the prevention of new energy crises.

The coming into force of the EU Eastern Partnership, with all its financial and political implications, aroused Moscow’s fears, which saw its political interests in the ex-soviet space threatened. Only when it became clear that this European project has a limited attraction, because the Eastern Partnership does

²¹ “Pax Medvedica”, <http://www.edi.org/russia/johnson>.

²² ‘Russia in 21 Century – The image of the desired future’, Report of the Institute for the Russian Modern Development, <http://insor-russia.ru/files/Obraz>.

not offer the opportunity for the six participating states to be integrated in the European Union, did Kremlin's leadership adopt a more tolerant position towards the pro-Western priorities of these countries. It is obvious that Moscow is not satisfied with the fact that ex-soviet states are in the situation to choose between Russia and EU; however, it can not ignore the progress it made in the negotiations on energy issues, which are much more important in the context of the economic crisis, which also affects Russia.

In its political dialogue with the European Union, Moscow is focusing on the situation in Iran and North Korea, which give her advantage to promote Russian interests. Leaders of the two countries have different perceptions of the impact of Russian proposals comparing them with those of Brussels or Washington. This led to the consolidation of Moscow's role in the solution of the situation in these regions.

We must recognize that Eastern Asia and the Middle East are the regions influencing bilateral US-Russia and EU-Russia relations, because on Moscow's position toward the solution of the problems created by Iran and North Korea depends the stability of those areas. The difference between the two – the Middle East and Eastern Asia – lies in the different level of instability caused by the two countries.

Near Abroad

The ex-soviet space is the area where the foreign policy of the Russian Federation has a contradictory character, because the advantages of an aggressive policy were confronted with geostrategic regresses. While it is painful for Kremlin's leaders to admit it, not all ex-soviet states want solid partnerships with Russia.

For Russia, *Ukraine* is a fundamental problem of national security. Kremlin's expectations that after coming to power of the President V. Ianukovich, Ukraine would be less oriented toward Western institutions and more liberal towards Russia, did not come true. On the contrary, relations between Ukraine and Russia have experienced a strong cooling. Ukraine – very interested in the economic penetration in different areas, including in the Caucasus and Central Asia – is falling sometimes in direct competition with Russia, especially in the transport of energy from Central Asia. Kiev wants the reduction of the price on Russian gas, while Moscow is ready for concessions only in exchange of assuming full control over the Ukrainian network of pipelines and its association with the Customs Union (Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan). Kiev is trying to take advantage and fully exploit its geostrategic importance, of which the EU and Washington are fully aware, especially in their relations with and towards Russia. Moscow has openly accused Kiev that it is trying to intensify its cooperation with NATO.

Russia sees its historical and strategic interests in maintaining its influence both in Transnistria and in the rest of the Republic of Moldova. In strategic terms, Russia considers the presence of its forces in Transnistria as an effective blocking of NATO expansion eastwards (as well as keeping its fleet in Sevastopol, Ukraine). Kremlin is acting for keeping the neutrality status of the Republic of

Moldova, stipulated in the Constitution of the country, seeking, at the same time, guarantees in this respect from EU and NATO. All this determine Chişinău to promote a prudent policy between its Euro-Atlantic option and Kremlin suspicions. Knowing Russia's firm opposition to NATO enlargement, the Republic of Moldova avoids even hinting at possible NATO membership, placing emphasis instead on its neutrality status. On the other hand, a possible EU accession of the Republic of Moldova, which enjoys a large popular support, could be probably easier accepted in Moscow, but without Transnistria. However, Russia will never accept total loss of its influence in the region²³.

On the regional level, Moscow will continue its policy to recover its spheres of influence in the ex-soviet space, benefiting from the reset policy in the relations with the US. Under the current conditions and US low interest in Eastern Europe, the resolution of the Transnistrian issue will be approached from this perspective, the federalization of the Republic of Moldova being an instrument to maintain Chişinău in Moscow's sphere of interest. According to the political analyst Dan Dungaciuc, it is only a foreign policy file which Russia is playing pending to other, much more important files, such as the relationships with Germany, relationships with EU, NATO, US. In its relations with the West, Russia is counting on the special partnership with Germany, France and Italy; it follows closely the dissensions inside NATO and EU and would like to see US out from Europe.

In the last century, the competition between the great powers took place mainly in Europe. With the decline of this competition on the old continent, we are witnessing the intensification of the struggle for influence in Central Asia. Powers outside the region have intensified efforts to access renewable energy. China is among the main actors in this regard. The return of Russian influence in Central Asia is undeniable, but may be complicated because of the energy competition with political and geostrategic stakes. Russia's strategy in this area focuses on two objectives: to prohibit the free access of investment in the Caspian basin, which the energy producers are still dependent on, and to prevent a common European energy policy.

In this context it should be noted that the security in the Caspian basin is influenced by the following factors: the geographical location of a small region of attraction for East and West due to its geostrategic importance (energy and gateway to Afghanistan and Iran), the competition between local actors and outsiders regarding the control of hydrocarbon resources, existing and emerging regional conflicts. To this, we can add the presence of opposing security alliances as the CIS and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, on the one hand, and the Organization for Democracy and Development (GUUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) and NATO, on the other. The lack of a joint EU/UE strategy in the region and the involvement of external actors in the security issues of the Caspian Basin have a negative impact²⁴.

²³ Karoly Benes, *Moldova's European Perspective. Breaking the Integration Deadlock?* Stockholm Paper, May 2010, p. 27-29. Institute for Security & Development Policy.

²⁴ "Political and Security Cooperation in Europe's Four Sea Basins", Istituto Affari Internazionali, Documenti 09/13.

After the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, we are facing a complex situation that might last for many years. The Russian-Georgian relations are suspended and the relations between leaders of the two countries remain hostile because of irreconcilable differences on the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, whose independence was recognized by Russia. The October 1, 2012 Parliamentary elections ended with the victory of the opposition. President Saakashvili realized that he lost badly and acknowledged his party's defeat. Although constitutionally Saakashvili still retains immense powers, his influence on Georgian politics has declined dramatically since October. The new Government is likely to continue its rapprochement with Moscow, gradually shifting Georgia's geopolitical orientation toward Russia and conceding more and more to Kremlin²⁵.

As the protracted conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh is concerned, according to Putin, Russia will not impose a solution to resolve this conflict; its solution should not be transferred to Russia, and the two countries must find an acceptable way out of the current situation²⁶.

The Black Sea region is a strategic corridor for East-West energy routes connecting the Caspian and Mediterranean seas. Moscow's strategy to be an energy superpower will be continued with all the possible implications for the states in the region and beyond, Russia maintaining its influence and control in the post-Soviet space, Central Europe and even North Africa. We are witnessing a dramatic change of the Russian role in the area. Through its energy instruments and military presence, Russia declared the region as its sphere of influence, seeking to prevent other power centers to compel recognition in this sensitive and important area. There is a perception of compromise between the US and Russia in the Black Sea, which could postpone any social or political Westernization in the East of the region indefinitely. Also, the EU has not yet a strong presence in the Black Sea, and internal debates related to the financial crisis led to diminishing attention from the Russian near abroad. Moscow, however, is more sensitive to any increase in NATO's influence, than of the EU in the Black Sea. Therefore, it invokes the 1936 Montreux Convention to prevent the passage of warships belonging to non-coastal countries through the straits of Turkey, encouraging it to remain a dominant power in the area. Moscow and Turkey are already involved in various bilateral projects, which provide the basis for the two states to exercise influence in the area.

*“Looking to East” – Among Priority Coordinates
of the Foreign Policy*

The policy of approaching China and penetrating Central Asia, firmly promoted by Putin, is destined to provide all chances for Russia to be a recognized power in this new world balance. Lately, Russia's “Look East” foreign policy

²⁵ *Eurasia Daily Monitor* – The Jameston Foundation, January 9, 2013, Vol.10, Issue 3.

²⁶ “Thomas de Waal, “Vladimir Putin and the South Caucasus”, 4 Oct. 2011, <http://nationalinterest.org>.

orientation has been more strikingly visible. It is not that Russia has given up on Europe. Foreign policy initiatives oriented toward Eastern Asia reflect alteration in its foreign policy priorities. Recent evolutions point to the following:

- Russia-China strategic partnership has been intensified. With the border dispute agreement in place, both nations have available military resources so relieved for other tasks.

- Russia and China conducted the first ever large scale joint military exercises in East Asia to which military observers from many states were invited, except from the United States.

- Russia and China have coordinated their efforts to make the Shanghai Cooperation Organization into more of a regional military bloc. This has given them confidence to demand that the United States sets a timetable for withdrawal of its military presence from Central Asian Republics. Uzbekistan already asked US to withdraw its aero-bases from its territory. Similar requests were addressed to US from other Central Asian Republics.

- Russia re-kindled its strategic partnership with India, expressing publicly its support for India's candidature for the Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council.

- Russia has a strategic partnership with Iran, a country tending to become a regional power in Western Asia. It has, also, good relations with other countries from the region.

The National Security Strategy to 2020

On May 12th, 2009, President Medvedev signed the Decree approving the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020*²⁷. This document replaces the National Security Concept from 1997 (Yeltzin) and 2000 (Putin). The document presents a comprehensive security vision, by chapters on the developments regarding international security, national interests, strategic national priorities and challenges, ensuring national security, national defense, state and public security, improvement of the quality of life of Russian citizens, economy, science, technology and education, healthcare, culture and environment protection. The document highlights that the defense and security of the state and society are major priorities of the Russian national security, followed by the attention for socio-economic aspects, such as the improvement of the quality of life and economic welfare. According to this document, the state of the national security of Russia is directly dependent on the economic potential of the country.

In the military field, it is stressed that all necessary efforts should be made to achieve and to maintain parity with the United States of America in the area of strategic offensive arms, while Russia should become a global power.

The document highlights the interdependence between civil stability and national security, stressing that social and economic development is of the same importance as the military security.

²⁷ <http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>.

In the document are mentioned among the threats to international security the policy of some countries to achieve military supremacy by increasing their arsenals of strategic nuclear and conventional arms, by unilaterally developing a global missile defense system and militarizing space, by NATO's expansion close to Russia's border, and by non-observance of the international agreements on arms control. Energy security is, also, included among threats, arguing that the competition for energy resources could create tensions, which may escalate up to the use of military force on the borders of Russia and its allies.

Among the threats are included, also, some internal aspects, such as the demographic situation, poverty, healthcare, terrorism, separatism, radicalism, extremism, organized crime, corruption and epidemics.

One has to mention the balanced approach regarding the national security, which is not the case with external threats. The military threats are predominantly from the West, reflecting a traditional approach of the Russian security vision, based on the fear that the country is surrounded by enemies, making it necessary to create alliances and "buffer zones" against these threats. The main threats according to the document are coming from the West – USA and NATO respectively.

The *National Security Strategy to 2020* reconfirms Russia's foreign policy objectives from 2008 – building a multipolar world, in which the international order would be ensured by 5-6 major actors. Russia thinks that, currently, UNO is the central element of the international system of stability, offering equal chances to all states, based on political instruments for the resolution of global and regional crisis situations. According to this vision, Russia will increase its interaction within multilateral fora such as the G-8, G-20, RIC (Russia/India/China), BRIC (Brazil/Russia/India/China), as well as using the potential of other forms of international cooperation.

Vladimir Putin's Return

Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency and to the helm of the foreign policy was met with fear by some that it would mean the return to the foreign policy of his former mandates. However, now Russia is different. The envisaged economic growth was limited because of weak institutions and other causes defining Russian policy.

On May 7, 2012, at his investment as president, Vladimir Putin signed the Decree 605 on "*Measures to be implemented by the Russian Foreign Policy*".

On July 9th, 2012, in Moscow, at the Meeting with Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to international organizations, the President outlined Russia's main foreign policy priorities. Previously, he had tasked the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to prepare, until the end of the year, a new version of the Foreign Policy Concept, stressing that:

"Russia's foreign policy has always been independent and it will remain so. We follow a consistent policy based on continuity and the unique role the country plays in world affairs and in global civilization's development, a role that has taken shape over the centuries. Russia's policy has nothing in common

with isolationism or confrontation and is based on integration in global processes. Russia must have a dynamic, constructive, pragmatic and flexible range of diplomatic instruments at its disposal, in particular as concerns promoting our country's economic interests, which is a particularly important and far from an easy task".

"It is not enough to simply be passive observers and "follow developments", as the diplomatic reports usually suggest. We need to be more active in trying to influence the situation in circumstances when Russian interests are directly affected, to be ready for all possible evolution of the events, even the most unfavorable scenarios" ... "Our diplomats are well versed in the traditional and familiar methods of international relations, if not masters in this field, but as far as using new methods, 'soft power' methods, for example, there is still much to reflect on"

Stressing that no reliable solution for overcoming the global economic crisis has been found yet, in Putin's opinion, "the prospects are looking more and more worrying. The debt problems in the Eurozone and its slide towards recession are just the tip of the iceberg as far as the global economy's unsolved structural problems go. The global economic powers – the USA, the EU and Japan – can see their leadership erode, but the absence of new development models is putting a brake on global growth. The traditional Western economic powers have been weakened by the crisis, which has exacerbated social and economic problems in the developed economies, aggravated by the multi-vector nature of global development today."

As to the USA, Putin said that "we cannot but feel concerned when we see attempts to replace the anti-Soviet Jackson-Vanik amendment with an anti-Russian law, or to upset the strategic balance by building a missile defense system".

V. Putin reiterated his opinion that "Russia and the EU could set far more ambitious goals than those we have today. We could build a common market from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a market worth trillions of Euros. The life itself demands that we move in this direction".

While the relations with the West seem to face difficulties, Russia intends to strengthen its positions in the Asia-Pacific region, strategic and practical cooperation with China being a major priority, including "coordination of efforts on the international agenda. The same applies to the other fast-growing Asian countries, and above all, to India, our longstanding partner and friend"²⁸.

Concluding Remarks

Russia is distressed by the contradiction between the imperial nostalgia, on the one hand, and dramatic decline of its might after the disintegration of the USSR, on the other, which is conferring her a feeling of insecurity. Meanwhile, Russia is strong enough to create some problems, when leaders of the country

²⁸ Vladimir Putin's Speech at a meeting with Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representative to international organizations, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4145>.

consider that its national interests and priorities are disregarded, or there is a hostile attitude towards them. There is a large understanding within Russian elite that today's Russia is not strong enough to defy or to assert itself among global leaders without dialogue and support from other important actors.

In the centre of the debates on Russian foreign policy are the issues of national identity and interest. The answers to these issues have grounded the foreign policy's orientations. Russia achieved two big objectives: regaining its role as an important world power and remaking Russia's position as a significant actor in the former Soviet space, though there are still concerns related to dependence of its economy to energy export.

Russian foreign policy in the recent years highlights a complex of dynamic processes, combining the efforts for a vigorous foreign policy able to consolidate Russia's international position with a prudent, constructive approach to its integration, in a positive way, in the international system. This suggests that Russia does not intend to make concessions on its primary aspirations on the international level.

Documents from the Putin's and Medvedev's presidencies – Foreign Policy Concept, National Security Strategy, Military Doctrine, Statements regarding the key principles of the national foreign policy and strategy –, followed by the recent measures adopted by the president Putin lead to the conclusion that there is a continuity and similarity in highlighting the following aspects:

- Setting up a multipolar world, based on the principles of international law and excluding unilateral dominance.
- Russia's wish to cooperate and to develop friendly relations with all countries, including Western ones.
- Any security model includes as a priority the protection of Russian citizens regardless of their residence.
- The idea that Russia has privileged interests in some particular regions, such as the ex-Soviet space, is promoted openly or allusively.

The main differences between Putin's and Medvedev's Foreign Policy Concept lie not in the analysis of the global trends, but in Russia's capacity to influence them. Medvedev's concept argues that Russia's primary goal must be to continue to modernize and to create conditions that are conducive to the country's integration into the global economy. Once it is realized, Russia will act to forge "a crisis-resistant international system"²⁹.

An attentive analysis of the official documents on the foreign and security policy clearly highlights that, beyond the hostile rhetoric, Moscow does not perceive NATO and USA as a threat. NATO's enlargement, anti-missile defense and other Western policies are, of course, on the list of those affecting Russia's security interests. However, Russia does not see imminence of a nuclear conflict or a large scale military conflict. The main focus in the official documents is on the threats represented by international terrorism, the spreading of local conflicts

²⁹ Nicolai N. Petro, "Russian Foreign Policy, 2000-2011: From Nation-State to Global Risk Sharing", www.npetro.net.

over the Russian territory and the inherent threats stemming from different internal problems, such as excessive dependence of the economy on the energy export, deterioration of the social infrastructure and weak state administration. All these make it difficult to adopt some decisions independently from the pressure caused by special interests. Russia is still dependent upon the West for its economic modernization and political independence. Western investments are crucial for the economic modernization of the country. All these elements suggest that Russia will continue to combine in its foreign policy the elements of assertiveness with those of cooperation, articulating a new and coherent vision of national interests.

Consequently, Russia will promote a rational and pragmatic foreign policy, excluding exhausting confrontations, inclusive of the race of armaments, opting for consolidation of its interaction with the EU.

Regarding NATO, the alliance's plans of extension to Russia's borders, and attempts to endow NATO with global functions that go counter to norms of international law, are unacceptable to Russia, and constitute the issues of disagreement between Kremlin and Brussels. Some political analysts are optimistic that in Russia a realistic consensus is taking shape, which explains also Russia's particular interest in combining the energy security with interdependence. However, the skeptics are arguing that the continuing presence of the Russian basis on the territory of some CIS countries does not support this opinion.

It is expected that President Putin will continue the foreign policy agenda, which is supported by financial and political elites, that he will not seek for confrontation, but rather would act strategically in relations with his partners from EU, USA, China and the Arab world. Over the years, Moscow has made important efforts to build strong relations with USA, EU and other important actors, and does not seem willing to sacrifice them. Today's Russia is more interested in regaining what its leaders consider to be a place it deserves among the great global powers, than in challenging the West. The Russian Foreign Policy Concept is aimed at strengthening global security (political, military, economic, in the field of energy and environment) by sharing the risks not only between governments, but on the basis of agreements on the way it will be realized by a comprehensive number of political actors, always with UN blessing. Future debates, will probably, touch upon the division of responsibilities in assuming the risks on national, regional and international level. The debates might continue on the way to establish the lines of separation between national, regional and international responsibilities in assuming the risks.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bakreski, O., B. Avramovska, Z. Nikolski, "The Changing Strategic Standing of Russia and International Security", <http://www.globalpolitician.com/27004-russia-geopolitics-security>;
- Benes, Karoly, "Moldova's European Perspective. Breaking the Integration Deadlock?", Stockholm Paper, May 2010, Institute for Security & Development Policy;

- Dinuțescu, Rodica, *Argumentul nuclear în politica externă a statelor*, Editura Institutul European, Jassy, 2011;
- “ECFR – The Spectre of a Multipolar Europe”, <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa>, August 8, 2012;
- “European Security Treaty”, Draft, November 29, 2009, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/275>;
- Eurasia Daily Monitor* – The Jameston Foundation, January 9, 2013, Vol.10, Issue 3;
- Geopolitical Journey*, part. 4, Moldova, Nov. 19, 2010;
- “Hilary Clinton’s Remarks on the Future of European Security”, U.S. Department of State, January 29, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/136273.htm>;
- “J. Biden speech at the Munich Security Conference”, 2009, <http://www.state.gov>;
- Kommersant*, March 15, 2010 – <http://www.edi.org.russia/johnson>;
- Sergei Lavrov, Speech delivered at MGIMO (Moscow University), September 1, 2008, <http://www.mid.ru>;
- Medvedev, Dmitri, “Speech at meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations”, <http://www.kremlin.ru/> July 12, 2012;
- Medvedev, Dmitri, “Speech at the Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders”, <http://www.kremlin.ru>, June 15, 2008;
- Medvedev, Dmitri, “Kontseptsia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii”, <http://www.mid.ru>, July 12, 2008;
- Medvedev, Dmitri, “Vystuplenie na soveshchani s poslami i postoyannymi predstavatelyami Rossiiskoi Federatsii pri mezhdunarodnyh organizatsiyah”, <http://www.kremlin.ru>, July 15, 2008;
- Medvedev, Dmitry, “Debates of the Valdai Club”, *Soci, Mediafax, Agerpres*, September 12, 2008;
- Mikhelidze, Nona, Report of the International Seminar “Political and Security Cooperation in Europe’s Four Sea Basins”, Instituto Affari Internazionali, Documenti IAI 09/13, April 2009, www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai0913.pdf;
- “Mutual Georgian-Russian provocations may turn serious”, *Oxford Analytica*, Global Strategic Analysis and Advisory, May 13, 2011;
- Nazavisimaia Gazeta*, July 10, 2012;
- “Pax Medvedica”, <http://www.edi.org/russia/johnson>;
- Petro, Nicolai N., “Russian Foreign Policy, 2000-2011: From Nation-State to Global Risk Sharing”, www.npetro.net;
- Putin, Vladimir, “Vneshnepoliticheskaya koncepsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii/The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation”, <http://www.mid.ru>, June 28, 2000;
- Putin, Vladimir, *Vystuplenie i discussii na Munchenskoj konferentsii po voprosam politiki bezopasnosti*, www.kremlin.ru, February 10, 2007;
- “Russia in 21 Century – The image of the desired future”, Report of the Institute for the Russian Modern Development, <http://insor-russia.ru/files/Obraz>;
- Secieru, Stanislav, *Rusia după imperiu: între putere regională și custode global*, Editura Institutului European, Jassy, 2008;
- Tsygankov, Andrei P., San Francisco State University, “Change and Continuity in Russia’s Foreign Policy”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, Nr. 109, March 8, 2012;
- Waal, Thomas de, “Vladimir Putin and the South Caucasus”, October 4, 2011, <http://nationalinterest.org>;
- <http://www.edi.org/russia/johnson>;
- <http://www.mid.ru/2008/09>;
- <http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>.