

RUSSIA DOES NOT NEED NATO

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Discussions about Russia entering NATO are directly associated with the evolution of the relationship between the USA and China. Now one of the key processes in international relations - or maybe even the most crucial one - is the gradual involvement of the USA and China into what seems to be a long-lasting conflict cycle. It seems that, after a period of contemplation and attempts to draw China into a kind of collaborative international format (for instance, talks about G2), the United States is tending towards a model of containing China and limiting its possibilities of extending its international influence or acquiring new allies. This is especially the case for allies like Russia, as the latter is one of the two leading nuclear powers in the world and the owner of sizeable unique natural energy reserves. **Many experts in Washington now think that it is better to grant Russia membership in NATO and, by doing so, this would effectively cut the country off from becoming a potential strong ally of China.**

The USA's allies in Europe are undoubtedly opposed to Russia's accession to NATO. They view NATO as a select club that is founded on certain values and an accommodation of specific interests. A country that equals the USA in terms of military power is surely not what Europeans actually want – such a scenario runs the risk that they would simply be abandoned and forgotten.

Moreover, discussions about Russia's membership in NATO are associated with the reappraisal of the meaning of this organisation for the USA. The USA now holds a different view on the role of NATO than it used to espouse during the Cold war period. Now, it is much more flexible. The USA no longer considers NATO as a select club that is limited to countries exhibiting a certain political, social and economic model. At least this is the case now that it is Barack Obama's term in office.

While discussing ways to overcome hostility and bring about rapprochement between Russia and NATO, the most realistic outcome would be the continuation of the process of reforming European security architecture, as well as the establishment of new institutional and legal conditions. It is either the European Security Treaty that was proposed as a project by the Russian government nearly a year ago, in December 2009, or the elaboration of a series of sectoral relations, which would ensure greater collaboration between Russia and NATO countries in different spheres. I think such an activity would help to significantly improve the atmosphere of trust between Russia and NATO.

With respect to the European Security Treaty, Russia thinks that it is necessary to establish new international institutions in order to ensure European security. However, the United States and its allies consider the correct approach to be breathing new life into the OSCE, which has become a rather artificial organisation as of late.

None of the existing international organisations in the security sphere (neither the OSCE nor NATO nor the Collective Security Treaty Organisation nor the European Union, which also claims to have a role in security issues) – none of these organisations have been able to prevent a single war in Europe in the last 20 years and there have already been quite a number of such conflicts. None of these organisations have been able to cope with their primary task.

The international focus is clearly shifting from the Middle East, where the situation is continually bad, to the region encompassing Afghanistan, Pakistan and the former Soviet territory in Central Asia. **Namely here, it would be appropriate to speak not about the Middle East, but of an Extended Central Asia as a new international topic for exploration.** I think that suppressing the disturbances that will take place in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US troops will determine an important practical line of cooperation between Russia and NATO. Apart from providing transportation logistics for the troops operating in Afghanistan, this will involve a joint struggle against what is a serious drug threat.

The most complicated question is, naturally, the anti-ballistic system and the future of this question on the whole. To date, there have not been any signs of significant contact or an affinity of positions between the two respective sides.

It is easy and, at the same time, difficult to answer the question as to what NATO has to offer Russia and what Russia has to offer NATO. Russia may be interesting for NATO in that such partnership would be capable of striking a colossal blow to the interests and positions of China. As for NATO, I think that it has nothing to offer Russia at the moment. At present, Russia does not need NATO membership. ■

Recorded by Anastasia Orlova