
Medvedev Plan: Giving Russia voice but no veto in the new European Security System

On November 2nd, 2010, **Richard Krickus**, Professor Emeritus at Mary Washington College (USA), delivered a lecture within the framework of the Master's MIREES at the Faculty of Political Science "Roberto Ruffilli" in Forlì.

The central question in Dr. Krickus's Open Lecture was how the west, that is the United States and the European Union (EU), can build an inclusive relationship with Russia without diluting their own ability to control the development of **European security infrastructure**. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has argued since 2007 that the uni-polarity of the United States was no longer a reality, and that there needed to be new dialogue between Russia, the United States and the European Union over a comprehensive security structure. But the reality of this was most clear in 2008 with the conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia where the existing European and western security structures were effectively unable to respond in any way. In addition, the ongoing debate over the American initiative to deploy a Missile Defense System (MDS) in Central and Eastern Europe is another point of contention that suggests the need for better dialogue.

While western, and particularly American, media tended to over play Medvedev's statement as confrontational, and while they continue to focus on the illiberal elements of Russian politics, Professor Krickus argued that this is in fact the opportunity to include Russia in re-designing Europe's security system. In his analysis, the media focus is distorting an overture to the west for dialogue on the issue of security. Professor Krickus argued that the events of the last few years, and the fact that Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and that it controls significant energy resources, mean it is not reasonable to ignore Russia in this issue. The first step in this should be, in fact, the offering of voting rights in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to Russia via the Membership Action Plan (MAP). MAP would not imply Russian membership in NATO, but rather would bring about a level of integrate strategic thinking between NATO and Russia.

Professor Krickus acknowledged the controversy and the challenges that this idea presents, not least because Russia deems NATO to be part of an old system that needs to be transformed. The other elements that make this a controversial proposal are the fact of NATO expansion into the Russian sphere of influence (particularly the Baltic region) and the continued potential of including Georgia into NATO, all factors that do not please Russia. In addition to this there continue to be disagreements over the deployment of the MDS, which would give the US First Strike capabilities, providing defense against a weakened Russian missile system after an initial US strike, in the event of conflict.

Having provided the context within which this debate was playing out, Professor Krickus suggested there were also some positive developments pushing all parties in the right direction. First of all the decision by President Obama to abandon the "Starwars" MDS and develop one in collaboration with Russia demonstrates an openness to the dialogue over common security. Second of all there was the signing and, in the US but not yet in Russia, ratification of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Yet while these were positive developments, there would need to be more work on both sides in accepting the others reality in order to move forward. For Russia this may mean accepting that NATO is here to stay and thus becoming more of a player within it; for the United States and the EU it will be recognizing the importance of a partnership with Russia in the evolution of the regions security structure, and thus including it on these terms.

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