

## **Singhofen: NATO and Russia. How to Safeguard the Partnership?**

Ten years after the adoption of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and five years after the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council, the general mood is anything but exuberant. Cooperation is in an ambivalent state, debates about the planned deployment of rockets in eastern Europe are causing tensions, and the Kosovo question, the enlargement of NATO towards the east and the future of the CFE Treaty are putting a considerable strain on the relations between NATO and Russia. The question is: What is the problem?

Cooperation between the two parties has been in place since 1991. Its legal framework is the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, which also specifies their fields of cooperation. However, the overall record offers hardly any cause for rejoicing: The goal of a 'new quality' as described in the 2002 Declaration of Rome has not yet been achieved.

There are three identifiable deficits: First, there is a clear imbalance in cooperation. It is true that a large number of Council meetings were held, but this political cooperation has no counterpart at the military level. Second, there is a lack of practical results. Mutual agreement has been achieved on some points at the political level, but military cooperation so far shows hardly any concrete results. And third, the markedly negative attitude of important foreign and security-policy elites in Russia towards NATO starkly contrasts with the good working relations within the NATO-Russia Council itself.

It seems that both sides are well aware of the cooperation deficits and the potential scope for further development. Both partners specified the latter as their goal, and it was addressed by an international working group in 2002 and 2004. However, it will not be possible to correct these deficits as long as their causes have not been eliminated. And there are quite a number of them.

To begin with, it may be said that Russia, currently a bureaucratic and authoritarian system, is an actor that does not comply with the fundamental elements and values of the North Atlantic Treaty. As a community of values, NATO can hardly ignore the wide value gap between Russia and itself. At the same time, Russia is successfully attempting to stabilise itself outwardly by conjuring up bogus enemies and using an anti-Western rhetoric. Moreover, Russia is endeavouring to re-establish itself as a great power. This per se limits cooperation with NATO, especially as the incentive for Russia to bind itself is very small. Resulting from this, the fears of a neo-imperialist Russia that have resurfaced in Poland, the Baltic states, and Georgia put a strain on cooperation between NATO and Russia. And finally, crucial segments of the foreign and security-policy elites in Moscow disapprove of cooperating with NATO anyway.

However, there also are problems within NATO. Thus, the fact that the alliance is currently going through a complex transformation process has a negative effect on cooperation with Russia. Another problem is the addition of new members to the alliance and, as a result of this, the extension of its area of operations into the post-Soviet region, with Moscow protesting vehemently against Georgia's and Ukraine's accession to NATO. Furthermore, US endeavours to skirt around the UN and other international regimes in its foreign policy have led to fears that Russia might lose its influence on the global stage and be marginalised in the long run. And finally, it should be mentioned that the views about cooperation with Russia differ within NATO itself, as the new East European members, the accession candidates, and other member states watch Moscow with a critical eye for diverse reasons. All in all, the deficits described above can be reduced to two factors: On the one hand, there are the structural differences between the cooperation partners, and on the other, there are the ongoing transformation processes on both sides.

Strained NATO-Russia relations are nothing new. The enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance by east European countries and the Kosovo crisis of 1999 have led to tensions before. First, to continue reviving the relations, military cooperation should be enhanced, second, practical results should be sought at the political and military level, and third, the discrepancy in Russia between good cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council on the one hand and the reservations of the political elites in Moscow vis-à-vis the West on the other should be eliminated. However, there seems to be hardly any scope for all this at the moment.

Still, these endeavours should not be allowed to slacken. There are even several arguments in favour of continuing the security-policy cooperation. First: Even though the goals set in the Declaration of Rome have not yet been accomplished, much has already been achieved. Second: In the field of security policy, the cooperation that was established brings the two sides together in fighting new threats, such as that of terrorism. And third: After the end of the Cold War and the confrontation between the blocks, and in view of the new historical situation that emerged from it, Europe has no other option but to cooperate with Russia.

The West should not challenge cooperation with Russia. It should endeavour to minimise the frictions resulting from the structural differences and the transformation processes on both sides. Thus, the West could offer Moscow an adaptation of the CFE Treaty. With regard to the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO, the West could refrain from taking overhasty steps. And it should try to expand cooperation on both sides wherever possible. Next to military cooperation, there certainly are enough other areas in which new perspectives are opening up.