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Russia and the Transatlantic Relationship

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I.

Let me start with some comments on matters of principle:

Given that Russia is their immediate neighbour, Germany and the European Union countries have two fundamental interests in favour of the closest possible cooperation with Russia:

We have a strategic interest in a politically and economically modern Russia which is democratically constituted and subject to the rule of law, and which acts accordingly.

And we have a strategic interest in a predictable, non-threatening Russia which acts cooperatively.

The NATO-Russia Council and EU-Russian relations, but also the Council of Europe, offer opportunities to develop more mutual trust with Russia in this spirit and to exert influence through closer cooperation, in the expectation that Russia will act in accordance with these institutions' standards and values.

II.

The question which thus arises is: what kind of partner are we dealing with?

We very much welcome the new beginning in US-Russian relations and the prospect of

a conclusion of a START follow-up treaty soon. We also welcome the message that I have heard here in Washington, namely that there is great satisfaction with the cooperation with Russia in other thematic areas. It is helpful, in terms of solving the numerous international and global challenges we face, if Russia has the sense that it is on level terms with the US when it comes to status.

However, Russia still has a long way to go to achieve the goal, set out in its new *National Security Strategy until 2020*, of becoming a self-confident world power. This was made clear, not least, by the economic and financial crisis, which has hit Russia especially hard. Russia's unilateral focus on its natural resources, its lack of innovation and its massive bureaucracy are major obstacles to a swift exit from the crisis and, at least initially, prevent Russia from keeping pace with emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil. The repeatedly voiced fears of encirclement, too, are a further expression of the fact that Russia is far from being a self-confident world power at present.

III.

So how should we deal with Russia?

As a general principle, we should seek cooperation with Russia wherever possible but we should not chase after it. Where there

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DR. ANDREAS SCHOCKENHOFF

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are instances of foreign policy failings on Russia's part – as in the Georgia crisis – or domestic policy deficits, such as the problems with the rule of law, we should address these issues in appropriate terms. We should also look at Russian proposals such as President Dmitry Medvedev's initiative for a European security treaty and if these proposals create genuine added value in the security arena, we should seek to reach an agreement with Moscow.

IV.

As regards the Medvedev proposal for a new European security treaty, the existing structures with NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe – which are based on common values – continue to offer every opportunity for intensive deliberation of Euro-Atlantic security concerns. The commitments arising from the UN Charter and the OSCE Final Act, too, are still valid and do not need to be reframed in a new treaty. Genuine added value for security will only be achieved if binding principles of international law are complied with and tangible measures to strengthen security in Europe are agreed and implemented jointly: in other words, if more trust and confidence are created through closer cooperation. Whether the ensuing strengthening of security in Europe should then be reaffirmed in a political declaration is a moot point.

NATO and Russia have agreed to deepen their cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council. Here too, particular emphasis should be placed on a mutual deepening of trust. For example, regular talks could take place in the NATO-Russia Council on themes of particular relevance to Russia's security interests. I am thinking, for example, of the fundamental although distant prospect of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, over which Russia has no right of veto, but I am also thinking of issues such as missile defence or a dialogue about the new NATO strategy.

However, we must also expect Russia to show willingness to engage in a trust-building dialogue about NATO countries' concerns and fears about Russia. The con-

cerns of the Baltic countries and to some extent Poland as well are well-known to you.

Not least, I would also expect the agreed joint appraisal of 21st century threats to have a confidence-building effect.

V.

EU-Russia relations, too, can make a substantial contribution to building trust and confidence and strengthening security in Europe. Closer cooperation, which is what we are seeking to achieve through the negotiations on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, would greatly enhance security in Europe. I need only mention energy security and more shared internal security through joint measures to curb terrorism and crime; not least, a broadening of exchange and an easing of visa regulations would add a great deal of value to trust and security.

VI.

A major challenge in and for relations between the EU and Russia concerns their shared neighbourhood. Moscow's claim to spheres of influence in its neighbourhood run counter to President Medvedev's declared goal of creating a "new security architecture in Europe", which must be based on relationships of equality in our common European home. That is in Russia's interest, not least, as well. The fact is that Russia needs stable neighbours for its development – neighbours with whom it can develop future-oriented cooperation. In other words, what are needed are genuine partnership instead of imperialist pressure and new forms of integration instead of old-style re-integration. I have been following very closely the nuanced and self-critical debate among the Russian elites about Moscow's neighbourhood policy. One of the main protagonists is Konstantin Kosachev, the Chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs. This debate offers hope that soft power and confidence-building will become more important as instruments of Russian foreign policy.

1. Februar 2010

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VII.

This is a good point at which to cast a glance at Russia's internal development:

The economic crisis was a moment of truth for Russia. It laid bare all of Russia's chronic domestic problems, long denounced by President Medvedev in increasingly drastic terms: its continued backwardness, weak capacities for innovation, the absence of the rule of law, and corruption – but above all, its internal democratic deficit.

It is not democracy which is threatening the current leadership's modernization programme, but passivity and a lack of public participation. The individual initiative and civic engagement which developed in the 1990s must be revitalized. Russia needs the active participation of its society; it needs a genuine separation of powers; it needs independent media; and it needs committed individuals who are willing to engage from the grassroots up. Without these, Russia will not progress, and it certainly will not achieve its self-proclaimed goal of becoming a self-confident world power.

Can this type of systemic change be achieved under President Medvedev?

Beyond his rhetoric, the Russian President has sent out some encouraging signals. Measures of relevance to civil society are the amendment of the legislation on non-governmental organizations and the reconvening of the Council for the Development of Civil Society under the chairmanship of Ella Pamfilova. Another example is the ratification of Protocol No. 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is an important step. There is also a slowly expanding group of institutions, experts, economists and media who are calling for a fundamental systemic shift towards democracy and self-determination and a new relationship between state and society.

The challenges are immense, however, and are epitomised by the numerous murders of journalists in recent years. As long as these crimes go unsolved, the "legal nihilism" which President Medvedev is attempting to

curb will continue to hold sway in Russia. Despite all the announcements, very few real improvements in Russia's legal system can be discerned, especially in commercial and financial law. In my view, two important cases must be regarded as the benchmark against which to measure whether a new beginning is genuinely taking place in Russia's justice system: the Khodorkovsky trial and the trial of Anna Politkovskaya's murderers. Both these cases were missed opportunities, however.

VIII.

What can we do?

Russia is an autocracy whose internal structures can only be influenced to a limited extent from outside. It is Russian society, first and foremost, which must bring about a change in conditions in Russia. Let me be clear on one point: to what extent President Medvedev can achieve his objective of modernizing Russia with his ideas and proposals is an entirely open question. Nonetheless, when it comes to his efforts to liberalize Russian society, we should take him at his word and utilize every opportunity to support him.

Influence can only be brought to bear successfully from outside if it can link in with existing internal developments. Entry points, in terms of promoting an open society, could include, for example, expanding the provision of advice, engaging in open and critical dialogue with official partners, stepping up support for the champions of open debate both within and outside official structures, cooperating with civil society on practical projects, raising awareness of our own pluralist society, and further easing travel restrictions and promoting more exchange between schools, students, journalists and civil society groups. Not least, economic links, trade and investment can also help to facilitate more openness and liberalization of Russian society.

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Let me conclude with a comment about our transatlantic relationship:

It is quite normal, in the context of our countries' relations with Russia, for us to have divergent interests. That will be immediately obvious to anyone who looks more closely at Europe: we need only think of the Baltic countries and Poland, on the one hand, or Italy, Spain and Portugal, on the other, and not least Germany. As Europeans, we must do even more to align our positions. Between Americans and Europeans, too, a regular dialogue about Russia is needed in order to reconcile different views and interests and to reach agreement on how to contribute to Russia's modernization. I would like to take a small step in this direction at this event today, so let me conclude by thanking the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung very warmly for hosting this meeting. Above all, however, I would like to thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here this evening. I very much look forward to our discussion.