

RUSSIA AND THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

A conference series

**A CONFERENCE SERIES ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
OF RUSSIA AND THE NORDIC COUNTRIES**

"The Nordic Pearls* – independent bilateral cooperation institutions - will, in a conference series in the course of 2015 and 2016, address different aspects of Nordic-Russian relations in the past and present. From 2011 to 2013 "the Pearls" hosted a similar conference series, with corresponding focus on Germany and the Nordic countries.

WE ARE

Hanaholmen/Hanasaari in Helsinki - the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre was founded by a bilateral agreement between the Swedish and the Finnish governments, and first opened on June 1st, 1975. It reinforces connections between Finland and Sweden in the spheres of culture, politics, business and civil society



Voksenåsen in Oslo was given by Norway to Sweden as a donation in thanks for the Swedish aid program during World War II. Its purpose is to strengthen the bonds between the two countries and to contribute to Swedish-Norwegian cooperation and understanding. Voksenåsen also works with Swedish-Norwegian issues with an international perspective.



The Foundation for Danish-Norwegian Cooperation - Lysebu - Oslo, and Schæffergården-Copenhagen. The Foundation was established in 1946 with the money remaining from the Danish fundraising program for food supply to Norway during World War II. Its aim is to contribute to increasing understanding and cooperation between Denmark and Norway



Biskops Arnö in Sweden is a Nordic Folk high school, situated 40 kilometers from Stockholm near Bålsta. Biskops Arnö has a special literary focus, and the combination of this and its Nordic profile means that it is particularly suitable for conferences such as this.



The Nordic House in Reykjavik is a cultural institution established in 1968, operated by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Its goal is to foster and support cultural connections between Iceland and the other Nordic countries, and it houses a diverse program of cultural events.



DEAR FRIENDS,

It is a pleasure, on behalf of my colleagues, managers of the "Nordic Pearls" network of collaborating institutions, to invite you to follow our conference series on Russia and the Nordic countries. The series will be held from 2015 to 2016 and will address different aspects of past and present Nordic-Russian relations. From 2011 to 2013, the "Pearls" hosted a similar conference series focusing on Germany and the Nordic countries.

Throughout history the development of Russia and the Nordic countries has been closely interwoven. Their relationship, though varying over time, has had an important impact on both regions, and is still crucial. In a rapidly changing world, the Nordic countries and Russia need to be aware of, and possibly to redefine, their own position. Further development of our neighbourly relations is an important aspect of that process.

The aim of this conference series is to create a common arena for dialogue for Russians and Scandinavians, in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of the contemporary and historical aspects of the relations between our countries.

This pamphlet includes a number of articles, intended as input for the coming debate. They are written from a Nordic point of view, even though there might be a small imbalance in the Norwegian favor.

Yours,

Karl Einar Ellingsen
Director of Voksenåsen



FORE- WORD

BY THORVALD STOLTENBERG

Former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs



Voksenåsen has initiated a Nordic conference series on Russia and the Nordic countries. The series starts in Helsinki, and continues in Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Reykjavik before summing up in a final event considering future perspectives, in Oslo in October 2016.

This conference series takes place in a time of great challenges in the relationship between Russia and the West. We are currently experiencing the most acute crisis since the Cold War. Crimea and the unrest in East Ukraine with subsequent Western sanctions are crucial elements in this crisis.

I am not at all comfortable with today's development. We know how easy it is for large international conflicts to escalate. The current crisis may trigger a new arms race propelled by a deep, mutual distrust. It would be most unfortunate if we should end up in a new kind of Cold War. Neither Europe nor the Nordic countries would benefit from a new rivalry between Russia and the USA.

I am by nature optimistic. And I am interested in finding solutions. We have previously seen that it is possible to find ways out of difficult situations between the East and the West. During the Cold War the Soviet Union and the US mutually engaged enemy images. But we still managed to start a process of détente. Currently the two sides are not declared enemies. Therefore it should be

easier to secure détente today. We should also remind ourselves of the bold Ostpolitik ("Eastern policy") of Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr. It created its own dynamics and contributed vitally to ending the Cold War, and eventually to the German reunification. We must not disregard such thinking.

At the end of the Cold War, we discussed setting up a European peace instrument with Russia as an essential partner. We were of the opinion that security should be obtained in cooperation with the Russians, not against them.

In those days of optimism I had the pleasure of establishing the Barents Cooperation, a regional cooperation where the Nordic countries met their Russian partners.

We succeeded in creating people-to-people cooperation across the borders with Russia. We set up meeting-places for political leaders from Russia and the Nordic Countries.

This regional cooperation has worked for almost 25 years. During this time a lot has taken place. We have carried out comprehensive exchange programmes. We have organised thousands of common projects, and Russian students have become the largest group of foreign students here in Norway. On both sides of the borders between the Nordic countries and Russia, new knowledge about the other side is being created.

We have learnt a lot about each other, which makes cooperation easier. We have built a foundation of political trust that I hope we can draw on in the time to come.

I think that this conference series on the relationship with Russia has to connect to our experiences on the regional level. In addition it must be a goal for each of the conferences that we explain, not defend, Russian actions and Russian politics. That is why Russian participation is essential.

I consider it crucial that this conference series is a Nordic conference series. Russia is important to all the Nordic countries since they all encounter Russia in the North, albeit in different ways and in different locations.

In recent decades a dominating perspective in the Nordic capitals has been that Nordic-Russian relations have evolved in a positive and constructive way, on both national and regional levels. But with the current crisis in Ukraine a new element of insecurity has emerged, with regard to the understanding of the situation as well as uncertainty over which politics the countries should follow. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that informal talks be established on the development within Russia as well as on our relations with Russia. It is vital that we engage representatives from our great neighbour country in Nordic-Russian dialogue.



RUSSIA AND THE NORDIC COUNTRIES – A BRIEF HISTORY

BY UFFE ØSTERGAARD *Professor*

In the years between 700 and 1200 the Nordic countries were active in the entire Russian area. The terms "Varægerne" or "væringier" (from old Russian *varjag*, old Norse *væringi*, Greek *varangoi*) in early Russian sources referred to Scandinavians, who with Rurik fronted the Rusrijet in the late 800s.

The modern discussion on the historic role of the varæger started, according to historian John Lind (HT 1996), in 1735 by the publication *De Varagis*, by a German researcher, G. S. Bayer, at the Russian Academy of Science. In a fierce dispute and as a frequently addressed issue, the question resurfaced in 1749 in a speech by German born historian G. F. Muller, which was censured and eventually confiscated.

The Mongols dominated the Russian territory after 1240, when they crushed Kiev and burnt the city to the ground. During their hegemonic rule the princes of Moscow seized the opportunity and conquered the remaining Russian territory. This made Russia both a European as well as an Asian country.

Under Ivan III The Great (1440-1505; in Russian Ivan Vasiljevitj Velikij), Moscow conquered the surrounding Russian states,

including the Scandinavian-influenced city state of Novgorod (there were thousands of well-kept rune-texts written on pieces of birch bark) in 1478, and Tver in 1485.

In 1480 Ivan III finally liberated Russia from the Mongol yoke in a sheer demonstration of power. At the same time he started involving his country in European politics, and he took the title Tsar with the double-headed Byzantine eagle as the symbol of the State.

Through his daughter's marriage in 1495 to the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Ivan infiltrated Belo Russian territories and conquered several of them. Most decisive was, however, the Russian conquering of the Tatarian Kazan on the Volga river in 1552 under Ivan IV (1530-1584; in Russian Ivan Vasiljevitj Groznyj). In 1538 Ivan married the daughter of the Bojar, Roman Jurevitj, the forefather of the Romanov dynasty. The expansion of Russian influence can be traced by the spread of onion domes on Orthodox churches. They had previously looked like European churches. In Novgorod today a number of churches have been restored to their original shape (supported by an organisation of former Hansa cities).

Ivan IV reformed the civil administration and

army together with a circle of advisors, Izbrannaja rada. It culminated with the conquering of the two tatarian khanates at Volga Kazan and Astrakhan in 1552 and 1556. In 1558 Ivan attacked Livland, and triggered an international conflict that with varying partners, including Denmark, lasted his entire reign (Knud Rasmussen 1973). Success soon led to adversity, adversity that made Andrej Kurbskij (who had conquered Kazan), in fear for his life, desert and join their Polish enemies. As a countermove Ivan IV ushered in an unrestrained terror regime in 1565-72, called Opritjninaen, giving Ivan the nickname "The Terrible". When he died in 1584, Russia was in tatters, and remained so for the most of 1600s, in spite of its expansion into Siberia, which it started around this time (Lincoln 1994). Poland and in particular Sweden took advantage of this Russian weakness and made great inroads into Russian territory. But Russia survived and had its comeback under Peter the Great who defeated the Swedes in Poltava in 1709. This ended a period of sovereign Ukraine, but first of all it introduced the beginning of Russia as a multinational empire.

Since 1552, Russia, or more correctly, the Russian Empire, has been multinational and

multi-religious. The expansion that took place from 1400 to 1900 established a unique melting-pot of the peoples that were conquered. Even though the majority of the conquered peoples were of Slavic origin, the many ethnic groups who were considered part of the Russian speaking population had limited freedom. The natives were suppressed, but never threatened by extinction like the native population in North America or Australia. The premise for inclusion was full adaptation to the Russian language and Orthodox Christianity. As the Empire expanded eastward, the Finno-Ugric and Turkish peoples (such as the Mordvin, Udmurt, Meri, Tatar, Tuvas and Bashkir people) in Siberia and Central Asia were assimilated into the Russian nation. Even the elites in Transcaucasia – in particular in Georgia, Armenia – and Central Asia (Khiva and Bokhara) were recognised by the Russian hierarchy, though not necessarily russified.

Only Catholics in the Polish and Lithuanian regions resisted assimilation after their inclusion in the Russian empire during the three partitions of Poland in the 1700s. They were therefore hardly a part of the ruling class, as opposed to the German speaking nobility in the Baltic countries

The multinational statehood Russia was for a long time regarded by the rest of Europe as a "North European" or even "Nordic" country.

and the Finnish nobility (originally Swedish speaking) in Finland. Tsar Alexander I established the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1812 after conquering the Eastern part of Sweden in 1809. The life of the soon-to-become war hero and president of Finland, Gustav Mannerheim (1867-1951) is a prime example of the period. He made a career in the Russian Army during the war against Japan in 1904-05 and the First World War, and spoke better French and Russian than Finnish.

TERRITORIAL STATES ERA 1500-2010

The multinational statehood Russia was for a long time regarded by the rest of Europe as a "North European" or even "Nordic" country. One discussed whether German speaking areas like Holsten belonged to the "Nordic" sphere (Frandsen 2008). But these countries developed differently. Russia became a multinational and a multi-religious empire – firstly under the tsars and later the communist parties – and maybe even under Putin, though somewhat less so. The Nordic countries, on the other hand, changed from being Catholic monarchies to Lutheran territorial nation states, from 1523 and the reformation in 1527-1536 and 1591.

The Nordic territorial states, Denmark with Norway and Sweden with Finland, had very different relations to Russia. This was in contrast to the situation in the Middle Ages, with their close relationship to Novgorod that virtually stretched all the way to Finnmark and Northern Norway (ref. John Lind on borders). Denmark allied with

Russia against Sweden, while Sweden allied with the Ottoman Empire against Russia. Sweden was for hundreds of years allied with the Turks, while Denmark has been their enemy. The reason for these differences was Russia or the Russian Empire. This empire was actually the enemy of Sweden from its expansion towards the East in 1561 at Narva in Estonia, until 1809, when Russia conquered half of Sweden and called it Finland; and perhaps even longer, despite the fact that Sweden got Norway as compensation in 1814. In that battle it seemed logical to ally with the great enemy of Russia in the South, The Ottoman Empire. The constant aspect in Russian politics was expansion towards the Baltic Sea at the expense of Sweden, and towards the Black Sea and the Bosphorus Strait (Crimean War 1854-56).

This difference in politics has many consequences, but is manifested even today in different ways. Both Denmark's and Sweden's official embassies are found in the capital of Ankara, and both have consulates on Istanbul. Sweden, as the first European power in the 1730s, was allowed to set up its diplomatic mission here in a prominent location not far from the Galata Tower. The self-image of the Sultan, having conquered the centre of Christendom, was that he had inherited the legacy of the Roman Empire ('Rum' in Turkish) and the role as protector of Christians. As a response to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow appointed itself the Third Rome in the 1500s.

The alliance between Sweden and the Otto-

mans was particularly strong during Karl XII's prolonged war with Peter the Great in the early 1700s, the war that in Denmark is called the Great Nordic War 1700-1721. Denmark, seeking revenge for the loss of Skåne, was quickly defeated before the Swedes proceeded towards Poland and Saxony, and later towards the Russians who were about to build a modern war machine. Peter the Great founded Saint Petersburg in 1703, as part of the mobilisation against the Swedes, on the Neva River's estuary swamps which officially belonged to Sweden. Legend has it that they marched Swedish (and Finnish) prisoners of war into the swamps and built the Peter and Paul Fortress on their dead bodies. That is why, according to Alexander Pushkin's epic poem The Bronze Horseman, the Neva River overflows its banks every year in revenge.

After some victories in the beginning, Karl XII's army eventually suffered an annihilating defeat by the Russians, in the scorching summer heat on 27 June 1709 at Poltava, Ukraine (Peter Englund in Poltava, 1988). Karl escaped and went into exile for 5 years in the Ottoman Empire. He founded a small town for himself and his entourage, Karlopolis or Karlstad. This small society grew as the king brought back from the Baltic provinces ransomed women and children whom the Russians had sold to the Turks or Italians.

The stay in Constantinople, or Istanbul, introduced a permanent Swedish diplomatic mission to the city. A military alliance was out of the question even if the Ottoman army gave

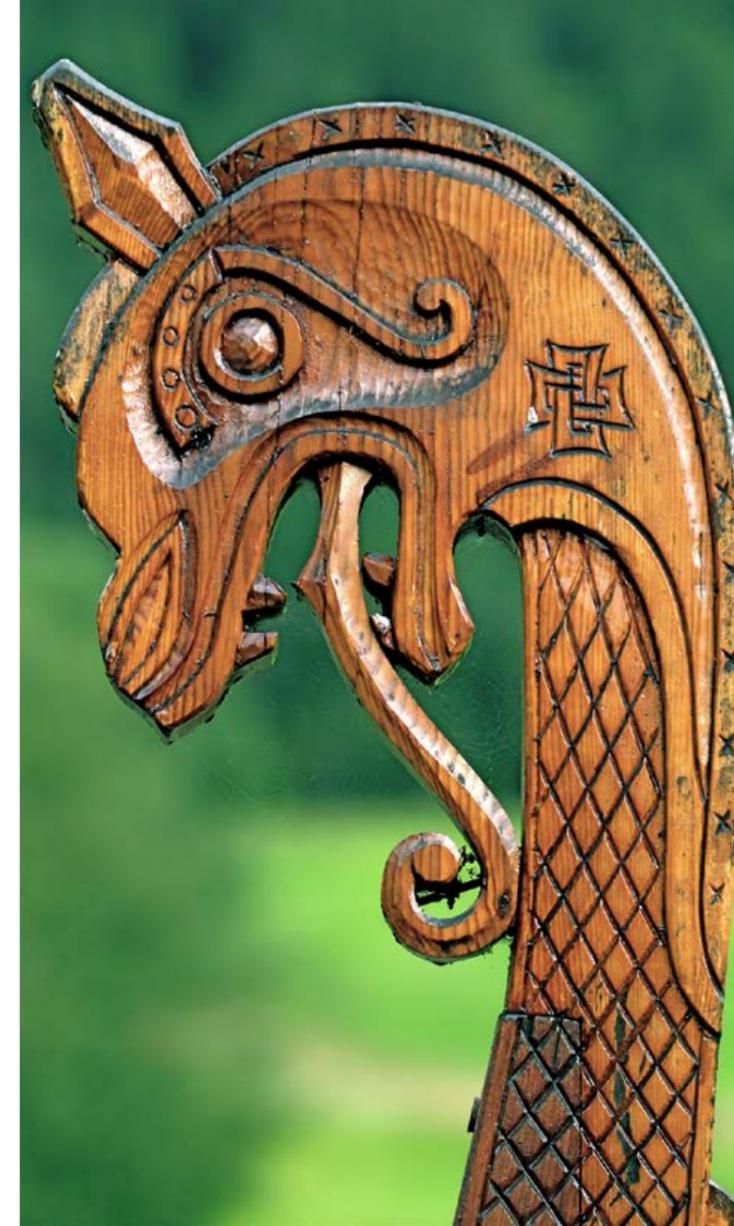


PHOTO: ODDBJØRN MONSEN

the Russians under Peter the Great a crushing blow at Iasi (Rumania today) in 1711. On the contrary, the Swedish army became a problem to the Turks, who primarily wanted to use the Swedes as a pawn in their own game to gain a favourable peace with the Russians. Karl was actually taken prisoner during a short battle, after having been wounded. Europe simultaneously experienced peace as the Spanish War of Succession came to a close and Karl XII returned to Sweden in 1714. He eventually ended his life at the Norwegian fortress Fredriksten in 1718. But the foundation was laid for a Swedish-Ottoman alliance that was to characterise the 18th Century. This is the background for the fact that Sweden even today has a diplomatic mission in a stately, neoclassic palace near the Galata tower in Istanbul.



THE DYNAMICS OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

BY DR. JULIE WILHELMSSEN, NUPI

Russia has come to seem so different and dangerous to us, in particular over the past year. This is not just because we look upon the political arrangements in Russia as the converse of what we wanted Russia to be. Since the annexation of Crimea, Russia has been portrayed only, or mainly, as aggressive and expansionist. Our actions reflect this representation.

It is time, then, to explore this image of Russia, or at least to try to uncover the processes that make Russian foreign and security policy appear logical and legitimate to them.

My point of departure would be that both the processes that make it seem necessary to engage in conflict and the processes that generate a country's foreign and security are similar and recognizable from country to country, although of course there are local variations, local norms. This is because states are dynamic, social units. State leaders such as the Putin-regime, relate both to international and national audiences (still!).

I would therefore like to stress the importance of these two dimensions for developments in Russian foreign policy. First, the importance of domestic politics and discourses: Russian foreign policy is often a byproduct of domestic ambitions and projects. The Putin regime has from the very beginning played and adjusted to constituencies inside Russia, and these clearly influence Russian foreign policy. Second, Russian foreign policy is affected by interaction with other states. I do not

claim that the 'West' is guilty of all the things Russia does, as the Russian propaganda would have it. But I do think that Western actions, reactions and practices, as well as the West's own negligence of international law, contribute to the development of Russia's foreign policy.

If we look back to 1999-2000, domestic politics were at that time the core driver of Russian relations with the West. The aim was to establish a strong Russia through economic revival and modernisation. For this to be possible, tighter integration with the West was necessary. And such integration seemed to become possible after 9/11, 2001 and the beginning of the so-called strategic partnership between Russia and the US in the fight against international terrorism. Russia was 'taken seriously': the NATO-Russia Council was established, and G7 became G8. And Russia also had something to offer: the US was allowed to establish bases in Central Asia, intelligence was shared and a new arms-reduction treaty was signed. If we look at the Russian military doctrine at that time, the Western threat was totally downgraded. Putin was even quoted as saying that it was 'time to stop making a fuss about NATO expansion. We need to build a common security structure for a united Europe.'

Why did it change?

First of all, this foreign policy was only weakly rooted in Russian domestic constituencies. The Russian foreign and security establishment

harboured a strong scepticism towards USA and NATO, and this made an impact on the regime's foreign policy. Hardly anyone was ever for US bases in Central Asia. Since 2004-07 the Putin regime has mobilised around this anti-Western discourse on the domestic front. This has served to create inner cohesion in the system. And it has created the rationale not only for containing US expansion globally, but also for preventing colour revolutions locally and at home.

Secondly, crucial interaction effects arose when the strategic partnership broke. Russia's high hopes of being taken seriously were dashed. The Bush administration's criticism of human rights and democracy deficiency in Russia from 2003 onwards was seen as offensive, as untimely meddling in internal affairs, even as a sign that the US was trying to bring Russia down.

With regard to the war in Iraq, supposedly part of the War on Terror, Russia's point of view was not taken into consideration. Moreover, it was a setting aside of international law and the UN that Russia has always rejected. Ever since Primakov coined the doctrine of 'Multipolarity' (1996) Russia has insisted that any international crisis should be dealt with by the UN (Security Council) and in line with international law (not because Russia is especially law-abiding but because it has been in their interest as a weak power with a Security Council veto). This insistence, and a restrictive interpretation of international

law, have been connected to the increasingly expressed fear that the US will act according to its own will and its own interests outside of the UN order in a unipolar world.

This became the framework through which Russian foreign policy works. It conditions the way Russia views events such as the NATO expansion of 2004 (NATO merely being an extension of the US), the colour revolutions in Georgia (2003) Ukraine (2004; these were not seen as domestic uprisings, but as US intervention in Russia's "Near Abroad"), the much discussed missile shield (Russian officials have always spoken as if the real intention behind the shield is to neutralize Russian capabilities), the 2008 war in Georgia (where Saakashvili was seen as the US's man), and The Arab spring revolutions. Here the Libya case is crucial because Russia did not veto the first part of the intervention. With the toppling of the Gadhafi regime, however, it was as if the Russian conspiracy theory regarding the West's use of the "responsibility to protect" doctrine to camouflage regime change around the world was confirmed.

This perspective also colours Russia's view of Maidan as an American-instigated uprising to depose a regime that was stabilising, democratically elected, but in Western eyes authoritarian in order to place an anti-Russian, pro-American regime in Ukraine, ultimately one that would head for NATO membership.

By now, the Russian position that the US breaches international law to cater for its own



PHOTO: ODDBJØRN MONSEN

interests is so strong that it can even be used as an excuse for Russia's own breaking of it in Crimea and East Ukraine.

The point here is not to make Russia less accountable for its actions. There is no doubt about Russia's activities. The humanitarian crises that Russia warned of in order to legitimise its annexation of Crimea first became a reality when Russia took over; today the rights of the Crimean Tatar minority are being crudely infringed upon under Russian governance. But I want to alert us to interaction effects and the problem of precedence in international relations.

At the same time domestic conditions and political dynamics in Russia are changing and I want to return to those in my analysis of what shapes Russian foreign policy. There is no doubt that Russia's substantial economic growth has triggered a general posturing on the international arena which mirrors its new self-esteem. It has also created new ambitions in the former Soviet space. We have seen the strengthening of the CSTO ("The collective security trade organization") as a parallel to NATO. Possibly the most

important factor for understanding Russian actions in Ukraine is the fairly new ambition of creating a Eurasian Union, an EU, in the post-Soviet space.

For the time being this is just a customs union, the Eurasian Economic Union, which includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and soon Armenia, but if we listen carefully to Russian rhetoric we can hear a vision of a separate and distinct civilization as the basis of the Eurasian Union. This civilization is articulated as a counterpart to the Western hyper-liberal civilization, where God is dead and everything is allowed. Here we see the impact of changing domestic debates on what Russia 'is' and 'should be' on foreign policy priorities and projects. Because these alternative values are not merely the regimes manipulation; they are a deep reaction in Russian society.

A final domestic impetus in Russian foreign policy to which I would like to draw attention is the regime's need to neutralise internal opposition. The 2011/12 demonstration in Moscow illustrated that any potential opposition to the Putin regime does not come from the liberal or demo-

cratic camp - indeed, these actors are totally marginalized in today's Russia. Rather, any opposition is more likely to come from Russian nationalists. Putin's practice when faced with such potential opposition has often been to capture their banner. Indeed, I believe that this is what we were witnessing during the annexation of Crimea.

Beside the arguments in official rhetoric that tried to cater to the international audience, there were also arguments such as the need to protect 'Russian interests', 'the Russian speaking population', 'the Orthodox Church', 'Novorossia', etc. This latter set of arguments was produced from the domestic arena and reflects the Putin regime's attempt to co-opt the agenda of nationalist constituencies at home in order to neutralise them. His problem now is of course how to put the genie back into the bottle again, once he has started to engage this ethnic Russian nationalist discourse.

So, my argument is that if we want to understand Russian foreign policy we need to keep an eye on Russian domestic developments and on Russia's interactions with other states, including our own Western states.

Even though anti-Western rhetoric is strong, we need to look for the statements and actions that point in the direction of compromise and not confrontation. They do exist. Moreover, considering the interaction effects at work, we need to check our own anti-Russian discourse and take action to de-escalate.



GERMANY IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE RUSSIAN STRATEGY

BY ALEXANDER RAHR *Research Director German Russian Forum*

Western policy towards Russia is divided. EU and NATO countries are currently manoeuvring between two different approaches. One group of countries – the United Kingdom, Sweden, Poland, Baltic States and the Netherlands believe that while Vladimir Putin remains in power in the Kremlin, the West must contain Russia. The U.S. seems to share such an approach. Another group of countries inside the EU and NATO, led by Germany and France, argue against a new division of Europe and reject a new Cold War scenario. Their approach is to bind Russia through economic and security ties with Europe. In their view, Europe cannot be stable and prosperous without an engagement with Russia.

Elder statesmen in Germany such as Helmut Schmidt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the late Egon Bahr, issued calls for a new German Ostpolitik vis-à-vis Russia. They reminded Europeans of Germany's productive role as Russia's advocate in the West since the 1990s. Germans, thanks to decades of dealing with Russian economic and security interests, have a better understanding of Moscow's rejection of NATO and EU expansion. But in the present Ukrainian crisis, Germany abstained from playing the instruments of Ostpolitik. On the contrary, Germany stood up for sanctions against Russia, although its economy suffered most under the destruction of bilateral trade relations. For Germany it was more impor-

tant to prevent a split in Transatlantic relations over Russia. Berlin chose the role of a mediator between hardline and soft approaches. Chancellor Angela Merkel blasted Russia's policy in Ukraine as aggression, but, at the same time, invited Putin to discuss the idea of a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

The traditional German „Ostpolitik“ made sense during the Cold War, when West Germany needed a special relationship with the Soviet Union in order to keep open the option for reunification with the GDR. Former German politicians understood that a reunification could only proceed by peaceful means. There was no alternative to détente and dialogue. But nowadays, German politicians understand that the negative attitude to Russia within the Western camp prevents a new German-led Ostpolitik. In the previous two decades, Germany started several initiatives to engage Russia – supporting Russian membership in the G7 (2003), proposing peace-plans for Abkhazia and South Osetia (2008), building the Nord Stream pipeline (2011), developing a Central Asian initiative (2007) and inventing the so-called Meseberg process (2009). All these initiatives were ignored by other Western states. At the same time, Germany was reluctant to support the British-Polish-Czech EU Eastern Partnership strategy (2009), which was directed against Russia. With hindsight, a major opportunity to

engage Russia through the Nordic dimension EU strategy (proposed by the Nordic states, but not supported by the EU as a whole) was missed in the 1990s.

Present Western strategies towards Russia lack pragmatism. They seem to build on the notion that sooner or later (after Putin) Russia will return to the path of democracy, and then a strategic partnership with Moscow can be resumed. The West has no „plan B“. Together with the Nordic states, who seem to voice stronger interest than the rest of Europe to return to a pragmatic cooperation with Russia, Germany could initiate the following steps to re-engage Russia in a positive pro-Europe dialogue:

1. The German OSCE chairmanship in 2016 should start a process of rethinking the present security institutions in Europe. European security will continue to be supported by the two pillars of NATO and the EU. But both institutions need cooperative agreements with the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).
2. The collapse of the international price of oil has postponed energy production activities in the Arctic. However, the Nordic states, Russia and Germany could join forces in developing the so-called North-Eastern transit route along Russia's northern coast to Asia. The transit route is designed as an alternative to trade through

the Indian Ocean.

3. Building on their many years of experience with the Russian market, Nordic states and Germany seem well equipped to cooperate with the growing middle-range business in Russia.
4. The danger of international terrorism, particularly from Islamic extremists, remains a permanent threat for Europe and Russia. Joining forces in combatting terrorism could be beneficial for all sides. Such a cooperation between secret services helps to rebuild trust. If Iran is not a threat to the West any more, why does Europe need U.S. missile defense?
5. The Nordic states have historically acted as protectors of the Baltic States, and they are culturally close to each other. The Nordic countries could take upon themselves the difficult but nonetheless vital task to push the elites of Russia and the Baltic states towards reconciliation.

Immediate action on the EU diplomatic front is required. The other option is a return to the Cold War, which nobody wants. The EU can always reject Russian proposals for revamping the existing European security order. But in the first place, the EU should at least try to understand Russia's real intentions, security fears and challenges.



THE NORDIC COUNTRIES, GERMANY AND RUSSIA SOME GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BY KAI LIE and SVERRE JERVELL *Former Norwegian diplomats*

PREVAILING ASSUMPTIONS

In the post-war period, the four Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) managed to develop Nordic cooperation despite their different places on the East-West geopolitical map. After some years even Finland found its place in the Nordic cooperation.

When the Cold War ended, Finland and Sweden took advantage of the new geopolitical situation and joined the EU. Recently, Nordic cooperation has been broadened to include certain issues in the field of foreign and security policy.

The challenge for the Nordic countries today is to adjust to new geopolitical realities both in Europe and on the East-West scene. They can do this alone or in close cooperation. So far they have mostly acted alone.

It is not difficult to understand why. Different interests and different historical experiences among the Nordic countries have produced different outlooks on international relations. Finland and Sweden are facing the Baltic Sea, whereas Norway and to some extent Iceland and Denmark, are facing the North Atlantic. The approach to foreign policy also differs. In Finland a more continental orthodox realist approach prevails, whereas Norway tends to be guided by more Western and legalistic views, stressing legal obligations more than national interests.

Although the Nordic countries have had different policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union/Russia, the Nordic countries have a similar basic approach to their large neighbour. On the one hand, they base their security on cooperation and dialogue with Russia, and on the other, on military defence. The challenge is to strike the right balance between the two. This balance point is often perceived differently in the Nordic capitals.

The Nordic countries have to keep in the back of their minds that they are typical small states. Small states will often have to be attentive to the wills of the greater powers and often need to adjust to external trends. A good foreign policy for a small country is often a policy that adjusts to the surroundings in a way that secures the vital interests of the country.

Since the end of the Cold War the United States and Russia have reduced their military and political presence in Europe while Germany is increasingly putting on weight politically. These factors give the Nordic countries increased room for manoeuvre.

COMMON ASSESSMENT OF THE GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

If the Nordic countries are to act together politically, they will first need to develop a common Nordic understanding of their new geopolitical

environment. In such a process the following elements could be included:

- following defeat in the Cold War, Russia is gaining power and influence under the leadership of Putin (see Julie Wilhelmsen's contribution to this booklet),
 - the emergence of Germany as a major European player after the collapse of the Soviet Union (see Alexander Rahrs contribution to this booklet),
- and also:
- the shift of American geopolitical focus in the direction of the Middle East and Asia and the emerging power of China,
 - the increasing range, precision and effect of modern weapons that affect the role of geography and distance in the struggle for power and influence,
 - the increasing importance of financial power and access to energy resources in the international power struggle,
 - a relatively stable and bipolar world is replacing a more multipolar system with more mobility among the players.

Beyond this common assessment, a Nordic dialogue would be helpful in order to reach agreement on approaches to more specific issues and challenges.

NORDIC RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN RECENT HISTORY

Nordic-Russian relations were close when the Vikings travelled, settled and traded along Russian waterways, but ended when the Mongolian invaders threw them out of Kiev. (See the contribution of Uffe Østergaard in this booklet).

More recently, Nordic history has been characterised by the rivalry between Russians and Swedes over Finland. Denmark has also experienced a period as a European power player, but then, at times, in cooperation with Russia. Norway and Iceland, long under Danish rule, have since independence been within the sphere of the Western sea powers.

During the Cold War the Nordic countries had well-defined roles in the East-West game. After the Soviet collapse the Nordic countries achieved more room for manoeuvre and established regional cooperation in the North, the Barents cooperation and the Baltic Sea cooperation, which opened for a closer cooperation with Russia in the North.

GERMANY'S NEW ROLE

After the fall of the Berlin wall, the thought of German reunification was enough to send shudders through London and Paris. To their surprise, Germany opted for a stronger and more

integrated Europe. Germany also had another surprise in store for Washington when it flatly refused to participate in the American wars in Iraq and Libya.

Neither has Germany been quite as accommodating to Washington, London or Warsaw, when it comes to Ukraine, even though they have loyally followed Western policy on sanctions. German sentiment seems better reflected in the utterances by Helmut Kohl, Carl Schmidt and Gerhard Schroeder about the crises, expressing, on some points, a better understanding of the Russian position than the attitudes of Washington and London.

The German “Ostpolitik”, initiated by Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr, has been one underlying trend in German policies ever since. Its main argument is that it is not possible to construct security against Russia, but only with Russia. The fear of a new rivalry and conflict with Russia is clearly more prevalent in Berlin than in Washington, London or Warsaw.

After the Soviet collapse the Western world pushed its sphere eastward. In recent years, Moscow has gradually regained power and lowered the boom in Georgia and Ukraine.

This expansion of the Western sphere did not have undivided German support. Germany supported the idea of “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals” in line with Gorbachov’s idea of a “Common European House”, and Germany vetoed the efforts of Washington and London to expand NATO to include Georgia and Ukraine.

While recent developments have widened the distance between Russia and Western Europe in general, German-Russian relations seem not to have been affected that much.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The long term challenge for the Nordic countries is to define their role and place in a changing Europe and a new East-West environment, between Germany to the South and Russia to the East. If

the Nordic countries are not able to define their role, others might do it for them!

A new rivalry and a new arms race between the United States and Russia will not benefit Europe or the Nordic countries. Such a development is likely to be detrimental to cooperation between the Nordic countries. The Nordic countries might under such conditions be subject to different external pressures that could further divide them.

Germany’s interests, when it comes to relations with Russia, are often similar or compatible with the interests of the Nordic countries. The Nordic countries therefore have much to gain through a closer political cooperation with Berlin, and Berlin may have much to gain through a closer cooperation with the Nordic countries.

The waters of the North, the Barents and the Baltic Sea are increasing in importance for trade and transport. The Baltic is regaining its traditional role in this respect, and the Arctic waters are important as a source of petroleum energy and fish protein. The cooperation here between the Nordic countries and Russia has been very successful and fruitful and is an important element in the maintenance of stability and order in the area.

Climatic change combined with modern technology promises to make the Northeast Passage an important transport corridor between the Far East and Europe, not least between Chinese and German ports. Closer German-Nordic-Russian cooperation in this connection is to be expected. (This is one of several concrete proposals presented in the abovementioned contribution by Alexander Rahr).

There is also an underlying cultural factor that motivates a closer German-Nordic cooperation: the common northern culture that goes back at least to Martin Luther and the Hansa. It makes this part of Europe one “Kulturgebiet” with a common political, cultural, religious and social heritage.

A similar common heritage is the basis for the current exclusive and close cooperation between the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This is, if need be, the precedent for an extension of Nordic cooperation within its “Kulturgebiet”.

Germany already has regular political dialogues with Poland to the East and with France to the West. The time has come for the Nordic countries together to seek a regular political dialogue with Germany. If the five Nordic countries together invite Berlin to such a dialogue, it is most likely that it will be met with a positive response.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FOLLOW-UP TO THIS CONFERENCE SERIES ON RUSSIA AND THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

This conference series could, not least because of the urgent need for a reduction of East-West tension, embark on the following tasks:

- assessing the current geopolitical situation for the Nordic countries, aiming at a common Nordic understanding of the situation,
- assessing their relations with Russia and the current situation in Russia aiming at a common Nordic understanding. It would be useful to have Russians taking part in this discussion.
- assessing the role of Germany in Europe and in the current crises and the possibility of a closer Nordic-German dialogue on East-West issues. (The previous conference series of the “Nordic Pearls” on the Nordic countries and Germany provides a useful basis for this task, together with the conference publication “The Nordic countries rediscover Germany” and Alexander Rahr’s abovementioned contribution.)



Map of the shifting political borders in Northern Europe since 1939.

TIMEFRAME

for further events of the conference series

16 SEPTEMBER 2015

FINLAND, HANAHOLMEN

*Russia and the Nordic countries.
Culture and Communication.*

26-27 OCTOBER 2015

NORWAY, LYSEBU AND VOKSENÅSEN

Russia and the Nordic countries past and present.

FEB/MARCH 2016

SWEDEN , BISKOPS ARNÖ

Russia and the Nordic countries in the literature.

9-10 MAY 2016

DENMARK, SCHÆFFERGÅRDEN

State, Religion, Society. Arctic region.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2016

ICELAND, THE NORDIC HOUSE

OCTOBER 2016

NORWAY, VOKSENÅSEN

Going forward.



Norræna húsið
The Nordic House