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# Carpe Diem

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Russia Profile - 10/12/2008

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The Backlog in Accepting Ukraine and Georgia into NATO Gives Moscow Grounds for Normal and Pragmatic Cooperation with the Alliance's Member States

Ukraine and Georgia have so far been unable to boost their status in NATO. This is probably one of the most significant events of the passing year. These countries will now have to either wait for a more favorable political environment, or to essentially adjust their approaches to foreign policy and national security. But although the delay in processing Ukraine's and Georgia's NATO applications can hardly be seen as a triumph of Russia's diplomacy, it gives Russia enough time to come up with the mechanisms needed to halt the alliance's eastward expansion altogether.

During a summing of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels, which took place on December 2 and 3 and summed up, to a certain extent, the year 2008, the two former republics of the Soviet Union did not receive a Membership Action Plan (MAP). Other issues became the focus of attention in the capital of Belgium. "Albania and Croatia have already completed important reforms. Our goal is to welcome two new members to the alliance during our next summit," the communiqué summarizing the results of the summit claimed. Thus, by the Alliance's 60th birthday (NATO turns 60 in 2009) the two Balkan republics will become its full members. However, this will be the limit of yet another "eastward expansion," at least for the time being. Even Macedonia has not yet received a "final invitation" to the alliance, due to the problems connected with its name.

Different positions and opinions are available today with regard to the delay of Georgia's and Ukraine's North Atlantic integration. Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev expressed his satisfaction with the process of halting NATO's expansion eastward, emphasizing that "reason has prevailed." According to Russia's representative in NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, the alliance's position means a political defeat for the "orange leaders." However, official Kiev and Tbilisi have a different opinion of the problem. Just a few days ago, the head of Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID), Vladimir Ogryzko, declared that "Ukraine will take a different path into NATO." According to Ogryzko, this is largely due to the fact that the path has become "too politicized." The minister believes that in reality, Ukraine has been fulfilling all requirements specified in the Membership Action Plan for over two years now. And this is why, from the point of view of the head of Ukraine's MID, a formal offering of a MAP is something that should not be overrated.

Similar judgments can be heard from the representatives of Georgia's authority. "I think that our chances of joining NATO are high, and I think that at this stage the so-called Membership Action Plan for the alliance is no longer relevant. This was interesting back in April, but today it is not relevant anymore. Evidently, new mechanisms for these processes are about to be developed, and we will definitely become a member of NATO," said Temuri Yakobashvili, Georgia's Minister for Reintegration. But the minister did not explain what these new mechanisms are, what their essence is, and, most importantly, why the MAP that only yesterday was so much hoped for is suddenly "not relevant." But it would have been difficult to expect such explanations from him. Just a few days ago, he tried to explain that the Dagomys Agreement and the Joint Control Commission were not "relevant" and proposed to "unfreeze" the process of conflict regulation.

As of today, Georgia has lost not only part of the former South Ossetian autonomy, but also the Akhalkgori district, precisely as a result of the search for a "relevant unfreezing."

For the sake of being objective, however, we should note that both in Georgia and in Ukraine influential politicians and experts, representing the reigning authorities and the opposition, are trying to analyze their own failures and mistakes. Ukraine's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and now the Head of the Verkhovna Rada's Foreign Affairs Committee Boris Tarasyuk (who has the reputation of a fervent supporter of NATO integration), claims that, to a large extent, "we are to blame," and in particular the "internal political instability" and constant clashes between the "orange coalition" teammates. Another former political leader, the ex-speaker of Georgia's national parliament and a living symbol of the "Revolution of Roses" Nino Burjanadze believes that "because of some inadequate actions of its authorities, Georgia has lost the prospects of growing closer to NATO. NATO did not give a MAP to Georgia's authorities, not to the whole nation or its people." However, it is impossible not to see a fair share of slyness in this thesis. NATO gives a MAP (or refuses to provide one) not to nations or people, but to states.

Be that as it may, Russia's politicians and political analysts now have to register some interim results of the "expansion" process, which will most probably not stop for good this winter. After all, Georgia and Ukraine did not receive MAPs, but the whole issue of North Atlantic integration has not been taken off the agenda. And the United States, along with Great Britain, the Baltic States and Poland, continue to actively lobby the NATO aspirations of these two former Soviet republics.

The decision to put the applications from Kiev and Tbilisi on the backburner is extremely important for the internal political situation in Russia. It will, at least for a period of time, silence the voices of irreconcilable "hawks," the advocates of the conspiracy theory about NATO that is trying to surround Russia. Once again, this demonstrates that NATO is far from being the same as the Soviet Union Communist Party's Central Committee of Comrade Leonid Brezhnev's era, which was dominated by the concept of "unanimous support." Nowadays even such a superpower as the United States cannot "impose" a decision without the support of other members of the alliance. And if Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands are not ready to see Georgia and Ukraine in NATO, then this position (in line with the national interests of these countries) will be taken into consideration. The same is true for Greece, which is willing to go to great lengths to prevent the ex-Yugoslavian republic with the questionable (from Athens' point of view) name from getting recognized. There is no total unity in NATO, and many members set the factor of cooperation with Russia above the dubious, from the point of view of efficiency, "accelerated" expansion.

This fact was also proven by the latest session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Valencia. The resolution on the necessity of reestablishing a military and political partnership and cooperation with Russia was passed at the plenary session of the Assembly on November 18. Russia's cooperation with the Assembly was practically scrapped after the "five-day war," precisely as a consequence of the events of the "hot August" of 2008. The text of the resolution clearly states the need for reestablishing cooperation in the field of security, because there are many "security concerns shared by NATO and Russia, including the terrorist threat, continuing instability

in Afghanistan and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including Iran's nuclear and missile programs." The President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Jose Lello of Portugal, also emphasized the fact that "we must reestablish our relations with Russia to the fullest extent." In the two weeks that passed between the session in Valencia and the summit in Brussels, many representatives of the Alliance confirmed the need to go back to the "spirit of 2001."

This means that a field for normal and pragmatic cooperation with the member states of the alliance is now opened for Moscow. After all, thus far nobody has really been able to explain to us why it is dangerous for Ukraine to join NATO. They either point at the urban madmen with gonfalons, or keep talking about Slavic solidarity (as if Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia are no longer members of NATO), or better yet wage a war on the spirit of Ivan Mazepa. But this has nothing to do with Mazepa or Slavic spirituality. The problem is that Ukraine's military industrial complex is extremely tightly integrated with that of Russia. If Ukraine moves under the flags of NATO, it will cancel multimillion contracts for Russia's "defense complex" (although, the process won't be painless for Ukraine's defense industry, either). This is the pragmatic point of view that should be used to deal with Ukraine, and our allies in this effort should be the generals of Ukrainian military industry, not the marginal politicians we see on our television screens. We should have realized long ago that Russia's interests in the world should be fought for not by the supposedly "pro-Russian forces" in the CIS republics, but by serious business, media and intellectual resources in the West (we can get them to fight for us by creating a maximally favorable environment for them in the areas where our pragmatic interests intersect).

Secondly, one of the other lessons we can learn from Brussels is that the decision on Georgia and Ukraine did not become a triumph for Russian diplomacy. It's just that the spirit of pragmatism turned out to be above the interests of the "democracy commissars." It would probably be wrong to shrug off Russia's firm position during the "five-day war," too, along with the stirring up of the situation in the Southern Caucasus (the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict regulation, the signing of the Moscow Declaration on Karabakh).

All of this, however, had only an indirect influence on the decision made by the NATO states. Even during the April summit of the alliance in Bucharest, the representatives of the "old Europe" (especially Germany) were rather skeptical about the potential "draftees" from Georgia and Ukraine. Thereby, in the future it will be enough for Moscow to simply use the existing disagreements between the United States and "old Europe," between the ex-communist republics (whose ambitions grow not because of their economic power, but because of their scandalous behavior connected to Soviet history and political advisability) and the European democracies.

Thirdly, it's too early to celebrate, because the process of NATO's expansion will not stop completely. The problem here is not limited to the "pro-Russian" positions of Germany and France. Georgia and Ukraine (or at least its current president) are appealing to join the alliance on their own, without any support from "old Europe." Other states, whose status in the bloc today is lower than that of the two above-mentioned countries, also see some prospects for themselves in NATO. This is a reference primarily to Azerbaijan. The countries of Central Asia are also taking a closer look at NATO. Thus the problem is not even limited to the United States with its strategy of "acceleration" in relation to the former fraternal republics of the "unbreakable Union."

Here is the main problem: escaping from Soviet history (and escaping from post-Soviet realities) is becoming the main trend on a sixth of our planet's dry land. Russia could offer its strategy of being a good neighbor, an alternative at least to the "Eastern partnership" which is being so actively promoted today by the European Union. This strategy would be adequate to the geography, history and current realities. However, such a strategy is not yet apparent, whereas Moscow could have presented many of its actions during the post-Soviet period in a much more positive light than the actions of NATO in Kosovo or in Afghanistan.

However, this cannot be done without employing the democratic language adopted in the West, without modernization tasks and other similar things. Nobody nowadays is warmed by the feelings of nostalgia for the Soviet Union, the "Slavic brotherhood" and the "Eurasian values." All of this ideological baggage should be checked into storage, otherwise it will work (and is objectively already working) against our interest and in the interests of "accelerated expansion." Russia could have become not an anti-Europe and anti-West, but an alter-West and an alternative Europe. Though this is something that is not possible without internal changes.

In December of 2008 Russia received a certain backlog of time. The "expansion" process did not finish in Brussels, it simply slowed down. Perhaps it will become more sensible; however, it would now be premature to say that Russia has the resources, institutions and mechanisms to stop such a process. Therefore, they should be created. We still have a few years ahead, although we should have started a few days ago.

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