

New Russian Strategy Foreign Policy Document, Russian State Duma

Modernization and Cooperation with the West. Cooperation with Serbia on the basis of *Realpolitik*.

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In his address to the State Duma at the end of 2009, the Russian President Medvedev said that Russia needs to modernize. On that occasion he issued an instruction to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare a document about the use of foreign policy as a tool for modernization. Incidentally or not, the draft of this document, under the title *Programme for efficient use of foreign policy on systematic basis as means for long-term development of the Russian Federation*¹ leaked on the pages of the Russian edition of *Newsweek* magazine on 11 May. According to the information from the media, the President has already approved this draft and sent it to the Government for further development.

The programme suggests a realistic turn of Russia towards the West in order to help its modernization. In that manner the relations with the EU, USA and other states are seen as a resource of Russian modernization, which should be based on *Realpolitik*. France, Spain, Italy and Germany are listed as countries with a positive attitude towards Russia, hence the cooperation with them should be deepened. This document also underlines the list of Russian wishes for the future relations with the USA, such as abolishing restrictions on trade and investments. The same goes for Japan, Singapore and Canada. On the other hand, the UK is ignored due to bad relations with this country. Both Russian and Western political analysts agree that this document is a step forward towards the West. Thus, if these projections become official, it would be possible to expect the end of Russia's geostrategic confrontation with the West, but not yet further approximation.

This programme allows to differentiate the level of importance of certain countries as a resource for Russia's modernization. Countries such as those in Central Asia or the Baltics cannot offer technology, know-how or investments to Russia, but could potentially offer industrial goods and natural resources. There are paragraphs about Serbia too. This document is completely stripped off of any ideological premises and is based on pure realism, economy and interests.

Serbia does not have any of the above mentioned resources to offer to Russia. According to the document, Serbia is Russia's partner in concrete matters. With this country Russia should "accelerate cooperation in the energy sector" as well as military-technical cooperation. If it is true that the South Stream project would be finished as it was planned, and if it is true that all of the existing problems with the Petroleum Industry of Serbia could be worked out, than it is quite obvious that Russian diplomats see more space for further increase of cooperation in the energy sector! Furthermore, Russia is aware that most of our arms and military equipment are of Russian/Soviet origin. Since Serbia does not have sufficient funds to buy the new ones, existing ones should be maintained. Now we should wait and see whether the existing equipment would be modernised or will there be acquisition of new portions of Russian arms and military equipment after the upcoming visit of the Russian Chief of General Staff to Serbia.

The document is clear: Russia, like the most of the countries uses its foreign policy tools for its economic benefits. Those tools are especially needed now, during the era of the Russia's

¹ <http://www.runewsweek.ru/country/34184/>

modernization. For this reason, Russia in the process of modernisation should “receive concrete economic benefits from a range of states, (...) the best preferences for its goods, investments as well as favourable conditions for transit (...) because of the Russia’s permanent help to states like Armenia, Uzbekistan, Iran, Cuba, Syria and Serbia”.

The programme treats the whole region in the same manner as Serbia. Apart from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina (without any mention of Republika Srpska) are also mentioned. According to the words of one ambassador of Serbia, Russia would soon become an advocate of the Western Balkans regional cooperation due to its realist approach to the region and the substantial increase of its economic interests in that area.

The above mentioned Russian vision of Serbia is not new, but it is good that it is portrayed in such a concise manner, for two reasons. First, the document lays foundations for realistic and long-term good bilateral relations, based on solid economic grounds. Second, it should reduce the influence of popular myths about Slavic brotherhood and Orthodox fraternity. These myths could be freely used in personal, religious spheres as well as among friendship societies, but there is no room for them in *Realpolitik*. This concept of relations is favourable for Serbia, and it should be widely accepted, not just among political and economic elites, but also among citizens of Serbia. Accepting this approach would allow for the cessation of unrealistic expectations that Russia would return Kosovo, invest billions of dollars or bring Serbia into its own integration processes in post-Soviet space.

An additional proof that *Realpolitik* approach is predominant in Russian foreign policy is the significance that this document affords to the question of international law - a question of utmost importance for Serbia. While existing 2008 Foreign Policy Concept underlines the importance of the International Law, and reaffirms Russia’s opposition to the revision initiatives and arbitrary approach to the norms and principles related to the respect of territorial integrity of states (...) and efforts to portray violations of international Law as its “creative” application. It is obvious that these lines refer to the issue of Kosovo. Instead, the new foreign policy document does not have a single line about this issue. In fact, the support for the international law is more general, and is perceived as a tool of Russian interests. This leads us to the conclusion that the resetting of relations gives the results in this area too.

The content of this programme, as well as the recent activities of Russian representatives indicate that Russia fully understands that the process of the Serbia’s European integrations is irreversible. The existing government, as well as all potential future governments which could be formed after the next elections, would not abandon the idea of European integrations. That leaves an option for Russia to fortify and expand its position in Serbia before the beginning of the application of the EU norms. To reach that goal, Russia would use all the resources deriving from the historic closeness and *brotherhood*, accompanied by tempting economic offers.

The devil for Serbia will lie in the detail to strike the appropriate balance between good deals with Russia and obligations steaming from the EU prospects. Therefore, our room for manoeuvre is much narrower than the one of the EU member states, since any Netherlands’ could block Serbia’s European path.

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