

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots. Several dots are highlighted in red, indicating specific geographical locations. The title 'Russia and East Central Europe: A Fresh Start' is overlaid on the map in a large, blue, sans-serif font.

## Russia and East Central Europe: A Fresh Start

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- A fresh start in relations between Russia and the Eastern Central European (ECE) nations shall not be taken for granted despite the recent progress achieved with a number of countries in the region.
- In order to consolidate and expand progress, Russia and ECE countries are best advised to intensify and institutionalize political dialogue without avoiding difficult issues on the agenda.
- As European arms control mechanisms are weakening, the countries of the region should also pay particular attention to cooperative measures to build trust between their security and defense establishments.



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## Executive Summary

### Transition Accomplished

Despite multiple controversies over common history, security issues or minority rights, Russia and East Central European (ECE) countries have cooperatively managed the profound transformation of their relations since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The Eastern Bloc was effectively dissolved at an early stage of the transition. Russian troops were withdrawn from East Central Europe by 1995, cooperatively and without delay. New treaties have replaced the Soviet era arrangements which institutionalized the limited sovereignty of the ECE nations within the Eastern Bloc. Except for Estonia, the Baltic States have settled their borders with Russia. The Estonian–Russian border, although not formally delineated, is not contested either.

All ECE countries have become members of NATO and the European Union. After having negotiated the relevant adjustments with NATO and the EU, Russia has accepted and respects the choice of the ECE nations. It does not seek to reverse it.

### Fresh Start

Closing most of the open issues of the transition could have paved the way for opening a new chapter in relations between Russia and East Central Europe. Restoring and improving economic cooperation appeared to be lowest-hanging fruit leading in that direction. However, despite the remarkable growth in trade, the effect of the recent economization of Russia–ECE relations remains ambiguous. The benefits of economic cooperation have not automatically translated into political relations.

Economic cooperation itself is limited by the structure of mutual trade and the trade deficits of most ECE countries. It is further poisoned by the fears manifested in many ECE countries that Russian investment in certain sectors considered sensitive – primarily in the energy sector, industries or civil aviation – could pose a challenge to their sovereignty. Energy security is a prominent issue on the agenda with all ECE countries, although it is handled by individual states in very different ways.

The momentum that could be created by improved economic cooperation has not been supported by intensified political dialogue. The mutual desire to progress in economic cooperation contrasts with continuously diverging policies on most of the relevant issues on the European or wider international agendas.

New security issues are looming. This is manifested by the controversy over the US deployments in ECE countries, as well as the modernization of armed forces and military exercises which are deemed threatening either by Russia or by its neighbors. The relevant security issues are growing in importance, particularly against the background of the erosion of European arms control.

Although some ECE countries have manifested increasing openness to re-engage, others have maintained a policy of »strategic restraint« with regard to Russia.

As a result, the recent progress in Russia–ECE relations has not become a prevailing trend and remains fragile.

### External Factors

Accession to NATO and the EU has affected ECE–Russia relations in different ways. In some cases, it was seen as a platform for improving those relations; in others, as a safety belt making re-engagement with Russia unnecessary. A few countries regarded membership as a means of increasing leverage vis-à-vis Russia. In general, however, accession has neither eased nor complicated ECE–Russia relations.

They have repeatedly benefited from improvements in US and NATO–Russia relations, and have suffered from their decline. The same seems to be true with regard to the effects of EU–Russia relations, although those effects are not similarly straightforward.

The controversy over US deployments of ballistic defense systems in the ECE is an example of an essentially bilateral US–Russian dispute that has strongly affected relations between Russia and a number of ECE countries. At the same time, the re-set in US–Russian relations during Barack Obama’s first administration increased the incentives for the ECE countries to improve relations with Russia.

The state of affairs between Russia, US, NATO and the EU has affected and will further affect relations between Russia and the ECE, in both directions.

### Looking Ahead

Despite the recent progress – of which the Polish–Russian rapprochement is the most notable example – Russia and the ECE nations still have a long way to go to build trust. However, they can significantly improve their relations if they:

- step up and maintain more regular political dialogue, not interrupting but intensifying it, particularly in periods of »bad weather«;
- do not avoid discussing difficult issues but, instead, concentrate on the search for solutions to those issues;
- take into account the Polish–Russian experience which suggests that positive effects can be achieved if the most difficult issues are addressed in an institutionalized dialogue;
- do not shy away from showing good will;
- significantly expand and invest in promoting dialogue and cooperation between professionals, educational and research institutions and businesses, as well as civil society;
- substantially expand bilateral scholarships and youth exchange programs;
- encourage and support historians and commissions of historians to conduct joint research and share it with the wider public;
- establish and observe a regular schedule of meetings for those joint committees or working groups that operate under the provisions of intergovernmental agreements, without making them hostage to developments in bilateral relations;
- adopt bilateral measures, without prejudice to the international security commitments of the countries concerned, to help to develop mutual trust, in particular by developing cooperation between their security and defense establishments, providing each other with relevant information concerning the modernization of armed forces, discussing concerns related to military activities, inviting observers to military exercises and conducting common exercises.

## 1. Introduction

This policy paper is based on a series of dialogues conducted in 2011 and 2012 with the generous support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and involving experts from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Russia.

Those discussions concentrated on assessing the fundamental changes that have taken place in relations between Russia and East Central European (ECE) nations since the end of the Cold War and the more recent efforts at revitalizing these relations, and on developing an inventory of the most important issues that dominate the agenda of their bilateral relations.

Without going into the specificities of individual relationships, this policy paper seeks to summarize general conclusions that could be made on the basis of those discussions. These conclusions reflect solely the individual opinions of the authors of this paper without prejudice to the many diverging views that have been revealed during our discussions.

After the end of the Cold War, Russia–ECE relations went through a profound transformation. It was driven primarily by a dynamic of its own. At the same time, it was imbedded in wider European developments, which resulted in fundamental changes in the European landscape as a whole.

The developments that shaped the new European landscape included the collapse of communism and the transition of the ECE countries to political pluralism, the rule of law and market-based economies, the unification of Germany, the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and of the former Soviet Union, the falling apart of the former Yugoslavia, the emergence of the European Union, the policy of »returning to« or re-integrating with Europe pursued by ECE nations, and the transformation of the North Atlantic Alliance. Meanwhile, all ECE countries have become members of NATO and the EU.

The European landscape was also shaped by the ambiguous outcome of the post-communist transformation of the Soviet successor states, including Russia, as well as by the policy of Moscow aimed at consolidating the post-Soviet space and developing a Eurasian community. The

latter is often conceptualized as a pendant to the Euro-Atlantic community. The Eurasian community is still limited to a few Soviet successor states, with Russia at the core, but manifests the ambition to grow and to extend to as many countries of the former Soviet Union as possible.

Over the past twenty years, Europe as a whole has experienced an unprecedented build-down in armed forces. Nothing in contemporary Europe any longer justifies fears of a return to the arms race or military confrontation reminiscent of the Cold War times.

Residual instability remains in some areas of Europe, particularly in South Eastern Europe or in the former Soviet Union, where protracted conflicts continuously fuel concerns of an eventual re-escalation. However, a large-scale war in Europe, or wars among most of the European nations have become impossible. The security agenda is increasingly dominated by transnational security threats and challenges, and expanding cooperation among states regardless of their membership of security alliances.

Russia and ECE countries have multiple platforms for maintaining dialogue and developing cooperation. Apart from improving bilateral relations, they can benefit from working together within various multilateral frameworks. They are participating states of the OSCE, which is a platform for the maintenance of permanent political dialogue and for developing cooperation on a wide range of issues. The ECE countries have an important role to play in developing cooperation within the NATO–Russia Council, as well as through a highly institutionalized dialogue between the EU and Russia. Last but not least, Russia and the ECE countries are part of sub-regional frameworks, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States or the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Those institutions can also play an important role in increasing mutual confidence and developing practical cooperation.

Nevertheless, Russia and the ECE countries have a long way to go to return to normalcy in their uneasy mutual relations.

## 2. Transition Accomplished

The transformation of the European landscape and of the relationship between Russia and East Central Europe has resulted in a state of affairs that is not con-

tested and has become an integral part of the European peace order.

### The Eastern Bloc Disassembled in a Cooperative Way

In 1991, the Warsaw Pact and the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON/CMEA), the two multilateral pillars of the Eastern Bloc were disbanded. Russian troops had left East Central Europe by the mid-1990s. The ECE countries have successfully negotiated new basic treaties with the Russian Federation to replace previous bilateral instruments of mutual assistance which institutionalized their limited sovereignty within the Eastern Bloc.

There were disputes but they were resolved in a cooperative manner. Russia did not break any of its commitments negotiated in the process of troop withdrawal from ECE countries or other issues.

The Baltic States, except for Estonia, have settled their borders with the Russian Federation. But the existing Estonian–Russian border is not contested. It is becoming increasingly open for human and business contacts, cross-border communication, as well as for cooperation in addressing contemporary transnational threats.

Except for a few cases, the legacy of disputed history no longer represents a political liability in mutual relations. Virtually in all cases in which Russia and ECE countries have not shied away from addressing difficult issues of their common recent history in an open way, those issues are off the political agenda, although they may still be important elements of national memory and historical narratives.

However, whenever either side did not exhibit openness and cooperativeness in addressing contested history, those issues remain on the political agenda and often prevent the countries from moving ahead towards a more pragmatic approach to resolving pending bilateral issues and boosting cooperation.

Contested history and minority rights still represent residual issues that need to be addressed, particularly in relations between Russia and the Baltic States and Romania. Here, efforts aimed at achieving mutual reconciliation are still badly needed.

### The ECE Countries Have Achieved the Goal of »Returning to Europe«

This vision was largely shaped by former President of Czechoslovakia Václav Havel. They have all acceded, not only to the Council of Europe, but also to NATO and the EU. This has firmly anchored them in the Euro-Atlantic community, which provides them with a reassurance and certainty they sought after the end of the Cold War.

Once firmly anchored in the Euro–Atlantic community, the challenge of defining and shaping new relations with the Russian Federation increasingly loomed on the agenda of most ECE countries. The ultimate shape of a new relationship, however, remains ambiguous.

### Russia Has Accepted and Respects the Choice of the ECE Countries

NATO enlargement into the ECE was one of the most controversial issues in the mid-1990s. The enlargement of the EU, as it approached in the early 2000s, also produced several disputes with the Russian Federation.

However, most, if not all practical or political issues that emanated from the eastward extension of the Euro-Atlantic community, have been resolved by negotiation. Moscow has accepted and no longer contests or seeks to reverse the changes in the status quo that have occurred due to the integration of the ECE countries into the Euro–Atlantic community.

Particularly since the early 2000s, Moscow sought to re-engage ECE countries by repairing and developing political dialogue, which had suffered under the NATO enlargement controversy, and by offering ECE countries increased economic cooperation. However, it has done so rather selectively and has pursued this policy only when its cooperative moves were reciprocated.

Ultimately, the outcome of the more recent attempts at repairing Russia–ECE relations remains extremely uneven, ambiguous and fragile. There are success stories of a more recent improvement of relations between Russia and individual ECE states. There are also examples of either failures or stagnation.

Russia has obviously failed to formulate a clear and sustainable vision for the future of its relations with ECE countries, except for building upon the eventual benefits of expanded trade and economic cooperation.

Nevertheless, the successful completion of the transition of ECE countries after the end of the Cold War, which included their domestic post-communist transformation, the overhauling of the fundamentals of their relations with Russia, and firm integration with the Euro-Atlantic Community, as well as the acceptance of those changes by the Russian Federation, provide for a *solid basis for an eventual fresh start in their mutual relations*.

However, a fresh start shall not be taken for granted unless both Russia and the ECE countries show political will and dedication in cooperatively addressing the issues on their agendas.

### 3. Economization of Relations

From the late 1990s and early 2000s, the prospects of improving mutual relations were associated in most ECE countries and in Russia with boosting economic cooperation. Indeed, it was seen by many to be the »lowest hanging fruit«, an area in which significant progress was expected in a relatively short period of time.

Promoting trade, developing large-scale cooperation projects, promoting mutual investment and cooperation in the energy sector were the main areas under consideration during the past decade. Bilateral inter-governmental commissions for economic cooperation were re-established with Russia by almost all ECE countries after their accession to the EU in order to promote cooperation without interfering with the mandate of the European Commission.

#### Trade Growth

The anchoring of ECE countries in the European Union and their economic reorientation towards European markets during the 1990s made many of them champions in intra-EU trade. In some cases, the European Union absorbs up to 80 per cent of the external trade of individual ECE countries. Seeing this objective accomplished, many ECE countries started exploring further opportuni-

ties to expand exports beyond European markets. Russia is seen as one among the growing markets worth re-entering. Many ECE countries sought to benefit from the large-scale economic modernization programs of the Russian government and from the modernization partnership concluded between Russia and the European Union in 2010.

There has been a remarkable increase in economic exchange between Russia and ECE countries over the past decade (Figure 1). ECE exports to Russia grew between 2004 and 2011 almost fivefold, from 6.6 billion USD to 30.5 billion, while imports tripled over the same period from 21 billion USD to 66 billion.

This helped to stabilize the share of Russia in ECE exports at the level of almost 5 per cent (6 per cent in 1993 and 2.5 per cent in 2004), although the importance of Russia as an export partner is significantly higher for the Baltic states (16 per cent) as compared to the Visegrad countries (4 per cent) or Romania (2 per cent). The share of the ECE countries in Russia's trade has also stabilized at the level of 12 per cent in exports and 9 per cent of imports.

#### Limits of Economization

Representing a generally positive trend and probably one of the recent success stories in ECE-Russian relations, the increased trade and economic cooperation is not unproblematic.

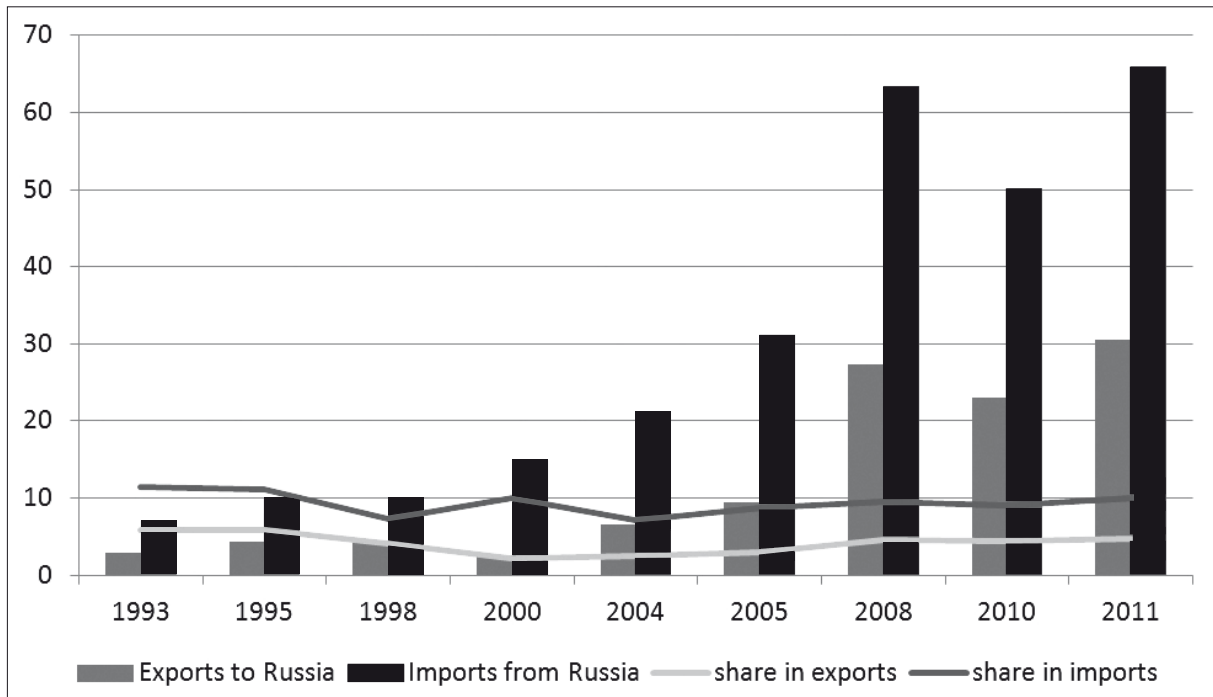
Energy supplies continue to dominate Russian exports to East Central Europe. This sets a limit to further growth unless Russian exports are diversified substantially. This requires a profound modernization of the Russian economy in general.

Due to the predominance of energy in economic exchange, trade between ECE and Russia remains highly unbalanced. Although exports from ECE countries to Russia grew faster than imports, in absolute terms their trade deficit grew from 14.6 billion USD in 2004 to 35.5 billion in 2011. Estonia and Latvia are the only countries that have achieved a trade surplus with Russia in the past few years.

At the same time, apart from the generally growing trade, no ambitious common economic project has been launched in recent years that could eventually become a



Figure 1: ECE–Russia Trade, 1990–2011 (USD billion and %)\*



\* Based on data from: Frumkin, Boris: The Transformation of Russia's Economic Links with the ECE Countries, forthcoming in: Zagorski, Andrei (ed.) (2013): *Russia and East Central Europe After the Cold War: A Fundamentally Transformed Relationship*, Moscow.

symbol of a new relationship between Russia and ECE countries. All projects that have been under discussion have been dropped for either political or economic reasons. At the same time, several issues of economic cooperation with Russia remain politically highly controversial within East Central Europe, or figure prominently on the agenda of their bilateral relations with Russia.

This is particularly true with regard to *energy security*, which is widely associated in East Central Europe with the goal of obtaining independence or at least lowering the dependence on energy supply from Russia, particularly since this dependence is higher in East Central Europe than in most other EU countries.

After the Russia–Ukraine gas conflict in the winter of 2009, which resulted in a short but very harmful disruption of supply from Russia to Central Europe, and the complete disruption of oil supply to Lithuania in 2006, the discussion of the issue largely concentrates on security of supply and the diversification of sources of energy and their delivery routes. Although individual countries have followed different paths in addressing this challenge, in many ECE states energy dependence is closely associated with the

fear of an eventual abuse of the existing dependence by Russia which, pursuing political objectives, allegedly could seek to intimidate or punish individual countries.

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the evidence supporting these fears. It suffices to establish that those fears not only exist and boldly manifest themselves in some ECE countries but also that they have a role in domestic politics and significantly affect policy choices made by individual governments.

More recently, the debate has started to shift to the implementation of the third energy policy package of the European Union which, severely hurting the interests of the Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom, has become one of the most contentious issues in relations between Russia and the European Union, as well as – in particular – between Russia and Lithuania.

The discussion of energy security represents one of the most powerful irritants in relations between Russia and several ECE states, although not with all of them. It would take serious efforts and political will on either side to rationalize this debate and to restore mutual con-



confidence in order to turn cooperation in the energy field from an issue poisoning relations into a positive component of mutual relations.

Mutual relations are further poisoned by the fears that *Russian investment in the ECE countries*, not least purchases of assets in the energy or a few other sectors considered sensitive, could challenge the sovereignty of those countries or jeopardize internal security.

At the same time, investment from ECE countries in Russia remains limited. The main reason is the lack of confidence in the stability and predictability of the Russian market and the fear of eventual political interference. However, Russia's accession to the WTO is expected to remedy those fears.

#### 4. Limited Effect of Economization

Efforts at developing more solid and pragmatic economic relations with Russia have been taken by several ECE countries over the past decade, and have been at the center of the political dialogue between Moscow and those countries. The outcome of these efforts and particularly their effect on the bilateral relationship in general, however, have remained limited. As the dynamic of economic cooperation has not translated into improved and results-oriented political dialogue it has not yet set an example that would be seen as worth following by other countries.

Economic cooperation has not (yet) helped the conversion of the policies of Russia and the ECE countries on the most contentious international issues

Economic cooperation has encouraged both Russia and a number of ECE countries to re-engage each other in a more intensive high-level political dialogue. However, while agreeing on the importance of addressing economic cooperation in a pragmatic manner, both sides usually agreed to disagree on many political or security issues. With a number of ECE countries, the controversy over new security issues – such as consent to the deployment of US ballistic defense or other military assets in the Czech Republic, Poland or Romania – has even escalated in recent years, significantly poisoning mutual relations.

Although the controversy over US deployments may be an extreme example, Russia and ECE countries continuously diverge on a number of issues, such as the European security architecture or, more particularly, policies with regard to the common neighborhood, beginning with the policies towards the resolution of protracted conflicts, particularly in Transnistria, the open-door policy of NATO and the prospect of integration of some post-Soviet states into Euro-Atlantic institutions, the objectives of the Eastern Partnership policy of the European Union, or the rationale of developing of a Eurasian Community, centered around Russia. The controversy over the Russia–Georgia war of 2008 was a high point revealing the existing divergences.

ECE countries differ very much in the extent to which they show their attachment to the eastern neighbors of the European Union, or to which they are ready to promote their integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. A few ECE political leaders have even gone as far as to publicly express their understanding of, if not sympathy with Russian policies, which are otherwise the subject of strong criticism in the ECE countries. However, they were not strongly backed by domestic political circles or public opinion, or even by their governments.

In other words, the divergence of political discourse in Russia and ECE has continuously prevailed over its eventual convergence. More importantly, the economization of relations between Russia and ECE countries has not yet helped to reverse the unfortunate state of their political dialogue in the 1990s, when the political leaders of Russia and ECE countries, with very rare exceptions, did not talk to each other on difficult issues.

Domestic political groups and public opinion in ECE countries remain split on the rationale for improved relations with Russia

A review of fairly unsystematic surveys reveals that, in most cases, the general public opinion in ECE countries has been developing moderately in favor of Russia. Fewer people in ECE would see Russia as a threat, more would emphasize the need for economic cooperation.

The growth of economic cooperation has helped emerging interest groups ready to lobby for better relations with Russia. However, in most ECE countries, these interest groups have little influence on government decisions related to relations with Russia.

Public opinion in ECE countries remains very sensitive to any signs of controversy in relations with Russia. Such fears rise substantially particularly when specific controversies are mounting with Russia, for example, concerning the US deployments in individual countries followed by threatening statements by Moscow stipulating the possibility of targeting those countries by Russian missiles. They also rose as a result of the Russia–Georgian war.

This split is even more visible in the political realm. Political parties in most of the ECE countries strongly differ on the issue of relations with Russia. While some political parties – most often, although not always representing the political left – tend to emphasize the importance of improving economic relations with Russia, other caution not to re-engage and to retain a safe distance from Moscow.

As a result, changes in governments of ECE countries lead to changes in policy towards Russia, which does not make it possible to sustain the momentum of even moderate improvements. Apparently, this tendency has been changing slightly over the past few years, revealing a modest trend towards a gradually developing consensus in some ECE countries on their Russia policy. But this trend is still neither firmly rooted nor universal in the ECE.

#### New Security Issues are Looming on the Agenda

Apart from the recent controversies with the Czech Republic and Poland, or the contemporary one with Romania concerning US deployments, which go far beyond the purely bilateral agenda of their relations with Russia, there are other developments which may become challenging in the context of Russia's bilateral relations with neighbor states in the ECE, particularly with the Baltic States and Poland.

The new issues have gradually arisen from the ongoing modernization and restructuring of armed forces of Russia and the ECE countries, as well as from their military exercises in the proximity of each other borders, includ-

ing the more recent NATO exercises, which are part of the contingency planning to defend Poland and the Baltic States. The relevant security issues are growing in importance, particularly against the background of the erosion of European arms control, which results in reduced cooperation and mutual transparency.

## 5. External Factors

The accession of ECE countries to NATO and the European Union has had different effects on their relations with Russia.

In some countries, it has been seen as a new solid foundation from which they could seek to develop a new relationship with Russia without fearing becoming subject to Russian domination. In others, it has been seen as a safety net, not only providing the necessary sense of security but also making any re-engagement with Russia unnecessary until Russia and its policy change profoundly. Others have sought to instrumentalize their membership particularly of the EU as a means of increasing their leverage in otherwise asymmetric relations with Russia.

The two latter strategies have hitherto failed to produce significant effects in terms of improving bilateral relations with Russia. On the contrary, their relations with Russia remain either estranged or have even aggravated recently.

Otherwise, two contradictory developments could be observed over recent years revealing the still strong dependence of bilateral relations between Russia and ECE on overall relations between Russia and the US, NATO or the European Union.

On one hand, Russia–ECE relations have repeatedly benefited from any significant improvement in US or NATO–Russian relations and, on the contrary, have suffered from their decline. The same seems to be true with regard to the effects of EU–Russia relations, although those effects have not been similarly straightforward.

The recent re-set in US–Russian relations during the first administration of Barack Obama obviously increased the incentives for ECE countries to seek to re-establish their relations with Russia. The controversies

accompanying US–Russian relations, at the same time, have repeatedly afflicted the Russia–ECE agenda although, ultimately, these controversies were waged primarily between Moscow and Washington, and their outcome could hardly be affected by bilateral ECE–Russian relations.

The controversy over the US deployment of ballistic defense systems in the ECE – five years ago concerning the anticipated deployments in the Czech Republic and Poland, more recently in Romania – serves as a good example to highlight this point. It remains primarily a bilateral dispute between Russia and the US which has overshadowed Moscow’s relations with the respective countries. Any solution to this dispute would hardly depend on the individual ECE countries, however.

## 6. Recommendations

Relations between the ECE countries and Russia have not yet been properly repaired. They still have a long way to go to build mutual confidence and trust, and to expand open-minded dialogue and cooperation. There has been progress recently, most notably the rapprochement between Poland and Russia. However, improvements remain fragile and have not yet passed the point of no return.

More recent attempts at curing this relationship through economic pragmatism have produced limited effects. The prospects of establishing »normalcy« in relations between Russia and East Central Europe would require that increasing economic cooperation is complemented by sustainable mutual engagement and more regular and intense political dialogue, which would not avoid difficult issues; it must also be results-oriented and help to identify appropriate solutions to existing and emerging problems in the context of bilateral relations.

The lessons to be learned from the past twenty years, however, indicate that Russia and ECE countries can achieve more positive results if they exhibit the necessary political will.


- Regardless of how controversial their previous relations have been, whenever any side has taken a cooperative step, such a gesture of good will has most often been reciprocated. Whenever either party has

pursued maximalist policies and was not prepared to compromise, it has proved impossible to reach an agreement.

- Whenever Russia has displayed openness in addressing difficult historical issues, this has produced a remarkable de-politicization of the discussion of the past. At the same time, whenever Moscow has remained reluctant to engage in a dialogue on history or other difficult issues, this has only contributed to increasing the politicization of the past.
- Whenever Russia and ECE countries have been prepared to engage each other in an open discussion of controversial issues, it has been possible to ease tensions. Whenever they have avoided talking to each other on the most controversial issues, the respective controversies have culminated and poisoned mutual relations, to the extent of making progress on other issues more difficult, if not impossible.

Russia and ECE countries can significantly improve their relations if they:

- step up and maintain more regular political dialogue, not interrupting but intensifying it, particularly in periods of »bad weather«;
- do not avoid discussing difficult issues but, instead, concentrate on the search for solutions to those issues;
- take into account the Polish–Russian experience which suggests that positive effects can be achieved if the most difficult issues are addressed in an institutionalized dialogue;
- do not shy away from showing good will in the fear that cooperative gestures will not be reciprocated;
- significantly expand and invest in promoting multiple dialogue between professionals, educational and research institutions and businesses, as well as civil society; substantially expand bilateral scholarships and youth exchange programs; this will pay off in the future as it will help to broaden public support for better relations;
- encourage and support historians and commissions of historians to conduct joint research into relevant periods of common history and share it with the wider public;

- 
- establish and observe a regular schedule of meetings for those joint committees or working groups that operate under the provisions of intergovernmental agreements, regardless of other developments in bilateral relations;
  - whenever appropriate, adopt bilateral measures, without prejudice to the international security commitments of the countries concerned, to help to develop mutual trust, in particular by developing cooperation between their security and defense establishments, providing each other with relevant information concerning the modernization of armed forces, discussing concerns related to military activities, inviting observers to military exercises and conducting common exercises.

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