

**Kazakhstan and Central Asian Region could be the main field of application for the Paris-Berlin-Moscow geopolitical convergence**

**“KAZAKHSTAN MONITOR”, Alma-Ata, n.37, 8 October 2004**

**Fabrizio VIELMINI** – *Central Asia Analyst.*

The last two years have been marked by a radical modification of the terms of the Euro-American relationship. More than be the pure expression of the White House current administration, the US political behaviour seems to be the product of some tendencies *in nuce* inside the US establishment at least since the end of bipolar world. A confirmation of this view could be find analysing the stance of Democratic opponent to Bush administration. One of the official paper prepared by the Democratic Party in order to outline a concept for Kerry foreign policy (*Progressive Internationalism: A Democratic National Security Strategy*, [http://www.ppionline.org/specials/security\\_strategy](http://www.ppionline.org/specials/security_strategy)), call for a renewal of the “party’s tradition of muscular internationalism” in order to rally around America the “international community” (meaning with this primarily Europe). This sound very similar to neoconservative interventionism and allow to think that the differences between the two presidential contenders are mostly in the nuances.

The consequence are of tremendous momentum not only for Europe but for the very future of the world's governance. If the West will remain so monolithic on similar universal and moral basis, it will be more and more perceived negatively in North Africa and South Asia, areas that for Europe constitute the main geopolitical underpinning. Here, the point to take into consideration is that geopolitical differences are amplified by the condition of structural crisis of American economy. The net foreign indebtedness of the United States - public as well as private - is on the way to explosion. This fact threaten serious negative effects for the world trade based on US dollar.

At the level of world geopolitical system, the result of this two moments is that massive tectonic-plate shifts are taking place everywhere. Giving the structure of world power, this shifts regards first of all the Eurasian landmass, at western shores of which Europe is located. Most of this changes call Europe for a true Eurasian alliance in which the EU should bring a contribution proportionate to its economical and strategic weight.

***French-German-Russian partnership as a way out to the crisis***

In our view, this background is at the basis of the growing European interest for a new pattern of relations with Russia. However, during 2004, despite the reinforcement of the circumstances calling for an Euro-Russian strategic entente, a number of negative facts occurred in disturbing its concrete realisation. Most disappointing in this trend is the fact that its main actor has been the European Union bodies. Different documents produced in Brussels and Strasbourg dealt with Russia in an harsh and sometimes provocative tone. The EU enlargement deepened the cause for misunderstanding as in the new EU countries there

exists strong anti-Russian resentment. The most disturbing example went with the inopportune EU declaration voiced by the Dutch chairmanship of the Union in the aftermath of the Beslan hostage-taking calling for an “explanation from the side on Moscow in the midst of the tragedy, a move directly linked with the influence exercised by the newly arrived Baltic State inside the EU. The final impression in Russia is that European bureaucrats do not view Russia as a possibility but they view it only as a problem. In every case, the whole suggests that the EU institutions seems to dramatically lack the vision to operate in the direction of the needed Eurasian alliance.

As a consequence, there is a need to look for other architectures to build this geopolitical construction. The needed groundwork could only be find in France and Germany. France’s role has been seminal in the evolution toward a new outlook for the dialogue with Russia, a dialogue that, according to former French Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin, should be consolidate in the frame of a European-Russian Strategic Partnership through a « permanent institutional mechanism ». In Germany too the recognition of the inevitability of a new alliance with Russian is keeping to grow. This mood is not an exclusive of chancellor Schroeder and the ruling left coalition as also in CDU-CSU circles there could be find convicted partisans of a German emancipation from the US tutelage – for instance, the deputies Karl Lamers et Friedrich Merz defended this perspective against their party’s chairman Mrs. Merkel. This is the reflex of the absolutely new set of circumstances that characterises today German-Russian relationship. In the words of Alexander Rahr of the German Council on Foreign Relations: “for the first time in 100 years there are no obvious contradictions between Europe and Russia with regards to the architecture of the future world order.”

On the ground, this triangular co-operation is constantly elaborating. Notwithstanding the gloomy condition of Moscow-Brussels relations, Russia, France and Germany hold regular summits to draw a common foreign political line in global affairs. The future could be with this geometry, corresponding to the enormous pressures for massive change which are steadily pushing beneath the surface of current pattern of international structure. However, new concrete steps should be taken, otherwise, there are historical opportunities at risk to be missed doing to extreme volatility of the actual world conjuncture. This will not occur without heavy losses on both sides.

### ***Kazakhstan and Central Asia as a privileged testing ground***

Considering this concrete steps, from an operational point of view, it is important to define concrete applications of the Paris-Berlin-Moscow partnership in crucial geopolitical theatres. The rationale is that the potentiality of the partnership should be tested in adjacent external area where it could express its best. From this point of view, Central Asia appears as a privileged testing ground. There is a lot of talk on what should be the European role in the region, but up to this moment a clear strategy is far away from being identified. Inside the straight EU approach, this role seem to have exhausted its reach with standardised co-operation agreements, misrepresentation of Central Asian integration and other not-so-well defined occasional actions.

This results in the fact that, despite the concrete resources disbursed by the EU and the German-French duo in the region, the Europeans are far from having the concrete say in the regional affairs that the US have.

Contemplating Central Asia, a true European geopolitics should designate Kazakhstan as the principal pivot for its action. The importance of this country for Europe could not be misapprehended. Both Europe and Asia have focused much more attention on energy-related strategic co-operation agreements with Russia and the Central Asian states. This trend is set to continue and accelerate and Kazakhstan lies at its mist.

Out of this, Kazakhstan is of a foremost importance for an Europe projected to be a geopolitical actor. From this point of view, the country is a lot more than a provider of energy resources. It should be perceived as a geopolitical hub, a direct bridge to China, which in its turn represent a strategic partner for the three elements of the "Peace axis" partnership. This, first of all in view of the necessity for the construction of a Trans-Eurasian transport corridor, a perspective in which Kazakhstan and China are already engaged with concrete infrastructural projects and which is waiting for a more concrete signs of interest from the side of Europe. Big infrastructures would surely emerge as concrete element of economical recovery in view of world financial crisis. Europe and China will cope with the effects of this one only connecting their economies by way of similar projects, which, in their turns, will assure the recover of post-Soviet space only passing through it. Kazakhstan it is also the place of a strategic object as the Bajkonur space-vehicle launching site, a concrete place where French-German-Russian partnership could grow into the formation of joint scientific projects and capacity-building in space technology.

Kazakhstan is an ideal setting for French-German-Russian partnership expansion also from a political perspective. Of all the post-Soviet entities, Kazakhstan has always refused the logic of Russian encirclement (unfortunately adopted by many of the new EU members) which the US policy tried to implement during the 90'. Today this republic presents the closest degree of integration with Russia on the economic (Common Economic Space) as well as on military (Organisation of the Treaty on Collective Security) ground. President Nursultan Nazarbayev synthesized Kazakhstani vision for the Eurasian continent stating that the future is with the establishment and the close correlation of two geopolitical bloc: the Eurasian and the European Unions, each of them considered as full subject of international relations. As a result, it could be taken for sure that Astana will welcome the reinforcement of the French-German-Russian international architecture in order to bring its contribution to its strategy.

Last but not least, from an historical point of view, as a place of residence of a consistent German community, this country constitutes a living incarnation of the historical German-Russian intermingling. Considering the Tsarist-Soviet expansion in Asia according to the logic of a colonial enterprises is one of the elements that today impeach to fully understand the potential role of Russia in the Eurasian land-mass. There are actually many elements allowing to consider the former expansion an exchange proficient for all parties involved in it. In this view, Central Asian disenclavement trough the inclusion in the Tsarist Empire was in many respect a joint Russian-German enterprise. In our times, the positive

facet of this experience could be recovered under the banner of French-German-Russian partnership.

**The Europeans have only a little grasps of the potentialities of the Central Asian region for their future. The needed more ambitious projects are neglected because of a perception of lacking the possibility to interact with a so difficult region. This perception is doomed to disappear if only there could be find a way of composing European and Russian capacities and energies. Kazakhstan is definitely a field of gathering for the manifold interests that drive together the two geopolitical poles. In this perspective, it could be a pivot through which the tripartite partnership could reach further in the direction of creating a new Eurasian alliance.**

Text friendly sent by the author to [www.paris-berlin-moscou.org](http://www.paris-berlin-moscou.org)

October 2004