

The G-8 Summit in St. Petersburg and Russia

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Abstract

The G8 summit in St. Petersburg from July 15 through 17, 2006 was regarded as a triumph for Russia as a host country that took advantage of the moment to assert its re-emergence on the world stage. The G8 leaders except Russia agreed to avoid pressuring Russia on its domestic policy, after a lot of accusations by Western leaders and the press on rollbacks in democracy.

By focusing on and examining energy security with special reference to Russia's energy resources and strategic position, this paper shows why and how Russia was able to become only winner at this G-8 summit. Moreover this paper points out why education was set as one of the summit's priority subjects and how Russia, in cooperation with other G-8 members and the United Nations, was becoming capable of giving a new impulse for international cooperation for peace to resolve many issues such as nuclear proliferation, terrorism and regional crises, including human security issues in the area of fighting infectious diseases.

1. Introduction

The G8 summit in St. Petersburg from July 15 through 17, 2006 was regarded as a triumph for Russia as a host country that took advantage of the moment to assert its re-emergence on the world stage.¹ The G8 leaders except Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to avoid pressuring Russia on its domestic policy, after a lot of accusations by Western leaders and the press on rollbacks in democracy.²

One of the major sub-themes of Peace studies is on civil society, the state and democracy, especially on balance of power between nations as study of international relations. Broadly speaking, one of the purposes of this paper is to study the sub-themes of Peace studies such as democracy and balance of power between nations as study of international relations.

However, strictly speaking, the main purpose of this paper is to consider why and how Russia was able to become only winner at this G-8 summit by examining energy security with special reference to its energy resources and strategic position. Moreover this paper points out why education was set as one of the summit's priority

subjects and how Russia was becoming capable of giving a new impulse for international cooperation for peace.

2. Russia as only winner after the G-8 Summit

The main themes discussed during the summit included global energy security, development of modern education systems and the fight against infectious diseases in Russia, as well as globalization, international trade and Africa. Regarding the energy sector,³ the participants adopted the St. Petersburg Plan of Action, aiming to "enhance global energy security through efforts to increase transparency, predictability and stability ... improve the investment climate, promote energy efficiency and energy saving... ensure physical safety of critical energy infrastructure, reduce energy poverty and address climate change."⁴

Russian President Vladimir Putin chose energy security as a summit theme, and on this, too, there was a bland statement.⁵ The European leaders hoped to get Russia to ratify the Energy Charter, a liberalising treaty, and to open its gas pipelines to companies other than Gazprom, but they failed.⁶ Indeed, Putin, who grew up in St Petersburg, was the summit's only winner.

There were disappointments. Russia and America failed to strike a deal that would have let Russia join the World Trade Organization (WTO). Putin has showed confident assurance as this year's G8 host and appeared undaunted by the delay. Instead, he has aimed sharply worded commentary at some of his fellow G8 leaders, including U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Bush and Blair, by contrast, have appeared deferential, backing away from past criticism of what they termed Russia's antidemocratic trends.⁷

3. Russia's Impressive Show of Cooperation

Putin spoke at the first of the press briefings marking the conclusion of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg and noted with evident satisfaction that the St. Petersburg summit meeting had shown Russia to be a strong and vital member of the G8. He has expressed satisfaction that Russia's ideas and proposals for the G8 summit found understanding among the rest of the G8. Putin said, "It is clear that Russia's growing economic potential is enabling it to play an increasingly important role in global development and

We are ready to participate actively in carrying out all the initiatives put forward.”⁸

The summit was unexpectedly overshadowed by escalating violence in the Middle East, where Israel has mounted a powerful military offensive against Lebanon. Some observers feared that the Lebanese crisis and concern over North Korea's recent missile tests would hijack the summit. Both proved to be headline issues.⁹ But the leaders gathered in St. Petersburg and also released joint statements on all of the items on Putin's G8 agenda, including health, education, and energy security.

Prime Minister of Japan Junichiro Koizumi said the G-8 should condemn North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens as international human rights abuses and the launches by the DPRK of ballistic missiles on 5 July 2006.¹⁰ Consequently, the Chair's Summary statement made by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the end of the summit included concern among the member nations about the abduction issue and North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs.¹¹

Russia, hosting the G-8 summit for the first time, gave an impressive show of cooperation. President Vladimir Putin aimed to be widely recognized as a leader of a major power that is well conscious of its international responsibilities. Putin's diplomatic style reflected Russia's growing confidence in its economy, which has been growing thanks to rising oil exports.

4. Russia's Status Determined by its Energy Resources and Strategic Position

Putin used oil pipelines to retain his balance while fending off challenges by the other G-8 leaders who try to use human rights, energy security or territorial claims, including Japan's laying claim to the Northern Territories, to dislodge him. Russian commentators seem to be nearly unanimous in their assessment that the summit marked Russia's full return to the rank of the leading countries of the world.

Russia should be in the group due to its geopolitical location, the fact that without Russian participation none of the problems facing the international community can be solved, and because of its position as an energy superpower. Russia's status is determined by its energy resources and strategic position.¹²

For oil- and gas-rich Russia, energy security was the most important item on its formal G8 agenda. There, Russia won a decisive victory in rejecting European calls for it to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty. That agreement would require Russia to provide

open access to its energy resources and transport infrastructure.

Russia agreed to a vaguely worded G8 statement supporting the "principles" of the Energy Charter.¹³ But without ratification, control of Russia's gas-export pipelines remains fully in the hands of the country's Gazprom monopoly. European leaders fear this will leave them and their energy needs vulnerable to the whims of the Russian government.

The Putin administration has followed a state-controlled energy policy. This has stirred considerable alarm among European countries that depend heavily on oil and natural gas supplied by Russia.¹⁴ If Russia wants to attract more foreign investment in its energy sector, it needs to win the confidence of potential investors. It can do this by scrapping restrictions on investments and ensuring that market rules are enforced, for instance. That means Russia must commit itself to implementing the G-8 energy security action plan.¹⁵

Western leaders should speak out against Russian use of energy to bully its neighbours. Many west European countries have been too timid in their criticism. Above all, Western leaders should avoid giving the impression that what they really object to is not an illiberal and undemocratic Russia but a strong and rich one--a paranoia that even Russia's few remaining liberals all too often share.¹⁶

Sixty years ago a wise American diplomat, George Kennan, proposed that the right policy of the West towards an expansionary Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin should be containment. Russia today is clearly no such threat. But it still matters, and the West should care about where it is going. The best policy now is no longer containment but wary engagement.

5. Improving the Quality of Education as One of the Summit's Priority Subjects

One of the summit's priority subjects was improving the quality of education.¹⁷ The G8 leaders believe the quality of education has failed to keep up with the needs of the global economy and consider it necessary to adapt education to meet the demands of the innovative economy, and actively realize the program of "Education for All."¹⁸ Without a guarantee of universal primary education, and foremost in the developed countries, there can be no talk of development scientific and technical progress.¹⁹

Putin said at a press conference on the results of the G8 summit, "it is absolutely clear that knowledge is the main growth resource in the modern world,

fuelling not just the development of national economies but social progress in general. Education forms the foundation for the development of all modern culture in the world. Ultimately, the kind of world we live in tomorrow and its degree of growth capacity, tolerance and stability will depend on the kind of education people receive.”²⁰

Education is increasingly lagging behind the demands of the global economy. To address this issue, the G8 leaders have agreed on coordinated and substantial work in three key areas as following:²¹

First, education should be adapted to the demands of the innovation-based economy, which not by chance is called the “knowledge economy”. The possibility for life-long learning and training is of key importance in this respect.

Second, efforts should be stepped up to implement the Education for All [Programme](#). If there is not universal basic literacy, especially in the developing countries, we will not be able to achieve scientific and technical progress in the world.

Third, education [programmes](#) are a key to resolving the serious problems arising from the expansion of migratory flows in the world. Education is an effective tool in helping immigrants adapt to their new countries and in preventing conflicts that arise from ignorance and lack of tolerance for the traditions and values of other peoples.

6. Issues of Human Security and Peace at the Summit

As one of so called human security issues, significant decisions were taken in the area of fighting infectious diseases.²² It is needed to work intensively on developing international efforts to prevent and stem the spread of epidemics. These decisions carry on from earlier work in this area and set the outlines for future G8 strategy on preventing widespread diseases.²³

The G8 leaders are determined to stand by previous commitments on combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. A joint statement of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg "Fight against infectious disease" says as following:²⁴

- The commitments will be carried out through "mobilizing support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; continuing to pursue as close as possible to universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment for all who need it by 2010.
- G8 leaders will be supporting the Global Plan to Stop TB; providing resources in cooperation with African countries to scale up action against malaria; continuing

to expand the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.

However, international charity groups told a briefing on July 16 on the sidelines of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg that the leaders of the world's leading industrialized economies were dragging their feet on delivering the aid promised last year in Gleneagles, Scotland.²⁵

As one of so called peace issues, G-8 and Russia have reached agreements on issues of strategic and regional stability. They are ready to continue coordinating their work on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this respect G-8 and Russia share a common position regarding the need to resolve the Iranian and North Korean nuclear issues through exclusively peaceful and diplomatic means.²⁶

7. Counter-Terrorism and Reaffirming the Unique Role of the United Nations

Leaders of the Group of Eight member states have declared the adoption of an action plan to protect the most important facilities of the world's energy infrastructure. G8 leaders who gathered in St. Petersburg has passed a declaration on the fight against terrorism and in this declaration resolutely condemned terrorist attacks all over the world, as well as those who commit such attacks and spread suffering and death. They expressed their deepest condolences to all victims of terrorist attacks. G8 leaders were certain that if terrorism and violent extremism are allowed, this means harm is inflicted on our societies everywhere.²⁷

Before the adoption of an action plan to protect the world's energy infrastructure, Russian President Putin said that he had agreed with U.S. President George W. Bush on a global plan to combat the threat of nuclear terrorism. Putin said “the plan aims to keep track of potential terrorists, secure nuclear materials, and facilitate a joint response if terrorists obtain a nuclear weapon.”²⁸

Moreover, the Group of Eight has passed a statement on the strengthening of the United Nations' counterterrorism program. G-8 and Russia have reaffirmed the unique role of the United Nations in consolidating efforts in the fight against terrorism and have set out concrete steps for making this fight more effective, including through helping to develop the counter-terrorist capacity in third countries.²⁹

8. Concluding Remarks

The settlement of regional crises occupied an important place in G-8's discussions. Given the flare up in the situation there, they paid particular attention to the Middle East, Israel-Lebanon conflict.³⁰ Russian President Vladimir Putin has appealed for calm in the Middle East amid the sixth day of fighting in Lebanon. Putin said that the main thing now is to stop violence, stop the growing confrontation, prevent the region from falling back into chaos, prevent a wider conflict, end the suffering of common people, give priority to political and diplomatic methods of settlement with the central mediating role of the United Nations. He said also Russia would consider contributing troops to an international peacekeeping force in the Middle East if the UN approved such a deployment.³¹

President Vladimir Putin has said that there were no serious differences between G8 leaders during the drafting and adoption of resolutions on the Middle East.³² He said at a final press conference that we did not proceed from different, diametrically opposite points of view and our objectives were absolutely the same. He added the question only was that our proposals had to be correct and compatible with international law.³³

The G8's common position on all of these issues has been reflected in the final statement of the president.³⁴ Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown great leadership among G-8 leaders including U.S. President George W. Bush.³⁵ Thus Russia's Status became to be determined by its energy resources and strategic position.

Notes

¹ Kud'min and Volkova 2006b

² Iourine 2006

³ Grigor'ef 2006.

⁴ "St. Petersburg Plan of Action Global Energy Security " 2006 .

⁵ Kuz'min and Volkova 2006a.

⁶ Blinov 2006b

⁷ Chivers 2006

⁸ Putin 2006b.

⁹ Blinov 2006a

¹⁰ Sorokina 2006.

¹¹ Putin 2006c.

¹² "If Russia is the Chair of the G8, Be a Member of it" 2006.

¹³ About the Energy Charter, See Blinov, *loc. cit.*

- ¹⁴ European leaders anxious about Russia's reliability as their sole supplier of natural gas or as a partner in energy extraction projects came away with nothing to ease their anxieties. About this, see "The beef with Russia" 2006.
- ¹⁵ "St. Petersburg Plan of Action Global Energy Security" *loc. cit.*
- ¹⁶ Friedman 2006.
- ¹⁷ Putin 2006a.
- ¹⁸ "Education for all and Development" 2006.
- ¹⁹ "Building Skills For Life and Work Through Quality Education" 2006.
- ²⁰ Putin 2006b.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² "Making health a G8 priority" 2006
- ²³ Putin 2006b
- ²⁴ *Fight against infectious diseases: G8 Summit Documents* 2006.
- ²⁵ Bigg 2006.
- ²⁶ Putin 2006b.
- ²⁷ About the declaration on the fight against terrorism, see *G8 Summit Declaration on Counter-Terrorism: G8 Summit Documents, July 16, 2006* (2006).
- ²⁸ "U.S., Russia Agree To Fight Nuclear Terrorism" 2006.
- ²⁹ *G8 Statement on Strengthening the UN's Counter-Terrorism Program: G8 Summit Documents, July 16, 2006* (2006).
- ³⁰ Blinov 2006a.
- ³¹ Putin 2006b.
- ³² *Middle East: G8 Summit Documents, July 16, 2006* (2006).
- ³³ Putin 2006b.
- ³⁴ Putin 2006c.
- ³⁵ "Putin Defends Russia's Record On Democracy" 2006.

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