

European Security and EU-Russian Relations (ARI)

*Manuel de la Cámara**

Theme: Russia has proposed a comprehensive review of the so-called 'European Security Architecture'.

Summary: The Russian President, Dmitri Medvedev, has proposed a comprehensive review of the so-called 'European Security Architecture'. The goal, according to the Russian President, is to negotiate a new wide-ranging Pact in the form of a Treaty to cover the Euro-Atlantic Area. As such, the pact should establish a new system of collective security that would do away with what are perceived by Russia as dividing lines, consecrating some of the basic principles of international law and achieving equal security for all countries in the area.

Analysis: In a speech in Berlin on 5 June 2008, the Russian President, Dmitri Medvedev, proposed a comprehensive review of the so-called 'European Security Architecture'. The goal, according to the Russian President, is to negotiate a new wide-ranging Pact in the form of a Treaty (Medvedev called it 'Helsinki II') to cover the Euro-Atlantic Area 'from Vancouver to Vladivostok'. As such, the pact should establish a new system of collective security that would do away with what are perceived by Russia as dividing lines, consecrating some of the basic principles of international law and achieving equal security for all the countries in the area. Moscow has indicated its desire to address this issue within the framework of various organisations such as OSCE, NATO and even bilaterally with the EU. It has also proposed convening a summit of all 56 OSCE member countries to discuss this initiative.

The Russian Perspective

The proposal is an answer to a number of issues that are very negatively perceived by Russia:

- (1) From Moscow's point of view, since the end of the Cold War NATO has taken the centre stage in European security, filling the void left by the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact. Other organisations, mainly the OSCE and even the UN, seem to have lost much of their relevance and Russia has felt excluded. Actions such as NATO's military intervention during the Kosovo crisis (without UN Security Council authorisation), NATO enlargement (contrary to the assurances given to President Gorbachov when the USSR accepted German reunification) and the US plans to install elements of its missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic have been considered by Moscow as a threat to its security and its interests.

* *Spanish Diplomat.*

- (2) The Founding Act of May 1997 and the NATO-Russia Council of May 2002 have not served Moscow's objectives of obtaining equal status in the decision-making process and of transforming the Alliance into a politico-military organisation aimed exclusively at carrying out peace-keeping operations under UN and OSCE mandates (that is, renouncing article 5 on collective defence and any action not sanctioned by the appropriate international organisations).
- (3) Moscow denounces the West's double standards when it criticises Russia's 'disproportionate' military action against Georgia and Russian recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while condoning Western military intervention in Iraq or in the former Yugoslavia and recognising Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence without the appropriate UN Security Council resolution.
- (4) The Allies' reluctance to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty proves, in Moscow's eyes, the West's unwillingness to review and update the existing security structures in the Euro-Atlantic area.
- (5) The support by the US and some EU countries of the so-called 'Colour Revolutions' in the Ukraine, Georgia and other former Soviet Republics, NATO's Bucharest Summit Declaration regarding the membership of Georgia and the Ukraine and the setting up by the US of semi-permanent military facilities in Central Asia (in connection with the military operations in Afghanistan) are perceived by Moscow as attempts by the West to impinge on its 'backyard', on its 'natural sphere of influence' in the post-Soviet space.

Briefly, Moscow denounces a system that, in its opinion, has been unilaterally designed by the West since 1991. Now, a resurgent Russia wants to put an end to the 'Western-dominated' security architecture. In the words of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, it is necessary to 'clean up' European security structures from their Cold War legacy and recognise that Russia has regained much of its strength, claiming a 'a seat at the table as a major power'.

On the Western side the response to the Russian proposals of concluding a new treaty on European security has been cautious. There is indeed a readiness to engage in discussion as to what elements of the security framework in the Euro Atlantic area could be improved in order to restore trust with Russia. This discussion was initiated during the OSCE Ministerial meeting in Helsinki last December. But both Americans and Europeans have made it quite clear that the existing structures, organisations and agreements, as established in the Helsinki process and the post-Cold War period, must be preserved. In that respect, there is a preference for a 'Helsinki +' over a 'Helsinki II'.

Russia's Western partners affirm that the Transatlantic link between Europe and the US will be maintained as an essential element of European security. They claim that NATO does not pose a threat to Russia and they explain that the EU and NATO enlargements are a response to the request by independent and democratic European states to join the community of values and the economic and security structures represented by these organisations. Briefly, these processes are aimed at extending stability in Central and Eastern Europe but are not intended to damage Russia's security interests.

From a Western perspective, Russia is fully entitled to defend its interests in Europe and the post-Soviet space. However Russia has no 'right of veto' that can be interpreted as a new 'Monroe Doctrine' or as the recognition of exclusive spheres of influence. The former Soviet Republics are fully sovereign states entitled to have independent relations with all nations. High Representative Javier Solana expressed these ideas quite clearly in his Address to the Munich Security Conference last February: 'Some principles underpinning European security are non-negotiable: that we do it with the US, that countries are free to choose their alliance and that we reject notions such as spheres of privileged influence'.

A European Perspective

From a European perspective, there is a recognition that some of the major decisions taken in the area of security and defence in the last few years (the Kosovo case, for instance) might have caused irritation and resentment among some of its partners. Europeans claim, however, that these decisions were not taken to damage Russia's security interests or to restore dividing lines on the continent. For the Europeans, security cannot be achieved without the full participation of Russia, as a major power and partner.

But, from the European point of view, the best way to achieve comprehensive and lasting peace and security on the continent is not to restore a 'Peace of Westphalia' system based on rivalries and arrangements among major powers. Peace is better achieved by promoting interdependence and integration between nations.

The European integration process was a direct consequence of the terrible destruction and suffering brought about by the two World Wars. As conceived by the 'founding fathers' (from Aristides Briand, Salvador de Madariaga and Altiero Spinelli to Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet), the process was designed to make war in the European continent unthinkable –especially between France and Germany– and to promote economic exchanges based on democracy and the rule of law. That is, the stabilisation of relations between states and the stabilisation of societies by encouraging economic and social development. This was achieved through a step-by step approach (the so-called 'Monnet method') to build a common economic area with the four freedoms (the free movement of goods in a system of real and fair competition, the free movement of workers and services, freedom of establishment and the free movement of capital), based on a system of rules¹ accepted and respected by all. Within the Union, each country defends its national interests strongly but must always respect the common rules and accept the understanding that, in the end, on every issue there must be a compromise that requires concessions from all sides.

This process, although not perfect, has been tremendously successful and decisive in promoting lasting peace on the European continent. From the original six member states and the initial 'Common Market' there is now a Union of 27 countries with a population of almost 500 million. Even the UK, a former empire which for centuries had remained apart from Continental European arrangements, has also become a member. Many other states from different parts of Europe, such as Turkey and the Balkan countries, aspire to join the EU one day. In order to do so, they are all introducing reforms to strengthen their democracies and their economies and have renounced the use of force to resolve their bilateral disputes.

¹ The Treaties or primary law and the secondary law, which includes regulations, directives, decisions, etc.

When membership is not possible the EU tries to extend its own model based on the rule of law, a social market economy and fundamental freedoms to areas and regions in its neighbourhood. This is the main purpose of initiatives such as the so-called 'Eastern Partnership', aimed at countries in Eastern Europe, and the 'Union for the Mediterranean', aimed at the EU's southern neighbours.

But what about Russia? European history –from the 9th to the 21st centuries– cannot be understood without Russia. Europe has taken much from Russia and given much to it. But Russia is not very sure about its identity and many Russian citizens do not consider themselves Europeans in the political and cultural sense. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the 21st Century, as Stefan Schepers has written,² is to build upon the EU's experience in promoting peace and prosperity in Europe to achieve similar results with Russia. This goal must be sought taking into account that Russia is not going to join the EU in the foreseeable future. A real European security system should be such that it would make war between Russia and any other European country as unthinkable as it is now between Germany and France.

The importance of their relations should push Russia and the EU towards mutual understanding and cooperation, even more so after the latest EU enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe. Russia is the EU's biggest neighbour (bordering with five member states), its third-largest trade partner after the US and China (overall trade in 2008 reached €278.3 billion, and 74% of EU exports were manufactured goods). In the past few years 70% of FDI in Russia was from the EU and most Russian investments abroad go to Europe. Russian citizens travel to Europe and many have properties there. Russia is the largest supplier of energy to Europe (supplying 33% of Europe's oil, 42% of its gas and 25% of its coal in 2007) and is a crucial alternative to the unstable Near East. The dependence is mutual, as most of Russia's oil exports go to the European market and it sells most of its gas through pipelines leading to Europe.

The EU and Russia's positions as regards global challenges such as the proliferation of WMD, terrorism, organised transnational crime (including high-seas piracy), climate change, natural disasters and disease are similar and cooperation in these areas is already substantial. They also have similar positions as regards some of the main issues on the international agenda such as the Middle East and the stabilisation of Afghanistan.

But moving towards deeper understanding is not easy. There are profound differences between member states on the EU's relationship with Russia. After the latest enlargements, some of the new member states that were part of Russia's sphere of influence during Soviet times distrust Moscow's new 'assertiveness'. Russia's military intervention in Georgia in 2008 heightened the perception of vulnerability of some of the new member states. Russia's reliability as a gas supplier was jeopardised by the cuts that took place in January 2006 and again in January 2009 in the context of Russia's gas disputes with Ukraine. There is concern in Europe about the growing presence of the State in Russia's political and economic activity, its return to an autocratic system of government and to power politics in its foreign policy. All of this seems to push Russia and the EU further apart instead of bringing them closer together.

² See "The Logic of European History. Rapprochement between Russia and the European Union". In *Russia in Global Affairs*. January-March 2009. Pages 104-117.

There is no common view on Russia among the EU's member states. Russia and some EU countries (especially the larger ones) prefer to address some of the main issues on a bilateral basis, in particular in the energy area. This has prevented the development of a truly comprehensive relationship between Russia and Europe. Some member states prefer to deal directly with Moscow on economic and energy matters and leave the most difficult issues –such as democracy and human rights, trade barriers and reciprocal access to investments in some sensitive sectors– to the EU. Some projects –eg, 'North Stream' and 'South Stream'– have been conceived without taking into account the interests of all EU members. This is a paradox because some of the most belligerent member states vis-à-vis Russia are the most dependant on its gas and oil supplies.

In the energy area, the EU is especially interested in guaranteeing uninterrupted and sufficient Russian supplies as well as access to investments in upstream and transit infrastructures in Russia. But the preference of some member states in dealing with Russia on a bilateral basis undermines a common response to energy security and the Commission's efforts to diversify both the sources and the transport routes (such as the Nabucco project). On the other hand, Russia is interested in gaining access to gas storage and distribution in Europe, removing restrictions on investment in certain sectors (eg, aerospace) and eliminating barriers to electricity and fissile material exchanges. As long as it fails to gain concrete results on these issues Moscow will not respond to the EU's call to abide by the principles of The Energy Charter and its Transit Protocol.

Perhaps because of these factors the EU has so far been relatively unsuccessful in co-opting and attracting Russia to the process of European integration. The reality is, however, that Europe needs Russia, while the EU is the partner that Russia needs to develop an economic base which is not almost wholly dependent on the sale of crude oil, gas and certain other mineral and metal products.

President Medvedev seemed to share this objective when he said in July 2008 that: 'We attach much importance to the conclusion of a great strategic agreement between Russia and the EU which constitutes the base for the construction of a "Greater Europe" without dividing lines'. The President added that the new agreement should be based on intense economic cooperation, with agreed rules and regulations, including the energy and high-technology sectors.

In accordance with this approach, the EU's negotiating mandate –approved on 25 May 2008– included an ambitious objective: to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that encompassed all areas of EU-Russia cooperation. In the economic sphere, the aim was gradual integration with the establishment of an enhanced free-trade agreement which would include substantially all economic exchanges. A prior requirement was Russia's accession to the WTO.

The negotiations on a new 'Strategic Agreement' were resumed after a temporary interruption following the Georgian crisis in December 2008. Four rounds of negotiations have already been completed and the fifth will begin soon. However, it is not clear either when the negotiations will be completed or what the final result will be. There is no certainty as to when Russia will become a member of the WTO and, therefore, the establishment of an 'enhanced Free-Trade Agreement' might have to wait. Due to the economic crisis the Russian government has recently taken a number of measures to protect certain sensitive sectors. The EU considers these measures contrary to Russia's commitments under the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the

obligations undertaken for its entry into the WTO. On the key energy front, relations are strained due to the temporary interruptions of Russia's gas supply to its European clients last January. The tough Russian reaction to the recent Brussels Declaration on the Modernisation of the Gas Transit System of Ukraine shows how sensitive this area is.

The issue of external security offers good possibilities for enhancing EU-Russian cooperation, despite the fact that the ESDP is not yet fully developed. This may take some time but the EU has already developed a valuable expertise in carrying out the so-called 'Petersberg Tasks', with over 20 military, police, civil or mixed missions in various crisis scenarios. A good example is the EUMM in Georgia, which has been instrumental in facilitating the implementation of the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreements after the crisis last summer. The agreements were a good example of how Russia and the EU can work together to defuse a dangerous international crisis on the continent. Joint efforts should be made to find solutions to smouldering conflicts in the South Caucasus (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Moldova (Transdnistria), for which Russian participation is crucial. There are other examples of good cooperation, such as Russia's participation in the EUFOR peace operation in Chad and the Central African Republic and coordination between the EU's Atalanta operation and Russian naval units to combat piracy off Somalia. These are good 'building blocks' for a stronger partnership.

If cooperation between Russia and the EU in this area is developed further, the new agreement could include some new instruments and mechanisms, such as an EU-Russia Council similar to the NATO-Russia Council. An important step would also be to establish cooperation between the EU and relevant organisations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on issues such as the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime.

The EU should explain to Russia that the 'Eastern Partnership Initiative', which is a process in the making, should not undermine Russia's efforts to achieve a greater degree of economic integration within the CIS, much the same as the 1997 EU-Mexico Agreement did not undermine NAFTA. In this respect, a dialogue should be established between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Community as the main organisation promoting an economic integration process within the post-Soviet space.

When analysing EU-Russian relations and their relevance to European security, the fundamental importance of values should not be ignored. The report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy presented by High Representative Solana to the EU Council on 11 December 2008 stated that: 'Our partnership (with Russia) should be based on respect for common values, notably human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, and market economic principles as well as common interests and objectives'. Similar language is used in the negotiating Mandate for a new agreement, as was the case in the 1997 PCA.

But the Russian side has rejected the idea that the new agreement must be based on common values and insists that the EU and Russia should rather concentrate on identifying 'common interests'. From the European perspective it is clear that a process whose aim is deepening the economic and political convergence with Russia cannot succeed if there are no shared values and basic agreements on a number of 'fundamentals', including the rule of law and the respect of norms and basic freedoms. On this matter, the valuable initiatives and clear commitment shown by President Medvedev

towards introducing reforms and guaranteeing respect for the law in Russia are positive and encouraging steps.

Conclusion: Reviewing the European Security Architecture, beyond a simple rhetorical exercise, will not be easy. As regards the EU, the idea of establishing a strategic partnership with Russia cannot hide the fact that on some important issues there is still no common vision. There is a need for enhanced dialogue and explanation to avoid suspicions and misunderstandings and the search for strong cooperation in many areas to proceed, as Jean Monnet would have recommended, to *rapprochement* by concrete realities and achievements.

Manuel de la Cámara
Spanish Diplomat