



Towards a new European security architecture – what is Russia's place in Europe?

by Arcadio Diaz Tejera, Senator, Madrid*

The question as to whether Europe needs a new security architecture was put back on the international agenda in June 2008 by President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia. His move is a sign both of growing concern in Moscow about its perception that Russian views tend to be ignored and of the country's increasing self-confidence, which emboldens it to aim for the revision of the existing security structures.

This was before the war in Georgia that brought Russia and NATO back to a cold war-style confrontation and shook the foundations of Europe's security structures.

Russia's security interests

In Russia's view, a new architecture should be based on a legally binding treaty and provide equal security for all. The treaty should be signed not only by all OSCE member states but also by the existing security organisations such as NATO, the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) and the OSCE itself.

Russia wants to correct three major trends that it has observed since the end of the cold war and which it perceives as threatening its security interests:

- no country must be allowed to assure its own security at the expense of others;
 - measures on the part of military alliances or coalitions of countries that undermine the unity of the common security area should not be permitted; and
 - there should be no expansion of military alliances in a way that threatens the security of other parties to the new treaty.
- Collective conflict prevention with resolution mechanisms and new forms of cooperation in the fields of non-proliferation and the fight against terrorism and organised crime should be established.

The pan-European approach versus inner reforms

Moscow has often felt that its proposals for pan-European security have not been taken seriously. I believe that this will not be the case again. Russia rightly points to the curious situation in which the principle of equal security for all is being proclaimed at the same time at the OSCE level and within other regional security organisations such as NATO and the CSTO. The core of the Russian proposal is to strengthen pan-European commitments and to raise their political level from that of an undertaking within the OSCE to a treaty-based obligation. The Russian President's initiative also needs to be seen in the context of his parallel efforts to reform his country



Arcadio Diaz Tejera

Arcadio Diaz Tejera from Spain, born in 1954, is a Socialist Senator who represents his birthplace of Las Palmas in Gran Canaria. Before becoming a member of parliament he was a Criminal Court judge dealing with terrorist cases.

He has been a member of the Political Committee of the European Security and Defence Assembly/Assembly of WEU since June 2008. He is also active in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of

Europe where he is a member of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population as well as of the Sub-committee on Crime and Terrorism, Legal Affairs and Human Rights. Additionally, he sits on the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights.

from the inside. In Russia's case, external and internal reforms go hand in hand. In fact, internal reform is almost a pre-condition for successful efforts to review the external security system. In the end, it all boils down to creating the necessary confidence in Russia's readiness to become part of the larger transatlantic family of democracies interested in an active governance of the common security challenges they face.

However, given the difficulties with Moscow in other areas of international cooperation, such as the issue of Russia's accession to WTO or its attitude towards a new partnership agreement with the EU, many take the view that Mr Medvedev must do a lot more in order to show that Russia is serious about change.

How Russia could meet its security interests

Ever since the end of the cold war and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, two important underlying questions have remained unanswered: firstly, what is Russia's place in Europe? And secondly, how can the security requirements of eastern European countries and the successor states of the former Soviet Union best be met?

Russia is a major geopolitical player and one of Europe's most important actors in addressing a number of security concerns, including arms control, non-proliferation and missile defence, as well as terrorism and organised crime and related issues such as the energy trade, piracy and cyber security. As far as the second question goes, expanding NATO eastwards may not in every case be the right answer. Among other

things, it risks confining our perspective to a mainly military one, leading us to neglect other dimensions of security. A NATO expansion resulting in a more hostile attitude towards Russia within NATO would be counterproductive. But if NATO membership is not the right answer at this point in time for those countries, what should we be offering them? The recent launch of the EU's Eastern Partnership (on 6 May 2009 in Prague with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as participants, is an example of what we can do. But while the Partnership aims to contribute to economic stability and cooperation in the region, it lacks a security dimension. The EU, despite the considerable progress of its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), is not yet capable of providing collective security for its members. It is worth mentioning, however, that the Eastern Partnership has opened up the potential for a normalisation of relations with Belarus. We should make sure that the EU's initiative cannot be misconstrued as a partnership against Russia. Our common history demands that we continue looking for new and better ways to cooperate with one another.

What are Moscow's real objectives?

President Medvedev's proposal first met with a degree of suspicion, not least because it was short on detail and few people could see the point being made. Then came the war in



The President of Russia, Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev. Photo: www.eng.kremlin.ru

“The time has come for the new generations to profoundly change and modernize Russia”

Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, President of Russia, Moscow, 12.11.2009

Georgia and theoretical concepts were overtaken by events and the attempt to create new realities on the ground by military force. Russia ceased to show patience and restraint and acted instead. For Russia, the war proved President Medvedev right: the existing institutions are not up to dealing with the current challenges.

President Medvedev's critics believe his proposal is a ploy to set the NATO allies and the OSCE, Council of Europe and EU members wondering whether the set-up they have is the right one, by creating unwarranted uncertainty about the legitimacy, efficiency and credibility of those institutions. Many suspect Moscow of wanting to weaken the human rights dimension of the OSCE, which it increasingly regards as biased and one-sided. Other critics fear that Russia's aim is to effectively veto further NATO expansion by seeking to maintain a recognised sphere of influence in its own neighbourhood and to keep the United States – often perceived as synonymous with NATO – at bay.

What Russia should do to convince critics

The Russian proposal was then taken to the OSCE, which is the natural and most relevant forum in which to discuss pan-European security issues. The OSCE summit in Corfu in June 2009 launched the “Corfu Process” which aims to structure the further dialogue on European



Russians forces answering Georgian aggression



Destroyed Georgian tank

Photos: www.armyrecognition.com



Russian missile destroyer used in the 2008 Russian-Georgian war at the coast of Sevastopol (Ukraine).

Photo: commons.wikimedia.org

security. This is a good start: we parliamentarians need to follow this closely and make our own contribution to the debate. A first step was an interparliamentary conference recently hosted by the Ukrainian Parliament. We need to deepen this dialogue further and Russia should make best use of all opportunities to further explain and promote its ideas when they run up against a wall of scepticism.

How then to define Russia's place in Europe?

Russia itself has not fully made up its mind about the geopolitical role that it wishes to play. Geographically speaking, a part of Russia is European and about 75 % of its population lives in its European part. But Russia is also a Eurasian power that shares borders with both China and India. The United States is considered "European" in the political sense and is a military ally of 26 European countries. Any successful future European security architecture would integrate Russia better into Europe's security structures without in any way excluding the United States.

It is time to create negotiated setups

The current set-up is insufficient to do this. It has clearly not been successful for keeping the peace, as we saw recently in Georgia. The existing structures such as the NATO-Russia Council have weaknesses that prevent us from efficiently tackling other "frozen" conflicts, as they are known, in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Crimea, for example, or the Balkans still.

Stay away from illusions

Germany's former Foreign Affairs Minister, Joschka Fischer, has suggested transforming NATO into a real European security system that includes Russia as a member. NATO has been so central to the security of its current members that he believes it also needs to play a central role in a new European security system. But it is currently as unlikely that NATO will undergo the necessary transformation as it is that Russia will deviate

from its current strategic course, which could be defined as seeking to remain a power in its own right. But the long-term consequences of such stagnation of the strategic environment are not satisfactory for anyone.

There is hope

I very much welcome that Washington has understood the need to improve its relations with Russia. Presidents Medvedev and Obama have put forward a common agenda for negotiations on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. But so far, there has been little of the progress on such pressing issues as Iran's nuclear and missile programmes that could mark a new level of mutual confidence and unite us all.

The chance of a truly new beginning

This is the third time since the end of the Cold War that the chance of a truly new beginning in our relations has presented itself. On previous occasions, following the break-up of the Soviet Union and in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the potential for cooperation was not exploited to the full. The US, Russia, the EU – all of us – must grasp this new opportunity, which, if lost, may not return for many years.

• Need for an open-ended dialogue

This is why we aim for an open-ended dialogue, involving all Euro-Atlantic countries willing to participate, on the ways and means of improving the existing European security architecture. This dialogue should first and foremost cover new measures for building mutual confidence and transparency. Without trust and transparency there is no point in trying to set up a new architecture or sign a new treaty.

• Preserving the transatlantic links

I believe that preserving the transatlantic link will prove essential for a successful security structure. But like many people in Russia and elsewhere, I believe that there should not be one country whose status towers above that of the rest. I find the new approach by President Obama to his country's foreign policy very encouraging.

• Thorough review of Russia's foreign policy

That is why President Medvedev should also conduct a thorough review of Russia's foreign policy, in particular as regards its own neighbourhood. He must have realised how damaging it is for his proposal and for Russia itself that the relations with almost all of Russia's neighbours are characterised by lack of mutual confidence or outright tensions.

Russia's heavy involvement in the frozen conflicts has not always been constructive. Its recognition of the two breakaway regions of Georgia, its military build-up there and continuing difficulties over its observance of international commitments made in August 2008 raise question marks over the very principles President Medvedev has set out as integral to the kind of new security architecture he wants for Europe, and he should explain what role Russia intends to play in the world.

The utmost importance of EU-Russia cooperation

Russia needs to decide whether it wants to be part of the greater Euro-Atlantic community of modern democracies and open societies joining forces with those seeking to define the future European and global security architecture. A common security system in which all countries enjoy equal security can only work if all partners share common values.

If Russia prefers to remain aloof, resting on its laurels as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and possessor of an aging nuclear arsenal, its inclination might be to do little more than wield its power to disrupt. In such a scenario, which I hope we can avoid, and in view of demographic trends within the country and its heavy dependence on energy exports, it faces the risk of decline. Standing alone will not be sustainable.

We should strive for a win-win position for all partners

Russia, its neighbours, the EU and the United States have everything to gain from a serious dialogue on the strengths and weaknesses of the current security architecture and ways of improving it. Arms control, nuclear proliferation, international terrorism, climate change and the security of our energy trade are questions that concern us all in one way or another. I believe a dialogue on the new security architecture should first address those issues and only then focus on institutional aspects. The frozen conflicts, the CFE crisis and the numerous non-proliferation issues provide us with ample opportunity to show that we are able and willing to find common ground even where we used to differ. As members of parliament, we know that our citizens, our voters, do not want us to create yet more institutions or sign yet another treaty. Rather, they look to us to find answers to the pressing challenges of our times, in Europe and worldwide.

*Rapporteur for the European Security and Defence Assembly(ESDA) / Assembly of WEU, Paris

Opinion

Does the OSCE secretary general have nothing better to do than to slam the EU?

Marc Perrin de Brichambaut must be bored out of his mind at the Hofburg to slam the European Union as he does in an article published by Europe's World. The OSCE secretary general reproaches the EU for undermining his organisation through unilateralism that has no cause to be jealous of that of Moscow or Washington. He accuses it of having deliberately ignored the OSCE by rolling out strategies for Central Asia and the Black Sea, while his own organisation was already active in both these regions. The same thing, he says, is true for South East Europe, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (...).

The secretary general is of the view that the OSCE is what might be termed an "actor of urgency" to whom the EU can turn for lessening tensions in situations where other forms of engagement have either been blocked or have proven ineffective. As proof of this, he points to the role played by the OSCE in Georgia last year, speaking of the deployment of additional military monitoring officers in the conflict zone almost immediately after the hostilities had ceased. This, he says, was an important underpinning of the French EU Presidency's actions and since then the EU and the OSCE have co-chaired negotiations in Geneva. The Union's monitoring mission is only mentioned a little further on to affirm that the EU has a "vital interest" in a continuing OSCE presence at its side on the ground.

Would it be unseemly to remind Mr Perrin de Brichambaut that the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe was unable to ease tension in Georgia or to prevent the conflict in August 2008? As for the rest, there is the impression in Brussels that – with the intervention of the French president followed up by very swift deployment of a monitoring mission – the EU was the only effective mediator in that crisis. And the presence of the OSCE in Geneva is generally seen around Schuman Square as a gesture of goodwill towards a paralytic organisation.

Attack is the best form of defence but it cannot conceal the OSCE's inability to carry out in-depth reform. The Union and its member states no doubt have a role to play in this, but they cannot achieve it on their own. The secretary general's initiatives on this are awaited with interest because if, as Marc Perrin de Brichambaut says, the OSCE is the "natural place" for dialogue on the new pan-European security treaty proposed by President Medvedev, then it cannot remain so without a complete overhaul first.

Olivier Jehin, Chief Editor
EUROPE DIPLOMATIE AND DEFENCE in
THE AGENCY EUROPE BULLETIN ON ESDP & NATO, Nr. 262,
20.October 2009, Brussels
www.agenceurope.com