RUSSIA AND CYPRUS IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN AND REGIONAL SECURITY

Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova
Head, Department of European Studies, Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Russian Academy of Sciences

Past

Russia's relations with Cyprus have always been very good, spiritually close and based on mutual respect and friendship. In the past Cyprus as a member of Non-Alignment Movement contributed to the erosion of bipolarity. But the bipolar structure of the international relations limited the scope of the USSR-Cyprus cooperation on many problems since the stakes of both East and the West were very high and nobody wanted to change the existing balance in the international relations.

Present and Future

With all importance of cultural and economic interdependence, the fundamental for the Russia-Cypriot cooperation is related to security. They hold similar positions on a number of issues, first and foremost on a new European security architecture that could allow resolving the old conflicts and preventing new ones in the Euro-Atlantic area. It is very telling that Cyprus is the only EU member-state that signed in November 2008 the Joint Declaration with Russia supporting the idea of a new European Security architecture. Given that Cyprus has been divided for the past 36 years (and no solution in yet in sight), President Medvedev could not have chosen a more symbolic EU state for his initiative.

International, European and Regional Security

There exists a strong dialectical interdependence between international, Euro-Atlantic and regional security. Security and stability in Eastern Mediterranean and in Europe at large will depend on the future developments in the Russia-West relations and on structural changes in the adjoining regions which in their turn will depend on the Russia-West relations. Just regional cooperation cannot resolve the problem of the frozen conflicts that reflect the main contradictions of the post-bipolar international system: a contradiction between the principle of territorial integrity and nations' right for self-determination; a contradiction between nations' right for sovereignty (non-interference of external players in domestic affairs of other states) and nations' right for humanitarian intervention; a contradiction between nations' right to freely choose and join security alliances and nations' right to oppose expansion of security alliances when it is perceived as a threat to national security. They cannot be resolved by the so called case by case approach. The Cyprus problem is a product of bipolarity while the frozen conflicts in the CIS space and in Western Balkans have been triggered with the end of bipolarity. However, notwithstanding the economic, political, cultural and ethnic peculiarities of the frozen conflicts as well as their varying geopolitical locations and environments, they share some fundamental features: the

bitterness of the dominant titular ethnic group about losing to the separatists as a result of the intervention of an external force, the factor of refugees (except, Transnistria), the loss of the territorial integrity as well as the fact that Communism in the post-Communist NIS has been replaced by nationalism. The latter has become the main driving force in the formation of statehood in these countries. Such fundamental problems should be addressed in a new context of the Russia-West relations.

Medevedv's proposal is a message to reconsider these relations. Usually all world wars ended with peace conferences – be it Peace of Westphalia, Vienna Congress, Versailles, or Yalta - that established a new world order and new rules of behavior in international relations. Unlike the past world wars the end of the Cold War did not result in a reconstruction of the international relations in Euro-Atlantic space. The collapse of the Communist East created the impression in the West that everything in its policy had been right and there was no need to change anything. The Cold War security system was logical and had a clear goal – to prevent a new big war in Europe either through a deliberate aggression or inadvertent escalation. That system had fulfilled its goal, the Cold War ended twenty years ago, new security threats have emerged - but the existing system still basically consists of the old elements and hastily introduced innovations (i.e. Russia-NATO council), which are not adequate to new security challenges. Two conflicts after the end of bipolarity– the Kosovo crisis of 1999 and the Caucasus crisis of 2008 are the most telling evidence to the fact, that none of the existing security institutions, allegedly responsible for preventing and resolving such conflicts, were able to effectively do their job.

"Without Russia" means "against Russia"
We have heard many times from my Western colleagues that "without Russia" does not mean necessarily "against Russia" and that EU and NATO have a legitimate right to develop their regional strategies without Russia. True, they have a legitimate right to do this but Russia has a legitimate right to oppose those strategies which are perceived as a threat to its national interests. In any case legitimate does not mean necessarily good or right. As long as Russia shares the continent with EU and NATO, which possess huge economic, technological and military power - "without Russia" will be always interpreted by Moscow as "against Russia". Russia's critical position on Eastern partnership or NATO' enlargement to the CIS space would have never developed if Russia had been part of these strategies. European security may no longer be confined to the EU and NATO borders. New external threats are transnational and Russia is needed to cope with these threats: proliferation of WMD, international terrorism, drug-traffic, illegal migration, trans-border crime, ethno-religious conflicts, piracy etc.The last year brought some positive results – the reset of Russia's relations with the US, Poland, Ukraine and Scandinavian states.

The Russia-US rapprochement is central for cooperation on the global, European and regional security. It is essential for the Russia-NATO relations and consequently it creates a favourable environment for the Russia-EU

relations. Without the US-Russia cooperation it will not be possible to cope with proliferation of WMD, first and foremost with the Iranian nuclear ambitions. If Iran decides to go nuclear, it will negatively affect not only the Arab world but the Wider Black Sea region. Due to the complexity of its security environment, Turkey that seeks protection from weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats will do the same and there are other countries in the region with a potential to follow the Iranian scenario. Such developments would strongly affect security interests of Russia and Cyprus.

Aside from this, there is a **problem of TNW** that are present in the region. As for tactical nukes US planned unilateral withdrawal, if it happens, will be welcomed by Russia but not too enthusiastically: in view of NATO huge conventional superiority and because the withdrawal will be unverifiable and quickly reversible. It would be safer to have a legally binding treaty, first, to place all tacnukes in centralized storages with mutual controls of their perimeters (useful also against terrorists), and eventually withdrawing all US and Russian tacnukes from Europe.

With regard to conventional imbalances, given the fact that in the past, the Black Sea-Mediterranean region was the political borderland between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, traditional security perceptions still cast a long shadow over the region in the absence of a clear-cut NATO/U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Russia. NATO, notwithstanding its transformation, is still a military alliance and there can be little question that much of the strategic importance accorded to the region in the post-bipolar era derives from a very traditional stake in power projection. For Russia the stakes are clearly different." A more competitive relationship with Russia could also mean a different kind of American and NATO engagement across the region. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey (which is the second largest standing force in NATO after the United States could face new pressures regarding security cooperation, base access and over-flight rights.

A major source of contention between Russia and the West regarding the CFE Treaty is their differing interpretations of the relationship between two important decisions adopted at the Istanbul summit. It would be rational and reasonable to agree to reduce conventional forces in CFE zone down to 300 thousand for Russia and NATO as long as they still are not allies. Russian policy makers do not consider the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty Agreement as fully meeting their country's security needs. On many occasions they called on NATO to eliminate the flank limitations, commit not to establish permanent military bases outside NATO territory, and accept lower quotas to compensate for the additional military capacity NATO had acquired through its membership expansion.

If the crisis around the Adapted CFE Treaty were resolved it would be possible to move further. Theoretically, neither Russia, nor NATO (or EU ESDP plus US forces) need more than 300 thousand strong forces. EU rapid deployment corpse is planned at a level of 200 thousand to able to field at any given time around 60 thousand - for Petersburg-type missions. Plus 100 thousand US

troops to substantiate transatlantic link and be ready to redeploy to Asia or Africa to suppress terrorism, rogue states or WMD. That is all that may really be needed after the end of Cold War, if the West indeed is not planning to fight Russia. For Russia conventional forces of 300 thousand would also be enough in Europe to take care of its southern contingencies and cooperate with NATO and EU in Petersburg missions.

Russia's proposal on a new European Security Treaty has been met with great skepticism in the West. But whatever the juridical merits of the proposed draft – it reflects at least one reality that should not be ignored - hard security still matters for Russia and without radical changes in the NATO-Russia relations it will remain a major source for security conflicts in Europe.

Turkish factor in the regional security
Turkey plays a very important role in the regional security. It is a "middle power" in Eurasia and in the Middle East aspiring to become a "regional superpower" primarily by tightening relations with the Arab and Muslim states. The establishment of a free trade zone between Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and Turkish assistance for erecting industrial parks in the Palestinian Authority are the most telling evidence to potential Turkish involvement in the regional economy. Turkey also has a crucial position in the regional balance as a transit country in the Caspian energy corridor. Turkey is part of the Cyprus problem and part of its solution.

It is argued that Turkish membership to EU would enhance the European security structure, as it would benefit from Turkey's geopolitical position and military capabilities as a NATO member. However, the crux of the problem has been Turkey's non-compliance with obligations set out in the 2004 Ankara Protocol, which were later included in the country's negotiating framework for EU accession. The NATO-EU Capability Group is hampered by political problems, namely by the so-called participation problem, which in its turn a product of the unresolved Cyprus problem. Turkey refuses to allow Cyprus to participate in ESDP missions involving NATO intelligence and resources, while Cyprus refuses to allow Turkey to engage in the overall development of CSDP, and vetoes the association of Turkey with the European Defence Agency. The EU has been upset by the recent Turkish-Brazilian diplomatic engagement with Iran on its nuclear program. And the same can be said about the Turkey-NATO relations which are at a crossroads nowadays since the frequency of disagreements has increased over time.

The results of the last referendum on constitutional changes in Turkey have reflected a general rethinking of the government's policies in other areas, including foreign policy. Although the Turkish leadership has emphasized that the tightening of ties with Muslim states, and especially with Iran, do not contradict its desire to strengthen its relations with the West and continue the process of joining the European Union, a great deal will depend on its domestic evolution. Only democracy can bring Turkey closer to the EU but democracy in a Moslem state does not mean necessarily Westernism and it is capable to bringing Turley to other foreign policy destinations.

Until recently the growing gap in security perceptions between NATO, Russia and Turkey had a strong impact on international and European security dividing and undermining international cooperation on **non-traditional security threats**. Both Russia and Turkey were demonstrating the tendency toward more unilateral conduct. The two countries position themselves as pragmatic international players acting first and foremost on the basis of national interest. Both have been concerned of U.S. activism in the Black Sea region. Both have been accustomed to perceive the Black Sea as an "internal lake" and opposed efforts to make the Black Sea a NATO-controlled body of water. Turkey has been taking advantages from its position of a middle-man between Russia and NATO but it is likely to lose this position with the reset of Russia-West relations.

Today, Russia is Turkey's largest trading partner. Russia also supplies close to half of Turkey's crude oil and 65 percent of its natural gas, used both to heat Turkish home and to run many of the country's power plants. But the paradox of Russia-Turkey economic relations lies in the fact that while Moscow and Ankara are engaged in an intense partnership, including in the energy sphere, they are at the same time fiercely competing with one another in the same energy sphere. During his visit to Cyprus president Dmitry Medvedev said Russia's growing commercial and political relations with Turkey "do not pose a threat" to Cyprus. In May, Turkey and Russia signed 17 cooperation agreements, including the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant near the Mediterranean coastal town of Akkuyu. However Russia will be keeping a close watch on Turkey's foreign policy.

Conclusion

A solid legal and institutional basis in Russia's relations with the EU and NATO member-states is indispensable condition for the construction of a new European security architecture and international cooperation in the security sector. Cyprus, being Russia's natural ally, is vitally interested in Russia's rapprochement with the West since only a new security environment in which Russia could play more visible role could encourage a solution of the Cyprus problem.