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FOCUSING BACK AGAIN ON EUROPEAN SECURITY: The Medvedev proposal as an opportunity

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The Russian proposal for a European Security Treaty has helped to revive the debate on European Security. This paper suggests ten ways in which the new momentum could be seized to improve the general context of Security in Europe:

1. Continue with the OSCE Corfu process, ensuring that the comprehensive vision of security and the three Helsinki "baskets" (politico – military, socio – economic and human dimension) retain the same weight. Make the renewed commitment to the principles of the OSCE visible in a summit in 2010 under Kazakhstan's presidency, reinforcing the visibility of the Euro-Asian dimension of OSCE.
2. Take into account the perceptions of Russia and other non-NATO countries of Europe in the ongoing review of NATO's Strategic Concept, with the objective of minimising NATO's potential to create additional insecurity in Europe as a result of its future strategy.
3. Upgrade the NATO dialogues (with Russia, Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean) to the status of one of the main tasks of a reformed alliance, not just a collateral by-product. Reactivate the Russia – NATO Council.
4. Make clear that NATO is in principle neither closed to Russia's membership nor an anti-Russian construction. Prove the first point by offering to all NATO partners, including Russia, to adopt a mutual assistance clause against a number of well specified threats (large scale terrorist attack, rogue attack with weapons of mass destruction, major natural or man-made catastrophe and other of similar nature).
5. Commit all key players - Russia (and its military allies of CSTO) and NATO - to stopping all contingency planning based on the scenario of one player attacking (or defending itself from) another.
6. Introduce the idea of modernisation to EU-Russia security dialogue by implementing joint projects in important areas of security that interest both sides, such as better control over Russia's land borders or military reform in Russia.
7. Put in place a Russia-EU dialogue on crisis management and extend it to the areas of joint missions, also on European soil. Invite Russia to participate in some of the new developments in Common Security and Defence Policy. Start with a joint initiative to help Kyrgyzstan stabilize its South.
8. Focus on jointly contributing to a settlement of the Transdniestria issue through the existing mechanisms (5+2 negotiations), on the basis of a renewed Russia – EU dialogue on the issue, and envisage the creation of a joint mission to implement a possible settlement.
9. Reactivate the diplomatic formats and groups in which both Russia and the EU are part, and show a new joint activism in the Quartet for the Middle East, the Contact Group Balkans, the Minsk Group for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (once EU participation in it has been achieved), and even consider forming a Contact Group South Caucasus with the actors of the region.
10. Propose jointly – Russia and the EU – a general framework agreement which will allow the citizens of non-recognised (or partly recognised) independent territories to use their basic administrative documents throughout Europe in the same manner as those of recognised states. Work towards the removal of extraordinary obstacles to mobility and other direct effects of the lack of settlement on the everyday lives of people.

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In 1989 Europe was at the very centre of a global revolution in security issues. Nowhere was the radical transformation of the former Soviet bloc as swift and thorough, nor was the new equilibrium more instantly obvious, than in the continent that had formerly been split in two across its very centre. It was indeed in Europe that Fukuyama's heralded 'End of History'¹ and the promise of generous 'Dividends of Peace' seemed most closely at hand. However, the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and the return of the horrors of war to the very heart of Europe soon dispelled these illusions. Much of the 1990s was spent as much in building the new post-Cold War Order as in readjusting the international institutions which had so blatantly failed to ensure a new security order in Europe without grey zones or security "black holes".

The following ten years appeared to look much more positive, to Western eyes. The decade started with NATO enlargement to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. 1999 also saw a bold NATO-led intervention in Kosovo, which stopped what looked like a potential re-enactment of some of the darkest episodes of Bosnia's war, which paved the way for a genuine democratic revolution in Serbia a year and a half later. As violent conflict was averted in Macedonia and Montenegro by early intervention and the promise of EU membership, the whole of the Western Balkans entered the road to EU membership (including a newly independent Kosovo in 2008) and NATO and EU enlargements proceeded at a good pace, security in Europe seemed to be less and less of a concern.

In this new environment, security discussions focused less on Europe's order and more on global issues and areas outside the continent. The large scale terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 in the United States brought to the forefront a new set of issues, from failed states to counterterrorism or the Middle East conflicts. The focus of the global security agenda on Afghanistan, then Iraq, and back to Afghanistan via the Gaza war, meant that the security agendas of NATO and the EU increasingly turned their attention to extra-European affairs. The European Security and Defence Policy and its missions, which were first tested in the Balkans, progressively enlarged their scope to cover Africa and even more remote locations such as Aceh, in Sumatra. Furthermore, NATO's discussions in the second half of the decade focused more and more on the complexities of intervening in Afghanistan.

The wake-up call in this state of affairs came in the form of the sudden and shocking war between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia in 2008. The "August War" reminded all actors that security in Europe should not be taken for granted; that, within the continent itself, not all actors felt secure; and nor could all Europeans enjoy the high levels of human

security that tend to be associated with their continent. The Ossetian war was not however the first warning sign of Moscow's unease with the European security context: President Dmitri Medvedev had already expressed concerns about the situation of security in Europe² and proposed a new Treaty that would address some of the issues he felt were most pressing in the European security arena. Thus, despite all its shortcomings, what has now become commonly known as the Medvedev proposal, had the merit of bringing attention back to European security and the need to address it anew.

European Security: Security in Europe

As we have just described, the security policies both of European countries and of NATO and the EU have grown more and more concerned with extra-European matters. Their strategies and every day policies show a growing interest in – to use NATO terminology – 'out of area' operations. This increased level of concern has reached a point where it is worth making a distinction between them: European security policies deal with areas in and outside Europe; there still is a need for discussing security (and insecurity) within the geographical space of Europe. Therefore, some aspects of European security policies (be they NATO's involvement in Afghanistan or EU missions to Chad) are not necessarily part of European security per se. In this text we use this expression "European security", to discuss the question of security on European soil. Furthermore, we define Europe's boundaries as those of the countries included in the Council of Europe – with the obvious addition of Belarus.

This idea of European security is closely related to other concepts, but again it also stands distinct from them. In the first place, it is not exactly the same as Euro-Atlantic security (which includes two non-European actors, the USA and Canada), despite the fact that one of the leading players in European security is the USA; and NATO, with its fundamental role in security issues, does define itself as Euro-Atlantic. European security is not the same as Euro-Asian security, a concept which extends not just to the Asian parts of Russia and Turkey, but also to the five Central Asian republics, all of them members of the OSCE. This Euro-Asian space is in direct contact with crucial countries such as Afghanistan and China, which brings with it a whole new set of issues. Finally, European security is linked to, but separated from, Euro-Mediterranean security, an idea which has been strongly promoted by European institutions, but which does not seem to have shaped the security environment in a substantial manner, for the countries involved.

The Medvedev proposal may be instrumental in bringing about a re-evaluation of the state of security on the European continent

1. Fukuyama, Francis 1989 'The end of History?' *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

2. Medvedev, Dmitry 'Speech at the Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders', Berlin, 5th June 2008. Available in English at: http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type8291type84779_202153.shtml

Underlining the distinctiveness of European security as such does not have to result in overlooking the obvious connections not only with the spaces outlined in the paragraph above, but also both with global issues and with regional, extra-European issues which have direct or indirect impacts on Europe. It does however seem sometimes necessary to underline that not all potential threats and dangers to the security of Europe come from the global context or indeed from neighbouring regions. Europe itself contains factors of instability and potential security threats that need to be addressed within its own geographical scope.

The international system is evolving. At the global scale, the redistribution of power which has been operating for some years to the disadvantage of the Western powers becomes more and more evident by the day in domains as varied as international trade negotiations, the fight against climate change or voting patterns on Human Rights issues at the UN. However, it seems relatively unlikely that any major international actor from an extra-European context, such as China, will become a main player in Europe's security. It does not seem likely either that most actors currently in existence, from NATO to the Republic of Kosovo, will disappear in the near future (thus triggering a major rearrangement of the security landscape such as that resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia). Should these two premises hold true, we could conclude that addressing the concerns and needs of the actors that already play a role should be a priority in creating a stable and lasting security environment. In particular, if an actor feeling uneasy about the existing order is as crucial a one as the Russian Federation, the whole security architecture itself may be in jeopardy.

For this reason, the Medvedev proposal, which has been considered by many as a non-starter, may be instrumental in bringing about a re-evaluation of the state of security on the European continent. The proposal brings to the forefront some issues that worry not only the Russian Federation, but a number of other European countries, in particular amongst those east of the Oder and the Adriatic. The Russian concerns about European security need to be integrated into the debate - which does not mean that they should lead or condition it. Part of the unease that the proposal generated may well reflect the fact that it challenges institutional inertia, and opens issues which many hoped were already closed. In any case, we should welcome the fact that they have contributed to focusing attention on security in Europe just at the time where NATO is revising its strategic concept and the EU, after much soul-searching, has acquired the tools that should allow it to adopt a bolder approach to international issues, including security.

One answer only – be it a flat rejection, an acceptance of the proposal in its terms or an OSCE contained process – may not be enough

What to do with Medvedev's proposal?

The proposal presented by the Russian Federation on 29th November 2009³ crystallised the ideas expressed by President Medvedev in Berlin⁴ and Evian⁵, further developed by other Russian officials, in particular Foreign Minister Lavrov.⁶ The text, however, was disappointing, in that it even failed to live up to previous speeches and presented a rather unworkable (and not particularly new) set of proposals which would take the form of a binding treaty. The very idea of a Treaty contains a number of problematic issues (for example, the ratification process can be extremely demanding and uncertain in a number of places, in particular the USA); and the contents suggested by the Russian diplomacy do not seem to bring anything particularly useful to most transatlantic partners. Thus, it would be tempting to just drop the Russian proposal or let it in effect die after a round of window-dressing negotiations.

We believe that in fact, the proposal is an opportunity and that, in order to seize it, one answer only – be it a flat rejection, an acceptance of the proposal in its terms or an OSCE contained process – may not be enough. Rather than a direct response to the written proposal, an overall reassessment of the state of European security might be the best answer. This exercise should not necessarily be conducted on the basis of the Russian text, and indeed an important part of it could be to see to what extent existing agreements and commitments are still to be fully implemented and could be useful. No country should be allowed to think of itself as holding a tacit veto

or the right to ignore previous commitments at the time of proposing new ones. Revisiting such crucial agreements as the Conventional Forces in Europe or the OSCE's 'Istanbul Document 1999' and re-starting stalled negotiations in fields such as energy would be indeed crucial. The success of USA – Russia negotiations on nuclear disarmament that led to the signature of the New Start Treaty augurs well for this avenue of action.

The OSCE is the only organisation to have directly reacted to Russian proposals with the launch of its so-called Corfu Process. Setting the process was not easy, as countries had divergent views both about the scope and about the methodology to be followed, but the fact that it is in place at and

3. Available at <http://www.mid.ru/ns-dvbr.nsf/dveurope/065fc3182ca460d1c325767f003073cc>
4. Medvedev, Dmitry 'Speech at the Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders', Berlin, 5th June 2008. Available in English at: http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type8291type84779_202153.shtml
5. Medvedev, Dmitry 'Speech at World Policy Conference' Evian, 8th October 2008. In English at: http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2008/10/08/2159_type82912type82914_207457.shtml
6. See for instance 'Address by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Opening of the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, June 23, 2009' in http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b_43256999005bcb3/9eb56f1ecaad3ab5c32575df00362cc9?OpenDocument

that the process extends into the 2010 Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE shows the adequacy of the OSCE as a vessel for such a discussion. This does not mean that the OSCE framework does not in itself have problems: from its weak track record in implementation to the diverging perceptions that Russia and most Western countries have about the scope of its responsibilities, there are many reasons to believe that the OSCE's ability to solve the issues about European security raised in the last two years is rather limited.

The idea of a grand security architecture designed by a legally binding treaty seems in fact rather unhelpful. European security would probably be better served by the thickening of a web of partial agreements which would reinforce the existing commitments and structures. Despite Russia's (and other actors') complaints about the state of security in Europe, the Russian Federation is actually in a rather privileged position in the system and a complete revision of it would not necessarily result in a larger role or a broader room for manoeuvre. An incremental transformation might therefore well be more beneficial even for Russia, in the mid-term.

Thematic agreements on security-related issues – even those which do not necessarily directly fall within the scope of what was traditionally known as “hard security”, such as the fight against drug trafficking or energy supply – could be a good way of improving the overall security environment and rebuilding trust. Sub-regional cooperation in the spaces of contact between Russia and the rest of European countries, such as the Barents Sea, the Baltic, the Black Sea or the Caucasus, also provides opportunities for a progressive and partial improvement of security in European soil. Thus, a multiplicity of responses to the issues could be a rather more fruitful reaction than a quick dismissal of the Russian text in a moment of opportunity.

Anchoring NATO's role in European Security by re-engaging with Russia

Russia's unease with the security situation in Europe did not start in 2008: indeed, most analysts agree that it is the experience of the last 20 years which will mark Russian threat perceptions and interpretations for a number of years to come. However, three major ‘irritants’ contributed to a serious deterioration of the situation in Russian eyes in early 2008: Western support for Kosovo's declared independence; the American decision to install part of the infrastructure of its new anti-missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic; and Georgia and Ukraine's rapprochement to NATO, with their eyes on future membership. These issues piled upon previous grievances about successive waves of enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe, and out-of-area operations of the alliance met with deep suspicion – where they did not generate open outrage in Moscow, as in the case of the military action against Ser-

bia in 1999. Despite numerous Russian complaints about EU policies and serious disagreements on issues such as its recently launched Eastern Partnership, the level of antagonism and criticism attracted by NATO in Russian political and intellectual discourse is not comparable with that encountered by the EU or any other European organisation. In the words of an influential Russian analyst, ‘[f]or all its efforts to improve its image, many Russians now view NATO as a much more hostile organization than they did in the 1990's, or even before then.’⁷

That Russian (mis)perceptions of NATO and its actions are so overwhelmingly negative is, to a large extent, a product of Russian domestic dynamics and can not, in itself, be held against the alliance. It is nonetheless a relevant factor to take into account as the alliance reviews its Strategic Concept and revises its tasks and priorities for the forthcoming years. Arguably, NATO's number one shortcoming in this moment is the fact that it generates fears and antagonism in Russia. This, in itself, hinders one of the main functions of the alliance: that of securing a Europe free from fears and threats. Thus, whether or not NATO integrates the issues and questions raised by the Medvedev proposal, the final contents of the new Strategic Concept will be read in light of them, at the very least, by the Muscovite elites. The fact that external, and in particular Russian, views were heard on the process pre-

paring the recommendations for the Strategic Concept, and the final document⁸ of the task force led by former US State Secretary Madeleine Albright, show that the alliance is well aware of the importance of taking into account their perceptions and priorities.

The place for interaction between NATO and Russia is the NATO – Russia Council, an arena which was wholly neglected at the time of the August 2008 war. Getting in back on track on a solid footing should be a priority even before the Strategic Concept review is approved. Partnership with Russia – and also the other partnerships: the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean partnerships and the Istanbul Initiative with the Gulf countries – should become a primary objective of NATO, on a par with the other fundamental tasks of the organisation, rather than a side activity.

There is little question that NATO will not accept a *de facto* Russian veto over its main strategy, including its prospects of enlargement, or that the cornerstone of the alliance, Article 5 (the collective defence clause) of the North Atlantic Treaty, will not be diluted or questioned in order to assuage a non-member's anxieties. But there is still room for cooperation in a number of concrete issues. In the past, a cooperative approach has been successful in some areas,

7. Karaganov, Sergei ‘The Unfinished Cold War’ *Project Syndicate* 5th August 2009.

8. ‘Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO’, 17 May 2010, available online at <http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf>

such as Russia's involvement in NATO-led SFOR peace keeping mission in Bosnia. Other areas where cooperation exists and can be expanded include anti-piracy operations or Afghanistan.

These are important theatres for NATO, but reducing cooperation to the peripheral topics or out of area operations fails to address those issues which are at the heart of European Security. For that reason, further measures to increase mutual trust and address shared problems could be devised. Oksana Antonenko and Bastian Giegerich have suggested,⁹ for example, the creation of joint military units involving Russia and some NATO member states, which would be prepared to participate in international missions, on the model of the Franco – German brigade.

Russia's membership in NATO was briefly discussed in the country right after the demise of the Soviet Union. The idea, which was by and large abandoned as unrealistic and not particularly desirable by either side, has resurfaced recently and been evoked by influential Russian thinkers such as Igor Yurgens¹⁰ or Sergei Karaganov¹¹. It seems unlikely that this idea would gather the support of a majority of NATO member states or be adopted by the Russian government in the short term. However, the mere evocation of the possibility in the future, however distant, can counter some of the most rabidly anti-NATO arguments in Russia. In the meantime, or as an alternative, the idea of a limited opening of NATO to Russia in a way which was not exclusive of its other partners (the Mediterranean partners but, in particular, the Partners for Peace) should not be discarded.

Rather than hoping to 'socialise' the Russian establishment into another way of thinking about security, as NATO tried to do for years through extensive consultations and Russian participation in meetings, NATO should instead try to find specific mutual guarantees that would bind its own security to Russia's in an explicit manner. A written, binding commitment, however limited in its scope, might be seen by the Russian side as a serious offer. A concrete proposal in that spirit would be to create a limited collective security clause against some specified sources of threat. Inspired in the 'Solidarity

Clause' contained in Article 222 of the EU Lisbon Treaty, NATO and Russia could think of a guarantee of mutual assistance in cases where the state suffered from a certain kind of threat. Article 222 limits the threats to terrorist attacks and natural or man-made disasters; maybe the NATO guarantee could also include other threats such as attacks with weapons of mass destruction or sudden and major refugee inflows. The clause should in any case not be limited to NATO and Russia, but should also open to all other NATO partners.

Generating trust could be achieved in an ever more radical, open way: a mutual commitment on the part of NATO not to conduct contingency planning aimed at Russia and the mirror Russian commitment to stop all contingency planning based on scenarios involving conflict with NATO members. This would obviously be a wholesome departure from a number of assumptions in current thinking on both sides, but that is precisely why it might be the way to radically transform the relationship, and indeed, has been publicly advocated by leading figures like as Javier Solana.

An overall review of NATO's policy towards Russia could transform Europe's security environment. It could take place by means of small, incremental steps, such as a new approach to the NATO – Russia Council and cooperation in some peripheral issues and theatres; or through bold initiatives such as re-stating that

NATO is potentially open to Russian membership, a mutual solidarity guarantee, or abandoning hostile contingency planning. Consensus amongst allies on either approach, in particular the second one, may well prove

difficult, despite a new attitude in Washington towards Russia. Even if NATO finally decides that such steps are not beneficial to its own members, a focus on relations with Russia has the additional advantage of bringing European security back to the centre of NATO discussions, at a time where the idea of transforming it in a sort of expeditionary force with a global mission gains momentum. NATO's major successes (averting an overall conflict during the Cold War, peace missions in the Western Balkans) have taken place on European soil for a reason: the main geographical focus of NATO has always been the Old Continent. As the alliance reviews its Strategic Concept, a clear definition of how it plans to contribute to an even safer Europe should remain central to its future role.

Relations between the EU and Russia have a degree of intimacy and complexity that can not be compared to those with NATO

The EU as a leading player in European Security

It can be regarded as an irony, or it can be interpreted as a stroke of luck, that Europe has come out of a five-year introspection crisis after the French (and Dutch) 'no' to the EU constitutional treaty with a renewed institutional structure, just in time to face a challenge of unprecedented magnitude. The first steps of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty have coincided with a fateful moment for the EU: the global economic crisis is testing the limits its flagship achievement,

9. Antonenko, Oksana and Giegerich, Bastian 'Rebooting NATO-Russia Relations' *Survival* 51-2 April 2009, pages 13-21.

10. Igor Yurgens is the director of the Institute of Contemporary Development, an independent think-tank chaired by Dmitri Medvedev himself. His think tank published in February 2010 a report called 'Twenty-first Century Russia' building radical scenarios for the modernisation of the country which included accession to NATO. The abridged report can be found in English at http://www.riocenter.ru/files/INSOR%20Russia%20in%20the%2021st%20century_ENG.pdf

11. Sergei Karaganov is the Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (SVOP) and Dean of the School of the World Economy and International Affairs at the State University–Higher School of Economics. Together with Timofei Bordachev he drafted the Report of the Russian Experts for the Valdai Discussion Club Conference titled 'Towards a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture'. The full report can be found in English at http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/European_security_eng.pdf

the common currency, and the idea of solidarity between nations that is supposed to be at the very root of European integration. How well the EU withstands such a challenge will clarify how solid are the bases upon which this new institutional structure stands.

The current difficulties can not mask the fact, however, that no international actor has been nearly as successful as the EU in establishing itself as the beacon of stability and prosperity in Europe and its neighbourhood. The success of the integration process and its progressive enlargement to new countries in ever-more-remote corners of Europe has made the EU an unsurpassed agent for transformation of Europe's security environment. This long term transformative power is moreover complemented with a Common Foreign and Security Policy and the new Common Security and Defence Policy, which complete a formidable set of tools at the disposal of the EU in its objective of securing an ever-safer, more integrated Europe and neighbouring regions.

The EU is already an actor in Europe's security. For this very reason, and if it wants to increase that role, the EU should not let the opportunity offered by Medvedev's proposal pass without giving it enough consideration. Relations between the EU and Russia have a degree of intimacy and complexity that can not be compared to those with NATO. The range of issues at stake for both sides is huge, and technical negotiations on issues of Community competence (such as Trade) or high interest (such as Energy) feature prominently in the agenda. This, however, has not kept the agenda from being repeatedly hijacked by political disputes and mutual distrust. In this context, isolating the thorny security debates (or leaving them to other actors, such as OSCE and NATO) in the hope that this will make agreement in other, important areas easier, not only is an illusion - (past experience has shown us that no item can be isolated in the agenda of relations with a sophisticated diplomatic actor such as the Russian Federation) - but will indeed reinforce the Russian perception that the EU is irrelevant and divided in security issues, and can therefore easily be ignored altogether when it comes to them.

This is why the contrary approach - a more prominent role for security matters in the bilateral, Russia-EU agenda - seems wiser. At the 2000 Paris EU-Russia Summit, a 'Joint Statement on strengthening dialogue and cooperation on political and security matters in Europe' was approved, but this dialogue has since then achieved modest results at best. A new idea, the partnership for modernisation, is gaining ground as the defining narrative for the next generation of agreements between Russia and the EU. It may not be wise to extend the scope of the partnership for modernisation indefinitely by including yet another set of issues, as this only weakens its transformational capacity and risks rendering it totally meaningless if it encompasses virtually all of the bilateral cooperation.

However, the narrative of modernisation can be useful as we seek to extend the Russia-EU security agenda. As has been made clear at this stage by the EU side, modernisation does not only involve technology transfer, but also requires profound changes in such issues as organisational culture, administrative reform or the strengthening of the rule of law. The same narrative could be applied to security issues. From crucial aspects of the relationship between the military and the rest of society to more effective border control, the areas in which Russia and the EU could cooperate in an approach to modernisation which would also focus on security policy, are many and diverse. All such areas can bring about changes which have the potential to make both parties feel more secure and thus contribute, in turn, to a safer environment for all of Europe.

Security is already on the table of EU - Russia dialogue with the issue of crisis management. This is one issue which very directly addresses some of the concerns and grievances that both sides have aired in the last years, in particular in connection to interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and South Ossetia in 2008. The obvious positive effects of a joint approach to it are acknowledged by both sides and the Russia - EU summit in Rostov under Spanish presidency could well see the first steps in that direction.

Kyrgyzstan offers a good opportunity for EU - Russia cooperation and should be an obvious candidate for a joint initiative

Other issues have already been identified by both sides, but agreement has been elusive. The institutionalisation of political consultations in the framework of ESDP, in particular, is one such case, as this area of EU policy sees a new horizon of possibilities

with the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which could provide a useful step in building trust and consolidating a relationship in the security domain. Internal consensus amongst member states will not be easy to achieve, but the opportunity of transforming ESDP into a field for cooperation rather than conflict should not be lightly dismissed. The Russian ambition of participating in joint planning may seem a distant prospect but, again, rather than an outright rejection if internal consensus on the issue does not emerge, the EU could keep the option open for a later stage.

One possible outcome of the dialogue on crisis management could be the idea of establishing joint missions - either by opening CSDP missions to Russian participation, by establishing ad hoc joint missions, by working together under the joint umbrella of the OSCE or the UN, or even, as suggested by Russia, by allowing the participation of EU troops in Russia-led operations. Operational obstacles are obvious, but they are probably less crucial than the difficulty for Russian policy makers to envisage the participation of their own troops under EU command (and, conversely, for EU officials to accept the reverse situation). That kind of cooperation happened in Bosnia, with NATO-led SFOR; and examples of Russian participation in EU-led missions are visible in the Indian Ocean and Central Africa

- (indeed, Russian cooperation in Chad and in operation Atlanta fighting piracy has been generally evaluated as a success). New possible scenarios for cooperation should be explored in the difficult but crucial European context. The potential of joint missions should not be overlooked and the idea of EU troops under Russian command offers some interesting possibilities. One of these is a joint initiative in Kyrgyzstan, where the repeated calls for international assistance of the government have not so far been answered. Another less immediate possibility is that of using EU involvement under Russian command as a first step in the gradual transformation of Russian military presence in places such as Transdnistria and South Ossetia into genuine neutral peace-keeping operations, through the gradual integration of EU troops in the contingents.

Indeed, the volatile situation in Southern Kyrgyzstan offers a good opportunity for EU – Russia cooperation. Given its government's public calls for international assistance for keeping peace in the region, set against the potential for national and international destabilisation, the OSCE commitments that bind EU member states and Russia to the Central Asian republics and the reluctance of all actors, including Russia, to act alone, Kyrgyzstan should be an obvious candidate for a joint initiative. By taking the step of asking Russia to play the leading role and offering to contribute to an international mission, the EU would show its acknowledgement of the Russia's capabilities without bowing to any sort of 'sphere of special interest' thinking. As the government of Kyrgyzstan struggles to consolidate a parliamentary democracy and its people long for safety and the lost confidence between neighbours, the EU has a golden opportunity to support them and at the same time make substantial headway in its relations with Russia and improve the Security climate in Europe and Central Asia.

Transdnistria seems to be the standing conflict in which Russia – EU cooperation could potentially bear fruit within a reasonably short time frame. Previous attempts at solving the issue, in particular the 2003 Kozak Memorandum¹², failed to satisfy the aspirations of both sides and were received with suspicion by the EU (and USA). However, the situation on the ground and even the positions of both sides are less extreme than any other open secessionist conflict in the European space. A bold opening from the EU side for a reactivation of negotiations and a firm negotiation based less on the balance of influence and more on the urgent need to unfreeze the solution of the controversy would probably not result in an easy and immediate compromise, but would certainly stand a good chance to generate a new,

positive dynamism that the EU and Russia, together with all actors directly concerned, could then use to work for a settlement. Ideally, this should not be conditional on domestic developments in Moldova and, in particular, to the election results by either Russia or the EU.

One of the recurring concerns in Russian domestic debates is the fear of exclusion from important diplomatic and decision-making fora. Despite Russia's membership in most relevant decision-making groups, from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to exclusive clubs such as G8 and G20, events like the NATO intervention in Kosovo or the US-led coalition 2003 attack on Iraq had a profound effect on Russia's self-perception as a country in decline in global matters. For this reason, reactivating some of the diplomatic fora in which Russia plays an important role, could be a way of playing down some of these fears of exclusion and the temptation of aligning with non-European emerging powers - or even entering into 'axis of annoyance' relations with anti-American (and anti-Western) champions such as Cuba or Venezuela. Some diplomatic arenas are alive and in desperate need for new diplomatic impetus, for example the Middle East Quartet. The Contact Group Balkans might be revitalised and could play a role in the standing issues (Kosovo status, Bosnian constitutional reform), if common ground could be found. The Minsk

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group for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (once France had been convinced to cede its leading role to the EU, not a minor issue) is another group in which Russia participates, that could serve as a step for improved diplomatic cooperation: indeed, a

sort of "Contact Group Southern Caucasus", which would tackle some of the issues that hindered the prospects of the Turkish 'Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform' initiative, could be a useful confidence-building measure with Russia, even if its initial output were modest.

Finally, EU – Russia dialogue on the final settlement of the conflicts over the territory and status of Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh (and its adjacent occupied territories) and Transdnistria is unavoidable, however difficult it may be. As a first, important step, Russia and the EU could focus on simple, status neutral steps that would guarantee that, for instance, the populations of unrecognised or partially recognised territories stop being punished because of their 'nationality' with the non-recognition of their official documents (travel documents, driving licences, secondary school diplomas and the like), thus holding them hostages in order to pressure their governments. Isolating these populations with insurmountable administrative barriers will do very little to create goodwill and is in fact pushing them to obtain foreign passports, a development that does not make a final settlement any easier. A Russia – EU agreement on those lines (probably involving a bargain on equal treatment for Kosovars and South Ossetians, for instance) could then provide the basis for jointly lobbying the directly affected states (Serbia, Moldova,

12. Kozak Memorandum is the short reference to the 2003 Russian Draft Memorandum on the Basic Principles of the State Structure of a United State in Moldova, a Moscow-brokered blueprint for reintegration of Transdnistria into an asymmetric federal Moldova.

Georgia and Azerbaijan) to change their attitudes and improve conditions for internally displaced people/refugees and for citizens of the *de facto* independent territories. It should not be totally unthinkable that, even before the final settlement of the status of their territories, all citizens of wider Europe enjoyed a minimum level of administrative recognition and mobility.

Conclusions

For all its faults, lack of definition and debatable feasibility, the Russian proposal for a new European Security Treaty had the merit of bringing to the front the debate on European security (understood as security in Europe's soil). The general fact that Europe is one of the safest places in the planet for both individuals and societies can not hide, at a closer examination, the persistence of security threats and risks that emanate not only from the rest of the world, but also from Europe itself.

Since World War II, but in particular with the 1975 Helsinki Conference, the wider European space has witnessed a number of attempts to build an institutional architecture that would transform the continent that pulled virtually the whole planet into the bloodiest war in history into a beacon of stability and security. The institutional framework consolidated since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union, with the Council of Europe and the OSCE working to create a shared space of peace and liberty for nations and individuals, but also with NATO and the EU as active regional security players, has gone a long way towards achieving that objective. In the process, however, some actors and nations – and not least of them the successor of a super-power, Russia – have been left behind.

The main argument of the present paper is that two decades after its total transformation, Europe's security deserves a reassessment, but that a radical transformation of the institutions and agreements which are at the base of European security, or the approval of a new treaty, do not seem the best ways – though certainly not the least risky nor the most efficient – to achieve real progress. Rather than dismissing the Russian proposal, however, or confining it only to the OSCE framework, the opportunity offered by Moscow's initiative should be seized from different angles.

NATO and the EU, in particular, as the two institutions with the strongest capacity to influence Europe's security environment, have a special responsibility in not letting the opportunity go to waste. For that reason, a number of bold, brave initiatives towards Russia, that would also take into account the plurality of actors in the European space, might change the nature of the game in European security. A number of the 'problems' identified by Russia may in fact have more to do with an interpretation of facts driven by domestic policy, recent historical experience and ideological stereotypes. None

the less, ignoring or downplaying them will not make them just disappear. Instead, a firm and honest dialogue, with serious and innovative offers on the table, might contribute to breaking the vicious circle of perceived victimisation, preemptive aggressiveness and naked cynicism that poisons the relationship between Russia and the West. We have tried to outline what some of these initiatives could be in the present context, and have summarised them in a ten-point table at the beginning of this paper.

Focusing once more on European security, as an outcome of the debates started by the Medvedev proposal, is simply not pandering to Russia's brinkmanship or giving Moscow an extraordinary role in setting the agenda. Neither the scope nor the terms of the debate are or should be dictated by any actor – not by Russia, but neither by NATO, the EU or any other single actor – and the inclusion of all countries in the wider European space is crucial. This is why the OSCE is a good starting point. However, NATO and the EU should resist the temptation of hiding behind the OSCE Corfu process and ignoring their own role in ensuring that Europe addresses its own sources of insecurity and expands the safety that a majority of Europeans enjoy to even the most remote corners of the Old Continent.

Two decades after its total transformation, Europe's security deserves a reassessment and neither the scope nor the terms of the debate should be dictated by any actor