



The role and responsibility of the European Union for mutual understanding and a quieter relationship between the Western World and Russia

Report of the second phase of the work
by EuroDefence Working Group EWG20

The world and notably Europe today are probably going through more troubled times than in recent history. Issues include:

- the Islamist movements and rivalries, which cover several countries in Asia and Africa but also the Middle Eastern area, with consequences for terrorism, at home and exported;
- profound imbalance in wealth coupled with failed states that lead to population displacement (economic immigration and refugees) impacting on all (countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination);
- the rise of China in East Asia and in the world as an economic, regional and potentially global power;
- a newly assertive Russia, which has led to the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Donbass, and fears amongst Baltic States and more broadly of east European countries;
- hydrocarbon energy supply problems and the protection of our planetary environment;
- crisis management by the western world as a whole, where the hyper-powerful United States still appears in the lead whilst our European Union appears – in the public opinion - to be without concrete and visible strategies.

In this broad landscape, some countries and leaders make decisions which appear to lack consultation and long-term vision: For example, the wars involving Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria and events in Ukraine.

The growing interdependence of issues and interests just as the growing volatility of "the global atmosphere" could lead to situations that easily escalate, with disastrous global consequences.

Probably one of the root causes of the situation in Europe and its near abroad is the lack of in depth communication and dialogue between some of the biggest actors involved, i.e. the USA, EU and Russia, and not overlooking that cooperation is always better than confrontation.

The interest of all, and particularly of the West, is to find the best solutions to these issues and to establish a relationship with Russia so as to manage the wider problems which can emerge very quickly, and for long periods, in relation to the Muslim and Far-East worlds.

To this end some mechanisms already exist, with various degrees of effectiveness and efficiency, and can be built on further or revitalized, such as OSCE and Partnership for Peace/NATO-Russia Council/Defence against Terrorism STO/Arctic Council.

EuroDefense proposes strengthening existing processes of dialogue and consultation between USA, EU and Russia and further action on a number of sensitive situations we reprise below.

This process has triple aims, to:

- Stabilize relations between the USA and Russia, and between the EU and Russia, in the interests of all, co-operating in the resolution of today's and tomorrow's conflicts.
- Enhance EU's capabilities to create new links between the West and Russia and strengthening its existing ones.
- Ensuring that EU's diversity is a strength, not a weakness, in the international community, to address the major issues that have developed with the Arab and Muslim world and China.

Our proposals:

1- Key topics for discussion between USA, EU Member States, and Russia

These bestow very different levels of advantages and disadvantages for each of the three parties, but are generally considered issues where agreement could be found to create a 'win-win-win' balanced advantage for all three. However, depending on the parties' point of view, the topics may have different priorities and may be affected by their perceptions of their reality and their dignity.

The list below is not built showing any kind of priority nor any reference for potential planning of the negotiations.

- EU Member States
 1. *Task EU bodies to establish a well-balanced analysis of the threats on Europe's flank, including a detailed analysis of Russian strategy.*
 2. *Continue to reflect on whether the benefits of the economic sanctions against Russia, in terms of deterrence and of influencing future Russian behavior, outweigh the economic costs to EU countries.*

- USA/NATO and Russia
 3. *Deterrents or provocations? Analyze the political impact of maneuvers, permanent military bases and rearmament in Eastern Europe and Western Russia.*
 4. *Consider suspending any further expansion of NATO to countries in Russia's "near abroad" while there is no climate of trust by Russia towards NATO.*
 5. *Reassess NATO's anti-ballistic systems in Poland and Romania, taking into account their real roles and efficiencies.*
 6. *Take into account oil and gas supply to Europe from Russia and the Middle East which create energy dependence*
 7. *Analyze the impact of economic exchanges, trade and cultural agreements.*

- Ukraine-Crimea
 8. *Take forward the issue of Crimea's illegal annexation*
 9. *Consider a special status of the Donbas in Ukraine and if it would balance the different sensitivities?*
 10. *Coordinate relations of the USA, the EU and Russia linked with Ukraine, with possible consideration of all options.*

- Syria-Iraq-Daesh
 11. *Build a strong and open collaboration between the West and Russia against ISIS/Daesh.*
 12. *Consider acceptance by the West of Russia-Syria agreements which consolidate their long-term strategic goals (e.g. warm water bases).*
 13. *Find an agreement on the future of Syria, including the Bashar El Assad/ Alawite regime short term issue, and future peacemaking and reconstruction.*

- Iran-Saudi Arabia
 14. *Better understanding between the West and Russia on struggles for political and religious hegemony in the Middle East, and the implications for consistent and balanced actions.*

- Turkey (recognizing that its constitutional referendum result is already complicating issues further)
 15. *Collectively assess the current and future roles of Turkey in the problems of the Middle East and Daesh,*
 16. *Take forward the long standing Cyprus division issue*
 17. *Address the problem of the Kurds perceived nationhood and Assyro-Chaldean Christians*

- Israel (noting that USA, EU, Russia tripartite discussions have little chance to solve the problem, except in times of real crisis).
 18. *Build dialogue to ensure that Israeli decisions favor long term and peace; and build an internal consistency and a dialogue with Russia on the subject. Coherent Western and Russian attitudes would strengthen understanding towards Israel, so that, if a catastrophic situation occurs, the necessary actions are coordinated.*

2- Immediate actions by EU and EU Member States

Relationships have deteriorated quickly because of a range of short term factors, and the long term return of distrust and ill feeling towards Russia. We consider it essential for existing channels of communication to be kept open in each of the three strands - leaders; parliamentarians; and officials, both bilaterally and multilaterally, while policies and messages are reassessed and new channels opened to facilitate the process towards permanent dialogue.

3 - Three step process to permanent dialogue

- Step # 1: European agreement

Request EU high officials support (Donald Tusk, Jean-Claude Juncker and Federica Mogherini, with their advisors beforehand) for the development of an explanatory dossier (White Paper) of the European position on the future recommended West-Russia relations, using the arguments of this paper and others.

This dossier would aim mainly at convincing US and Russia policy makers and leadership, as well as EU public opinion. It would propose a process of both bipartite and tripartite dialogue between the USA, the EU and Russia, with a negotiating framework for the High Representative of the EU with the other two parties. The dossier should include proposals for deterring Russia from unhelpful behavior, as well as proposals for partnership.

Then seek agreement of European nations on the document with a view to agree it at European Council level.

- Step # 2: Agreement of the USA and Russia on a process for dialogue.

The EU must be active in promoting and participating in meetings held together with the U.S. State Department and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, persuading everyone to discuss on the basis of ideas coming from the EU document, and others if proposed.

These meetings would aim to converge to agreed positions on the maximum number of points between the three parties, thus promoting a better understanding between the USA and Russia, between the EU and Russia, and between the EU and the USA.

- Step # 3: Permanent operation of the process of dialogue

This process could then allow a dialogue on new problems as they appear, allowing adaptation of agendas according to the need.

In the first instance the implementation of these tasks would be the responsibility of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and security policy, but individually and collectively the nations of the EU must by their words and deeds support this mechanism, not leave it to others.