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Revisiting relations between Russia and Cyprus in the new European and International Environment



H.E. Mr Stanislav V. Osadchiy

Ambassador of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Cyprus

Dear Mr. President!
Dear Colleagues and Friends!
Ladies and gentlemen!

I am grateful for this opportunity to address such an honorable audience in one of the key think-tanks of the Republic of Cyprus. University of Nicosia with its high reputation in scientific and educational circles is well known far beyond the island. Today's event is another proof of it.

I hope that this conference will allow us to evaluate the ongoing process in the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation and to come up with feasible ideas, how we can overcome the current difficulties. There is no doubt that tight and friendly economic, political and cultural Russian-Cypriot ties are one of those examples, which can be used for the gradual restoration of relations with the whole European Union. However we all understand that a lot of efforts are to be undertaken to achieve this complicated task.

Let's try to understand where we stand today. Essentially situation has changed dramatically over the last year. The majority of politicians and experts see it only as before and after Ukraine. What did we have before? Active and mutually beneficial development of the Russia-EU partnership which included strengthening of economic, political, security, humanitarian and social cooperation with the promotion of democratic values and freedoms. We even came very close to the lifting of the visa-regime to open up borders for the citizens of our countries.

Things changed suddenly in the beginning of 2014, when some forces in Ukraine decided to use unlawful means to protest against decisions of

the legal government, which wasn't going to refuse from coming closer to the integration with Europe as some Western leaders claimed, but just postponed decision on the Association with the EU to solve this dilemma firstly among political parties in Ukraine. We all know what followed after that. Instability in the country led de-facto to the disintegration of the country, with some regions not willing to be part of the state, which advocates a philosophy of terror and violates their basic rights, especially freedom of expression and self-determination.

One of the first steps to ensure stability was undertaken on the 21 of February 2014, when that time Ukrainian president Victor Yanukovich signed agreement on the settlement of the crisis with the opposition leaders in the presence of the EU high-ranking officials. Besides other things this document stipulated terms of transition of the power in the country. But it didn't help the situation, mostly because of the pressure from some western leaders, unwilling to solve the situation peacefully.

Later on the international community succeeded in elaborating a new mechanism to prevent further aggravation of the situation around Ukraine. On April 17, 2014 during the meeting in Geneva foreign ministers of Russia, the EU, the US and Ukraine coordinated a joint statement, which stipulated initial measures to de-escalate tensions and restore security for all Ukrainians. The participants strongly condemned and rejected all manifestations of extremism, racism and religious intolerance, including anti-Semitism. They also stressed that the announced constitutional process will be inclusive, transparent and accountable. Another attempt to come to the settlement was undertaken in September 2014, when through intermediary of our country warring parties concluded the well-known Minsk agreements aimed at a gradual peaceful solution of the crisis.

It is obvious that Ukraine in fact has disregarded all these agreements. Instead of taking steps to de-escalate tensions, Kiev has stepped up hostilities and is using heavy weaponry in the southeastern regions, which have claimed thousands of lives and led to large-scale destruction.

The situation in Ukraine continues to be complicated. It can be described as a real humanitarian catastrophe. We strongly believe that all European countries must do their utmost to stop bloodshed and seek all possible ways to restore peace and stability in Ukraine. For our country it is definitely key priority. But how do other states treat the situation?

The steps undertaken by some European leaders and their allies in third countries show that in practice they prefer to make this crisis even deeper. Or how else can we explain initiation of the sanctions against our country? These unfriendly restrictions have seriously undermined cooperation between Europe and Russia, caused mistrust and the further we go, the worse situation is becoming. How can such developments help to untie the Ukrainian knot?

It is gratifying to know that not all the EU countries support such approach. The number of opponents of the anti-Russian sanctions among European states is growing. The Republic of Cyprus has been among them since the very beginning, claiming that economic restrictions is the wrong way and the solution must be searched at the negotiation table and only by diplomatic means. I would like to stress that we highly appreciate such position of Cypriot leadership.

Besides other things, the crisis in Ukraine caused so called informational war with a lot of provocative and false accusations aimed against our country. I would like to emphasize that allegations of the participation of Russia in the East of Ukraine is definitely untrue. We do not have any troops there, we do not supply arms, we didn't have anything to do with the tragedy of the Malaysian airplane. The truth is on our side, otherwise the certain evidence would have been provided, first of all by the US officials. On the contrary, we just hear groundless accusations with no proof. It seems that Washington is not interested in revealing the real facts.

Speaking about the US policy, I would like to refer to the yesterday's speech here in the University of Nicosia of the vice-president of the Atlantic Council D. Walson, who promised huge benefits to Cyprus from the participation in the Euro-Atlantic partnership. Don't you think that such proposals look more like the invitation of a sheep in the den of the wolf? Are we sure that such involvement can bring advantages to Cyprus and help to solve Cyprus issue in the real interest of its citizens?

Dear Colleagues! Certainly, there can be no parallels between the situation in Ukraine and in Cyprus. I want to assure you that we do understand vital importance of the crisis resolution on the island for all Cypriots. We strongly believe that achievement of comprehensive settlement as it is fixed in the UN documents and final unification of your country will lead to the dynamic social-economic development of Cyprus, to the stabilization of situation in the whole region and will open

up new opportunities for the citizens of Cyprus. Russia traditionally supports and will support Cypriots in the aspiration to conciliation on the island.

As all other countries the Republic of Cyprus faces a lot of problems. Last year was one of the hardest periods in the history of your country. The consequences of the financial crisis were very serious and affected deeply all the spheres of your economy. Collapse of the banking system caused mistrust towards it among local and foreign investors. The restructuring of this sector led to losses and undermined trust towards Cypriot banks. As you know, there were a lot of Russians among the depositors, who suffered this crisis.

Nowadays situation is gradually stabilizing, thanks to the efforts of the Government of Cyprus. Russia is also doing its best in contributing to it. As you know the Russian Government took the decision to restructure the previously granted credit in favour of our Cypriot friends. Moreover, Russians continue supporting Cyprus economy. The number of tourists from our country has been steadily growing amounting, as expected this year to 650 thousand people (25 percent of all holiday makers on the island). Many Russians purchase property here. Our businessmen actively invest in Cyprus, participating in different projects, especially in the sphere of construction and finance. One of the latest examples is the participation of the Russian company "Renova" in the Bank of Cyprus additional shares issue, purchasing more than 5% of its equity.

Taking into account our traditionally long-lasting cultural and historic ties, as well as mutual trust and support, we are confident that despite all difficulties, there are bright prospects for economic and political relations between Russia and Cyprus.

With this I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the organizers of the conference, especially to the University of Nicosia. I hope we will enjoy interesting and fruitful discussions today.

Thank you for your attention.

New European and International environment: Revisiting relations between Russia and Cyprus



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The European Union is facing today profound problems which challenge and even threaten the pillars of its own foundations. The crisis of the Eurozone has generated very painful and socially unacceptable outcomes. The recipes that are being offered have not led to the constructive resolution of the issues at hand. On the contrary there seems to be a deterioration of conditions. It would not be an exaggeration to say that many cities and broader regions of the European South are beginning to face serious symptoms of social disintegration.

It is within this context that we should assess today the crisis in the relations between the EU and Russia as well as the fact that indeed the Union seems to be absent from today's difficult and complex international environment. This includes our region, the Eastern Mediterranean. Analyzing these issues will be also helpful in rethinking and revisiting relations between EU and Russia as well as between Russia and Cyprus. To do so it will also require courage and the ability to think outside the box.

During the Cold War relations between Soviet Union and the West were difficult and antagonistic. Nevertheless, even then there was an understanding that Europe had to maintain a minimum level of cooperation with the Soviet Union. In the new era we have witnessed a fundamental paradigm shift.

The new international environment is such that encourages new approaches and initiatives. Yet it seems that Europeans have not focused adequately on what could be seen as obvious: that the

upgrading of relations between EU and Russia could be mutually beneficial, economically, politically, socially and indeed even strategically. Perhaps this is the outcome of inertia – in the sense that in some quarters Russia is still perceived in Cold War era terms.

The Ukrainian crisis has escalated in ways which could lead us back to an antagonistic environment similar to the Cold War period. One could raise the question about whether this was inevitable. I feel that the EU and the US could have acted differently showing a deeper understanding as well as respect of the sensitivities of all parties involved. And Russia could have acted in a more restrained way protecting its vital interests on the one hand but avoiding severe criticisms and sanctions on the other.

The EU is taking a position as if it has the moral high ground on all issues. This is obviously not the case. For example, while the EU is very eager and prompt to impose sanctions on Russia it has been for years tolerating the Turkish occupation of the northern part of Cyprus as well as other criminal excesses. Furthermore, it should not escape our attention that the EU itself has its own deficits and weaknesses. It will not be an exaggeration to note that the EU faces today a democratic as well as a solidarity deficit.

Furthermore, I am convinced that the economic policy pursued in order to address the Euro crisis and the serious recession in several countries of the European South require substantive rethinking. This is also the dominant view in the United States.

The European Union must work under a different set of circumstances and also engage on a new set of relationships. There is no doubt in my mind that the enhancement of relations between the EU and Russia will contribute to economic prosperity as well as to stability, security and cooperation.

In closing allow me to share with you a few thoughts on the relations between Russia and Cyprus and how these may be perceived.

It has been repeatedly stated that the decisions of the Eurogroup in March 2013 had been particularly harsh and even punitive. One of the major objectives of those decisions was to contain Russian presence in Cyprus. This was extremely unfair.

Interestingly enough this raised questions in several EU capitals about the implications of the relations between Russia and Cyprus at a time when the geopolitical significance of the Eastern Mediterranean was and is increasingly growing. It has to be understood in the EU that the fact that there are strong cultural, historical, economic and political links between Russia and the Republic of Cyprus does not necessarily create a conflict of interest in Cyprus' commitments to the EU. Quite the contrary.

If we assume that there is potential for a deeper partnership between the EU and Russia, the role of Cyprus may turn out to be much greater than we think.

Be that as it may Cyprus is facing today a great economic crisis while at the same time it has to address the Cyprus question and also formulate a comprehensive energy policy. At a time that the European solidarity is at a level much below of what was expected, the Republic of Cyprus must critically reconsider its options.

It goes without saying that Cyprus has to also rely on support from friends inside and outside the EU.

Ukrainian divide and its impact on the Russia-West relations



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The Ukraine crisis is the first direct conflict between differing regional strategies of Russia and the EU – Brussels' Eastern partnership and Moscow's Eurasia Union concept. Ukraine has been central to both strategies, and the either/or choice presented to Kiev ultimately made conflict inevitable. It's possible to identify several crucial turning points in the history of this conflict: President Yanukovich's shift away from what had seemed Ukraine's European vocation on the eve of the EU's Vilnius summit, along with a Russian departure from Europe that was formalized by Vladimir Putin's return in 2012 to the power of the presidency. Deeper analysis still shows that the origins of the conflict are in fact rooted heavily in the 1990s.

"Don't bother us and we won't bother you"

Nowadays many Western politicians are nostalgic about the 90's. However, it was a period of the devastating shock therapy reforms, the military clash between Yeltsin and the Parliament in 1993, and the war in Chechnya. And it was a period when the Yeltsin leadership formulated its "sticks and carrots" policy vis-à-vis its CIS neighbours who were never regarded by Moscow as sovereign independent states. Russia's post-Soviet euphoria was replaced with a sense of loss of empire and status of world super power equal to the US. These concerns resulted in the Kremlin's policy of reassembling the CIS neighbours under the aegis "special relations" with Russia.

In that period the West – the EU, NATO/USA - was focused merely on the post-Communist Europe –the Yugoslav war, the CEE states return back to Europe or their inclusion into NATO and EU. Therefore the West offered Russia a pragmatic model for their relations – ***don't bother us***

in CEE space and we won't bother you in your backyard.

Interestingly, the West, though it was concerned about a revival of a new Russian empire, did not let this spoil relations with Russia, because the rest of Moscow's foreign and domestic policy suited it perfectly well. Aside from this, in the 90s neither European states, nor the US wanted to sort out the mess in the post-Soviet space while Russia could not afford to stay aloof watching what was going on in its immediate neighbourhood. As it could, sometimes in a very uneven and heavy-handed way it stabilized the CIS space having frozen a number of conflicts and deployed its armed forces in Abkhazia, Transnistria, Armenia and Tajikistan. But when the CIS was more or less stabilized and the problems of the CEE states were resolved, NATO and EU turned to the CIS space.

Without Russia is against Russia

When the problem of the Soviet Union's nuclear legacy was solved, the EU and the West as a whole became obsessed with the prospect of a new Russian empire. Supporting with one hand the weakening Yeltsin's regime (which was still viewed as the best possible), the West with its second hand started to build a new border against unpredictable developments in Russia. It saw the separation of Russia from its Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) partners as a guarantee that the USSR would never be brought back to life. And this principle was put at the centre of the EU and NATO regional strategies. This strengthened the "great power" sentiments of Russia's political elite, and also created fears that there was a Western strategy of "squeezing" Moscow out of vital interests like its relations with the countries of the CIS. Looking back in time one cannot but recognize that it was the most erroneous and counterproductive approach to Russia and its neighbors.

In all probability, if Russia had been part of the NATO enlargement policy, the Caucasus crisis of 2008 would never have happened. And had Russia been invited to join Eastern Partnership which was a regional dimension of ENP, the Ukrainian conflict would not have erupted. The lesson that can be drawn from this experience is that 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".

Game without rules

The Kosovo precedent is widely viewed as a main reason of the growing tensions between Russia and the West. However, the problem is not so much with Kosovo precedent itself but rather with the absence of clear rules of behavior after the end of bipolarity. The Helsinki Final Act, recognizing in principle nations' right for self-determination, has given clear priority to the principle of territorial integrity, because in the bipolar world the risk of global confrontation was very high. The Helsinki principles were not legally binding but nobody could even think about violating them since the stakes in the bipolar world were very high. In the post-bipolar time international actors started to apply these principles selectively according to their foreign policy interests and preferences. Within two decades since the Paris Charter Summit, every one of the ten principles of the CSCE's Helsinki Final Act (1975), has been violated. One of the main questions of our days is whether the Helsinki principles are still topical.

Eastern Partnership and Eurasia Union: pro et contra

Both the EU Eastern Partnership (EP) launched five years ago in Prague and the Eurasia Union concept, presented by president Putin in 2011 had in their substance political goals. The goal of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is to bring partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) closer to the EU through deepened cooperation and integration on the basis of EU values, norms and standards. The bilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership encompasses EU relations with the individual partner countries. This includes activities aimed at concluding Association Agreements, establishing Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas.

With all good intentions this project has several serious defects. **First**, it was a mistake not to invite Russia, the EU biggest eastern partner, to join EaP under the pretext that Russia did not like to participate in the EU regional strategies. **Second**, in its approach to the EaP partners the EU proceeded from its experience in the CEE and Baltic region where European identity and vocation were inherent. In the CIS area the situation was different. The European option has not become irreversible for these states. **Third**, like in the ENP, Brussels regarded all EaP members as one whole without clear priorities and differentiated approach to their eastern partners. **Fourth**, The EU conducted no assessments to understand how the DCFTA's would impact different sectors within the partner countries. As a result, it did not offer a well thought selection of financial measures, implementation of reasonable

timelines designed to smooth transition to the EU norms and standards. **Fifth**, Brussels always preferred to talk to the political elites of its eastern partners but not to their ordinary people who were aware of all hardships that they would be faced with, but knew very little about finalite and benefits of the EaP implementation. **And the last** but not least, the EU never understood Ukraine's importance for Russia.

The Kremlin's focus on Russia's Eurasian vocation came at a time of the EU crisis, which discredited its image as a successful model of the regional integration and Partnership for modernization concept. The Eurasian Union is undoubtedly an important new dimension of Russia's foreign policy. Putin stated many times that the Eurasian Union would play an increasingly important role on the global stage to become a **bridge between Europe and Pacific Rim**, adding that the EU would have to deal with the Eurasian Union's commission along with Moscow. Generally speaking, there is nothing scary or bad in a regional integration if it is built on a voluntary basis, common interests and equal rights. However, it is not clear what this concept means in practical terms. Does it mean that Russia returns to its traditional model? What is the difference between the Soviet Eurasianism that resulted in "the biggest geopolitical tragedy" and the new concept? And is there any new convincing ideology of Eurasia Union that can embrace and unite very different peoples and states? Could the Eurasia Union become a bridge between Europe and Pacific Rim, since neither Europe, nor Asia needs a bridge? China's trade turnover with EU and US is 6-7 times bigger than that with Russia.

What next?

The conflict over Ukraine has exposed some very uncomfortable truths – the CIS space became an apple of discord in Russia-EU relations and smashed to pieces their "strategic partnership" based on four common spaces of co-operation because none of these spaces addressed the CIS issue. It's a lesson that should be taken to heart on both sides. It seems unlikely that even a peaceful solution of the Ukrainian conflict can return EU-Russia relations to their previous level. The relationship will probably never be the same unless Russia clearly defines its identity. A future paradigm shift would be also contingent on the West defining a clear strategy vis-à-vis Russia, based on a careful balance between its values and realistic objectives as well as the lessons drawn from the past. Yet a peaceful solution would give the EU and Russia a chance to minimise the damage and at least save the key channels of interaction.

U.S. national elections: 2014



Monroe Newman
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Historically, when U.S. national elections are held during a president's sixth year in office, his (thus far, always a man) party loses seats in the Congress. That happened this year to a greater degree than average. The numerically most significant result is that his party no longer has a majority in either half of the legislature.

Three general questions are of interest – Why this happened? What it means for U.S. policy? What it means to the rest of the world? At this point, primarily conjecture is possible in addressing the latter two.

Two-thirds of eligible voters did not vote in this year's election. Not voting is unfortunately common in the U.S., particularly so in non-presidential elections. But there is an element in this that the U.S. shares with the democracies of Europe – a distrust and distaste for government. It is found among older America voters, particularly white males, and among the youth for whom government has not delivered on its promise of economic independence and well-being. The high rate of unemployment that plagues Europe's youth is not as severe a problem but in the U.S. (as elsewhere) it is compounded by stagnant real wages. This is part of the growing unequal income distribution. Average real incomes in the U.S. have been stagnant for a generation and, for example, the latest data show no change in real wages over recent years. Youth do not expect, as prior generations have, that their level of income will exceed those of their parents. President Obama promised change and this has not been felt in youth's pocketbooks despite the undoubted magnitude and pace of economic recovery, something not common in Europe.

Younger voters were an important component of Obama's winning coalition but many stayed home. So did members of other generally supportive groups – single women and Hispanics, in particular. Many voting contests had candidates within 3-5 percentage points of each other and had more of his coalition voted with the President's party, the outcome might have been notably different.

In part, their absence from the voting booth was also because of promises that were not kept. This has to be ascribed in significant part to the opposition's announced policy of blocking the president's agenda. In that, they were remarkably successful in keeping much from enactment and demonizing what was not stopped.

Credit for what did happen has to be given to Obama's opposition in another way. They got their adherents out to vote. Leaving aside such intangibles as the quality of individual candidates and the campaigns they waged, the opposition used their enormous funding to capitalize on implicit racism, distaste for government, opposition to particular policies (such as health care insurance and environmental protection) and economic malaise to make arguments that were not well countered.

The President has two more years in office. Expectations for what may be accomplished have to be very low. The opposition has achieved its victory by a six year long policy of saying "no." Not only does that presage a continuation of the policy but many of its members are committed to being anti-government, the opposite of the president's orientation. Not surprisingly, the campaign for the presidential office in 2016 began the day after this year's election. It is not likely that those who have achieved increased power will now adopt a more conciliatory or accommodative stance.

To a much greater extent than is true of domestic policy, foreign policy is the province of the president. Moreover, the present president's opposition in this field is far from unified. Some believe that the U.S. has been too reticent, too unwilling to exercise its muscle in world affairs. This faction faults Obama for too rapid withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, for insufficient and belated involvement in the Middle East, for being too critical of Israel and insufficiently inflexible toward Iran, among other faults. In contrast, other opponents have less specific policy criticisms because they espouse a vague form of isolationism while still being critical of what they too see as a decline in U.S. "standing" in the world.

It is noteworthy that all these opponents are not inclined to be critical of U.S. foreign economic policy, raising the possibility that the two major trade agreements Obama has advocated may move forward, despite the fact that they are questioned by his more liberal supporters.

It is highly unlikely that the President will alter his approach to U.S. non-economic policy toward the rest of the world and, as a result, when those policies require Congressional action (such as appropriations or ratifying international approaches to global warming, for example) they may well go unsupported. Of course, game-changers are possible but

they would have to be the natural disasters or violent international events that are so regrettable and not now foreseeable.

It is likely that only those Americans who oppose any actions by government will look back on the next two years with some satisfaction.

The Roma in the EU: Continuing inequalities and exclusion



Craig Webster

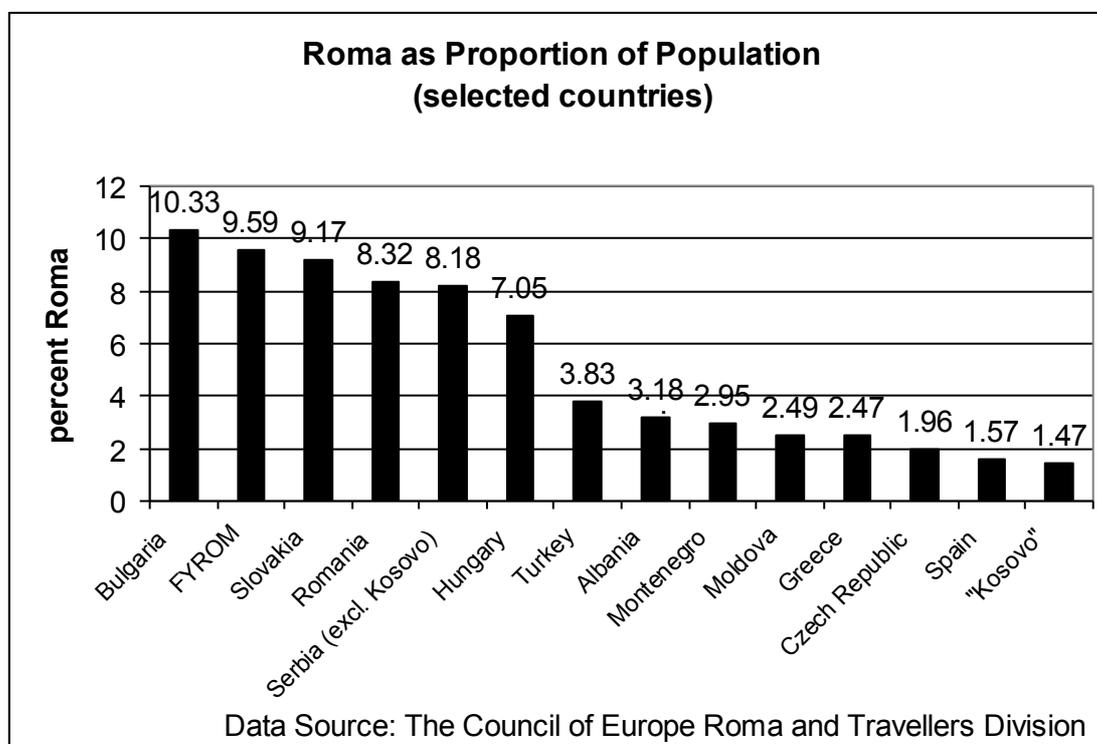
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In the summer of 2010, hundreds of people in France and Italy were rounded up and expelled, with most of them returned to Romania. It seems that the Italian and French governments did not want a certain population in their countries, as the people who were rounded up were Roma. Despite being EU citizens, those people were rounded up and sent back to other EU countries, something that is a bit confusing, as it seems to clash with the general policy of the free movement of populations in the bloc. There are continuing cases of expulsion of Roma (Phillips and Chrisafis 2011), with the case of a 15 year-old Roma girl in France in 2013 probably being the most publicly discussed in recent years.

The Roma have a long history in Europe and most agree that they have been in Europe for about a thousand years. Although they have had a long history in Europe, they have suffered from all sorts of exclusion and genocide. Some use the word "Porajmos" (meaning "devouring" or "destruction") to describe the genocide that they suffered from during World War Two in which between 220,000 to 1,500,000 were killed (Hancock 2005). The genocide ended although persecution and all sorts of exclusion have continued to this day (Council of Europe 2012).

Despite the genocide during World War Two, the Roma population is alive and kicking, with many of them living in many EU countries, especially those countries that were admitted to the EU in 2004 or afterwards. The figure below illustrates that the highest proportions of Roma in EU countries are found in Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Romania. The highest concentrations of Roma populations in the EU tend to be in the poorer parts of the EU, with the Council of Europe estimates that

there are about two million Roma in Romania and 750,000 in Bulgaria. This makes the Roma populations of Bulgaria and Romania the largest Roma populations in the EU, although numerically Turkey has more (about three million).



There are some interesting things to note in the data. The highest proportions of Roma seem to be concentrated in the poorer countries of the EU. It is understandable that those from the poorer countries in the EU (Bulgaria and Romania) would seek their fortunes in wealthier countries in the EU, as all EU passport holders theoretically have mobility within the EU. So it comes as no surprise that many from socially excluded groups such as the Roma in the poorest countries in the EU would move to wealthier countries in the EU, presumably to seek their fortunes where there are opportunities for economic and social advancement.

The problem is manifold for the Roma. When Roma flee poverty and poor living conditions in countries in which they are from in the EU, they are not only entering into another country where there are opportunities for economic and social advancement, but they are also entering into communities with deeply-engrained suspicions of Roma. As a result, the Roma seem to be learning that they are treated as second-class citizens in much of the EU. While the EU touts "rule of law" and "equal treatment," the Roma are learning that within many member states of

the EU, deeply-engrained beliefs and attitudes towards the Roma follow the Roma.

The way ahead is difficult and there seems to be no quick fix to deal with the situation of the Roma in the EU. First, the Roma have not fully integrated nor assimilated into their host countries, despite centuries of being in Europe. What this suggests is that there is something about this group that either resists integration/assimilation or that host populations hold such anti-Roma attitudes that this is not a practical option. Second, social, economic, and political exclusion mean that many Roma, when given an opportunity, will leave the countries where they are from and find opportunities elsewhere. This means that the EU's Roma have the right to be mobile within the EU, although it seems that legal loopholes and deeply-entrenched anti-Roma attitudes work in combination to limit their geographical and social mobility.

In 2004, the Roma issue in the EU was introduced as a major social, economic, and political issue for the EU, as in 2003, the number of Roma was generally limited in the EU. The introduction of Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Hungary into the EU introduced a population of millions of marginalized people who have the rights of mobility within the EU. Solving the puzzle of integrating a large population of people into the EU without continued racism and marginalization will be a tricky business for decades or perhaps centuries to come. What would likely help the Roma and related groups to move away from being an excluded group would be organization, lobbying, and building strong institutions for advocacy. While such an approach would in many ways assist the Roma and related groups and such organization is underway, in some limited ways, it faces substantial external as well as internal resistance. But this is also why the Roma and related groups remain so interesting, as they largely defy the way that we identify nations and ethnicities and seem to work on a very different logic from the industrial/post-industrial societies of Europe. Because they are culturally different and perceived of as being different, overcoming exclusion and marginalization will be a continuing issue for the Roma and Travellers and a major challenge for the EU for many years to come.

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Turkey's vision of Cyprus as its satrapy



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Turkey's vision of Cyprus is that of a satrapy; a Turkish satrapy. It does not extend beyond that. If this thesis is understood and accepted then the past and present policies of Ankara vis a vis Cyprus, be those of the Kemalists or, today as it happens those of the Islamists, can be decoded and make "sense". It will make "sense" why Turkey can submit a 100 page brief to the European Commission, as Ankara did recently, developing a convoluted array of arguments to prove that one state-member of the European Union, Cyprus, does not in fact exist. The Turks are talking about a country that for six months in 2012 presided over a Union that Turkey aspires to join. One does wonder whether the Turkish Foreign Ministry prepared its EU brief on its own volition and by observation, or whether it took its a priori cue from the pronouncement of its leader, Tayyip Erdogan, who a few weeks back announced, to an unaware world, that "there is no such country called Cyprus".

Accepting the satrapy thesis will also make sense of the latest provocations of Ankara in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus and its throw back tactics of gunboat and coercive diplomacy. A satrapy has no rights except those magnanimously granted, as was the case with the satrapies of the Great Persian King. Naturally, as a Turkish satrapy Cyprus cannot have its own EEZ. Worse, Cyprus is an island state and according to the Turkish auto-interpretation of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, island states can have neither continental shelves nor EEZs. (Lucky for the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia that do not have Turkey as a neighbour.) But that is not the end of it. Turkey is one of a handful of states that stubbornly refuses to sign the now universally accepted LOS Convention. And while it claims rights under it and

pronounces that it will defend those precise rights with its gunboats, it denies the same to Cyprus.

But this is not, again, the end of it. When the Turks are not trying to impose their cockeyed sea rules on Cyprus through coercion, as they are currently attempting to do with their gunboats, they claim that they act in their capacity as "guarantor" of Cyprus under the 1960 Treaties. In other words they claim guarantor rights about a state while with the other side of their mouth they declare that such a state does not exist. Or on further contemplation, they claim that at least "half" of it exists, which is the Turkish version of Japan's Manchukuo puppet state in Manchuria (1931-1945), that they forcefully set up after their 1974 invasion. And that it is on behalf this Turkish "Manchukuo", that they act.

Accepting the satrapy thesis can also demystify western propagated wisecracks such as "those who claimed to have understood the Cyprus problem are either fools or ignorant". Or that the Cyprus problem is amongst the "most intractable" in the world, in fact the "most intractable", next to which even the Arab-Israeli conflict pales in comparison. Some even go as far as to claim that the Palestinian conflict may stand a chance to be resolved some day but not the Cypriot one. On this last point they may be right but only because Ankara cannot envision but a "Turkish peace" on Cyprus. In other words, if only a 21st century Turkish version of a satrapy is established. Then the problem will cease.

There is nothing difficult to understand about Cyprus and there is nothing "intractable" there, unless none of the international customary and conventional rules and regulations of state behaviour may apply to Cyprus and its population and, without outside powers interfering in its internal affairs as Ankara blatantly does on a daily basis. And Lord forbid that these norms should furthermore include human, individual and democratic rights that are the hallmark of the European way of life-its political and legal civilisation that took some three hundred years and rivers of blood to establish. No, none of these should apply to Cyprus, says Ankara.

Since 1974 40000 Turkish troops, NATO trained and US armed, have been illegally ensconced on Cyprus in an offensive deployment. The Cold War ended, Germany was reunited but the Turkish Army has not bulged an inch on Cyprus. In fact according to UN reports the Turkish occupied

part of Cyprus remains, mile by mile, the most militarised piece of land in the world. And the only reason Turkey has been getting away with this retrograde and imperialistic behaviour is because of its membership in the Euro-atlantic security alliance. For no other reason. It is NATO membership that shields Turkey from the type of criticisms as well as sanctions that the West regularly imposes and /or demands that they be imposed on pariah state behaviour. Since the 1950s, a "holy cow" syndrome has characterised the West's relationship with Turkey allowing Ankara unrestrained and arrogant behaviour, exhibited constantly in Cyprus and, lately, to a whole range of security issues. There is not a single Western Chancery today that is not unaware that the Islamist regime in Ankara has, over the last few years, become the single most important enabler of jihadist terrorism in Syria and Iraq and with agents increasingly active in Libya, Egypt and elsewhere in Africa and the Caucasus. There exists a NATO state that is a terrorist enabler. But none dare say so except in coded diplomatese and increasingly though officially sanctioned leaks in the press.

Still, Ankara's sub rosa relationship with international terrorism is not something recent. It dates back some decades and it is documented by studious research. Turkey has been an enabler in the making of the Pakistani nuclear bomb, something Washington was aware but pretended otherwise (see, "Turks Ship U.S. A-Tools To Pakistan", The Washington Post, Sunday, June 28, 1981). The Turkish "Deep State" (Derin Devlet) protected and guided the hand of Ali Agca in his attempt to assassinate the Pope in May 1981. And it protected his co-conspirators until matters fell apart with the 1996 Susurluk scandal revelations. Turks have played a not so opaque role in the bombings of non Muslim houses of worship in Istanbul (before and after 9/11) and in the assassination of prominent minority Turkish citizens and Turkish christians. And in the U.S. Court system the interested researcher can find troves of material and underground connections on Ankara's espionage activities against the U.S. involving illegal trade in nuclear materials, plus fascinating information based on intelligence sources about the shadowy role of Turkey prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York. (see Deposition Before the Ohio Election Commission, Case No. 2009E-003, of August 8, 2009.) And these are just a sample.

If there is a country the West has been handling as "a spoiled child" and as the diachronic "model" and cure for all that ails the non-western world that country has been Turkey. Since WWII Turkey has received more monies from the West than any other western ally, including South

Korea, South Vietnam and even Israel, all of which have been involved in major wars (except for Turkey, when it attacked...Cyprus). Yet the Turks firmly believe that this is "owed" to them as "indispensable" allies. "You [the US/ West] must pay our bills because you need us", was the cynical way a Turkish Prime Minister put it to a well known US scholar and official, Dankwart A. Rustow, in Ankara. (see his "Turkey's Travails", Foreign Affairs, Fall 1979, p.102). This continues today in the form of various political IOUs, with weak and vulnerable states in the region, like Cyprus, at the short end of it.

Still Turkey cannot have its cake and eat it too. Certainly not in Cyprus. Its 1974 attack may have yielded conquered territory which Ankara proceeded to ethnically cleanse from its indigenous Greek Cypriot majority population and established there a de facto geographical cleansed region, to hold and control for its "lebensraum" and Great Power ambitions. These ambitions are unabashedly admitted by Ahmet (a.k.a. "Zero Problems with Neighbours") Davutoglu, in his magnum opus "Strategic Depth"(2001) where he actually uses the nazi era word "lebensraum" in the context of his geopolitical vision. But Turkey's 1974 attack failed in its strategic objective which had been to delegitimise and destroy the Cypriot state. And proof of that is that Cyprus, including its territories currently controlled by Turkish bayonets, became a bona fide member of the EU. The legitimacy of the Cypriot state cannot disappear because its powerful neighbour wills it. And this is causing frustration in Ankara expressed in aphorisms, political tantrums and bullying tactics. For its part, Cyprus should remain cool and defend its interests through legal and institutional instrumentalities available to states.

The EU membership of Cyprus does by its very nature depend on the vision of Cyprus as the satrapy of Turkey. Other developments in the region enhance the ability of Cyprus to thwart Turkish bullying. These include the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and the growing interest in energy and security cooperation amongst non-NATO regional states. An additional factor has been the gradual unmasking and almost total failure of Turkey's "benign" hegemon project for the entire region. This may have commenced with the collapse of the axis with Israel. But it was soon revealed, first in Libya, then in Syria- Iraq and now in Egypt, that it went beyond singling out Israel and was in fact based on the false and unhistorical (Davutoglean) premise that the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire enjoyed their subjugation so much so that they were simply dying to return to it under its 21st century reincarnation, with the likes of Erdogan and Davutoglu at its

helm. This is not how interstate relations work and are conducted. Yet for a weak state like Cyprus, it is a blessing in disguise that the Islamist elite in Ankara remains unwaveringly in its course, convinced, in addition, that it is carrying out Allah's (Sunny) calling.

Cyprus cannot on its own deal with its Goliath neighbour. But it does not have to. It can, within the international system and its dynamics, pursue a Lilliputian strategy. Which effectively tied down Gulliver.

Erdogan's folie de grandeur



Robert Ellis

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The latest example of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's *folie de grandeur* is the new presidential palace built at a cost of \$615 million on Atatürk's Forestry Farm in Ankara.

The farm was originally owned by the founder of the Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and donated to the Turkish state in 1937. It was declared a protected zone in 1992, a first-degree protected zone in 1998, but was reduced to a third-degree zone in 2011 to make way for what (then) Prime Minister Erdoğan determined would be an "unforgettable" new prime ministerial building. However, when he won Turkey's first presidential election in August, Erdoğan decided he would move to the new complex instead of the traditional Çankaya Palace.

There was a great deal of opposition to the construction from architects, engineers and environmentalists, as the farm, known as the lungs of Ankara, has been a favourite spot for the people of Ankara at the weekend. Nevertheless, the green area has gradually been reduced by the building of an amusement park, a tractor factory and a wholesale market – and now the palace – as well as being intersected by highways and roads.

In February an Ankara administrative court reversed the decision to reduce the degree of environmental protection granted to the area, in effect halting the construction of the new complex. Erdoğan's reaction was characteristic: "If they have the power, let them demolish it."

The palace, known as "Ak Saray", the White Palace, is built on an area of 300,000 square metres, and is set to outdo the Sultan of Brunei's palace, the Kremlin and Versailles, and dwarfs the White House in

Washington. Erdoğan has said it can host 2,000–3,000 people in receptions and, in fine weather, up to 5,000 guests. “These are the conditions to be a great state”.

According to David Blair, The Daily Telegraph’s chief foreign correspondent, its architectural style seems to cross the Ottoman and Seljuk traditions with that of a modern Chinese railway station, and Turkish economist Emre Deliveli has dubbed the building “the new Reich Chancellery”.

There is also the question of the palace’s legal status and whether a proper construction licence and occupancy permit have been issued. In defence of the extravaganza, the Prime Minister’s Office has stated that the palace belongs to the people, and there is no doubt the people will pick up the tab. In addition, Turkey’s president has been provided with a new Airbus A330-200 Prestige at a cost of \$185 million.

Lavish spending

Erdoğan has earlier claimed, “We cannot condone any lavish spending and have to stick with budget discipline.” Nevertheless, it is estimated that the president’s palace and plane will account for 7 percent of Turkey’s budget deficit for 2014.

A report from the Turkish Court of Accounts also reveals that the Prime Minister’s Office exceeded its budget allocation by 50 percent in 2013, and according to an opposition deputy, Erdoğan’s expenditure from his discretionary fund during his period as prime minister was 20.5 times higher than that of the previous three prime ministers combined. At the same time, there has been a cut in overall expenditure in the 2015 budget, but the allocation for the presidency has been increased by “only” 49 percent.

Not content with his new palace in Ankara, President Erdoğan has also designated the Vahdettin Mansion in Istanbul, originally home of the last Ottoman sultan, as his office in Istanbul. This historic mansion, situated in a 50,723-square-meter grove, is at present under renovation, including the demolition of local houses and building larger structures, parking areas and a helipad.

Another project close to Erdoğan’s heart is the construction of a vast mosque complex on Çamlıca hill in Istanbul, which is intended to accommodate 35,000 worshippers and rival the city’s Blue Mosque and

the Süleymaniye Mosque, built by the famous architect Sinan for Sultan Süleyman (known as the Magnificent).

Indeed, the hallmark of Erdogan's rule has been the predominant role played by construction in Turkey's economy: highways, airports, housing, hotels, shopping malls and skyscrapers, which has led to many businessmen shifting from production to construction because of the immense profits.

This frenzy has had severe environmental consequences as mega-projects such as the construction of the third bridge over the Bosphorus and the third international airport have resulted in the deforestation of Istanbul's northern forests and a threat to the city's water supply.

A new bill plans to allow construction of energy facilities and mining in olive groves under 2.5 hectares, but as this means 90 percent of the country's olive groves, this will threaten the livelihood of 500,000 families and Turkey's olive oil production, which now comes fourth after Spain, Italy and Greece.

The first popular uprising against Erdogan's authoritarian rule was sparked off last year by the plan to tear down the trees in Gezi Park in Istanbul and replace them with a shopping mall. The current protests against the construction of a mosque in Validebağ Grove in Istanbul, despite a court's stay of execution order, which have been met by the police with pressurized water and pepper spray, are yet another example of the refusal by Turkish activists to accept government-inspired vandalism.

Is an 'energy tetrahedron' feasible in the South East Mediterranean?



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Egypt, under the presidency of Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi, is re-experiencing the implementation of the Mubarak doctrine on the country's regional alliances. Al-Sisi, one of the key figures during the uprising against Mohammad Morsi's regime in 2012, has been very clear about the way he sees Egypt's place in the world: Cairo strengthened its intelligence and military cooperation with Israel vis-à-vis the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip, which allegedly holds strong ties with Islamic factions in the Sinai peninsula. The Egyptian government clearly shows its strategic resilience to the US-led coalition against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, which has resulted in the renewal of the decades-long political alliance with other pro-Western Sunni Arab States, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain. Al-Sisi does his best in order to show his differentiation towards the Muslim Brotherhood's brief control of political power under Morsi, adopting severe measures against radical political Islam, in order to remind to the West that Cairo is able to continue to bridge the Arab world and the West, as it did during the Mubarak era. Egypt is annoyed by Turkish and Qatari intrusiveness over the issues concerning the influence of political Islam in Egypt's political scene and in the Levant in general. At the same time, Egypt and the West are preoccupied with the unstable situation in neighboring Libya, while both keep a low profile towards Assad's secular regime in view of a Western-led coalition against the Islamic State.

President Al-Sisi's regional agenda shows that Mubarak's legacy in the country's foreign policy will continue to affect Egyptian decision-makers, following a brief period of pro-Islamic ambivalence that puzzled the country's traditional ties with Western countries in the Mediterranean,

that shared a common past of good relations. One of those countries is the Republic of Cyprus.

In a volatile Middle East and South east Mediterranean, regional alliances do not remain stable. However, geographical facts do - and Cyprus has always been important for Egypt. During the '60s Gamal Abdel Nasser viewed Cyprus as a strategic ally that might reflect Cairo's regional endeavors through Nicosia's activity in the Non-Aligned Movement, despite - and due to - the fact that the island was an integral part of NATO's regional military presence. During the '70s and '80s Cyprus was an additional positive factor for Egypt's commercial and diplomatic relations with the West. Nevertheless, Cairo understood well that keeping a low profile over the continuing Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island was essential in order to prevent any undesired correlation affecting Cairo's normalized, yet vulnerable, ties with Israel, a country which maintained a strong strategic alliance with Ankara for decades.

The Mavi Marmara incident in June 2010 severely affected the Turkish-Israeli coalition, while the newly founded natural gas resources within the Cypriot and Israeli EEZs' created a new reality, with imminent economic prospects as well as security concerns. During that time, the Egyptian political scene was facing severe agitations. Despite the fact that during these last two years President Al-Sisi and his military forces have proven their ability to control the country's political system, at the same time, jihadist paramilitary activity is still negatively affecting the exports of Egyptian natural gas to Israel and Jordan, severely damaging gas pipelines along the northern coast of the Sinai. The situation is similar along the Egyptian borders with Libya, a country that until now hasn't recovered from the uprising against its previous leader Moamar Al-Ghaddafi. The Al-Sisi administration did manage to restore the country's reputation in the West, but Egypt, now more than ever, is experiencing a *quasi* isolation on the ground from its immediate geostrategic setting, affecting financial prospects, based upon the country's natural gas resources off its Mediterranean coasts.

As geography has its own rules, Cyprus is once again important to Egypt. As an EU member-State, friendly to Israel, with historical ties to Egypt's position within the Arab world, sharing common endeavors in the regional energy market, the Republic of Cyprus can once again, be an important strategic ally to Egypt, providing direct access to the European markets. In the framework of this win-win situation, Cypriot

natural gas resources are on the verge of playing a major role. On the political field, Egypt has already given clear signs of good will towards the Greek-Cypriot views on the Cyprus issue, by calling for the exclusion of the self-proclaimed 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' from the Islamic Conference of which it is currently monitoring. This move firmly expresses Cairo's anti-Turkish regional policy – a fact that Nicosia, under the present circumstances, cannot ignore.

On the other hand, the Republic of Cyprus has comprehended that Israel is reluctantly moving towards a practical –and not only verbal– cooperation in the fields of natural gas exploitation within the Cypriot EEZ, mainly due to Jerusalem's expectation that Turkish regional policy is about to change in favor of Israel, in view of a Western-led broad military coalition against the Islamic State. At the same time, Turkish-Israeli cooperation in the private sector is flourishing, despite the four-year-long diplomatic turbulences. As a result, and despite the frequency of common Cypriot-Israeli military exercises within the Cypriot territorial waters and airspace as well as Israeli FM's declarations, publicly backing Nicosia's argumentations over the Republic of Cyprus' exploration rights, Israel is avoiding to proceed with any practical move that would consolidate on the ground a long-lasting Cypriot-Israeli energy axis – a fact which might endanger or even annihilate the prospect of a future rapprochement with Turkey, an important regional player for Israel's security concerns.

However, in case the recent talks between Egypt, Cyprus and Greece result in vital strategic partnership, Israel might reconsider its position. It may eventually decide to differentiate its energy projects with the Republic of Cyprus from its important security cooperation with Turkey, in case Ankara reevaluates its Middle Eastern policy.

No matter what the future holds for Israeli-Turkish relations, Israel's energy policy will always be related to its western sea borders with the Republic of Cyprus and the Cypriot EEZ. In case Nicosia and Cairo consolidate a cooperation on their energy projects, which would eventually include a strategic alignment with Greece, Israel might decide to become a part of a stable EU-backed energy exploitation environment, guaranteeing sustainable ties with Europe – a perspective boosting competitiveness in the energy market for both Egypt and Israel.

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