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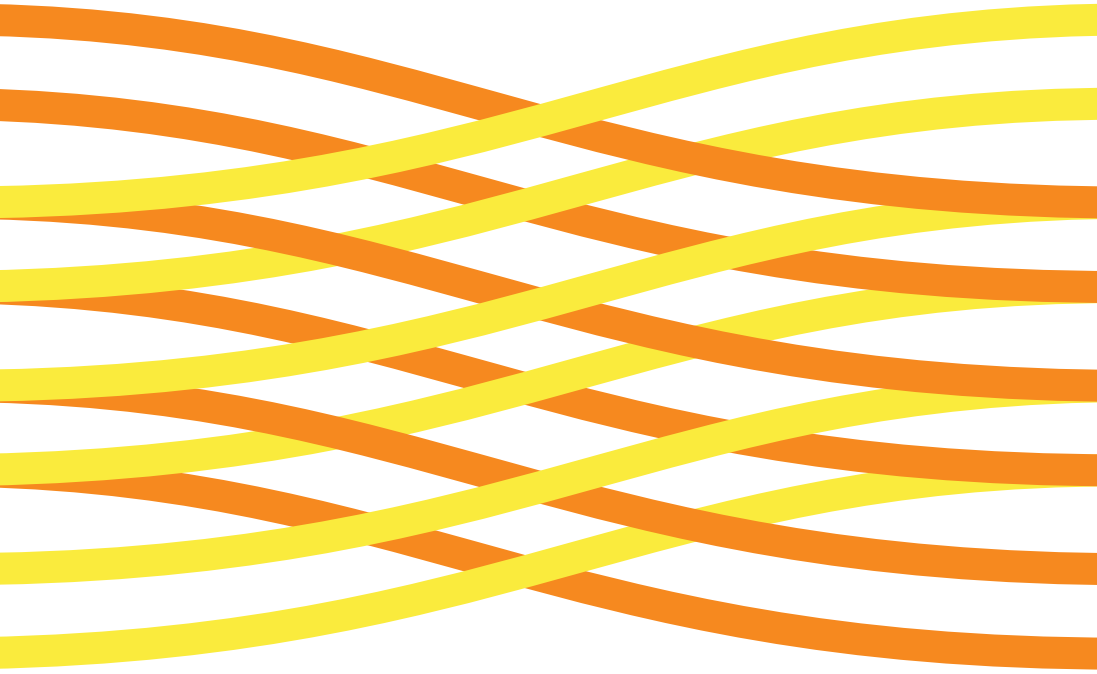
Transforming Euro-Atlantic Security Landscapes



LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
LATVIJAS ĀRPOLITIKAS INSTITŪTS

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Latvian Institute of International Affairs
Riga, 2017

RIGA DIALOGUE AFTERTHOUGHTS 2017: TRANSFORMING EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY LANDSCAPES

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This project is managed by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Nuclear Threat Initiative, European Leadership Network and State Joint Stock Company "Latvijas dzelzceļš."

This publication has been supported in part with funds from the Nuclear Threat Initiative. Its contents represent the views, findings and opinions of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

ISBN 978-9934-567-08-7
UDK 327(470+571:4+7)
Sp950

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Note by the Editors

ANDRIS SPRŪDS, DIĀNA POTJOMKINA

A dialogue is an asset of the self-confident. A dialogue is instrumental in the search for global and regional stability, even in times of uncertainty, insecurity and mistrust. The annual *Riga Dialogue* conference in Riga, which took place for the fourth time in 2017, has become an important venue for debating security issues and exchanging views among a variety of stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region and wider Euro-Atlantic area. The follow-up publication *The Riga Dialogue Afterthoughts 2017: Transforming Euro-Atlantic Security Landscapes* assembles insights from leading international experts and reflects on the diversity of interests, judgements and proposed solutions. The *Afterthoughts* seek to contribute to the thorough assessment and understanding of existing challenges and opportunities for cooperation, especially between the West and Russia.

Partnerships are always instrumental in achieving a feasible outcome, as the *Riga Dialogue* conference and publication demonstrate. They have been the result of long and productive cooperation between the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and its distinguished international partner institutions. The generous support and active engagement by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Nuclear Threat Initiative, European Leadership Network and State Joint Stock Company *"Latvijas dzelzceļš"* [Latvian Railways] have been indispensable and essential for ensuring a dynamic and forthright *Riga Dialogue* process. The expanding partnership contributes to a continued dialogue in the region and wider Euro-Atlantic space. The *Riga Dialogue* process has become an important endeavour for shaping the transforming Euro-Atlantic security landscapes in a constructive and practical manner.

Shifting Euro-Atlantic Security Sands

IMANTS LIEĢIS

Twists, turns and turmoil in the Euro-Atlantic security scene do not merit practitioners burying their heads in the sand. That is why the ongoing endeavours by Latvia's Institute of International Affairs and its partners to promote dialogue between Euro-Atlantic and Russian experts are welcome.

The fourth consecutive Riga Dialogue in May took place just a week after France elected a new President, Emmanuel Macron. His subsequent engagement in Euro-Atlantic security issues has in the meantime been noticeable and distinctive. It gives room for some optimism about dialogue being maintained with Russia.

Nevertheless, the current state of affairs in the Euro-Atlantic security space is not clear cut. As Latvia's Foreign Ministry's Political Director Andris Pelšs recently pointed out, "as long as Russia's goal is to destroy the West's value system and international legal order, it is not possible to normalise relations."[1]

Despite these continuing contradictions, the latest discussions held in Riga provided an opportunity for various specialists to engage and consider how to proceed further. As one participant mentioned, this is not "wasted work," even though tangible results may not be immediately evident.

Without making specific attributions, I will use some of the discussions to assess the current situation and propose some recommendations for continuing to engage with Russia.

America: in or out?

Hot on the heels of the Riga Dialogue, President Trump began his first forays abroad. There was acute interest in how his approach to Euro-Atlantic security would be.

It is important to recall that his participation at the NATO leaders' meeting on 25th May was not a given at the beginning of the year. By attending, the US at least began countering the President's earlier reference to NATO being "obsolete." However, the positive messages relating to NATO's ongoing relevance and collective defence also given by Secretaries Tillerson and Mattis during various trips to Europe were tempered by President Trump's seemingly deliberate refusal to mention Article 5 of the Washington Treaty at the NATO Brussels meeting.

This omission was subsequently remedied during Trump's visit to Warsaw on 6th July when he said that "The United States has demonstrated not merely with words but with its actions that we stand firmly behind Article 5, the mutual defence commitment."[2]

So, the eagerly awaited words were spoken. What about the deeds? Latvia and the Baltic States continue to receive substantial military support from the US. The US defence budget for 2017 allocates US$3.4 billion to the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) and President Trump has submitted the 2018 budget request which seeks a $1.4 billion increase for ERI over 2017. A day before the Brussels NATO meeting, United States European Command issued a press release quoting the Commander, General Scaparrotti, who explains that "ERI funding increases our joint capabilities to deter and defend against Russian aggression. Additionally, these significant investments will further galvanize US support to the collective defence of our NATO allies, as well as bolster the security and capacity of our US partners."[3]

In the context of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence on its Eastern flank, the US commitments through ERI, therefore, seem sound. They include a deployment of some 7,000 servicemen to Europe, even though there currently lacks a permanent presence in the Eastern flank.

Despite contradictory messaging, the ongoing measures taken by the United States seem to indicate that transatlantic relations could weather the storm of Trump's Presidency.

USA and Russia

Contradictions also prevail in the US-Russia context.

Some initial optimism about the Trump presidency providing a window of opportunity for a renewal of US-Russia relations seems to have been confronted by a harsh reality. This has implications for those of us seeking ways to halt the downward spiral of deterioration in the relations between these two significant powers (see for example the high-level appeal of 27th June addressed to the leaders of both countries prior to the Trump and Putin G-20 meeting signed by Des Browne, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor Ivanov and Sam Nunn).

Even though the first Trump-Putin encounter produced some positive noises about cooperation on Syria, it provoked more unanswered questions rather than achieving any tangible progress. Whilst personal contacts per se are of course welcome, the context cannot be ignored. "As long as the US breaks ranks, Russia can swim in the mainstream" – this was reported to be the German foreign ministry's reaction to the Trump-Putin Hamburg G20 meeting.[4] The background of both an unpredictably extended first meeting together with the later disclosure about another one-on-one meeting that had been kept quiet hardly encouraged confidence among onlookers. Likewise, the initial assertion about establishing a joint cyber security unit and the so called "agreement" that Russia had not interfered in the US Presidential elections sowed further seeds of uncertainty.

Indeed, interference in last year's election process in the USA restricts Trump's room to manoeuvre, given the increased mistrust that it provoked and the fact that US policy towards Russia has become victim to detailed scrutiny. This so called "new normal" in relations with Russia continues to present dangers, rather than diminishing risks, not least in the crucial area of nuclear policy where the US-Russia relationship is paramount.

In endeavouring to promote mutual trust, the question arises as to whether the USA and Russia deliberately misunderstand one another or are unable to understand each other. Ironically, there is even some yearning for the "clarity" of the Cold War era, where the lines were better defined and nobody crossed any red ones.

Europe

Europe's role in the Euro-Atlantic security scene is increasing out of necessity and design.

Necessity, because despite their varying attempts to sew discord, Brexit, Putin and Trump are all contributing to promoting a greater sense of purpose and unity amongst the 27 member states about the direction of the EU's defence policy. This cannot fail to have implications for broader Euro-Atlantic security issues. The maxim "never waste a good crisis" (i.e. the uncertainties caused by Brexit, Trump and Putin) therefore seems to be a good rule of thumb for developments within Europe.

Design, because of the positive results of democratic elections in Europe this year, when compared with the turmoil created by voting patterns last year. While of course, we need to await the outcome of Germany's elections in September, the victory of Emmanuel Macron in both presidential and legislative elections in France seems to have encouraged an emerging sense of hope and optimism. Halting the growing tide of extremism by defeating National Front candidate Le Pen contributed to this. His appearances on the international scene have, for the most part, been very successful, even though they may have been with an eye on strengthening his hand in pushing through crucial domestic reforms. Hosting both President Putin and President Trump in Paris just weeks after coming to power indicates that Macron wishes to place France front and centre in international diplomacy. Mutual interests in both cases prevailed, but in the case of Putin, his meeting was in sharp contrast with the complexities surrounding the first Putin-Trump encounters.

The French-German motor within the EU could well determine the future EU role. "More Europe" is back on the agenda, even though it may come with an increase of "various speeds." A revival of enthusiasm for Europe can only come about based on a strong Franco-German axis. The first Macron-Merkel intergovernmental meeting in Paris on 13th July resulted in some specific proposals around EU defence and security policy. These include measures to move ahead with permanent structured cooperation by elaborating appropriate principles and criteria, developing defence funding and streamlining production projects in the defence

industry. The management of these initiatives will be important to try to achieve maximum engagement of member states. Hence the insistence that these projects will be inclusive and not exclusive, and will not compete with NATO, are principles that will be keenly watched.

There also seems to be a prevailing underlying acceptance that Europe will not move into the realm of collective defence, a crucial principle to avoid undermining NATO's role.

The effect of President Trump's first visit to Europe in May for the NATO meeting in Brussels and the G7 summit is an illustration of how the dynamics of an increasing European role is emerging. This relates particularly to the widely reported response of Angela Merkel, albeit at an election campaign rally and in the context of maintaining the Transatlantic link. It is worth quoting what she said, given that it was seen to have wide-ranging implications: "The times in which we could rely on others are to some extent over, as I have experienced in the past few days. We Europeans must ... take our fate into our own hands."[5]

These words were probably a marker for the subsequent Franco-German summit already referred to. They should nevertheless not be interpreted as a rejection of America's engagement in Europe. Europe will continue to rely on the transatlantic alliance, which will need to survive, irrespective of who inhabits the White House.

Given that Russia's actions in Ukraine were one of the causes of the deterioration in relations with the Euro-Atlantic community, and will be one of the keys to reviving these relations, the current state of play needs to be established. There are few signs available to indicate that the crucial issue of implementing the Minsk Accords and returning Crimea to Ukraine will be resolved soon, either through US-Russia relations or Normandy Format discussions. Three years after Russia overthrew the post war established order with its military intervention in Ukraine, the prospect of a resolution of this fundamental issue remains remote. Euro-Atlantic unity on sanctions remains. The military conflict in Eastern Ukraine continues. By appointing former diplomat Kurt Volker as Special Envoy for Ukraine, at least the US has indicated to European partners that there will be more of a focus on Ukraine, even though it emerged almost six months into the Trump administration.

Keeping an eye on the ball

Progress in transforming the Euro-Atlantic security landscape is dependent on the dynamics between and around the players engaged in the process. A focused approach bearing in mind some of the following suggestions could help.

1. Retain patience and resolve

Working to improve relations with Russia is a long-term item on our agenda. This should be recalled at times when it seems that nothing is working. Again, our Russian colleague's reference to "not 'wasted work'" during the Riga Dialogue is a pertinent reminder of the need for patience.

The headline of the Economist article quoted above after Trump's first visit to Europe ran "Don't let him get to you." The same can be applied to our dealings with President Putin. The article closes with the quote of Wolfgang Ischinger, "engage, engage, engage," described as a strategy approach which is an "inconvenient truth." Again it applies to both Trump and Putin.

2. Stick to dialogue and values

Engaging in dialogue can be done without condoning the actions of the dialoguing partner. Should the illegal annexation of Crimea and the "hot war" (to quote Kurt Volker) in Eastern Ukraine preclude dialogue? Clearly not at this point in time, although previously a pause in dialogue was necessary.

The values issue remains crucial, especially from a European perspective where the foundation of the EU rests on legal and value based principles. It remains paramount not to offer the illegal annexation of Crimea as a bargaining chip. After all, Western countries maintaining for 50 years the principle of "non-recognition" was crucial for the occupied Baltic States when they regained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

3. Seek progress on smaller issues before moving to larger challenges

There is no shortage of suggestions for trying first to resolve smaller items on the agenda with Russia before approaching more substantive matters. Proposals for setting up a NATO-Russia Military Crisis Management

Group is a case in point. Likewise, trying to encourage transparency and predictability through the commitments of the OSCE Vienna Document. Any progress in such areas could help to restore mutual trust as well as providing a context for addressing more complex issues.

4. Bolster dialogue with deterrence

The two-track approach is crucial to allay concerns amongst more vulnerable NATO members. Hence the importance of deploying NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence ahead of Russia's planned exercises in Belarus in September 2017, with the possible involvement of some 100,000 troops. These are measured, tailored and appropriate responses by the Alliance. Neither dialogue or deterrence should be regarded as mutually exclusive.

5. Retain the value of the UK as a significant player

As the EU's role grows in seeking ways to develop relations with Russia, despite the turmoil created by Brexit, the value and significance of the UK role in Euro-Atlantic security should not be forgotten. Britain is the framework NATO nation in the Enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia. Though not involved in the Normandy format, the UK retains its membership of the P5 on the UN Security Council. As a crucial partner in defence and security for both France and the USA, any endeavours at seeking solutions with Russia should continue to bear in mind ongoing UK contributions.

6. Confront the realities of cyber and information warfare

These are two substantive issues that have to be dealt with in parallel with searching for opportunities in relations with Russia. The realities of Russia's attempts to interfere in democratic processes, whether in the USA, France Germany or elsewhere, cannot be swept under the carpet. Time, effort and finances need to be devoted to deal with hybrid threats that seek to undermine our democracies. This applies both on a national and multilateral basis.

In the shifting sands of Euro-Atlantic security, there is no magic formula to get relations with Russia back into a safer and more predictable phase. Seeking solutions is preferable to burying one's head in the sand.

Endnotes

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[4] See *The Economist*, July 15, 2017, print edition, 20.

[5] *The Economist*, June 3, 2017, print edition, 23.

The Best European Security System We Can Afford Today

ANDREY KORTUNOV

Nobody would deny that relations between Russia and the West are undergoing a deep crisis. The current levels of mistrust, suspicion, negative attitudes and outright animosity on both sides are higher than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Many Russian and Western observers consider this situation to be abnormal, saturated with serious risks and dangers, detrimental to long-term interests of Moscow and Western capitals alike. Many warn about both immediate negative consequences and more remote repercussions of the conflict triggered by the dramatic events in Ukraine in late 2013 – early 2014.

However, let us get back to the predictions and assumptions made almost four years ago, after the crisis had erupted, and compare them to realities of mid-2017. In my view, the overall situation in Europe has demonstrated more resilience and stability than many of us had anticipated. The Minsk Agreements have never been fully implemented, but there has not been a major escalation in Eastern Ukraine: separatists have not attempted to seize Mariupol, while the Ukrainian army has not tried to capture Donetsk or Lugansk. The mil-to-mil contacts between Russia and NATO have not been restored, but there has not been a single collision between Russian and NATO military or civil aircraft, or combat ships; no inadvertent or accidental escalation has happened. The war of sanctions and counter-sanctions has already continued for more than three years and is not likely to end anytime soon, but neither Russia nor Ukraine faces an unavoidable economic collapse or feels strong pressure to change their current policies. Four NATO battalions are being deployed along the eastern border of the Alliance and three Russian divisions are supposed to counter this move, but neither the West nor Russia voices a lot of concerns about a new large-scale and highly destabilizing arms race in Europe.

The situation between Russia and the West somewhat reminds of *drôle de guerre* or the Phony War – the initial period of World War II, when the war had already been announced, but no major military operations were conducted. In 1939 – 1940, the Phony War only lasted for eight months and ended with the German attack on France and the Low Countries. I do not intend to draw any historical parallels here, but the question remains: for how long can this situation in Europe last? Will we still discuss the same set of issues between Russia and the West in 2020? In 2024? In 2030?

To answer these questions, one has to explain the resilience of the post-Ukrainian *modus vivendi* in Europe. I can think of at least three explanations, none of which I find particularly convincing. Let me briefly outline each of them.

First, one can argue that the evident inability of Russia and the West to deal with the crisis results from failures of the intellectual communities on both sides of the frontline. Allegedly, experts and analysts turned out to have been poisoned by their respective political and ideological biases and therefore were incapable of any innovative, out-of-the-box thinking. This is why politicians continue repeating their old mantras instead of offering new approaches and advancing new proposals. In my opinion, this explanation does not hold water. During the last three and a half years, a lot of interesting, creative and out of the box ideas, concepts and even detailed roadmaps were generated within the international intellectual community; all the good advice is already on the table.

The second explanation boils down to the conclusion that both Russia and the West continue believing that time is playing on their side and that we are approaching a tipping point in the conflict. In Moscow, they might think about the multiple unresolved crises within the European Union, about the unpredictable future of the transatlantic relationship under President Trump, about the growing Ukrainian fatigue in the West, about the likely implosion of the present political regime in Kyiv, and so on. In Western capitals, they have their own set of self-serving expectations: the economic and social costs of the conflict for the Kremlin will increase; the popularity and even legitimacy of Vladimir Putin will erode; a political opposition will arise and the Russian leadership will have to

reconsider its current foreign policy posture. This explanation seems more plausible than the first one, but with time flying, it becomes less and less convincing. Indeed, if we have not reached the mysterious tipping point since early 2014, what are the odds that we will reach it anytime soon? Nothing suggests that either side is on the brink of a capitulation or even on the brink of taking a more flexible position due to growing political or economic pressures or to distractions caused by other pending problems.

The third explanation is arguably the most pessimistic, but I consider it the most plausible. The ongoing conflict between Russia and the West in this specific format and at this particular level serves important interests on both sides of new European divide. For the Russian leadership, it helps to maintain the necessary level of public political mobilization, it gives more authority and status to the military, it keeps oligarchs on a short leash and it justifies the less than satisfactory performance of the Russian economy. On the other hand, the crisis with Russia helped to reinvigorate NATO, to rediscover the "enemy of convenience," and even to find a new foundation for the challenged European identity. Sanctions against Russia remain one of very few foreign policy matters on which EU members can still keep a consensus.

This does not mean that Russia and the West are happy with the current situation. Clearly, they are not. However, the situation appears to be acceptable for both sides, especially because the crisis of the last three and a half years has not led to an uncontrolled escalation or other unpredictable negative developments. What we see is a situation of a *managed confrontation,* which creates not only serious challenges but also tangible opportunities for the two sides confronting each other. On the other hand, the likely political costs of changing the current policies appear to be high for Moscow and/or Brussels. Moreover, given the fact that both Russia and the West are entering uncharted waters in their respective development, these costs appear to be not simply high, but prohibitively high at this point.

I can easily imagine critical comments from a Western reader: how could you put Russia and the West in the same league here? The responsibility of the two sides for the ongoing crisis is not even, and if this is the case, why should the West even consider changing its policies?

I am not going to compare the Russian and the Western narratives of the crisis here; I am not sure that at this particular stage these narratives can be reconciled. Nevertheless, if neither side can have a decisive victory in this confrontation anytime soon, both should look for some kind of accommodation involving the demonstration of more flexibility and more willingness to compromise.

My idea of a compromise is based on my strong belief that at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, both Russia and the West are weak rather than strong corporate actors. Neither can pursue a truly consistent, unambiguous long-term foreign policy, fully segregated from a variety of partisan, regional, economic, professional and other group interests. Furthermore, these groups do not only influence policies on the state level, they also become independent players in international relations. The pluralism of foreign policy players on both sides is not necessarily a problem but might be part of the solution to the difficult problem we face now. Being weak corporate actors, Russia and the West can gradually be incorporated into what I call a *hybrid security system* in Europe.

The adjective "hybrid" has become popular in modern academic slang – they commonly talk about "hybrid regimens," "hybrid economic models" and recently – about "hybrid wars." As a rule, this adjective has a distinct unflattering meaning; there is something profoundly wrong with all these regimes, models and wars. However, we also know of "hybrid vehicles" that use two or more types of power, such as internal combustion engine plus electric motor. A hybrid vehicle has a more complex design than an ordinary car, it is more expensive and has higher maintenance costs; nevertheless, it also has a number of undeniable comparative advantages over an ordinary car.

To follow the automobile analogy, I would suggest that in our case, the old Cold War security system stands for the traditional internal combustion engine. It might well look a bit dated, not particularly efficient and definitely not environmentally friendly. However, the Cold War system in Europe was relatively stable, reliable and predictable. It included multiple channels of political communications, mil-to-mil contacts, risk reduction measures and arms control agreements. It also implied a certain level of mutual respect and even trust. It is high time we revisited some of

the old Cold War practices – within the NATO-Russia Council, OSCE, sub-regional mechanisms, within ad hoc formats and, above all, in the framework of bilateral US-Russian relations. Speaking of the latter, the most apparent urgent tasks seem to be to address mutual concerns about the implementation of the INF Treaty and to extend the New START.

However, the old internal combustion engine – a reincarnation of the Cold War system – is not sufficient to set our European vehicle into motion and to move it in the direction of more security. There are at least four liabilities of this mechanism, which are worth mentioning. First, the Cold War security system is static, not dynamic; it is spectacularly change resistant, but it can crumble instantaneously, as has happened once already, in the late 1980s. Second, the Cold War system was based on two hierarchically organized military alliances, which divided Europe between the two superpowers' spheres of influence. Today, no division of Europe is feasible or acceptable; the spheres of influence concept has lost its legitimacy, at least, in the West. Third, the Cold War system addressed the security challenges of the 20th century. Though some of these challenges are still with us, our security agenda is much broader today than it was fifty or even twenty years ago, including threats generated by non-state players. Finally, the Cold War system was relatively efficient when Russia and the West were almost completely isolated from each other and therefore could act as strong corporate actors. Today, with porous borders, mass cross-border travel, a lot of economic interdependence, multiple identities, numerous autonomous group interests, etc., both Russia and the West emerge as weak corporate actors, which means that the rigid skeleton of the Cold War system becomes very fragile and unreliable.

This is exactly why we need to go beyond restoring appropriate components of the Cold War system. The European vehicle needs to have a new electric motor to complement the old internal combustion engine. By the electric motor, I mean a system of pan-European and sub-regional regimes preserving and expanding the remaining common space between Russia and the West. Today, the odds are good that we have a better chance to proceed with this task in non-security areas – like education, research or culture. However, one could also consider a variety of new (not Cold War type) security challenges, where this approach could be applied.

Among these, I would single out international terrorism, migration management, drugs traffic and cross-border crime, energy security and even cybercrimes. The regime approach can also be applied to sub regional problems (the Arctic, the Black Sea zone, the Balkans). We might be able to take one issue after another or to handle them in a parallel way.

The regime approach has a number of evident comparative advantages compared to the old-fashioned institutional approach. Regimes are more flexible than institutions; we do not need to negotiate very complex and ambiguous decision-making processes and feed multiple layers of bureaucracies. Many regimes do not require a ratification procedure, which is also an advantage in the context of the current relations between Russia and the West. Regimes are more democratic – they can embrace any party which is interested in joining the regime. In certain cases, they can even accept non-state participants – regions and municipalities, private companies and NGOs, international organizations and trans-border movements. This is very important if the goal is to attract new potential stakeholders into rebuilding the badly damaged state-to-state relationship. Finally, regimes can first be launched where the conditions are ripe and the cooperation is already on; one can reach out for low hanging fruits, later building on the initial success.

There might be at least two lines of criticism of the regime approach to European security. First, one can argue that this is yet another disguise for a Western appeasement policy towards Russia. Second, it might appear difficult, if possible at all, to draw the line between the old confrontational model and the new cooperative model, between traditional institutions and non-traditional regimes. These concerns might be valid. However, I would like to underscore that the two models of relations between Russia and the West could coexist only because each of them has its own target audience and its own potential constituency of stakeholders on both sides of the European front line. In the 21st century, the world of a university assistant professor has little to do with the world of a lieutenant colonel serving at an ICBM launch site. The reality of the second world cannot be denied, but it is not the only reality we should take into consideration.

Of course, many of us would prefer to shift from the old internal combustion engine to a new electric motor right away, without tinkering

with a heavy, overpriced and not always reliable hybrid vehicle. However, a quarter-century of relations between post-Soviet Russia and its Western neighbours suggests that the transition to a clean, efficient, affordable and sage electric motor is not going to be fast or easy. At the same, this is not an excuse not to move in this direction.

Russia, Germany and the European Order. Conflicting Geo-Strategic Concepts – Concert of Big Powers or Fair Balance of Interests?

KARSTEN D. VOIGT

For a large part of their history, the destiny of the peoples living in Europe has been shaped by the interests of great powers. For centuries, the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg empires, as well as France and Britain, have dominated the European continent. From the 19th century until the end of World War II, first Prussia and then Germany joined this competition for influence, directly and indirectly. In Versailles after the First World War and in Yalta after the Second World War, the great powers of the time shaped the European political landscape for decades.

This centuries-old experience of being the object of competition between the big powers and not a sovereign subject of one's own making continues to influence political debates in Europe to this day. Of course, the historical memories of former threats and domination are stronger in smaller states than in larger ones. One reason for this mindset is that larger states have a greater ability to influence their own conditions than smaller ones. This is still a reality of international politics. However, a reliable and sustainable order in Europe can only be achieved if states, both large and small, are prepared to establish a fair balance of interests and influence.

Accordingly, the complex voting rules in the Council of the European Union and in the European Parliament are a typical expression of the

desire to define this fair balance between smaller and larger countries. Beyond these formal voting rules, the European Union is based on the guiding principles of a common political culture, chief among these are ideas of co-dependence and integration. If the largest state in Europe, Russia, is returning to the logic of the "concert of big powers," first in Georgia, then in Crimea and now in Eastern Ukraine, this affects not only the direct neighbours of that power but undermines the stability of Europe as a whole.

With the initiation of the Helsinki Process, the equality of smaller and larger states has been demonstrably strengthened. The Charter of Paris, signed in 1990, confirmed the right of both small and large states to decide their own destinies. Therefore, when Russia acts against the principles of the Charter by annexing part of the territory of a neighbouring state, supporting the use of military force in other parts of a smaller state, and claiming the right of specific zones of influence, then such a policy is an attack on the basic principles, norms and values that formed the basis of the post-Cold War political order.

If we accept such a behaviour, then Europe as a whole will soon be dominated again by the old ghosts of mistrust and conflict. As such, it is not anti-Russian sentiment, but a commitment to the principles, norms and values of a peaceful European order that has guided the German government during the Ukrainian crisis. Russia has not withdrawn the signature of the Soviet Union from the Paris Charter. When it violates the agreement, it does not render the values and norms of the Charter invalid.

In the years after the peaceful fall of the Berlin Wall and the largely peaceful end of the Soviet Union, our policy towards Russia was defined by the desire to combine the process of integration with cooperation. In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, however, the coming years – though hopefully not decades – will be defined by a cooperation, as far as is possible and a defensive security policy, as far as is necessary.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, pan-European cooperation deepened and accelerated. The Charter of Paris defined the common principles of Europe, whole and free. Russia was included in the

Council of Europe and became a partner of the EU and NATO. Trade and cultural exchanges increased, and the network of pan-European relations became denser. While the objective of the full membership of Russia in the EU and NATO was perhaps never realistic, the West tried, though not consistently enough, to at least achieve closer cooperation. The security relationship between Russia and the West – and especially Russia and the USA – was dominated by the effort to enlarge the areas of cooperative security and diminish the importance of the concept of mutual deterrence.

But Russian leadership has since changed its view on Russia's role in its neighbourhood and in the world at large. President Putin regards the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Soviet Communism not as a historic opportunity for building a prosperous, modern and democratic Russia but "as the greatest geo-strategic disaster of modern times." Putin's Russia does not want to be recognised internationally as a great Eurasian power, but as what it once was: as a world power, equal to the US, especially in its hard power arsenal. But to be strong militarily and weak economically is not a stable foundation for a country aspiring to be a world power the long run, on the contrary. Such a policy is provoking negative reactions: Russia perceives its attempt to maintain and recover zones of influence as its historic right, but to most of its neighbours it is seen as Russian revisionism and irredentism.

Russia failed to build mutual trust and cooperation with its smaller Western neighbours after the Cold War. This failure is not only the result of Russian mistakes. Russia also sees US policy as the most relevant factor in the souring of post-Cold War relations. Russia's hope, that this negative trend might be reversed after the election of President Trump, has faded away. My own view is that the most important foreign policy reason for the increasing alienation between Russia and the members of the EU and NATO is the mostly negative and deteriorating relationship between Russia and its smaller Western neighbours.

At the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815, the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and at the Conference in Yalta in 1945, Russia and the Western powers of the time decided the destinies and the boundaries of Russia's Western neighbours. This geo-strategic reality changed at the end of

the Cold War. During the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, it was already obvious to me that leading actors, especially in Yugoslavia but also in Russia, did not understand the new European realities after the end of the Cold War. When I met, as president of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, with leading politicians in Belgrade at the time, they obviously had difficulties understanding the consequences of the fact that for the US, Britain, France and Germany, it was more important to harmonise their views than to follow their traditional different national strategies.

Since the 1990s, we have had a geo-strategic constellation which is different from all previous centuries: all European nations have signed up to the goal of a common democratic system of values as defined by the Council of Europe. Most of Russia's Western neighbours are now members of the EU and/or of NATO. Britain, France and Germany will, like other countries in Europe, pursue individual bilateral policies with Russia beyond their policies as members of the EU and NATO. As the debate about "North Stream 2" shows, Germany's eastern neighbours cannot exert a veto-right on Germany's Russia-policy. However, Germany's Russia-policy will not be pursued behind the backs of smaller European states and without taking their interests into consideration. For Germany, Russia is the most important country east of the boundaries of the EU and NATO. It is not, however, more important than our relationships with our partners in the EU and NATO.

Clearly, after 1945 the USA and the Soviet Union were the key determinants of European security. Their impact was often also decisive for societal developments inside their respective spheres of influence. I do not underestimate the role of the US and Russia in Europe today. But their role, and especially the role of Russia, has changed enormously, and cannot be compared to their roles during the Cold War or during the period of *détente*. Russia no longer decides which governments are formed in East-Central or South-Eastern Europe. And no Russian government exerts a veto-right over the foreign policy of East-Central and South-Eastern European countries. Unlike in the 19th century, Western Europe's powers are integrated into the EU and NATO. This integration has fundamentally changed the geo-strategic framework for their policies

towards Russia and, in a different way, towards South-Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans as well.

Russia seems to underestimate the importance of these changes and the historical significance of this new European security landscape. The present Russian leadership prefers a return to a concert of great powers, in which they can carve out a sphere of influence, and from there apply rules and norms which differ from the accepted international norms and the principals of the Charter of Paris. It is not only for moral reasons but also geo-strategic ones that the preservation of the European order requires a new approach – one that cannot be based on the ideological convictions of previous diplomats like Metternich, Bismarck or Kissinger.

There are analysts and politicians who argue that the European order does not need to be based on the norms, rules and values agreed upon in the Charter of Paris and in the Council of Europe. Yes, it is true that even in the absence of such a common basis, many compromises and pragmatic agreements with Russia are possible and desirable. The willingness to continue cooperation with Russia, whenever possible and reasonable, is the expression of our realism. But without a basis of common norms, rules and values, we will always be far away from a truly stable European order and peace.

In the next years, we therefore need to protect the stability and security of those parts of Europe which are based on common norms, principles and values, as defined in the Charter of Paris and the Council of Europe. At the same time, and in a very pragmatic way, we should, wherever possible, cooperate with those European nations, especially Russia, who challenge these principles and values and who thereby directly or indirectly undermine the cohesion, stability and security of the European order and key institutions like the Council of Europe, the EU and NATO.

We should continue pursuing an active dialogue with the Russian leadership and, so far as this is still possible, with Russian society. To strive for cooperative solutions does not mean to underestimate meaningful conflicts of interests and values. To try to understand Russian policies does not necessarily mean to agree with them, either. Especially during

a crisis, intensive communication is an indispensable prerequisite to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

On the other hand, unlike in previous years, we have to accept that the EU and NATO have to take precautions whenever Russian policies pose risks and dangers for Russia's neighbours, for the members of the EU or NATO, or for European security as a whole. Nor can we accept that boundaries are changed by force and that political and military steps in contradiction of the Charter of Paris are legitimised by any European country, especially not by the EU and NATO. Russian involvement in the military conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine has led to a revival of NATO and the importance of collective defence. I doubt whether this was intended by the political leadership in Moscow.

The war in Eastern Ukraine, however, has also shown that we need to strengthen the OSCE and other instruments of cooperative security. We need to examine whether OSCE "Blue Helmets" can be deployed in Eastern Ukraine. Whether all members of the OSCE, especially the Russian leadership, are ready for an improvement of the existing rules and including an exploration of greater transparency in arms control. This could mean that other elements of cooperative security, like confidence-building instruments and agreements which enhance the transparency of military decisions, are strengthened, in an environment that has been dominated by mistrust and conflict in recent years. The NATO-Russia Council should be activated with the goal of enhancing the strategic stability in Europe.

Many are talking of a new Cold War. Others are expressing their desire to return to the cooperative approach practised during the period of *détente*. Both are, to various extents, understandable positions. It would be best, however, if we could develop appropriate concepts for today's challenges.

On the one hand, the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine is a "hot" war. On the other hand, in contrast to the Cold War we are, at least on paper, united with Russia by common principles; a commitment to a policy of peaceful resolution of conflicts. We should not too quickly put the institutions, contacts and norms on which we agreed in the last decades at risk. If Russia, however, were to undermine this network of relationships, we cannot repair the damage unilaterally.

Our future relationship with Russia can develop in different directions. There are alternatives. We should always support policies that tend towards a more cooperative and peaceful direction. Whether such policies are realistic, however, will primarily be decided in Moscow. After all, a policy of cooperation needs at least two for it to have legs.

Donald Trump and "The Three Uns" of US Policy on the Euro-Atlantic Region[1]

STEVE ANDREASEN

Many Europeans woke up on the day after the US election less than reassured by the prospect of a Donald Trump presidency. Throughout the campaign, then-candidate Trump repeatedly challenged NATO, referring to the Alliance as "obsolete" while questioning America's commitment to defend all allies, in particular those who did not pay their fair share of defence.[2] While the issues of NATO's relevance and burden sharing have existed for some time, rarely has a presidential candidate so pointedly, consistently and caustically highlighted his or her doubts about the value of the trans-Atlantic link, or raised such fears of a policy reset between Washington and Moscow that could come at the expense of NATO.

Seven months in to the Trump presidency, an ad-hoc policy frame has emerged, albeit (perhaps) not deliberately, with respect to the Euro-Atlantic region, including Russia. It can be best characterized as "The Three Uns": Uncertain, Undisciplined and Unpredictable.

Uncertain

The word "uncertain" is perhaps the best single word summary of the Trump presidency. It applies broadly to issues of both personnel and policy, and has continued for a period beyond the norm for other new administrations getting their sea legs.

With respect to personnel, the continuing absence of senior officials and expertise in the relevant departments and agencies is particularly troubling entering the autumn of the first year of the Trump

administration. For six months after the February appointment of the highly respected Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster as the new National Security Advisor, McMaster was fighting with White House chief strategist Steve Bannon over National Security Council (NSC) staff appointments.[3] Even with Bannon's mid-August departure from the administration, the NSC may lack relevance if the president doesn't give it its historic mandate to effectively coordinate foreign and national security policy across departments and agencies, a mandate that up to now appears to be lacking (see the contentious debate within the administration over whether to certify Iranian compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which reportedly led an angry Trump to task a "Team B" under Bannon for developing a case for declaring that Iran is violating the agreement[4]). Such coordination will be critical in formulating and executing a strategy for the Euro-Atlantic region, including Russia, that will require years to implement and the involvement of several agencies. Key to the NSC's ability to achieve this will be the perception across the government that the NSC knows the president's mind, and speaks for the president. This, by definition, is uncertain with Donald Trump.

As of August 2017, Rex Tillerson, the new Secretary of State, is one of only a handful of Trump appointees in the State Department that has been confirmed by the Senate. It appears it will still take months for the Trump-Tillerson team at State to be nominated and confirmed. The situation in the Pentagon is roughly similar, with Secretary of Defense James Mattis still putting in place his senior policy team. None of this bodes well for quick, agile or thoughtful approaches to the issues surrounding Euro-Atlantic security and US policy towards Russia.

With respect to policy, despite recent efforts by President Trump and senior administration officials to reassure NATO about the continuing US commitment to the trans-Atlantic alliance, the general feeling at NATO is of uncertainty run amok (see German Chancellor Angela Merkel's declaration in May that Europe "really must take our fate into our own hands").

The direction of US policy towards Russia compounds the uncertainty. President Trump's professed willingness to improve relations with Moscow is one of the few constants that ran through his campaign,

transition and early months of his presidency. In March, however, reports began circulating that Trump might shelve his plan to pursue closer ties, due to Russian "provocations," including Russia's reported violations of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The first Trump-Putin meeting in Hamburg, however, seemed to tilt US policy back towards closer ties between Washington and Moscow. Now, Congressional sanctions – and Russian retaliation – have pushed the pendulum the other way, keeping NATO's head swivelling.

Most recently, President Trump's escalatory "fire and fury" rhetoric on North Korea has rattled at least some of America's NATO allies concerning the direction of US policy in Asia, with the uncertainty compounded by the divergent messages being sent by senior Trump administration officials. Chancellor Merkel felt compelled to state, "I don't see a military solution to this conflict," and warned against inflammatory rhetoric.[5]

Undisciplined

A close second to "uncertain" as a descriptor of Trump's approach to governing is "undisciplined."

There was ample evidence throughout his campaign that then-candidate Trump would not be captive to the traditional norms associated with an American presidential campaign, where both candidates and their campaign staffs were historically given high marks by pundits – and arguably rewarded by the electorate – for having a clear "message of the day" and staying on point. For much of the Trump campaign, the candidate consistently went off-topic via his twitter outbursts or statements, without a lot of apparent thought as to how it might impact whatever theme might have been on the campaign chalkboard that morning.

When all was all said and done on Election Day, Trump had succeeded in hammering home more recognizable themes than his disciplined and cautious opponent, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Phrases like "Make America Great Again," "Repeal and Replace," "Lock Her Up," and of course, "We're Going to Build a Wall… Who's Going to Pay for that Wall?" all became embedded in the country's psyche. That said,

the process of getting to the White House, including multiple campaign chairs and numerous rhetorical off-ramps taken on the road to victory, was undisciplined to the extreme, at least until the last two weeks of the campaign, when US FBI Director James Comey's announcement that the Bureau had reopened the investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails effectively paused the election and gave Trump one last opportunity to regroup.

Once in the White House, the undisciplined nature of Trump and his staff are back in full view. True, any new administration goes through growing pains, as there is nothing quite like running the Executive Branch of the US Government from the White House enclave. The lack of experience in governing that runs through many of Trump's staff and cabinet picks has only exacerbated this dimension. If government is an art form, a president is usually better served by bringing in some proven artists rather than an eclectic group of finger painters. Unfortunately for the Republican artists, particularly in the area of national security and foreign policy, during the campaign many of them said that they would take their brushes and go home if Trump won. He did win, and he does not forget a slight.

But even with an allowance for inexperience, Trump's undisciplined stamp with respect to policy and policy making is unmistakable. There is already a long list of examples: cobbling together his first Executive Order on Immigration after only seven days without the appropriate vetting and consultations with Congress; a sloppily drafted Executive Order on Organizing the National Security Council that only served to cast doubt on the membership of two key principals in that crucial policy making group, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of National Intelligence; and the President's twitter accusation that his predecessor tapped his communications and those of his campaign prior to the election, without any proof.

All of these serve to underscore the undisciplined approach to both policy and messaging that Trump encourages. The appointment of General John Kelly to the position of White House chief of staff in July was seen by some as an effort to instill discipline in the Trump White House. But within days of Kelly's appointment, Trump ratcheted up

his North Korea rhetoric in his public statements and twitter feed – reportedly improvising his remarks without coordinating with his national security team[6] – and fired rhetorical broadsides at the Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, whose help Trump will sorely need down the road. None of this equates with a disciplined approach to policy.

Unpredictable

Finally, the combination of "uncertain" and "undisciplined" inevitably leads to the third "un": "unpredictable."

Even with the two constants in Trump's Euro-Atlantic world view – his professed desire to improve US-Russia relations and an emphasis on a greater contribution from NATO allies to defence – Europeans should be bracing for an unpredictable ride with respect to Trump and the Euro-Atlantic security order. In particular, Trump's attitude towards US-Russia bilateral relations and Russia's role in Europe could literally change overnight or in the span of a single tweet (just ask former President Obama, praised by Trump throughout the transition, then reviled by Trump as a "bad or sick guy"[7]).

There are other actors on the stage, both domestic and foreign, that will play a role in how US policy in Europe, including Russia, plays out. Both National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster and Defense Secretary James Mattis reportedly hold cautious, if not conservative views on Russia and Putin. NATO allies have reportedly been trying to send a message to Trump: that an early deal with Putin – particularly a deal not carefully coordinated first within NATO – would be a bad deal.

Putin also has a number of choices to make with respect to Russia's course vis-à-vis the new US administration, some of which could provide an impetus to a dramatic US policy shift, one way or another. Putin's recent decision to expel hundreds of US diplomatic personnel from Russia in response to new US sanctions would seem to be a negative; however, Trump's response ("I want to thank him because we're trying to cut down on payroll") suggests the President may not hold it against him.[8]

It seems clear now half way through the first year of the Trump presidency that no one should unbuckle their seat belts: the "Three Uns" are likely to underpin US policy for at least the next three and a half years.

Variables

That said, there are (at least) a few variables that could play into the "Three Uns," or perhaps lead to a more certain, more disciplined and more predictable US policy in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Most of these variables, at least today, are tied in some way to Russia. A congressional investigation and a Justice Department investigation led by a special counsel are now underway with respect to Russian efforts to influence the US election, following up on the US Intelligence Community's assessment that the Russians did indeed conduct such a campaign. The outcome will, at a minimum, reemphasize Russian meddling in the US election; and it may uncover Russian ties to members of the Trump campaign. Either or both could box the administration into the posture of maintaining the *status quo* in Europe for some time, by making it too politically costly for Trump to pursue a rapprochement with Moscow. Moreover, sanctions legislation passed overwhelmingly by Congress and reluctantly signed by President Trump will make it more difficult for the President to simply "cut a deal" with Putin that could lead to sanctions relief for Russia, as any change in sanctions policy will now require Congressional approval.

Russian actions this year could also box the administration in. Revelations relating to Russian efforts to influence the outcome of upcoming elections in Europe, in particular Germany, could be a heavy brake, as could an escalation by Russia and its "supporters" of military activity in Eastern Ukraine, or continuing the stalemate over the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Nuclear weapons and NATO

The aftermath of President Donald Trump's first visit to NATO in May and the G20 Summit in July may seem an inopportune time to debate the future of US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, as both events have driven up the anxiety level in NATO capitals. Washington and its Allies would be rational and wise, however, to move towards a safer, more secure and more credible nuclear deterrent. The alternative – navigating change as financial and political pressures build, or worse, a terrorist incident involving a NATO nuclear storage site – risks severely undercutting NATO deterrence and defence.

This is not to underestimate the challenge of changing NATO's nuclear posture: in particular, political leadership and administrative competence will be required in Washington, at a time when both seem to be in low supply within the Trump administration. Moreover, Congressional hawks are set on further constraining the President on Russia, including by requiring the Pentagon to begin developing a missile that would violate the INF Treaty in response to Russia's violation. The US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), however, is happening now, which will set a course on these issues that the Alliance may have to live with for seven years.

On this and other issues, betting on the normal laws of political gravity to guide the actions of the Trump White House is not a wager most observers would take today after having lost that gamble consistently throughout 2016. The much safer bet in the Euro-Atlantic region, albeit one whose payoff is unknown, is to wager on the Three "Uns." In practice, this means that Europeans would be wise to proceed cautiously and hold their bets after any single experience with the Trump White House.

Endnotes

[1] This piece is adapted from a contribution to the Fabian Society pamphlet, "The Age of Trump: Foreign policy challenges for the left," published April 13, 2017.

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Good Neighbours, Lousy Friends or Perfect Enemies: Ways Out of the Dungeon

VICTORIA V. PANOVA

Relations between Russia and the West continue to experience turbulence and seem to have unsolvable issues at hand in leading us out into a brighter future soon. At the same time, it is essential not only to continue discussions on ways to overcome existing discordances but also to explore a) the foundation that supports the whole building of distrust and disappointment between the two sides and b) how the current global system of interstate relations, multi-stakeholder solutions to each internationally significant issue and geopolitical shift of power influence the direction of policy and the ability to overcome the deadlock.

Geopolitical power shift and the handicaps of the modern system

It has already entered common discourse to say that we're witnessing a gradual shift of power in the global order from being first centred around Europe, then bipolar, then to America, and now to Asia. All previous orders had Europe at the heart of international relations, first as a subject, and later as an object, with different degrees of independent thinking capacity. At the same time, confirming the rise of Asian giants, there seemed to be an undercurrent of thought on the possibility of reversing this trend, as happened on a much smaller scale in the past (e.g. with the Asian financial crisis of the 1997 or actual outcome of the once miracle of Asian Tigers) or tamed to keep the decision-making power within the old paradigm and in the same geographical position, benefitting the old three centres of power of half a century ago. Nevertheless, what we see now is

not reminiscent of the favourable scenario. It is not only the economy but all other components of power that are shifting away from the traditional core – political initiative, soft power and attraction, military might and the unlimited control of the open seas and sky.

Europe is losing most of the previously attractive features that allowed it to be not only on the global governing board but also be the dream of the millions – an island of wealth with extensive social benefits and safe haven for all in need. Although it is true that economic growth indicators are quite stable and different estimates allow for positive figures of around 1.5–2%, which is quite positive for developed countries, global rates remain higher, and the economic power of the other parts of the world continues increasing. The vote on Brexit, even if hasn't yet provoked catastrophe, continues to loom over the economy, and has negatively influenced the global image of the EU as an unassailable fortress. What adds to this perceived or real problem, lowering Europe's attractiveness, is another stage of massive migration inflows from insecure countries[1] (according to some estimates, starting in 2015 approximately six thousand people crossed the EU borders daily[2]).

Adding to the weakness of the West, even if only in relative terms, is the rise of discordances within the bloc itself. Solidarity against the Soviet Union allowed the West to keep its ranks closed throughout the Cold War, even though a divergence of interests was almost permanently a constant factor. Today we see that the internal power struggle within the USA regarding the non-acceptance of Trump as the President by the large part of the American political establishment weakens US positions globally and causes problems in relations between the allies. It is enough to mention the recently adopted sanctions package (formally directed against Russia, Iran and North Korea) which will extensively influence European business.[3] Even though it was specifically mentioned that the new package was modified so as to take into consideration European worries and Jean-Claude Juncker said the EU was prepared to defend its interests against the USA, European politicians demonstrated impotence and a lack of independence by rushing to adopt new additional sanctions themselves after the scandal around Siemens. Those activities prove that, counter to the arguments of Russia's alleged intrusion into American

elections, there are very close ties between the American political establishment (supported by industry and profiting from conflicts and instability) and the majority of the current European leadership, which is not necessarily in support of national interests, but corporate ones.[4]

To make a long story short, the modest prospects for economic and social stability on both sides of the Atlantic compared to continued rise of Asia and other parts of the world, along with the internal political discords within the "geriatric" world due to the anti-establishment revolution that happened in the USA last November, lead to a further degradation of the role of Europe in global politics and decision making, and as a result, the relatively lower interest of this sub-region to Russian policy-makers and business.

The lower interest becomes more evident in the following figures. Looking at Russia's overall trade turnover, the European share of trade dropped by 2% (from 44.8% to 42.8%), benefitting the APEC countries, especially China (with its share growing from 28.1% to 30%).[5]

Political coordination in Russia is occurring bilaterally with its priority partners like China and other Asian, Latin American and African countries or multilaterally within BRICS, the SCO, the Eurasian union, the G20 and other fora. Considerable attention within the realm of relations between Russia and the West is hijacked by the United States. It was interesting to see that most of the attention during the Hamburg G20 Summit wasn't occupied by the European agenda or even multilateral global challenges, but rather the bilateral meeting of the two Presidents – Putin and Trump.

Out of the labyrinth

Ever since the relations between Russia and its Western counterparts began to degrade, there has been a steady growth of distrust, bitter disillusionment and a surging competition of adversarial statements and activities. Given that in the past, goodwill gestures have been interpreted as a sign of the other side's weakness (as with the December actions by the outgoing Obama Administration and Russia's decision not to take reciprocal measures), compromise is getting more and more unlikely.

Another heavily negative factor is the situation in which internal political struggle is hindering any progress on the international arena. Recent activities have made evident that the American establishment is ready to sacrifice global stability in order to punish the currently elected President, blocking any positive development of relations with Russia. At the same time, the weak and dependent position European countries leads to less favourable positions of its own businesses.

So, what must be done to get out of this vicious cycle of degrading relations between Russia and the West, and particularly Russia and Europe?

As in all situations in which there have been so many fatal steps on all sides, the first thing needed is to sit down at the table without preconditions. Any continuous insistence by either side on the ultimate truth or on the necessity for either side to accomplish certain actions beforehand would be a non-starter and would likely lead to even further and faster degradation of relations.

The second vital condition is stopping the "witch-hunt" and ceasing to build negative stereotypes of the opponent in the eyes of the population and in satellite countries.

The third and most immediate condition is not keeping business as hostages of political struggles.

Given that it has been impossible for either side to come to any acceptable solution, it does make sense to refuse package deals and freeze into the *status quo* for a while: not much can be changed until the internal political struggle in the USA has faded, election campaigns on both sides have been completed, and the cross-regional rebalancing of financial and economic power has been accomplished. At this point, it makes sense to set aside all divergent approaches and concentrate on issues that can be beneficial for both sides – emphasis on the word *both*.

Areas of priority cooperation: security, economics, culture

There are traditional areas of intensive cooperation, which have suffered due to the politicisation of the issue of bilateral and multilateral relations, and which should therefore be released from political pressure, though there is also the need to search for new cooperative schemes in addition to the ones already in existence.

First of all, both sides have the common interest of ensuring the survival of humanity. Each side possesses deadly weapons of mass destruction and therefore holds primary responsibility for not allowing a global conflict to break out. Keeping in mind the increased arms race on both quantitative and qualitative scale, the heavier presence of military divisions near the borders and the general security dilemma could lead to further destabilization and fast escalation of tensions. This is even less acceptable given that the countries involved possess WMDs. As an indispensable element of overcoming the crisis, it should be recognized that it is highly unlikely to reach any tangible deal on confidence building measures, let alone a fully functional and comprehensive conventional arms treaty in the area. Nevertheless, working mil-to-mil contacts and intelligence sharing to counter the truly global threats of terrorism, extremism, piracy etc. should be maintained in all regions and with no limitations to full capacity.

As was described earlier, the current political situation influenced all areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. While the process of diversifying energy resource exports to the east started in Russia long before the beginning of the conflict, and therefore cannot be attributed to the ongoing negative scenario, it is evident that sanctions and counter-sanctions have considerably undermined total trade turnover between Russia and Europe (trade relations with the USA are too small to have comparable effect). Another edition of the sanctions adopted by the USA, even if softened considerably to take into consideration some of the concerns of European business, nevertheless further impact energy cooperation between Russia and Europe, particularly NordStream and other joint projects, and are designed to offer extra advantages for

American business vis-à-vis Europe following the end of the massive enthusiasm for shale gas.

At the same time, attacks on the oil and gas sector led Russia to finally implement actions to start building a modern society with great attention to developing innovation, the digital economy and advanced technologies. While it is true that this is much easier in cooperation with highly developed Western economies, it is no less true that such collaboration was of a very limited character even before the start of the crisis. Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, we have witnessed the intensive brain-drain and migration of talented Russian/Soviet professionals to the West, caused both by neglect from their own national government, and by special programs to attract high profile specialists to work in the USA and Europe. Even if the political situation improves, there's no evidence to consider a change in the general policies of the West in the high-tech sectors and readiness to either invest in or share advanced technologies with Russia.

That said, when discussing the prospective economic sectors that should be considered within the uneasy realm of the confrontation, Europe should be interested in continuing a balanced cooperation and exchange with Russia in the area of energy resources. On the one hand, this is a mutually beneficial area, on the other hand, as paradoxical as it might sound, it is actually in Russia's (even if not Gazprom's) interests to export lower levels of crude oil and gas flow to Europe for the sake of its own advanced economic development.

There are several reasons for that. First of all, the high level of trade in this particular sector requires transparent and stable rules, not influenced by volatile political realities, which proved to be unattainable – the parties have not worked out any mutually acceptable system of energy security rules. Second, in order to stay on track and keep up with the current ever-growing global challenges – be it technological advancement or the threat of environmental degradation – all parties must respond promptly and abandon over-reliance on national mineral and other natural resources. The third suggestion takes into account the limited nature of such resources and the preference for equally redistributing resource flows without a further increase in

export volumes. Finally, it is obviously against Russia's national interests to not only increase but even to sustain current crude export volumes. Instead, the current solid economy needs both digital, high-tech and service-sector development, balanced with real sector industry and production, which must be developed within Russia.

At the same time, it is possible to find a mutually beneficial solution in the energy area that would combine these three main areas – starting negotiations a new type of comprehensive energy security system, ensuring joint transit control and a guarantee of energy flow to Europe via unstable countries, and launching joint projects on alternative energy research and production.

The next area of cooperation should be logistics and transport. While we see China pushing actively with its Belt-and-Road Initiative, neither Russia nor Europe is taking independent steps to offer an alternative transportation network, either complementing the BRI or offering another globally significant Eurasian logistical complex. Instead, during the protracted "after party" after the "divorce" of the former Soviet republics, we saw the deliberate demise of the already existing network and counter-measures with the construction of new transportation hubs.[6] The similar problem of the destruction of existing solid infrastructure applied to electricity grids in the region. In a time of ever growing interdependence and interconnectivity, it is vital that transport infrastructure links all distant regions between each other, forming a common space for people-to-people communication.

In turn, this leads us from political and economic connections to the necessity of supporting joint projects in the cultural and humanitarian area. Very soon after the October Revolution, Lloyd George of the UK claimed that it was most important to destroy the Russian communist regime by communicating with the grassroots, fostering people-to-people contacts. This was later used as a technique, most successfully after the Helsinki act and with its "humanitarian basket," and more recently with the methods of the "colour revolutions." At the same time, those types of "humanitarian intrusion" do not actually comply with the true idea of people-to-people contacts, cultural exchange and building common educational, inter-civilizational and intercultural space.

It is important that the two sides progress with a different type of humanitarian cooperation, one clear of any political interference into the life of the other nation or region. Education and building joint school and university programs, summer schools and language courses, if done in both directions, seem to be the best way of breaking the negative stereotypes of each other. As we know, neither the UNESCO Convention of 1983 on recognition of each other's systems of education and qualifications nor the follow-up regional documents perform their functions. Working instruments need to be adopted and implemented to push the process forward. At the same time, irrespective of interstate relations, there should be a firm belief on both sides that cultural and sports activities should never be used to promote political agendas or causes.[7]

It is possible to list many more areas of cooperation in each of the three main blocks. What matters most though, is not the specific area or project suggested, but the desire and ability to continue working together on all levels, being able to set aside difficult issues for a time and come back to develop solutions when ready.

Endnotes

[1] Previous stage of the kind witnessed in the 1990s with the civil war and NATO activities in former Yugoslavia.

[2] Pierre Vimont, "Migration in Europe: Bridging the Solidarity Gap," Carnegie Europe, September 12, 2016, http://carnegieeurope.eu/2016/09/12/migration-in-europe-bridging-solidarity-gap-pub-64546

[3] At the same time, we might remember the 1980s and Reagan's attempt to sanction European companies dealings with the Soviet Union on the "Druzhba" pipeline project. When not used for internal political struggle, common sense prevailed and such activities were not enforced. According to Wifo research, sanctions and counter-sanctions led to loss of 400 thousand jobs and 17.6 billion of euros of revenue in Europe ("Исследование: 400 тысяч европейцев в 2015 году потеряли работу из-за санкций против России," Газета.ru, 5 января 2017 года, https://www.gazeta.ru/business/news/2017/01/05/n_9530927.shtml). Interestingly, while forced to sign the bill due to the continued struggle of the American establishment against the popularly elected President of the USA, President Trump called it "clearly unconstitutional" and "seriously flawed" (Julian Borger, "Russia Sanctions: Trump Signs Bill Imposing New Measures," *The Guardian*, August 2, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/02/donald-trump-sanctions-russia-signs-bill).

[4] President Trump as a businessman is much more interested in preserving global peace and stability due to nature of his business (real estate, entertainment industry), while the traditional establishment directly versed in war-mongering industries flourishing with the intensified conflict and enhanced arms race.

[5] As shown in statistical review, although a certain overall decrease in 2016 figures are there due to objective economic picture, trade with the European countries are among those suffering most. Trade turnover with Germany dropped by 11.1%, the Netherlands – 17%, Italy – 35% etc. (Екатерина Быркова, "Внешняя торговля России в 2016 году: цифры и факты," 14 февраля 2017 года, http://xn--b1ae2adf4f.xn--p1ai/analytics/research/40407-vneshnyaya-topgovlya-possii-v-2016-godu-tsifpy-i-fakty.html)

[6] It is enough to remember the situation around Baltic ports and the loss by Riga or Tallinn of considerable volume of cargo transit around worsened relations with Russia and the start of building new ports or enhancing the capacity of the old ones in Ust-Luga, Vyborg or Primorsk.

[7] Such situations as the Olympic Games boycott of 1980 and 1984, getting handicapped sportsmen into politics, hampering handicapped singer from Russia from participation at Eurovision are unacceptable and are depreciating the very essence of the world peace saved through humanitarian, cultural and sports cooperation, which should be above politics.

A Lot of Talking, Too Little Dialogue in West-Russia Relations

ŁUKASZ KULESA

When the Russia-West crisis started in 2014, one of the main sources of concern – at least for those worried about the possibility of the situation getting out of control – was the dramatic breakdown of contact between the adversaries. While there was a flurry of diplomatic activity connected with the management of the Ukraine crisis, Russia was ejected from the G8 group, some of the established channels (such as cooperative activities in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council, EU-Russia summits, or most bilateral military-to-military contacts) were suspended, sanctions were adopted, and the regular schedules of meetings and consultations at bilateral and multilateral levels were interrupted.

From the Western viewpoint, the break with the previous patterns of communication with Russia was justified by the brutal and brazen Russian actions against Ukraine, which challenged the basic nature of its relationship with Moscow. *"No business as usual"* became a rallying cry for all those who thought a fundamental change of Russia's attitude towards the international and European order needed to be reflected accordingly in the way that relations with Russia were to be conducted. Western countries were concerned that a potential resumption of contacts could be interpreted as an acquiescence of Russia's unlawful actions; and also cautioned against repeating the mistakes of 2008–2009, when Russia was relatively quickly "forgiven" after the war with Georgia.

Yet, a number of commentators soon began to argue that this communication breakdown went too far. It was claimed that, instead of signalling resolve and punishing Russia, the West had reduced its own ability to pressure Moscow, to raise concerns directly, and to more

generally better manage the political, military or economic dimensions of the crisis. That stimulated calls for the resumption of NATO-Russia and EU-Russia contacts, establishing more military-to-military channels of communication, and re-engaging in diplomatic dialogue in the OSCE and on a regional and bilateral level. Russia itself was quick to criticize Western countries for their unwillingness to engage, their focus on criticism of Russia, and their "obsession" with bringing up Ukraine at every meeting.

By mid-2017, some of those concerns were taken into account by Western governments and contacts with Russia were partially reconstituted. The main Western organizations, NATO and the EU, have developed principles and protocols for contacts with Russia. Several countries resumed, albeit mostly at reduced scale, bilateral talks with Moscow. At the OSCE, a new effort in the form of the Structured Dialogue was launched, with Russian participation, to discuss the state of European security and its current challenges. There have been also numerous Track 2 initiatives aimed at connecting Western and Russian experts and opinion-shapers. Yet, the fact that there has been much talking does not mean that Russia-West relations have improved. The relations between the West and Russia can be best described as *"business as un-usual."* Since Russia has not changed its policy in crucial areas, relations with Moscow are still heavily influenced by sanctions, restraints and conditions put forward in 2014.

Russia-West relations: 2017 and beyond

At the beginning of 2017, when Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, and populists and pro-Russian political parties looked likely to win elections in the Netherlands and France, it appeared that Russia-West relations may take an unexpected turn: instead of Russia being forced to compromise under the burden of isolation and sanctions, it seemed that it was rather the West that was poised to adjust its policy. It was feared that, even if the majority of Western countries would continue with the principled policy on Russia, some countries would sooner or later break ranks with it.

Instead of a break from the past, 2017 brought a continuation, or even an intensification of the Russia-West standoff. Although President Trump signalled his personal preference for mending the ties with Russia, the US Congress and the majority of his administration pulled in the exact opposite direction, especially as new details emerged of the scale of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign in support of Donald Trump. As a consequence, Russia is now firmly established in Washington as an adversary needing to be not only contained but also punished for transgressions against the core interests of the US. The adoption of additional sanctions against Russia in August 2017 put the US firmly in opposition not only to specific Russian actions but also to Russia as such.

Meanwhile, the pro-Russian political offensive in Europe that many had feared fizzled before it really begun, especially after Emanuel Macron decisively won the French presidential elections with an election platform highly critical of Russia. It seems that the far-from-subtle Russian attempts to influence the Western political opinion through "active measures" (propaganda and information operations) had backfired, cementing the mainstream thinking in Europe around the idea that Russia represents a menace.[1] Any forays that Russia had made into strengthening contacts with some European countries, including Serbia, Hungary or Slovakia, have been nullified by the resentment it generated in major capitals, including Berlin, Paris and London.

Russian "tactical" efforts to achieve a better relationship with the West without a major change in foreign policy have been notably unimaginative. With regards to the US, Moscow seemed to wait for President Trump to assume his authority over the rest of the government and Congress and begin a new opening in the bilateral relations. When he failed to do so, Moscow was powerless to stop the deterioration of the bilateral relationship. With regards to Europe, Russia called on Europeans to sideline the issue of Ukraine and the implementation of the Minsk Agreements and to focus instead on pragmatic cooperation on sectoral issues. This proved to be ineffective. Taking into account the ongoing occupation of Crimea, Russia's support for separatists in Donbas and the near-collapse of the Minsk-mandated ceasefire mostly due to separatist

attacks, Russia's accusations against Ukraine for failing to implement Minsk were not accepted by any of its European partners. It addition, there appeared to be a concerted and clandestine Russian effort to weaken the cohesion of the EU, undermining any offers of closer cooperation in specific areas.

With Russia unable to change, and the West unwilling to compromise, the optimal scenarios for the future shape of relations between the West and Russia are being scaled down from close integration or partnership to "co-existence,"[2] as well as stabilization of the military confrontation. Expectations for dialogue with Russia need to be adjusted accordingly.

Russia-West dialogue so far: the case of NATO-Russia relations

As previously noted, it is no longer the case that the West and Russia do not talk to each other at all. NATO-Russia relations are a good example. Between 2014 and 2017, new or modified frameworks of contact have been developed for NATO-Russia relations, using the same forum as the NATO-Russia Council but with a vastly modified agenda.

In April 2014, NATO suspended all practical cooperation with Russia, it also subsequently limited the access of Russian diplomats to NATO HQ.[3] However, the possibility of convening NATO-Russia Council (NRC) meetings at ambassadorial level was upheld (in fact, one such meeting was held in June 2014), and the top leadership of the Alliance kept regular contacts with Russian diplomats. Emergency "hot lines" between NATO and the Russian General Staff were not cut off, though despite NATO overtures they were not used for broader military-to-military dialogue because of Russia's reluctance to engage.

With the passage of time, both Russia and NATO realized that the maintenance of regular dialogue can serve both crisis management and broader political objectives. The first post-Donbass escalation meeting of the NRC took place in April 2016, just before the NATO Warsaw summit. Following lengthy negotiations on the agenda, it was agreed that the meeting started with discussing Ukraine (as demanded by NATO),

followed by an exchange on risk reduction and transparency measures, and finishing with discussing Afghanistan.

Such a balanced program of action was maintained during the next NRC meetings. Exchanges on topics other than NATO-Russia crisis management, risk reduction and transparency seemed to produce very little effect due to the major differences between sides, but discussions on risk reduction allowed both sides at least to raise concerns (e.g. by NATO regarding Russian-initiated air and sea incidents, as well as snap exercises and military build-up near NATO border) and to discuss possible transparency measures. In July 2017, by the 7th NRC meeting since the suspension of practical cooperation, the NRC meetings became almost routine, no longer generating big controversies. In that meeting, the two sides actually exchanged advance briefings on upcoming military exercises, including a Russian briefing on Zapad-17.[4]

While a return to practical cooperation remains out of question, and the two sides are still engaged in a bitter confrontation, it should be noted that NATO-Russia confidence-building dialogues (with very limited aims) have been successfully reinstated. This presents a good case study of what it is possible to achieve in relations between the West and Russia in this difficult period.

Areas and aims for dialogue with Russia

The question of "how to talk with Russia?" (and "how not to talk with Russia") has already been posed and debated by the excellent experts Kadri Liik and Andrey Kortunov.[5] The points they make about the differences between the Western and Russian approach to dialogue and the dangers of miscommunication remain valid. The main dilemma also remains: how and what to talk about, and what topics to leave aside as not very promising, or even dangerous.

With regards to the latter, the main points of contention in the political-military sphere in Europe cannot be resolved through dialogue alone: the Russian annexation of Crimea, the intervention in Ukraine and Russia's rejection of the rules of European security system. It is

clear by now that there is no new set of rules that will be accepted by other countries to accommodate Russia, and there is no "Helsinki 2" conference on European security on the horizon. At the same, it is highly improbable that Russia will return to compliance with the rules it considers discriminatory and NATO/EU-centric. There is no middle way to chart in this area and no compromise to be struck, apart from an "agree to disagree" formula.

As a consequence, our basic disagreements over European security system make discussions about it not only highly contentious but also futile. Western diplomats are obliged to continue bringing up the topic of Russia's return to compliance with OSCE norms, and Russian diplomats offer a well-rehearsed set of counter-arguments. The experts are free to suggest alternative solutions for European security architecture (such as perpetual neutrality for the common neighbourhood countries), but these are unlikely to be accepted by the interested sides.

This does not mean that all West-Russia dialogue is pointless, only that the topics for discussion should be chosen with caution. Substantial dialogue with Russia – understood as an engagement oriented at achieving results which can be beneficial for all sides involved – may be worth pursuing in two areas: political-military strategic stability and cooperation on specific challenges.

Political-military strategic stability dialogue was originally developed to manage relations between the US and USSR, and later with Russia. It was focused on crisis stability (no incentive to strike first) and arms race stability between the two nuclear superpowers. Importantly, it was presumed that dialogue on strategic stability issues was beneficial for avoiding war, fostering mutual trust and understanding, and could be conducted despite the ideological and political conflict between them. It is thus not surprising that the return to bilateral strategic stability talks was chosen as a way to manage the troubled US-Russia relationship in the Trump era. The first meeting of the Strategic Stability talks format between the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and US Under Secretary of State Thomas Shannon was held in July 2017. It is presumed that, besides

nuclear weapon and arms control issues, topics like missile defence and cyber warfare will be included in the agenda.

Strategic stability dialogue does not have to be limited to the US-Russia framework. Adopting this concept for the wider format of West-Russia relations, strategic stability could be defined as a state of relationship in which the likelihood of intended or unintended escalation leading to a massive use of force is reduced. In Europe, strategic stability can be an umbrella concept for the management of the adversarial relationship, even while we disagree on the fundamentals of European security. Strategic stability talks in Europe could include: enhanced politico-military and military-to-military dialogues on threat perceptions and military doctrines, exchanges on the implementation of existing and development of new arms control and CSBM mechanisms, discussions on the strategic consequences of cyber, and improved crisis management for incidents and accidents. Such strategic stability discussions could be conducted under OSCE framework or in the NATO-Russia Council.

With regards to the second sphere of dialogue with Russia, it is clear that geography, common challenges and emerging opportunities necessitate talking to Moscow on a number of non-military bilateral and multilateral issues. On nearly all of these, Russia, Western states and other countries have their own interests and priorities, which may only partially overlap. For example, on the issues of tackling the threat of Islamic terrorism or managing migration flows – which are usually cited as areas of possible cooperation – Western priorities and strategies for dealing with these challenges are different from Russia's. Yet, it is still possible to put together a common agenda for dialogue and cooperation. The same is true of managing the economic relationship between Russia and the West and between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union, enhancing High North and Baltic Sea cooperation, management of visa regimes, scientific, cultural and humanitarian exchanges. Russia and Western countries will also continue to work together in groups dealing with specific conflicts in the former Soviet Union area, including the Normandy Format for Ukraine, and also cooperate on global issues such as climate change or WMD nonproliferation. The outcomes of all these contacts and

dialogues need to be judged on their specific merits and usefulness for all sides. At the same time, it seems doubtful that achievements in sectoral cooperation will have a "spillover effect" to transform the adversarial political-military relationship.

Beyond these two specific areas in which the government officials, diplomats and military have a leading role, there remains a space for other actors to continue the groundwork around maintaining contacts and dialogue between the Western and Russian civil societies, especially the young generations. The main aim here is to keep the lines of communication open, increase the knowledge and understanding of the other side, and also address some of the most damaging stereotypes which fuel hostility at the societal level. Paradoxically, the digital revolution and the rise of social media seemed to have a damaging effect on people-to-people contacts. The malign influence of state-run propaganda, information operations and fake news make a meaningful exchange of views over distance more and more difficult. This increases the importance of creating opportunities for direct contact and unscripted meetings with the people from both sides of the divide.

While there are an increasing amount of contacts, it is difficult to expect tangible results from such dialogues in terms of resolving the fundamental differences between the West and Russia. Especially at the official level, both sides rehearse the same lines of argumentation, maintaining their entrenched positions with little willingness to change them. Further development of a dialogue on strategic stability – as suggested above – will be helpful in terms of avoiding a drastic escalation of tensions, and sectoral contacts can bring positive results in specific cases but will remain insufficient in transforming the overall relationship into a cooperative one.

Endnotes

[1] See: Joseph Dobbs, "The impact of EU-Russia tensions on the politics of the EU and its Member States: Insecurity and Resolve" in Łukasz Kulesa, Ivan Timofeev and Joseph Dobbs, eds., *Damage Assessment: EU-Russia relations in crisis*, ELN Special Report, June 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2017/06/15/51bdeecd/170615%20ELN-RIAC%20Damage%20Assessment%20EU-Russia%20Relations%20in%20Crisis.pdf

[2] This has been recognized also by some in Russia, see: Igor Ivanov, *In Search of a Common Home*, RIAC comment, August 2017, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/in-search-of-a-common-home-/

[3] See e.g. NATO, "Relations with Russia," NATO factsheet, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm

[4] "Press Point by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of NATO-Russia Council," July 13, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_146220.htm

[5] Kadri Liik, "How to Talk with Russia?," ECFR Commentary, December 2015; http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_to_talk_to_russia5055; Andrey Kortunov, "How Not to Talk with Russia," ECFR Commentary, April 2016, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_not_to_talk_with_russia_6053

Security Dialogue between the West and Russia: A Problem of Trust

MARGARITA ŠEŠELGYTĖ

In 2014, when Russia attacked Ukraine and annexed Crimea, the relationship between the West and Russia was the worst since the end of Cold War, with some experts even going further and stating that it was worse than *during* Cold War, as at that time the level of uncertainty and the danger of escalation had been lower. As opposed to after war in Georgia, the European Union (EU) and USA demonstrated unprecedented unity and firmness punishing Russia for its violation of international law. Economic sanctions were followed by the suspension of Russian membership in the G8 and military reinforcements of NATO's Eastern borders. It should be noted, though, that opinions in 2015 and 2016 on how to further deal with Russia varied in the West. A number of experts argued that it was necessary to talk and cooperate with Russia, as this was the most sensible policy to help avoid an escalation and was also useful economically.[1] Samuel Charap and Jeremy Shapiro observed that eventually, the US will have to choose between a Cold War and a negotiated solution to the crisis. They argued that "a new arrangement with Russia on the regional security order in Europe" was a lesser evil than a new Cold War.[2] The Baltic States, Poland and some other Eastern European states, on the other hand, remained cautious about Russia's intentions to cooperate, warning that the "back to normal situation" mean the defeat of the West. Sławomir Dębski argued that "Russia is not a credible partner and thus the political cost of maintaining sanctions against Russia is significantly smaller than the cost of lifting it," adding that it was more prudent for the security and welfare of Europe to convince Russia to renounce war as an instrument of policy

and withdraw from Crimea and Donbas than to contemplate dialogue and the suspension of sanctions.[3] Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius, in his article for *Politico,* warned that Russian leaders might manipulate the dialogue: "NATO–Russia negotiations might be used as a smokescreen for continuing Russian aggression."[4] Despite a divergence in these opinions, it should be noted that three years after the conflict there are still no signs of rapprochement, on the contrary: confrontation has only increased.

The general level of trust vis-à-vis Russia and the willingness to cooperate in the West is remarkably low at the moment, and has decreased over the last three years. The Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs released a study on American opinion on US–Russia relations. Compared to 2016, in 2017, more Americans would support containment (53%, 39%) vis-à-vis Russia than cooperation (43%, 58%). Confidence in Russia to deal responsibly with world problems was very low (28%).[5] Another survey released in August 2017 demonstrates that confidence in the Russian leadership to do the right thing for world affairs has also decreased globally, but particularly in the US and Europe. In 2017, 48% of Americans responded that they had "no confidence at all" in Putin to do the right thing (in 2003, 19%, in 2008 26%, 2016 49%). In Germany, the numbers varied from 6% in 2003 to 31% in 2016 and 35% in 2017, in France, respectively 25% in 2003, 48% in 2016 and 52% in 2017 and in Poland 44% in 2007, 60% in 2016 and 62% in 2017.[6] There were multiple reasons for the drop in confidence in Russia in recent years, among them Russia's withdrawal from international agreements, its military activities in Syria, interference in the internal political processes of Western states, as well as more effective measures to counter Russian propaganda, first in Europe and recently in the US as well.

The Russian Sanctions Bill marks a new level of confrontation, signalling a legally binding move away from dialogue and towards deterrence and containment. The bill makes resetting the situation into one "that absolves Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and attack on the 2016 US election virtually impossible."[7] At the same time, the EU has expanded the list of companies and persons that fall under the sanctions. New US sanctions have received harsh criticism and

triggered countermeasures from Moscow. Russia decided to expel 755 US Embassy employees in Moscow. The last time the two sides were expelling diplomats in similar quantities was back in the 1980s. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on his Facebook account defined the new sanctions as a global trade war against Russia and declared that hope is dead that relations with the new US administration would get better.[8] Russian political experts observed that Russia and the US are moving towards a global confrontation,[9] which will not be overcome in the coming years.[10]

Confrontation in Russia-West relations has important consequences for Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea region, which lie at geopolitical crossroads. NATO Eastern members are uneasy with the forthcoming large-scale joint Russian and Belarusian military exercise Zapad 2017, which is to be held from 14–20 September and, according to military analysts, might involve around 100,000 troops on the Eastern borders of NATO.[11] One of the biggest fears in the Baltic states and Poland is that in the situation of confrontation, uncertainty, mistrust and lack of communication channels, a mistake or a provocation during these exercises might lead to an escalation and possible security crisis.

The prisoner's dilemma quite neatly explains the incentives of players to cooperate or defect from cooperation, stating than one of the main predicates for cooperation is trust.[12] This becomes especially important in the multiple interactions when actors become more aware of each other's intentions and trustworthiness. This paper argues that deteriorating relations between the West and Russia are caused by diminishing trust, in a way on both sides, albeit for different reasons, but particularly in the West. It analyses advantages and disadvantages of the various strategies of interaction in low-trust situations, aiming to answer the question: Is a security dialogue between the West and Russia still possible and rational? It also discusses how to build trust in a situation of confrontation. Finally, it provides recommendations for policy makers on feasible policy options in current Russian-West relations.

Security dialogue and trust

The link between trust and the resolution of interstate disputes has been proven by a number of researchers.[13] Trust helps to create and maintain sustainable relations between states. The prisoner's dilemma demonstrates that states make decisions to cooperate or defect on the basis of their expectations vis-à-vis another state's behaviour. Aaron M. Hoffman argues that any definition of trust must include "the willingness to take risks and the expectation that others will honour particular obligations." He adds that "trusting relationships develop when actor[s] grant others discretion over their interests based on the belief that those interests will not be harmed."[14] Thereby, trust helps to reduce the calculated risks of cooperation, increasing the calculated benefits. Research also demonstrates that trust is never unconditional, because trusting others involves risk and certain premises about the future actions of the other.[15] Past experiences prejudge the level of trust, and the other factors that affect trustworthiness of a country are related to its size, foreign policy record, predictability and value system. Any effort to cooperate must involve trust because it necessarily involves risk.[16] This is particularly important in the situation of observable confrontation.

Sometimes countries choose to cooperate even if there is no trust, because the risks of not cooperating are higher than the challenges of cooperation, e.g. arms control regimes. In the 1980s, despite efforts of *détente,* relations between the US and USSR were on the edge of brinkmanship, however leaders from both countries managed to sign the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty (INF) in 1987, obliging both countries to eliminate short and medium-range nuclear weapons.[17] This agreement was supported by strict verification measures. Following this historic example, it might be argued that today, when uncertainty is high and confrontation is increasing its potential, an improvement of cooperation in the arms control field might outweigh the risk of possible crisis. Therefore, dialogue between two sides should be developed in this field. However, the Russian withdrawal from Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), its suspension of the implementation of the Plutonium Disposition and Management Agreement (PDMA) between the Russia

and the US and its violation of INF Treaty – the same treaty that was signed in 1987 – makes the expected risks of cooperation quite high for the West.

Risk-benefit analysis based on trust might be applied to every strategy proposed for relations between the West and Russia. A deterrence strategy that aims to punish Russia for the violation of international law and to dissuade it from potential adversarial activities has been applied by the US, EU and NATO. It is also the most rational strategy in the situation of low trust. However, it could ultimately lead to further escalation or an arms race, and, if applied alone, it does not create a ground for the breakthrough in mutual relations. Therefore, a number of experts and policy makers recommended combining it with *détente*.[18] *Détente*, as during Cold War and in combination with deterrence, might promote dialogue, open opportunities for cooperation in some areas and, most importantly, reduce the risk of escalation. However, in the current situation, *détente* might be too risky and not bring expected results as Russia manipulates the dialogue to promote its interests and reinstate its narrative due to the lack of trust. John McLaughlin, the former CIA Deputy director who was visiting Moscow when the first official US statements about Russian interference in the US election process appeared, has confronted Kremlin and Foreign Ministry officials about the issue. They denied it and accused the US for degrading Russian-American relations, at the same time denouncing American policies on NATO enlargement, the Balkans, Libya, democracy in the former Soviet states and Syria, to mention just a few.[19] When two sides are not talking to each other, but rather only making statements, it is not a dialogue, these talks are futile or even counterproductive, further diminishing trust.

Another challenge for mutual trust are the diverging value systems and different interpretation of rules and norms in Russia and the West. Kadri Liik rightly points out that Russia has double standards when it comes to rules and norms: "while it can be very rigid and clinging to the letter of the law, it can also freely ignore its spirit."[20] Before Zapad 2017, there were a number of conflicting messages about the exact numbers of participating troops (ranging from 13,000 to 100,000 and more) and equipment. Under the Vienna document[21] if the number of troops

participating in the exercise exceeds or equals 13,000, the organizing country should invite international observers, which Belarus did – sending invitations to observe Zapad 2017. The explanation for these conflicting messages could be that, along with Zapad exercises, Russia is organizing a number of other exercises more or less at the same time (most of them are the so-called no-notice exercises or smaller exercises where the number of troops does not exceed 13,000 or the so-called "specialist training"). Therefore, Russia is not obliged to invite international observers, although the total number of troops in synchronized manoeuvres could consist of 100,000. During the last exercises Zapad 2013, it was estimated that the number of troops were 4–5 times greater than reported to the OSCE.[22] Technically, the requirements of the Vienna document had not been breached, but the lack of transparency breaches the spirit of the Vienna document and makes the dialogue insincere.

Two other strategies recently discussed by analysts were containment and linkage. The application of the former would involve maintaining or even intensifying sanctions on Russia, at the same time politically supporting Western partners and reinforcing NATO's military readiness.[23] The latter would entail offering concessions in one field, while at the same time persuading Russia to cooperate in another. However, in a situation of low trust, linkage has very similar risks to *détente*. While containment is a less risky strategy, similarly to deterrence it does not prevent brinkmanship. James Dobbins from RAND suggests instead using a strategy of "delinkage – confronting Moscow where necessary and cooperating where possible."[24] However, the implementation of this strategy requires exceptional unity as well as a high degree of flexibility in the West, and in that sense, the West cannot compete with the Russian regime. Kadri Liik argues that Cold War strategies in their classical forms are not fully applicable to current Western-Russian relations. Russia today is less predictable than during the Cold War, there are fewer institutions for crisis management, the West is less unified and more vulnerable and Russia is actively using asymmetric measures.[25] Dismissing Cold War options, Kadri Liik suggests maintaining dialogue between two sides, however this dialogue should concentrate not on commonalities but rather on differences, "differences would still be there, but they will be

less dangerous." In the low-trust situation due to high risks of being mistreated, the West is left with very few options for dealing with Russia, mostly concentrating on restraining measures (deterrence, containment), while at the same time keeping military and political channels open to avoid miscommunications. The same purpose could serve limited dialogue on various levels. The risks of more open and cooperative options at the moment are too high.

Although limited options leave us with the grim prospect of a confrontation between Russia and the West that could last for years, it should be noted that an aggressive posture vis-à-vis the West is not beneficial for Russia in the longer term. The Russian regime employing aggressive rhetoric might press the West and buy some time (the same could be said about the mobilization of the Russian population) but, in the long run, to be viable a country requires economic modernization, rule of law, effective institutions and in that regard the only feasible partner for Russia is the West.

How to build trust under the conditions of confrontation?

To rebuild trust is not an easy task, it takes time and costly measures. The two sides should decide to take short-term risk to promote longer-term mutual gains and for that purpose employ repetitive confidence and transparency building measures as well as costly signalling. Costly signalling is a type of behaviour that requires sacrifice or other significant costs such as demonstrating risk or vulnerability. It shows commitment to the relationship or a course of action.[26] One state sends a costly signal to the other, then the other interprets and responds with own signalling. At the end of the Cold War, the leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, realizing that the West felt threatened by Soviet forces and postures, announced the unilateral freeze of the most threatening parts of Soviet military deployments. This opened the door for future constructive talks with his US counterpart.[27] It might be argued that by announcing a reset towards Russia, the US made a kind of positive signalling effort in 2009. It did

not prove to be the right step, however, as Russia interpreted this step as a weakness and not as a step towards dialogue and cooperation.

What could be a promising trust-building step today? The issue of Ukraine and implementation of Minsk agreements is of the utmost importance for Europe and the US. Ambassador Kurt Volker, the US Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations, argues that after the adoption of new sanctions the "US should communicate unambiguously to Moscow that the US stands ready to lift sectoral sanctions as soon as Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments and respects Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity."[28] This step would signal transparency of what is required from Russia in order to improve relations, but whether Moscow would come forward and take the costly measures of implementing these agreements is questionable.

A further trust-building step that Russia could make is to signal its predictability and responsibility. The West currently sees Russia as an unpredictable power that uses aggressive rhetoric, wants to revise the international order and claim a bigger role in it, violates international agreements and tries to interfere with the internal political processes of Western states. In order to enhance the advantages of cooperation and reduce possible risks to the West, Russia could try to signal (both through its rhetoric and actual behaviour) that it is changing its thinking and goals. Throughout history, big powers have never restrained themselves in order to pose less threat vis-à-vis other states with the goal of ensuring a cooperative environment, e.g. Great Britain in 1815, US in 1919, 1945. Big powers that have lost their might due to wars (e.g. Germany and Japan) or due to the changing power balance in the world (e.g. France) have reduced their ambitions and became successful and predictable cooperating middle powers. Trust has also been promoted by the responsible and committed participation in international institutions. These efforts not only increased stability and trust on the international level, but also contributed to the successful and sustainable internal development of those countries. Another example of how trust is created by restraining oneself is the decision of big states in the EU to limit their decision-making powers, placing their interests under the control of other states when in 1986, the EU adopted a majority voting system.

Within the EU, small states enjoy greater relative power than large states, and this arrangement does not hurt big states, on the contrary, it creates a trustworthy and cooperative environment. The current liberal international order provides many opportunities for small states. They enjoy such freedoms as self-expression and influence that they have never experienced before. In this order, it is more advantageous to be cooperative than aggressive, as the long-term wellbeing of all countries depends to a certain extent on the cooperation of all. In fact, there are few countries in the world that would complain about the current international order, even China seems to benefit from it.[29]

The current leadership of Russia, however, seems to behave according to the rules of international politics that existed in the 19th and early 20th century, where sovereignty, geopolitical power and the interests of a state were above all else. For Russia, it seems that having an exceptional status and unrestrained power are more important than cooperation. Western powers do not understand or appreciate this perspective. Andrey Kortunov tries to legitimise the current foreign policy of the Russian Federation arguing that at the end of the Cold War, Russia had been mistreated and did not get the role it deserved in the Euro-Atlantic security system. He emphasises that "Russia had to accept that it would have even less influence on core matters of European security and development than the smaller countries of Central Europe, which did indeed join NATO and the EU not a very comfortable position for a country that claims to be a great power."[30] On the one hand, one can sense certain insincerity in these words, as Russia itself was not particularly willing to limit its power by participating in the institutions where it would not be granted a special status, and it was accepted into all of the institutions to which it applied. On the other hand, it is not entirely clear why would Russia be granted more influence on the core European security matters than the "smaller countries of Central Europe." It might also be in doubt that Russia still qualifies for a status of great power. Stephen Kotkin maintains that Russia's great power status today is limited by its "geography that spreads over two continents, nuclear arsenal and a seat at the UN Security Council."[31] These elements are having less and less importance in the current understanding of state power.

Another challenge in building trust with Russia is that a number of countries feel mistreated by Russia and, due to its current aggressive rhetoric, still feel uneasy about their future. Even though new circumstances might improve relations with other Western countries, these countries will continue to doubt any activity of Russia, and will search for hidden maliciousness. Edward Lucas believes that modern Russia's problem in its dealings with the Baltic states is the dilemma of how to deal with the past: to apologise, ignore or celebrate it.[32] The same now also applies to Georgia and Ukraine. One of the strategies of reconciliation could be reconciliation with the past. Jennifer Lind believes that the acknowledgement of past harm "is vital for reconciliation between former adversaries."[33] This acknowledgement could come together with an apology or not, but acknowledgement in and of itself is extremely important because it is not only the first step towards the reconciliation, but also works as a healing therapy for the society of a former aggressor. Germany did this after the Second World War, it had a very positive impact on the development of the country and in due time allowed it to build a sustainable trust with the countries it once harmed. Russia, although declaring itself the bearer of the rights of the USSR, has neither acknowledged its defeat in the Cold War nor crimes committed during that time. Last July, NATO released a short video about the Forest Brothers, freedom fighters in the Baltic states during the Soviet occupation, which have a particular symbolic and emotional meaning for the three states. The reaction of Russian Foreign Ministry was prompt and very antagonistic, calling Forest Brothers a "criminal organisation" and "cooperates of Nazis."[34] Current Russian leaders have made the grand victory in the Second World War and Soviet grandeur is prevailing in the narratives of contemporary Russian ideology. These narratives support the Russian claim of a special status in international affairs. Andrey Kortunov tries to explain Russia's claim on an exceptional role in world affairs by emphasizing the particularities of Russian political culture, in particular importance of the sense of "respect."[35] He is right in a way, as the latest public opinion surveys demonstrate that Russians consider it "less important for their government to promote cooperation than to re-assert Russia's position on the world stage."[36] However, it is more of a challenge

for Russia than justification of foreign policy stance, demonstrating that the country did not manage to reconcile with the past, to "come to terms with its history." It should be noted as well that in international relations, both respect and trust are socially constructed, they cannot be claimed, they come as a result of trustworthy and respectable behaviour.

It is not highly likely that the current leadership of Russia would be willing to take any of above-mentioned steps in the short-term, however, in the long-term it will have to be done, because these steps would help Russia become a strong, modern and democratic state. The only other option is growing isolation, outdatedness, antagonism with the West and aggressiveness. This policy might work for a short time, but in the longer-term, it is not sustainable, unless the country wants to become similar to North Korea.

Concluding remarks

In a situation of growing confrontation and low trust, unfortunately, there is not much space for a security dialogue between Russia and the West. It is highly unlikely that the current Russian leadership will be willing to undertake sincere and costly unilateral steps to reduce the tension and try to restore trust. It is also not likely that the Minsk agreements will be implemented any time soon, or that Russian leadership would accept reduced Russian influence in world affairs. Least likely of all is the probability of Russia acknowledging defeat in the Cold War and the harm it inflicted on neighbouring countries.

Thus, how should Western policy makers behave under the circumstances, neither falling into trap of manipulation nor going down the spiral of escalation, avoiding serious crises due to miscommunication? First, strong deterrence with elements of containment should be left in place, to re-assure the Western states and their partners, to deter Russia and to help the partners fighting about Russian interference in their domestic affairs. At the same, resilience should be built in the West vis-à-vis Russian influence, especially in the information field. Second, a limited dialogue should be maintained on the political, but particularly on the military level, to avoid misunderstanding and sudden security

crises. It is also particularly important for the West to keep calm and not to fall into the trap of provocations and manipulations, which is often the tactic of hybrid strategies that Russia employs. Third, it is of the utmost importance to maintain and protect the current international order, institutions, norms and values of liberal democracy. Any special status for Russia will be a violation of these norms and values and will also be harmful for Russia. In due time, Russian leadership will realise that the current international order, institutions and values also fit the interests of democratic Russia. For time being, however, these values are in danger, and Western states have to stay united and concentrate their efforts on protecting them in order to survive.

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Reducing NATO-Russia Tensions: An Imperative but Elusive Goal

RUXANDRA POPA[1]

The May 2017 Riga Dialogue conveyed a profound sense of fatalism about the current state of relations between Russia and the West. References were made to a "new normal," to a "*drôle de guerre froide*," to an entrenched "crisis of trust." As one contributor noted, the cost for Russia and for the West of changing their policies towards one another currently seems to be higher than the cost of the *status quo*. At the same time, it was clear to all participants that the present situation carries serious risks which it would irresponsible to ignore. In other words, reducing tensions between Russia and NATO Allies is imperative, but it has, so far, proved frustratingly elusive. Relations remain at a post-Cold War low point with the potential to reach deeper depths still.

NATO's response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been based on a dual-track approach combining deterrence and dialogue, with support to partners in the Northern and Eastern neighbourhood as a third key dimension. This policy, first elaborated in 2014, has been reaffirmed regularly since and continues to be backed by a strong consensus. While Donald J. Trump's election to the United States presidency in November 2016 had initially brought with it expectations of a possible policy change, the new United States administration has since made clear its ongoing support for the current approach. Russia's persistently aggressive policies have given Allies little cause to shift their position. Thus, a breakthrough or significant course correction now seems a distant and unlikely prospect.

At the same time, however, the current deterioration in NATO-Russia relations creates a dangerous situation in which multiple risk factors could trigger a rapid and uncontrolled escalation of tensions. Rather than *reducing* tensions, a more realistic objective in the near future is, therefore, better *managing* NATO-Russia tensions.

This paper suggests that steps could be taken to reduce risks without altering the basic framework of NATO's current policy of deterrence, dialogue, and cooperation with partners. It starts with an overview of NATO's approach to Russia and the current dangers related to today's heightened tensions, before suggesting a few avenues for tension management.

NATO's response to Russia's challenge to Euro-Atlantic and global security

Russia's aggression against Ukraine marked a turning point in the post-Cold War and post-World War II European order. For the first time since World War II, a European state used force to illegally annex part of another independent state's territory. Taken together with policy statements identifying NATO as a threat to Russia, increasing conventional and nuclear sabre-rattling, the growing use of hybrid and information warfare tactics, including interference in election processes, and an intensive military modernisation programme, Russia's war with Ukraine has raised fears that Moscow might be tempted to test NATO with an offensive action directed this time against one of its members.

These actions have led NATO to reassess and profoundly revisit its relations with Moscow.

The first pillar of NATO's response has been a significant reinforcement of its defence and deterrence posture, which has included:

- a policy revision to acknowledge the nature and scale of the challenge that Russia's actions pose to the Alliance;
- the forward deployment of multinational units, headquarters, and equipment;
- the bolstering of rapid response arrangements;
- an intensified schedule of exercises; and
- a commitment by all Allies to increase defence spending and investment in equipment.

This reinforcement has aimed to make clear the Alliance's resolve and unity. However, the nature and scale of these measures make plain that they are meant as purely deterrent and defensive.

While they have suspended practical cooperation with Russia, the Allies have maintained channels for high-level political dialogue. NATO's Russia policy thus rests on a dual-track approach combining strong defence and meaningful dialogue, demonstrating unambiguous solidarity while providing opportunities for discussing and potentially de-escalating tensions.

The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in fact met twice in the first few weeks following Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, on 5 March and later in June 2014. After a two-year hiatus during which Allies and Russia were unable to agree on the terms of their dialogue, the NRC met again in April 2016 and has convened four times since, in July and December 2016 and March and July 2017. The agreed upon agenda has included the situation in Ukraine, Afghanistan, and risk reduction and transparency. In practice, dialogue has delivered only a few concrete results, mostly related to transparency, while the fundamental disagreements between Allies and Russia over Ukraine and the European security order seem to have crystalized.

In addition to strengthened deterrence and dialogue, Allies have identified enhanced support for, and cooperation with partner countries most directly affected by Russia's renewed activism as a third key priority. NATO has significantly strengthened cooperation with Sweden and Finland in the Baltic Sea area in particular, a cooperation which also benefits from recent breakthroughs in NATO-EU relations. In the Black Sea, the Alliance has stepped up its political and practical support for Georgia and Ukraine and included both partners more directly in discussions on regional security.

Earlier speculation that elections in the United States and in Europe might bring significant changes in relations between Russia and the West have so far been proven wrong. Hopes for a rapid and comprehensive US-Russian agreement in Syria, which would help recast relations in a more positive light, have rapidly withered. Instead, while talks on Syria have continued, the Trump administration has been firm in its condemnation of Moscow's ongoing aggression in Ukraine, signalled its intention to play a more active role in conflict resolution, and confirmed planned deployments of troops and equipment to the Baltic States and

Poland. It appears that the US administration has found little ground in its discussions and dealings with Moscow for considering significant steps forward. Nor would it be able to convince a very reluctant Congress without securing major concessions from the Kremlin. Much to the contrary, the administration has had to acquiesce to additional pressure from Congress to sanction Russia's suspected meddling in the election.

Indications are therefore that the consensus among Allies on the current policy combining deterrence, dialogue and support to partners, remains particularly strong, and that both NATO and Russia have accepted the fact that they have entered a new and lasting phase in their relations. This situation, however, is far from stable and carries serious risks.

A deceptive *status quo*

Labelling the current situation "a new normal" conveys a deceptive sense of stability, whereas most indicators point to multiple risk factors which could lead to a further degradation in relations, or worse, a direct military confrontation.

The European Leadership Network has warned in several reports about the risks related to increased air activity by Russia and NATO on each other's borders, and the danger that the reckless behaviour demonstrated by certain Russian pilots might cause an unintended incident which could trigger a rapid military escalation.[2] NATO has reported a further increase in Russian air activity in recent months in both the Baltic and Black Sea areas, and several close encounters.

The lack of transparency by Russia about its military exercises, notably the upcoming Zapad exercise scheduled for September 2017, also feeds the current lack of trust, and increases the risk of miscalculation. While Moscow agreed to brief NATO Allies on Zapad at the latest NRC meeting in July 2017, the NATO Secretary General made clear that "we have every reason to believe that it may be substantially more troops participating than the official reported numbers."[3]

Zapad, in fact, will likely open a dangerous six-month window during which President Putin might seek further foreign policy achievements in order to consolidate his power ahead of the presidential elections planned

for March 2018. He would have plenty of possible scenarios to choose from to demonstrate to the Russian public that he keeps scoring points at the West's expense: a further consolidation of Moscow's position in Ukraine and Georgia; a new move to extend its grip in the Republic of Moldova; a further escalation of tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh; a renewed political crisis in the Western Balkans; or the intensification of its parallel diplomacy in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. Current EU-US strains on sanctions only risk emboldening Russia, which might bet on a weak and divided response.

While attempts to disrupt or interfere in the upcoming elections in Norway, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Italy are to be expected, they would offer a riskier route for Moscow, likely triggering unified condemnation and action. But such are concerns about Russia's unpredictability that Allies cannot rule them out, nor indeed afford to discard even more dangerous scenarios involving direct military action by Russia against a NATO country, although these would inevitably entail an escalation from the current *status quo* to a state of grave crisis.[4]

Discussions at this year's Riga Dialogue have made clear that the current lack of trust runs deep. In this sense, it is highly unlikely that tensions between the West and Russia will be *reduced* in the near future. However, the risks depicted above of a further and serious escalation make it imperative for Allied governments to make every effort to at least seek to *manage* tensions better.

It would be unrealistic to expect NATO-Russia discussions to drive progress. If significant progress is to be achieved, it will more likely take place in other formats, notably in bilateral US-Russia relations. However, there are steps that Allies could take to support tension management without revisiting the fundamentals of their Russia policy.

Options for better managing tensions with Russia

NATO's priority in the near and medium terms will be to press ahead with the implementation of agreed upon measures towards enhanced deterrence and forward defence, as well as strengthen Allies' resilience to hybrid and cyber warfare. As many participants at the Riga Dialogue

mentioned, one of the key differences with the Cold War and main sources of risk in today's environment is the absence of clearly stated "red lines" on both sides. While some amount of ambiguity is essential for deterrence to work, the current situation amounts to uncertainty with the potential to lead to dangerous miscalculation. As suggested in a recent report by NATO Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President Rasa Jukneviciene of Lithuania,[5] a more explicit enunciation of NATO's red lines could therefore diminish the risk of confrontation by strengthening deterrence. Among others, Allies should rebuff Russian statements blurring the line between conventional and nuclear weapons. In line with earlier decisions, Allies should also make clear that a hybrid or cyber attack could be considered an armed attack and trigger the collective defence clause in Article 5 of the NATO Treaty.

At the same time, Allies should continue to engage Russia in the NRC and to push for progress on transparency and risk reduction. Steps such as Russia's recent briefing to Allies on Zapad, even if mostly symbolic, seem to indicate an interest on Moscow's side to at least appear to support positive steps. Allies should take Russia up on its apparent openness, and press for further concrete steps towards greater transparency on a reciprocal basis. They should also use initiatives such as the expert group on air safety in the Baltic Sea – bringing together NATO, Russia, and other littoral states, including Sweden and Finland – to press for concrete commitments on incident avoidance and management. A parallel initiative could be envisaged in the Black Sea, possibly including Georgia and Ukraine. In turn, NATO could consider reopening some of the military-to-military lines of communication specifically for, and limited to, incident avoidance.

Dialogue does not mean acceptance, however, and as with Zapad, Allies should continue to expose Russia's deceptions and failure to commit to genuine transparency in the framework of the Vienna Document.

NATO's partners most directly affected by Russia's military activism – notably Finland and Sweden in the North, and Ukraine and Georgia in the East – have an equally strong stake in avoiding further escalation of tensions with Moscow. NATO should therefore seek to engage partners in a "joined-up" approach to tension management. Synergies are easier to achieve with EU members Finland and Sweden, as illustrated by the Finnish initiative

on air safety. Closer coordination in the NATO context also benefits from broader progress in NATO-EU cooperation.

Georgia and Ukraine, in contrast, are both victims of conflict with Russia, which occupies part of their territory. Both have also made clear their ambition to become NATO members. In this context, devising a NATO strategy to demonstrate support for Georgia and Ukraine without escalating tensions with Russia is challenging but not impossible. NATO should continue to affirm its unambiguous support for Ukraine and Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and enhance its practical support to both partners focusing specifically on assisting them in strengthening the resilience of their institutions and societies. Allies themselves can learn a lot from these countries' experience. At the same time, Allies should encourage both Georgia and Ukraine to engage Russia in further discussions on concrete and reciprocal measures towards military restraint and tension management. Tbilisi has demonstrated remarkable leadership and responsibility in its dealings with Moscow and set a positive model with its approach to the Geneva and Prague dual-track negotiations. This model could serve as useful inspiration for Kyiv, in the event that Russia steps back from active military hostilities.

Concluding remarks

Moscow's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 has thrown NATO-Russia relations into a downward spiral which might not yet have bottomed out. Speaking of a new *status quo* in relations is deceptive. Sadly, possible sources of further escalation are plenty. While NATO and Russia do indeed seem to be locked into a new and enduring state of tension, it is within their power to put in place mechanisms to manage these tensions and avoid them spinning out of control. Progress has been elusive so far, yet it is imperative.

NATO-Russia dialogue is unlikely to produce major breakthroughs, but the Alliance can support broader efforts towards transparency and risk reduction without weakening indispensable efforts to bolster NATO deterrence and collective defence arrangements or reneging on its support to its closest partners in the face of an aggressive Russia.

Endnotes

[1] Ruxandra Popa is the Deputy Secretary General of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA). The views presented in this article are her own and do not necessarily reflect the NATO PA's position.

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The Lengthening Nuclear Shadow

ANGELA KANE

"May you live in interesting times" is a curse attributed to the Chinese, but whether we see it as a curse or a challenge, we must accept that the international climate, and especially relations between the US, Europe and Russia, has perceptibly changed for the worse over the last few years.

Some have nostalgia for the Cold War and its black-and-white predictability. Everybody then knew where the red lines were and that they were not to be crossed. And despite the Cold War, disarmament and arms control treaties were negotiated and concluded: progress was possible, both multilaterally as well as bilaterally between the US and the Soviet Union.

Maybe we should instead be nostalgic for the 1990s, the decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the opening of the Eastern bloc. Yes, the nineties also saw savage wars and ethnic cleansing, such as in the former Yugoslavia, but it brought independence to states in the Soviet Union, it brought transparency, it saw a vastly expanded European Union, it brought a sense that anything was possible and that political developments would bring people ever closer. Twenty years later that sense has vanished, giving rise instead to anxiety and insecurity, especially on the European continent.

The deterioration in the security situation is usually attributed to recent developments: the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the challenges by Russia of Ukrainian sovereignty in the Donbass region, Syria, Brexit, vastly increasing migration into Europe, terrorism attacks, the election of US President Trump, the decisions taken by the UK and the US to modernize their nuclear forces. The knock-on effects on political stability in many European countries are palpable and not reassuring. Elections in Europe have shown deep divisions that are unsettling for the long term: will Europe hold together politically and economically?

And what are the effects of the "lengthening nuclear shadow?" Will nuclear developments matter in the years to come? What implications will there be for Europe? Is there a greater role for nuclear weapons in European security and are we facing reduced options for nuclear arms control and non-proliferation?

The post-war years have shown that mutual predictability is the essence of security: that is why we conclude treaties, why we have monitoring, why we have verification, cooperation and dialogue.

Russia has not only become unpredictable but also poses a direct challenge to international norms and principles. We are seeing interference in the political system through cyber attacks and strategic leaks in elections. The breakdown of dialogue, of strategic communications and the high risk of escalation are no longer a looming danger but an increasing probability. The challenge of today is how to address and reverse this situation.

Let us be mindful of the fact that the deterioration in US-Russian relations did not start with the annexation of Crimea.

Ten years ago, Russia already publicly questioned the utility of the INF Treaty: it was a grave mistake, Russia said, to scrap a whole class of missile weapons – as only Russia and US were allowed to possess them. The US has accused Russia of violating the INF since 2014, and the *New York Times*[1] reported on the disagreements and accusations between the US and Russia, including the first meeting (after 13 years) of the Special Verification Commission, the body established to deal with violations, including Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, who are part of the INF treaty as it was negotiated by the Soviet Union.

In March of this year, the *New York Times* reported that Russia had already deployed a significant number of prohibited missiles (in the ranges banned by the Treaty, 500–5,500km), an accusation that Russia rejected as "fake news."[2]

We also saw Russia in 2014 suspend its participation – effective after 150 days – in the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), and walk out of the Treaty's decision-making body. The suspension finalized Russia's unilateral moratorium on the implementation of the CFE treaty which President Putin declared in a decree dating from

2007. The CFE Treaty established a comprehensive structure of equal limitations on major armaments for NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but it also included important notification provisions and inspection obligations on both sides. Russia's suspension was not considered a "legally available option under the Treaty" and resulted in an "unhealthy imbalance in transparency within Europe,"[3] according to the US Mission to the OSCE.

A later agreement, the Treaty on Open Skies (2002), established a programme of unarmed observation flights over the entire territory of its participants and is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities. Yet while the treaty specified the kinds of equipment the aircraft could carry, technology has outpaced the specifications (i.e. film replaced by digital imagery) and Russia, in its 2016 request to start flying over US territory, intended to include high-tech sensors on its aircraft, a move that would "violate the spirit of the treaty,"[4] according to a US official.

In March 2017, the spokesperson of Moscow's Nuclear Risk Reduction Center, Sergei Ryzhov, confirmed that Russian inspectors would conduct aerial surveillance flights over the US;[5] these flights took place in April. Yet while there may be grumbles about Russian cooperation under Open Skies, the value of these observation flights is high, and exponentially increases in times of tension. For example, the US aircraft carrying crew members from NATO members and non-NATO members on Russia's periphery, have conducted twice the number of overflights as Russia has.

Other instances of suspended cooperation can be cited: on nuclear safety and security, Russia ended almost all cooperation with the US on bilateral efforts to secure nuclear materials. The US-Russian cooperation to destroy stocks of chemical weapons – as mandated by the Chemical Weapons Convention – has also ceased.

Additionally, large-scale and long-term nuclear modernization programs have started in the US and the UK; upgrades to military capabilities are planned or ongoing in other countries that will boost the defensive systems for decades to come. Add to this the flexing of the DPRK's nuclear muscle, the Syrian conflict and the volatility introduced in the US by the election of President Trump – it has become a highly combustible mix.

The US is currently conducting a Nuclear Posture Review, which is expected to be completed at the end of this year. The last Review was done in 2010 and the security situation since then has deteriorated considerably: the world is now in disarray. There is now increased reliance on nuclear weapons, and this also drives the perception of NATO. For nuclear deterrence to be effective, a credible threat requires plausible plans for the use of nuclear weapons, a dangerous gambit in an uncertain threat environment in Europe. With Brexit, the EU will have only one nuclear power – France – and I would expect that the UK post-Brexit would work more closely with the US, perhaps integrating more with their military, to compensate for the loss of EU membership.

The European Union concluded its Global Security Strategy a year ago: it recognized that strengthening cooperation and guarantees of respect for the rules are an investment in a balanced global order. Rules are not seen as a constraint, but a guarantee that the game is played properly. They are also a guarantee of respect, observed High Representative Federica Mogherini, in a keynote address at the Carnegie Conference in Washington in March 2017.[6] She stated that the security of citizens could only be achieved through nuclear disarmament, and underlined that the Global Strategy was approved by all 28 EU members, including the two nuclear powers. She argued for continued cooperation between the US and Russia, to find common ground, and urged both countries to move on START.

Yet a year later, at the European Council meeting in June 2017, the EU showed an increased focus on defence and security issues, reflected in the Council conclusions:[7] the ground for the EU has clearly shifted as its continued prosperity and sustainability are threatened, and the EU is indicating that it will become a bigger defence player, even while stating that "the transatlantic relationship and EU-NATO cooperation remain key to our overall security, allowing us to respond to evolving security threats."[8]

The election of Donald Trump as US President has brought new concerns: he has been a reluctant partner in NATO and urged European states to contribute more financially to NATO. He has also strongly criticized Iran and grudgingly certified compliance to Congress with

the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action (JCPOA), stating that Iran was "unquestionably in default of the spirit of the JCPOA" and imposed new sanctions[9] to penalize Iran for activities not covered by the nuclear agreement, while the European Union is strongly supportive of the JCPOA – as is Russia – and sees it as an important accord vital to security.[10]

President Trump has also brought unpredictability to long-standing established political and trade relations, such as with China, Mexico and countries in the Middle East.

We are witnessing a resurgence of unilateralism and great-power rivalry, coupled with the unravelling of domestic order in a number of countries, all of which creates instability and confrontation. In Europe, a region that strongly opposes such destabilizing developments, countries are aware of differing interpretations: what one side calls defensive deployment (such as by NATO in the Baltic states and in Poland) the other side calls offensive forces.

We need to be mindful of the fact that compared to the US (and NATO), Russia is still very small in terms of nuclear weapons, and it will certainly not give them up, but according to the latest SIRPI estimates, it has increased its military expenditure by 87% in the last ten years.[11] And contrary to the US and NATO, Russia has no allies and the level of risk-taking is very high, as there are no constraints on President Putin. The risks of conflict with Russia are real and growing.

The following questions are therefore before us: How can the situation be addressed and influenced positively? How can further back-sliding be prevented? Who are the actors and what are the elements to be included?

The first point of departure is to look at the areas in which cooperation appears to be working between the US and Russia: the Arctic Council and Antarctic cooperation are instances where pragmatism rules over the political.

Another area of cooperation is P-5 cohesion in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. There are regular meetings among the P-5 to agree on strategy concerning the non-nuclear possessors. Their dismissal of the outcome of the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Ban on Nuclear Weapons in late June further demonstrated their unity. If there is divergence with

regard to the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East, the glue that holds the P-5 together is still very strong and will continue in the years to come. The regular meetings held in that context should be used to discuss an expanded nuclear agenda and not only NPT issues.

So what other tools can be used to exert a positive influence?

The first tool overall is the use of diplomacy. The downward spiral of mistrust and antagonism has to be halted by conducting a disciplined and constructive dialogue that aims not to disparage and accuse, but rather looks for positive connections to re-establish an Atlantic-European-Russian security order.

In an open letter addressed to Presidents Putin and Trump prior to the G-20 meeting in Hamburg in July 2017,[12] four steps were outlined to improve security:

1. A joint declaration by the US and Russia that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought;
2. Increase military-to-military communication through a new NATO-Russia Military Crisis Management Group;
3. Collaboration to prevent ISIS and other terrorist groups from acquiring nuclear and radiological materials; and
4. Reaching at least informal understandings on cyber dangers related to nuclear command and control.

The survey of leading defence and security experts, on which the recommendations were based,[13] additionally included practical steps to prevent accidents, enhance predictability, and increase confidence. These included: the request to all military aircraft to fly with transponders turned on; agreement on a "safe distance limitation" on US and Russian aircraft and ships in international airspace and waters; negotiating a reduction in notification and observation thresholds for all military exercises; and halting the "reckless nuclear rhetoric" which has come from statements by public officials and military leaders.

To this list must be added renewed engagement on two important US-Russia bilateral arms control agreements, INF and New START, both of which are in serious danger of collapse. The long-simmering disagreements regarding INF need to be more vigorously addressed in the Special Verification Commission – without shoring up the INF treaty,

it will be politically difficult, if not impossible, to extend and then renew New START.

Would it not be possible to start with experts from both sides examining the technology changes that have occurred since the conclusion of the INF treaty: how should the treaty be updated? Are there deliverables that can be negotiated at the political level?

Another consideration is multilateralising the INF, a proposal that had been made ten years ago by Russia but was never taken up. Can the potential competition between offensive and defensive systems be discussed, together with the introduction of new and destabilizing technologies? Could there be a discussion of threats that both sides share, such as more effective cooperation on the issue of terrorism, particularly ISIL, to define the targets? Can cyber attacks be discussed among the US, EU and Russia? Could there be US-Russian cooperation on space stations?

It is not all that difficult to find points of entry, provided there is political will on both sides – with the support and involvement of the EU – to move forward. With the election of a new OSCE Secretary-General from Switzerland, a non-NATO member, an additional opportunity for engagement is there.

The crucial aspect is dialogue. States must enter into direct discussions – on nuclear as well as related security issues – rather than talking at cross-purposes so much of the time. States need to re-discover the value of arms control and disarmament, for its own sake rather than as a favour to the other side. Unless all players rally to this purpose, the spiral of accusations, misjudged intentions and mistrust could easily escalate out of control. In 2012, the Doomsday Clock stood at five minutes to midnight. Today, it stands at two and a half minutes to midnight: the clock is ticking, global danger looms, and "wise public officials should act immediately, guiding humanity away from the brink;"[14] an admonition that is urgent and timely.

Endnotes

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United States – Russia: Back to the 1970s or How to Save Nuclear Arms Control Process

EVGENY P. BUZHINSKIY

According to the assessment of quite a number of experts, the "escalation of Russia-West relations can lead not only to conventional but also to a nuclear confrontation." Although I do not think that the situation is quite so gloomy, I do share their concerns in this regard. Especially troubling is the deterioration of bilateral relations between the US and Russia, relations between two leading nuclear powers, which are now at the lowest point since the end of the Cold War. Currently, six years after signing of the Prague (or START III) Treaty, the two nations are as wide apart as in the early 1980s, creating a growing threat of a fatal military misunderstanding between them. In this short paper, I will attempt to briefly analyse some aspects of US-Russian bilateral relations, first looking at nuclear arms control, nuclear modernization programs, the possibility of military confrontation and some others.

At the moment, we face a unique historical, comprehensive crisis of nuclear arms control. Never before, in the 50 years of nuclear arms control since the 1963 partial test ban treaty, did we have a situation where all negotiations are stalled, progress is stagnating and arms control is disintegrating. Not only with nuclear arms reductions, but also with nuclear arms non-proliferation. And we are facing the real threat of losing control over these most devastating weapons ever invented.

For the last three years, we have experienced a series of crises in our bilateral relations. In the context of nuclear arms control, the INF crisis is an example which I will dwell upon later. Although this crisis is important on its own terms, very vivid, very troublesome symptom of a much larger general picture: the picture of the disintegration of nuclear arms control.

Disintegration did not start a year ago. It did not start with the Ukrainian crisis. It started much earlier, after some dramatic positive breakthroughs in the 1990s.

From the end of the 1990s, the process started to stagnate and lose its focus. It was not properly adapting to a changing world order, the changing strategic balance of the world, or to technological developments. And now, since 2011, one could say that everything that had accumulated has hit the fan, in a sense.

Moreover, the stalemate in arms control talks has removed an important channel of strategic communication between Russian and US national command authorities. A prolonged breakdown of regular mil-to-mil contacts and the arrival of a new generation of commanders, who are more disrespectful and combative to each other than their predecessors, may result in dangerous collisions when armed forces are acting in close proximities.

Therefore, as noted by Dr. Alexey Arbatov, a natural conclusion may be drawn: that today, due to the above-mentioned stalemate "after a quarter century pause, Russia and the US are again on the verge of a massive and multichannel arms race."[1] He quotes the observation by Professor Robert Legvold that "both are engaged in modernization of all three legs of their nuclear triads thus reopening potential competition between offensive and defensive systems. In addition the US have introduced new destabilizing technologies, such as conventionally armed strategic missiles capable of striking the other side's nuclear weapons, thus blurring the firebreak between conventional and nuclear warfare."[2]

The new US administration continues to implement decades-old policies regarding the deployment and modernization of nuclear forces and their infrastructure. Moreover, it projects reliance on nuclear forces as a central instrument of their national security strategy for decades to come. Regarding deployment, for the time being, there are no substantial changes planned in the nuclear force structure of heavy bombers, land-based missiles and ballistic missile submarines, or in their alert states. Regarding modernization, the Trump administration takes an aggressive approach. The US is well underway on an extensive modernization program of its entire nuclear weapons enterprise.

"Over the next decade, the US government plans to spend nearly $350 billion on modernizing and maintaining its nuclear forces and the facilities that support them. The results of this effort will include a new class of SSBNs, a new long-range bomber with nuclear capability, a new air-launched cruise missile (ALCM), a next-generation land-based ICBM, and a new nuclear-capable tactical fighter aircraft. It will also include complete full-scale production of one nuclear warhead (the W76-1), initiation of production on two others (the B61-12 and W80-4), modernized nuclear command and control facilities, and new or upgraded nuclear weapon production and simulation facilities.

In addition to these programs, the United States is planning to significantly redesign warheads for ballistic missiles. These modified versions will be interoperable warheads. While the new designs are intended to be based on existing weapons, they will mix warhead components from different types of warheads into new designs that do not currently exist. The first of these modified interoperable warheads, known as IW-1 or W78/W88-1, would create "an interoperable nuclear explosive package for use in the Mk21 ICBMs and the Mk5 SLBM aeroshells, with adaptable nonnuclear components," according to a recent report from the National Nuclear Security Administration (Energy Department 2016). Formal development would start in 2020 with first delivery in 2030 and production continuing through the early 2040s at a cost of around $15 billion. The second modified interoperable warhead, the IW-2, would combine the W87 and W88 and start in 2023 with first delivery in 2034 and a cost of more than $17 billion. The third version, the IW-3, would be a modified W76-1 and cost more than $18 billion (Energy Department 2015)."[3]

All in all, the administration plans to spend $1.2 trillion in the coming 30 years on the nuclear weapons complex. In its turn,

"Russia is also in the middle of a broad modernization of its strategic and nonstrategic nuclear forces, including both new programs and some that have been underway for many years. The broad modernization reflects the conviction of the Russian leadership that nuclear forces – in particular strategic nuclear forces – are indispensable for Russia's security. It is motivated in part by Moscow's strong desire to maintain nuclear potential parity with the United States.

The focus of the current phase of Russia's modernization of its ICBM force is the SS-27 Mod 2, known in Russia as the RS-24 or Yars, which

is a modified SS-27 Mod 1 (Topol-M) that carries up to four multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs). Russia is also developing the SS-30, or Sarmat (RS-28), which is intended to replace the SS-18 (RS-20V) by the end of the decade. Russian defence officials have also stated that the program of creation of a rail-based version of the SS-27 Mod 2, known as *Barguzin,* is also underway.

As for the modernization of the nuclear component of the Russian Navy, the now in service SSBNs Delta IIIs and Delta IVs will be replaced by the new class of Borei SSBNs. Each boat is armed with 16 SS-N-32 (Bulava) SLBMs that can carry up to six warheads apiece. Three boats are in service, with another five in various stages of construction. It is expected that Russian Ministry of Defence will order another four Borei SSBNs for a total fleet of 12 boats, the same number of SSBNs planned by the US Navy. Russia is already beginning to design the next class of SSBNs, which is described as a fifth-generation SSBN that will be more effective than the Borei class.

As for modernization of the strategic bombers force, nearly all of the Tu-160s and most of the Tu-95MSs are undergoing various upgrades. The first seven upgraded Tu-160s and Tu-95MSs returned to service in 2014, and another nine followed in 2016. Only a few dozen of the Tu-95MSs – perhaps around 44 – will be modernized, while at least 10 Tu-160s will be modernized by 2019. The upgrade will fully integrate the Kh-102 nuclear cruise missile and improve the bombers' ability to deliver conventional cruise missiles such as the Kh-101. The future bomber force will include 50-60 aircraft.

In addition to modernizing some of the existing bombers, in 2015 the Russian Ministry of Defense announced plans to restart production of the Tu-160. Production of the new version, known as Tu-160M2, is scheduled to begin sometime after 2023. The plan of the Air Force is to buy at least 50 of the new version which would result in the retirement of all remaining Tu-95MSs.

The Tu-160M2, meanwhile, is only a temporary bridge to the next-generation bomber known as PAK-DA (Advanced long-range aviation complex), the development of which has been underway for several years. The Russian Ministry of Defence signed a contract with manufacturer Tupolev in 2013 to construct the PAK-DA. The first flight is scheduled for around 2021, with delivery starting in the mid-2020s.

In addition to modernizing its strategic nuclear forces, Russia is also updating some of its shorter-range, so-called nonstrategic nuclear forces. This effort is less comprehensive than the strategic forces modernization plan, but also involves phasing out Soviet-era weapons and replacing them with newer but fewer arms. The emergence of more advanced conventional weapons will have a stronger impact on the numbers and composition of

nonstrategic nuclear forces than on strategic forces, and result in retirement of many nonstrategic weapons over the next decade."[4]

As mentioned by Dr. Arbatov,

"besides the political split over Ukraine and Syria, disagreements on ballistic missile defense and conventional global hypersonic systems, the two states are now deeply divided in their fundamental views on the role of nuclear weapons, assessments of strategic balance and perceptions of the possible causes of war. These contradictions and their origins should be understood by both powers. Russia and the US should make an effort to forge a common, up-to-date understanding of strategic stability and enhance it by arms control provisions and through regular military and civilian contacts (in the joint US-Soviet statement of June 1990, stability was defined as a state of strategic relations that is removing incentives for a nuclear first strike)."[5]

He continues,

"weapon systems that threaten the survivability of each other's strategic forces and command, control communications and intelligence assets imply a first strike strategy and provoke pre-emption. While undertaking phased reduction of nuclear forces, both sides should reach agreements to alleviate mutual concerns about prompt and slow counterforce systems, even if those are designed against other opponents. Expanding defensive systems to reduce each other's vulnerability to "rogue states" should only be based on US-Russian agreements. Systems and concepts blurring the line between nuclear and conventional operations are inherently destabilizing and should be subjected to limitations and confidence-building measures. There must be a mutual understanding that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, is escalatory and should be excluded from bilateral strategic relations."[6]

In the context of the existing contradictions between Russia and the United States I'd like to speak in more detail on the issue, which I've already mentioned, that could potentially lead to the complete dismantlement of the arms control process in general and nuclear arms control in particular: the INF Treaty.

A very accurate assessment of the danger posed in this regard is made by Dr. Pavel Podvig from the UN Institute for Disarmament Research,

> "The situation with this Treaty is getting worse pretty rapidly. The most vivid example of this process is the "INF Treaty Preservation Act" worked out in Washington. Judging by the language of the bill, its authors believe that the best way to deal with the INF Treaty is to kill it (and to kill the New START extension as well). The current version of the bill would establish a US program to develop an INF-range ground-launched cruise missile development program. Other proposals have been circulating as well – the Senate version of the INF Preservation Act mentions active defenses, counterforce capabilities, or things like "facilitating the transfer to allied countries of missile systems with INF ranges" (the plan is that the missiles would come from Israel). And it's not just Congress – the Pentagon has already developed a set of five or so options that would address the alleged INF violation by Russia (Israeli missiles is reportedly one of them).
>
> In short, the process that would lead to destruction of the INF Treaty has been set in motion and at this point fewer and fewer people mention the option of resolving the issue through a discussion with Russia. In fact, a lot of people in Washington do not particularly care about the details of the alleged violation or its real military significance. For them, it is very convenient to start with a "blatant treaty violation" and move on to their favorite cause, be that missile defense, dismantlement of New START, or something else."[7]

The US-Russian discussion on Moscow's alleged violation of the Treaty, however, does not seem to reach the point of discussing technical details or producing convincing evidence. On various levels, Russia repeatedly stated that it was in full compliance with the treaty but is ready to discuss the issues of concern on both sides at the appropriate fora.

Dr. Podvig continues, "Ironically, this is more or less how the United States treats Russian concerns about the Mk41 "universal" launcher deployed as part of the AEGIS Ashore"[8] (the only difference is that the US is not ready to discuss the issue). In the Russian view, the deployment of AEGIS Ashore is a direct violation of the Treaty which forbids deployment of GLCM launchers. I say "GLCM launcher," because in the opinion of the majority of the Russian experts the SLCM launched from the Mk41 launcher on board a ship can be easily launched from the same Mk41 launcher deployed on the ground. That is why, concludes Pavel Podvig,

> "It is not unreasonable to ask the United States to demonstrate that Mk41 universal launchers are distinguishable from those that are used to launch SLCMs. As I understand, the reason the United States balks at that request is that the difference, while exists, is not particularly large and one would have to get inside the launcher and/or its control equipment to demonstrate it. So, the United States just says that there is no problem there and we should trust it that the AEGIS Ashore Mk-41 launchers cannot launch cruise missiles. That's not that different from the position taken by Russia.
>
> So, we appear to be stuck here, with both sides claiming full compliance and with no mechanism in the Treaty to unblock the stalemate. About the only thing that could help at this point is an open discussion of the alleged violation. If the Unites States believes it has convincing evidence, it should show it. US reluctance to go public with detailed description of its accusations is only adding to the suspicion that its case is not particularly strong."[9]

I believe that to save the arms control process, both countries should resume work on at least three topics.

First, we should work together on strategic nuclear arms control. INF Treaty is definitely an integral part of the process, and without it the fate of the present START which our two countries are now implementing is in question.

It is hard to name any other area of bilateral relations still unaffected by the bilateral crisis. The New START is a good treaty, but it does not go far enough. Russia and the United States still control more than 95 per cent of the global nuclear weapons stockpiles. They have more than enough nukes to guarantee their own security and maintain their nuclear deterrence capability. This fact is well understood in both capitals. Nevertheless, progress on arms control has stalled. We should lay the ground for negotiations on a new treaty that would mandate deeper cuts in offensive weapons and address the sensitive unresolved issue of defensive weapons, including US missile defence plans. As for the current START, the situation is the following: the treaty provides for a single, five-year extension that does not require ratification. Such an extension would not preclude future negotiations nor would it limit future flexibility to withdraw from the treaty under the "supreme interests" clause.

The biggest problem, however, is the continued and growing antagonism between the two countries. If this cannot be overcome, no follow-up treaty will be possible. Yet many US observers believe that it is in the US national interest to maintain New START transparency and the current limitations on Russian forces. Moreover, if conditions between the two states continue to deteriorate, a routine extension might be politically impossible when New START expires in 2021. As a hedge against this possibility, they believe the United States and the Russian Federation should agree to extend New START for five years early in the term of the next US administration.

Summarizing this aspect of the US-Russian bilateral relations, I can't avoid mentioning that the future of the nuclear arms control will also depend on the readiness of the new administration to seriously discuss not only further reductions of strategic offensive nuclear weapons and NSNWs but also missile defence, strategic weapons with conventional warheads and the militarization of space.

Second, Russia and the United States should do their utmost to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. A solid foundation has already been laid for efforts in this area. In 1968, despite the confrontation over the deployment of Soviet troops to Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and the United States became the founding fathers of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NPT has even been called by some a *Soviet-American condominium*, even though it now has more than 180 members. We are living in a new century and a new millennium; many milestones have come and gone, but the treaty is still alive and bearing fruit (suffice to recall the recent diplomatic *taming* of the Iranian nuclear program). Nevertheless, a new Cold War between Russia and the West could well lead to cracks in the treaty's foundation. Nuclear proliferation is equally dangerous for both of our countries. Trump and Putin should pool their efforts to keep the NPT afloat.

Third, preventing an arms race in outer space is a key priority. New types of weapons are already poised to make a leap to space, and not all of them are American or Russian. A new actor, China, has emerged to rival them both in that area, and others are not far behind. It is in both Russia and America's interest to prevent space from becoming another arena of

military rivalry, or the next big cash cow for the defence industry. In fact, things in this area have gotten so far out of hand that I am not even sure whether we can put this genie back in the bottle.

The above list of three priority areas for cooperation to restore strategic dialogue between Moscow and Washington is not exhaustive. But these are the areas that hold a realistic promise of success, and I have no interest in theorizing about pies in the sky. Real progress, however, will require a political will on both sides – and yes, it will require a *reset*. The word has been ridiculed to within an inch of its life, and rightly so. Donald Trump couldn't help grimacing when a journalist used it in one of his interviews. Well, no problem: we can find a new word, or a well-forgotten old one (what about *détente*?) The point, however, is that we need a genuine, not merely verbal, reset of our bilateral relations.

Thus, the agenda for the next several years is to look for opportunities where they exist and to mitigate the long-term consequences where opportunities cannot be found. It is unlikely that the next four years will see much cooperation, let alone genuine partnership between the United States and the Russian Federation. But strained relations can still be stable. The two sides need to agree on what a stable relationship would look like and how to establish such a relationship. Ultimately such agreement must be reached by governments, but informal discussions can pave the way.

Unfortunately, the latest moves by the US Congress around Russia do not add optimism regarding the restoration of even a minimum level of trust needed for the resumption of strategic dialogue. Nevertheless, Russian officials at various levels have more than once emphasized, Russia is interested in having good, normal relations with the United States and ready for the resumption of bilateral dialogue on all levels, regarding all topics, including arms control, provided Washington gives up their strange approach: "We deter and press Russia wherever and whenever possible and cooperate with it if it meets the US national interests."

Endnotes

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[7] Pavel Podvig, "Is It Too Late to Have an Informed Discussion About the INF Treaty?," *Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces*, July 1, 2017, http://russianforces.org/blog/2017/07/is_it_too_late_to_have_an_info.shtml
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For a Balanced Peace. The First Steps Out of the Security Deadlock in (Eastern) Europe[1]

REINHARD KRUMM, ALEXANDRA VASILEVA AND SIMON WEISS

The current state of the European security order can be briefly summarized in six major points:

- The principles of the European security order are under threat.
- The conflicts in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) are not the root causes, but rather are symptoms of a larger crisis.
- Different interpretations of the events of the past 25 years and the resulting threat perceptions leave little room for cooperation.
- Many more stakeholders and countries are involved now than during the Cold War.
- More prominent powers are interested in managing the *status quo* rather than changing it. For the countries comprising the "East European Six" (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine), the "Divided European Home" is not sustainable and might severely undermine their development and security.
- A bipartisan consensus in the United States (US) on condemning Russia makes progress on dialogue with Moscow extremely difficult.

Thus, 25 years after the often proclaimed and assumed end of the division of Europe, we are heading for a new separation. However, this time the dividing line has moved eastwards – towards the Russian border.

Root causes of the European security dilemma

The main explanation for the above-mentioned development lies in a contradiction in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, commonly known

as the "Paris Charter." In the section titled "Friendly Relations among Participating States," there are two crucial sentences. The first reads, "With the ending of the division of Europe, we will strive for a new quality in our security relations, while fully respecting each other's freedom of choice in that respect."

This clause is well-known and understood, though less attention was given to the next sentence: "Security is indivisible and the security of every participating State is inseparably linked to that of all the others." In other words, freedom of alliances is possible, but only if no one sees their security compromised by shifting alliance memberships.

This text examines each actor's main arguments to fully understand the diverging threat perceptions of the three actors involved – the West (the EU and the US), Russia and the East European Six.

The West

The West has strived for a secure Europe through NATO and EU Eastern expansion following requests by Poland, among others. This policy went hand in hand with the West's aim to take a leading role in a post-Cold War security order.

Western-oriented reforms stalled in Russia, with Russia tending towards increased strength and authoritarianism, thereby opposing some of the Western moves. The West became frustrated, describing the foreign policy of a seemingly corrupt Russia as aggressive, unpredictable and revisionist. Furthermore, according to the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the Defense Intelligence Agency, the US "will always compete with Russia for influence around the globe."

Russia

Russia has become increasingly frustrated about its lack of a role in the European security order. Although Moscow felt compensated for the first and second rounds of NATO Eastward expansion by the NATO-Russia Founding Act of Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security (1997) and the NATO-Russia Council (2002), when NATO began considering a

third wave, Russia felt dominated and that its security interests were being neglected with regards to the *in-between* countries, mainly Georgia and Ukraine. Russia maintains that since the end of the Cold War, it has not experienced a "Balanced Peace" and refers to its current situation as being similar to that of Germany after the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919.

According to Moscow, a European security order is only possible by including an acceptance of Russia's interests in that field, especially concerning its relationship with the *in-between* countries. As a major power, Russia is insisting on privileged interests in the spheres of security, economy and cultural relations with regard to Russian minorities in those countries.

East European six

The six countries aim to strengthen their sovereignty, security and wealth – on their own terms, according to their own principles and goals and within the framework of international law. However, the countries feel that their security environment is becoming increasingly fragile and that they are being denied their right to freely choose their preferred alliance.

These six countries are quite different and are looking in different directions for their transformation. According to a recent Pew Research Survey, they also differ in their approach towards Russia and the EU – ranging from Armenia, with a very strong pull towards Russia, to Ukraine, with an almost opposite attraction towards the EU. For now, each country has very good reasons for its stance.

This short analysis of the root causes explains why everyone in Europe feels threatened 25 years after the "end of history": some EU countries by Russia, some of the East European Six by Russia, the US by Russia and Russia by the EU and the US.

Status quo

One of the symptoms of the crisis and the core subject of this paper is Ukraine, a country that saw parts of its population stand up heroically to political leaders in 2013 and is now trying to survive as one country. Since

the war began in 2014, 10,000 people have been killed and 1.7 million people have been displaced in Ukraine alone. Crimea has been lost and fighting continues in the contested Donbas territory in the southeast. Economically, there have been some positive signs, but the main challenge remains: how to reform the economy in such a way that the population gains, rather than loses.

Almost three years after going into effect, experts increasingly view the Minsk II Agreement as obsolete. This is due to the impossible task of prioritizing the agreement's 13 points, especially Point 9, which concerns Ukraine's complete control over its borders with Russia, and Point 11, which concentrates on constitutional reforms and a special status for Luhansk and Donetsk. On the other hand, the agreement makes some progress in the conflict's humanitarian aspect. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), up to 20,000 civilians manage to cross the contact line every day. Nevertheless, the agreement lacks the fulfilment of the political goals agreed upon by involved actors.

Obstacles to easy solutions

Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense in the George W. Bush administration, described a fundamental dilemma for the EU and the US in finding solutions to the security problem: "Every time NATO makes a move or Russia makes a move near a border, there is a response. Where does that all stop? So, there is a need to stop that downward spiral. The dilemma is how do you do that without handing Putin a victory of huge proportions?" In other words: what would a face-saving option for the first step look like?

The main obstacle for new initiatives is that managing the *status quo* is less costly and more expedient for some countries than trying to work out a solution that can resolve the crisis surrounding Ukraine and the wider European security order. Moreover, in the US, there is a bipartisan anti-Russian consensus among Democrats and Republicans. Hence, there is no incentive to come up with a solution other than to continue sanctions, which might be strengthened by the 115th Congress's "Countering Russian influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017."

For the East European Six, the situation looks quite different, particularly for Ukraine and Georgia. The *status quo* of a "Divided European Home" is hardly sustainable, and could worsen and develop into a "Broken European Home" with severe consequences for stability – even risking their sovereignty. Here, we see the legacy of the Cold War. At that time, the disputed *in-between* countries included Hungary and Poland. Today, the East European Six are the new *in-betweens*, facing adverse security implications.

The lack of transparency with regard to intentions is also noteworthy. As long as Russia sees the eastward expansion of NATO and the EU as an aggressive move, and as long as the EU and the US see Russia's longing for participation in building a European security order as a decoy for becoming an aggressive superpower, little common ground can be expected. To emerge from this state of affairs requires a great deal of imagination for better policy. Now is the time for precisely that.

Policy steps towards a balanced peace

This paper offers two steps to begin overcoming the crisis in Ukraine and move towards a Balanced Peace, considering all of the interests of the different sides, and ensuring that the involved parties feel that the positives and negatives are evenly shared for a sustainable result. Step one is to concentrate on the challenges of the Donbas region by recharging the Minsk II Agreement. Step two is geared towards a medium-term policy through *détente*, which is not limited to just one country but includes the entire region of the East European Six. A third step would be a move towards a long-term policy for a European security order, but this goes beyond the scope of this paper.

Before beginning with the problem-solving policy, we have to examine the current situation and worst-case scenarios. Three options are available:

a. Continue the current policy and hope for a miracle
b. Deploy deterrence and thereby lose the chance for rapprochement
c. Remain as tough as possible, but simultaneously try to achieve progress by coming closer.

If Minsk II continues as business as usual, we are facing Option A. This would mean relying on Minsk II as it is today and hoping for initiatives from Ukraine, the separatists, the EU, Russia or the US. Such hope can go on for quite a while. To be blunt, however, the conflict could become a much worse scenario than existing protracted conflicts, like in Nagorno-Karabakh or Transnistria. That would be a slippery slope towards the irreversible division of Ukraine, with severe consequences for its economic and political development.

Option B, deploying deterrence, parallels a policy that is being discussed by experts and some politicians in the Baltic States and Southeast Europe. Envisioned is a kind of cooperation between Ukraine and the Baltic States, as well as Poland and Romania – one that extends back into Polish history, known as the Intermarium. It resurfaced a few years ago as a model for the security of NATO members and Ukraine. It is a method of deterrence against Russia and could also lead towards closer links between some NATO member states and Ukraine.

The problem is that the conflict around Ukraine could spread to NATO and the EU, which could then lead to an uncontrolled increase in risk. At the same time, the Intermarium could give Ukraine the illusion of almost having NATO protection, by developing close relations with NATO member states in the region. The deterrence against Russia could be a false hope, however, due to the willingness of Russia to continue its strategy as long as a Balanced Peace is not reached.

To avoid these developments, there should be a return to Minsk II, as it is still the only foundation to build upon. It has produced de-escalation, a reduction of the death toll, an attempt to build a rudimentary level of trust between both sides, and the possibility of crossing the contact line while offering a road map for political solutions. Nevertheless, according to some politicians, the agreement is useless; experts even say it is dead, precisely because the agreement's political points are not being implemented.

We would, therefore, suggest an implementation of Option C – remaining as tough as possible, while simultaneously trying to achieve progress by coming closer, via the following two steps:

Step 1. Minsk II Plus: regional transitional power sharing

Given the lack of trust, not only between the Ukrainian state and the separatists but also between Russia and Ukraine, one of the ways forward is to build "islands of cooperation." This strategy would concentrate on "transitional power sharing" – a tool endorsed by academia as an essential factor for conflict-solving measures – in the Donetsk and the Luhansk regions, bringing together people from both sides of the contact line. The core element should be to form a new trilateral contact group that would replace the existing one. This new group would consist of representatives of the Ukrainian state (who should be drawn primarily from the region close to the conflict and less from Western Ukraine and the capital Kiev), as well as local stakeholders in the contested territories, and the OSCE.

The aim would be to prepare to implement the humanitarian aspects of the Minsk Agreement, such as Points 5 to 8, especially to ensure the restoration of economic and social relations.[2] This approach would be a trust-building measure to prepare the ground for the more difficult tasks, particularly the status of the two regions within Ukraine, elections, and full border control of Ukraine. The goal would be to counter the fading trust across the contact line. As an inclusive organization, the OSCE would spearhead such an initiative, supported by political pressure from France and Germany on Ukraine and Russia.

Despite imminent further US sanctions against Russia, and given the importance of the US and its dialogue with Russia under the Obama administration, Washington might join the effort to play an active role in finding a solution. The appointment of former US NATO ambassador Kurt Volker as Special Ukraine Envoy strongly suggests that. The reason behind that decision could be that letting events take their course will most certainly lead to a remilitarization of Europe, possibly extending to the Arctic, more competition in Eurasia, an uncontrollable multipolar nuclear world, and a very costly and irresponsible competition between the US, China, and Russia.

Step 2. Security guarantees: robust deterrence without NATO membership

This step would strengthen the Minsk II agreement and improve the fulfilment of the 13 points. The goal would be to find a legal and security framework for the East European Six to develop their economies in a secure environment. This should first be agreed upon by the six countries themselves. But given the importance and the urgency of the current situation, the EU and Russia should participate in finding a compromise solution, taking their own security interests into consideration as well as those of others.

The security guarantees must come from the countries most actively involved in the crisis at the moment. To counter the argument of the broken Budapest Memorandum of 1994, one should consider the changing security environment. Instead of a memorandum, one could envision a more binding document under the auspices of the OSCE. The transparency of intentions should be very clear.

This endeavour demands a very serious reconsideration of European context, which is already underway because of Brexit. Here, it is important to understand that the EU is not Europe's only defining element. Instead of conceiving of Europe as composed solely of EU members and non-EU members, it is possible to conceptualise four rings of Europe that are equally important for the well-being of the continent and that require similar development opportunities. They would differ in levels of integration but share the overall understanding of being part of Europe and benefiting from a stable and secure environment through close economic ties. All four rings should have a chance to shape the future of Europe in order to be able to find their appropriate developmental path. Here, a failure of imagination could be a serious threat to European security. With effort, however, the legacy of the Cold War – the division of Europe – could finally be overcome. The four rings of Europe could consist of:

- Core EU member states,
- EU member states with less enthusiasm about further integration,
- European states such as Switzerland, Norway, and soon the United Kingdom,
- European states such as the East European Six, Serbia, and Russia.

Concluding remarks

A policy towards solving the crisis in and around Ukraine could consist of three stages. The short-term policy is the implementation of the Minsk II agreement with new ideas, namely regional "transitional power sharing." The medium-term policy is to find a framework for the prosperous and secure development of the East European Six, with a clear understanding of non-provocative security guarantees. The long-term policy would lead to a European security order with Russia and Ukraine, including a solution for the status of Donbas and Crimea. Although this last step is not the topic of this paper, it should not be forgotten, because without such a vision, step one and step two will be even harder – and because it would be the final step for achieving a Balanced Peace.

Endnotes

[1] This article was printed first at FES in Berlin in August under the same title.

[2] "5. Ensure pardon and amnesty by enacting the law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. 6. Ensure release and exchange of all hostages and unlawfully detained persons, based on the principle "all for all ." This process is to be finished on the day 5 after the withdrawal at the latest. 7. Ensure safe access, delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need, on the basis of an international mechanism. 8. Definition of modalities of full resumption of socioeconomic ties, including social transfers such as pension payments and other payments (incomes and revenues, timely payments of all utility bills, reinstating taxation within the legal framework of Ukraine).To this end, Ukraine shall reinstate control of the segment of its banking system in the conflict-affected areas and possibly an international mechanism to facilitate such transfers shall be established." https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11785.doc.htm and in the official document: http://www.osce.org/ru/cio/140221?download=true

All Quieter on the Eastern Front? Managing Security in the Baltic Sea Region After the End of the Russia-Western Strategic Partnership

EMMET TUOHY

Just a few years ago, Russia and the countries of the European Union and NATO often eagerly spoke of a strategic partnership comprised of mutual values and common interests.[1] However, despite the prominent mention of this partnership at the 2010 and 2012 NATO summits, for example, this partnership ended rather abruptly for reasons that are now well known – the annexation of Crimea and war in the Donbas. Yet, given the geographic reality that both former partners continue to exist next to each other, the "breakup" of the partnership is not the end of their interaction. Whether both sides like it or not, the West and Russia will remain neighbours; and even if those neighbours are separated by tall fences, it is not necessarily inevitable that those will become tall lines bristling with barbed wire, even if a return to cordial "business as usual" political discussions is highly unlikely to take place within a generation – or longer.

To examine the possibilities for improving relations within the lifetimes of those reading this analysis, one must consider the following questions. First, given that the downturn in Western-Russian relations is not exactly breaking news, what is the current status of the post-partnership relationship, especially in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, where smaller countries – both within and outside Euro-Atlantic institutions – continue with some justification to fear being the subject of great power decisions over which they have no say? As for NATO, how

have things have progressed since the Warsaw Summit, where the Alliance decided to make its assurance and deterrence efforts in the regions more explicit? What security mechanisms exist to ensure that the two former partners do not inadvertently end up in a larger military conflict? Finally, is it possible to rejuvenate and expand such measures while leaving the door open to reshaping the wider relationship?

Regional warming: the current *status quo* in the Baltic & Black Sea regions

While the "front lines" today are much the same as they were a year ago, the sheer volume of military traffic behind those lines is enough to add additional dynamism – and therefore risk – to the situation. However, when speaking of the *status quo*, we must first acknowledge that these regions are comprised of countries involuntarily "stuck between" Russia and the West, as one participant at this year's Dialogue put it; accordingly, what they have in common is often less significant than what divides them. Moldova, for instance, was previously the "success story" of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative, but now faces more significant domestic political challenges to its pro-European aspirations than, for example, Georgia; within the EU, meanwhile, Poland finds itself somewhat more diplomatically isolated than in the past, despite its aspirations to play a leading economic and security role in the broader region.

Of the participants in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) program, perhaps the most delicate balancing act is being waged by Belarus. While an essential part of the Eurasian Economic Union, it has become increasingly involved in the multilateral track of the EaP especially after the lifting of most EU sanctions; moreover, by adopting short-term visa waivers for US and EU citizens, among nationals of other countries, it triggered retaliatory moves from Russia[2] – an example of the tensions that are likely to accompany that country's potential political transition after its next presidential election in 2020.

As for the remaining five EaP members, each has unresolved "frozen conflicts" on its territory, though some are more thawed than

others – such as Transnistria, where despite the continued rhetoric of the separatist authorities, local exporters have taken advantage of opportunities to sell products to the EU market under the DCFTA (with Moldovan customs stamps!), and where even the losing sides in the territory's political competition feel comfortable seeking "exile" in Moldovan government-controlled territory. Yet even in this region, more intense Russian pressure can be felt, for instance with Moscow's efforts both to reinforce its troop presence on the territory despite Moldova's wishes and to conduct high-level visits in violation of EU/NATO member state policy.[3] Turning now to Ukraine, Moscow has similarly recently announced the closure of the Kerch Strait (at the entrance to the Azov Sea between Crimea and Russia); while the ostensible purpose is for bridge construction, it will cut off steel exports from the port cities of Mariupol and Berdyansk, which represent some of the biggest sources of revenue for the country – thereby having a "debilitating effect on the fragile Ukrainian economy."[4]

As for the Baltic, while there remain hiccups in cooperation in areas such as energy and infrastructure, on security matters they remain more united than ever before. For instance, some states preferred to focus their resources on deployable professional forces instead of local troops intended to secure territorial defence; moreover, Latvia and Lithuania neither met nor even had any plans to reach NATO's 2% of GDP defence spending target. However, such differences are now rapidly vanishing. Lithuania, for its part, reinstated conscription in March 2015 after a seven-year absence.[5] Meanwhile, this April, Latvia's parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Defence Andrejs Panteļējevs publicly declared a return to the concept of "comprehensive defence" in April 2017, including all elements of society; the ministry notably recommends giving elementary and high school students a "mandatory choice" to sign up for basic training in state defence.[6]

In addition to domestic reforms, following Warsaw the most significant development has been the permanent "heel-to-toe" rotating presence of a full multinational battalion of over a thousand NATO troops and their equipment from countries such as the United States, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Canada. While some argue that

this presence is not enough to blunt a full-scale invasion from the east, others argue that the deployment enhances deterrence – which after all is a "political outcome in the mind of a potential adversary"[7] not only from the famous "tripwire effect," but also but by improving the ratio of defenders to potential attackers – the "tactical correlation" – enough to cause the potential aggressor to doubt the success of any offensive action.[8]

Meanwhile, exercises throughout the region have increased in number and in size relative to recent years, with some Western analysts calculating that the forthcoming Zapad exercise in September will feature as many as a hundred thousand Russian troops in a gesture of "intimidation that recalls the most ominous days of the Cold War."[9] While Russian observers counter that such accounts are "panicked" and predict that the exercise will be much smaller,[10] what is clear is that tensions – and fears – on both sides are increasing.

Moreover, tensions are not just high on land, but in the air and at sea as well. As part of what retired US admiral James Stavridis believes is "the continuation of an increasing pattern of aggressive manoeuvres around US and NATO military units in recent years," a Russian intelligence vessel attempted to lure a US cargo ship en route to exercises in Lithuania into Russian waters in what the ship's captain called an "intense and threatening" encounter in May.[11] Meanwhile, the next month, Russian media reported that NATO jets came close to the aircraft carrying Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu in international airspace over the Baltic, only to be chased off by Russian fighters.[12]

Beyond the front: Western-Russian relations outside the Baltic

The above are not simply taking place in isolation, but against the broader context of escalating Western-Russian tensions that go beyond the individual concerns of those states that share a physical border with Russia. Indeed, disagreements on the two sides are not simply *military* (such as the positioning of forces near each other's frontiers, or in areas such as the self-declared separatist republics of Ukraine and

Georgia) or even *political* in nature (accusations of electoral interference in the United States and France, as well as the more traditional discussion of American "foreign agent" NGOs within Russia). The list of mutual grievances now includes, for example, involvement in *minority population* issues, such as a perceived Russian effort to exacerbate tensions within Germany over the refugee population there – undermining EU hopes that Moscow could play a role similar to Turkey in mitigating the issues raised by the crisis.[13]

For its part, Russia's ire has moved beyond the regular accusations of mistreatment of the rights of Russian speakers in the Baltic states and elsewhere to include topics such as history and collective memory; one recent example was Moscow's blunt threat of sanctions against Warsaw should the latter go ahead with its plan to relocate monuments from the Second World War.[14] (Of course, even the name "Second World War" is itself disputed, with the Ukrainian decision to ban the ideologically loaded term "Great Patriotic War" attracting further criticism from Moscow.)

Even on issues where realist have traditionally called for cooperation, working together from a position of self-interest seems far more difficult for both sides now than it did at the beginning of the decade. Taking the fight against ISIS and radical extremism in Syria, for instance, while the incoming Trump administration signaled a willingness to work more closely with Russia on the issue, knowledgeable former officials noted that the two sides' activities and objectives in the country are "fundamentally in conflict,"[15] an argument made even before Trump's decision to launch missiles at Syrian government facilities in April after Damascus used chemical weapons – a decision that resulted in the usual condemnation from the Kremlin.[16]

Just as domestic political considerations in Russia militate against rapprochement with the US, the reverse is true to an even greater degree in Washington, where the ongoing investigations into Russian involvement in Trump's campaign limit the White House's freedom of action to adopt measures seen as more favourable to the Kremlin – as evidenced by the remarkably harsh sanctions bill recently signed by the President that was vociferously condemned not just by Moscow but

by Brussels, where the Commission leadership accurately noted that the bill would limit bilateral economic activity even further in another area of mutual interest, long advocated by proponents of sectoral cooperation: energy trade.

While areas such as nuclear non-proliferation and containing Iran's regional ambitions remain possible avenues of issue-based cooperation – and are discussed elsewhere in this volume – it is important to remain focused on the broader picture: that the dream of an economic and political space based on common interests and even values, stretching from Vancouver (or at least Valencia) to Vladivostok, is truly dead for the time being.

It is certainly true that Russia's domestic political system might change at some point; as former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice sharply observes in a recently-published volume, "Russians are not endowed with some unique anti-democratic DNA."[17] Yet, one should be careful not to conflate democracy as a political process with Western liberal democracy as a set of norms; in other words, any democratically-elected Russian leader is equally likely to conceive of the country's national interest in broadly similar terms as does the current incumbent of the Kremlin. To cite just one example, even leading Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny has declared that he will not return Crimea to Ukrainian control;[18] if he or the next opposition figure to emerge eventually assumes power, it is far from certain that agreement with the West on a broad spectrum of issues will automatically follow. Accordingly, given that the difference in perspectives between Russia and the West transcends a single leader's personality, we need to recognize that tension between the two sides is likely to last – and thus should figure out how to *manage* this tension, especially in ways that prevent the outbreak of immediate war.

This should be done through two broad sets of means: increase military-to-military dialogue on pragmatic issues, while advancing discussions on technical confidence building measures.

Across the front: technical dialogue and confidence-building measures

One key issue on which technical dialogue has already had some small success is the issue of military aircraft flying without transponders in the Baltic Sea region, a practice that can lead to potentially fatal mid-air collisions between military and civilian aircraft in increasingly crowded airspace. In July 2016, while arguing that it was not just Russian but also NATO aircraft that were guilty of flying with transponders switched off, President Putin acknowledged Finnish president Sauli Niinistö's "initiative to draft a system of trust-building measures to enhance security in the region."[19] For NATO's part, Secretary General Stoltenberg also "welcomed" the Finnish initiative – though clearly, more technical work is necessary beyond encouraging statements at the senior political levels.

Somewhat more constructive was the decision by Belarus to invite Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian representatives to observe the Zapad exercises in person.[20] It is particularly welcome that the Belarusian authorities cited the OSCE Vienna Document – which calls for a range of confidence and security-building measures – in extending that invitation. However, the OSCE is seen by many in Western policy and government communities as a moribund organization due to the veto power wielded by Russia and its relative lack of success in bringing about a resolution to the "frozen conflicts" mentioned above.

Other existing instruments that can help reduce tension include the Treaty on Open Skies (not to be confused with open-skies agreements for civilian air traffic), which enables signatories to conduct observation flights over each other's territories with advance notice and with personnel from the other state on board. While Russia has exercised this treaty right in, for example, Estonia without incident,[21] the recent Russian decision to conduct flights not over strategic sites but over US President Donald Trump's summer residence in New Jersey is likely to raise rather than lower the climate of mutual suspicion.[22]

In future, these instruments can still contribute to a reduction in tensions if used judiciously. One recommendation would be to avoid the

involvement of political-level personnel whenever possible, focusing instead on military and on operational-level civil servants, the earlier in their careers the better. This focus brings two main advantages: first, personal familiarity with one's functional counterparts makes it easier to resolve potential flash points before they escalate; and second, if developed early, the habits of functional cooperation are likely to lead to reduced tension in future as well.

Tactical stalemate: the least worst option

In the end, increased dialogue *as such* will not necessarily accomplish anything. Like a couple in the final stages of a divorce, face-to-face encounters often result in nothing more than an angry recitation of each side's positions. Not only do these encounters do nothing to lower tensions, but they even create an opportunity for misunderstandings along the lines of Nikita Khrushchev's famous prediction in a 1950s speech to Western ambassadors in Poland that the communist bloc "would outlive" the capitalist countries – only for the message to be received threateningly as "We will bury you!"

In the meantime, with neither side willing to accept the legitimacy of the other's values – let alone policy positions – the best outcome might be a type of stalemate, whether in the Baltic or indeed beyond. While maximalists on both sides will likely continue to call for a broader European space of common values and renewed great-power cooperation, this analysis has demonstrated that neither is likely to occur in the foreseeable future. While a stalemate that sees continued large numbers of troops along both sides of the NATO-Russia border is not ideal, it is certainly preferable to an outbreak of armed conflict – as more than one world war fought along that very border has already taught us.

Endnotes

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A Bridge between the East and the West? The Case of the Latvian Cargo Transit Sector

MĀRIS ANDŽĀNS

Since regaining independence in 1991, Latvia's economy has been largely and successfully reoriented from the East – Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union – towards the West. Yet one significant sector of the national economy stands starkly out as still heavily dependent on Russia: the transit of cargo over the Latvian transport infrastructure, as the main Latvian ports and railways still function as one of the export gates for Russian cargo.

Latvia has consistently positioned its ports, railways and roads as a bridge between the West and the East – both in the direct sense of the word and indirectly – as a springboard for political interaction. Notwithstanding the exchange of the economic sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine between the West and Russia, the flow of latter's cargo through Latvia, though slightly decreasing in volumes, has continued. Yet serving as such a bridge entails not only opportunities for business and political dialogue, but also significant political and economic risks: from remaining an easy target to Russia's political influence to risking a significant and sudden contraction of the sector in the case that the political relationship with Russia worsens.

The Latvian transit sector in numbers

The Latvian transit sector is generally understood to comprise the transport and logistics services provided by the companies operating in Latvian ports, in conjunction with the railways and roads in the East-West transport corridor. The transit sector also includes an oil products pipeline

in the same corridor, as well as cargo flow in the North-South corridor and cargo shipped through the Riga International Airport, the biggest airport in the Baltic states. The East-West direction is dominant.

Latvian cities have been significant regional trade centres since the times of the Hanseatic League in the Middle Ages. Yet, the Latvian transit sector in its current form, with its current infrastructure and main trade partners, is a legacy of the Soviet Union. The ports of Riga and Ventspils were significant for the export of Soviet goods, both given their Western-most location and being ice-free the whole year in the case of Ventspils (it was developed as a centre for export of oil and chemical products), and for most of the seasons in the case of Riga. The 1,520 mm wide, or the so-called Russian gauge railways, ensured, as they still do, shipment of goods to Latvian ports from almost any place in Russia, Central Asia or other parts of the former Soviet Union using the same rolling stock.

Since 1991, the Latvian economy has largely and successfully reoriented towards the West: in 2015, trade with countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) constituted a mere 11.9% of the Latvian export and 12% of the import.[1] Yet the situation in the main Latvian ports and railways is different, as they still function as an export gate for Russian cargo and, to a lesser extent, the cargo of other CIS countries. Russia's cargo forms the bulk of the transit goods currently handled in Latvia: the Port of Riga, currently the biggest in Latvia, estimates that up to 80% of its total cargo turnover is sent to or from the CIS countries;[2] in 2016, for Latvia's biggest rail carrier LDz Cargo (its rail cargo market share in 2016 was 74.6%[3]) cargo from Russia constituted 79.2% of "import" (87.9% of its total cargo) and inland transit cargo, and Belarus followed with 15.3% well ahead of other countries (see Figure 1 in the Annex; situation is more diverse in "export" shipments, however, they constitute only 5% of its cargo – see Figure 2 in the Annex).[4] The majority of the cargo shipped over Latvian railways and through ports is oil and oil products, as well as coal: in 2016, both cargo categories combined made up 57% of the cargo in Latvian ports and 68.9% in railways; other individual categories of cargo such as containers, grains and wood products constituted less than one tenth of the cargo both in the ports and railways (see Figure 3 and 4 in the Annex).[5]

All in all, the transit sector still constitutes a significant part of the national economy. The Latvian Ministry of Transport estimates that the revenue from transit cargo constitutes 3.5% of the gross domestic product, whereas the revenue for transit cargo handling – 20% of the total services export.[6] The Latvian Ministry of Economics estimates that "transport and storage" make up approximately one tenth of the national economy by value added (9.5% in 2015; see Figure 5 in the Annex), as well as approximately the same share of the total workplaces it ensures (9% in 2015)[7] (yet it is important to note that "transport and storage" also includes air transport and postal services that fall outside the traditional understanding of the Latvian transit sector; therefore, the total impact of the transit sector is smaller than the numbers mentioned above might suggest). Hence, in recent years, there has been a gradual decrease in the share of "transport and storage" in the Latvian economy as it has dropped from 12.3% in 2005 to 9.5% in 2015.[8] Also, the volumes of cargo transported have decreased in recent years: in 2016, the cargo transit sector witnessed a return to the approximate levels of 2010[9] (see Figure 6 and 7 in the Annex). The decrease may have different explanations – as reflecting the economic difficulties that Russia has faced amid the Western sanctions over its aggression in Ukraine, the impact of the decrease in prices for oil, fluctuations in demand for Russian export products overseas, as well as a precursor to the reorientation of Russia's cargo to its own ports. The latter factor will be further elaborated in the next part of the chapter.

The political aspects of Russian cargo transit

Cargo transit through Latvia has usually been subject to factors beyond a purely economic interaction, as economic activities in Russia are subject to a stronger political influence than in the West. Latvia's relationship with Russia has never been simple and harmonious, and therefore complications at the political level have been traditionally feared to have effects on economic relations. On top of that, Russia has been actively developing its own transport infrastructure, and it has facilitated cargo flow over its own infrastructure by different means.

The Strategy for Development of the Russian Sea-ports' Infrastructure until 2030 states that "[t]he main challenge for the [Russian] Baltic sea-ports will be the transfer of cargo oriented towards Russia from the ports of the Baltic states and Scandinavia."[10] Even though investment to support the reorientation of the cargo is immense in Russia, reducing dependence on external partners, as well as the potential for stimulating the domestic economy seem to serve as more important factors than using neighbours' ice-free ports (Russia's Finnish gulf ports are not ice-free) with possibly lower fares.

Already by the time of the approval of the aforementioned strategy, in 2012, the share of the total Russian export cargo dispatched through the ports of the Baltic states was 10%, compared to approximately 25% one decade earlier.[11] To support this dynamic, in addition to the major ports of Primorsk and Saint Petersburg, the newly built port Ust-Luga has been instrumental. It started operations in the early 2000s, and cargo volumes in this port have surged since then: in 2016, the total volume processed was 93.4 million tons,[12] with a further target of 191 million tons for 2025[13] (in 2016, the Latvian ports of Riga and Ventspils processed 37.1 and 18.8 million tons accordingly[14]). It is likely that Ust-Luga will gradually benefit most from the cargo reoriented from current exports through Latvian and Estonian ports.

When it comes to Latvia's political relationship with Russia, almost permanent complications have interchanged with fragmented attempts of rapprochements. From the point of view of the Latvian transit sector, complications in political relationships have almost always been feared to have negative implications for the sector, whereas efforts of pragmatisation of the relationship have raised hopes for not only retaining but also increasing the volumes of cargo flow.

The boldest example to date of the materialization of the worst expectations was the decision in 2002 to stop the transportation of crude oil through the pipeline to Ventspils (presently, only oil products (diesel) are transported). In August 2015, following the detention of the President of the state joint stock company Latvian Railway over bribery charges, loud rumors spread that Russia would halt the transit of coal through Riga (he was widely assumed to be well connected to the Russian railway elite

and beyond; coal constitutes approximately one-third of the Latvian rail and ports' cargo turnover (see Figures 3 and 4 in the Annex)). Similarly, in May 2017, rumours spread in media about a possible significant reduction of rail cargo transit over Latvian railways. It was alleged that such a step could be a retaliation over the Latvian government's decision to prevent the Ventspils Freeport Authority from being involved in the construction works of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline. On both occasions, the rumours did not materialize.

At the same time, Latvian politicians and entrepreneurs with transit related interests in Russia have traditionally been advocates for better political relations with Russia. At the height of the latest Latvian-Russian relations' rapprochement attempt following the visit of the President of Latvia to Russia in December 2010, the Latvian Ministry of Transport went as far as to prioritize the idea of a high-speed railway line to Moscow instead of the Rail Baltica project, a 1,435 mm or the so-called European gauge railway line set to reconnect the Baltic states with the West. Even though the idea of the new railway line to Moscow did not prevail, the impact of the transit sector on the Latvian foreign policy was demonstrated by another case. In 2014, Latvia was successful in lobbying against the inclusion of Russian Railways and its President Vladimir Yakunin in the EU sanctions list over Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Their inclusion in the list was feared to have negative consequences for the Latvian transit sector.

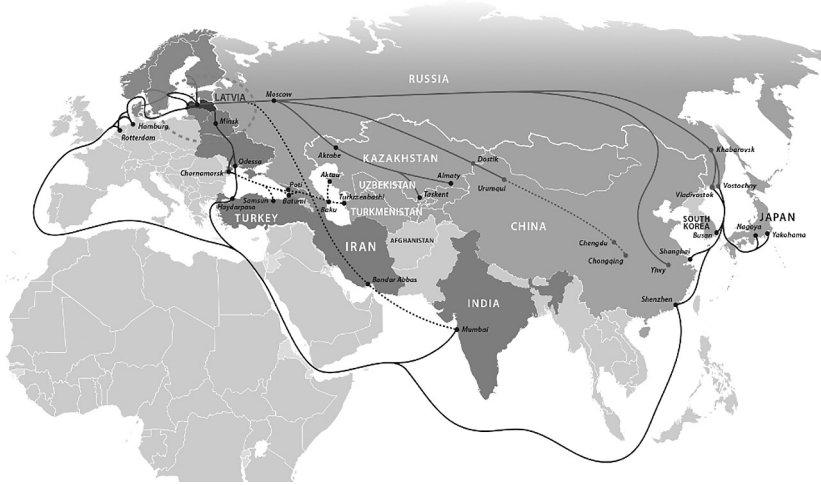
Transit beyond Russia

Latvian institutions and entrepreneurs are well aware of the risks that the transit sector is facing. Therefore, on the one hand, they are trying to retain current cargo transit through Latvia with the means they have. On the other hand, they are trying to find new markets to connect over the Latvian infrastructure. In recent years, a successful temporary attempt was the Northern Distribution Network, lines of communication to supply and redeploy the allied armed forces in Afghanistan. Latvia played a key role in coordinating the transportation of cargo to and from landlocked Afghanistan through its ports and

the Riga International Airport. The security situation in Afghanistan, however, has not allowed a further commercialization and expansion of these routes (though, some cargo is still being sent over these routes).[15] Nevertheless, more distant future prospects of connecting to Pakistan and other neighbouring countries via Afghanistan cannot be completely ruled out.

Hence, the highest stakes for alternative cargo sources in Latvia are seemingly put on China. Its cargo has been considered as the only possible sizable alternative, however, not as a substitute in volume, to existing cargo. A pilot train from Yiwu reached Riga during the Summit of the 16+1 cooperation format in Riga in November 2016 (an earlier pilot train from China arrived in 2008, however, it had no continuation), whereas in May 2017 another pilot train was dispatched in the opposite direction – to Kashgar in Western China. Latvia has also tried to use the opportunities that the Chinese led Belt and Road Initiative (sometimes referred to as the New Silk Road) and the 16+1 cooperation format (comprises China and sixteen Central and Eastern European countries) provide. Latvia has, amid those efforts, established a 16+1 Secretariat on Logistics Cooperation.

As a significant advantage of railroad transport between Latvian ports and China is considered to be the transiting time, approximately two to three times shorter than the sea routes between Asia and Europe. However, Latvia is only one of many European countries willing to attract cargo transit from and to China. Latvia's neighbour, Belarus, has established a close cooperation with China as it continues the development the Great Stone industrial park near Minsk and already runs regular container train lines from China to Western and Southern Europe (some containers from trains transiting Belarus are offloaded and then shipped through Latvian ports). The already established container train lines take the advantage of geography as the distance to Western and Southern Europe through Belarus and Poland is smaller. In turn, Latvia's advantage may be its more convenient position *en route* to Scandinavia. However, this advantage is also shared by ports in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, inland cargo transportation to and from China cannot outweigh the lower costs of the sea lines.



Latvia in the Eurasian multi-modal corridors as seen by the Latvian Ministry of Transport[16]

Another transport corridor with development perspectives, the North-South corridor, has seen renewed topicality in recent years. It is not only the Rail Baltica project which has the potential to revitalize cargo transportation between the Baltic States, Finland and Poland, as well as other EU Member States. There are also the Baltic Sea–Black Sea, as well as the related Black Sea–Caspian Sea–Central Asia connections. Transport connections between Baltic Sea ports and Black Sea ports are already provided by Zubr and Viking container trains. A further possible extension to this corridor goes towards Iran and India. Latvian Railway and other companies have been active in exploring and promoting the possibilities of cargo transportation over these routes (for example, the export of Latvian timber to Iran, as well as the import and export of commodities to India through Iran). The next few years will show if these routes will become viable.

Concluding remarks

Cargo transit has traditionally been a major issue in the Latvian Russian dialogue. However, as Russia is expected to gradually divert its cargo towards its own ports, the Latvian transit sector inevitably approaches a significant transformation. It is not yet clear when and how exactly it will happen. The seemingly inevitable contraction can be mitigated to a certain extent by extending current partnerships, creating new routes and through higher value-added transport operations. After the transformation, Latvian ports might still be in a suitable position to process some specialized Russian cargo, to retain and expand on the Western sourced cargo sent to Russia, as well as to operate as back-up ports when Russian ones might not be able to process the entire cargo, especially in winter. There is also potential to expand the cargo transit volumes from and to Belarus (thus also some of Chinese cargo related to Belarus), Ukraine, Central Asia and other Baltic states, as well as to expect revitalization of the South-North corridor as soon as the new Rail Baltica line is completed and to open other new markets. Nevertheless, the transit sector will be considerably smaller when measured in tons processed.

So far, Latvia has served as a bridge between the East and West. It has been a bridge in a rather narrow understanding – as a technical passage for the Russian export towards the West. The bridge, however, has not served as a solid foundation for a high-level political dialogue between Russia and the West, rather as a channel for Russian political influence in Latvia. With the transformation of the transit sector, the Latvian-Russian political relations can also be expected to transform further. Latvia's smaller dependence should narrow down the Russian influence in Latvia.

Annex

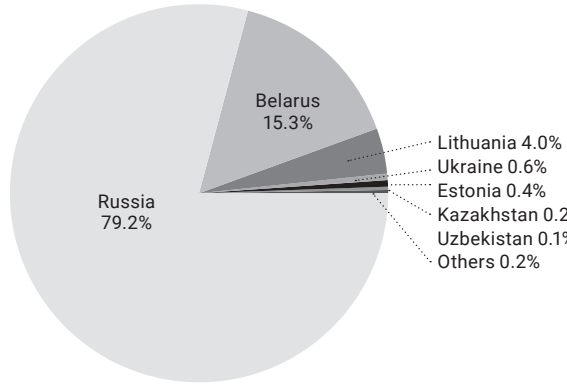


Figure 1: Sending countries of "import" and inland transit rail cargo of LDz Cargo, the biggest rail cargo carrier in Latvia, in 2016 (%)[17]

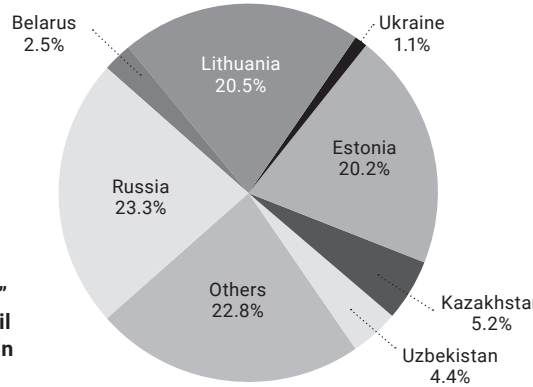


Figure 2: Receiving countries of "export" and inland transit rail cargo of LDz Cargo in 2016 (%)[18]

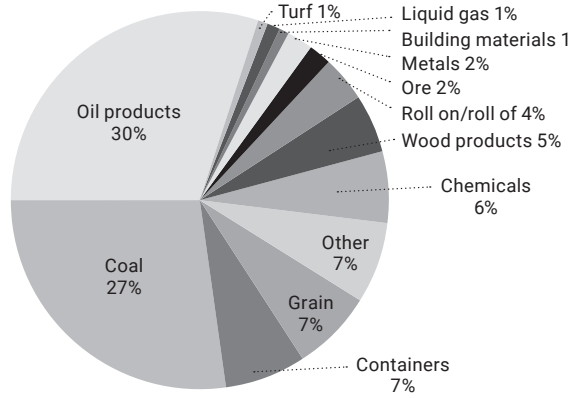


Figure 3: Cargo structure in the ports of Latvia in 2016 (%)[19]

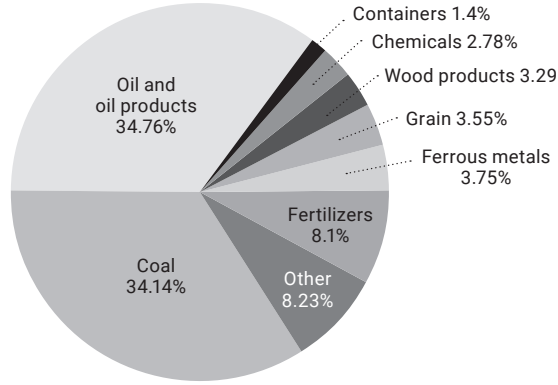


Figure 4: Cargo structure in the railways of Latvia in 2016 (%)[20]

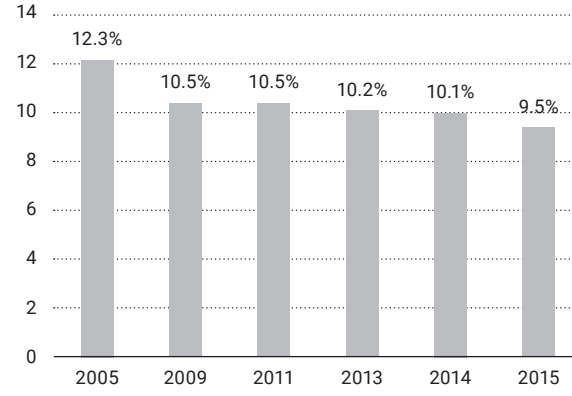


Figure 5: "Transport and storage" in the structure of the national economy of Latvia (value added, % in the respective years)[21]

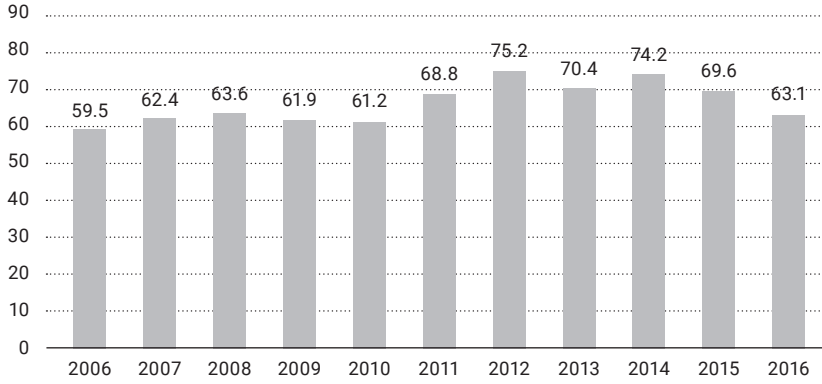


Figure 6: Cargo turnover in the ports of Latvia (million tons in the respective years)[22]

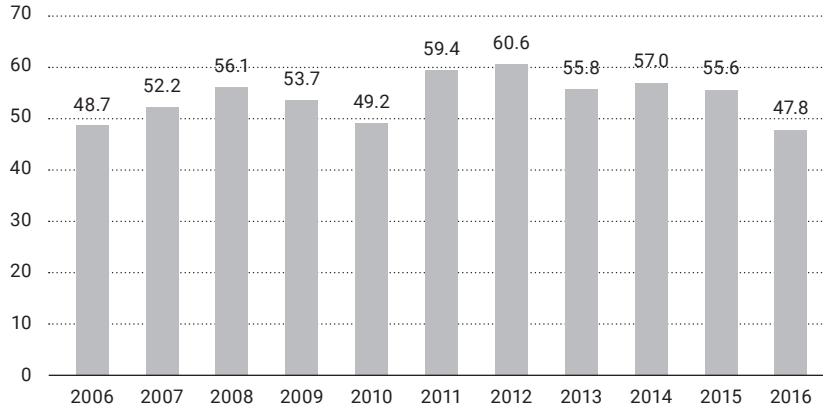


Figure 7: Cargo turnover in the railways of Latvia (million tons in the respective years)[23]

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Main Theses from the Roundtable "Riga Dialogue 2017: Transforming Euro-Atlantic Security Landscapes"

DIĀNA POTJOMKINA

"Riga Dialogue 2017: Transforming Euro-Atlantic Security Landscapes," the fourth edition of the annual roundtable in the Latvian capital, took place on May 16, 2017. Over sessions dedicated to new security trends, Russia-West relations, nuclear security, the Baltic and Black Sea regions and developments within the European Union, 40 high-standing experts and policy-makers from 15 countries across the Euro-Atlantic space discussed the current state of security as well as practical steps forward.

This summary aims to make the main points of the debate accessible to the general public. In doing so, it attempts to respect differences in opinion among participants that are observable along and across national lines. The broad number of countries represented around the table contributed both to a more inclusive view of security, not limited solely to US-Russia relations, and to a diversity of views. At the same time, we also see a broad consensus on such issues as the importance of continued interaction and trust in the Euro-Atlantic space or arms control. While this summary does not necessarily reflect the views of every participant of the Dialogue, it does indicate important differences and commonalities.

"New normal"

The confrontation between Russia and the West was felt very acutely in the first few years after the breakout of the conflict in Ukraine (2014). There was "a deep sense of urgency." By now, however, this discord

has become entrenched. Change occurs mainly at the level of internal political developments and in the Euro-Atlantic community's evolution of thinking. In words, dialogue between all involved stakeholders is increasingly recognized as important, even if the idea of "dialogue" is understood differently by different players.[1] Still, at the policy level, there have scarcely been any new initiatives or strategies, and even Donald Trump's strong interest in improving relations with Russia has not brought tangible results in relations between Russia and the West. Rather, key players in the Euro-Atlantic community are slowly "muddling through" without taking real ownership of the situation.

There are multiple reasons for this lack of initiative. For one, some participants argued that after the situation in Ukraine escalated, the expert community failed to suggest creative solutions to policy-makers. Policy-makers themselves sometimes use the confrontation strengthen their positions in domestic politics. The political cost of actually changing policies is very high because it requires convincing the public. Both Russia and the West also hope that the other side will eventually change their position and that therefore no action is presently required. Moreover, there is a fundamental lack of trust preventing both parties from finding cooperative solutions to the current crisis and also from believing that such solutions are, in principle, possible.

Stability has its positive aspects. The fear of unmanaged confrontation (confrontation that could easily lead to an escalation in the absence of communication channels) has subsided. On the whole, the Western community has maintained cohesion and has worked to address different conventional and unconventional threats. In particular, NATO allies in the Baltic Sea Region generally feel reassured, especially after the decisions taken at the Warsaw NATO summit in 2016.

Still, experts concurred that the current situation is less stable than it was during the Cold War. Trustworthy mechanisms of communication are still lacking. There are few agreed-upon rules, an insufficient ability to read each other's signalling and scarce experience in crisis management. The role of treaties has diminished, and verification mechanisms are weaker. All of this creates a sense of unpredictability. In addition, the West is less united than it was during the Cold War (more on this in the next

point). NATO, in the opinion of some participants, is too dependent on rapid reinforcement, still underdeveloped in its capacity for deterrence thinking, and it does not offer anything to non-member partner states. Other institutions, such as the UN and the OSCE, have been relegated to the background.

It is important to work on normalizing the situation. A crisis could be used for bringing forward new and creative policy solutions: "we should hope for crisis and not war." However, in the present circumstances, a new security order seems unlikely. The reduction of tensions and a "managed confrontation" currently seems to be the most achievable goal.

Shifts and expansions: wider borders of Euro-Atlantic security

Another major difference between the Cold War and now is the dramatically expanded circle of players in the security field. Instead of a bipolar international system, we see that Canada, the European Union and individual European countries (including non-members of the EU like Turkey, Ukraine and other countries of the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans) also play an important role in the overall landscape. Regional and sub-regional arrangements, including the European Union, the Nordic-Baltic Eight, other formats in the Baltic Sea Region, the Eastern Partnership etc. provide important contributions to overall security in the area. Moreover, the relevance of countries outside of the Euro-Atlantic space grows. The Middle East, for example, has been on the agenda for numerous years, and the Riga Dialogue has shown that Euro-Atlantic stakeholders are also interested in Central Asia and China. At the same time, the election of Donald Trump has raised questions about the continuation and quality of US global leadership. Many Europeans are wary of leaving the US, under the current Trump's leadership, to manage relations with Russia single-handedly, even if other players in the president's administration (including the Vice President Mike Pence) seem to treat cooperation with Europe seriously.

Participants of the Dialogue reached a broad consensus on the need to involve these various players in deliberations and practical initiatives. Ukraine has been an example of how a conflict concerning a non-EU, non-NATO state may dramatically alter the overall security situation in the Euro-Atlantic space (more generally, some experts have warned that crises in non-nuclear states may provoke a direct confrontation among nuclear powers). Opinions on how to deal with the conflict differ, but some experts and policy-makers alike believe that it is impossible to develop a sustainable Euro-Atlantic security architecture, or even a *managed* confrontation, until this crisis is resolved. The future resolution may or may not be linked to the now defunct Minsk agreements, but it is crucial to re-establish basic rules of interaction between Russia and the West. In the other Eastern Partnership states, as well as in the Western Balkans and Turkey, there are also current or potential tensions and transformations. The question is, whether and how solutions to these problems can be found.

On the Eastern partners' side, there is the strong but not fully met demand for security. Currently, the West does support its allies such as Georgia and Ukraine with capacity building and assistance packages, but this aid is not deemed sufficient by the recipient countries and at the same time Russian officials consider it a provocation. Some experts have also talked of managing the partner countries' expectations so that Western reassurance is not translated as a permit to engage in provocations. The situation in the Western Balkans also calls for closer international engagement. The West currently does not have a clear strategy for the region and does not pay sufficient attention to Russian interests in the region. The situation in the Black Sea region is similar, and some NATO allies are dismayed by the fact that the Western flank has received far better reassurance than the Southern partners. The Baltic States, despite being members of NATO, still feel threatened by Russian actions.

Europe in transformation

Europe is undergoing significant internal changes. A large part of these changes are related to volatility in domestic politics, which has or may have external repercussions. The 2017 elections were watched with concern as illiberal, populist forces gained strength in some of the largest and most internationally active EU countries. On a positive note, the results of the recent elections in France and the Netherlands were encouraging, and it is highly unlikely that any anti-European parties will gain a foothold in Germany. The French-German tandem partnership will therefore continue to operate. Illiberal leanings, however, persist in the abovementioned societies as well as in such major players as Poland, and they may resurface in the next elections – with direct security implications. The recent developments in Turkey, a member of NATO, are also a cause of concern.

The EU is changing its approach to engaging with the rest of the world, building a stronger security and defence policy. The European Global Strategy, adopted in 2016, makes a strong statement to this purpose. For instance, member states are now ready to create an EU operational headquarters in contrast with their earlier resistance to the idea, and there are other initiatives for even closer integration. However, a large role of the EU in the security field may not satisfy some member states who are worried of the EU attempting to replace NATO. Therefore, it remains to be seen what form this enhanced security cooperation will ultimately take, and whether it will actually happen as part of EU integration or on the basis of "outside" multilateral agreements among some willing EU states. Even if it happens as part of the EU integration, it may only involve the EU member states willing to participate. It should be noted that the future shape of the EU is currently under discussion, and one of the options is a more markedly multi-speed arrangement that would allow willing parties to move forward together but would also leave questions about the EU's internal cohesion.

In this context, Brexit is important. It leaves many questions as to Britain's future relationship with Europe and with NATO. Some countries are disconcerted because they believe Brexit will weaken the European

Union, even if the UK remains an active European player in the security field. Others have noted that the British government seems to use security as a bargaining chip in the Brexit negotiations instead of genuinely committing to future UK-EU security cooperation. Yet others believe that the British departure will open the way for enhanced cooperation on important issues, security in particular.

There is also the question of whether, and how, this "reinventing oneself" will reflect on the relationship of the EU and its member states with Russia. Currently, Europe is quite absorbed in internal issues. If it proceeds to actively shape international politics, it will need to develop Transatlantic relations and "a more activist foreign policy" that would not only satisfy its members but also respond to the international situation.

Dialogue and deterrence

Generally, Russia and the West are open to dialogue, even in the countries directly bordering Russia. Mutual sanctions failed to change policy on either side, so there is an understanding that other instruments are needed to deal with the situation. However, understandings differ on what dialogue entails, and some preconditions have been put forward.

In principle, dialogue should cover tangible problems as well as conceptual issues. An important block of topics for dialogue between Russia and the West is international security, including the situation in North Korea, Libya, Syria and Iran. Post-war settlement in Syria was highlighted as one issue requiring particularly urgent dialogue, although an easy solution is highly unlikely. Arms control (further examined below) is another topic for dialogue. Additionally, space, the Arctic and Antarctic, and economic issues (where there still are numerous common interests) could all be discussed. While work on smaller issues can potentially contribute to building trust, and even to taking "millimetre steps" in the right direction, in the longer-term, an agreement on conceptual issues will be necessary.

One of the impediments to dialogue is the abovementioned lack of trust and an insufficient understanding of each other's intentions.

The opinions of experts differ as to whether there should be any preconditions for dialogue, such as the other party's compliance with the first party's wishes or international norms. Both in Russia and in the West, many consider the opposite party's behaviour to be unacceptable, especially concerning the "common neighbourhood," Sweden's and Finland's cooperation with NATO, hybrid threats, propaganda and intervention in national elections. Some argue that trust is impossible while the basic principles that parties set forward continue to be violated and there is a lack of common values. Others believe that preconditions for trust cannot and should not be set, and that "cooperation is not a reward." Some representatives of Russia, in particular, believe that by putting forward preconditions, the West expects their country to fully comply with standards set by the West, depriving Russia of the possibility to set its own policy and priorities. A number of accusations about ignoring each other's basic interests have been voiced by both sides.

In contrast to the typical Cold War pattern of talks taking place between Russia and the US/NATO, there is support for more inclusive formats of interaction. This lines up with the broader understanding of who the stakeholders are in the Euro-Atlantic security community, as previously discussed. Russian officials also realize that on many questions, maintaining a dialogue only with the US is not feasible anymore. There is search for different platforms for dialogue after the Minsk format failed to bring results in several participants' opinion. However, there is no consensus: some experts believe that old mechanisms such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) should be revived, others propose new processes, and still others (some NATO member state) rely on NATO as the most trustworthy organization for interacting with Russia.

NATO has maintained a high degree of internal cohesion and has provided reassurance to its members located near Russia. At the same time, NATO-Russia dialogue is currently limited, does not lead to improved mutual understanding, and does not enjoy universal support in Russia or NATO. As some argued, the NATO-Russia Council is not dealing with the situation effectively and has generated few deliverables,

NATO is not introducing alternative discussion formats, and there is no military-to-military cooperation. The situation is hardly aided by the actions of Russian officials.

Some participants voiced concern that Russia may decide to deal bilaterally with certain NATO allies, leaving out the more sceptical ones. These worries are related to the current US administration as well as some European allies. However, NATO currently sustains quite a high degree of unity, so this scenario is not highly probable. US-Europe and NATO-European Union dialogues are very important in this regard.

The OSCE was highlighted as an institution that should be utilised to a greater extent. It is built on members participating on an equal basis, and it has experience and competencies that it put to good use in, for instance, Ukraine. Recognizing the potential of this organization, some experts advocated for a revision of the OSCE Vienna Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures. Others even called for a more fundamental "Helsinki II" process, spanning multiple areas and recreating the European security architecture. Aside from the OSCE, other formats are also possible, insofar as they involve the US, Canada, Russia and European countries. Experts also recalled the successful experience of cooperation with Russia in different Baltic Sea Region formats.

The participants encouraged the continued interaction by all stakeholders, not only at the official level but also at the level of experts, an idea that is exemplified by the Riga Dialogue itself. Additionally, people-to-people dialogue is important. As mentioned above, public support will be necessary for any policies that aim to overcome the current confrontation, and at present, such support is lacking.

Since hopes are scarce for a concrete settlement between Russia and the West at the moment, several experts called for more sustainable deterrence as a necessary complement to (but not a replacement for) dialogue. While some experts noted that deterrence should be developed further, others warned of inherent dangers in that approach. In particular, defensive measures are expensive and can be interpreted as offensive by the other party, either intentionally or inadvertently, leading to an arms race.

Some threats are not amenable to traditional deterrence. Building resilience and strengthening societies have become a major focus in the last few years, and Western countries have stepped up investments in the resilience of their partners and themselves. This involves such measures as fighting corruption, developing and strengthening democratic institutions and good governance, preventing malignant external economic influence, etc.

Arms control

There was a broad agreement between the participants that greater attention should be paid to arms control. Developing sophisticated proposals in this field may prove difficult for governments at this stage. There are already questions about the implementation of existing agreements (such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, INF), and uncertainty around whether we can ignore this and move forward with new treaties. (Some experts have argued that the current treaties cannot realistically be updated, so we need a new security architecture on the basis of which new agreements can be drafted.) Unfortunately, governments lack the capacity to develop new agreements, and it is not a popular solution politically. Arms control, however, is still a major issue that can help to stabilize the situation in the Euro-Atlantic space, and there was a general agreement that it demands a multilateral solution.

Since the Cold War era, there have been technological advancements and cultural changes that affect the possibilities for arms control. Some participants argued that future agreements should focus not so much on the quantities of weapons as on the behaviours of the parties. This means that parties should sustain military-to-military dialogue, explaining actions such as the development of new technologies, military exercises and military incidents. Complete transparency of intentions is necessary. Risk reduction and transparency are already being discussed in the NATO-Russia Council, but with few results so far.

While managing behaviours is an important new direction in arms control, many experts are still worried about military capabilities. When

parties have large military capabilities at hand, even benign intentions cannot be taken as a guarantee of security, as they can change overnight. With few channels of communication open, dangerous incidents can easily occur. In addition, the verification of capabilities helps to build trust. All of the above implies the need for deterrence to be coupled with mutual arms control and individual restraint.

Nuclear weapons are moving higher on the agenda. Since 2014, there has been a rise in nuclear signalling ("a lot of loose talk") and the modernization of nuclear forces in both Russia and the US. While this is, to a certain extent, a normal process, it acquired a new purpose and meaning in the last years. We should not expect an actual nuclear confrontation anytime soon, but it seems that the thresholds for the use of these weapons are becoming lower, and naturally, this situation does not help mutual understanding. The trend towards blending conventional and nuclear capabilities should also be controlled, as well as the militarization of space.

Control of other weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional capabilities is necessary. Additionally, the changing nature of modern warfare and the growing role of technology should be taken into account when ensuring transparency of capabilities. Technology has introduced new types of conventional weapons, an increased role of the informational component in nuclear capabilities, and other issues such as cyber terrorism and security of strategic infrastructure that all require regulation.

According to the experts, while new arms control initiatives clearly bind the US and Russia, in principle, they should be pan-European or even broader in scope. As mentioned above, some participants called for a revision of the OSCE Vienna Document, which foresees the exchange of military information and risk reduction activities. For nuclear arms control, some experts suggested broadened cooperation within the P5 process, where all the recognized nuclear states participate, though others argued that this format is not effective.

Endnotes

[1] The different ideas on dialogue were described at length in Diāna Potjomkina, "Main Theses from the "Riga Dialogue 2016: Building Bridges for Euro-Atlantic Security,"" *Riga Dialogue Afterthoughts 2016: Building Bridges for Euro-Atlantic Security* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2016), http://liia.lv/en/publications/riga-dialogue-afterthoughts-2016-building-bridges-for-euro-atlantic-security-542

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The "Riga Dialogue Afterthoughts 2017: Transforming Euro-Atlantic Security Landscapes" is a collective effort of ...

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