



# Restoring European Security

*From Managing Relations to Principled Cooperation*

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# ***Restoring European Security: From Managing Relations to Principled Cooperation***

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## Introduction

We are concerned about the security situation in Europe. Instead of co-operation, we see growing belligerence, and even violent conflict. Instead of common solutions, we see mounting problems and increasing dangers. We have different backgrounds and perspectives, but we share the view that cooperation rather than confrontation is needed to address problems and manage relations. We therefore came together in 2019 to form the Cooperative Security Initiative.

By means of a questionnaire, we attempted to stimulate people to think about why states need to work together for security and to deal with modern threats and challenges including pandemics, climate

change, nuclear proliferation, transnational organised crime and large flows of people on the move. We also devised a campaign through videos and social media to generate debate and critical thinking about why it is in the interest of states to work together.

Through consultations with well-informed professionals and students, we found broad support for our view that states urgently need to work together to resolve conflicts in Europe, while carrying out confidence and security-building measures. In the medium term, we argue that states need to return to the negotiating table to hammer out a new generation of arms control agreements, update

common principles and commitments to deal with contemporary realities and identify common interests. We urge states to hold a high-level meeting on European security to restore principled cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region by 2025 – the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

Ultimately, these steps will have to be taken by states. But we are all stakeholders in a safer Europe. Therefore, rather than drafting a report that remains consigned to the bookshelf, we hope that these results produced by the Cooperative Security Initiative can stimulate debate and action among diplomats, parliamentarians, civil society young people and in the

media. We aim to revive interest in, and support for, principled cooperative security and help shift momentum in the direction of more constructive relations between states.



## Alarm Bells and a Call for Action

### URGENCY

- It must not take a major war to restore or build a new European security system.
- There are already wars in Europe that involve great powers and a few hot-spots that could erupt into violent conflict.
- In the past few years, trust, common principles and agreements have been broken.
- Each side sees the other as being in decline, yet each side is also increasing its expenditures on military capabilities.
- The safety nets provided by arms control agreements and confidence-building measures are being cut away, while an arms race heats up. Continuation along this trajectory will make a major conflagration, either by accident or by design, more likely.

### REALPOLITIK NOT ALTRUISM

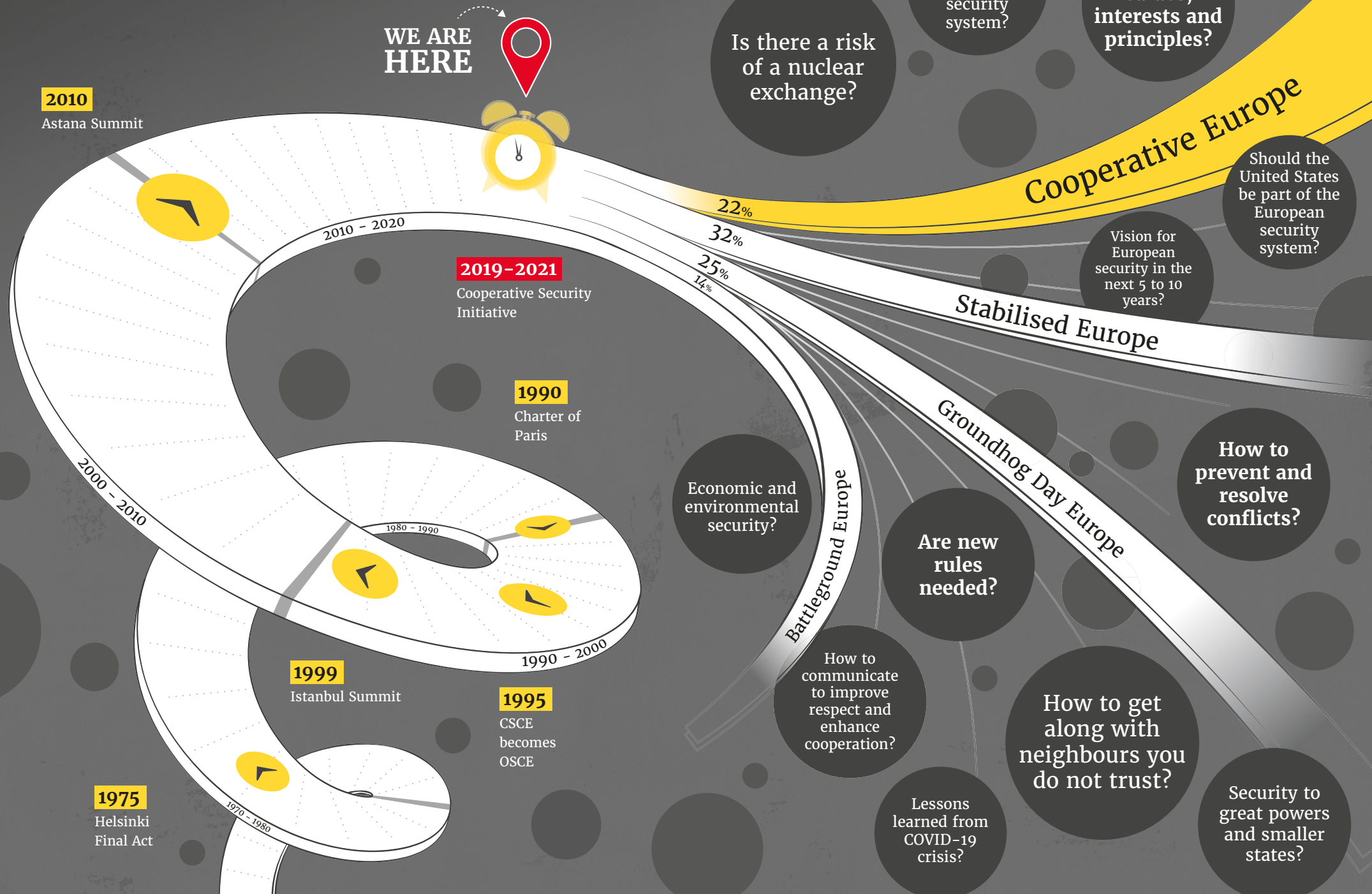
- To deal with transnational threats and challenges – like pandemics, climate change, large flows of people on the move, and organised crime – states need to work together: solidarity is self-interest. Cooperative security is necessity, not altruism.
- To safeguard national and European security interests, inter-state relations should become more cooperative: based on respect, meaningful dialogue, and adopting a constructive, problem-solving approach.
- To be sustainable and acceptable to all, a cooperative order in Europe must be rooted in commonly agreed principles and commitments: the rules of the road.
- Cooperation should not come at any price. In the process of restoring security in Europe, there should be no spheres of influence, nor should deals be made by great powers over the heads or behind the backs of other states. Cooperation must be principled and participatory. All countries must be involved in discussions and negotiations on the basis of sovereign equality.

### NEXT STEPS

- In the short term, the priority should be on limiting damage and managing differences peacefully.
- In the medium term, newly revamped arms control arrangements need to be agreed.
- Joint action should not be hindered by those who violate the rules or act as spoilers. In the absence of a broader consensus, interested countries should work together in the spirit of “flexilateralism”. Coalitions of the willing that respect international norms should demonstrate the potential and benefits of cooperation to the broader international community.
- Peace in Europe is too important to be solely left up to diplomats. It also needs input from parliamentarians, young people, civil society, the private sector and think tanks as well as exposure in the media.
- In the longer term, states should work towards a high-level event – like a summit on security and cooperation in Europe – that can focus the attention of leaders on the need for peace, create meaningful dialogue, identify shared interests, confront shared threats and challenges, reaffirm common principles, and agree on new commitments if necessary. This summit should result in a new founding document for European security, built on commonly agreed, principled cooperation to serve as the framework for security in Europe.

# Spiralling out of Control?

## Future options for European security



## A Story of Now: Dealing with the Unthinkable

European security is broken. Whereas war in Europe was “unthinkable” just a few years ago, recently there has been heavy fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, a simmering conflict in Ukraine, unrest in Belarus and protracted conflicts in other parts of Europe. People are dying, being injured, and displaced. In addition, tensions are brewing in a number of regions including the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Arctic. There is almost no meaningful dialogue, but plenty of belligerent rhetoric: interstate relations have literally become toxic. Divisions and distrust between Russia and the West heighten the risk of military incidents, accidents and escalation – even a nuclear exchange. The safety nets provided by arms control agreements and confidence-building measures are being cut away as a new arms race heats up. A continuation along this trajectory could lead to a major conflagration. At the same time, countries are grappling with the health, economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a pervasive sense of uneasiness, loss of control and even disbelief at developments in many parts of the OSCE area – not to mention the rest of the world.

When we asked people what they thought could trigger new conflicts, issues that were mentioned included migration, far-right radicalism, an arms race, and military misperceptions. A significant number also mentioned Russian aggression.

In terms of relations between Russia and the West, the central challenge is the crisis in and around Ukraine. This constitutes a dangerous intensification of a division that emerged much earlier. It is both a symptom and cause of the breakdown in trust and a violation of the rules that have governed order in Europe since the end of the Second World War and certainly since the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

Yet many people – including leaders – seem to think that, even if flawed, the status quo is acceptable, or there is nothing that can be done about it. In relations between Russia and the West, both sides seem to be convinced that they are right, that it is the responsibility of the other side to blink first, and that time is on their side. Moves on the geopolitical chessboard of Europe are seen as part of a zero-sum game where security can be achieved only at someone else’s expense. We are caught up in a classic security dilemma.

The sense of instability is heightened by the drama surrounding the COVID-19 crisis, the unpredictability of actions by the

United States and Russia, strains within the EU (like Brexit and the challenge posed by illiberal democracies), different viewpoints on how to deal with China, as well as misinformation and fake news. The sense of common values among states has eroded, and almost all the principles outlined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris have been violated.

Faith in multilateralism is breaking down. Institutions designed to protect and promote European security appear either to be divided by internal strife, or unable to deal with contemporary challenges like a pandemic, mass migration, cyber threats, organised crime, or the impact of the environment on security.

As a result, we are witnessing an **“inflection point”** in European security when old rules and institutions have been undermined, but new ones are not yet in place. This is nothing new. Periods of dramatic change create upheaval. Antonio Gramsci wrote in his prison notebooks: “The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear”. Our period of change is characterised by a shift from globalisation to countries erecting walls, and adopting a “me first” approach to sovereignty and foreign policy. **States are trying to go it alone at precisely the time when they need to be**

**working together. Now is the time for cooperative security!**

While we live in strange and dangerous times, the current mood of crisis should be a wake-up call: to stop taking for granted, or even losing, the security and normative system that has been built up since the end of the Second World War. The anniversaries of 2020 should remind us of important milestones in multilateral peace, cooperation and security: the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter, the 50th anniversary of the UN General Assembly declaration on good neighbourly relations, the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Paris, and the 10th anniversary of the Astana summit. Compared to the current world situation, these events and consensus-based documents look like high-water marks in the recent history of international relations. If there is to be order in Europe, these commitments need to be respected and implemented. They continue to form the bedrock for peace, security and cooperation. Indeed, the abrogation of many of these commitments and principles over the past two decades and the instability that has followed demonstrates the enduring value of these common agreements.

But while these principles and commitments remain vital as “rules of the road”, we cannot only look back to the past. The

security environment today is different. Therefore, founding principles of pan-European security need to be interpreted and applied in the context of modern realities, and, where necessary, new commitments need to be added to address emerging challenges like cyber security, new technologies, and the impact of the environment on security. **Dwelling on or romanticising the way things used to be or ought to be is not going to help address the ways things really are today.**

The COVID-19 crisis shows that basic assumptions can be overturned quickly, for better or for worse – that people can rally together and do things differently for the sake of survival when there is a sense of urgency and a common cause. We need that same sense of urgency and unity when it comes to pulling Europe back from the brink of a major security crisis. We should not be spectators to the current dangerous events. As Marshall Glanz has pointed out, “in a story of now, we are the protagonists and it’s our choices that shape the story’s outcome”.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://marshallglanz.usmblogs.com/files/2012/08/Chapter-19-Leading-Change-Leadership-Organization-and-Social-Movements.pdf>

\* Data presented in this report is based on the analysis of 273 SurveyMonkey® responses as of November 2020.

## *From “Battleground Europe” to “Cooperative Europe”: possible future options for security*

Things that were unthinkable just a few years ago, like a pandemic bringing society to a halt or war in the heart of Europe, have suddenly become a reality. Could in a similar fashion positive things like rebuilding trust and cooperation in Europe, slowing down the pace of climate change, and reducing the threat of nuclear war become thinkable? Or was the relatively peaceful decade after 1990 merely an aberration and things have simply reverted to a messy normality?

We asked people for their views on what European security could look like in the next five to ten years. Responses\* can be clustered roughly into four possible options: Battleground Europe; Groundhog Day Europe; Stabilised Europe and Cooperative Europe.

### **BATTLEGROUND EUROPE**

14 percent of respondents expressed the view that the future will be characterised by insecurity, with major players dictating the rules of the game, carving out spheres of influence, engaging in an arms race, and countries adopting na-

tional or bilateral approaches to resolving an ever-growing range of crises. Fighting rages in several theatres in Europe. This could be termed Battleground Europe – a scenario we must make all possible efforts to avoid.

### **GROUNDHOG DAY EUROPE**

One quarter of respondents felt that Europe will muddle on much like at present: the system is fragmented, the crisis in Ukraine simmers on, there is a multi-speed EU, and a stabilisation in relations between Russia and the West – but no major breakthroughs. Countries take action through ad hoc arrangements, like coalitions of the willing, and cooperate in niche fields. We call this Groundhog Day Europe – waking up every day to a series of tedious and familiar events.

### **STABILISED EUROPE**

Around one-third of all respondents (32%) believe that “partial security” can be achieved in the next 5 to 10 years. In this option, the EU becomes more united, has its own army and has gained more independence from American influence. Russia is not part of the European security architecture, but there is dialogue and peaceful coexistence. The Ukraine conflict has been brought to a peaceful resolution. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been resolved, or at least

contained. There is a mix between cooperative and collective security arrangements. This could be termed an improved status-quo option, or Stabilised Europe.

### **COOPERATIVE EUROPE**

On a more optimistic note, 22% of respondents envision a European security system based on cooperation. Such a system is characterised by states engaging in critical self-reflection and recognising their self-interest in working together, greater economic connectivity, and a shared understanding of security, as well as more effective multilateralism. There is a constructive dialogue between Russia and the West, and joint efforts to resolve conflicts and tackle common threats and challenges. This is obviously the option that we consider most desirable, and which the Cooperative Security Initiative is designed to bring back into the debate over European security.

Some may call this idealistic, even naïve. But who is more idealistic: those who think that they can win a tactical nuclear war, or those who want to prevent one? Who is being more realistic: a leader who seeks to work with others to address common problems, or one who thinks his country can do everything on its own? Cooperative security is realpolitik based on norms, not a fantasy.

## What is your vision for European security in the next 5 to 10 years?

**32%**  
Stabilised  
Europe

**25%**  
Groundhog Day  
Europe

**22%**  
Cooperative  
Europe

**14%**  
Battleground Europe

**8%**  
Unassignable

Our survey also highlighted the potential of involving stakeholders often excluded from debates on international security, such as women and young people. Interestingly, female respondents were more

optimistic about the future of European security than males.

Furthermore, students were more optimistic than experts.

### What is your vision for European security in the next 5 to 10 years?

Vision	Female (n=96)	Male (n=172)
Battleground Europe	8.3%	14.0%
Groundhog Day Europe	16.7%	27.9%
Stabilised Europe	34.4%	27.9%
Cooperative Europe	25.0%	18.6%
Unassignable	11.5%	5.8%
No answer	4.2%	5.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Vision	Experts (n=92)	Students (n=81)
Battleground Europe	12.0%	8.6%
Groundhog Day Europe	28.3%	16.0%
Stabilised Europe	27.2%	38.3%
Cooperative Europe	22.8%	24.7%
Unassignable	6.5%	7.4%
No answer	3.3%	4.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### HOW IMPORTANT ARE SHARED VALUES FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION?

The cross-tabulation of answers to the question as to whether shared values are essential for the European security architecture and the question concerning visions for the European security architecture are quite instructive. Respondents who are more pessimistic about the future of European security also tend to regard shared values as being essential for cooperation. This suggests that they see a less likely prospect of shared values in the next 5 to 10 years, and therefore greater insecurity. Conversely, those who do not regard shared values as essential for cooperation are more likely to imagine a Stabilised Europe or even a Cooperative

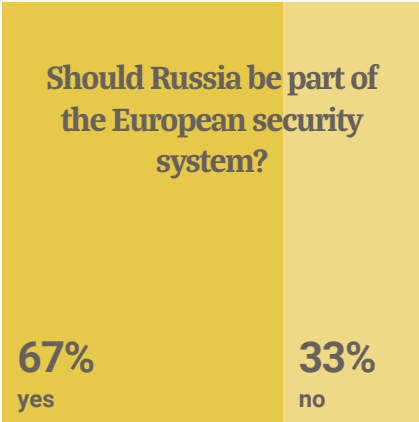
Europe. Moving forward, we believe that it will be important to identify common interests as well as common values: what is vital is that states follow common rules. Having different values should not be an impediment to constructive dialogue and even cooperation as long as all sides stick to the same rules.

### A PLACE FOR RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES IN A EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM?

Where do the Russian Federation and the United States fit into possible future scenarios for European security? One could argue that by the time of the Ukrainian crisis Russia had failed to emerge, or be treated, as a strong stakeholder in European security; and precisely this fact made

Are shared values essential for cooperation?				
	Battleground Europe	Groundhog Day Europe	Stabilised Europe	Cooperative Europe
Essential	57.1%	60.9%	50.6%	53.6%
Not essential	31.4%	39.1%	49.4%	46.4%
Unassignable	8.6%	0%	0%	0%
No answer	2.9%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

the crisis seem less of a risk from the perspective of the Kremlin. On the other hand, the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia’s role in the war in eastern Ukraine as well as cyber-attacks, interference in elections and the poisoning of opposition figures make it hard – even for those who favour cooperation – to accept Russia as a potentially reliable partner. The extraordinary challenge at hand is therefore to find a suitable and acceptable role for Russia in the European security order, but in a way that creates security for all. Two-thirds of respondents to our qualitative survey believe that Russia should be part of the European security system, and detail why: it is a participating state in the OSCE, a major nuclear power, and faces threats similar to those confronting many countries in the rest of Europe.



That being said, most respondents said

that Russia’s participation should be conditional: for example it should “return Crimea to Ukraine”, “stop undermining the security and sovereignty of its neighbours”, “embrace European values and play by the commonly agreed rules”. At the same time, it is worth noting that shared values do not seem to be an obstacle to Russia being part of the European security system. Almost 60% of respondents who said that shared values are essential to cooperation also said that Russia should be part of the European security system. Less surprisingly, 76.6% of respondents who adopted a more pragmatic approach (and answered that shared values are not essential for cooperation) said that Russia should be part of the European security system. As William Hill pointed out, this means that the states of North America and Europe will have to “find a place for the Russia we have, rather than the Russia we wish we had”.<sup>2</sup> For Russia, it means demonstrating a willingness to play by the rules and be a reliable and constructive partner. History shows that it is hard to achieve peace with Russia in Europe, but there will be no durable peace in Europe without Russia.

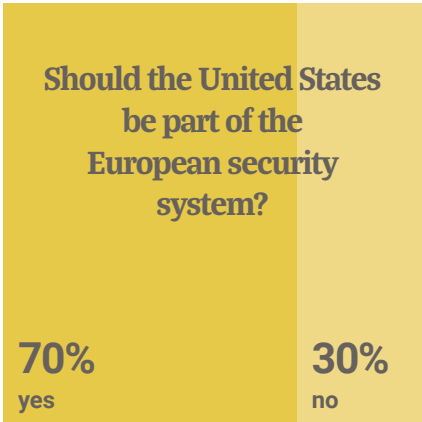
Mirroring the answer to the question on Russia in Europe, around two-thirds of respondents say that the US should be part

<sup>2</sup> W. Hill (2018): No Place for Russia. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 395



of the European security system. Until recently, this was the conventional wisdom in North America and Western Europe. After all, since the Second World War, the US has been a key guarantor of stability in Europe. But disengagement from Europe during the Trump administration, putting NATO in question, and withdrawal from key arms control agreements has raised questions about America's long-term commitment to European security and respect for treaties. Furthermore, the dysfunctional US-Russia relationship over the past twenty years has become a risk factor for European security and is hampering the ability of the sides to deal with global threats and challenges that they have in common. This risk can only be mitigated through diplomacy and a dialogue in which all stakeholders participate – Americans, Russians, and all other countries in Europe, no matter their size or position on the map.

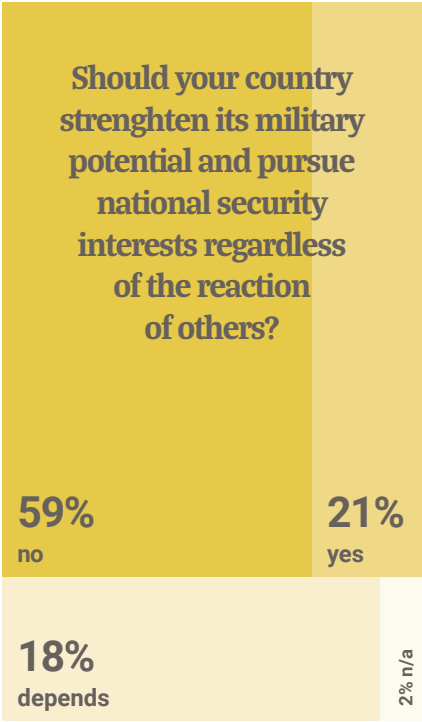
Should Russia be part of the European security system?	Are shared values essential for cooperation?	
	Yes	No
No	39.5%	22.5%
Yes	59.9%	76.6%
No answer	0.6%	0.9%
Total	100%	100%



Many respondents perceived the US as a traditional partner that subscribes to similar values and has a unique military and economic capacity. However, the responses also noted that within the European security system the US should “behave as an equal partner rather than a sovereign”, “stop confusing its economic interests with security”, and “actively support EU integration and strategic autonomy”. In short, both proponents and critics of the US seem to be saying that if Americans are to recommit to full participation in a system for managing European security, they should do so on the basis of clearly defined mutual interests with the majority of European states, and transparency in responsibilities and expectations.

RESOLVING THE SECURITY DILEMMA

Having the United States and Russia as part of a cooperative security system should help to resolve the security dilemma, since they would both be key stakeholders in the European security order. These great powers should also realise their self-interest in working with their neighbours and other countries with a stake in European security, and vice versa. At a minimum, they should find a way to coexist peacefully.



Interestingly, a significant percentage (59%) of people who replied to our survey do not think that their country should strengthen its military potential and pursue national security interests regardless of the reaction of others. While we do not claim that our set of respondents is necessarily representative of a broad spectrum of public opinion in the countries concerned, this result, obtained from a section of well-informed professionals and students of politics, suggests that people are less belligerent than their leaders and there could be grassroots support for a more cooperative approach to security and space for exploring alternatives to the militarisation of security policies.

If this is the case, and yet countries need to defend themselves, how is it possible to break out of the security dilemma? The answer has been provided by states themselves: in 1999 at the OSCE Istanbul Summit. On that occasion, OSCE heads of state and government agreed that:

“Each participating State has an equal right to security. We reaffirm the inherent right of each and every participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve. Each State also has the right to neutrality. Each participating State will respect the rights of all others in these regards. They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the

security of other States. Within the OSCE no State, group of States or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence.”

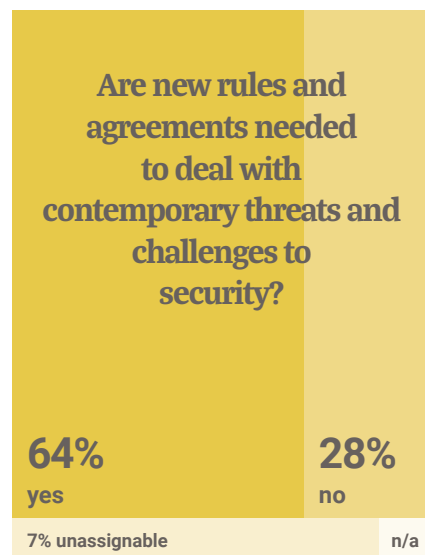
Creating a broader sense of community is one way for states to buy into a less confrontational approach to security. Such a vision was expressed a decade ago in December 2010 at the Astana summit, where OSCE heads of states re-committed themselves to “the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals.” Do the leaders of the 57 OSCE states still share this vision? If so, they need to work out how to get there together. If not, then a different unifying agenda needs to be devised.

Surprisingly, almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents to our survey think that new rules and agreements are needed to deal with contemporary threats and challenges to security. This should provide a pause for reflection to those who think that the existing normative framework is sufficient.

The respondents believe that new rules and agreements should be sought in is-

sue areas that have not been the main focus of existing agreements, for example on cyber security, the impact of climate change on security, and dealing with transnational threats. The very process of working on these new rules and agreements could help improve cooperation.

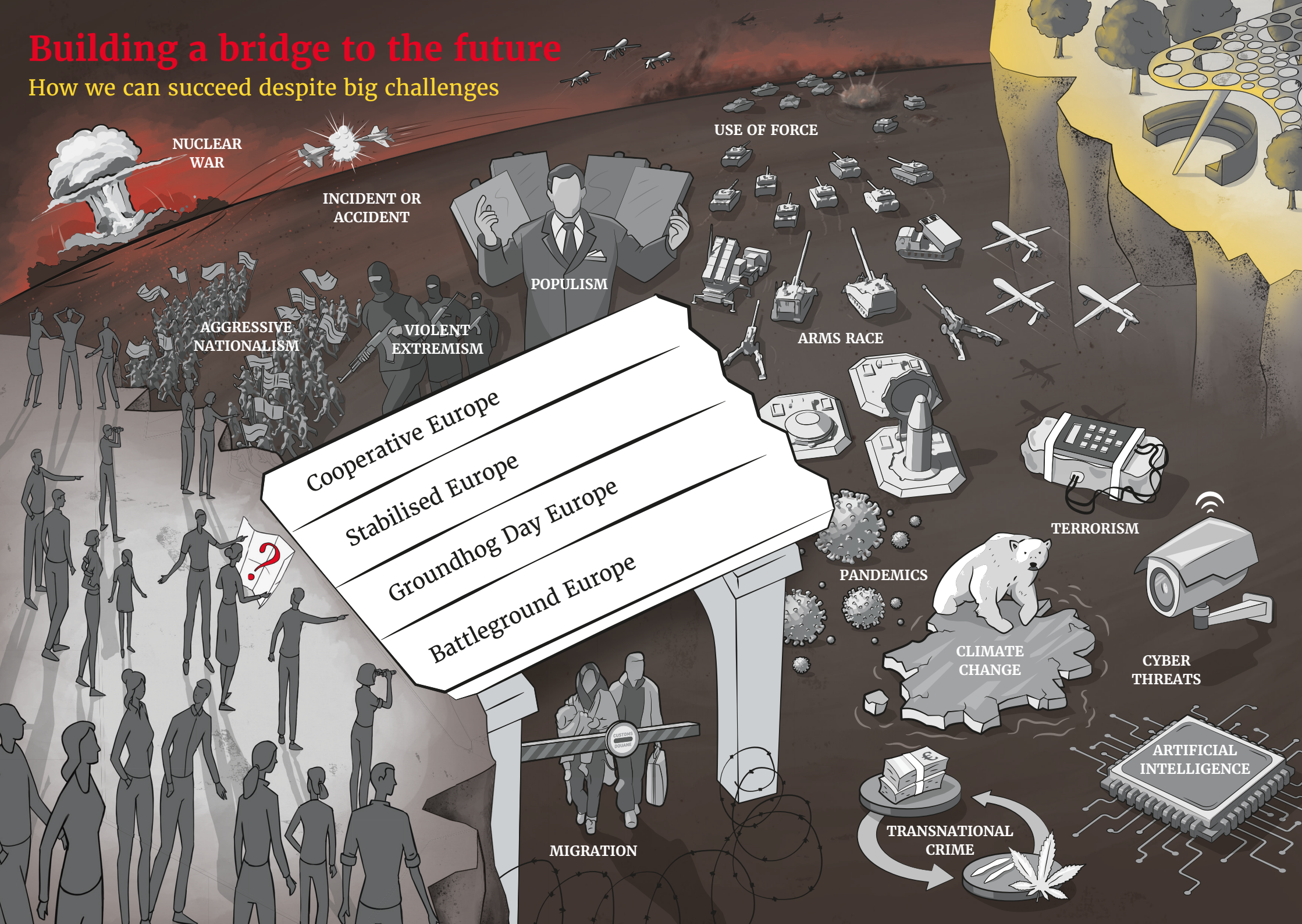
As such, a number of factors point to the need for a more cooperative approach to security: the need to avoid conflict, reduce tensions, manage relations peacefully, and work together to address common threats and challenges. While a more cooperative approach to security is both necessary and thinkable, is it do-able? We need to (re)start a process towards cooperative security.





# Building a bridge to the future

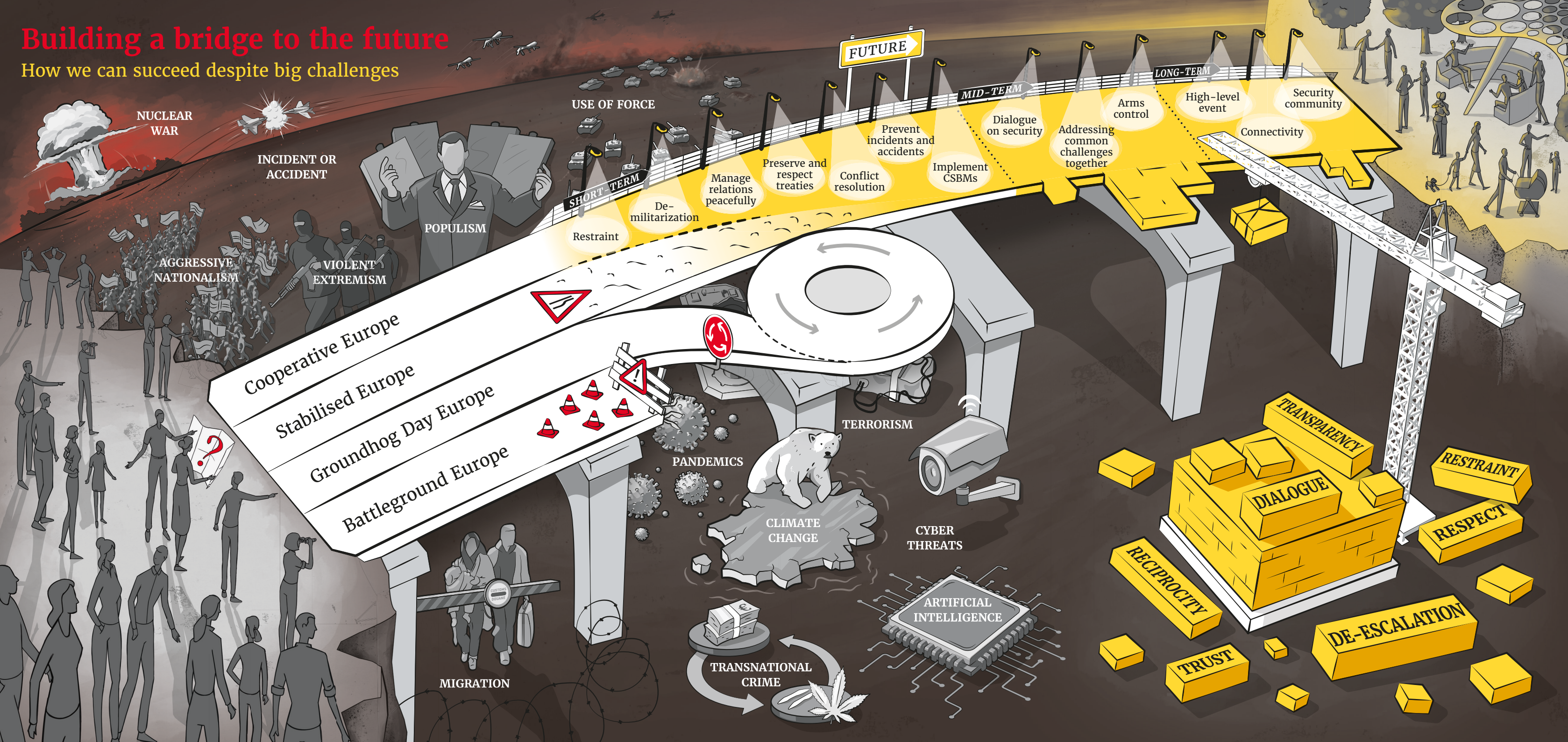
How we can succeed despite big challenges





# Building a bridge to the future

How we can succeed despite big challenges

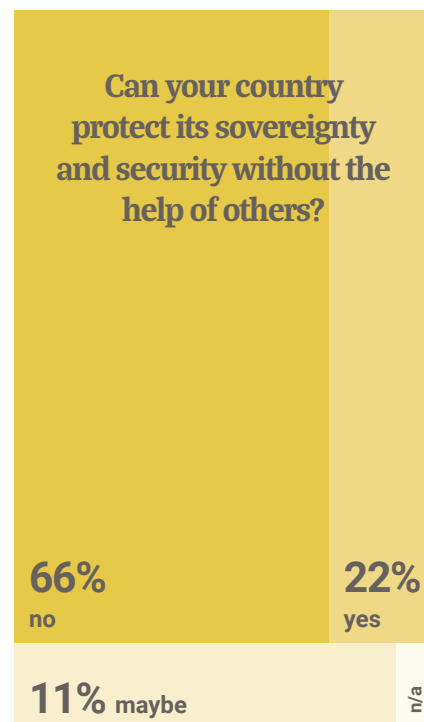




# The Case for Cooperative Security

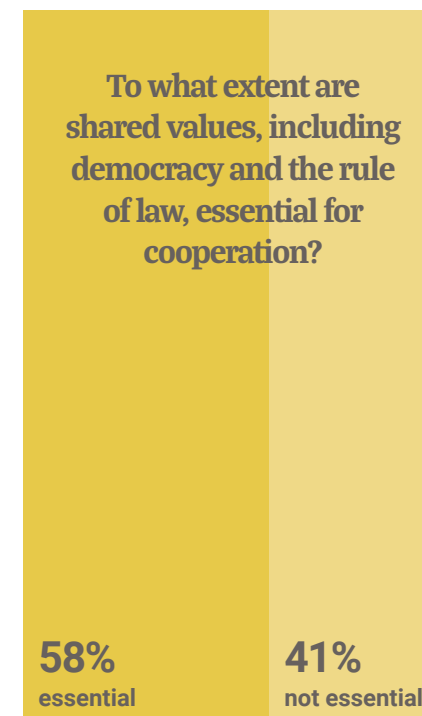
If the aim is cooperative security, what does that mean? Cooperative security is both a process and an objective: states working together for the same end in a constructive, collaborative way. Unlike collective security which is defensive (an alliance against something/someone), cooperative security is a more outward-looking concept. It comes into play when the security question at hand is not who we should defend ourselves against, but who we need to cooperate with in order to address particular issues. Climate change and environmental degradation, regulating the impact of technology (like artificial intelligence) on our lives, coping with large flows of refugees and migrants, pandemics, arms control, transnational organised crime, cyber threats, and nuclear safety: these are issues on which states need to work together. Indeed, on several global issues, either there is a cooperative solution or no solution at all. As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres put it in his address to the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, "In an interconnected world, it is time to recognize a simple truth: **solidarity is self-interest.**" Tellingly, this point is shared by most people who took part in

our survey. More than two-thirds feel that their country cannot protect its sovereignty without the help of others – which implies that cooperation is vital for national security.



The COVID-19 crisis is a stark warning. The virus does not care about borders or propaganda. The spread of this pandemic has shown the importance of cooperation within communities, between states, and as an international community. National solutions are insufficient: either to stop the spread of the virus, or to develop a remedy.

This crisis shows that our survival depends on truth, trust and cooperation.



Cooperative security is particularly attractive for small and medium-sized countries: there is safety in numbers, and advantages in pooling resources. And for neutral countries, cooperative security offers many of the benefits of being in an alliance without having to take sides. It is no coincidence that neutral and non-aligned countries were the bridge-builders during the Helsinki process and the Cold War. But in an inter-connected world of complex and major challenges that do

not respect borders, even great powers have a self-interest to cooperate. In short, enhanced cooperation between both great powers and small and medium-sized states is needed to pool resources and capabilities to the mutual benefit of all the actors involved. Such cooperation can be facilitated through participation in multilateral organisations.

Cooperative security works best when there are shared values, but this is not a prerequisite. Indeed, a significant percentage (41%) of people who took part in our survey said shared values are not essential for cooperation. That being said, a significant number of female respondents (70%) believe that shared values are essential for cooperation.

Looking deeper into the qualitative responses, a number of respondents made a distinction between "thin" and "deeper" cooperation. Cooperation to a limited extent or on a select range of issues may be possible without shared values, but the intensity of cooperation is usually greater when there is shared understanding of the rule of law, common principles, and democracy.

Furthermore, security can be built through cooperation: it is not necessary to feel secure or trust each other in order to start talking and working together. In fact, the very process of dialogue and inter-action

can build trust. However, relations must be guided by common rules and principles that the parties themselves have developed and agreed to, and there must be a common interest in security. The rules are there to ensure fairness, and to bring about a degree of predictability. This is a defining feature of **principled cooperation**. Rather than just making deals in a transactional way that benefits one or both of the parties at the expense of international law, existing principles and commitments and even the sovereignty of other countries, principled cooperation is anchored in commonly agreed principles like those in the UN Charter and Helsinki Final Act. These have to be seen as the fundamental sine qua non for cooperative security.

Cooperative security is an approach to conceptualising security policy which encourages states to jointly identify and prevent threats – both national and transnational – rather than counter them through deterrence or the use of force. It relies on establishing elements of common threat perceptions, the demonstration of restraint by all parties, the privileging of dialogue, conflict-prevention, rules-based interaction, good neighbourly relations, and a gradual move towards – at a minimum – peaceful coexistence. This can create the basis for joint action if necessary.

Cooperative security is based on sover-

eign equality. All countries must be involved and negotiations and decisions should be taken together on the basis of consensus. Cooperative security requires a degree of empathy: to understand that the other side may have a different history and culture as well as different perceptions and interests, but wants to be treated with dignity and respect.

This approach requires the various sides to listen to one another, to be transparent and constructive, and to not seek to enhance their security at the expense of others. It requires trust-building steps, predictability, reciprocity, and pragmatism based on common principles.

Cooperative security does not mean condoning the other side, compromising for the sake of compromise, or sacrificing one's values, principles or interests. On the contrary, it is based on the assumption that states collaborate out of self-interest: **there is a pay-off from working with others** – benefits that cannot be derived by acting alone. Thus, cooperative security is based on the national and collective interests of states rather than altruism.

Cooperative security will not necessarily lead to perpetual peace – although that would be nice. Rather, it is designed to prevent war and to manage relations peacefully. Cooperative security is based

on a longer-term perspective rather than one-off transactions. This longer-term perspective coupled with a comprehensive set of issues on the agenda means that states have an incentive to work together in order to keep the process going, to get a pay-off, whereas the cost of defection could mean retaliation on other issues or at a future stage in a way that is disadvantageous to that state. Indeed, the credibility of any future agreement is harmed if existing agreements fail to be honoured (hence *pacta sunt servanda*). In short, reciprocity with a future-oriented perspective enables cooperation to thrive.

Unfortunately, trust has reached such a low point at the moment that even talking to the other side is considered disloyal. Opposing parties fear that their own ventures at cooperation will be misused or instrumentalised by the other side. As a result, countries are closed off from each other, blowing hot air into their own bubbles and beating the drums of war. External threats are played up to distract attention from problems at home. This may help to firm up internal cohesion, but it sends belligerent signals across the border, fuelling the very perception of threat that is being talked up at home.

We need to get back to the basics. States need to speak with one another. To listen. Show respect. Show a degree of empathy – to understand the viewpoint of the oth-

er. All sides need to talk about their grievances and concerns, admit mistakes, or correct false impressions. This will not be easy. The alternative is that leaders keep shouting in their echo chambers. This will not bring peace. Indeed, there is no current or historical precedent that suggests that reducing or cutting off dialogue will somehow dissuade or change bad behaviour.

In the current environment, it is unrealistic to expect states to identify a common set of interests on which they can agree. But **they could at least agree on what they want to avoid, namely war**. That would be a good basis on which to start talking. As Willy Brandt said, “peace is not everything, but without peace, everything is nothing.” At a minimum, states should reaffirm – in words and deeds – the common principles and commitments to which they have agreed, and start brainstorming about new ones not yet covered by existing agreements.

In terms of joint action, progress should be made where progress is possible, among a group of countries that are willing and able to act in order to uphold common principles, commitments and decisions. This may require different cooperation formats working on different issues at different times. On some issues cooperation will be “thicker”, on others the common basis will be thinner. The

challenge will be to find the right constellation at the right time, to deliver, while at the same time linking in to formal inter-governmental institutions and international laws for the sake of legitimacy. There are precedents for such coalitions of the willing, or what could be called “security cooperatives” – on a case by case basis, states contributing according to their means, and joining in.

So European security cooperation in the next decade will likely rely on constant ad hoc arrangements, especially sub-regional ones, and including ones that never looked realistic before. Such a system of “**flexilateralism**” may well resemble an “interwoven spaghetti bowl” of formal multilateral frameworks and institutions

that must be defended, reformed, and revamped with more flexible contact groups on different crises to provide the necessary agility and flexibility needed to address urgent crises. This may weaken the inclusive regional nature of an organisation like the OSCE, but frankly, participating States seem to have done that already. More flexible and innovative arrangements – based on common principles and commitments – would overcome gridlock, restore faith in the ability of states to act, and in the process both strengthen cooperation and demonstrate its benefits.

# An Agenda for Principled Cooperation

When setting an agenda for cooperation in the future, let's not go back to normal. Normal wasn't working. The past decade, if not the past two (since the crisis in Kosovo in 1999), has been characterised by bickering, selfishness, short-sightedness, and the breaking of commitments and trust. This has led to unsustainable approaches to security and development and violations of the rule of law – even war.

In an ideal world, states would act in the interests of the global commons, and the pan-European security community. They would work together, live in peace and prosperity and enjoy common benefits as a result. Realising such a vision – shared by 57 OSCE participating states as recently as the Astana Summit in December 2010 – is a long way off, but it is a noble aspiration that should remain as a beacon on the hill.

But we cannot afford to wait and simply hope for a better future. The roof of our common European home is burning and we face serious global challenges. Therefore, a number of short-term measures are urgently needed, followed by medi-

um-term ones that can contribute to a safer Europe in the longer term. These measures should not be considered a blueprint for solving all of Europe's problems. Rather, they set out a framework for action to manage relations more peacefully and move states towards a more co-operative approach to security. The basis throughout should be principled cooperation – as a means and an end.

## SHORT TERM: DAMAGE CONTROL AND STABILISING RELATIONS

- States need to **exercise restraint** and tone down their rhetoric. Instead of monologues, states need to engage in meaningful dialogue: to look for opportunities to communicate good will, and show an interest in engagement to **manage relationships** in a peaceful way.
- **Existing treaties should be preserved** to stop the existing security system from unravelling, and existing organisations should be shielded from political quarrels.
- Renewed efforts should be made **at the highest level to resolve the crisis** in and around Ukraine and the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The aim should be to be to put an end to the fighting and improve the lives of civilians who are suffering. Medi-

ation formats themselves can help to strengthen trust and cooperation among the mediators, including great powers, for example France, the Russian Federation and the United States as co-chairs of the Minsk Group.

- Modalities should be agreed to **prevent and deal with incidents and accidents** in the air and at sea.
- No more time should be lost in **implementing existing CSBMs in good faith and modernising the Vienna Document**. 2021 will mark the 10th anniversary since the last update – a process that is supposed to take place every five years.
- The "New START Treaty", signed in 2010, should be renewed by the US and Russia.

## MEDIUM TERM: BRIDGE DIFFERENCES

- States should engage in a frank, open and constructive exchange on threats and challenges to security and identify issues of common interest and concern. The existing Structured Dialogue in the OSCE needs to be made more dynamic. This could be achieved by more engagement from capitals, but also by involving parliamentarians, civil society, and think tanks in some sessions. The

process also needs a goal rather than being open-ended. Such a goal could be preparing the way for an OSCE Summit in 2025 (the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act).

- States should look for ways to take joint action to prevent and address the threats and challenges identified in the process of Structured Dialogue, inter alia through OSCE decision-making bodies and executive structures (like institutions, secretariat and field activities).
- Discussion should be initiated on arms control, focusing on specific destabilising weapons systems (e.g. short-range nuclear weapons, ballistic and cruise missiles, hypersonic systems), capabilities, and broader limitations for conventional military posture. Like in 1972, an open-ended discussion at the OSCE or between interested states could be initiated on both the principles and scope of a broad arms control regime in Europe, and on specific destabilising weapons or military capabilities.

## LONG-TERM: A SECURITY COMMUNITY BASED ON PRINCIPLED COOPERATION

- There should be work towards a high-level event – like a summit on security and cooperation in Europe – that can focus the attention of leaders on the need for peace, create meaningful dialogue, identify shared interests, tackle shared threats and challenges, reaffirm common principles, and agree on new commitments if necessary. This summit should result in a new foundational document for European security.
- Taking into account the world situation and its recent trajectory, in the next 5 to 10 years Europe has a special responsibility to cope with four main challenges: climate change, COVID-19 and recovery from the pandemic, migration, and the nuclear threat. These should be at the centre of a common, unifying pan-European and trans-Atlantic peace project.
- The aim should be to envision a European peace order that is shaped by democratic institutions, fundamental freedoms, environmental sustainability, and trustworthy security arrangements based on cooperative interdependence and not on military competition and nuclear deterrence.
- Peace and cooperation are too im-

portant to be left to the diplomats (alone). The pan-European peace project will need the involvement of all: addressing the concerns and interests of all states and their citizens.

- There also needs to be a focus on energy security, water security and management, while looking at Europe as a common economic and environmental space. States should not be forced to have exclusive relations with either the EU or the Eurasian Economic Union, and instead develop good relations (like free trade agreements) with both sides. Greater connectivity is needed both as a counter-balance to China, and to cooperate with China (Belt and Road Initiative).

There will have to be some synchronisation of these processes. Without decreasing current tensions and addressing the most urgent challenges, there is little point in devising grand schemes for a future European security system. But without a joint understanding regarding a (realistic) future common objective there will be little incentive for some of the actors to get involved and invest in the immediate steps. The process must be inclusive and participatory.

It is not realistic to de-couple the crisis in Ukraine from tensions between Russia and the West, and vice versa. Therefore, it would make sense to pursue an intensified dual-track approach toward the crisis. The dialogue is not likely to produce immediate results, but can gradually change the overall momentum in relations between Russia and the West. Meanwhile, greater attention should be focused on modest, incremental steps aimed not so much at resolving the crisis with a magic solution as at preventing further escalation and easing the burden on people directly affected by the conflict. Such an approach implies a gradual upgrading of confidence-building measures on the ground, international cooperation on humanitarian aid, and enhanced communication between the parties. Russia and the West can work with their respective local partners to generate more flexibility on these matters, but, at the same time,

should never cease working to peacefully end the conflicts.

In conclusion, it should be recalled that overcoming differences, managing relations peacefully, and adopting a cooperative approach have been possible in the past, even in dark times. The process of détente and dialogue in the early 1970s, marking the beginning of the Helsinki process, began just a few years after the Prague Spring was crushed in 1968. While one must be realistic about the number of hurdles that stand in the way of cooperative security in Europe today, one should not be so fatalistic or rigid to wait for conditions to change – because failing to engage in dialogue and de-escalate tensions could make the situation even worse. **It should not take a war to rebuild the European security system** – as was the case in 1815, 1919 or 1945. Governments must realise that they have a self-interest in cooperating: to deal more effectively with the crises of today, and to prepare for threats on the horizon. Principled cooperative security is the best option in order to bring about a more stable world and a more secure Europe.

## Background and Methodology

The Cooperative Security Initiative (CSI) began in early 2019 out of concern among a group of policy analysts about the need for a more cooperative approach to security and the inability of states to effectively use existing cooperative security organisations, like the OSCE, to resolve conflicts and work together on issues of common concern.

CSI was inspired by the priorities of Slovakia's Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2019, namely conflict prevention, a safer future, and effective multilateralism. It was also designed to give an impetus to the OSCE during its year of anniversaries in 2020, and generate new ideas and instil a sense of urgency into multilateral frameworks dealing with pan-European security that had become acrimonious and gridlocked.

CSI has taken on greater relevance as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. That crisis has demonstrated the need for countries to work together to tackle problems that do not respect borders. It has also highlighted weaknesses within states and the international system that need to be addressed in order to deal with this crisis and build back better. Furthermore, during the time period of this Initiative (2019-20), the security situation in

Europe, which was already bad, became worse as a result of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, political tensions in Belarus, and an organisational crisis within the OSCE.

The Initiative is led by the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (based in Vienna), and GLOBSEC (based in Bratislava) and is supported logistically by the OSCE Secretariat. Financial support was provided by Slovakia and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Experts were chosen on the basis of their expertise on issues of European security and cooperation, and an effort was made to ensure geographic and gender balance.

The participating experts involved in this Initiative do not pretend to have all the answers to the problems of European security. Indeed, it was decided to pose questions to the public. The questions were phrased in a way to question assumptions and viewpoints, point out possible consequences of current trajectories, and provoke people into thinking about why cooperation is important. The experts devised 18 questions – a 19th was added on COVID. A questionnaire was circulated to all official representatives of all OSCE participating states and made available to the public on a website built for this purpose. Answers were submitted online using SurveyMonkey® (see page 40-41). 301 partic-

ipants responded to the survey. Most respondents came from Germany, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United States as well as Belarus and Serbia. Male respondents were over-represented, comprising 63% of all those taking part. In terms of age, the relative majority of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 40. In terms of occupations, respondents to the survey were mostly experts and students, followed by public servants, private sector employees and persons in the diplomatic service. Since the questions required respondents to write a short statement in response, the data set consists of qualitative data. In addition to a content analysis of the answers to each question, a system was created to codify each answer (wherever possible) and with the help of MAXQDA® the responses were analysed from a quantifiable perspective. Additionally, selected coded questions were cross-tabulated with other coded questions as well as sociodemographic data to show how answers to one question related to those of another.

In addition to the questionnaire, CSI developed a campaign to increase awareness of what cooperative security is and why it is needed. The goal was to reach an audience beyond the bubble of diplomatic relations and generate debate and a groundswell of support among civil society, youth, parliamentarians, the me-

dia and the general public about why cooperation is so important for security in Europe. This includes a number of videos and interviews as well as messages on social media that can be viewed at <https://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org/>. The campaign on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube was launched in April 2020 and lasted until September that year.

Four meetings of CSI initiators and participating experts have taken place in person: after launching CSI in Bratislava in June 2019, experts of the initiative met in Vienna and Bratislava in August and November 2019. One month later the initial results were presented at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Bratislava. The experts also provided written submissions to the process. Several video conferences were held in 2020. The outcome of those consultations led to this report. The experts also used their networks and events held at their institutes to raise awareness of CSI and the importance of cooperative security.

This report is not the end of the process. Rather, it is seen as yet another output of the CSI aimed at stimulating debate and action to promote greater security in Europe through cooperation.



## Answer 1/19

What could trigger new violent conflicts in Europe today?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

## Answer 2/19

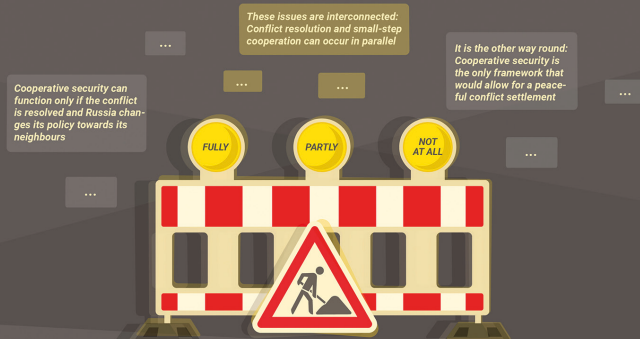
Is there a risk of a nuclear exchange?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

## Answer 3/19

To what extent is a cooperative security framework in Europe contingent on a resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine?



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# 19 Questions & Answers

## Answer 4/19

Can your country protect its sovereignty and security without the help of others?



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## Answer 5/19

What steps could be taken to de-escalate and de-militarize tensions in Europe in order to prevent possible war?



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## Answer 6/19

Are new rules and agreements needed to deal with contemporary threats and challenges to security?

»NO,  
actors should obey  
existing rules.«

»YES,  
to deal with new challenges  
like cyber security, new  
weapons and global health.«

[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

## Answer 7/19

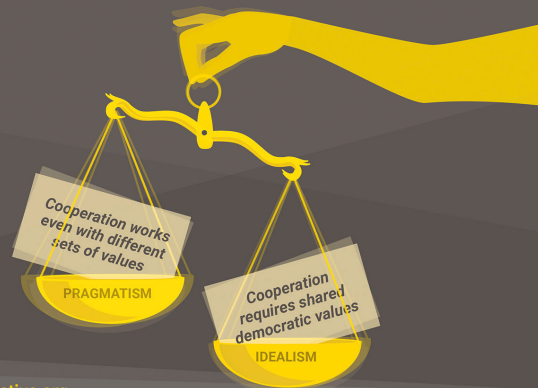
What are the challenges on which states need to work together, because they cannot be addressed on their own?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

## Answer 8/19

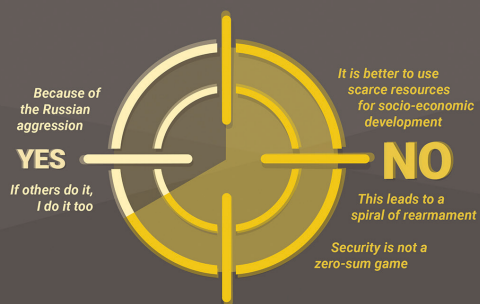
To what extent are shared values, including democracy and the rule of law, essential for cooperation?



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## Answer 9/19

Should your country strengthen its military potential and pursue national security interests regardless of the reaction of others?



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# 19 Questions & Answers

## Answer 10/19

Should Russia be part of the European security system? Why?



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## Answer 11/19

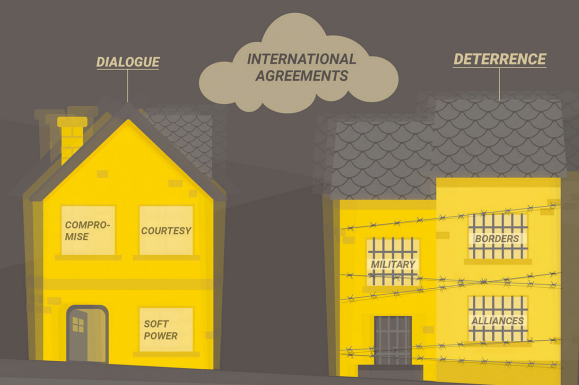
Should the United States be part of the European security system? Why?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

## Answer 12/19

How to get along with neighbours (and other states) that you do not trust?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

### Answer 13/19

How to communicate in ways that improve respect and enhance cooperation?

With respect and equal footing

OPEN-ENDED AND PREPARED FOR SETBACKS

Without emotions, lecturing and moral superiority

Focus on solutions, not problems

Focus on present and future, not the past

Talk when in conflict

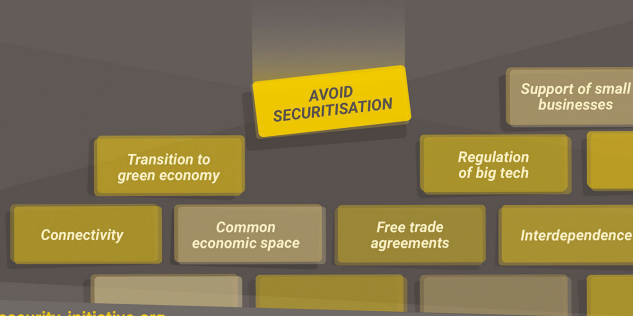


Focus on areas of common interests

[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

### Answer 14/19

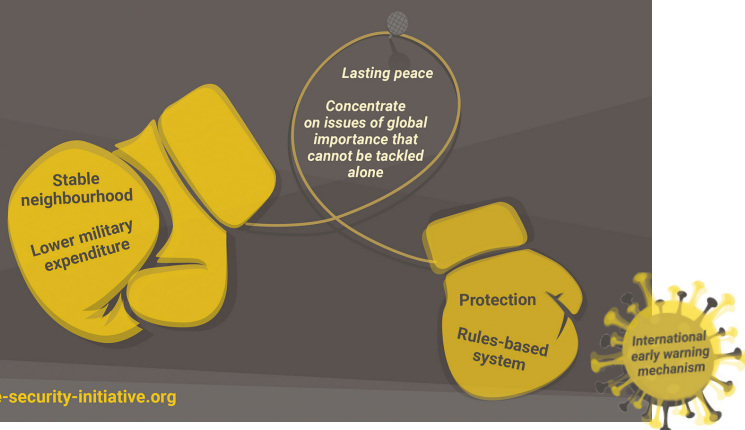
How should our common European space be managed in terms of economic and environmental security?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

### Answer 15/19

What are the benefits of cooperative security to great powers and smaller states?



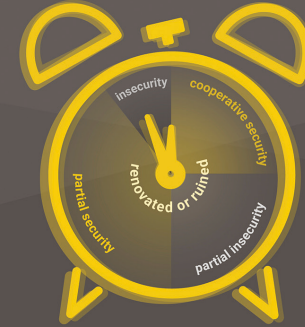
[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

### Answer 19/19

## 19 Questions & Answers

### Answer 16/19

What is your vision for European security in the next 5 to 10 years?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

### Answer 17/19

What should your country do to contribute to cooperative security?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

### Answer 18/19

What can you do to contribute to cooperative security?



[www.cooperative-security-initiative.org](http://www.cooperative-security-initiative.org)

What in your opinion are the three most important lessons to be learned from COVID-19 for improving cooperation in Europe and beyond?





## Editors

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This publication is part of the Cooperative Security Initiative.  
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