



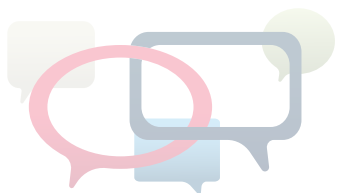
RIGA DIALOGUE
2020 PAPERS

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES AND
SUSTAINABILITY IN THE
EUROATLANTIC COMMUNITY



LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS





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EDITORS:
ANDRIS SPRUDS, KARLIS BUKOVSKIS

LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
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LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



EUROPEAN
LEADERSHIP
NETWORK



BUILDING A SAFER WORLD



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Russian International
Affairs Council

The seventh annual “Riga Dialogue” took place in September 2020. High-level international decision-makers and experts participated in off-the-record discussions on the future of multilateralism, the de-escalation of NATO-Russia tensions, and arms control and disarmament agreements. The “Riga Dialogue 2020 Papers: Strategic Narratives and Sustainability in the Euroatlantic Community” elaborates on many of the ideas presented at these discussions.

The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the European Leadership Network, or the Russian International Affairs Council.

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Editors' Note

ANDRIS SPRUDS AND KARLIS BUKOVSKIS

The “Riga Dialogue 2020 Papers” is a follow-up of the Riga Dialogue, the seventh annual edition of which took place in September 2020. High-level international decision-makers and experts shared their insights, concerns and recommendations on the future of multilateralism, the de-escalation of NATO-Russia tensions, and arms control and disarmament agreements. The “Riga Dialogue 2020 Papers: Strategic Narratives and Sustainability in the Euroatlantic Community” further elaborates on many of the ideas presented at these discussions in essay format by distinguished participants.

Relations between the Western countries and Russia since 2014 have remained complicated. Uncertainty about military security policies, assertive rhetoric and elements of a mutual arms race in the region have been causing concern on both sides. The geopolitical rebalancing that is currently taking place is a challenging issue not only for the major players, but also for small countries that are geopolitical pivot points, especially the Baltic Sea and Black Sea countries. A dialogue is essential for limiting uncertainty and understanding each other's fears and interests. Seating all sides around the same table increases mutual understanding and decreases distrust. And that has been at the core of the annual Riga Dialogue discussions.

The Riga Dialogue in 2020 touched upon not only relations between the West and Russia, but also on relations between the Western countries themselves. The complex relations between the US and the EU countries, Brexit, post-election turmoil and violence in Belarus and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic have brought new challenges to the table. Crisis management mechanisms, as well as regional and transnational solidarity, have become important elements with implications for both hard and soft

security. The international consequences of the pandemic should not be neglected as part of the further administration of relations between the West and Russia. Calls for increased security and self-reliance for the EU and its member states are triggering worries among the general public and decision-makers. These are just few of the developments that needed to be reckoned with.

By collaborating with distinguished regional and global partners, the Latvian Institute of International Affairs seeks to understand and facilitate discussion and dialogue on relations between the West and Russia. The format and the publication of the Riga Dialogue is a result of partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the European Leadership Network, and the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC). Prominent experts have contributed their views to this edition, making it a comprehensive and interesting outlook on complex relations in the current international system.

The general conclusion of the discussions is that there is a genuine desire on all sides for strategic stability and confidence-building. A return to trust can come via both a larger vision and small steps. And the Riga Dialogue and this publication hopes to be one of those small but considerable steps. A committed and diverse partnership platform ensures a solid basis for a continued exchange of ideas and intellectual cooperation, promoting mutual trust and safety in the Euroatlantic community.

MULTILATERALISM AND GEOPOLITICS

System in Flux: Where Are the Key Players Going?

VICTORIA V. PANOVA

The year 2020 brought about the further deterioration of systemic sustainability and saw an increased drive of humanity towards self-destruction. While early in the year the American-Iranian stand-off seemed a dangerous approach to the start of a new world war, with natural disasters like those of the Australian forest fires as a gloomy background, the rest of the year has taught us that the worst is still ahead, and every new challenge showcases the weaknesses and disabilities accumulated by the existing international system as a whole and each of its actors individually. Meanwhile, the overarching theme of this year has remained the global pandemic, compared by many to the situation about a century ago. From the very start of COVID-19's march around the globe there were a lot of discussions on how much it is to change our world, without much explanation on what new characteristics would be relevant for a post-pandemic environment - almost a year later, as much as at the very beginning, this seems to be a false core argument.

What information there is confirms that the pandemic has much exacerbated existing conflicts and crises in all areas of international and internal activities, or otherwise awoken dormant conflicts and crises, and it has also exposed international and domestic weaknesses. While we approach the magic figure of fifty million confirmed COVID-19 cases globally, the ever-increasing number of victims to this coronavirus hasn't brought about initial hopes of joint cooperative efforts around the world to respond to the common challenge. The actual response was a rise of national egoisms, an intensification of conflicts, and contradictions across the full

spectrum of human interactions *a la carte* - all with the background of new bipolar dividing lines, or even worse, with Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes*. The pandemic has also visibly demonstrated a lack of systemic and credible responses from the existing international institutions and highlighted the need to reconsider the role and structure of the international institutional architecture.

As characterised by the leading IR scholar, IMEMO President Alexander Dynkin, the pandemic has showcased geostrategic Darwinism in international relations. An inability and absence of desire to come to terms between key actors on the international scene made the already precarious situations witnessed a year earlier even more fragile. Globalisation as a means of constant interactions and interdependence, an established factor of the past decades, ceded to closed borders, isolationism and self-reliance as primary principles of survival with the advent of the pandemic. Although COVID-19 was the primary factor for such closures, their roots are found earlier, in the rise of geopolitical confrontations, and their re-opening is not to be determined only on the basis of epidemiological factors.

Another important characteristic of this pandemic is the absence of leadership and confusion and disappointment over chaotic developments among allies and followers of the all-time usual candidate for such leadership, the US. This new feature of deglobalisation offered another life to isolationism and self-help doctrine. At the same time, while Washington was not demonstrating the much-needed quality of the leader-empathy, it also was not ready to undertake such a role and incur the relevant costs for the benefit of its followers; Beijing, meanwhile, was not seen as reliable or appropriate to take this leading role. Instead, all the moves taken by China to show its willingness to contribute to the world's well-being and help others overcome the pandemic, which originated from its own territory, were generally viewed with suspicion. The eastern giant didn't manage to form a circle of friends and allies ready to support its general policies and follow its lead. Not just in the US, but also within European countries, one could hear talk of "mask diplomacy" - not as a well-meaning instrument of the increased influence of China - and an

ever-evolving blame game. Additional collateral consequences also include a re-ideologization of international politics, whereby geopolitical opponents are receiving the blame primarily through the prism of their political regime or ideology - as has happened over the past months in all the recurrent talk from Mike Pompeo blaming the Communist Party of China (Santora 2020) and presenting it as an evil aimed at destroying the very essence of American values and lifestyle.

LAW OF THE JUNGLE

An absence of trust is a key feature of today's world. It encompasses not just adversaries and competitors but has become immanent to relations between allied states as well. Moreover, a lack of trust characterises the view of all societies globally towards their governments, even considering the relatively well-off societies of EU with their anti-COVID protests and the USA with the peculiarities of BLM movement as well as the current elections process. The situation in the non-Western world looks less "eloquent", but not much more positive either.

The world we knew, with established rules of the game, a strategic stability framework and a common understanding of the inadmissibility of the use of force (at least outside the periphery) and mutual control over stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, is no longer in sight. Almost two decades earlier, the decision by the Bush Jr. administration to withdraw from the ABM Treaty signalled the first serious step towards the destruction of the arms control regime, but the final nails in the strategic stability coffin were put in with the recent steps made by Trump's America regarding the INF Treaty and the no-less-sad fate of the START-III, set to expire this coming February. Key to those activities is not the reasoning behind such decisions, even though it's for a long time been Russia's position that it is vital to include into the framework all the nuclear states, not just China, as is the major concern of the US. Also key is the fact that it is destroying the international regime,

which together with the overall adherence of states to UN Charter principles allowed the world to avoid major war and put reins on militarist ambitions globally. The pandemic hasn't seemed to offer a new vision stressing the importance of larger social investments as opposed to arms-race financing - instead, the situation deteriorated yet further. We are now living in a situation of greater instability than that which humanity witnessed at the times of the Cuban missile crisis.

Along with the crumbling arms control regime, the world we know today is also returning to the law of the jungle, which is marked by the right of the strongest and the right of the use of force with the support of a unilaterally established new rules-based order as opposed to the rule of international law. This in turn led to the rise of instances in which various sides used military means to achieve their aspired goals globally. We are seeing the further growth of global turbulence and enhanced confrontation across all lines: from the centre-stage, dominated by the Sino-American rivalry (this might be altered with the Biden administration, but not strategically, only through differing tactical approaches), to next level, comprised of no-less-dangerous instances of recent India-China border clashes; US pressure on Iran in attempts to reverse the JCPOA and introduce new sanctions against the country while pressuring the rest of the P5 and Germany and threatening to make the "wrong vote" in the UNSC; the remaining Middle Eastern tensions; the pan-Turk ambitions of Turkey and the flare-up in Nagorno-Karabakh; pressure on American allies in Europe against NordStream 2; and moving forces from Germany as a "punishment" to Poland, to mention just a few.

The external intensification of interstate conflict potential goes hand-in-hand with higher levels of extremism and transnational terrorism, as well as rising levels of domestic violence. Without looking deep into root causes of each particular case, this lack of trust led to bloody protests, the BLM movement in the US spilling over into Europe, Hong Kong's evolving situation with the new steps taken by China, Far Eastern protests over an indicted governor, the Belorussian situation surrounding the recent presidential elections, reinforced protests in Europe against

new lockdown measures or even against abortion in Poland, etc. There's no intention to draw a common line between those events, and the root-causes are all different, but what matters is that the consequences of pandemics provided for a heavier burden on the general public and allowed for unrest to ignite easier, with massive demand for a new social contract.

FALLING VICTIM TO HARD SECURITY

In addition to causing political chaos and compromising strategic stability, the pandemic has deepened the economic crisis (now surpassing that of 2008–2009) (Tooze 2020, Walker 2020) deepened social challenges and environmental problems, and not least of all exposed healthcare system deficiencies all around the world. If we look at the economic side, the only large economy that is forecast to experience positive growth this year is China, with a 1.9% rise. With the second wave of COVID-19 offering even gloomier prospects and new lockdown measures spreading gradually across most countries, the bottom reached earlier this year is no longer the worst-case scenario. With pandemic-related pressure on the global economy being an additional factor in terms of protectionism, economic competition and the technological race, specifically between the US and China, overall this would continue to negatively influence an already negative climate. New technologies and digitalisation, being primary areas for national security concerns, have brought back on the table not only such ideas as the Internet Freedom League, but also enhanced sanctioning policies, such as the US sanctions against Chinese technological giants like ZTE or Huawei and the rather recent addition of 38 more companies into the BIS Entity List (US Department of Commerce 2020) or acts to prohibit Chinese apps like TikTok or WeChat (Banjo, Fabian and Wadham 2020).

In fact, the latter also became part of India's policies as it banned over 50 apps deemed dangerous for national security. This complements much earlier restrictions in China itself

for Google and Facebook and the overall functioning of the Great Firewall. Interestingly, while earlier we could see more cooperative and pacifying steps from China, which seemed not ready to counter unprecedented American pressure, a recent party plenum underlined the new normal, with Beijing resolved to continue further working on all the cutting-edge technologies while finding ways to survive the increasing sanctioning policy of Washington.

Those processes had been developing earlier, and the technological race has been gaining ground over time, but it is true that the pandemic has brought those issues to the forefront. Especially since the times of lockdown, digital technologies were often the only way to continue any sort of activities – be it business with e-commerce and online operations, be it academia with distant learning and videoconferencing, or even healthcare with telemedicine, among others.

International cooperation and neutrality like that of the internet or financial system are no longer inviolable. That is why we have further evolving ideas with regards to the Internet Freedom League, China and Russia intensively working over their own payment systems, and their integration within the BRICS for fear of being cut off from the SWIFT (Tass 2020) system.

Socio-economic and humanitarian issues, which once offered cooperative solutions for relative gains, are getting ever more politicised. Non-military issues have become sensitive for states' leading elites – be it the social aspect of medical supplies with the not-new Silk Road of Health concept from China, making it an integral part of overall OBOR initiative, or the COVID-19 diplomacy of India or Russia or the US. It also shows a complete dehumanisation of social issues when, for example, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi bashed Donald Trump for offering supplies of ventilators to Russia (Tass 2020). Another race has become new to international politics – the vaccines race. When Russia stated that it had registered the first-in-the-world Sputnik V vaccine, instead of a general deepening of international cooperative measures on the topic, it led to an international PR-campaign portraying this vaccine as inefficient and harmful. While some mid-size countries turned

to Russia for discussions on the details of Sputnik V supplies, other large contenders continued this path on their own, unwilling to look into possibilities for true international engagement and exchange.

The pandemic has literally touched the nerve of all the societal illnesses of our global community, further fragmenting it and showcasing the resistance of those illnesses to existing curing methods. The powerful return of traditional history with the pandemic challenge has exposed the humanity to the renewed danger of extinction from the cumulative potential of crises. While older, existing international institutions, instruments and means would not be workable and would not offer satisfying solutions to the avalanche of multiple problems, the idea to get rid of those – as happened with the arms control regime and is ever more happening with the falling trade and financial regimes, alongside all other areas – would lead to a dangerous situation. This would be a situation where the old architecture is completely dead does not offer any safety pillow, but the new one is not yet in place due to a lack of understanding of where the world is going, a total and all-encompassing absence of trust, and a belief that it might be easier to survive by moving on without consideration of other parties' interests. And this challenge is much more severe and urgent than the physical threat of the COVID-19 pandemic: it puts people globally and their interests last, exposing each and every country to a virtually unstoppable spiral of violence, instability and ultimate destruction.

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The Future of Multilateralism in the Era of Great Power Competition

ANGELA KANE

For someone who has worked for the United Nations for over 30 years, it is difficult to accept that there are politicians and people who reject multilateralism, yet 75 years after the founding of the UN, multilateralism is under increasing challenge.

The UN Charter set the goal of achieving peaceful international cooperation and laid down principles that are non-negotiable. It offers tools, methods, and rules for the way forward. The Charter's provisions are interconnected and cannot be used "à la carte", as former Secretary-General Kofi Annan once warned.

The experiences and ideals that dominated the minds of the drafters of the UN Charter belong to a different generation. What inspired the founders was an international order built on balancing sovereignty with power politics in order to maintain international peace and security. The world has fundamentally changed - and for the UN, the response to this change has primarily been to expand the number of organisational entities, creating a network of funds and programmes with specific mandates addressing specific issues.

We have the same structures as we did in 1945: the Security Council still has the five victorious powers of World War II as permanent members with the right of veto, and while the Council was enlarged from 11 to 15 in the 1960s in response to an increasing number of countries gaining independence, there is still no African or Latin American permanent seat on the Council. And less than 10% of the total UN membership (15 out of 193) take decisions about threats to international peace and security, decide on sanctions or on peace operations - decisions that are binding on the rest of the membership.

The UN system is now so large and diffuse that it is difficult to remember all the acronyms of the various entities that have been created. None have ever been dismantled, even those that no longer have a role or whose functions have been superseded, such as the Trusteeship Council. Organisational consolidation has been timid; modernisation has been demanded but this often resulted in a re-shuffling of functions and entities rather than an actual analysis and overhaul of the UN structures.

Governance is no longer the purview of sovereign states: we now have multinational companies that dwarf the GNP of most nations. Power shifts have occurred over decades; China has risen to equal the US in power and economic heft. There is a trend towards multi-polarity, as expressed by the increasing number of states that act as key players.

Advances in technology and artificial intelligence empower us, yet at the same time they instil fear, insecurity and fierce competition among states. Social media platforms have the ability to rapidly spread information, yet also to distort facts.

The predictability of Cold War adversaries vanished 30 years ago; the euphoria then over global détente and harmonious relations has given way to at times narrow-minded unilateralism. It has allowed the rise of despots and dictators, of corrupt politicians, of human rights abuses, of an increasing number of conflicts and wars that are waged for power, for access to natural resources, and for the political domination of one group at the expense of another. "Politics have no relation to morals", Machiavelli said, and what the recent pandemic has additionally shown is the weaknesses of traditional security approaches and the return of authoritarian leaders who capitalise on the pandemic to further their grasp on power.

We could call this "politics as usual", but what has changed is that there has been a growing tolerance of such abuse of power in recent years. Our threshold for accepting such abuses has been lowered, and the moral voices speaking out against them are fewer and more muted.

So where does that leave multilateralism, our hard-won shining achievement of the post-war world? Where has the high-minded

idealism of “all for one, and one for all” gone? Where is the principle of equality, of “one country, one vote”?

We have seen a weakening of the ratification of and faithful adherence to international treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the countless treaties guaranteeing the rights of the child, freedom of association, social and economic rights, humanitarian law, arms control and disarmament, and even the most ratified treaties that are closest to universal world participation, which are those dealing with climate change, desertification, and the ozone layer.

We have also seen new types of actors that are changing the nature of the multilateral playing field. Regional organisations, already identified in the UN Charter (Chapter VIII) as important partners, have strengthened their role and power. The European Union became an observer in the General Assembly already in 1974, but its status was upgraded in 2011 by giving it speaking rights, which gives it some state-like qualities. Others, like the African Union, could follow. Does this not run counter to the principle of “one state, one vote”?

Regional groupings, like the G-20 and the G-7, have not lived up to the promise of steering global affairs, as had been hoped when these powerful groups were established. The Alliance for Multilateralism, created by France and Germany in 2019, is an informal entity founded on respect for international law with the aim to protect and preserve international norms. It aims to build an informal network of like-minded states – some 50 ministers participated at an event last September – but with the Alliance still in its infancy, its reach and impact are still unclear.

Let me mention the importance of civil society organisations. While their role is encouraged in assisting humanitarian crises, their voice in political matters is more tolerated than taken fully into account. The Security Council still holds “Arria Formula”, informal meetings to hear their input, rather than admitting NGO representatives as full participants in Council sessions.

The emergence of truly global problems further contributed to the erosion of the centrality of governments. An article in 2006 (Thakur and Langenhove 2006) already aptly stated that the “policy

authority for tackling global problems still belong to the states, while the sources of the problems and potential solutions are situated at transnational, regional or global level". Issues such as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, climate change and now pandemics are truly global and cannot be tackled on a national scale alone.

The decline of multilateralism goes back over a decade, but it has clearly accelerated with the election of Donald Trump as US president in 2016. He has questioned international institutions and the value of alliances, pulled out of the UN Human Rights Council, UNESCO, and the World Health Organisation; he has left international treaties such as the JCPOA and the Paris Climate Agreement, as well as arms control treaties that ensured security for decades.

The strains on the international community have been deep, compounded by the ongoing war in Syria, the refugee crisis, and now the pandemic. Yet we have to recognise that the multilateral system has held together relatively well, with some states (European Union members in particular) having stepped up to prevent further damage (after all, no other states followed the US in leaving international institutions or agreements), though this often meant assuming higher financial burdens to shore up a crumbling multilateral system.

Keeping multilateralism alive will mean facing several challenges in the future, even if a new US president is elected come November. The erosion of the US position as the "leader of the free world" has already happened and it will not be easy to reverse the damage. What needs to be done now is to work for compromise: how can this best be achieved in future diplomatic processes, given the rise of China and the redistribution of global power in general?

Will veto-wielding Security Council members continue to table opposing draft resolutions and curtail UN involvement in key political hotspots? And what does it mean for the legitimacy of the institution if a resolution for a ceasefire during COVID-19 gets held up for three months due to the petty intransigence of one veto-wielding member?

Another difficulty will be upholding the value of international agreements and treaties. Their value lies in faithfully implementing

their provisions: once that faith is eroded, compliance falters and ratifications stall. It seems that this is a time when war crimes go unpunished and the laws of war become optional. Compromise and language that at times denotes the lowest common denominator have been a feature of recent agreements; the international community needs to re-learn how to frame accords that inspire implementation rather than project the image of being a restrictive arrangement impinging on sovereignty.

The road ahead is difficult. This difficulty will be further compounded by the unpredictability of world events. The conflict and increasing competition between the US and China could further exacerbate, drawing other countries deeper into taking sides. We have already seen confrontations in the UN Security Council over Syria, the resolution on the pandemic, and on the JCPOA.

This raises uncomfortable political questions: how can the Secretary-General navigate the crises, how can the 75-year UN commemoration be "celebrated" at a time when distrust reigns in the Council, how can the UN continue its work when its coffers are empty due to the lateness of contributions to the UN budget? As Secretary-General Guterres said recently: "It is not enough to proclaim the virtues of multilateralism; we must continue to show its added value. International cooperation must adapt to changing times".

Finally, it comes down to what value member states put on the multilateral system. Despite the strain, this system must be maintained: no country can manage global challenges on its own. Solidarity, trust - and yes, idealism - were present at the UN's creation, but we have lost sight of those qualities. Power is not defined by having power over others; we should think of it not as a zero-sum game but as an issue of strengthening others in order to reach joint goals - goals that we are not able to reach on our own.

Reinforcing multilateralism means creating a balance of power among UN members, as well as creating a balance of responsibilities and representation for the people of our planet. The Charter opens with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations", a stark reminder that states cannot be the only building

blocks for effective multilateralism. The future of international cooperation lies with people - and I look towards the involvement of youth. The current generation has grown up with a wider lens on the world, with social media, with an outlook that is international, not restricted by borders. Their activism for the environment and their protests against political repression make me hopeful that support for international cooperation and multilateralism will grow stronger. The opposite would be too dire to contemplate.

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Realignment of the World and the Baltic States

SVEN SAKKOV

The year 2020 has witnessed a confluence of different processes affecting the security of the Baltic States - including the rise of China, the souring of transatlantic relations, and the pandemic. One would assume that the rise of China should force the West to stick together, but it doesn't. The pandemic should induce the world to work together against this common enemy, but it doesn't. This paper looks at how these trends are impacting the security of the Baltic States.

The pandemic has accentuated ongoing shifts in international relations. A new big power competition between the US and China is emerging. The European security landscape is way more complicated now than a decade ago. The Middle-East and North Africa are in turmoil. Russia has occupied and annexed Crimea, is continuing its slow-burning war against Ukraine in Donbass, has used chemical agents on the territory of a NATO country and has interfered in American presidential elections and the Syrian civil war. On top of that, we have witnessed the rise of China as a security concern. For many European nations, this latter realisation came suddenly, when China tried to use the health crisis for the advancement of its geopolitical standing. It came with a relentless propaganda war waged by Beijing, even though the initial mishandling of an outbreak by Chinese authorities is the reason the world suffers now.

The West needs to manage two processes simultaneously - the rapid rise of China and the slow decline of Russia. Europe needs the US in order to contain Russia militarily. The US needs Europe in order to contain China politically and economically. If we had no alliance between Europe and North America, we would want to invent it.

During the Obama administration, American foreign policy was supposed to pivot to Asia. In reality it did pivot away from Europe and the Middle East, but not to Asia. One might label this as a quirk of Obama's aloof foreign policy, but in reality, it has proven to be a start of a wider shift in American foreign policy. There are several factors behind this shift.

First, American citizens are tired of "forever wars". This is understandable - many young American soldiers fighting in Afghanistan were born after 9/11. These "forever wars" that have been taking place in the Middle East and Europe have served as a suitable military platform for the US. An end of these wars lowers Europe's strategic importance for the US.

Second, the US is now self-reliant on oil and gas, thus diminishing the importance of oil-rich Middle East in American strategic calculations even further.

Third, American policymakers have clearly realised that the Peoples Republic of China poses a long-term systematic challenge to American security. This realisation is shared by both major political parties and is not likely to be changed if Joe Biden wins the November elections.

Fourth, American policymakers consider affluent Europeans to be able but not willing to invest more in their own defence. In his valedictory speech to the NATO defence ministers in 2011, Defence Secretary Bob Gates warned that the time will come when the US is not ready to continue bankrolling European security (Gates 2011). This time is now upon us.

In 2020, the nations of Europe and Northern America have witnessed a health crisis unprecedented in modern times. We are entering an economic crisis dwarfing anything seen during the past three generations.

We should learn lessons from the current crisis, but not overlearn them. Our future security will not be determined by the readiness and robustness of our health services alone, regardless of how important they are. After 9/11, every security threat was perceived to be asymmetric. After Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea, every threat miraculously turned into a hybrid one. But, of course, the so-called "old" threats remained.

The broad contours of Russian foreign policy have not changed for centuries. One virus will not change that. Nor will the virus change the fundamentals of human nature. This is why we can relate to ancient Greek tragedies. Hence, it is unfortunately self-evident that there will be wars, and the virus will not change that. *Si vi pacem para bellum* still stands.

The economic downturn in NATO nations will be severe. We need to make sure that security will not be one of the victims of the virus. If we compromise on that, we might end up losing not just our health but also our freedom and liberty. During the last 6 months the world has become more, not less, dangerous for democracies. The level of defence investment in NATO's European member states and Canada has been on the rise since 2015, bringing their aggregate from 254 billion USD to 309 billion (NATO 2019). NATO governments should honour their pledge of moving their national defence investments towards the level of at least 2% of GDP, despite the state of economy. I use the term "defence investment" on purpose - this is an investment into our security, into our future. If we now decrease defence investment, we will disinvest our future.

Europe clearly needs to be able to do more in the field of defence. The nebulous idea of European Strategic Autonomy needs to be interpreted as Europe contributing more resources and capabilities for the security of Europe and its surroundings. This is not to compete with, but to complement what Europe and the US are doing collectively in NATO. Talk about a "European Army" is misleading and counterproductive. This is for a very simple reason - no-one knows what it is, and thus anyone can project their own understanding and meaning onto the concept. Empty of meaning, this concept leads to no action and no agency, thus doing nothing for the advancement of European security in reality. The alphabet soup of European defence initiatives are having a positive, though limited, impact on Europe's capability development. Without a significant increase in defence investment, talk about European Strategic Autonomy in the field of defence will remain just that - talk.

President Trump and some members of his administration have stated that the withdrawal of 12,000 American troops from Germany was meant as a punishment for that country for its failure

to increase defence spending to the agreed level. Ironically, the countries whose security will be most impacted by this move are the Baltic States. Since the Baltic States make up the most vulnerable region of NATO, the negative impact of departing American military machinery is most pronounced there. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are staunch friends of the United States who meet the goal of 2% of GDP in defence spending. Germany is surrounded by allies, while the Baltic States and Poland have a 967 km long border with Russia and 1,268 km border with Belarus, a country which may well end up as part of Russia, either officially or *de facto*. The Baltic States, not Germany, are the part of NATO where the Alliance is at its weakest and Russia is at its strongest.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

NATO has been able to change many times in its history. We now need a new Atlantic Compact, reinforcing the determination of the Allies to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, a pact founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, as the preamble of the Washington Treaty stipulates. Washington needs to see NATO as somehow relevant to its struggle to manage the rise of China. The answer does not lie with the military, but rather in standard-setting, investment screening, export controls, etc.

Inevitably, the US will judge its European allies according to the level of support they offer in countering the rise of China. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania seem to be very cognisant of this tendency.

The US and Estonia signed a joint declaration on 5G security on 1 November 2019, and Latvia followed suite on 27 February 2020. There are strong indications that Lithuania will do the same in the coming months (Guzdar and Jermalavicius 2020). The Baltic States are mindful of both the need to secure their future 5G networks against potential disruptions by the PRC security apparatus and of the continued necessity for US participation in Baltic security.

While the Baltic States (and Poland) are clearly aligning themselves with Washington, the same cannot be said about the EU as a whole. EU bigwigs are trying to chart a European “Sonderweg” between the US and the PRC, as if the former is not Europe’s main security partner and a fellow democracy while the latter is a communist dictatorship (The Economist 2020).

The Baltic States do not enjoy the luxury of being able to choose which American administration to co-operate with. It is in the strategic interest of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to find common areas of co-operation with Washington, even if those areas would not be among their first choice. A case in point is having the Baltic States be among the founding members of International Religious Freedom Alliance (Ochab 2020). Small, vulnerable countries in need of American attention use the straws they have.

The Baltic States should be very wary of Chinese investments in strategic industries and logistic connections. Here, Estonia is leading the way with its decision regarding the Tallinn-Helsinki tunnel. In July 2020 it became clear that the Estonian government will not support a private tunnel project, citing economic, environmental and security reasons (Posaner 2020). The nature of these “security concerns” is apparent in the annual security assessment of Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, which points its finger at the background of Chinese investment in the tunnel project (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service 2020, 76).

In August 2020, Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Reinsalu hinted that Estonia might distance itself from the Chinese-sponsored 17+1 format of PRC and Central-Eastern European countries (ERR 2020). It remains to be seen whether this hint will be followed up on and whether Latvia and Lithuania will follow suit. Looking at the overall dynamics of Baltic-American and Baltic-Chinese relations, it seems probable.

Listening to the political leaders of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania describe their security equation, one would assume that their defence spending as a percent of GDP is in the double digits. In fact, it is 2.14%, 2.01% and 2.03% of the respective GDPs (NATO 2019). Bearing in mind the vulnerability of the Baltic States,

American retrenchment and European military unpreparedness, such a low level of defence spending is not sustainable.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been very hesitant when it comes to the European Strategic Autonomy (ESA) initiative in the field of defence. They have always emphasised that European military security is guaranteed by NATO and that any other efforts should be considered as a distraction at best. It would be more sensible to join the debate about the ESA and ensure that it is about Europe's defence capability and defence investment, not about words and declarations. Moving on from defence - the need for a higher degree of European autonomy has been highlighted by the pandemic, which demonstrated Europe's reliance on outside (mostly Chinese) producers of medical equipment.

For affluent nations with large populations, foreign policy is about the advancement of its interest. For a small nation in precarious geopolitical surroundings, most of its foreign policy is influenced by its security policy. And its security policy is ultimately about an existential question - to be or not to be. The Estonian territory has been invaded five times over the course of 20th century. Big nations can make big mistakes and survive. Small nations might not.

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RUSSIA AND
THE WEST,
AND THE REST

Russia and the West: Ideas “For Better Times”

KLAUS WITTMANN

Worried about the state of relations between NATO, or “the West” in general, for that matter, and Russia, I have for years been promoting the following simple thesis: like the declining Soviet Union, Putin’s Russia needs “New Thinking” in foreign and security policy as part of its urgent modernisation. The West, particularly NATO, should facilitate that by self-critically acknowledging its share of the responsibility for the consistent deterioration of the relationship over the last 20 years (although no mistakes made on the Western side justify military aggression).

Realistically, I have come to acknowledge that with the present Russian leadership and its course of action, the prospects for such a constructive approach towards cooperative security are slim, due to, inter alia, Russia’s policy towards its “near abroad”, its military actions in Ukraine and Syria, its treatment of critics and journalists, and its general anti-Western hostility.

A personal reminiscence: in October 1990, General Moiseiev, the Soviet Chief of the General Staff, visited NATO Headquarters for the first time, invited to the Military Committee’s biannual Chief of Staff session. As a colonel in the International Military Staff (IMS), I had to draft for the Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC), NATO’s highest military figure, the welcome speech. I can thus regard myself as a contemporary witness of the sincerity of our cooperation offers. Things could have moved in a different direction.

I was then involved in developing the partnership between NATO and the Soviet Union, followed by Russia - not least in the creation of what we programmatically called a “strategy without an adversary”, which was articulated in NATO’s Strategic Concept

of November 1991. And Western readiness to integrate with Russia was much broader than Russian propaganda would indicate: the G20, the IMF, the World Bank, the G8, the WTO, the Council of Europe, and the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, in which both sides pledged not to regard each other as adversaries any longer, agreed to a broad common agenda, and established the NATO-Russia Council (then known as the Permanent Joint Council). The West did not do everything wrong.

But the concept of stabilising and integrating the Central and Eastern European (CEE) states, while at the same time cultivating an ever-closer partnership with Russia, increasingly failed. Reasons for this failure are to be found on both sides. In any event, the partnership appears to have been renounced for good by President Putin, who is full of resentment about the demise of the Soviet Union. The often-heard mantra is true: security in Europe (and beyond) can, in the long run, be brought about only with, not without or even against, Russia. But due to Russian policy in recent years, security countering Russia is now a priority again for many. That is not in Russia's interest.

What is presented as being in Russia's "interest" largely seems to be of a political-psychological character, in terms of bitterness, grudge, and prestige. NATO enlargement is certainly a thorn in Russia's side, as it were. But it is by no means a threat to Russia's security; it was not even an active expansion, but the result of an urgent desire of countries that were liberated from the Soviet yoke and limited sovereignty within the Warsaw Pact to join the West. Moscow should think more about the motives for this. There is wounded pride, as well as the feeling of being treated as a loser in the Cold War and being humiliated and taken advantage of. Sergei Karaganov once compared Russia's situation to Germany's after the Versailles Treaty. Absurd, but indicative!

The assertion that there had been NATO promises never to enlarge towards the East does not become truer by constant repetition. The only such commitment is in the 2-plus-4 Treaty, which stipulates that no allied troops would be stationed on the territory of the former GDR. What is often referred to are remarks in conversations - remarks made at a time when the Warsaw Pact

and the Soviet Union were still in existence and any consideration of a NATO enlargement to the East was hypothetical. The Soviets (in spite of their legal thinking) never demanded any codification of this. Furthermore, even prominent political figures such as NATO Secretary General Wörner or Foreign Ministers Baker and Genscher would not have been authorised to make such commitments on behalf of NATO, as this would in practice be repealing Article 10 of the NATO Treaty.

Still, it is important to put oneself in the opposite number's shoes, to take into account what the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik once pointed out: while we see Russia's present policy as revisionist, Russia sees itself as a status quo power and accuses the West of revisionism. Perceptions are reality and dealing with them in very candid dialogue is important.

President Putin's confrontational policy appears to be driven by a bundle of motives, among which I identify: revisionism and the desire for exclusive zones of influence; the "externalisation" of grave domestic problems; the wish to keep Ukraine reliably away from the West; "democracy containment", as one scholar recently called it (democratic success in Ukraine would be seen by Putin as an existential threat to his power system); and frustration about not being respected as an equal by the West, particularly by the United States.

In Ukraine, Crimea was illegally annexed with the help of a fake referendum at the tip of bayonets; war was brought to Eastern Ukraine, where Russia still denies its military involvement against all evidence. Without Russian intervention, there would be no "civil war" in the Donbass region, with almost 14,000 dead. No real interest is shown in finding a solution to the situation, because another "frozen conflict" seems to serve Moscow's interests. The Minsk II agreement, accepted by French, German and Ukrainian leaders only because active Russian military support threatened further advances by the "separatists", is an unequal one: it includes reforms on the Ukrainian side, with a Russian *droit de regard* over Ukraine's internal development. On the Russian side, the commitments include basic sovereignty issues: foreign troops on Ukraine's soil and the loss of control over hundreds of kilometres

at the border with Russia. Worse, Ukraine will only get back control over its border after the completion of internal changes.

Through his course of action, Putin has called into question all the cardinal principles of the European security order, as were laid down in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and confirmed in the Paris Charter of 1990: the sovereignty and equality of European nations, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the right of choice of security arrangements, etc. Again, military force has been used to attain political goals.

Although Ukraine could not be militarily defended, NATO members must be indisputably protected. Russia has catapulted NATO back into the world of Article 5, where it must once again give substance to the principle that an attack on one ally would be regarded as an attack on all. NATO's reaction is totally defensive and is exclusively aimed at protecting its Eastern allies.

In Syria, Russia's motives are not ending war and suffering, but rather have to do with objecting to any kind of regime change, with Russian military bases, with demonstrating military power, with the uncritical adoption of Assad's definition of "terrorists", with condoning the use of chemical weapons, and above all with the desire to re-establish Russia as a great power. Backed by Russia, President Assad sees no reason for any compromise or peace deal. The "liberation" of Aleppo was horrendous, and in Syria a "churchyard peace" is strived for.

This hostility towards the West is resulting not in a new Cold War, but in a confrontation where cyber and propaganda measures, disinformation, and fake news are used abundantly, and everything is done to sharpen the difficulties of European countries, not least by supporting populist simplifiers.

And Russians should be aware of the bitterness that the "Lisa case" (referring to the Russo-German girl allegedly abducted and raped by immigrants in 2016) created in Germany, where an invented story - disseminated under the guise of an alleged obligation to "protect Russians wherever they live" - led to anti-government demonstrations. If that reaction can be provoked in German cities, should not Estonians or Latvians, with important Russian minorities, be worried? More recently, then, there were

the poisonings of Skripal and Navalny and the murder in the Berlin Tiergarten - all well-proven, but nonetheless refuted with profuse disinformation and the smoke bombs of competing, in part wholly absurd, explanations.

There is presently a public debate about whether to launch a new Russia policy. That is the title of a new book by Mathias Platzeck, the President of the German Russian Forum - when I asked him whether not Russia needed a new Western policy, he could not but agree. In the US, proponents of that position are Rose Gottemoeller ("Rethink our Russia policy") and Kurt Volker ("No more resets with Russia"). As initially pointed out, one can be very agnostic about the chances of any advancement. But we still should continue to pursue the tension-reduction, de-escalatory efforts that the European Leadership Network (ELN) has initiated, and at the same time develop ideas and continue extending offers "for better times". As confrontational as President Putin may be, I maintain that on the Western side some self-criticism and soul-searching are desirable.

First of all, Russian political psychology and what was aptly called "imperial phantom pain" have been insufficiently understood. After the end of the Cold War, too little attention was given to the issue of Russia's place in the European security order. Also, for example, Russian proposals for adapting the treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) were ostentatiously disregarded. Moreover, the abdication of the ABM Treaty was counterproductive.

The NATO accession ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia were not handled constructively. When (mainly) the US pushed to offer them the Membership Action Plan at the 2008 Bucharest Summit (a move which Merkel and Sarkozy blocked), both countries were, for different reasons, not at all mature enough for that step. More importantly, no understanding was sought with Russia, whilst the two previous enlargement rounds had been "cushioned" by the creation, and then upgrading, of the NATO-Russia Council. And the controversial missile defence plan, which should be in the interest of both sides, was offered as a cooperative project much too late. Furthermore, the West underestimated the significance for Moscow of the recognition of Kosovo's independence, although efforts to

make this analogous with the annexation of Crimea, as construed by Putin, is flawed.

The NATO-Russia Council was insufficiently utilised and developed by both sides. Among the Western actions that influenced both Russia's stance and the development of its relations with the West, one must also mention the interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, although these were all different cases. And we have learnt from them - not least, that toppling a regime is not equivalent to regime change.

For Russia, "new thinking" would comprise the following: NATO clichés and stereotypes from the Cold War period should be overcome, as should the instrumentalization of these for domestic purposes. Since the London Declaration in July 1990, the Alliance has sincerely extended to former adversaries a hand of cooperation, and, as mentioned above, in their "Founding Act" NATO and Russia declared that they would no longer regard each other as adversaries. Russia must realise that dangers to its security loom in the South, and possibly in the East, but not in the West. At the same time, the Kremlin must understand the worries that arise in neighbouring countries when it insists on maintaining a privileged sphere of influence, proclaims its "obligation" to "protect Russians wherever they live", and pursues a "history policy" which is, to some extent, "Stalin revivus".

The sovereignty, integrity and independence of the post-Soviet states have to be recognised, and Moscow should actively contribute to reassuring them instead of undermining these principles. Respect for obligations, rules, and institutions - according to the 1990 Paris Charter - is the basis for cooperative security in Europe. Here, just as in global affairs, Russia should constructively contribute to problem-solving. This includes the requirement to actively promote solutions for so-called "frozen conflicts" (such as Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and now Eastern Ukraine) instead of keeping them simmering for the sake of destabilisation and influence. Nineteenth-century geopolitical categories should be set aside, and it is urgent in general to overcome the concept of security as a "zero-sum game", where one side can allegedly only gain security or

advantages at the expense of the other. One must admit, however, that this thinking is not quite unfamiliar to the Western side either. It is one of the greatest evils in today's world. And the present US president is literally obsessed by it.

Since the end of the Cold War, both sides have failed to conduct a thorough dialogue about Russia's place in the European security order. One mistake on the Western side was that it did not respond more actively to the proposal made by then-President Medvedev in Berlin in 2008 to negotiate a European security treaty. Not that the content of the proposal was acceptable, but it should still have been used as an opportunity to establish a structured dialogue about the European security order and Russia's legitimate place therein. The so-called "Corfu process" within the framework of the OSCE was half-hearted. And Western anxiety vis-à-vis the proposal was not justified - did not the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, with its beneficial outcomes for European history, also originate in Soviet proposals that many in the West initially regarded with great suspicion? One day, this initiative should be revived, and it should lead to a structured format for substantial and very frank discussions - with perseverance and patience - about NATO's and Russia's contrasting concepts for the transatlantic area, as well as Russia's place therein.

Confronted with grave regional and global problems, both sides need to define their common interests and should look to the advantages of cooperative as opposed to confrontational security. Whether this insight reaches President Putin and could influence him to change course is very doubtful. But thoughtful forces around him who realise that he has led the country to a dead-end may be growing. Without undue acquiescence, which Putin interprets as weakness, NATO should continue with the dialogue strategy that is part of its "Harmel philosophy", which was again emphasised at the Warsaw Summit in July 2016: deterrence and détente, firmness and readiness for dialogue.

NATO, as well as its members individually, should spell out more creatively what that offer of dialogue means. For years I have argued that NATO's readiness for a systematic dialogue with the CSTO (the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation)

might be constructive, or at least not harmful. With regard to further NATO enlargement, the open-door policy, in accordance with Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, cannot be given up. But between “no veto for Russia” and totally bending to Russian indignation, there must be a middle road, where Russia’s sensitivities would at least be addressed.

Furthermore, innovative approaches to conventional arms control are needed. An adaptation of the CFE Treaty – from a bloc-to-bloc format to that of individual states as parties to the agreement – failed, not least because of the West’s insistence on relatively insignificant conditions and its disregard for Russian proposals. Not unexpectedly, Russia suspended the treaty following Putin’s 2007 Munich speech. This is not important because of the numerical limits for tanks, artillery, airplanes, and the like, which are objectively undershot anyway, but because of the deactivation of notification, verification, transparency and inspection provisions that had important confidence-building functions. Robert Legvold once pointed to the “opportunity cost” of the new confrontation beyond the damage that has been incurred – that is, the many positive things that are not being done. A “revitalisation” of the CFE Treaty appears unrealistic. Thus, a new endeavour is necessary. Confidence-building, transparency, mutual reassurance, doctrine talks, and the credible defensive orientation of armed forces and infrastructure would be part of that approach, as would cooperative endeavours. And a return to systematic nuclear arms control is even more urgent.

My country, Germany, whose relationship with Russia is of course very important, must be careful not to give the 90 million people living between our two countries the impression that Russia and Germany consider agreement to be beyond their grasp. That would raise very unpleasant historical memories, as would a decision by outside powers, going over the heads of Ukrainian leaders and citizens, to never grant EU and NATO membership to Ukraine. Another concession I would rule out is any form of legalisation for Crimea’s annexation. Yes, we will have to put up with it for the foreseeable future, and ending the war in Eastern Ukraine is more urgent. But the Baltic countries’

forced incorporation into the Soviet Union was also never legally recognised by the West - even as none imagined what the world would look like 45 years later! (In this context, Nord Stream 2 is a very divisive project.)

The NATO-Russia Council should play a central role in the basic discourse between Russia and the West. It has been insufficiently utilised and developed by both sides. During the Georgia War in 2008, NATO put it on ice, just as Russia had done during the Kosovo Conflict, for which it was harshly criticised. After the annexation of Crimea by Russia, concrete cooperation was interrupted, and only the "political channel" was kept open. But since 2014, the NRC has convened only very rarely and only at the ambassadorial level, whilst it should have been active in quasi-permanence since the outbreak of the conflict.

In the short run, the NRC and its sub-groups should work towards the prevention of unwanted escalation and military incidents. In the medium term - and of course on the condition of a solution to the Ukrainian conflict that is in line with international law, beginning in Eastern Ukraine - it should become higher quality, with an extension to the areas where there is the potential for conformable interests and joint action. In the long run, the NRC should play an important role in the dialogue about Russia's place and role in both the European and the international security order. Perhaps a new forum would even be necessary for this purpose. Some think of creating a "Helsinki II". Different views of and perspectives on the transatlantic area from Russia and the West should be discussed with great frankness, with patience, and with the long haul in mind. This is more promising than trying to outwit each other in the current set of crises. An awareness of common responsibility for world affairs must be developed.

Under certain conditions, many attractive offers could be made to Russia: a free trade zone that would comprise the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union; cooperation in Russia's economic modernisation; joint, cooperative approaches to so-called "frozen conflicts", which might allow Russia to make do without counter-productive levers of influence; concertation in regional and global crisis situations and with regard to the climate, and more.

Coming back to one of the motives for President Putin's policies, as laid out above: there is frustration about not being accepted by the West, and particularly the US, on equal terms and as a great power. Putin once said that the US wanted to "keep Russia small", and he blew to immense proportions Obama's careless, but also rather harmless, remark that Russia was a "regional power". Highly welcome as a "great power" would be a Russia that constructively contributed to regional and global problem-solving (as it did in the almost singular case of the Iran nuclear deal), instead of relying on nuisance power, prevention force, military surprise actions, regional military superiority, destabilisation and fear of neighbours, and hostility towards democracy and the West. But respect and equal status cannot be enforced; they are earned. Russia's present policy and course of action do not appear to be predominantly motivated by a reaction to Western activities, but rather conditioned by internally steered political change, by creating domestic unity, and by blaming the grave problems in Russia's society and economy on the West.

At the end of one of the rather high-level informal German-Russian Schlangenbad talks, one of the German co-organisers said to our Russian friends: "For two-and-a-half days you have been hearing a lot of self-criticism from us - a little dose of that would also be welcome from your side." And the year after that, a well-known Russian politician asked us for patience, pointing out that "the road from the Gulag to Hyde Park Corner is long" - to which a Russian author dryly responded, "Yes, and if we take the opposite direction, it is even longer".

In conclusion, some years ago I published ideas such as these in the Atlantic Times, whose editor ignored my title and called the article "The West is Not Russia's Enemy". That is the spirit in which I criticise the present Russian policies and seek to develop ideas "for a better future".

Between Scylla and Charybdis: Russia's Relations with Turkey and Iran

NADEZHDA ARBATOVA

Russia's relations with Turkey and Iran, as well as its strategy in the Black Sea/Mediterranean region, are defined by three factors - post-imperial syndromes, security concerns and the negative experience of cooperation between Russia and the West after the collapse of the USSR. The conflict in Ukraine resulted in a sanctions war and Russia's exclusion from the main international fora held under the auspices of the West. This cannot but encourage the Kremlin's expansion in new geopolitical directions. Russia, like all ambitious actors, needs reliable allies, or at least *ad hoc* partners. From this point of view, Iran and Turkey have a special, ambiguous importance for Russia's national interests. Given their common imperial past and overlapping neighbourhood, Russia looks at Iran and Turkey as two counterweights that balance each other in the post-Soviet space, while in the Eastern Mediterranean all three are involved in a complex relationship that includes elements of forced cooperation and fierce rivalry.

IN THE INNER CIRCLE

Four influences guided Russian policies towards the "south" in the 1990s: (a) ethnic separatism in the Caucasus; (b) the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the expanded Middle East and its perceived impact on the south; (c) regional and extra-regional encroachments into Russia's "sphere of influence"; and (d) Russian neo-imperial

impulses concerning the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Sezer 1999, 210). Quite quickly, Russia's post-Soviet euphoria was replaced by a sense of loss over its former big empire and status of world super power equal to the US. Hence, the immediate task of the Kremlin was to prevent the dominance of external forces in the CIS space, as they could use the shaky position of Russia for their own interests. It is quite clear that the South Caucasus (or Trans-Caucasus) region, which is adjacent to Russia's most troubled region - the North Caucasus - is of direct importance to Russia's security and territorial integrity. Post-Soviet Central Asia is another region that is geopolitically and geo-economically important to Russia.

In tsarist times, the British Empire posed the greatest threat to Russian rule in Central Asia, while in the Caucasus, the Ottoman and Persian empires, the area's former rulers, seemed poised to challenge Moscow's rule (Sezer 1999, 209). Since the 1600s, Russia and Turkey have been involved in rivalry and enjoyed very short periods of rapprochement. After World War II, USSR-Turkey relations were strongly influenced by the bipolar confrontation and Turkey's geostrategic role as a NATO member in the Eastern Mediterranean, first and foremost because of its control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.

Russo-Persian/Iranian relations have striking similarities with Russo-Turkish relations. Tsarist Russia and Persia were involved in a series of conflicts between 1651 and 1828 over disputed territories in the Caucasus - Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and partly Dagestan. The wars between Russia and Persia were complicated by the territorial claims made by the Ottoman Empire, and from time to time the three empires entered into short-lived alliances.

The collapse of the USSR encouraged Iran and Turkey to fill the power vacuum in the post-Soviet space. After the end of bipolarity, Ankara became obsessed with the loss of its strategic value for NATO allies. The Eastern Mediterranean became intertwined with the Black Sea-Trans-Caucasus and the Trans-Caucasus-Caspian regions. Losing its importance as NATO's watchdog in the Eastern Mediterranean, Ankara started to look for a new mission in the post-Soviet Islamic space - the North Caucasus area and Tatarstan.

The revival of Pan-Turkism as an ideology aimed at the cultural and political unification of all Turkic peoples, as well as Ankara's activism in Tatarstan and North Caucasus, fuelled Russia's concerns about its territorial integrity.

The Munich speech by President Putin in 2007 and Moscow's dissatisfaction with the West coincided with Turkey's disappointment with European Union and the United States. Both Russia and Turkey started to demonstrate tendencies towards more unilateral conduct. Russia lost any illusions it had about integration with Western institutions – European Union and NATO – portraying itself as an independent Eurasian great power. Likewise, Turkey shifted its focus away from its role as part of the transatlantic Alliance toward that of a regional hegemon. Both Russia and Turkey agreed to keep the region free from Western influence. However, despite a common anti-Western platform, Ankara's regional ambitions was paired with a tendency towards radical Islamisation, and Erdogan's personal leanings towards nuclear weapons generates anxieties in Russia and other states in the region.

In this controversial context, Iran is viewed by Moscow as a valuable geopolitical partner in its "near abroad" and beyond. This is all the more true because the positions of Russia and Iran coincide, or are very close, on many political issues. Iran is Russia's most important partner after China and India in the market for arms trade, but its economic value for Russia cannot be compared with that of Turkey.¹ Russia understands Iran's ambitions to become an industrial state equipped with high technologies, including its energy sector. At the same time, Russia is strongly against any possibility for Iran to develop nuclear weapons, which is viewed as a threat to Russia's national security. For this reason, Russia played an active and positive role in negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear programme, as well as in saving this agreement after the US's withdrawal from it.

¹ Turkey is Russia's second-largest natural gas market. In 2018, Russia ranked 12th among Turkey's export destinations with a volume of 3.4 billion USD, and it was number one for imports with a volume of 21,989 billion USD.

The Kremlin has always tried to maintain the balance of power between Turkey and Iran, and their opponents and allies, which is a difficult mission. Most of Turkey's opponents in the South Caucasus-Mediterranean region are Russia's partners, as is the case with Iran, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Israel, or they are allies like Armenia. Interestingly, the latter is Russia's only formal ally in the region as a CSTO and EEU member. A key driver behind Yerevan's orientation towards Moscow is security concerns regarding a conflict with Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, over the breakaway territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. On many occasions, Russia has upset its military ally by selling weapons to Azerbaijan in order to maintain strategic parity between the two sides of the conflict. However, the September 2020 border clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh and Erdogan's unequivocal and aggressive support of Azerbaijan's President Aliyev in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict forces Russia to make a clear but difficult choice, since its policy of equidistance has already been exhausted.

Iran is not an idle onlooker in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, although it is recognised by Tehran that the role of "peace broker" it played before has been considerably reduced. It was in large part thanks to Iran that landlocked Christian Armenia, a Russian ally, could keep a lifeline to the outside world (Trenin 2016). Nowadays, it fears that the conflict could spill over to Iran's Azeri minority (around 20 million people), setting off a battle the government can't contain.

Relations between Turkey and Iran include both elements of commercial cooperation and fierce political rivalry, given that their regional ambitions go far beyond the Trans-Caucasus region. While Russia has so far managed to amortise contradictions between two regional players in the CIS, this is becoming an increasingly difficult and risky task for the Kremlin in the Eastern Mediterranean.

IN THE OUTER SHELL

Iran and Turkey have been singled out by the Kremlin as the key actors for its policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, their competing interests and irreconcilable rivalry create serious risks for Moscow in the region and beyond. Russia has to maintain a filigree balance between them, which is a difficult endeavour. The artificial alliance between Russia, Iran and Turkey, which was built in Syria around the Astana peace process, has made many think that its importance goes far beyond the Syrian borders. However, they have conflicting interests and goals not only in the South Caucasus but even more so in the wider Middle East, which means that their alliance won't last too long.

The goals of Russia in Syria are multi-fold. Russia's involvement in Syria is not about Basher Assad himself, but rather is a matter of principle for the Kremlin. Russia has drawn a red line regarding the Western policy of regime change. Russia's expanded presence in the region aims at status re-building and overcoming isolation from the West after the Ukraine conflict. Russia is interested in a friendly and strong regime in Syria, be it Assad or any other politician, Sunni or Shiite. Moscow also wants to destroy al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, which have presented a threat for Russia in the North Caucasus. It also wouldn't mind deepening the gap between Ankara and NATO. And finally, Russia wants to show everyone that what the US breaks, Russia is able to fix.

Turkey has been trying to resolve the so-called "Kurdish problem" in Syria, which has both domestic and external dimensions. Its military operations in northern Syria - be it Olive Branch or Euphrates Shield - are aimed at driving the mainly Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) out of land that borders Turkey. For tactical reasons, Ankara has found a way to cooperate with Moscow and Tehran, who are the protectors of Bashar Assad's regime as long as Kurds are excluded from the Astana peace process. But in principle, Assad is unacceptable for Ankara as the leader of Syria.

Iran, unlike Russia and particularly Turkey, is personally interested in Assad and Shiite leadership. Tehran looks at Syria as a buffer between itself and the "very aggressive U.S., Israeli, and

Saudi alliance". At the same time, Tehran does not want Assad to be strong and independent. To this end, it favours a "Lebanonisation" of Syria. "What Tehran needs most of all is allies who will shield it from the enmity of the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia. In this regard, Turkey and Russia could be helpful" (Conn 2018).

Turkey and Iran host, respectively, the region's largest and second-largest Kurdish populations. Fears of Kurdish separatist sentiments have made Iran and Turkey cooperate on this issue in the past. Like Turkey, Iran does not want an independent Kurdish state, but unlike Turkey, it does not view it as a real threat and in northern Syria, and they have backed various Kurdish groups.

Of the two countries, only Iran can be viewed as Russia's ally in the Middle East great game. The Kremlin recognises Iran's claims to be an important player in the Middle East region and appreciates Tehran's support for the Assad regime. Iranian presence on the ground in Syria is an important part of President Assad's offensive force, which works in coordination with Russia to assist Damascus-controlled territories. At the same time, when it comes to Assad's supporters Russia pretends to be the main player. The Kremlin also fears that Iran's regional ambitions may go too far and involve Russia in a military conflict with Saudi Arabia and the Sunni world. Likewise, Russia fears that Tehran's decision to go nuclear will trigger an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure and confront the Kremlin with a difficult foreign policy dilemma.

Russia and Turkey are presently portraying their relations as a strategic partnership, but in reality they are doomed to be only situational partners and strategic rivals. Turkey is pretending to become a regional hegemon in the Islamic world of the wider Mediterranean area and wants Russia to recognise the region as being Turkey's sphere of influence. Interestingly, the recent decision by Erdogan to change the status of Hagia Sophia was met with rejection and suspicion not only in the Orthodox world but in the Arab world as well. Erdogan's action positions him as continuing on the path of the Ottoman Empire, and this will clearly be a prominent part of his legacy. However, the Arab states are not ready to accept Turkey as the core of "the new sultanate and Erdoğan as the new Saladin" (Shlomo 2011).

Regardless of the fundamental differences in the regional policies of Iran and Turkey, they are united by strong anti-Israeli sentiments. The Abraham Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (signed in the US in September 2020), which marked the first normalisation of relations between the Arab states and Israel, were strongly criticised by Tehran and Ankara. These agreements registered as a threat to their ambitious plans in the region. In a remarkable show of unanimity, these main regional rivals condemned the accords as a stab in the back of the Palestinian people. Their anti-Israeli stance creates serious problems for Russia.

Israel's importance for Russia goes far beyond the region. Israel is viewed by Moscow as a kind of bridge to President Trump, who, unlike his predecessor, strongly supports the US ally in the Middle East. For its part, Israel recognises Russia as an important regional player with leverage over its allies and partners - first and foremost, Iran and Hezbollah. The latter present a direct military threat to Israel. Russia and Israel equally try to avoid any direct confrontation between Israeli and Russian forces in Syria and to prevent Russia's involvement in clashes between the Israel Defence Forces and Syrian Forces. At the same time, both Russia and Israel are well aware that each of them could spoil the regional plans of the other. For the moment, Putin has good personal relations with Netanyahu, which cannot be said about the Russian military brass, who barely tolerate Israeli military operations in Syria. So far, Russia-Israel relations can be defined as "friendly neutrality built around high expectations", which is too fragile a foundation for stable relations.

Important regional security issues always involve Russia, Iran and Turkey at the same time. The anti-Westernism of these three players can be singled out as a guiding star for their situational alliance, but it is too fragile a foundation for real partnership. The Kremlin is trying to adjust the Palmerston dictum of the 19th century to Russia's politics of the 21st century in order to keep the balance between regional states through artificial alliances. However, any incident, wherever it comes from, could trigger a chain reaction of tragic events in this explosive region. It looks like Russia in the wider

Middle East region is trapped in a “between Scylla and Charybdis” dilemma, which is fraught not with mythical accidents but with very concrete threats.

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Security Challenges from Russia and China in the Baltic Sea Region

KRISTIAN FISCHER

We are still facing the COVID-19 crisis. One of the consequences of this is the acceleration of many of the substantial developments we have seen in international politics and international relations over the last few years. We have seen a hardening of positions between the US and China in their relationship. We have seen an increase in national responses in Europe and beyond. And we have seen a continuation of global power shifts. These developments are likely to have effects on broader security issues in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). In this discussion paper, the focus will be on recent security¹ developments in the BSR with reference to the current and developing challenges posed to it by China and Russia.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 was followed by (still ongoing) military activity in Eastern Ukraine. Both events had severe negative effects on security in the BSR, increasing feelings of insecurity in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as in Poland.

¹ The term “security” is being used here in both a narrow and a broader sense. Its sense is narrow when speaking about a state’s territorial integrity, often in reference to military threats to it. In this piece, I will use security more broadly to refer, for example, to non-traditional threats such as cyber, hybrid and substantial economic challenges, as well as challenges derived from climate change.

As a consequence, these countries sought substantial reassurance and support from their allies and partners in NATO and the EU. A package of military measures was agreed upon by NATO, including an “enhanced Forward Presence” (eFP) by NATO (temporary deployment of a multinational battle group in each of the four countries). In each of the four countries, naval exercises were also conducted, in addition to ongoing NATO-led air-policing in the BSR. Russia views these military developments with deep mistrust. Another substantial recent development in the region has been the deepening of cooperation and dialogue between NATO and non-members Finland and Sweden, which is also perceived with great mistrust by Russia.

For its part, in recent years Russia has reformed and increased its military forces in the region (Efterretningstjeneste 2019, 23), especially in Kaliningrad and Western Russia. On several occasions, Russian military forces have displayed much more aggressive behaviour – for example, in responding to NATO exercises in the region. The political and military rhetoric from Russian diplomats and other officials has been far more robust and intimidating than before the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis.

We still lack a comprehensive and non-classified analysis of Russia’s military build-up and military activities in the region, as well as of the changes in Russia’s political and military rhetoric towards other states in the BSR, whether in public or in closed bilateral settings. Add to this the different kinds of cyber and information activities that come out of Russia, and they are clearly seen as very disturbing by neighbouring states in the region. Finally, Russia’s North Stream 2 gas pipeline project has raised a number of other concerns in the region.

In other words, in recent years the Baltic Sea Region has moved from being a relatively stable region in Europe to one where quite negative developments have taken root. Political, military and civilian contacts between Russia and the EU and NATO countries in the region are far more limited than before the Ukraine crisis. However, most if not all countries in the region stress the need for an approach towards Russia that has not only a deterrent effect but also a dialogue component.

Political dialogue with Russia since 2014 - whether taking place at the bilateral, minilateral or multilateral levels - has often been quite "robust". Interactions between elements of civil-society groups in Russia and other countries in the region have been made much more cumbersome by new Russian legislation directed against so-called "foreign agents".

In some areas, such as research and trade, we see regular contacts, some dialogue and sometimes substantial cooperation. However, the broader picture of regional cooperation with Russia is bleak and likely to remain so unless new and significant developments and opportunities emerge. The COVID-19 crisis does not seem to be changing the state of affairs for the better at all.

The dramatic developments following the recent general election in Belarus, which Russia clearly perceives as part of its sphere of influence, only add to the overall impression that there is very little dialogue and cooperation between Russia and other countries in the BSR. The outcome of the current crisis may have very significant effects not only for the people of Belarus, but also for security in the broader Baltic Sea Region and possibly beyond.

In recent years we have also seen increased Chinese political, economic and cultural interest in the region and its member states, including in the area of high tech. This interest is very different in its nature and objectives from Russia's aims in the region, as Russia regards many states as being within its sphere of influence. China's interests are far more focused on economic and technological matters, as well as on critical infrastructure. The tools China uses to promote its interests are therefore also different, and less visible, than Russia's actions in the BSR. However, China's interest also has broader security aspects to it.

China's growing interest and actions in the BSR are being felt at a time when far more sceptical perceptions of China's domestic and foreign policy actions can be seen in many European states. One of the reasons for this is obviously the broader American warnings to its European partners, warnings that are not only coming from the Trump administration. China's far more self-assured behaviour in a number of European states in recent years is another important factor. Added to this is the fear in many European countries that

China's increasing economic power is being used to invest in the European continent, for example, in crisis-hit critical physical and technological infrastructure.

We have therefore seen discussions and initiatives in the EU, as well as individually in many member states, on the possibility of increasing control over foreign investments. Furthermore, considerations are ongoing within the EU to find ways to ensure there is a much more level playing field when it comes to Chinese companies investing in Europe and European companies investing in China.

The polar dimension of the huge Chinese "Belt and Road Initiative" is one very substantial example of China's growing interest in critical infrastructure such as ports and railway connections in the BSR. The so-called "Talsinski project" to establish a tunnel between Tallinn and Helsinki is a good illustration of a project that could have huge importance in building a state-of-the-art gateway from and to the polar part of the Belt and Road Initiative, with connections to Northern Europe and Western Russia.

Another significant development in the BSR concerns Chinese trade with the countries in the region. This includes high-tech companies such as Huawei, which are actively seeking new market access in areas such as critical infrastructure, sometimes by intimidating local decision-makers. It is clear that China is seeking to benefit from the widespread perception in the BSR and in Europe that having close economic relations with China is essential for individual countries' economic development. However, recent research shows that the widespread perception that European trade with China is very comprehensive is not entirely correct. In fact, China makes up less than 6% on average of total trade for European Union member states (Patey 2020).

Nevertheless, China is using a broad set of foreign-policy instruments in the BSR. It is actively using its increasing economic strength and economic tools, including possible investments, as leverage to acquire insights and cooperation with local decision-makers, sometimes also exerting pressure on them.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Although Russia and now also China are clearly showing an interest in the region, their goals and foreign-policy instruments vary greatly. Russia, lacking China's comprehensive and increasing economic strength, is focusing on the hard-security policy instruments in its foreign- and security-policy toolbox. China, on the other hand, has the strategic patience and the economic strength to work much more "under the radar" than Russia.

The spill-over from the conflict in Ukraine, perhaps now to be followed by an escalation of the situation in Belarus, sets limits to how far cooperation with Russia can be developed. The point of departure is clearly that the EU and NATO cannot give in on the clearly agreed demands they have made to Russia with regard to the still-ongoing conflict in Ukraine, including Crimea. It would not only cause shock waves for the populations of many NATO and EU countries if NATO and/or the EU gave in, it would also set a dangerous precedent for similar potential invasions and actions by other authoritarian regimes both within and outside Europe. To consider how to address the very different challenges that Russia and China present in the region, we need to think and act both at the national and regional levels.

THE NATIONAL LEVEL

A number of activities needs to be considered at the national level:

1. The research community in the BSR can and must contribute more to informing about, and thereby raising awareness of, the comprehensive developments in the BSR - in other words, "the larger picture". Thus, up-to-date research can certainly contribute more to the knowledge base of national decision-makers, parliamentarians, officials, the media and civil society concerning recent developments in the BSR. It is important to emphasise that such research must be seen as independent and thus credible.
2. There is a tendency in some countries to focus on developments of more imminent importance for that country and thus place less emphasis on the larger and more comprehensive picture in

the region as a whole. This so-called “straw syndrome” (looking at developments and challenges through a straw) can also be seen, for example, in participation in larger international peace-support missions, where the respective countries have their forces locally deployed in a country or region. Therefore, there is a tendency to look at the local level rather than the comprehensive level of development in the country or region.

3. We also need to be more aware of history and better able to counter misinformation. Especially in the EU’s and NATO’s older members, many decision- and opinion-makers are often not aware of key facts and causal relationships – they tend to forget, tend to overlook or do not emphasise key political decisions in the decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is often easy for Russian officials to give their interpretations of key decisions in the past and have those versions go uncorrected. One striking example is NATO’s opening to new members that began in the 1990s. This is often portrayed as NATO (or a US-led NATO) pressing forward in violation of international treaties or political agreements. In fact, NATO’s and the EU’s enlargement processes were to a very large degree a response to a deliberate and strong political push from the new democracies to become members of both organisations. The new democracies not only felt they belonged in them, but also felt safer in the face of a very large and somewhat intimidating neighbour. Russia in fact agreed to key international declarations at the level of heads of state and government that European nations had a right to enter security alliances of their own choosing, as well as to leave them if they so choose.²

² For example, the Istanbul OSCE Summit Charter for European Security, 1999, para 8: “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.”

THE REGIONAL LEVEL

At this level, too, a number of activities need to be considered:

1. It is clear that enhanced cooperation between Sweden, Finland and NATO provides new opportunities for establishing a common picture of military, political, diplomatic and economic developments in the BSR. It also provides an opportunity to disseminate this broader picture to a number of target groups in nations around the Baltic Sea, including Russia.
2. Furthermore, cohesion and solidarity are key issues when it comes to sending effective political signals to Russia. NATO and EU states in the region need to ensure prompt and close consultations, as well as effective cooperation, to avoid being divided. The need for a significant US commitment, including a military presence in the region, is agreed by all nations except Russia and Belarus. However, it must be asked: does the recent political decision to move 12,000 US troops out of Germany send signals of solidarity and coherence to the Alliance, as well as towards the East? According to media reports (BBC 2020), approximately 1,000 of these 12,000 US troops are to be transferred to Poland. The US decision, seen together with the Trump administration's blunt rhetoric regarding the German government, is probably a move that governments outside NATO will interpret as an indication of less cohesion in NATO.
3. Another important and related question: how many and which US and NATO military capabilities are enough to make Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians feel safe from their big neighbour? These are surely questions on which there will be continued and difficult debates in NATO and its member states.
4. Geography plays an important role in security - any student of political science knows that. Russia, being where it is and having the size it has, will continue to be a security challenge in the region as far as one can foresee. We do not have the luxury to choose our neighbours. In the near future, we therefore need to give more thought to how we can engage in some kind of constructive political *dialogue with Russia*, that is, with Russian decision-makers, researchers, civil society and, if possible,

the broader public. However, we should do this without abandoning our red lines over, for example, Ukraine and Crimea.

5. The research world offers some avenues for substantial dialogue with Russian researchers, and also with Russian decision-makers. Clearly it is useful for the academic world to listen to the perceptions of its Russian interlocutors, and vice versa. Should we consider adopting a more proactive national and multilateral approach when it comes to information activities directed towards the broader Russian public, perhaps by using social media? Does it make sense to disseminate facts about Russia's comprehensive actions and military build-up in the BSR in the Russian language? These facts may also include Russian officials' blunt rhetoric, including threats of the use of nuclear weapons against their neighbours in the region.
6. Consideration should also be given to whether the academic community in the BSR can be useful in establishing Track II-like dialogues and building up professional networks. We need not start with the most difficult issues, such as security. Other issues, such as climate change, the environment in the BSR, preventing epidemics, etc. may have better chances of getting some positive traction. Some nations, such as Finland and Norway, have already established concrete contacts and cooperation between some of their civilian ministries and their Russian counterparts. We may be able to learn something from their experience.
7. Another important question here is whether we can use already established institutions to achieve substantial political dialogue within the BSR. The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) had a very promising start in 1992, but cooperation in the Council has been severely limited due to the overall deterioration of security in the region. Nordic cooperation in many different forums (NORDEFECO, the Nordic Council, etc.) also has the potential to be taken further.
8. The challenges posed by China's increased involvement in the region suggest different policy considerations. We clearly

lack a transatlantic forum for comprehensive dialogue about how to deal with China in the years to come (Brzezinski, Lute, and Wheeler 2020). Since China poses a challenge with many different aspects – economic, trade, technology, AI, military, health, etc. – it is difficult to see either the EU or NATO being a forum for such dialogue. Therefore, combined meetings – for example, at the ambassadors’ level – could be one way to initially establish such a dialogue, one in which those members of the EU or NATO who are not members of the other organisation can participate. The recent reaching out to the US by EU High Representative Borell was a step in this direction. However, even though this was met with a fairly positive initial response from the US administration, no such dialogue is likely to gain much momentum before the US elections.

9. We also need a political dialogue within the BSR about the emerging Chinese presence and China’s actions in the region. Again, it is clearly advantageous for decision-makers to have a broader knowledge base about developments in the BSR, rather than focusing primarily on bilateral relations. Another issue is whether there are close contacts between civilian ministries in the BSR – for example, ministries of transport – when it comes to their approach to growing Chinese interests.
10. A final consideration is whether it would be useful to raise the issue of China’s increased presence in the region in contacts with Russian interlocutors. For example, it would be interesting to learn about Russia’s perceptions and goals in relation to Chinese military activities and economic investments in the BSR.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA

An Initiative to End the Standstill - Desirable Security Policy Objectives of a United European Union

REINHARD KRUMM AND SIMON WEISS

Since Ursula von der Leyen assumed the role of President of the European Commission, the European Union has shown stronger aspirations in security policy. Van der Leyen has been calling for a “more geopolitical EU”. The EU wants to take on a larger share of global responsibility. However, this will only be possible if that desire can be conveyed in socio-political terms, i.e. which political aims the EU intends to pursue and what it expects from its partners. If it wants to communicate these objectives more coherently and more credibly, there will need to be a higher degree of unity within the Union. The underlying principle that only a more “united” EU will be able to become “a geopolitical player” has been stressed and reinforced by former President Jean-Claude Juncker. Effective joint action is still being hampered by internal procedures and institutional structures. Hence, the EU will need to carry out partial reforms and modernise. New ideas such as the European Security Council and the European Intervention Initiative may be useful in this regard.

EU citizens want to see their governments take on more responsibility when it comes to resolving international crises or conflicts. To most member states, taking on more responsibility means implementing policies through the EU. Following the Coronavirus pandemic, where countries have been acting within their national administrations, the EU will once again become the framework for medium- and smaller-sized EU member states to

implement policies. In the long term, Brussels must also be able to represent key interests independently. In the context of increasingly challenging transatlantic relations, it is essential for the European Union to become more assertive vis-à-vis the US in certain policy areas. This will be the only way for it to assume a stronger long-term geopolitical role and to stand up for itself in a globalised world. The EU should not become a weak “in-between region” - between the US and China.

In the long run, a European nuclear shield could be part of a joint security approach. Currently, it does not seem to be either morally right or pragmatic for Europe to forego nuclear weapons. However, as the US has realigned its foreign policy, a European nuclear shield would mean that EU member states would be guaranteed a sufficient level of security. At the same time, the transatlantic Alliance is still an important security foundation in the interest of the EU.

The OSCE should also be given much more attention within the EU. It is one of the rare organisations where all EU countries - including Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Russia, as well as the US and Canada - are represented. More effective use should be made of these channels of communication. The OSCE has the capacity to provide Europe with a long-term vision of security policy by integrating all stakeholders. The German EU presidency is looking into that.

EU DISUNITY: “DIVISIVE TOPICS”

With European divisions over the Iraq War of 2003 fresh in his mind, British historian Timothy Garton Ash wrote in his book *Free World* in 2004: “The whole of the new, enlarged Europe is engaged in a great argument between the forces of Euro-Gaullism and Euro-Atlanticism. This is the argument of the decade. On its outcome will depend the future of the West.”

This was a fitting analysis of the two engines of European policy and their potential split. More than a decade has passed

since this assessment, but what remains true is Donald Rumsfeld's well-known dichotomy between the "Old and New Europe". Much might have changed since then with respect to the EU's institutions (such as the Joint Foreign and Security Policy, Eastern Partnership, and Permanent Structural Cooperation: PESCO), and three new members have joined the Union and the United Kingdom has left, but that dividing line is still clearly visible today.

Almost on a monthly basis there is a headline in political reporting that aims explicitly to show a lack of unity in the EU: on Libya, on Syria, and on the question regarding the position that should be adopted in the long run vis-à-vis globally operating autocratic systems such as China and Russia. One of the most prominent examples of this disunity, apart from the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic, has been the European migration policy, which has been a constant topic of contention. Since 2015, the EU has failed to develop a sustainable concept; in this respect, just relying on Turkey will not be sufficient.

Another area of partial disunity is the question of how to deal with and how to include the transatlantic partner. Since the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency, US relations with the EU have become increasingly unclear and complicated. The US administration's paradigm of "America First" has been putting into question principles that had been taken for granted in transatlantic relations for decades. Trump is even willing to resort to economic sanctions, i.e. measures that are not normally envisaged among partners.

Nord Stream 2 is probably the most topical example of where the US saw itself forced to act to protect the EU, especially Germany, from a supposed dependency on Russian energy supplies. So far not all EU member states have clearly condemned or disapproved of the US's behaviour, which can be attributed to their own security but also economic interests, with the positions on the project among EU member states diverging as well.

Fundamentally, in many cases the EU is not even sure whether or not its own interests coincide with Washington's. Even in the past it has not always been easy to reach an alignment of interests. There have been examples of this in areas such as external energy

policy, including America's dislike of Soviet pipelines in the 1970s and 1980s, or more recently in the context of the establishment of PESCO and the European Defence Fund (EDF). However, even if there is consensus on issues within the EU, there is also the need to assess the extent to which member states are prepared to safeguard their own national interests at the international level. In various areas there seems to be a lack of willingness to do so, when push comes to shove. A case in point: INSTEX, the instrument for supporting trade activities with Iran, has only been used half-heartedly to save the Iranian Nuclear Agreement (JCPOA).

It is a problem that the current institutional set-up of the EU makes joint action much more difficult within the EU. Firstly, matters of foreign policy must be subject to national procedures, which are then dealt with at an intergovernmental level within the European Council, where every decision has to be taken unanimously. As the international system become more turbulent and the ability of the EU to react to major crises is increasingly in demand, the lack of structural unity in security policy is becoming a serious problem.

If the EU wants to be relevant at an international level and wants to become a global player, then it will need to partially reform and modernise. Planned structures, such as the European Security Council and the European Intervention Initiative, might provide a remedy. However, it needs to be clear that in the medium and long term, a united EU cannot be compensated for with new bodies and EU institutions. When it comes to unity and being a global player, relations with Russia will evidently be decisive, as this is one of the topics that is the source of many disputes with the EU.

Relations with Russia have been made so complicated by the fact that divisions, as well as the differing perceptions and positions of EU member states, are based on many different causes and factors. Some EU member states have been searching for national identities, historical differences, and party-political changes at the national and European level, as well as for alliances within the EU (such as the Visegrád members). These members are particularly keen on prioritising their region or their own political agenda, as well as their own economic interests.

NEW THINKING: "THE EUROPEAN UNION AS SUBJECT"

"Euro-Gaullist activism" could also be observed among some predecessors of French President Emmanuel Macron. Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy implemented such policies, although with varying degrees of success. Chirac was one of the leading architects of the "Paris-Berlin-Moscow Axis", which, in conjunction with some other Western European countries, formed the opposition to the US-led Iraq War of 2003. However, President Sarkozy's initiative to intervene in Libya with a European "coalition of the willing" led to a disastrous outcome for security policy within the context of the Arab Spring.

What has changed with respect to the French initiative for a European Security Policy? The objective is now to form a joint approach to further the strategic development of the EU and the role of the EU within Europe. President Macron's new way of thinking provides an opportunity for a detailed debate on the methods and objectives of the European Security and Defence Policy with an ambitious aim: increased independence as a player in security policy in a volatile international system.

On several occasions Macron has pointed out that a political debate with Russia is necessary, despite this potentially being a source of major conflict at the European level: "If we do not talk to Russia, this would be a serious mistake. Russia is situated in Europe and we cannot and should not ignore it". A common EU position in terms of relations with Russia is very important, as is the constructive development of this relationship. This includes dealing with the conflict in Ukraine, climate change (Russia's territory comprises about one-eighth of the earth's surface), the conflict with Syria, the long-term energy security of the EU, as well as military de-escalation (to promote the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to prevent another arms race).

Many EU partners have shown reluctance and a negative reaction with respect to France's initiative. "New Thinking" has always been highly controversial. German chancellor Willy Brandt had to cope with disunity and initial rejection by the Western

powers when promoting his "Ostpolitik". However, the desire for the reunification of Germany was so great that no effort was to be spared. At the same time, the West German government was determined to make its Western allies accept that relations with Socialist neighbouring countries and the USSR needed to be improved because of Germany's horrific and barbaric actions against humanity during WWII. Bonn sought to facilitate this by being as transparent as possible. Egon Bahr had previously received Washington's approval.

Over a decade after Brandt and Bahr, Soviet Leader Michael Gorbachev also had to take note that his "New Thinking" was met by major scepticism not only within the political class in the Soviet Union, but especially by the West. At the time, it was argued that this might lead to a split of the allegedly fragile West in its entirety.

The more recent past holds an example that shows how Europe has been dealing with new ideas and concepts: the "Three Seas Initiative". Started by Poland and Croatia in 2015, this informal forum of 12 Central and Eastern European States has provoked a lot of scepticism. For the last two years, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier have attended summit meetings of the Three Seas Initiative, with Germany having somewhat adapted its policy to project the image of a more "united" EU. The reasons for this change in policy have been threefold: the prospect of mutual good will, Poland becoming more open to EU initiatives, and Germany being given better insight into the development of this political process (as an observing member).

An EU leadership core will need to cooperate and communicate intensely to avoid encouraging any bilateral strategies coming from the US, Russia or China, who all want to exploit the structural disunity within the EU. However, with the EU having 27 member states, a lot of national players need to be dealt with. Even Berlin and Paris cannot whole-heartedly agree on what the EU as an independent player in security policy entails. Ideally, Poland, as an influential Central Eastern European country, would take part in such an initiative because it is in its own interest to co-determine

such policy and not to reject it. And the importance of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in that matter is not questionable.

Over the past few years, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has been widely criticised for a lack of strategy because there has been no political project, with it having served only as the classic EU instrument for enlargement and integration. The reasons for this are to be found in the implicit sharing of roles between the purely intergovernmental and US-led NATO, on the one hand, and the EU, which was not responsible for security and defence, on the other hand. This division of labour has not been questioned by more recent EU members.

Only over the last three years were these additional institutions - i.e., the launch of the PESCO Initiative and the European Defence Fund - noticed by the outside world and then promptly criticised by the US defence secretary of the time, James Mattis. The main criticism was that they would be competing with NATO. However, there has also been criticism of these within the EU. This was not only about the heightened importance of being able to act in foreign policy matters, but also about the strategic autonomy of the EU. This is currently an ambitious policy initiative and might become a guiding principle of the EU if it were sufficiently supported by the Union.

If there were to be agreement in favour of a process of strategic autonomy, the EU would be provided with an impetus for its policy of integration, on the one hand, and would be given space to develop its security policy, on the other. The effects of this would be felt beyond Europe. Paris and ideally Warsaw would be the partners with whom Berlin and other EU member states might reflect upon and shape the process of strategic autonomy. It will be an important task over the following years to find a balance between countries that want to actively move the EU forward and those that want to be passive bystanders.

CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACHES

There have been only a few cases since EU enlargement in 2004 where EU member states have acted jointly (for example, the sanctions against Russia due to the conflict in and about Ukraine). It is important to take constructive decisions and to show that a union with half a billion inhabitants can act, particularly in times of international crises and conflicts. The focus should be on the following six elements.

PRAGMATIC STRENGTHENING OF THE CAPACITY TO ADDRESS URGENT CRISES: THE EU MUST PROVE ITS COMPETENCE AS A GLOBAL PLAYER

The results and the analysis of the study Security Radar 2019 (Krumm, Dienes, and Weiß 2019) show that a large majority of Europeans feel part of a European culture and want to see their governments assume more responsibility to resolve conflicts. In addition, the analysis of expert debate and the responses of representative surveys in seven countries (France, Germany, Poland, Serbia, Latvia, Ukraine and Russia) have shown that the leading tandem consisting of France and Germany should be bringing about a positive change of the status quo. In this context, it is important to point out that both France and Germany see their current national governments' objectives in security policy as being closely linked to a united Europe.

Enabling the EU to become a "global player" will only be possible if the EU is united in wanting to acquire this ability. There are good reasons for this. For the next decade, the greater geopolitical ambitions of the new EU Commission will need to be compatible with structural change in transatlantic relations, as well as with swift political changes in third countries that might affect the interests of EU member states. If such interests cannot be made compatible with transatlantic relations, the EU (supranationally or after consultations with governments, depending on the internally agreed level of ambition) must be in a position to represent its vital interests independently. Depending on the nature of the challenge,

it will need to be able to establish the necessary majorities and form agreements, taking into account existing diplomatic and military capabilities. However, on a case-by-case basis, this might lead to unconventional constellations of stakeholders (within the EU as well as with third countries), as can be seen at present in Mali and Libya.

TACKLING THE CHALLENGES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN A COOPERATIVE MANNER

At a national level, there has been a remarkable eagerness to take decisions to overcome the economic effects of COVID-19. Huge financial rescue packages were agreed upon by national governments to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic for the labour market and for essential sectors and stakeholders. The EU has taken the first steps in this regard by considering raising the billions of euros necessary for a reconstruction fund through issuing Euro bonds. The compromise that has been emerging on the Franco-German proposal of such an instrument means that cooperative – not only national – action is necessary to address the severity of the Coronavirus crisis. Apart from this financial aspect, it is also appropriate to invest in the strengthening of international organisations such as the WHO, as well as to set up coordinating institutions such as a Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. After these organisations have been set up, it is important that they should not only be active within the EU, but also cooperate in conjunction with other international organisations and government crisis response centres.

THE DEBATE ON A EUROPEAN NUCLEAR SHIELD

A survey by the Körber Foundation and the Pew Research Center from September 2019 (Pew Research Center 2020) has shown that respondents in Germany specifically declared themselves to be in favour of a European Nuclear Shield instead of remaining under the US shield. A remarkable feature of this was the fact that Germans were even prepared to accept larger defence

expenditure to support it. At the beginning of the year, French President Emmanuel Macron fleshed out his plans regarding a European Nuclear Shield (Elysee 2020). He called for increased cooperation and established a European dimension for the French nuclear deterrent force. Germany and the other EU member states should be very open to this offer and should discuss its long-term implementation.

Naturally, this does not mean that the EU should demand that the US Nuclear Umbrella over Europe be closed. However, it may be a good idea, especially in times of incalculable security risks and unclear alliances, to develop an EU strategy of nuclear deterrence in parallel to the existing NATO concept – with the clear understanding that the EU is foremost interested in a comprehensive regime of limiting nuclear weapons or, at best, eliminating them altogether.

ALLOWING FOR COORDINATED CHALLENGES

In the Eastern European neighbourhood of the EU, it is important to challenge the policies of the Russian Federation by allowing Russian leadership to react to pragmatic policy initiatives in very precise and sectoral areas of policy. The EU might submit a roadmap with tangible and politically synchronised actions for de-escalation to Russia. At best, Russia would respond to this in stages. If Russia broke existing agreements in this context, then the EU could always intervene and reassess its policy. If this approach is agreed as far as possible, then the EU can rely on its inner strengths, and in case of a foreign policy slip by Moscow it can return to the *status quo ante* at any time.

Vis-à-vis Russia, the EU is superior, or at least equal, in many relevant attributes of power and capabilities. The substantial dialogue with intermediate stages between the EU and Russia or the Eurasian Economic Union should be conducted in accordance with agreed-upon criteria and a common understanding about its purpose. It should be clear to EU member states that a process of political dialogue is of strategic interest, especially in settling armed conflicts in Europe and in its immediate neighbourhood.

One of the initial results should be a substantial improvement of the situation within and around Ukraine.

There is a successful record of such a political process. The silent and effective diplomacy between France and the Soviet Union, used to pave the way for the CSCE process, became an important link in the era of détente. At that time, the European Community and the Western world as a whole were anything but united. In both cases, the objective was not a strategic partnership.

A HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF SECURITY: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE OSCE

The unique feature of the OSCE is the fact that EU members, the US, and the Russian Federation are all represented under one umbrella. For this reason it should be obvious, as enshrined 30 years ago in the Paris Charter of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and confirmed by the Astana Declaration of 2010, that this is the organisation that should restore cooperative security in Europe. Even though it might already be a link between EU and non-EU members, the EU should strengthen the organisation's role and should pay much more attention to it. A stronger OSCE might reinforce the feeling of unity, put all stakeholders on more equal footing and provide Europe with a security policy objective. This might contribute to making the process more transparent. On the other hand, this referential space of cooperative security could include Russia in the process, provided that the country is still interested in such an initiative. However, some fundamental questions would need to be answered: Will new rules and agreements be required to deal with the current threats and challenges to security? What is the objective of European security over the next five to ten years?

LOOKING AHEAD

It is partially in the hands of politicians, but primarily in the hands of the citizens of EU member states, to make sure that an agreement can be reached between the different key drivers of European security policy. There is certainly not going to be any complete unity, but a common understanding might be possible. In turbulent times, when it is becoming increasingly difficult to rely on political partnerships in the international system, and in times of socio-economic challenges, not only due to the pandemic, the EU cannot afford another decade of constant disunity.

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Is It Time for a New Schuman Declaration on Foreign Policy and Security?

How Can We Secure the EU in an Increasingly Unstable World?

STEFANO BRAGHIROLI

Former Belgian Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens once described the European Union as “an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm”. During the Cold War and for a large part of the 1990s and 2000s, the EU and its member states have conveniently avoided addressing this contradiction, comfortably relying on a clear division of labour according to which collective security and defence cooperation were to be dealt primarily at the NATO level, with the EU focussing chiefly on economic integration and trade (i.e., the European Communities Pillar) and – to a certain extent – on growing political integration. The rationale was that each organisation would focus on what it does at best – the EU dealing with *Venus* and NATO dealing with *Mars* – to avoid unnecessary overlaps and redundant duplications.

Even as Brussels moved the scope of European integration beyond the economy with the Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Lisbon treaties, this division of labour and its overarching rationale has never been fundamentally challenged at either the supranational level or in national capitals. Even the mutual defence clause of Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and invoked for the first time by France in 2015 in the aftermath of the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris, has not changed the state of things, as in practice it makes the obligation of aid and

assistance conditional on member states' "commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation".

This division of labour between *Venus* and *Mars*, which has allowed the EU to prosper as an economic giant for over half a century while practically disregarding security and defence, is based on two essential pre-conditions, which – despite seasonal ups and downs – have fundamentally held true throughout the Cold War and up until the first decade of the year 2000s. The first tenet is the overall convergence of interests within the transatlantic community and between the two sides of the Atlantic. The second is the idea of the unity of the West based on the shared values of democracy and liberalism. A practical display of the latter has been Washington's traditional and continuous support for the emergence and consolidation of the process of European integration in post-war Western Europe and throughout the Cold War.

If we look at today's state of affairs, both these pre-conditions appear increasingly under stress. Following the end of the Cold War, the convergence of interests between Washington and Brussels has been tested on a number of occasions by isolationist and unilateral temptations, as was the case in the Second Iraq War, for example. The zero-sum approach taken by the current Trump administration when it comes to transatlantic relations, the country's monetisation of the Alliance, and its erratic foreign policy behaviour has substantially widened the gap, as demonstrated by the fate of the Iran Nuclear Deal, the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, and by the US's unilateral action (or inaction) towards Russia and China.

For the first time since the end of WWII, the gap between the interests of these two sides has extended to values, thereby dangerously challenging the idea of the unity of the West based on the shared principled *Weltanschauung*. Under the current US administration, from Eastern Europe to the Middle East, the United States appears to have progressively abdicated its role as the leader of the free and democratic world. President Trump's

personal and personalised diplomacy appears more at ease with autocrats than with traditional US allies. Accordingly, the White House is actively siding with illiberal political forces in Europe, and - for the first time since its inception - it is objectively undermining the process of European integration. Evidence that this goes beyond President Trump's colourful and undiplomatic language includes his militant support for Brexit and his openly Eurosceptic appointees as US representatives to Brussels and Berlin.

While the outcome of the forthcoming US elections is still to be decided, even a change in the White House is unlikely to result in a full reset of transatlantic relations, given the growing polarisation of America's society, the partisanship of its foreign policy, the lasting damage to the post-Cold War international system based on the idea of *Pax Americana*, and the growing distrust of key European allies from Paris to Berlin.

If the EU and its member states are not able to make sense of and adapt to this new reality, Brussels's impotence as a global player will inevitably reverberate upon the realm of *Venus* and progressively deflate the EU's role as an economic giant. In practice, it will be increasingly difficult to sustain trade and normative power without strong foreign and security policy foundations. As the ongoing latent trade war between Brussels and Washington and the scaling back of the WTO and of trade multilateralism is becoming clear, Europe as a mercantilist power might soon prove to be a giant with feet of clay.

While the state of transatlantic relations is at an all-time low and uncertainty is on the horizon, the rise of powers with fundamentally different interests and systems of values directly challenges Europe's global role as a normative power. The progressive retreat of international arbitration and of global governance by an increasingly divided West in favour of the *imperium* of military might has turned Europe's Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods into increasingly fluid and unpredictable environments. Domestically, the EU's fundamental values and our "European way of life" appear increasingly challenged by both insiders and outsiders, while internationally, Europe's voice is unheard or unspoken.

The ongoing global pandemic has resulted in Brussels and European liberal-democracies being blamed from many sides for their lack of leadership and their ineffective response, while authoritarian regimes - from China to Russia - are being praised for their iron-fisted approach and are successfully engaging in a global PR campaign to market not only their response to the pandemic but also their model of governance, free from the "unnecessary" red tape and checks and balances of the decadent West (Braghiroli 2020). This sort of narrative is supported by a well-oiled infrastructure of disinformation and deception in what Braghiroli, Hoffman, and Makarychev (2018, 243) define as a "reverted direction of influence". Propelled by both external actors and by domestic political entrepreneurs, the illiberal model is gaining traction all across Europe. Unsurprisingly, a growing number of voters and their representatives seem ready to give up their freedoms in exchange for the unrestrained leadership of unlikely saviours.

At the same time, Europe's incapacity in backing up its words with actions when dealing with diplomatic and security challenges has severely undermined Brussels's credibility. The failure of member states failure to safeguard the Iran Nuclear Deal and their inability to respond credibly to Russian aggression towards its Eastern neighbours highlights a significant gap between the ambitions of the 2016 "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" and today's reality.

This is epitomised by the most recent debacle of Brussels's response to the fraudulent elections in Belarus and the massive protests and repression that followed. After denouncing endemic irregularities, EU High Representative Josep Borrell emphatically declared that "we are using *all the tools* that we have at our disposal to contribute to the end of the violent repression that has been developing in Belarus after the elections, which we do not consider to have legitimately elected Lukashenko". Borrell's words and member states' varying determination has translated into a limited set of sanctions that mostly target some of the perpetrators of the violence - sanctions that were endorsed by a large majority in the European Parliament, only to be contradicted a few days later

by a veto from Cyprus (over its ongoing dispute with Turkey) in a dramatic blow to EU's credibility. Once again, the *tools* at the EU's disposal proved unfit and weakened by the need for complete unanimity, while member states' *liberum vetum*, used without discretion and for reasons unrelated to the substance of the issue at hand, proved fatal.

In an increasingly unstable world dominated by growing great power competition reverberating along EU's Eastern and Southern borders, and without a clear transatlantic perspective, individual European states - as Brexit has dramatically proven - run the risk of falling under the influence of exogenous hegemonies or facing the concrete risk of irrelevance in world affairs. But this does not necessarily need be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This year we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, which marked the beginning of the process of European integration with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. This seminal document starts as follows: "world peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it."

Nowadays - more than ever - we need creative efforts that are proportionate to the dangers we face. When it comes to defence and security, some positive steps in this direction have been undertaken by EU member states with the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the still-ongoing creation of the European Defence Fund (EDF), and the possible foundation of a single EU headquarters for military operations under the European Commission's helm. But confronted with the enormity of the challenge we face, these are still limited steps that are far from the *Sovereign Europe* envisioned by French President Macron in his Sorbonne speech: "to establish a common intervention force, a common defence budget and a common doctrine for action [...] needed to ensure Europe's autonomous operating capabilities". Changes ought to be strategic, not tactical; they should be organic and structural, not *ad-hoc* and in isolation. The same can be said when it comes to foreign policy.

As the global pandemic has shown us, the evident limits of European institutions in dealing with the crisis, which provoked

so much outrage, are a direct consequence of the inadequate instruments and insufficient competences conferred to them (Braghiroli 2020). The same can be said when it comes to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which faces growing great power competition in an increasingly unstable world.

Every serious attempt to develop a coherent European foreign policy and security perspective has been traditionally and systematically undermined by uncompromising intergovernmentalism and the need for complete unanimity. The EU is what its member states make of it. They are the ones who decide the balance of powers and competences between their national capitals and Brussels, and they are the only ones who can change it. Experience has shown that in policy areas of strategic national interest, member states are unlikely and unwilling to take organic, structural steps relating to their sovereignty unless forced by exogenous circumstances and/or events beyond their control – as the experience of Europe's response to the global pandemic proves once more.

Only by putting aside national egoisms and short-term thinking can the European Union and its member states have the chance to emerge as a genuine community of intentions and values that is able to speak with one coherent voice and be heard on a global stage by projecting a consistent normative power based on those values.

Speaking with one voice, not only to competitors but also to allies, might also prove vital to renewing the strength of transatlantic ties through the revitalisation of the two above-mentioned pre-conditions. A truly *united* foreign and security policy would be provided with the capabilities and material and financial resources needed to deliver a tangible and balanced contribution to the work of NATO and the pursuit of mutually agreed interests, as has been rightly expected by our US allies since the Yugoslav Wars of the early 1990s. At the same time, the geo-political synergy and healthy complementarity between the EU and NATO has the potential to provide a credible liberal-democratic model for addressing world issues and global challenges, which functions to reduce the gap between European

democracy and its citizens and eventually regain their trust, setting aside illiberal and authoritarian temptations.

Regardless of the fact that we are dealing with an increasingly assertive Russia, with China's influence, with global terrorism and with nuclear proliferation, this step necessarily implies a stronger union with empowered representative institutions that leads its member states in this changing global reality. More specifically, this entails the transformation of the office of high representative into a proper foreign minister of the union - with appropriate supranational competences and robust powers - and of the European External Action Service into an actual ministry with own resources and tools.

Time is critical, and as Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned during his 2017 State of the Union speech, "we must complete the European House now that the sun is shining [...] Because when the next clouds appear on the horizon - and they will appear one day - it will be too late." The clouds are no longer on the horizon; they are above us.

While having every European capital on board is challenging but desirable, an avant-garde of member states can start construction and pave the way for a renewed and truly united foreign and security policy. This has happened in the past, dating back to the Schuman Declaration itself, both in terms of policy areas (e.g. the single currency) and of institutional development (e.g. the European Public Prosecutor Office).

European capitals might soon find themselves at a crossroads, left with no other choice but to overcome, united, the growing number of challenges from far and near and complete the European House, including in terms of foreign affairs and security, or to face the concrete risk of irrelevance in an increasingly hostile world defined not by international law, but by the *imperium* of external powers.

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The EU's Relations with Russia in 2020 - No Light at the End of the Tunnel

SABINE FISCHER

EU-Russia relations are an important cornerstone for any European security order. They have been marred by conflict and the depletion of mutual trust since 2014. At the end of the very complicated year that was 2020, the EU will conclude a review of the Five Guiding Principles for its Russia policy, introduced in March 2015 by then-High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

The five principles stipulate (1) the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, which are aimed at ending the conflict in Ukraine's Donbas region, as the key condition for any substantial change in the EU's stance toward Russia (including the lifting of Donbas-related sanctions); (2) closer relations with Russia's former Soviet neighbours, including in Central Asia; (3) strengthening the EU's resilience to Russian threats, such as those in the area of energy security; (4) selective engagement with Russia on issues of interest to the EU; (5) the need to engage in people-to-people contacts and support Russian civil society.

These five principles marked a conceptual shift in the EU's policy towards Russia. Before the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014, this policy was based on the assumption - albeit never undisputed - that the EU could work with Moscow towards Russia's political, economic and societal modernisation (i.e. transformation), which would ultimately lead to a strategic partnership based on shared rules and values. These five principles departed from this assumption in several ways. By declaring relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries

to be a priority, they put an end to the EU's traditional Russia-first approach. By using the term "resilience" (both for the EU's neighbourhood and for the EU itself), they indicated a more robust approach to fending off negative Russian influence. By announcing that future engagement with the Russian state would be selective, they implied a fundamentally different, much more interest-based approach to Russian authorities – and a focus Russian society.

This change of approach was not appreciated by the Russian side. In its 2016 Foreign Policy Concept, Moscow claimed that the EU, along with NATO, was pursuing geopolitical ambitions instead of working for the creation of a common European security and cooperation framework. From the Russian point of view, this was the real cause for the crisis in the relations between Russia and the West (MID 2016). Moscow responded by continuing its own policy of engaging selectively with individual EU member states, thereby exploiting and deepening the EU's internal divergencies over Russia and marginalising EU institutions in Brussels.

These five principles never went undisputed within the European Union, either. They earned praise for being flexible and sufficiently balanced to keep on board member states with different positions and interests vis-à-vis Russia. However, they have also been fiercely criticised for a lack of policy goals and strategic vision: If not a strategic partnership, what should be the aim of the EU's Russia policy?

Indeed, the five principles give no answer to that question, which was raised, among others, by French President Emanuel Macron in the summer of 2019. Based on the belief that in a world shaped by growing competition between China and the US, the EU cannot afford to push Russia into Beijing's arms, the French president called for greater efforts to bring Russia back into a European order of trust and security. His diplomatic charm offensive vis-à-vis Moscow included the activation of French-Russian bilateral relations, a more pro-active French role in the Normandy Four negotiations, and the ambition to engage with Russia in different multilateral fora. The initiative was eyed with great suspicion by other EU member states, such as Poland, the Baltic States, Sweden, and Germany. Paris keeps insisting that it

was not questioning the fundamental tenets of the EU's policy towards Russia, namely that any substantial improvement of the relationship will depend on tangible progress in the Donbas peace negotiations. French diplomats did, however, criticise the small-steps approach embodied in the five principles for not yielding results and called for a more ambitious policy.

THE ENTRENCHMENT OF RUSSIA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY

In December 2019, the new European Commission, proclaimed "geopolitical" by EC President Ursula von der Leyen, took office. Everything now seemed set for a debate about the future of the EU's Russia policy. The Normandy Four Summit in Paris in December 2019, the first one in almost four years, and the international conference on Libya in Berlin in January 2020 even seemed to indicate a modestly positive dynamic in relations with Russia. But the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the Russia issue - and almost any other topic not related to the coronavirus - to the backburner.

When Russia returned to the agenda of high-level EU meetings, the positive signs from the beginning of the year had all but evaporated. Instead, several developments indicate that the relationship between the EU and Russia will become more rather than less difficult in the future.

Many in Brussels and the EU capitals had hoped that the global scale of the pandemic would prompt Russia to reconsider its stance vis-à-vis the EU, and that the fight against the virus would become a positive case of "selective engagement". This did not happen. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international contacts and caused many countries to retreat to egoistic and nationalistic policies. EU member states were no exception: at the beginning of the pandemic they ended up closing borders and demonstrating a rather shocking lack of solidarity. It took several weeks for EU institutions to settle into their role and for EU member states to

start working for joint solutions. Other states, above all the United States under President Donald Trump, continued their egoistic behaviour. Unlike Washington, Russia stressed the importance of multilateral cooperation within the framework of the World Health Organisation (WHO). But it rejected all advances made by the EU and its member states for more intense cooperation on the fight against the coronavirus. On the contrary, the difficult situation in some EU member states in the early weeks of the pandemic was exploited by Russian state media to underline propaganda narratives about Europe being weak and decaying (as opposed to Russia being strong and resilient).

Moreover, COVID-19 was politicised in the context of Russia's constitutional reform, which was launched by Vladimir Putin in January 2020. The "winning against the virus" narrative became entangled with the other important motive in Russia's state propaganda in 2020: the 75th anniversary of the victory against Nazi Germany and the end of the Great Patriotic War. Together, they provided the background for the campaign that led to the popular vote in favour of the constitutional amendments, which was held on 1 July 2020 in the midst of the pandemic in Russia.

The constitutional reform will have implications for Russia's foreign policy as well. Two amendments refer directly to foreign policy issues: the prohibition on "estranging" Russian territory (Art. 67) and the precedence of Russian law over international law if the latter contradicts the Russian constitution (Art. 79). Both reflect already existing policies. More importantly, the reset of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms, which gives him the possibility to run for office again in 2024, implies that Russia's foreign policy course will not change in the foreseeable future (Florov 2020). The dual crises over Belarus and the poisoning of Alexey Navalny give a taste of what Moscow's even more entrenched position implies.

Russia and the EU were equally surprised by the mass demonstrations against Alexander Lukashenko after the presidential election in Belarus on 9 August - and they immediately found themselves disagreeing over the causes and meaning of the protests. Moscow saw another case of Western interference in its

sphere of influence and threw its weight behind long-term ruler Lukashenko. The EU condemned attempts by the Belarusian regime to crush the protests and called for a new election. As Russian support consolidated Lukashenko's position, more and more opposition leaders were forced to leave Belarus, and they found themselves in exile in various EU countries. In the absence of any willingness on the part of either Minsk or Moscow to enter into a dialogue with the protest movement, they had little choice but to reach out to governments in the EU for support.

The poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent from the Novichok group on 22 August and the ensuing spat between Berlin and Moscow dealt another serious blow to the already fragile relationship. For the first time, Germany found itself at the centre of a conflict with Russia and in the cross-fire of Russian state propaganda. The Navalny case and Russia's negative reaction to calls for an investigation have further crushed the little trust for Russia that still existed in Berlin and other EU capitals. It remains to be seen what this means for EU-Russia relations in the medium and longer terms.

When EU foreign ministers met in Berlin at the end of August for their informal Gymnich Meeting, they did not discuss prospects of selective engagement with Russia, as this had been originally envisaged by the German EU presidency. Instead, they focused on sanctions against the Lukashenko regime and on appropriate responses to the Navalny's poisoning (Federal Foreign Office 2020). This is the atmosphere that will define any reflection about the future of the EU's Russia policy until the end of the year.

THE FUTURE OF THE EU'S RUSSIA POLICY: FIVE PRINCIPLES RECALIBRATED

The EU debate so far indicates that the five principles will remain the framework of the EU's policy towards Russia. However, developments in 2020 should prompt the EU to recalibrate their weight and significance:

The first three principles, which aim to constrain Russian policies in the Eastern Neighbourhood and in the EU, should be strengthened. The EU needs to keep its course on the conflicts in Ukraine and work towards the democracy, prosperity and stability of all its Eastern neighbours. These are difficult and contrary processes, but sustainable stability in the Eastern Neighbourhood is in the EU's strategic interest. The post-election developments in Belarus show how authoritarianism, supported by Russia, threatens this stability. The outbreak of a new war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh underlines the importance of conflict resolution efforts not only in this but also other unresolved conflicts in the region. The EU needs to find ways to strengthen such efforts in a more efficient way. Efforts to strengthen the EU's internal resilience must address attempts at political interference, cyber-attacks, as well as money laundering and the investment of corrupt Russian money into EU member states.

The EU should pursue selective engagement with Russia (principle number four), but it also needs to acknowledge that the space for this kind of engagement is shrinking dramatically. Instead of promoting, including vis-à-vis Moscow, long wish-lists for cooperation, Brussels should focus on a small number of areas where such cooperation is realistic.

The EU should maximise efforts in its engagement with Russian society. It will need to find solutions to address the increasing tension between principle five and the "constraint" principles (1-3), as Russian authorities are eyeing European activities at this level with suspicion. Lifting visa requirements for ordinary Russian citizens would be the strongest possible signal the EU could - and should - send to Russian society.

EU-Russia relations will remain complicated in the coming years, reflecting the difficult European security situation. The five principles are a useful toolkit for the EU's policy towards Russia. To combine them with a strategic goal will require the EU to work on its internal coherence with regard to Russia, which has always been a challenge for EU member states. Any reflection needs to start from the assumption that the EU and Russia's current leadership

do not share many goals or interests. Constraining certain Russian policies, therefore, must be an important aim of the EU's Russia policy in the future.

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NATO AND RUSSIA

Does NATO Need a Russia - and China - Policy?

STEFANO STEFANINI

Great powers competition is back in the 21st century. It is not the only game in town - does anyone remember 9/11? However, there is little doubt that history is back with a vengeance. And the West, hence the Atlantic Alliance, faces two major challengers from state actors: Russia and China. The challenges they pose are different in nature and geography. Russia's challenge is well-known and is at the centre of NATO's defensive deterrence policy. China does not directly threaten the transatlantic space's security; on the other hand, it has emerged as a global superpower in competition with NATO's leading ally, the United States. NATO is a political-military alliance that encompasses the great majority of Western nations and has developed significant partnerships with like-minded countries, such as Japan and Australia, outside the North Atlantic region. It would delude itself by thinking that it can simply ring-fence its transatlantic perimeter from the US-China confrontation.

NATO does not have a China policy. It thinks it has a Russia policy. The latter is based on two pillars: deterrence and dialogue. Since there is hardly any dialogue left between Moscow and the Alliance, either political or military - mil-to-mil contacts have been reduced to bare bones - only one of the two is left standing: deterrence. This translates into a well-thought-out and effective defensive military posture, but it is not a policy.

But does the Alliance need such a policy? A case could be made that military deterrence is a sufficient response to Russia's challenge. Deterrence fulfils NATO's task of guaranteeing the security of the transatlantic space and protecting its members. Deterrence was highly successful in the Cold War to keep the

mighty Soviet Union at bay. Why ask the Alliance for more? There are two fundamental reasons for NATO policy on Russia, in addition and beyond military posture. The first and most obvious one is that the Washington Treaty envisages a continuing political process among the Allies in parallel with their commitment to collective defence. The two tasks are embodied, respectively, in Article 4 and Article 5. Following the London summit of 3-4 December 2019, NATO is actually revitalising its political dimension through a “reflection group” that is expected to present its conclusions in November-December 2020.

Then there is an even more compelling rationale that applies equally to Russia and to China. Either NATO does have a policy toward both countries, or individual Allies will, and in so doing they might differ among themselves and with NATO’s mainstream. The United States has and will continue to have a Russia and a China policy. The same applies to the European Union and to the post-Brexit United Kingdom. At the time of this writing, French President Emmanuel Macron is initiating a bilateral diplomatic initiative with Russia aimed at developing a medium- to long-term dialogue. He does not underestimate the difficulties of a bilateral approach to Moscow, but he believes that one needs to talk to the people one disagrees with, not only to the ones with whom one already agrees, as former President of Israel Shimon Peres used to quip.

NATO policies towards Russia and China would not prevent national initiatives such as Macron’s, but it would provide a framework for Allies’ national engagement with Moscow and Beijing. Without it, NATO runs a twofold risk: internal fracturing, as Allies might part company in dealing with Moscow and/or Beijing, and marginalisation, as decisions will be made bilaterally, especially by the US, and/or in other contexts, as seen in the Normandy format on the Ukrainian crisis.

The present paper aims at laying out the possible fundamentals and roadmaps of NATO policies toward Russia and toward China. As already noted, from NATO’s viewpoint the two countries fall into different categories. Not only is Russia the devil we know and China the one we don’t, but the NATO-Russia relationship has a long track

record and an existing institutional structure, albeit one that has been practically unused since the Ukrainian crisis. The NATO-China relationship is a blank - that makes it more difficult and demanding, but potentially rewarding.

A NATO RUSSIA POLICY: OUTLINE AND ROADMAP

To NATO, Russia is an adversary and has to be recognised as such. This is not NATO's choice - it is the consequence of Russia's deliberate hostility toward the Alliance and of its behaviour, especially in the Ukrainian crisis. As long as it lasts, NATO has to deal with it not only militarily but also politically. The NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, and the Rome Declaration in 2002, were based on the prospect of developing a cooperative relationship between NATO and Russia. That prospect is over. But the rationale for engagement is not.

Since 2014 NATO has followed the principle of "no business as usual" in its relationship with Russia. That decision has de facto suspended contacts between the Alliance and the Russian Federation. That principle should now be turned on its head: the more "unusual" the business, the more NATO needs to be able to communicate with, engage and counter Russia at a political level. "Absentees are always in the wrong", said former Italian Prime Minister and stalwart Atlanticist Giulio Andreotti. In the political vacuum that is left between NATO and Russia, Moscow talks to individual Allies, to NATO partners and to special formats (like the Normandy group). It also exerts influence from within through disinformation and interference in domestic politics. The combination outlined above gives Russia a political advantage over the Alliance.

NATO needs to develop a political strategy on Russia in four directions: a) first and foremost, direct bilateral engagement with Moscow; b) more Article 4 consultations among Allies and with partners (both regional partners and "global" partners

such as Japan, South Korea, or Australia) on Russia and Russia-related issues; c) developing a counter-narrative to debunk Russian disinformation; d) outreach to other international players by interacting with major powers (China, India) and engaging multilateral fora - including organisations typically placed on Russian (or Russian sympathetic) turf, like the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The Alliance needs to talk to Russia and about Russia.

Re-engaging Moscow bilaterally would of course also depend on Russia's willingness to respond, which in present circumstances cannot be taken for granted. It takes two to tango. But should Moscow step off the dance floor, NATO could seek a dialogue aimed at: a) managing and de-escalating differences (de-conflicting the relationship); b) identifying areas of converging interests, terrorism or pandemic management come to mind (a positive agenda); c) confronting Russia on its aggressive policies of a military and non-military nature, such as disinformation and domestic interference (a warning policy).

The first order of business would be a re-activation of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). In addition, in order to overcome the NRC's institutional constraints and lack of political adjustability, NATO should consider new flexible diplomatic and political approaches, for instance empowering the secretary general to carry out appropriate initiatives and open pragmatic channels of communication. None of the above initiatives should be seen as a reward to Russia. On the contrary, they would be part of a comprehensive policy designed to serve NATO's and Allies' interests.

Finally, the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis needs to be factored in. This could go either way: it could be conducive to toning down the military challenge, or vice-versa, it could lead to increased confrontation. The rationale for NATO developing a political approach to Russia relations, in addition to its deterrent military posture, would remain the same in both scenarios, but the ways and means to carry it out will be certainly influenced by the medium-term fallout of the pandemic on the international scene and more specifically in Europe, Russia, and in the transatlantic region.

DOES NATO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT CHINA?

Unlike Russia, China is not threatening NATO militarily. It does not directly intrude on the security of the transatlantic space. Its exponentially growing influence in the area, including in the Mediterranean, and in adjacent regions such as Africa and the Arctic, is of a different nature: economic, political and societal. China aims at gaining hegemony, in Europe and elsewhere, through trade, essential industrial supply chains, the acquisition of critical infrastructure, technological dominance in 5G technology and artificial intelligence, and political connections with governments, political figures and political grassroots movements.

China's challenge to the West is technological and economic, whereas Russia is no match for West in those areas - and Moscow knows it. But China's vision of its future is global. It is an economic powerhouse, second only to the US - and catching up quickly. Xi Jinping makes no mystery of his goal of making China the world's leading superpower by 2050. The Chinese challenge will inevitably involve a security dimension in the transatlantic sphere as well. It already has to be confronted in the military domains that are not constrained by geography: cyber and space. This is the scenario that NATO needs to factor in.

The recent Chinese handling of the coronavirus pandemic offers a telling case study. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a reputational threat to China. Beijing responded with a sophisticated strategy of disinformation, blame shifting, and targeted conditional assistance to selected countries. It built a reverse narrative about the origin of the pandemic and its own accountability. These tactics included a deliberate attempt to sway governments and public opinion away from the transatlantic relationship in favour of China. They had some measure of initial success in manipulating discussions around COVID-19, for instance in influencing the debate in the EU.

Today's international scene is dominated by the China-US global rivalry. Beijing is no less as aware of this than Washington is. To play the two-superpower game, it will resort to the time-honoured "decoupling" strategy by trying to break down the

alliances and international systems that the US has initiated and supported. The transatlantic relationship is therefore a Chinese priority target and a key battleground. NATO may or may not know it, but Beijing does. To quote Leon Trotsky: "You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you."

China's attitude toward NATO is different, and harsher, than its EU strategy. China seeks gains from eroding transatlantic solidarity, but it has no desire to break up the EU. The EU's single market is, for China, an attractive prospect, as long as Beijing maintains near unfettered access to it. Rather, China sees Europe as a battleground in its confrontation with the US. In order to "tame" the EU, it has to weaken the two main transatlantic connections: the US-EU relationship and NATO-EU relationship.

While the impact of China's operations can occasionally surface in national politics, as has been the case in Germany and in Italy as a result of Beijing's pandemic disinformation campaign, of potentially longer-term concern is the country's economic-commercial penetration in Europe and in the Mediterranean, centred on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China has been building strong commercial and industrial links, preferential bilateral relationships, and multilateral formats such as the 17+1 forum, which has enabled Beijing to reach out to governments across Central and Eastern Europe. It has established a strong presence in the Balkans; in Serbia - a Partnership for Peace member, albeit a difficult one - China's COVID-19 campaign, supported by carefully stage-managed aid deliveries, has resulted in a surge of pro-China sentiment. Finally, in its quest for influence over Europe and European nations, Beijing has been borrowing from Russia's playbook in terms of cyber and disinformation techniques, the dissemination of fake news, and interference in political processes. Taken together, all these initiatives have the potential to undermine NATO.

NATO needs to recognise China's challenge and look at its security implications. China does not pose an immediate or short-term conventional military threat, although it already intrudes in areas such as cyber and outer space that constitute military "domains". To confront the sheer size - geographical, demographic,

and economic – and technological potential of China, the Atlantic Alliance needs to develop a comprehensive strategy.

At this point in time, a NATO China policy would only be at a preliminary stage, but the following guidelines can already be envisaged:

- engaging Beijing in political dialogue;
- debunking China’s propoganda and disinformation as it seeks to insert a wedge between Europe and the United States, and between the EU and NATO;
- making China a central topic of NATO-EU cooperation;
- establishing a common baseline on difficult and sensitive issues, such as technology, critical infrastructure, and sensitive and dual-use trade. There is no other forum but NATO that can be used to draw common red lines on China¹;
- developing mutually reinforcing China and Russia policies to put pressure on Moscow and Beijing to engage bilaterally with NATO rather than simply standing together on a unified anti-NATO front.

Tackling the China challenge will take NATO into uncharted waters. But either NATO chooses to sail those waters, or it will be side-lined vis-à-vis the world’s second superpower, it will be vulnerable to the erosion of Atlantic solidarity, and it will be outplayed in the Great Game of the 21st century.

¹ In this respect the Alliance has two unique assets: membership – including the US, the great majority of EU member states *and* non-EU important allies such as Canada, the UK, Norway, and Turkey (plus Iceland, Montenegro, and Albania, the latter two being also EU candidates) – and partnerships with approximately 50 other countries around the world.

W(h)ither NATO-Russia?

IMANTS LIEGIS

NATO-Russia relations have not yet withered to the point of non-revival. However, the time has come to seek the ways and means to ensure that resuscitation could take place. There should be neither illusions nor delusions that a Russia led by President Putin will change its ways in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, we are likely to witness more of the same, with nuances that fit the tactics and strategy of Putin. This assumption needs to be the starting point when analysing how NATO as a defence alliance – and how its individual members – should carry on dealing with Russia. There should be a focus on finding common ground between those who argue for a “re-think” / “re-set” and those who point to the failures of such an approach.

What evidence is there of a consistent hard line and uncompromising approach by Russia? NATO-Russia Council (NRC) meetings have gone nowhere over recent years. Russia’s reluctance to appoint a new ambassador accredited to NATO makes high-level dialogue difficult to achieve and reduces the availability of contacts. NATO has had a standing offer to hold an NRC meeting for the last half year, but it has not been taken up. Efforts by Russia to try to brush over the root causes of the deterioration in relations that arose in 2014 (i.e. the illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine), and to “move ahead” by ignoring fundamental problems, have continued unabated. Ukraine needs to stay on the agenda.

Russia’s active measures involving interference in the affairs of democratic processes in third states have proliferated over the past few years. Evidence of influencing the last US and French presidential elections, as well as the Brexit referendum, has been collated by authorities in all three countries. Chemical weapons were used by Russian intelligence officers in a bungled

assassination attempt in Salisbury, UK a few years ago. Not to mention killings and attempts to kill opposition figures on Russian territory, with the Navalny incident in August 2020 being the latest example.

Blatant and cynical revisionist disinformation operations regarding the outbreak of World War Two have targeted Poland and the Baltics; these are being used as a countermeasure against facts about Stalin and Hitler dividing up Europe as a precursor to invading Poland and annexing the Baltic countries. These were prevalent in August 2019 during the marking of the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Soviet-Nazi secret protocols. Poland was blamed for the outbreak of the war, whilst Latvia was described as having “voluntarily” joining the Soviet Union and “gaining” (rather than “regaining”) independence in the 1990s. These examples may seem trivial. However, when compared with the disinformation surrounding the annexation of Crimea, the military engagement in Eastern Ukraine and the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in 2014, they provide a consistent and determined pattern of undermining facts and creating uncertainty that can have consequences. In addition, the underlying purpose of such campaigns destroys and precludes any element of trust between Russia and its partners.

The ongoing global pandemic crisis relating to COVID-19 has also been used by Russia as a tool for promoting disinformation and an opportunity to exploit a lack of solidarity amongst allies. In the latter case, Russian military medical assistance was provided during the early stages of the flare up of the pandemic in Northern Italy. This was after European partners failed initially to respond to Italy’s appeal for urgent help in dealing with their health emergency. Seemingly, no permanent rift within NATO came about as a result, but no doubt security risks could have ensued given the Russian military presence on NATO territory.

In March 2020, the EU’s European Action Service (EEAS) had already identified some 80 Russian COVID-19 injects of disinformation over the course of two months (French 2020). Amongst the actions taken were claims that the virus was a biological weapon released by China, the US or the UK. Evidently

this helped to increase and exploit popular concerns about whether European health systems were sufficiently well-equipped to deal with the emerging crisis.

The result of Russia's approach in deftly helping Italy and exploiting popular concerns about the virus was to unbalance allies and test coherence.

These examples are not meant as a tool for "Russia bashing". Rather, they are offered as a pertinent reminder of what to bear in mind when dealing with our important neighbour.

TO RE-SET OR NOT TO RE-SET – THAT IS NOT THE QUESTION

Individual NATO member states cannot and should not be restrained from attempts to re-engage with Russia. President Obama's approach failed, leaving US-Russian relations in a worse state at the end of his administration than at the beginning. French President Macron's launch of efforts to re-engage Russia, with a warning to his assembled ambassadors in August 2019 not to use the "deep state" to hinder his policy, has, one year later, yet to provide tangible results. Although in all fairness, this policy was from the outset touted as a long-term goal.

Attempts to force other allies to adopt such an approach or to turn it into a joint NATO policy are likely to be doomed to fail. On the one hand, all credit to President Macron for engaging the country's top non-Russian specialist diplomat, Pierre Vimont, to head up talks with his counterpart in President Putin's office and to actively and openly explain to NATO partners what developments are (or are not) taking place as a result of increased French-Russia contacts. In contrast, any French attempts through Hubert Vedrine to push through a Gaullist agenda in the NATO reflection group are unlikely to make headway.

In any event, there should be an awareness that individual "re-sets" risk causing rifts in Allied unity, thereby playing into the hands of Russia.

In the run up to November's US presidential elections, well-argued opposing positions about the US's approach to Russia have appeared in the public domain (Gottemoeller 2020, Kramer 2020).

Putting aside the question of whether or not to re-set (or re-think) relations with Russia, there are some constructive and useful ideas to be gleaned from both sides. Let's call this brief review of the arguments "Kramer v. Gottemoeller", as the lead proponents of the respective arguments were David J. Kramer and Rose Gottemoeller.

Gottemoeller's camp refers to blocking Russia's interference in elections. Publics in all NATO member states can surely go along with that.

There follows a reference to exposing Russian disinformation, which has an echo within the Kramer group with their suggestion to provide more analysis about Russia's actions. NATO's Centre of Excellence on Strategic Communication in Riga, which focuses on these issues in general (not only *vis-a-vis* Russia), is well up to the task as far as disinformation is concerned.

Is there a big difference between "containing and confronting the threat" (Kramer) and "balancing a commitment to deterrence and détente" (Gottemoeller)? The NATO dual-track approach of maintaining dialogue with Russia whilst retaining a robust defence and deterrence policy seems to embrace the proposals from both sides. Détente, of course, can extend beyond dialogue, but cannot take place without it.

Kramer and colleagues call for the Putin regime to be recognised for what it is - corrupt and aggressive towards its neighbours. On that basis, NATO can proceed, to quote Gottemoeller's group, to "deal with Russia as it is, not as we wish to see it". This train of thought can be developed further by referring back to Kramer's appeal to distinguish the regime from the people. Engaging with Russian partners outside the circle of Putin's people is an important policy approach for NATO as a whole, as well as for its individual member states.

Are NATO's relations with Russia broken and therefore in need of a fix? If we assume this to be the case, what would the fix entail and how should it be approached? Here are some suggestions.

1. There is not going to be any “quick fix”, but there is a need to think in the long term. Strategic patience and Allied unity founded on the dual-track approach of deterrence and defence with dialogue must be maintained.
2. The NRC is indeed in a sorry state, but it still remains a unique forum for Allies to dialogue with Russia. Eminent minds need to address the question of how it can best serve the purpose of all parties in terms of managing future NATO-Russia relations. The Reflection Group will hopefully address this issue and offer specific proposals. Input from the non-governmental sector should be encouraged.
3. The arms control and non-proliferation agenda affects everybody in the transatlantic area. The nuclear threat is increasingly existential. Engaging with the Russian government to work towards risk reduction, whilst simultaneously continuing to point to Russian violations, needs to be the way ahead.
4. Engagement and negotiation “out of the public glare” (Gottemoeller) has indeed been the essence of discussions at the Riga Dialogue meetings these past few years. In parallel, important discussions in other fora (e.g. the European Leadership Network) are working on specific proposals to improve the NATO-Russian dialogue. High-level military-to-military NATO-Russia contacts, which are discreet but ongoing, should of course be maintained.
5. Discussions about specific regional de-escalation measures should be avoided unless all countries in the regions concerned give their prior approval to such discussions. The security of NATO’s European members should continue to be viewed through a 360-degree lens. Spanish and Italian troops in NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) on Latvian territory is as important as Latvian soldiers participating in operations in the Sahel region. Russia’s disruptive role in Ukraine (and hopefully not Belarus) is mirrored by its opportunistic engagements in Syria and Libya.

As a result of fraudulent presidential elections, mass protests and heavy-handed attempts to maintain the status quo, developments in August 2020 have lurched Latvia’s neighbour

Belarus onto the international agenda. Both Russia and NATO have exercised initial restraint in their reactions. At the time of writing (at the end of August), President Putin has been contacted by European leaders (including Merkel, Macron, and Michel) to discuss the fast-developing events and has in turn invited Lukashenko to Moscow for talks. In parallel, Lukashenko has appealed for Russia's help, pointed to a so-called "build up" of NATO troops in neighbouring Poland and Lithuania, and talked about Belarusian troops being moved to the border region. If and when the NRC resumes contact, Belarus will no doubt need to be an additional item on the agenda.

Less than one year ago, French President Macron in an interview (The Economist 2020) warned that the Alliance was "brain-dead". In spite of ongoing internal challenges, NATO remains "alive and kicking". The same needs to apply to NATO-Russian relations.

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No Longer Fiction: How Next-Gen Tech Will Change NATO Collective Security

BRUNO LETE

From the Holy League to the Triple Entente to the Warsaw Pact, history shows us that there is nothing sacred about the durability of an alliance, no matter how successful or long-lived it has been. NATO, perhaps, will not be an exception to that rule. Alliances deteriorate and dissolve for several reasons. Most often, failure stems from the inability of the original association to adapt to the changing nature of the threat it is intended to counter. Alternatively, failure follows when members begin to question either the capacity or willingness of their allies to fulfil their obligations, or when the leading power within the association can no longer sustain a disproportionate share of the costs or offer material inducements to make alignment more attractive. NATO today faces a mixture of all three risk categories. The Alliance has adapted to many new circumstances in its environment, but to endure it will need to tackle these vulnerabilities in the years to come.

The speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 8 June 2020 built important momentum to prepare the Alliance to make changes and look to the future. He shared his vision for NATO in 2030, focusing on a strong military, on more political unity, and on an alliance that takes a broader approach globally. Stoltenberg's speech adds to a series of recent policy initiatives aimed at recalibrating the Alliance's goals. This includes the adoption of a new NATO Military Strategy in May 2019, the current drafting of a

new Operational Concept of Deterrence and Defence, as well as a new Warfighting Capstone Concept.

These forward-looking initiatives seem to have one objective in common. They are pushing NATO to become an alliance that defines its priorities based on current and future threats in a world that is characterised by global competition. In other words, external factors are now driving NATO strategy. This does not mean that internal allied politics can be dismissed, but the paradigm is a very different one than NATO's approach over the past decade, where strategy was largely defined by the need to develop a wide array of capabilities to support the internal priorities of member states.

As the security environment changes, NATO's response must not linger. NATO is simultaneously confronted with many very real security threats at once, both from inside and outside Europe, and from land, sea, air, space and online. Of those external factors, it is the role of technology that may define NATO's future collective security the most. Today's tech revolution has brought on previously unseen opportunities for human welfare, but it is also responsible for extending and accelerating the state of deterioration that NATO allies need to face. In our digital age, NATO has to confront new forms of warfare based on hybrid operations that combine aggressive information and propaganda campaigns, social media exploitation, cyber-attacks, the sabotage of satellites, the creeping infiltration of special forces, militias and weapons, economic embargoes, political and business networks of influence, and the exploitation of minority grievances. This variety of threats is fuelled by technological innovations and necessitates a different allied approach. The challenge will not only be in mission multi-tasking, but also in being able to apply a far broader spectrum of capabilities - from maintaining a 1950s-style big-platform, visible presence, to 2020-style intelligence-driven, AI-powered, cyber-assisted, special-forces focused, networked interventions.

TECH TRENDS TODAY, TECH THREATS TOMORROW

Secretary General Stoltenberg's #NATO2030 call presents an opportunity to better understand the shifts taking place in NATO's strategic environment. Ten years from now, technology will play an even larger role in defining the parameters of our defence and security. Data, the internet of things and artificial intelligence are changing the face of war and peace, creating a new global theatre of rivalry and competition. With these dynamics coming into play, the question of NATO's relevance - of how NATO should transform itself to meet 21st century challenges - should be turned on its head by asking: which threats unify NATO members states in the 21st century? The pace of technological change will not slow and is already seriously testing the Alliance in several domains. If left unchecked, some tech trends today will become unavoidable threats tomorrow. Here are four evolutions that NATO needs to watch.

DIGITAL DICTATORS

Technology strengthens autocracies and enables them to become a more formidable threat to democracies. Malicious non-state actors such as hackers, organised crime and terrorist groups benefit from these technologies too, but rogue governments intending harm represent a still greater threat because they can bring immense financial, technical, and military resources to developing new digital tools for exploiting the innate and human-induced vulnerabilities that are inevitable in any complex system. Today's digital dictators are using technology - the internet, social media and artificial intelligence - to narrow the scope of civil society, to confuse public discourse, to surveil individuals, to launch cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, and to steal classified political, industrial and military information. To shelter member states from these negative effects, NATO will need to increase investments in digital deterrence and to take political actions that raise the costs of foreign state

actors' efforts to undermine democracy, democratic institutions and elections. NATO today already has a mandate to coordinate member states' efforts in the digital and cyber fields, but the output of this remains relatively low because countries are often unwilling to share their sensitive information. In many cases, online incidents involve matters of national security. However, NATO will only be able to push back effectively against digital dictators if it receives a more robust role in syncing member states' actions on issues ranging from the fight against disinformation to the development of cyber defences to the mitigation of harmful technologies. As NATO represents a coalition of like-minded states, it also carries sufficient international weight to shape global cyber norms so that they are consistent with human rights and democracy. In all these domains, there is serious incentive for NATO to keep thinking of new ways to cooperate with the European Union. Both institutions uphold policies that are largely identical – they are based on principles of digital resilience, deterrence and defence – and their tools are becoming increasingly complementary.

SPACE SABOTEURS

Space is a congested, contested and competitive domain. At least 50 different nations and multinational organisations own and operate satellites (Paulauskas 2020). For NATO, space provides essential civilian and military functions, including situational awareness, early warning systems and satellite imagery that is vital to decision-making. Such evidence is particularly important to counter disinformation in peacetime or in war. Yet, despite the value of satellites as vital intelligence assets, today most of them are unprotected and are in fact easy targets to destroy. In this sense, NATO's deterrence on earth starts with the ability to deter in orbit. Only four countries – Russia, the US, China and India – have demonstrated anti-satellite capabilities over the past decades. But a growing number of new countries, such as France, Japan, Iran and North Korea, are now actively looking to join this exclusive club by boosting their military space activities as well. Rogue governments

planning to sabotage or destroy space satellites is no longer fiction. Today's arsenal of counterspace systems includes satellite jammers, laser dazzlers, orbital "kamikaze" projectiles, cyber capabilities, directed-energy weapons and earth-to-space missiles. Political tensions are on the rise too. In recent years, NATO member states have frequently denounced attempts by adversary governments to interfere with Western satellite systems. A game-changer occurred in October 2018, when the Norwegian military and allied officials accused Russia of persistently jamming GPS signals during NATO's High North Trident Juncture exercise. Less than a year later, in June 2019, NATO adopted its first - classified - Space Policy. In spite of this being a commendable step forward in NATO adaptation, the classified nature of this policy renders its political value pretty low. While the Alliance made it publicly clear that it opposes the militarisation of space, it nevertheless misses the opportunity to deter adversaries by clarifying whether Article 5 could apply in the case of a space incident. This would be an important political signal, since the "space domain" is not mentioned anywhere in the original arrangements under the Washington Treaty. Moreover, keeping NATO's Space Policy classified also eliminates the chance to forge partnerships with other critical space actors, such as the United Nations, the European Space Agency or the US Space Command. Such partnerships are invaluable if NATO is to actively shape the global norms of behaviour in space. The October 2020 NATO Defence Ministerial decision to create a Space Centre at the Allied Air Command in Ramstein in Germany is an encouraging sign that this new domain is becoming a focal point of attention. But the allies will soon need to solve some of these outstanding issues if NATO wants to assert its credibility in space as well.

SILICON SOLDIERS

The 21st century is the Silicon Age. The silicon used in semiconductor electronics is essential to the integrated circuit chips of modern technology. This includes the development of autonomous weapon systems, from robotic sentries to battlefield-

surveillance drones to autonomous submarines. During his speech on 14 September 2020, UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace made it clear that drones may replace British troops in future warfare. The United States Department of Defense for its part is currently rushing to deploy “robot generals” – a complex system of sensors, computers and software that include battle-planning, intelligence-gathering, logistics, communications, and decision-making capacities (Klare 2020). Robotic military devices have become unavoidable on the battlefield and are disrupting the global strategic balance. However, today some NATO member states still rely heavily on conventional weaponry and are ill-prepared to bring their armed forces into the Silicon Age. Moreover, the technological overmatch that NATO developed in the second half of the 20th century is gradually evaporating. Defence R&D budgets across the world, most notably in China and Russia, are on the rise, while military and dual-use technologies are proliferating to a growing number of states and non-state actors. In addition, the pace of technological progress often outpaces NATO member states’ ability to adapt to those technologies and to integrate them in their military strategies. To address the rise of silicon soldiers, a first step would be for NATO to take stock of the technological innovations that member states need the most. This will furthermore require developing a credible vision on cooperative public-private efforts, prioritising financial instruments for innovation, and linking R&D initiatives at the national level with NATO-level initiatives. The Alliance could also leverage the EU-NATO partnership to enhance NATO cooperation with well-funded EU projects, such as Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Fund.

5G INTRUDERS

Next-generation wireless technologies are set to revolutionise military operations. The introduction of 5G, enhanced with artificial intelligence and quantum computing, will change everything for NATO, from its command and control functions to training and exercises to communications. Artillery can now be assisted

by machine-learning targeting, while air and sea drones can automate their attack formations and deliver cloud-based, real-time situational awareness to forces on the ground, while these forces are being resupplied by unmanned logistical vehicles. Rather than mass and mobilisation, next-gen wireless technology will reward speed, readiness and resilience in new domains such as space, cyber and sub-sea. This is an opportunity for NATO to evolve new military concepts, but it also involves risks. The speed and massive real-time data sharing offered by 5G and the internet of things also make it easier for adversaries to secretly infiltrate these networks if they are not sufficiently secured.

The consequences of this for NATO could be severe, and it could give adversaries access to classified data or even the ability to disrupt the interoperability of allied military systems. Moreover, NATO can only be as safe as its weakest link. If only one member state's networks are compromised, the entire Alliance could potentially suffer the consequences. 5G ecosystem are provided by several NATO member states and partners, including companies from the US, Finland, Sweden and Japan. But admittedly these are dwarfed by China, which today has become the dominant power in 5G technology - the result of a coherent strategy and major public investments by the Chinese government. The initial desire of some European NATO allies to acquire Chinese systems - which are cheaper but evoke concerns about network surveillance and data privacy - certainly riled the member states that opted for trusted Western technology. It was therefore critical for NATO to adopt an Alliance-wide strategy that unites its members on issues such as 5G procurement and the digital value chain. Thanks to initiatives such as the US-driven "Clean Network", as of October 2020 there are already 27 out of 30 NATO member states that have agreed to exclude untrusted vendors from their telecom markets. For NATO, this is a matter of strategic interest, as it is becoming clear that those acquiring technological dominance over next-generation wireless systems will be able to heavily influence the future course of geopolitical affairs.

NATO TOWARD 2030

In less than a decade, global strategic trends have changed dramatically, and the dream of expanding transatlantic security has been replaced by a general feeling of uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of another economic crisis may lead us back to even more instability. NATO is now facing a very different security environment, one in which both Europe and the United States need to realistically analyse the steps needed to remain credible security providers. The ability to think about containment and deterrence will need to be supported by much-needed expertise on new technologies and revisionist powers. Questions surrounding resources and adaptation to next-gen capabilities will play a defining role when synchronising common policies more effectively. Some of these changes can be addressed by military means, but it increasingly looks like NATO will also need to become much more political than it is today. As the hero of de Lampedusa's *The Leopard* famously puts it, "things will need to change to remain the same."

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ARMS CONTROL

Threat Reduction and Arms Control: Trends and Opportunities in Europe

STEVEN ANDREASEN

Current trends in Europe are generating challenging headwinds for threat reduction and arms control, making the pursuit of legally binding limitations or constraints on nuclear and conventional forces or emerging technologies difficult. Not since the early 1980s have relations between the United States, NATO and Russia in the transatlantic region been as adversarial as they are today. Nevertheless, renewed dialogue is both possible and desirable, and it could support concrete threat reduction and arms control steps over the next four years. These steps could include: restarting crisis management dialogue between the United States/NATO and Russia; a new US-Russia Presidential Joint Statement confirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought; establishing a US/NATO-Russia joint data exchange centre; and establishing rules of the road that preclude cyber-attacks on nuclear facilities, nuclear command-and-control structures, or early warning systems.

STRONG HEADWINDS IN EUROPE

Within the transatlantic region, there are strongly opposing views on relations between the United States, Europe and Russia - on all sides of the equation. The fridity of US/NATO-Russia relations following Moscow's annexation of Crimea and intervention in

eastern Ukraine, combined with substantial nuclear modernisation programmes in Russia and the US, have reignited competition in the transatlantic theatre and the possibility of a nuclear arms race between the two nuclear superpowers.

Since 2014, there has been an increased level of military exercises and a reinforced military presence along the borders of Russia and NATO member states. The occurrence and increasing risk of dangerous military incidents has become a subject of primary concern. In particular, the increased intensity of air force and naval activities in the Baltic and the Black Sea regions may lead to unintended escalation, both conventional and even nuclear. This danger further increases if, due to time pressure, the authority to use military force is delegated to lower levels of the command chain. Against this backdrop, there are a number of emerging trends that are likely to complicate both threat reduction and arms control over the next four years.

First, we are moving in the direction of fewer, and perhaps even no, restraints on nuclear and conventional forces - an era of strategic deregulation. Over the past two decades, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty - applying limits on missile defences, conventional forces, and intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles, respectively - have been discarded. The United States has indicated it will withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty, and has recently considered "un-signing" the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and resuming nuclear testing. The future of the New START Treaty is also unclear - the treaty could expire within a few months. But even if New START is extended before next February - whether for five years or less - it will be difficult to replace with a new treaty that is approved by the US Senate. Moreover, the prospects for reapplying legally binding limits on missile defences, conventional forces, or intermediate-range missiles also appear daunting.

Second, as momentum behind deregulation increases, there are an increasing number of domains beyond those of air, land, and maritime to worry about. In particular, both the space and cyber domains are becoming increasingly complex, with a growing

number of potential actors in both. This is likely to complicate defence, deterrence and arms control in both cyber and space - including the possibility of negotiated norms or agreements intended to regulate and reduce risks - as well as "traditional" nuclear and conventional defence, deterrence, and arms control.

Third, the relationship between the US/NATO and Russia will be difficult to turn in a more positive direction. The now six-year downward slide in the US/NATO-Russia relationship is more than just an aberration: it reflects deep disagreements between Washington, Europe and Moscow over transatlantic security writ large. Moreover, mistrust of Moscow runs deep and across party lines in Washington, fuelled by the war in Ukraine, interference by Russia in US elections, and (most recently) Russian bounties on US soldiers, the turmoil in Belarus, and the attempted assassination of Aleksei Navalny. This dynamic is likely to persist over the next four years, whether in a second Trump term or in a new US administration.

Fourth, as tensions between the West and Russia have risen and relationships have deteriorated, there are fewer contacts between military and civilian officials across governments. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, the trend was in the opposite direction: there were multiple venues for engaging Russia, including diplomatically and military-to-military (e.g., arms control compliance commissions, negotiations, etc.), nuclear "lab-to-lab" contacts, and other official and unofficial channels. Today, the United States, NATO, and Russia continue to severely curtail dialogue in the transatlantic region, depriving ourselves of an essential crisis management tool and undercutting progress on broader issues (EASLG 2019).

Fifth, there is a creeping - if not now gaping - lack of expertise in the area of threat reduction and arms control, and the capacity for diplomacy writ large (Burns and Thomas-Greenfield 2020). This is increasingly true in the United States, and almost certainly in other nations as well. Hence, the capacity for engagement within the government, or with other governments, is thin and getting thinner - including in traditional arms control.

Sixth, the impact of COVID-19 is uncertain in both its scope and duration. Budgets for defence and diplomacy are likely to

be impacted, but the impact will be more than just budgetary: recovery from the pandemic will consume the attention of governments and senior officials, and will impact the “process” of government and diplomacy.

The sum total of these six trends is suggestive that, at least in the near-term (e.g., the next four years), the pursuit of legally binding limitations or constraints on nuclear and conventional forces or emerging technologies will be a difficult task. That said, renewed dialogue in the transatlantic region could support specific steps through politically binding arrangements that would not require new legally binding treaties but could help facilitate future treaties. These steps could be tailored to Europe; however, some could also be applied more broadly to include other nations (e.g., China).

EUROPE FORWARD

In the mid-1980s, leaders played a key role in providing an accepted “framework” for their governments to re-engage on core security issues. Joint statements between leaders, beginning with the November 1985 Reagan-Gorbachev Geneva Summit Statement, which included agreed-upon principles and elements of common ground, provided a foundation for officials and experts to re-engage and eventually make progress on arms control, economics, human rights, and bilateral issues.

Similar to the 1980s, improving security in the transatlantic region today will require that leaders provide a framework for dialogue between governments. In the absence of such a framework from leaders, ideas are unlikely to percolate “up” from within governments, given political and diplomatic tensions in the region. Agreed principles (a) in support of renewed dialogue as a necessary prerequisite for strategic stability; (b) recognising areas of existential common interest where we can agree that we must work together across the transatlantic space, as we did during the Cold War (including preventing the use of nuclear weapons and the erosion of arms control structures); (c) recognising the challenges

of emerging technologies; and (d) defining a shared vision of where we would like to be in 5-10 years, all combined would provide a solid foundation for moving forward.

In this context, there are four near-term threat-reduction steps that could be taken over the next four years, which could be presented to public audiences across the transatlantic region so that they understand why these steps will make them safer and more secure.

First, restart crisis management dialogue between the United States, NATO and Russia, including nuclear commanders. The risks of mutual misunderstandings and unintended signals that stem from an absence of dialogue relating to crisis management and that lead to a dangerous escalation are real, beginning on one end of the spectrum with the possibility of a conventional military incident leading to conventional war, and on the other end the potential for nuclear threats or even nuclear use. The absence of dialogue - in particular, crisis management dialogue intended to avoid or resolve incidents that could breed escalation - severely undercuts the sustained communication essential for reaching mutual understandings on and maintaining strategic stability. Simply stated, we cannot have strategic stability without dialogue. Establishing a bipartisan liaison group in the US Congress to work with the executive branch on a US-Russia policy could provide essential support for this effort and broader dialogue between Washington and Moscow.

Second, release a new US-Russia Presidential Joint Statement confirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This initiative could be agreed upon quickly and would be positively received by publics at home and abroad. The affirmation of this principle by American and Soviet leaders was an important building block to ending the Cold War. Today, a Joint Declaration would clearly communicate that despite current tensions, leaders of the two countries possessing more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons recognise their responsibility to work together to prevent catastrophe. In addition, by expanding the declaration to include China and possibly other nuclear weapon states, it could be the foundation for additional steps to bring

China and others into efforts to reduce nuclear risks and avoid an arms race. A Joint Statement would also signal the commitment of leaders to build on past progress toward disarmament ahead of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in 2021, and could encourage other states to take further steps to reduce nuclear risks.

Third, the US/NATO and Russia could commit to updating the Clinton-Yeltsin/Putin-era agreement to establish a joint data exchange centre for the exchange of data from early warning systems and notifications of missile launches so that it includes all of NATO (or perhaps implement the centre concept “virtually”). The new US-NATO-Russia centre could be expanded over time to include other nations facing missile threats, including China, making it a truly global centre for nuclear threat reduction. A clear benefit of the centre would be to bring together US-NATO-Russia personnel in “day-to-day” operations on a dedicated joint activity. In the future, the centre could also have the potential for cooperation in other related areas, including cyber and space.

Fourth, establish US/NATO-Russia cyber “rules of the road.” The risk of any one incident or set of circumstances leading to escalation is greatly exacerbated by new hybrid threats, such as cyber risks to early warning and command and control systems. Cyber threats can emerge at any point during a crisis and trigger misunderstandings and unintended signals - magnified by difficulties in attribution and real-time attack assessment - that could precipitate war. Initiatives to establish rules of the road or red-lines that preclude cyber-attacks on nuclear facilities, nuclear command-and-control structures, or early warning systems would reduce fears of being blinded in the early stages of a crisis or conflict and would increase decision time. This too is an initiative that could include nations outside the transatlantic area, including China.

WE MUST LEARN FROM OUR PAST

In reviewing the run-up to past conflicts dating back to World War I, there is one common denominator: those involved in decision-making have looked back and asked how it could have happened, and happened so quickly. Today, we face familiar risks of mutual misunderstandings and unintended signals, compounded by the potential for the use of nuclear weapons - where millions could be killed in minutes. We must learn from our past and give ourselves the tools to prevent an incident today that might turn into an unimaginable catastrophe.

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New START and the Future of Nuclear Arms Control

EVGENY BUZHINSKY

After the US's withdrawal from the INF Treaty, it has become obvious that the nearly fifty-year-old history of nuclear arms control is coming to its end.

The New START treaty is set to expire on 5 February 2021, and there is little doubt that this will be the end of it. It could be extended if both countries agree. However, even this relatively straightforward step is in doubt. President Trump once condemned New START as one of the "bad deals" negotiated under his predecessor. There are also forces in the United States that believe (for various reasons) it is not in the US's interests to participate in New START. Yes, there are bi-lateral consultations going on in Vienna, but I think President Trump agreed to these consultations mainly for domestic political reasons, with no serious hope that they would be successful, as the preconditions which were put forward by the US delegation are practically impossible to meet.

It is obvious that the dismantlement of the entire nuclear arms control system may lead to an uncontrolled multilateral arms race involving strategic, intermediate-range and tactical nuclear and non-nuclear offensive and defensive weapons, as well as cyber warfare systems, laser weapons and other arms innovations. However, I don't think that this time the arms race will be quantitative (there is no need to again stockpile thousands of nuclear warheads), but instead it will be qualitative.

Do the parties to the treaty have any motivation to preserve it through an extension? I think the answer is "yes" for both Russia and the United States.

Russia seeks to limit Washington's ability to ramp up the US's strategic arsenal. If the United States were no longer bound by the

terms of START, it would be able to rapidly increase the number of nuclear warheads it has installed on deployed ICBMs from the current 400 to 1,200 due to its existing upload potential. It would also be able to increase the number of warheads on deployed SLBMs from the current 900 to 1920 (given the terms of New START, each Minuteman III ICBM can be equipped with three warheads, although since June 2014 they have typically only carried one; the US's Trident II missile typically carries four or five warheads each, although each missile can be equipped with eight or fourteen warheads depending on its type: W88 or W76). Uploading US Minuteman and Trident missiles to their full capacity would more than double the total number of US strategic nuclear weapons. Russia's Strategic Nuclear Forces would not be able to respond proportionally to such a massive increase in the US's strategic offensive capability, although it also has some potential to upload.

As for the United States, the benefits of preserving START would also be significant. Keeping START alive would enable the United States to have a much clearer idea of Russia's plans in terms of strategic nuclear weapons, which is extremely important to Washington because in 2021 Russia is expected to launch the mass production and delivery to the armed forces of new strategic offensive weapons such as *Avangard* and *Sarmat* ICBM, the new *Borei-A* class nuclear-powered missile submarines, and substantially upgraded Tu-160M2 heavy bombers that are armed with new weapons. These strategic nuclear systems fall under the scope of START and are therefore subject to on-site verification measures by US inspection groups. Additionally, the United States has no plans to deploy any new strategic nuclear systems up to 2026 (when the extension would run out), which makes such an extension an even more attractive proposition for the Pentagon.

Finally, keeping START alive would enable Russia and the United States to demonstrate to the international community their commitment to nuclear disarmament within the framework of Article VI of the NPT. This is an important consideration in view of the Tenth Review Conference, which is scheduled for January 2021. A five-year extension would also not pose any risks for Russian or US national security, because under Article XIV of START, each

party has the right to withdraw at any time should it decide that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the treaty have jeopardised its supreme interests (Esin 2019).

Moreover, for decades, strategic nuclear arms agreements between Moscow and Washington like the latest START have their bolstered strategic stability. These agreements have made it possible for the two countries to maintain a stable balance of nuclear forces affordably and to receive exhaustive information about the current conditions and future prospects of the modernisation of strategic offensive arms. These accomplishments have been made possible by dozens of annual on-site inspections, as well as exchanges of information and notifications regarding the condition and transportation of nuclear arsenals, the addition or removal of strategic systems, and telemetric data from missile launches.

Past experience suggests that a lack of this information inevitably and logically leads countries to overestimate their opponents' capabilities and, consequently, to increase the quality and quantity of their own arsenals at considerable cost. This dynamic can easily lead to a nuclear arms race. If START were allowed to expire in 2021, strategic stability would be in danger.

Granted, if the information exchanges conducted under the treaty ceased, Russia and the US could still obtain some data through other technical means, but satellite-based intelligence platforms would be a totally insufficient source of information compared to direct information exchange. For instance, it would then become difficult to determine the number of warheads deployed on ICBMs and SLBMs. Moreover, some US politicians and experts believe that security and stability could be achieved through non-legally binding transparency and verification procedures. The Russian position on such ideas is clear - Moscow does not need transparency for the sake of transparency or verification for the sake of verification. They should be closely tied to commitments with regard to limitations.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLES TO AN EXTENSION OF THE START TREATY?

Ongoing discussions about the treaty in the Trump administration are fairly negative. There are three preconditions to the extension of START that it has publicly formulated. First, the current START should be replaced by a new treaty that is signed by the United States, Russia and China, and that covers all their nuclear systems. Second, it should include all new Russian nuclear weapons systems (not just the *Avangard* hypersonic glider and *Sarmat* ICBM, but also the *Burevestnik* nuclear-powered cruise missile and even the *Kinzhal* air-launched missile and the undersea autonomous vehicle *Poseidon*, which are not even categorised as a strategic weapons systems). Third, it should include all nuclear warheads: deployed and non-deployed, strategic and non-strategic. Fourth, the verification mechanism (on-site inspections and the exchange of telemetric information) should be enhanced.

However, it should be noted that the US's position on the extension of START has become a little bit less rigid of late. The latest US proposal put forward by the American delegation at the August meeting in Vienna envisages Washington's consent to the extension of START for a period of less than five years, provided that a bilateral, politically binding, presidential-level statement that commits to starting negotiations on a new treaty is issued.

Of course, it would be wonderful if other nuclear states adopted these restrictions and subsequent reductions to nuclear weapons after 30 years of such steps being taken overwhelmingly by Russia and the United States. For instance, it's frequently suggested that the three other signatories of the NPT - the UK, France and China - be included in the process first, followed by the four non-signatories: Israel, India, Pakistan and probably North Korea. This would have a positive political impact on the nuclear non-proliferation regime, especially given the fact that the five NPT members are bound by direct obligations on the issue as per Article VI of the treaty.

But in this case, I see some problems that are not easy to solve.

First, there is no concept of multilateral deterrence. Each nuclear state has its own opponent to deter. This means you cannot involve China and not involve India, or India without involving Pakistan, and so on.

Second, to start multilateral negotiations between at least seven confirmed nuclear states – the US, Russia, China, the UK, France, India and Pakistan – the latter two should be recognised as nuclear states within the framework of NPT.

Third, the US and Russia still possess 92% of the world's nuclear stockpile. How can they convince other nuclear states (China first of all) to reduce their stockpiles before the US and Russia first reduce their own to appropriate levels?

Fourth, the problem of transparency. American and Russian stockpile levels are officially declared and verified. French, British and Chinese stockpile levels are declared but not verified (China's level of 300 warheads, which has been the declared amount for the last 20 years, is not trustworthy). India's and Pakistan's stockpiles are not even officially declared. Israel sticks to its traditional position of refusing to deny or confirm its nuclear status.

Moreover, limitations, reductions, and the dismantlement of such complex, costly weapons of such critical importance for national security never come about as the result of general good intentions alone. As is demonstrated by 50 years of negotiations and a dozen serious and politically binding agreements between the Soviet Union/Russia and the United States in this area, such steps are only taken on quite pragmatic, material terms.

First, a state adopts these measures only if it is guaranteed tangible security improvements, namely limitations on and reductions of weapons by the other side.

Second, such steps are only possible if the states' nuclear forces are approximately equal – not because such parity is required for deterrence, but because it makes the parties equally interested in reaching an agreement and provides the starting point for that agreement. In this case, both parties will have to adhere to the same numerical ceilings.

Third, no one will simply trust their opponent's word on such issues. This calls for an adequate verification system, the capacities

of which in many ways determine the limits of possible agreements (Arbatov 2019).

As for the inclusion in a new treaty of all strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons, as well as of any other systems not covered by the present START Treaty: for some of them it is quite possible, for some it is difficult but still possible, and for some it is not possible. Moreover, the United States is not the only side that may wish to cover additional weapons systems in the provisions of the treaty – Russia has its own concerns, dealing mainly with the US’s global missile defence and the weaponisation of space.

In any case, I’m sure that both the United States and Russia should explore the possibility of a new bilateral, legally binding and comprehensive arms control agreement that would succeed START, whether it ends in 2021 or in 2026. On its own terms or in conjunction with separate, less formal arrangements, such an agreement would need to address the concerns raised by one side or the other about missile defence systems, conventional strike systems, non-strategic nuclear weapons, offensive cyber and space capabilities, and any innovative weapons systems.

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What Should Replace New START?

ANDREY KORTUNOV

For several years, politicians and academics have warned the public about the growing threat of the international nuclear arms control system going down the drain. Not only were specific bilateral and multilateral agreements called into question, but the international arms control culture as it had emerged in 1960s-1970s also started to show evident signs of decay and obsolescence.

The first serious blow to this system was the US's decision to withdraw from the Soviet-US ABM Treaty in 2002. However, the system withstood this blow, largely owing to the general positive dynamics of Russia-US political cooperation at the time. The collapse of the INF Treaty 17 years later turned out to be more painful because it coincided with a highly acute political crisis in relations between Moscow and Washington. The next link in the chain of disintegration was the bilateral START III Treaty. Mutual accusations about a failure to abide by this treaty – at least in spirit if not the letter of the treaty – were becoming increasingly loud both in Russia and in the US, as were statements that the national security of either side would not suffer much even if the extension of the treaty were not possible.

The end of the New START Agreement is clearly not the end of the world. Now, neither Russia nor the United States has adequate technological, industrial or financial capabilities to engage in a large-scale strategic arms race, as they did during the Cold War. Odds are that for some time, both sides will actually comply with the terms of the treaty, as was true in other cases – for example, when the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2002. The Americans quit, but they did not create an efficient missile defence system: they actually continued to implement the treaty. Most US

and Russian current strategic modernisation plans do not require an explicit deviation by either side from the ceilings of the New START Treaty. To resume a full-fledged nuclear arms race beyond New START will take at least several years, appropriate budget decisions, and much more.

The immediate political repercussions of this US-Russian strategic arms control disintegration are likely to be more visible. The core pillar of the bilateral relationship is in peril: since the early 1970s, strategic arms control has been a foundation for all other aspects of interaction between Moscow and Washington. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, both sides have struggled to define an alternative core pillar, but without much success. Removing the centrality of strategic arms control not only deprives the US-Russia relationship of its special status in global politics, but also drastically reduces both countries' importance to one another.

Furthermore, it is impossible to terminate the bilateral Russia-US dimension of nuclear arms control while leaving its multilateral dimension intact. The energy of this disintegration is bound to spill over the framework of bilateral relations, and this is already happening before our eyes. Washington has launched a campaign accusing Moscow of conducting secret nuclear weapons tests. Thus, the future of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that the United States has signed but not yet ratified is called into question. It is perfectly obvious that if nuclear modernisation continues with the production of new types of warheads, those who insist on tests will exert more pressure on the public.

The ultimate destruction of the NPT would be the final nail in the coffin for nuclear arms control. Article VI of the treaty notes the "obligation of nuclear-weapon States to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament." However, to what extent can we seriously discuss nuclear disarmament today at all? The 2015 Review Conference was already a big disappointment for nuclear disarmament advocates, and the 2021 Review Conference may turn out to be the final event in this format. In this way, the NPT will follow in the wake of the CTBT, START III, INF and ABM treaties on the road to the dustbin of history, a road that is growing every year.

The end of the New START treaty raises many questions about the role of nuclear weapons and new approaches to nuclear security in the XXI century. Can we drive the nuclear genie back into the bottle? Are we still in a position to stop, or at least manage, the chain reaction of disintegration? Where is it possible to maintain defences against the coming nuclear chaos? On what terms and in what format is it possible to revive international nuclear arms control?

When addressing all of these questions, we should not forget that these days strategic arms control is not the only game in town for state leaders, politicians and opinion-makers. There are too many other problems and concerns, including the economic crisis, climate change, international migration and the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Arms control, alas, has long lost its former status as the centrepiece of international politics, and we will need to come to grips with this fact one way or another.

Temptations of “nuclear sovereignty”, “strategic autonomy” and even “strategic isolationism” without any restrictions whatsoever is certainly strong for any nuclear or would-be nuclear power. Life without arms control, strangely enough, might look quite attractive. For some players, this is because they hope to win an uncontrolled arms race using a superior resource base or technology. For others, it represents an opportunity to guarantee the effectiveness of an “asymmetric” retaliatory strike in a hypothetical scenario of a nuclear clash. For others still, it is about compensating for the unfavourable balance of nuclear potential by retaining a “strategic uncertainty” situation with regard to their capabilities and plans. However, these hopes, opportunities and calculations are nothing more than a mirage and an ephemeral illusion. The old maxim that one cannot ensure one’s own security at the expense of the security of others, for all its triviality, remains true in the 21st century. An uncontrolled arms race is not only about ever-increasing material costs, but also about ever-increasing risks.

To be able to embrace the future with confidence, the nuclear countries’ leaders first need to admit their mistakes and the delusions of the recent past. History was generous enough to give the international community 30 years to find a formula for

transitioning from the old Cold War model of arms control of the 20th century to a new model for the 21st century that suits everyone. Unfortunately, leaders completely wasted these 30 years. Now, the old model is rapidly and irreversibly disintegrating, while the new model has yet to emerge on the horizon, even in its most general form. The world is entering the twilight zone. For many reasons of a geopolitical, organisational, technical and even psychological nature, it will most likely not be possible to agree on, sign and ratify new "classic" arms limitation treaties in the coming years. Therefore, Russia, the United States and the rest of the world will have to move through a relatively large dead zone with few chances to resume full control of strategic armaments. Unfortunately, this situation may last for many years and, in a way, we should accept this as a new normal.

Without claiming to have any mystical knowledge of life after the death of arms control, I would like to offer several rules that could make our lives a bit less dangerous and more comfortable for everyone.

First, peace is more important than disarmament. For all the importance of limiting and reducing nuclear arms, the priority task for all should be to prevent a nuclear war. This means that even given the absence of an adequate international legal foundation for strategic stability, such stability could benefit from making full use of many modest but practical instruments at our common disposal. We could reduce risks through contacts between our military, politicians and experts at different levels, through parallel reductions of the combat readiness of nuclear delivery means, through parallel constraints in deploying new systems, and through an exchange of information on the evolution of nuclear doctrines and plans for strategic modernisation.

Second, quality is more dangerous than quantity. Russia and the US might have approached the limits of the quantitative arms race - neither of them plans to increase sharply the number of warheads or the means of their delivery. In the meantime, though, the technological race has just begun. For the time being, there is still an opportunity to promptly block its most dangerous avenues, which are linked to artificial intelligence, space militarisation and

the development of lethal arms autonomous systems, to name a few. Obviously this task will require completely different formats of arms control, whereby informal norms and codes of conduct may mean more than formalised agreements, and the role of the private sector and the civil society will not be inferior to that of states.

Third, threats posed by non-governmental players will increasingly outweigh dangers from opposing states. No matter what attitude the world may have to the nuclear-missile programme of North Korea or the possible development of nuclear arms by the Islamic Republic of Iran, a common logic of deterrence could work in both cases. This logic might not work vis-à-vis international terrorist organisations. In the meantime, such organisations will be increasingly likely to acquire nuclear arms. There will also be an increasing number of "failed states", and these are a breeding ground for international terrorism. Therefore, the prevention of nuclear terrorism (and terrorism with the use of any other weapons of mass destruction) should be a top priority in the future mechanisms of international arms control.

The arms control system of the 21st century cannot be bilateral. It has to be multilateral, and the transition to multilateralism will be very difficult. Nobody knows what multilateral deterrence could mean; nobody knows what China or India or Pakistan should legitimately have in order to provide for their security. What is clear, however, is that a multilateral framework will be very different from the bilateral arms control system that we have lived with. We also know that we have to move in this direction.

If the two superpowers have not coped with the mission entrusted to them by history, then surely it is time to let other nuclear countries in on the game. Paris, London and Beijing have stated their respective positions on the matter quite clearly: "First, let the Russians and Americans reduce their arsenals to levels comparable to ours, and then we can talk about multilateral agreements". However, one should not reduce arms control to an arithmetic problem. The question also includes "algebraic" considerations, some of which I mentioned above - the combat readiness of nuclear arsenals, their degree of transparency, confidence-building measures, dialogue on military doctrines, the

exchange of information on modernisation plans, blocking the most dangerous areas of the arms race, and much more. Progress in at least some of these areas would make it possible to both mitigate the negative consequences of the demise of the New START Treaty and the INF Treaty and to start to outline a new model of nuclear arms control that would gradually and delicately bring other nuclear powers into the fold.

When I talk about a new model of arms control, I also imply that currently, unfortunately, it is very difficult to arrive at legally binding agreements, which are subject to ratification by national legislatures. Can you imagine any arms control agreement between Russia and the United States that would be able to make it through the US Congress these days? If we cannot ensure ratification, this means that we cannot ensure verification, so we should look for different ways, maybe more technical ways, to get assurances that arms control agreements are abided by.

This is not easy; we are used to a different culture, a very legalistic culture, but this culture is not likely to work in the 21st century. There is a growing disconnect between an undercurrent of technological progress, on one hand, and the very slow and protracted legislative mechanisms that we have at our disposal, on the other. If we want to make our world safer for everybody, we should demonstrate more imagination and more out-of-the-box thinking than we have done before.

Post-INF Missile Restraint for Europe: Building on the Russian “Moratorium”

LUKASZ KULESA

Unrestrained deployments of INF-class missiles in Europe and the action-reaction pressure this would create will further escalate tensions in NATO-Russia relations. Russia should expand its 2019 missile moratorium proposal to include the withdrawal from service of the SSC-8 system. That would give NATO countries significant incentives to reciprocate by confirming and expanding NATO's own restraint pledges. While fragile, such moves could create space for stabilising the relationship.

The value of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty for European security stemmed from a number of factors. Signed in 1987 by the United States and the Soviet Union, the INF turned out to be a vital element in the process of overcoming the Cold War and guaranteeing a largely peaceful transition to a new era of international relations post-1989. The treaty itself, which prohibited the possession of all (conventional and nuclear) ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km, removed from the table an issue that in the late-1970s and 1980s greatly increased strategic instability in Europe: the introduction of a new generation of intermediate-range missiles and their deployment on the continent. These missiles could be used to initiate a large-scale, precise and surprise nuclear attack against a range of enemy targets, without involving the strategic nuclear forces of the Soviet Union or the US. Thanks to the INF, that threat disappeared. By 1991, 1,846 Russian and 846 US missiles had been

verifiably destroyed in accordance with the Treaty. It seemed that at least one pillar supporting strategic stability in Europe was firmly put in place, and that it would survive well into the 21st century.

The treaty's demise in 2019 therefore came as a shock to many Europeans. The developments leading to the US decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty in August 2019 have been well-described and debated in hundreds of analyses and op-eds. At the same time, all sides stick to their own narratives. Russia categorically denies that it violated the treaty with the development and deployment of the SSC-8/9M729 cruise missile. All NATO members have sided with the US in accusing Russia of treaty transgression, and ultimately supported the US's withdrawal decision (NATO 2019). The secretary general of NATO announced, meanwhile, that the Alliance has "no intention to deploy new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe".

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

This is, however, not the end of the story. Since the demise of the Treaty, both Russia and the United States have moved forward with developing new types of INF-class missiles, with Russia continuing to deploy the SSC-8 and having several other systems under development (Kacprzyk and Piotrowski 2018). The US's plans for an INF-class force are not entirely clear, with several projects in different stages of work (Kacprzyk and Piotrowski 2020). But once some of these US systems reach the production phase, the United States may initiate the process of deploying these conventional - and potentially in future nuclear-armed - land-based missile systems to Europe. Some NATO members, especially those situated along the Eastern flank, may be ready to host such missiles.

From Russia's viewpoint, that would have serious strategic consequences in terms of the increased threat of a swift "decapitation strike" against its decision-makers, crucial command and control centres, and other critical infrastructure. That is the same concern that led the Soviet Union to negotiate the INF Treaty

in the first place. From NATO's perspective, the deployment of numerous and more diverse Russian INF-class weapons in Europe would mean broadening the spectrum of capabilities that Russia could use for signalling, coercion and escalation during a crisis, and for defeating NATO forces during a potential war (Johnson 2018). Both sides therefore have nothing to gain from an arms race involving ground-based missile weapons, and plenty to lose.

THE WAY FORWARD

In September 2019, President Putin proposed to NATO a "moratorium" on INF-class missiles, pledging that Russia would not deploy such missiles in Europe as long as the US refrains from doing so. The main flaw in this, and the reason why NATO dismissed the Russian proposal, was that it did not cover the existence and continued deployment of SSC-8/9M729 cruise missiles, which NATO classifies as INF-range (The Moscow Times 2019). Only French President Emmanuel Macron expressed some interest in further exploring the moratorium in his talks with Russia, but he quickly clarified that this does not amount to accepting Russia's proposal for a reciprocal NATO moratorium. In October 2020, Putin suggested "additional steps" for the moratorium proposal. These would include the non-deployment of 9M729 missiles in the European part of Russia and external verification of their non-deployment in Kaliningrad in exchange for the opportunity for Russia to verify the absence of INF-range missiles at US missile defence bases in Europe. This proposal was also dismissed by NATO (Kacprzyk 2020).

It is clear that, unless Russia upgrades it further, NATO countries would not treat the "moratorium" as a credible point of departure for engagement. Russia should therefore consider coming back to the table with a new proposal that would build on its own idea. Such an offer would need to include, at minimum, the withdrawal from service of the 9M729 missiles. If Russia prefers, this could be explained as a "goodwill gesture", without changing its official

position about the range of the system. The withdrawal and destruction of all the launchers and missiles, in a manner which could be externally verified, would be the preferable option from the Western point of view, but this may be a step too far for Russia. But other solutions can be suggested, e.g. placing the withdrawn and "mothballed" systems into designated permanent storage sites, which could be monitored remotely to detect any attempts to return them to service. Another solution, suggested by German expert Ulrich Kühn, would be to attach electronic markers to the SSC-8 launchers, which would allow for their movement to be detected by NATO if they enter the European part of Russia. The launch vehicles could then be withdrawn beyond the Ural Mountains on Russian territory and put in storage areas.

With such an "improved" moratorium as the first step, NATO states could then in response pledge not to deploy, or allow the deployment of, all land-based missiles with a 500-5,500 km range in Europe. From NATO's perspective, that would be a meaningful upgrade of the previous pledge of its secretary general, which covered only ground-based nuclear missiles. At the same time, such restraint can realistically be expected from Russia and the US only with regards to European territories. It seems clear that the US has already made the decision to develop some intermediate-range missiles for its China-related contingencies in Asia. Russia would also most likely want to deploy some intermediate-range systems too address non-European regional threats. Any mutual pledges would therefore not be global in scale. The United States would be free to deploy intermediate-range missiles on their own territory and in other regions of the world, while Russia would be able to develop INF-class missiles other than the 9M729 (or its variants or clones with similar characteristics) and deploy them beyond its European territory.

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Granted, such a political arrangement to keep Europe free of land-based intermediate range missiles could be easily violated during a crisis or conflict, due to the characteristics of the launchers, which are mobile and transportable by land, sea and (in some cases) air. It would not address other developments in the missile domain, such as the increasing role of air- and sea-based missiles, some of which are nuclear or nuclear-capable, or the increasing importance of new-generation missiles of mixed trajectories (e.g. the air-launched Kindzal). Finally, it would not affect the deployments of Russian missiles with ranges shorter than 500 km, even those which are nuclear-capable and which in some regional contingencies (such as the Baltic and Black Sea areas) would have strategic significance.

However, a strong signal from Russia about its willingness to address the key issue in the INF Treaty dispute, namely the use of the SSC-8/9M729 missile, could positively affect broader NATO-Russia dynamics. It would address the concerns of not only the US, but of other members of NATO as well. It could also help to enable some movement on other contentious issues. For example, if Russia credibly resolves the SSC-8 controversy, this could provide incentives for NATO and the US to offer increased transparency about the Aegis Ashore sites in Europe (the operational site in Romania and the site under construction in Poland) to address Russian concerns about the characteristics of the missiles deployed there and the nature of the system itself.¹

The resulting political ban on NATO and Russian INF-class missiles in Europe, even if fragile, would increase both arms race stability and conflict stability. It would demonstrate that both Russia and NATO are capable of military restraint. It could also help to launch talks on an arms control agreement prohibiting or establishing limits on INF-class missiles in Eurasia or globally – a genuine successor to the INF Treaty.

¹ Russia claims Aegis Ashore is capable of launching US Tomahawk missiles; the US and NATO position is that the system has been modified from its sea-based version and it is capable of using only missile defence interceptors.

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