



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
TRILATERAL MEETING

Dialogue with Members of the U.S. Congress,
The Russian Duma and the German Bundestag:

Addressing Mutual Foreign Policy Challenges

April 30-May 4, 2016

Briesen, Germany



THE ASPEN) INSTITUTE
TRILATERAL MEETING

Dialogue with Members of the U.S. Congress,
The Russian Duma and the German Bundestag:

Addressing Mutual Foreign Policy Challenges

April 30-May 4, 2016

Vol. 31, No. 2

Dan Glickman
Vice President, Aspen Institute
Executive Director, Congressional Program
Washington, DC

This project was made possible by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York with supplemental support from the Democracy Fund, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Holthues Family Trust, the Henry Luce Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Copyright © 2016 by The Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute
One Dupont Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20036-1133
Published in the United States of America
in 2016 by The Aspen Institute

All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 0-89843-648-6
Pub # 16/011

Table of Contents

Rapporteur’s Summary	1
<i>Peter Eitel</i>	
Ukraine’s Impasse: Beyond a Protracted Frozen Conflict, Searching for a Viable Security Structure	9
<i>Sharyl Cross</i>	
Helsinki Plus or Helsinki Minus?	17
<i>Alexey Gromyko</i>	
Reducing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons	21
<i>Karl-Heinz Kamp</i>	
Reducing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons: The Status of the Iran Agreement and Multilateral Efforts to Limit the Spread of Nuclear Arms	23
<i>Sergey Rogov</i>	
Strategic Priorities for NATO in the Security Environment of 2016	33
<i>Jeffrey A. Larsen</i>	
Struggling for Islamic Alternative	39
<i>Alexey Malashenko</i>	
Confronting Terrorism, Combatting ISIS, and Middle East Challenges	43
<i>Joachim Krause</i>	
The Challenge of the Islamic State: The Record and the Lessons	47
<i>Rajan Menon</i>	
Collaboration, As Far as Possible; Defense, As Far as Necessary.....	53
<i>Karsten Voigt</i>	
A Long View of Transatlantic Crises: Increasing closeness, increasing friction.....	57
<i>Karsten Voigt</i>	
George F. Kennan, Containment, and the West’s Current Russia Problem.....	63
<i>Matthew Rojansky</i>	
The U.S.-Russian ‘Value War’	75
<i>Nikolai Zlobin</i>	
Closing the Gap by Looking to the Future	79
<i>Mathew Burrows</i>	
Conference Participants	83
Conference Agenda	87

Rapporteur's Summary

Peter Eitel

University of Kiel PhD candidate;
consultant to The Aspen Institute Germany

The Aspen Institute Congressional Program in cooperation with The Aspen Institute Germany held a conference in Briesen, Germany, May 1-4, 2016, titled *Dialogue with Members of the U.S. Congress, the Russian Duma and the Germany Bundestag: Addressing Mutual Foreign Policy Challenges*. Conference participants included 9 members of Congress, 7 members of the Russian Duma, 2 members of Russia's Federation Council, five members of the German Bundestag, as well as xx American, Russian and German scholars on a number of U.S. policy issues affecting the U.S., Russia and Europe. A field visit was also made to the nearby Seelow Heights war memorial for fallen Russian and German soldiers, where one of the major final battles of WWII took place. The gathering was the first of its kind between American and Russian legislators since the beginning of sanctions in 2014.

Participants discussed the following topics in different sessions: the Minsk process and European security; reducing the threat of nuclear weapons; confronting terrorism, combatting ISIS, and Middle East challenges; reconciling different Russian and Western values and expectations; and long term prospects for US-Russian relations.

The atmosphere of the meeting was characterized by a certain choreography: Conversations often began with very detailed statements elaborating on who is to blame for the current situation. While differences in opinion and interpretation persisted throughout the meeting, it was observable that over time the focus shifted from flagging differences, to participants increasingly striving to identify commonalities in

attempts to overcome controversial and hardened positions.

The Minsk Process and European Security

The crisis and conflict in and around Ukraine pushed an already strained relationship between Russia and the West into outright conflict in 2014. Ukraine remains at the heart of tension in relations today. The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine and the broader political crisis in which Ukraine finds itself are destabilizing factors for the wider region, including Russia and Germany.

The conflict in Ukraine is at the heart of the confrontation between Russia, the EU and NATO. Many participants expressed that resolving this conflict is a precondition to reaching a lasting European security architecture. One participant argued that mistakes made by the governments in Kiev, the West and Russia played an important role in the developments that led to the current situation. Kiev's mistakes were the illegality of assuming power; deploying military forces to the Donbas Region by the interim government of 2013; and conducting the military operation as an anti-terror operation, thereby labelling the entire Donbas population as terrorists. Mistakes attributed to the West included breaking the agreement with the Ukrainian government of February 24, 2014; supporting military operations against Donbas; and blaming only Russia for the crises, while neglecting the role of Ukraine.

Russia's mistakes included never adapting its policy towards Kiev; ignoring the necessity of utilizing soft-power to counter anti-Russian sentiments; failing to interact with Ukrainian civil society; and lacking able diplomats in Kiev.

Several experts noted that the implementation of the Minsk II agreement now largely depends on Ukrainian domestic politics, where an intense fight for political power is underway between various forces and stakeholders.

Another participant offered a different analysis of how Germany, Russia, and the United States regard the conflict in Ukraine. While the U.S. looks at the conflict from the perspective of democratic self-determination, Russia views the situation in Ukraine as a direct threat to its sphere of influence and a challenge to its role in the international arena. Germany feels directly threatened by Russia's renewed assertiveness, both in terms of democratic self-determination as well as of national security considerations. At the core of the conflict there is a quest for mutual respect and recognition.

Regarding the Minsk II ceasefire agreement, one participant argued that the goal of achieving a security architecture in times of tensions should be the guiding principle for the core actors in their efforts to implement the Minsk agreement.

Several participants remarked on the importance and unique character of this meeting, as nothing of the kind has occurred since 2013, and that discussing policy disagreements is a crucial step toward resolving the crisis in Ukraine. While the end of the bipolar world did not eliminate differences and disagreements between Russia, the United States, and its NATO allies, recent developments in Ukraine have escalated the situation from disagreement to conflict. This conflict, which emanated from a domestic conflict revolving around corruption, has taken on a military dimension with hybrid forms of warfare, and a geopolitical dimension.

While the Minsk agreement is a valuable platform for establishing and reaffirming working trust and "trust in capabilities" between the partners, it is battling against time. Several participants expressed concern that the window of opportunity for a successful implementation could close within the next three to four months, as this summer may be the last opportunity to get the support of the Ukrainian people.

According to this assessment, the current government in Kiev is rapidly losing support, and its position is contested by various elite groups. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the United States is currently focused on its presidential race; at the same time Germany and other European Union member states also have little leverage regarding the Ukrainian government. For it to be successful, the

government in Kiev plays an integral part. In Russia, on the other hand, presidential elections are set for September 2016, further adding to a stalemate regarding the speedy implementation of the agreement.

In order not to let the window of opportunity close, a roadmap for the resolution of the conflict was suggested: The parties involved should exert their leverage on the Ukrainian government to end violence and establish meaningful control of the borders; conduct a vote on the Donbas Region in the Ukrainian Parliament (the Rada), which would immediately trigger a referendum in the Donbas region; exchange military confrontation with efforts to rebuild the Donbas region; and return the migrant population and internally displaced persons.

In the broader context, one expert argued that the key challenge is to overcome the zero-sum game between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Rather than regarding the zones as mutually exclusive, or seeking to keep them apart by allowing for grey zones of instability, the actors involved should focus on increasing their economic interdependence, and accept that a failure to agree on Ukraine implies the end of a European security architecture. In this regard, Russia and the West should accept Kosovo and Crimea as exceptions and return to the principles agreed on in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 which could pave the way to end the violence in Ukraine.

The ensuing discussion was characterized by an often detailed exchange of different interpretations of international law and the international legal system, particularly regarding the UN regulations on the use of force and territorial integrity. In regard to Ukraine and the Minsk II agreement, the focus on different readings of each others' respective roles both in causing and in resolving the situation prevailed. However, several participants noted that the window of opportunity to resolve the crisis in Ukraine is closing very quickly, and that no time ought to be lost by finger pointing.

One participant identified the diverging narratives as the key obstacle, which can only be overcome if the actors involved dare to engage in more diplomacy. At a time when the world is experiencing the most dangerous moment since the end of the bipolar aggression, only a return to diplomacy can mitigate the "wrong button threat". In this, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe could play a key role, both as a symbol that constructive diplomacy on a European security architecture is possible, and as a multilateral

institution accepted by all partners.

Former Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev's idea of a "Common European Home" has collapsed over the question of Ukraine, one participant argued, due to shortcomings that led to diametrically opposed narratives both on behalf of NATO and of Russia. NATO, he argued, provoked Russia when in the mid-nineties NATO enlargement became a concern. NATO also failed to build a second pillar of the Helsinki Final Act by emphasizing increased cooperation in economics, technology, science, and the environment. In regard to Russia, its foreign policy has achieved the opposite of what it intended in Ukraine. While two years ago Russian-Ukrainian relations were friendly, today the majority of the Ukrainian population views Russia as a major threat. This situation is further aggravated by Russia's failure to further pursue a path of societal, economical, cultural and ideological modernization.

One participant provided policy recommendations: (1) Based on the reports of the OSCE observer mission in Ukraine that clearly indicate the majority of ceasefire violations being caused by separatists, Russia should consider allowing OSCE observers and monitors on the Russian side of the border; (2) While there are numerous tracks between Europe and Russia, the United States is less involved. However, there are several aspects in resolving the situation in Ukraine and beyond that call for U.S. involvement. This participant pointed out the absence of a highly visible summit between the Russian and U.S. president, and called upon the U.S. to call for a visible summit on the resolution of the Ukraine crises. Such a summit, he explained, would be of huge symbolic value.

Reducing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons

The Iran nuclear agreement has been cited as a triumph of multilateral diplomacy, and as evidence that cooperation among the world's big powers, including Russia and the West, remains possible despite apparently deep disagreements in other areas. Yet trust among the parties to the Iran nuclear deal remains extremely low, a breakdown in implementation of the agreement from either or both sides remains very possible, and politicians on all sides have spoken about military action as a fallback in case the agreement fails.

Renewed tensions between Russia and NATO over Ukraine have led to a new nuclear age, where Russia seeks to counterbalance NATO's conventional force superiority by tactical nuclear weapons. This development means that relieving the nuclear threat will not be achieved by arms reduction treaties alone. Even

cooperative achievements like the deal with Iran cannot cover up the fact that today, the idea of non-proliferation is as dead as the idea of a nuclear weapon free world. Therefore, it is crucial that NATO and Russia re-engage in nuclear talks.

There was a substantial reduction of nuclear weapons during the nineties, particularly on behalf of Russia and the United States. However, there are still too many nuclear weapons, particularly in the possession of nations other than the United States and Russia. The common challenge for the United States and Russia is how to engage these other states owning nuclear weapons on non-proliferation in a multilateral world. While Russia and the U.S. are still engaged in nuclear exercises, it is clear however that strategic stability cannot be ensured by strategic nuclear weapons anymore. Conventional weapons, cyber weapons, or other weapons all are capable of having strategic impact, a situation with which both the U.S. and Russia need to cope. In order to prevent a deepening of a new Cold War, one expert proposed a Russian initiative to renegotiate the accident/incident management framework first bilaterally with the United States, but also within the NATO-Russia context. The U.S. should be more open to dialogue and confidence building measures in respect to the missile defense systems.

One participant observed that NATO is grappling to understand Russia's current foreign policy rationale. As a military alliance, it will react accordingly if there is an increase in Russian troops on NATO's borders, as long as Russia's goals remain unclear. In relation to deterrence and NATO's nuclear policy, there is a necessity to rebalance collective defense, deterrence, and out-of-area missions in light of recent developments. Regarding proliferation, fissile materials and their use by non-state actors to produce "dirty bombs" are a key concern for NATO.

There are common strategic interests in engaging other nuclear weapon states such as China and Pakistan in nuclear arms reduction or preventing the use of nuclear-enriched explosives by non-state actors, particularly ISIS. Participants often referred to examples like the recent deal with Iran on its nuclear program, or the UN Security Council resolution to demolish Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles.

In relation to recent air and seaborne incidents between Russian and NATO forces, participants identified a need to review the existing regulations; the ensuing negotiating process could also serve as an effort to re-establish working trust. In addition, the need to

develop new confidence building measures between NATO and Russia was identified.

Confronting Terrorism, Combatting ISIS, and Middle East Challenges

Despite deep disagreements over Ukraine, Russia and the West appear to share a common challenge in confronting Islamic extremism originating in the Middle East and spreading into Europe and beyond, including the threat of violent terror attacks against civilians. Indeed, the acute challenge posed by ISIS may be a vehicle for restoring productive dialogue and cooperation between Russia and the West.

The threat ISIS poses is formidable: based on barbaric brutality and a narrative that frames the Muslim world as being under attack from outside forces, ISIS has gone far beyond merely being a terror group. Instead, the movement should be regarded as a phenomenon, one expert argued. It clearly strives for territorial control, counts former Iraqi military and administrative cadres among its leadership, and has an estimated 200,000 people actively supporting its cause.

Three catalyzing effects that supported the quick growth and stark impact of ISIS were identified: (1) a change in U.S. policy towards Iraq after the initial success; (2) the brutal repression of the Assad Regime against street protesters and opposition; and (3) the suppression of the Iraqi Sunni population under the Maliki government. An argument was made that Russia's uncritical support of the Assad Regime is the most important reason the West is suspicious of Russia's Syria strategy.

According to one participant, the question whether the conflict in Syria can be resolved depends on whether the conflicting parties are able to reach a power sharing agreement. The ideal solution of "one Syria under one ruler" is no longer realistic. Syria today, like the wider region, is a patchwork of clans and territories, evoking the impression of a big power struggle which may be compared to continental Europe during the Thirty Years War.

Such an agreement is only feasible if Russia exerts its influence on Assad. The conjecture was made that as long as Russia supports Assad cooperation on the question of Syria and the Middle East between the West and Russia unlikely.

Another participant argued that defeating ISIS would only eliminate the tip of the iceberg, since the creation of an Islamic State or caliphate is inherent in the Muslim faith since Mohammed's founding of a

Muslim state. The Koran lays out all the answers on how a Muslim state should look, and therefore, the utopia of a Muslim state is so deeply rooted that the world ought to come to terms with the existence of phenomenon like ISIS.

Based on this assumption, four pertinent questions were posed: (1) Whom are we fighting against?; (2) who are we fighting with?; (3) how do we want to fight them?; and (4) what can be offered to the Muslim population? The answers to these questions are further complicated by the fact that within the Muslim world there is conflict between Muslims on the best way forward in establishing a Muslim state. While the moderate factions have a long-term perspective, and base their actions within a legal framework, the catalysts have a medium term perspective and consider actions like mass-protests and social unrest as appropriate instruments in order to establish an Islamic State. Finally, the radicals, such as ISIS, have a short term perspective, and consider barbaric violence and military action the fastest way to fulfil the utopia of an Islamic State.

The observation was made that the world is in for a long battle against Islamic fundamentalism, and that attempts to establish an Islamic state will occur in many geographical areas in the future.

Another perspective was put forth that focused on the regional complexities of the wider Middle East. In this view, the conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Somalia are intertwined, and urgently require political settlement. While Iraq, Libya, and Somalia have been the locus for international interventions, Syria quickly became an internationalized conflict after the massive retaliation of the Assad Regime against the street protesters in 2012.

Regarding a possible way ahead in Syria, one participant forecasted that while resolving the conflict with Syria's original borders remaining intact would be desirable, this would be highly unlikely. In seeking a resolution, he noted that Assad's biggest competitor for power is a group known as Jesh al-Islam, a secular, yet not moderate opposition force. Russian airstrikes have focused on attacking Jesh al-Islam strongholds, particularly because of their control of a coastal strip in Northern Syria. From the perspective of Western liberal democracies, neither the domestic conflict nor Islamic fundamentalism ought to be considered a strategic threat. However, terror attacks against metropolitan centers like Berlin, Moscow or Washington would need to be prevented at all cost.

The following discussion was characterized by an atmosphere that was notably more constructive than in the previous sessions. Participants quickly voiced their rejection of the idea to accept a mindset that is barbaric and uncivilized. Russia and the West face a common enemy in ISIS, which challenges core principles of the Westphalian system, the enlightenment, and modernity. History shows, it was proposed, that Russia and the West are highly capable of building an alliance against a common threat.

Much attention was paid to the question of how to deal with Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. While the majority argued that fighting ISIS and Islamic fundamentalism should be the number one priority, others maintained that no power sharing agreement in Syria is possible with Assad staying in power, and that the question of how to deal with Assad should be the top priority in resolving the situation in Syria. Others insisted that it should also be considered how the conflict in Syria could be resolved with Assad as part of the solution.

Participants also cautioned to take regional and religious dynamics into consideration when striving to end the conflict in Syria and the wider Middle East. The position was voiced that a solution in Syria would be unlikely without a stable Iraq. Others expressed the view that any solution in Syria needs to create an environment in which Sunni and Shia groups can co-exist. In this respect, the conflict between Iran and Saudi-Arabia for regional hegemony has to be taken into consideration.

Some participants argued that joining forces in the fight against ISIS would require the joint development of a United Nations Security Council resolution that is accepted by regional players in the Middle East. However, in order to effectively fight ISIS, it would be necessary to have “boots on the ground” in Syria. At this point of the discussion, many participants argued that this is one of the biggest challenges, as no group or country can be identified that is willing to partner with the international community on this project. Some participants argued that as much territorial integrity as possible should be ensured, while Assad’s role should be limited to a constructive role in a transitional government. After a transition period, power should be transferred to moderate forces after constitutional changes and a free and fair election. Others saw a dissolution of the Syrian territory into three parts more likely, divided among Assad and the Syrian Army, Kurds and Sunnis, and Shia forces.

Reconciling different Russian and Western Values and Perceptions: Lessons to be Learned from the Ukraine Crisis

Disagreements between Russians and Westerners often turn disparate perceptions of the very same events, which arguably is proof of a deep “values gap” between Russia and the West. Yet after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia rejected communism and embraced the same basic principles and forms of the free market and democratic government which the West advocated and practiced. The annexation of Crimea has stopped this integrational process. And many of the current problems are related with the crisis around Ukraine and Russia-West relations are now attributed to disputes over “values” issues: human rights, corruption, rule of law, sovereignty, and individual freedoms as well as national self-determination, among many others.

A question was put forth as to whether values actually matter in international relations. This proposition was highly controversial: For example, while it is possible to detach values from technical issues like arms control, it is next to impossible in the case of fighting terrorism, as captured in the phrase “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.”

Weighing options for future cooperation, particularly between Europe and Russia, the idea of a common European house should not be forgotten. However, the current anti-NATO, anti-U.S. and anti EU sentiment is not only virulent among the Russian population, but among populations in Europe, including in Germany, Austria or Poland, it is fostered by populist movements, reducing the likelihood of achieving this goal.

All these neighboring nations are bound by the values and principles that are derived from the idea of a common European house, freedom of choice, and the idea of limited devolution of sovereignty to the European Union. These principles, it was argued, have been attacked by Russia and populist movements striving to undermine the European idea. Both developments have resulted in a strong response by Germany on a political and financial level. Also, this explains why Germany at times takes a tougher stance on Russia than the U.S. Referencing the question of Ukraine’s accession to the European Union, it was argued that the freedom of choice is a core principle of the European idea, and sacrificing this principle due to external pressure would mean giving up European identity. Moreover, Europe and the EU will never allow

Russia to have a veto on the question of accession to the European Union.

Another participant argued that the litmus test for the relationship between Russia and the West is whether both sides are willing to listen to each other closely enough so that they are able to comprehend and repeat each other's narrative in a way that each side would recognize its narrative when repeated by the other side. The notion of a new Cold War was brought up. Here, evidence is mixed. Similar to the Cold War, today's relations between the West and Russia are characterized by aggressive "they and us" rhetoric as well as the use of propaganda; mutual isolation by establishing sanctions and military proxy-conflicts including Ukraine, Syria, or Georgia, and non-military proxy conflicts in parts of central and Eastern Europe. Unlike during the Cold War, Russia and the West today can look back to 25 years of peaceful co-existence, which include fundamental technological developments particularly in the field of communications, that could make reconciliation over the question of Ukraine easier.

In addition, one participant pointed out a structural difference that distinguishes today from the era of the Cold War: While during the Cold War there existed two superpowers, today there remains only one superpower: the U.S. The position of the sole superpower, the speaker continued, makes compromising much more difficult for the U.S. As the sole superpower, there is no need to compromise, as all others have to comply with its demands. Russia is showing no inclination to comply with the U.S. and demands eye-to eye-level treatment. Current issues, ranging from Ukraine to the conflict in Syria to the battle against religious fundamentalism, require both sides to compromise and to carefully listen to each other.

Another participant also refused to call today's situation a new Cold War. However, while the tensions during the Cold War were much more severe, both sides shared an understanding of how to deal with each other. This has rapidly vanished, and Russia and the West need to develop new ways of coping with each other and finding new ways of managing their relationship. In this respect, raising the issue of a clash of values is not helpful.

It was observed that Russia and the post-Soviet space are currently in a highly fragile transitional period, which may well entail further territorial changes. Moreover, at the same time, the world order once characterized by bipolar stability is undergoing fundamental changes. In this fluid and complex

environment at the beginning of the 21st century, both the U.S. and Russia need to assess the developing power dynamics and changes, and evaluate their interests rather than their values. In this regard both sides are facing fundamental questions: what do Russia and the West want from each other?, and how can Russia and the West both contribute to a new world order? The expert hinted that in his view that answer should not include the integration of Russia into the Western community of values or for Russia to adopt Western models of governance (particularly the notion of sharing sovereignty). He urged the parties involved not only to speak with each other about third parties, but to dare to speak with each other to develop joint answers to the questions mentioned above.

Many participants rejected the idea of a new Cold War. However, overemphasizing diverging values carries the risk of fostering Cold War nostalgia, hardening conflict positions, and fostering mechanisms of blaming each other. The recent meeting between the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Popes and their joint statement on shared Christian values was mentioned, but it was also pointed out that sharing sovereignty is unthinkable for Russia. Some participants therefore favored the view that it is better to base relations between Russia and the West on interests and facts.

Participants stated that the relations between Russia and the West will always be characterized by a struggle for cooperation given the historical context. At the same time, both parties appreciate the added value of dialogue about contested issues. Participants stressed the necessity and value of an ongoing dialogue and confidence building measures, the major tool to overcome the current low in mutual relations. In times when Russia and the West are facing a common enemy and are witnessing an age of rapid change and chaos, these efforts were of particular importance for a number of participants.

Long-Term Prospects for U.S. – Russia Relations

Russia – U.S. relations have been described as "cyclical" throughout the post-Cold War era, alternating between periods of optimism and effective cooperation and periods of greater discord and confrontation. Yet, underlying principles have continued to govern relations for more than a quarter century, including the desire by both sides to remain connected economically and diplomatically and to avoid escalation of limited regional conflict to direct military confrontation between Moscow and Washington.

Russia and the United States are facing very similar threats, including global warming, demographic change, migration, the future of the nation state, human rights, terror networks and organized crime, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and fissile materials. In dealing with these topics, the two countries have much more on which to agree than to disagree.

The key questions both countries face include how well they are equipped to act in a networked and rapidly changing world, how resilient they are to change and how flexible they are between the use of soft and hard power.

Looking at the future of Russia – U.S. relations, the following were cited as areas of opportunity for potential cooperation: fighting global terror; confronting global warming; space exploration and cybersecurity.

Regarding current challenges, participants stated that the situation in and over Ukraine is in urgent need

of resolution, while mutual suspicion persists. These differences should not be neglected and continuously discussed. Therefore, while finding a way out of the conflict in Ukraine and in Syria, existing “incident – prevention mechanisms” should be reviewed and new formats of confidence-building be identified.

More generally, participants discussed the role of legislators in finding solutions for current and future challenges in a less conflictive manner than is currently witnessed. Some stated that in addition to dialogue formats such as this trilateral dialog and bilateral meetings of Russian and U.S. legislators, parliamentarians should work more effectively together in the OSCE parliamentary assembly; avoid stereotyping as a matter of personal choice; encourage colleagues to stop stereotyping and explain publicly that stereotyping is not helping to resolve differences.

Ukraine's Impasse: Beyond a Protracted Frozen Conflict, Searching for a Viable Security Structure

Sharyl Cross

Professor & Director, Kozmetsky Center, St. Edward's University
Global Policy Scholar, The Kennan Institute,
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

The conflict engulfing Ukraine since February 2014 has destabilized the European security environment ushering in a period of tension that many have warned is reminiscent of the East-West division of the “Cold War” or an even a more unpredictable “Hot War.” In February 2016, Russia’s Prime Minister speaking at the Munich Security Conference compared the current security environment with the period of the Cuban Missile Crisis reminding the audience of President John F. Kennedy’s words that “...foreign policy can kill us...” and expressing concern regarding consequences of falling into a new “Cold War.”¹ Reflecting on Medvedev’s remarks, Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) warned that “We are losing the tools and the kind of logic that we had during the cold war...” and he continued “It is more unpredictable than the cold war...”² He characterized the Ukraine conflict as a “symptom of deeper disease” related to the evolution of the European security architecture with a “narrative” that Russia interpreted as “not necessarily friendly.”³ The clashes over the turmoil in Ukraine shattered confidence and left a deficit of trust between Russia and the United States and European nations that will be quite difficult to overcome.

The United States and European Union imposed economic sanctions on the Russian Federation were justified because of Russia’s “illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilization” of Ukraine.⁴ The shooting down of the Malaysian Airlines MH17 passenger plane in July 2014 galvanized further unity in Europe for supporting the sanctions regime on Russia. In December 2015, given unabated hostilities and

ceasefire violations in Ukraine between pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine’s Donbass region and the government in Kiev, the EU extended sanctions against Russia through mid-2016. The combination of economic sanctions and sharp decreases in prices on the world oil market resulted in contraction of the Russian economy by 4% in 2015 with projections for further growth reduction in 2016. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s popularity remains high with a recent poll suggesting that more than 70% of the population would vote for Putin again in 2018,⁵ though there is evidence of labor unrest and other indicators that Russia’s economic downturn has started to impose hardship across segments of the population.

Russia’s intervention in Ukraine prompted reassessments throughout western nations regarding Russia’s intentions resulting in officials of the American defense institutions issuing statements to identify Russia as posing among the greatest security threats to the United States.⁶ At the *Wales Summit* in September 2014, the 28 members of the NATO Alliance issued a statement to “...condemn in the strongest terms Russia’s escalating illegal military intervention in Ukraine...”⁷ The creation of a *Rapid Reaction Force* was announced as President Barack Obama said to “serve as a signal to Russia to avoid any future potential aggression similar to the ongoing fighting in Ukraine...”⁸ With the intention of assuring new NATO allies, the Obama Administration advanced the *European Reassurance Initiative* in June 2014 providing for additional troop rotations and equipment across Europe, but especially on the territory of newer NATO allies. In 2016, to bolster defense in response to

Russia, the Pentagon proposed a fourfold increase in US military spending for Europe.

Moscow responded by implementing reciprocal sanctions banning imports of food commodities from the United States and Europe entailing costs especially for Europe's investors and markets. Russia's new *National Security Strategy* for 2016 affirmed again that NATO's advance toward Russia represents a threat to national security, but still indicated that cooperation with the US and NATO would be possible in areas of common interest. Russia has stepped up military flights over the Baltic and Black Sea regions, and encounters of NATO military warships with Russian aircraft and Russian incursions into European airspace have generated concern. In March 2015, Vladimir Putin disclosed that he was prepared to place Russia's nuclear forces on alert to ensure the annexation of Crimea. The risk of direct NATO-Russia confrontation escalated in in November 2015 when Turkey, claiming violations of its airspace, shot down a Russian aircraft engaged in the Syrian conflict. Subsequent disclosures suggest that Turkey undertook this highly provocative action without prior consent or consultation among NATO allies. The elevated state of tension and unpredictable behavior only heightens the likelihood of misperception or accidents which could lead to serious Russia-NATO clashes.

In terms of major diplomatic initiatives, in September 2014, the OSCE brokered the first agreement aimed to halt the war in the eastern Donbass region of Ukraine with the *Minsk Protocol*. Representatives of Ukraine, Russian Federation, People's Republic of Donetsk and People's Republic of Luhansk signed on to agree to immediate ceasefire, but this first *Minsk Protocol* failed to bring an end to the fighting in Donbass. In February 2015, seeking to revive the first *Minsk* agreement and establish a basis for lasting political settlement, the *Minsk II* ceasefire agreement was negotiated among German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande, and Russian and Ukrainian Presidents Vladimir Putin and Petro Poroshenko with the oversight of the OSCE. The agreement established terms for securing peace including an immediate ceasefire and removal of heavy weapons from the line of contact in eastern Ukraine and full restoration of Ukraine's border with Russia. *Minsk II* also set forth terms for political settlement to include releasing of prisoners, holding local elections, and implementing constitutional reform to grant special decentralized status for Donbass.

Besieged Ukraine, Implementation of Minsk II

The most recent United Nations estimates indicate that the death toll has reached more than 9,000 in the eastern region of Ukraine.⁹ There are still frequent reports of instances of human rights abuses and illegal detention, and much of the population has been displaced from their communities lacking access to basic health care and social services. Excessive state control, corruption, and pervasive cronyism continue to influence the political and economic systems in Ukraine and there has been little visible marked progress in managing these problems. *Transparency International* ranked Ukraine #130 of 168 nations in 2015 in the corruption perception index.¹⁰ Ukraine's GDP declined from 5.2% in 2011 to -6.8% in 2014 and -12.0% in 2015.¹¹ Inflation is still high, and disruption in trade flows with Russia and production in the industrial oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk has severely impacted Ukraine's economy.

The failures of the leadership in Kiev to manage the daunting challenges of Ukraine's recovery have led to a crisis in confidence among the public in both the President and the western-oriented government. A December 2015 poll indicated that Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko has only a 17% public approval rating and is even less popular than former President Viktor Yanukovich at the time of his ouster from office.¹² In February 2016 marking the second anniversary of the Euromaidan uprising, the political crisis culminated with Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko calling for the resignation of Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk. While Yatsenyuk narrowly survived a vote of no confidence in the parliament, in early March 2016 Poroshenko again attempted to unseat the prime minister by supporting his ally Rada Chairman and Parliamentary Speaker Volodymyr Groysman as a replacement for Yatsenyuk. Ukraine's Minister of Economy and Trade, Aivaras Abromavicius and his entire team were forced to resign in early 2016 amid political infighting and accusations that they had not been able to manage the economy and contain corruption. The \$40 billion International Monetary Fund bailout slated for Ukraine has also been jeopardized due to failure to implement necessary economic reforms and reign in the influence of the oligarchs. Domestic dissatisfaction with the performance of the government in Kiev on the part of original supporters of the Euromaidan movement across the political spectrum to include the Radical Right Forces and others has led to periodic speculation about a possible "Maidan III" uprising.

In late December 2015, the *Minsk II* agreement was extended into 2016 because key terms of the agreement still remain unfulfilled. The ceasefire between Kiev government forces and pro-Russian backed separatists has resulted in some progress in stabilizing the line of contact between the two sides and pulling back of heavy weaponry reducing the rate of casualties, but the warring sides continue to routinely exchange machine gun and mortar fire. The government in Kiev lacks the political support for instituting a new constitution to include decentralization and special status for Donbass to meet the terms of *Minsk II*, and the Ukrainian government has not resumed economic ties and social services in the Donbass region. The leadership of the People's Republic of Donetsk and People's Republic of Luhansk have resisted restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty to comply with *Minsk II*, and elections have been repeatedly postponed in these oblasts. There has been a lack of willingness on the part of Ukraine's authorities to meet the requirement to pardon and grant amnesty to those engaged in the conflict. Ukrainian officials report that Russia failed to fulfill the *Minsk II* provisions stipulating the withdrawal of foreign forces and military equipment from Ukraine, permitting full access of the OSCE to Donbass, releasing all illegally detained prisoners, and restoring Ukraine's control of the border.

With all sides assigning blame for failure to comply with the terms of *Minsk II*, it is difficult to envision how there could be progress beyond the current impasse to proceed with full implementation of the agreement. For Russia, fueling continued shelling and low intensity conflict in Donbass is one way to contribute to destabilizing the government in Kiev, but the linking of relaxing western sanctions with implementation of *Minsk II* has to be important consideration for Moscow. The United States and Europe will be reluctant to offer further support for Ukraine unless there are measurable strides in carrying out economic reform and countering corruption. While both Kiev and Moscow might benefit from expressing the intention to support implementation of *Minsk II*, without new momentum it appears that the conflict between Ukrainian government forces and Russian-backed separatists could continue unabated in Donbass for years to come.

Shared Mistakes, Importance of Re-Framing Security Options for the 21st Century

In retrospect, one might identify serious mistakes on all sides that contributed to Ukraine's collapse into a protracted conflict. In accordance with the 1994 *Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances*, Kiev had given up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for

commitments that Ukraine's territorial integrity would be ensured. The parties including the United States, Russia, and others agreed that Ukraine's borders would be respected and to abstain from employing the threat of force against Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and support of separatist forces in eastern Ukraine violated the *Budapest Memorandum*. The Obama Administration has resisted pressures to provide lethal arms to the government in Ukraine rightly believing that this would only result in escalation of the conflict. However, had the prior government in Kiev not elected in good faith to surrendering its major nuclear deterrent force, perhaps future intrusions across Ukraine's borders might have been prevented.

The United States and its European allies should be very clear in communicating with Russia's neighboring nations Georgia, Ukraine, and others regarding the actions they would be prepared to take in the event of conflict with Russia. Georgia's former President Mikhail Saakashvili and now Governor of Ukraine's Odessa oblast might have been emboldened because he chose to interpret communication from Washington in ways that actually precipitated the Russo-Georgian war in 2008. Georgia and Ukraine are not NATO members and are not protected under the Article V NATO security obligations. Western nations should have been careful about creating unrealistic expectations regarding obligations to these societies. There are limits to support the United States/NATO would be prepared to render to a non-NATO member bordering Russia, and there should be no ambiguity with respect to commitments.

One of the most serious mistakes resulting from the legacy of the bifurcated European security configuration of the past was the tendency on the part of many in the West and in Russia to continue to assume and insist that a "choice" must be made for new democracies in Europe and Eurasia to either seek deeper integration in the Euro-Atlantic security community or to rely on Russia and the emerging structures of the Eurasian Union to the East. There is no reason that middle-size (Ukraine) and smaller nations (Georgia), and others should not pursue closer security and economic integration both with the Euro-Atlantic community (NATO, EU, and others) and with Russia and eastern partners.

The conflict in Ukraine was triggered because of former President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to participate in the Russian-led Eurasian Customs Union instead of signing on to the Association Agreement to pursue closer integration with the EU as those of the Euromaidan movement desired. The involvement of external powers, especially the United States, European

nations, and Russia taking sides in Ukraine has resulted in tearing the society between the western areas of the country tending to identify with the Ukrainian language and historical narrative and allegiance toward Europe, and the predominantly Russian speaking populations of the East who prefer to more closely align with a Russian-led cultural and geostrategic world. It will be no easy task to shift the zero-sum narrative fueling the belief that a gain for one side excludes the other, but we must recognize that this lingering East-West divisive point of reference has been so detrimental for Russia's neighboring nations, and for the entire contemporary Euro- Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

Moscow's leadership has consistently objected to NATO enlargement, particularly with respect to closer integration of nations immediately on their border (Georgia and Ukraine) in the Euro-Atlantic security institutions. George F. Kennan had predicted that "...Expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the Cold War era..." and warned that "...Such a decision may be expected...to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking..."¹³ Indeed, perhaps there has been no single greater irritant in Russia's post-Cold War relationship with western countries than the issue of NATO's continued existence, enlargement, relevance, and success. The growth of the NATO Alliance closer to the territory of the Russian Federation has tended to be perceived as a deliberate strategy to encircle or weaken Russia. The fact that nations of Eastern Europe, Georgia, and Ukraine justified interest in pursuing NATO membership with the aim of seeking protection from Russia only strengthened that perception.

The United States, European nations and Russia have not been able to reach agreement on forming a post-Cold War security architecture that would satisfy Moscow's expectations for status and influence consistent with Russia's traditional role in Europe. Dmitry Medvedev's *European Security Treaty* proposal advanced in 2008 was an attempt to open dialogue on options, but never accomplished more than some preliminary review in western nations. Rather, as indicated, Moscow came to believe that it would be in a position of continually sacrificing Russia's interests with the West and that existing security structures in Europe were not suited to advancing Russia's interests.

NATO nations and Russia might have been well served to devote greater focus and creativity to explore means for adjusting current structures and practices to address Moscow's desire to find a suitable place for Russia in the contemporary European security

community. The obsessive focus among western media and many experts of the policy and academic communities in demonizing Russia's President Vladimir Putin has not been constructive in understanding the origins of the conflict in Ukraine or moving toward a settlement. There is no doubt that Russia had clear strategic interests and cultural/historic ties to Ukraine that contributed to intervention in Ukraine. Concerns about Russia's basing agreement in Crimea and the future of the Black Sea Fleet, and the significant Russian population in Ukraine factored in Moscow's decisions. Clearly, Moscow aims to ensure that any government in Kiev would not jeopardize Russia's interests with respect to this important neighboring nation.

There has been an absence of focus on identifying core American interests with respect to Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia and defining how specific policy actions are likely to support those desired objectives with these nations. Obama's "re-set" policy was not a failure or even botched attempt at appeasement as some have suggested. The "re-set" actually yielded concrete results in strategic arms control, ensuring transit support access for Afghanistan, and other areas. However, the "re-set" could never represent more than a temporary transition, and there was no long-term strategy advanced following the period of the "re-set." A well-crafted pragmatic strategy that the United States together with our European partners can support for managing the relationship with the Russian Federation is sorely needed.

Henry Kissinger is absolutely right when he concludes that "Ukraine needs to be embedded in the structure of European and international security architecture in such a way that it serves as a bridge between Russia and the West, rather than as an outpost of either side."¹⁴ What are the alternatives? Unless there is a settlement to conflict and a viable place established for Ukraine in the European and Eurasian security structures and communities, the nation will most likely remain locked in perpetual conflict with the quality of life for Ukraine's citizens continuing to erode in an environment rife with constant instability and threats. Russia and the West could remain in a prolonged period of high tension fraught with enormous risks.

The developments surrounding the conflict in Ukraine have not changed the fact that the United States, NATO, and Russia share common interests with respect to a range of critical security areas. The threat posed by the global violent extremist networks of Daesh/Islamic State (IS), Al Qaeda, and affiliates constitute a grave

threat to humanity that should be addressed involving cooperation of the United States, NATO allies, together with Russia and other partner nations. It is important to recognize that strong objections raised among European nations over Moscow's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty notwithstanding, statements among NATO allies have still emphasized that they recognize the importance of Russia for European security and seek to build a partnership with Russia.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg underscored in February 2016 that "I do not want a new Cold War, and that is why we will strive for a more constructive dialogue and relationship with Russia..."¹⁵ The United States, European nations, and Russia would all stand to gain by working to build the mechanisms and networks of security cooperation necessary to manage the daunting challenges of the emerging security environment. A common European security community to include Russia only makes sense, and official communication channels should continue to leave open this possibility at this difficult juncture when there is a tendency to become absorbed with immediate developments and lose sight of fundamental long-term vision and interests.

Following the outbreak of conflict with Ukraine, Moscow has accelerated its turn toward China aiming to offset economic sanctions and to develop a counterweight to western influence. However, while Beijing welcomes these overtures, still they have been cautious to maintain that Russia and China are "partners," not "allies." China also has much at stake in its relationship with the United States and Europe, and Beijing will be careful to balance benefits of Sino-Russian partnership among their extensive interests with western nations. Russia's cultural ties and economic and security networks are more established in Europe than with China. Russia is still a European power and a part of Europe. Russia's relationships with China and Asia will not fully compensate for difficulties in the West, and the United States, Germany, and Europe remain critical for Russia.

All involved have lost as a result of this conflict, most of all Ukraine in terms of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and disruptions to the society. The security environment in Europe has deteriorated at a time when the continent is overwhelmed by the unprecedented influx of migrants from the South and escalating threats of terrorism in the wake of the recent Paris and Brussels attacks. Russia annexed Crimea, but at considerable cost to the economy and damage to relationships with much of

Ukrainian society, Europe, and the United States. United States interests certainly have not been advanced by the turmoil in the security environment in Europe and Eurasia or the negative turn in the relationship with a major world power.

With all the obstacles, it is difficult to imagine moving beyond the current impasse in Ukraine. Given the lack of progress on full implementation of *Minsk II*, it seems most likely that Ukraine will remain locked in a prolonged "frozen conflict" leaving the beleaguered nation in a state of uncertainty with little hope for progress. Breaking this stalemate will above all require commitment and engagement on the part of all Ukrainian society, as well as all major international actors. Compromises will have to be made in order to move toward a settlement.

Beyond Protracted or Frozen Conflict, Steps toward Breaking Ukraine's Impasse

The *Minsk II* agreement does provide the best possible hope for reaching a realistic and sustainable settlement to the Ukrainian conflict. It is imperative that all parties commit renewed and sustained support for implementing the terms of the agreement. Partition might offer a better alternative than protracted or frozen conflict, but attempting to divide Ukraine would entail further disruption and huge costs and certainly be a far less desirable outcome than reaching a settlement in accordance with the *Minsk II* agreement. Disputes over proper sequencing for compliance with the terms of *Minsk II* will continue to impede progress. There is growing pressure among some European nations and segments of the business sectors to lift the sanctions on Russia. If Moscow would assume the initiative to take further bold steps toward compliance with the security requirements of *Minsk II* paving the way for lifting sanctions, the United States and EU could exert additional influence on the government in Kiev to proceed with the most politically unpopular controversial requirement of *Minsk II* to grant decentralized status for Donbass. Unless the political situation in Kiev is stabilized and sufficient support is generated by all parties to proceed with compliance with *Minsk II*, there will be no end to the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia's surprise announcement on the withdrawal of forces from Syria and Moscow's co-chairing with the United States in the *International Syria Support Group /Ceasefire Task Force* and joint support for the Geneva peace process could give impetus to further implementation of the *Minsk II* agreements. Some analysts have argued that Moscow's withdrawal from

Syria would free up resources for rendering additional support to separatists in Ukraine or for a spring offensive to take the port city in Southeastern Ukraine of Mariupol, but it may be more plausible that the decision was prompted because Moscow achieved the most important objectives in Syria.

Russia's military intervention did decisively impact the balance of forces in Syria perhaps establishing the conditions for achieving some progress in the Geneva peace negotiations, and Putin avoided becoming bogged down in a costly extended campaign that could have jeopardized Moscow's associations with majority Sunni nations or risked confrontation with NATO. The resumption of communication between President Barack Obama and President Vladimir Putin in managing the Syria crisis creates opportunity for dialogue and collaboration on other issues potentially generating forward momentum on reaching settlement in Ukraine. Further cooperation from Moscow with implementation of *Minsk II* will start the process of restoring Russia's economic relationship with the West and allow for advancing the immediate tasks of Ukraine's recovery.

Ukraine's geographic location, size, and agricultural and mineral resources provide a basis for developing a sound economy over the long-term. No recovery will be possible for Ukraine without the government in Kiev taking the necessary measures to implement rigorous reform which is so difficult especially given the disruption and rampant violence in the country. Ukraine will require long-term (decades) investment in political, security, and economic capacity building in order to develop the institutional structures and practices necessary for recovery and growth. The sharing of recent experiences with Ukraine's leadership in carrying out successful economic reforms offered by Poland and others should continue to be strongly encouraged. The problems facing the country will be compounded if major external powers continue to promote sharply competing visions and agendas for the nation's future. Ultimately, and perhaps most important, Ukrainian society must determine whether differences among various groups can be reconciled and minority relationships can be protected in some type of functional federal governmental structure.

Supporting Ukraine's recovery will be only one of many priorities competing for United States and European Union resource allocations. While economic support, investment, and expertise offered by western nations will continue to be critical for Ukraine, the U.S. and EU cannot serve as Ukraine's sole or only source of

assistance. Russia has been Ukraine's largest trading partner, but trade between Russia and Ukraine dropped sharply following the onset of conflict in 2014-2015 and in January 2016 the Russian Federation imposed an embargo on Ukraine with Kiev imposing a ban on importing a range of Russia's goods. It is difficult to envision Ukraine's recovery without some resumption of economic cooperation with Russia.

Beijing's leadership recognizes Ukraine's agricultural and resource potential, and they view Ukraine as a "bridge" to Europe. Stability in Ukraine could be important for advancing the objectives of Xi Jinping's "One Belt, One Road" linking China in a vast infrastructure and economic network across the Eurasian heartland to Western Europe. Ukraine's future economic growth and development should include cultivating the widest range of investment and economic assistance options. Ukraine's future can't be secured unless the questions are resolved regarding the nation's place in the European and Eurasian security communities. Moscow can't expect NATO to close the door to membership for Ukraine indefinitely since the path to join the Alliance should remain open to all those nations that aspire to meet the requirements. However, it should be obvious to all including Moscow's foreign policy community that Ukraine is not a candidate for NATO membership, today or in the foreseeable future. Even prior to Russia's destabilizing intervention, Ukrainian society was divided on NATO membership, and Ukraine had not made sufficient progress in political or defense transformation to meet the qualifications for NATO membership. Together with the European Union, NATO can still be an important source of support through the NATO-Ukraine partnership to encourage continued progress on democratic reform and defense transformation, economic reform, and implementation of further measures to counter corruption and encourage national reconciliation and protection of minorities.

NATO and Russia had an established relationship in the NATO-Russia Council, and developed several areas of practical security cooperation. Resuming consultations in the

NRC would open one important channel to manage future differences, conflicts, or even crisis situations. In addition, without setting unrealistic expectations, NATO and Russia can use the NRC as one mechanism (among others) to begin to consider security issue areas where all would stand to gain by collaboration. The United States, Germany, and their NATO allies should manage the security relationship with Russia in the

context of a broad ranging agenda so that no single issue can derail the bilateral and multilateral relationships where so many shared critical security interests are at stake.

Providing reassurances regarding NATO's resolve to protect allies, particularly those new members with historic fears of Russia, is of course necessary. However, there is a delicate balance in offering reassurances while not risking provoking adverse responses. Moscow is not likely to directly confront NATO or undertake actions that would lead to invoking Article V. In fact, had Moscow not exercised caution in the recent incident involving the clash with NATO member Turkey over the downing of the Russian aircraft, the situation could have led to a crisis confrontation.

One might revisit the wisdom of the decision to enlarge NATO, and there were certainly costs incurred with respect to Russia. NATO's planning and resources would be better utilized concentrating on developing new approaches suited to effectively respond to the extremely serious emerging challenges on its southern flank emanating from the Middle East and North Africa, rather than having to divert focus on the eastern flank resurrecting strategies of the past for containing Russia.

Re-building Russia's relationship with the West will require mutual incremental confidence building steps probably over a period of years. Expectations should be managed, but both sides have critical interest in improving these relationships. Russia must have a place in the European security order that will be conducive to eliciting their support for meeting common security challenges, rather than prompting continued undesirable actions that threaten European security. Ultimately, Ukraine also stands to benefit by integration in the security architecture of Europe and Eurasia.

Even during the period of the ideological struggle of the Cold War, the United States, Western European

powers, and Russia managed to cooperate in areas of critical shared interest such as arms control. Management of the crisis in Ukraine will have significant and lasting implications in shaping the geopolitical & security environment in Europe and beyond for years to come. The United States, Russia and Germany would be well served by pursuing immediate actions and developing long-term approaches with vision taking full account of the shared complex security threats ahead. It would be a mistake to underestimate the enormity of the challenges in reaching a peace settlement and recovery in Ukraine especially in such a fractured and violent political environment.

Endnotes

- 1 Dmitry Medvedev speech at the 52nd Munich Security Conference, Official Website of the Russian Government, February 13, 2016 [<http://government.ru/en/news/21784/>].
- 2 "OSCE chief warns against erosion of NATO-Russia Ties," *Financial Times*, February 16, 2016.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 "EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis," *European Union Newsroom*, March 18, 2016 [http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu_sanctions/index_en.htm].
- 5 "Poll: 70% Support 4th Term for Putin," *Reuters*, March 3, 2016.
- 6 "Defense Secretary Ash Carter: ISIS and Russia are Our Greatest Threats," *National Review*, August 28, 2015, "Russia is top U.S. national security threat: Gen. Dunford," *Reuters*, July 9, 2015 and "Carter Outlines Security Challenges, Warns Against Sequestration," *DOD News*, U.S. Department of Defense, March 17, 2016.
- 7 Wales Summit, Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, *NATO Press Release*, September 5, 2014.
- 8 "Obama: New NATO Force a Signal to Russia," *VOAnews*, September 5, 2014.
- 9 "Ukraine conflict has left more than 9,000 dead, says UN," *The Guardian*, December 9, 2015.
- 10 Corruption by Country, Transparency International [<https://www.transparency.org/country/#UKR>].
- 11 World Bank [<http://data.worldbank.org/country/Ukraine>].
- 12 "Ukrainians Disillusioned with Leadership," *Gallup Inc.*, December 23, 2015.
- 13 George F. Kennan, "NATO, A Fateful Error," *The New York Times*, February 5, 1997.
- 14 Henry A. Kissinger "Kissinger's Vision for U.S.-Russian Relations," *The National Interest*, February 4, 2016.
- 15 "Top NATO Official: Assertive Russia Threatens European Security," *Defense News*, February 25, 2016.

Helsinki Plus or Helsinki Minus?

Alexey Gromyko

Director, Institute of Europe
Russian Academy of Sciences

Prior to the Ukrainian crisis Moscow and Brussels viewed each other as highly important although awkward partners in many fields. During the previous two decades, their relationship had made a great deal of progress but the potential for deeper cooperation still seemed significant. Russia and the European Union clearly presented quite a dense fabric of interaction in economy, science, culture and human relations.

There are two fundamental factors, which inescapably have defined this mode of relationship

The tyranny of geography. There are plenty examples of this phenomenon in history, for example France and Germany, China and Japan, Turkey and Greece, etc. All these actors in the course of time had to accommodate each other's interests. Of course, there are different examples—Israel and Palestine, Serbia and Kosovo, South and North Koreas, Iran and Saudi Arabia. But even in these cases the mainstream opinion is that these conflicts should be sooner or later settled first of all because these states are neighbors.

The tyranny of history: Europe is a part of Russia and Russia is a part of Europe although it transcends its borders. These two parts have belonged to each other for centuries; their historical memory is littered with both dramatic and exemplary moments of partnership and confrontation. It is banal but they are in one boat. Married couples can separate or divorce and they can move out in different direction. But states or international organizations are bound to certain territories and they are here to stay forever.

There are positive freedoms (in other words—freedoms from internal limitations) and there are negative freedoms (freedoms from external limitations).

Borrowing from this pattern one may say that there are positive freedoms' interconnections and negative freedoms' interconnections. The positive ones are tangible and materialized opportunities, which have a minimum dependency on political process. The negative ones are anticipated, assumed, and expected but still beyond our reach.

The negative freedom of choice in EU—Russia relations is in a straitjacket of a political Cold War. The positive freedom of choice in the EU—Russia relations is demonstrated in the sphere of economy, education, science, social interaction.

In the European Union's foreign trade, Russia's share in 2014 was 8.4%, i.e., third place after the United States (15%) and China (14%). In the U.S. foreign trade, the share of Russia is 1% and that of China – 2%. For Russia, the European Union is the largest trade partner, while the United States is in 20th place.

At the beginning of 2015, the share of the European Union in Russia's foreign trade was 46%, or around 285 billion Euros, while the share of China was about 11% or around \$90 billion. The trade turnover between the United States and Russia is less than \$30 billion, while that between the EU and the United States is 515 billion Euros and that between the EU and China, 467 billion Euros. From this point of view, the “gravity” that pushes Russia to the EU is still several times higher than the gravity that drags it to China, not to mention the United States.

The Ukrainian crisis has significantly changed the situation. In 2014, the trade turnover between Russia and the EU dropped by 10% compared to 2013 and since has continued to be falling.

There are circumstances which should better this situation. In Europe we live in a period of grand destabilization, both external and internal. Everybody is interested in rectifying it. A lot has been said about a necessity to restore common responsibility for security in Europe. However, the matter is that we cannot restore this responsibility for a very simple reason—we have never shared one apart from expectations and declarations. Instead and at last we should create a stable, transparent, predictable and mutually beneficial pan-European security system from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Dramatic events in the proximity of Europe and recently and repeatedly inside Europe look like a certain awakening. It is a sombre and a bitter fact that we are too divided, too indoctrinated, too exposed to self-righteousness and hubris to see how vulnerable we are in the face of modern daunting challenges.

What is Russia's strategy towards its neighborhood?

First, Russia wants to ensure that this neighborhood is stable, especially taking into account that several countries in the region in the foreseeable future will face a leadership transition. For Russia the priority has been not the nature of a given political regime, but the notion of stability. Failed states are the last thing the Kremlin wishes to see on its doorsteps.

Second, to strengthen economic ties with these countries in order to limit the tendency of their economic divergence from Moscow.

Third, the challenge of international terrorism, which is impossible to deal with without a deep interstate co-operation.

Fourth, in geostrategic terms, in the face of NATO expansion and the EU's ambitions to create a kind of a Eurosphere, Russia wants to preserve or reconstruct a 'belt of friendly states' or at least neutral states in military-political terms. Moreover, Moscow is adamant to see the Baltic states as the last example of neighboring countries participating in military organisations—i.e. NATO (of which Russia is not a member).

Fifth, to ensure that the rights of Russian minorities are upheld according to the European and international norms.

Sixth, to manage a huge migration problem on a Eurasian scale. Few foreign policy specialists, busy with the migration crisis in the EU, pay enough attention to the fact that Russia for many years has been one of the biggest recipients of migrants in the world.

Overall, the predominant aim of Russia in the post-Soviet space is to prevent its shaky security situation to unravel. Status quo here is preferred to any kind of hasty political reforms and intrusion of regional and international actors, which unlike Russia are not so exposed or not exposed at all to potential negative consequences of such unravelling. The Achilles heel of the region lies in ethnic, religious or cultural differences and grievances. Ukraine is a conspicuous example of how these differences can get out of hand at the light speed.

It should be kept in mind that Russia itself is a federation, which includes several dozens national republics, and many of them, especially in the Northern Caucasus, have uneasy relations with one another. A serious destabilization on their outer borders may have a spillover effect detrimental for Russia's territorial integrity. In Russia people are well aware that the main reason of the break-up of the Soviet Union was that the genie of nationalism set free.

The simmering animosity between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the precarious state of affairs in Transnistria, the conflict in Donbass, the threat of terrorism and extremism looming over Central Asia and tensions among Central Asian republics themselves, and the balancing act with China are just a few burning problems. This in general is a huge challenge, which Russia is going to handle with a set of regional integration projects and with its active foreign policy in the pursuit of polycentrism in international relations.

What are possible elements for selective and gradual re-engagement?

First, what we may call 'communication lines', are ways to re-engage the EU, the U.S. and Russia in dealing with pressing regional and global hotspots, such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, the Middle East Quartet, Iran (where we have already jointly succeeded), North Korea, etc.

Second, "Sectorial Dialogues" would be smart to relaunch to start restoring the fabric of EU-Russian relations. Among them, the energy dialogue and the visa dialogue are the most important ones.

Third, it would significantly contribute to stability in the post-Soviet space and to the wellbeing of peoples who live there if Russia's Western partners stop indiscriminately labelling Eurasian integration as a 'restoration of the Soviet Union' and start treating it as a way to economic and political modernisation of this region. Those diehards who oppose it on the basis of Cold War mentality are either ignorant or at best biased

towards this regional integration, which in fact in many respects is modelled on best practices of the EU.

For European states and organizations it would be wise to design and pursue their policies in such a way that regional integration projects in Europe from the Atlantic to the Pacific are made complimentary and compatible instead of being focused on rivalry and zero sum games. It is high time for the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union to launch official dialogue.

Forth, policymakers on all sides would live up to their electorates' expectations if they concentrate on risks and threats common both for the post-Soviet space and for other parts of Europe, not on what divides them. As long as Wider Europe is divided it is to stay a fertile ground for illegal immigration, terrorism, social inequality, poor governance, economic stagnation and other challenges, which will feed on divisions of the quarrelling politicians.

Overall, for Russia the notion of 'not business as usual' is an acceptable approach, as for Moscow it is not

impossible to return to the narrative of strategic partnership with Brussels or Washington under the conditions of imposed sanctions. But politics is not about amicability but rather about promotion of national interests. Also it is easy to predict that Moscow, in the light of the marginal role of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) in the Ukrainian crisis' settlement, is going to continue to rely on bilateral relations with different European capitals and beyond.

Political will should again revisit the Euro-Atlantic to sort out its internal divisions. As for now it is a space saddled with sanctions and counter-sanctions, social and economic stagnation, political quarrels and even brinkmanship. This is not something that signatories of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 envisaged. Instead of doing Helsinki Plus we have been doing Helsinki Minus. Let's try to change the sign. There is still hope that 2016 may improve our relations.

Reducing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons

Karl-Heinz Kamp

President

German Federal Academy for Security Policy

For many years an agreement with Iran on keeping the country from acquiring nuclear weapons was regarded as the key to prevent further damage to the international nuclear nonproliferation regime. Thus, when the nuclear deal between Iran and China, France, Russia, the UK, the US and Germany (also known as the “Permanent 5+1”-format) was struck in mid-2015, the majority of the international observers welcomed this settlement as a success of patient and coherent diplomacy. Some critics pointed to the fact, though, that the highly lauded agreement could buy time at best. Since Iran could manage to preserve the option of nuclear enrichment as well as most of its nuclear infrastructure, Teheran would not be reliably kept from becoming a nuclear state. So far, the jury is still out which way the Mullah regime will take: either a cooperative path, which also could lead to significantly easing the tensions in the region, or a confrontational approach by further trying to circumvent the limitations to its nuclear ambitions.

As relevant as the Iran deal might be for regional stability in the Middle East, another political development has gained much more importance for international nuclear stability and for the question of the future role of nuclear weapons—namely Russia’s newly assertive policies in Eastern Europe. Russia’s annexation of the territory of a sovereign state has not only ended Moscow’s partnership with NATO and terminated the concept of a common European security order. It has also profoundly changed the future role of nuclear weapons and the requirements for preserving international nuclear stability. Three consequences are evident:

First, after having been neglected for decades, nuclear deterrence is back on the international agenda. Nuclear weapons which were long regarded as a relic of the Cold War again play a central role above all in Russian military thinking. Moscow sees its nuclear capabilities not only as one of the few remaining symbols of its former superpower status but also as an indispensable means to compensate for its conventional weaknesses vis-à-vis NATO and the United States in particular. Furthermore, Moscow obviously rejects further cooperation with the United States on reducing the risks of nuclear weapons. In November, 2014, Russia announced that it would no longer participate in the annual U.S.-Russian Nuclear Security Summit. One month later, Russia terminated the so called “Nunn-Lugar Act” which had been a capstone of the bilateral efforts for improving nuclear security. Through this program, initiated in 1991 by the U.S. Senators Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn, Washington provided significant funds and material support to assist Russia in safely dismantling the nuclear heritage from the bygone Soviet Union.

Second, the relevance of nuclear weapons is on the rise rather than decreasing. With Russia offensively trying to reconstitute its great power status, the chances of nuclear arms control with respect to the so called “tactical nuclear weapons” in Europe come close to zero. Moscow will not be ready to sacrifice weapons on the altar of disarmament if it regards them as an essential part of its armed forces. Instead, there are even hints that Russia might challenge the existing INF Treaty in order to increase its spectrum of nuclear options. On the other hand, particularly the NATO allies in the East are not keen on nuclear arms control negotiations either. They

regard the U.S. nuclear weapons currently stationed in Europe as a linchpin of deterrence and a crucial symbol of the American commitments for the NATO allies. Any withdrawal would be considered as a major blow to Eastern European security.

Moreover, in the Asia-Pacific, where four regional nuclear powers (China, India, North-Korea, Pakistan) confront each other, the idea of nuclear disarmament is not even deeply anchored in the perceptions of political decision makers. Why should they agree to dismantle nuclear capabilities they desperately struggled to acquire at the first place? What is more, states in the region miss the traumatic experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis where politicians looked into the abyss of mutual nuclear extinction. Instead, North Korea aggressively pursues its nuclear program despite international sanctions and might possess in a few years more nuclear weapons than France or the United Kingdom. As a consequence, other countries in the region might follow if they don't feel sufficiently reassured.

In result, independent from the success of the Iran Deal, Russia's action in Eastern Europe and the nuclear trends in Asia will once and for all end the illusions of a nuclear free world, expressed by U.S. President Obama in 2008.

Third, NATO will have to put the nuclear issue back on the agenda again. NATO's current nuclear concept codified in a document called "Deterrence and Defense Posture Review" rests on two pillars: the NATO-Russian partnership on the one hand and on the assumption that Russia will not turn its nuclear

capabilities against NATO on the other. Both preconditions no longer exist with Russia's seizing of Crimea and Moscow's simulated nuclear strikes against Western countries such as Poland or Sweden. Hence, a recalibration of NATO's nuclear thinking is inevitable. This would arguably not require discussions over modernization or new nuclear hardware. Instead, NATO will have to conceptually take on the key nuclear question of how to deter whom with what.

Given the sensitiveness of the topic in many NATO member states, such a nuclear debate is likely to materialize only after the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016. Moreover, the necessary in-depth discussion on the future role of deterrence and nuclear weapons would also need to include considerations on how to establish sustainable ways of crisis communication. Since Russia uses its nuclear posture for the "nuclear signaling" of deterrence messages and the demarcation of claimed spheres of interests, there is a rising danger of misperceptions or accidents.

Iran's strive for nuclear weapons has been a major threat to international stability for many years. The Iran agreement is therefore a diplomatic success which might reduce the global threat of nuclear weapons, even if it still leaves leverage for misuse and cheating. At the same time, though, international stability and nuclear security has been newly challenged from an unexpected side: by Russia recurring to military force in order to change borders in Europe. In the new "Article 5 world" of deterrence and defense Putin has ushered in, nuclear weapons will remain a power currency which will require new answers for keeping up strategic stability.

Reducing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons: The Status of the Iran Agreement and Multilateral Efforts to Limit the Spread of Nuclear Arms

“People Who Smoke Can’t Tell Someone Else Not To Smoke.”

Sergey Rogov

Director of Institute for the U.S. and Canada
Russian Academy of Science

Two factors influence the strategic stability at the present stage. On the one hand, there is a resumption of competition and an arms race between major centers of power in the multipolar international system of the 21st century. Since the collapse of the unipolar momentum after the end of the Cold War, Washington perceives Russia and China as key challengers to the United States national interests. Moscow and Beijing reciprocate. At the same time there is a tense relationship between China and Japan. There is a competition between China and India, which is also opposed by Pakistan. There is also a confrontation between North Korea and South Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia, etc.

On the other hand, there is a threat of nuclear proliferation accompanied by a possible access to nuclear weapons by non-state actors, including terrorist organizations.

Of all the threats to global security and peace, the most dangerous is the proliferation and potential use of nuclear weapons. Strengthening the international law, reliable physical protection, effective ways of accounting for and control of nuclear material, clear and reasonable government policy regarding the treatment of radioactive sources—these are the inalienable components of a successful response to proliferation and terrorist risks.

In 1992, 52 countries had weapons-usable nuclear materials—now there are only 24 countries. In addition, a dozen more countries have decreased their stocks.¹ But more than 1,800 metric tons of nuclear material remain stored in 24 countries, much of it vulnerable to theft, according to former Senator Sam Nunn, co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative.² The world’s military and

civilian nuclear programs have produced some 500 metric tons of pure plutonium, an amount that could fuel tens of thousands of nuclear weapons yet fit into a backyard shed. Countries with nuclear programs continue to add roughly two tons to this inventory every year.

Approximately 1,390 metric tons of highly-enriched uranium are still located at hundreds of civilian sites in two dozen countries.³ Highly enriched uranium—the other sparkplug of a nuclear blast besides plutonium—is actually the terrorists’ explosive of choice because it’s a bit easier to handle and use, and there’s more of it around.

Altogether, the stockpiles could be used in theory to construct 20,000 uranium bombs and nearly 80,000 plutonium weapons. The majority of this inventory is in the United States and Russia, but large stocks also exist in the United Kingdom, France, India, Pakistan, China and Japan. Japan, India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and North Korea are increasing their stocks of weapons-usable nuclear materials.

According to the former U.S. Defense Secretary Bill Perry, “far from continuing the nuclear disarmament that has been underway for the last two decades, we are starting a new nuclear arms race.”⁴

The first danger is the possibility of a nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia, either by accident or miscalculation. Perry argued that today’s situation is “comparable to the dark days of the Cold War.”⁵

The second danger is a regional nuclear war—a danger that did not exist during the Cold War. North Korea, Israel and other “new” nuclear states can be

involved in a conventional military confrontation that could rapidly escalate into a nuclear war—first at the tactical level, but one that could spiral unpredictably into a strategic exchange. A nuclear war between India and Pakistan would dramatically alter the world.

The third nuclear danger is the prospect of nuclear terrorism, which also did not exist during the Cold War—and which is far more dangerous than most people understand. The damage from fallout and blast, the deaths of potentially millions, and the environmental

devastation of even a few weapons detonations would dwarf any other global problem.

All the nuclear weapon states continue to modernize their remaining nuclear forces and appear committed to retaining nuclear weapons for the indefinite future. The exact number of nuclear weapons in each country’s possession is a closely held national secret. Despite this limitation, however, publicly available information and occasional leaks make it possible to make best estimates about the size and composition of the nuclear weapon stockpiles:

Status of World Nuclear Forces 2016

Country	Deployed Strategic	Deployed Nonstrategic	Reserve/ Non-deployed	Military Stockpile	Total Inventory
Russia	1,790	0	2,700	4,490	7,300
United States	1,750	180	2,740	4,670	6,970
France	280	n.a.	10	300	300
China	0	?	260	260	260
United Kingdom	120	n.a.	95	215	215
Israel	0	n.a.	80	80	80
Pakistan	0	n.a.	110-130	110-130	110-130
India	0	n.a.	100-120	100-120	100-120
North Korea	0	n.a.	?	?	?
Total:	~4,000	~180	~6,110	~10,240	~15,350

Source: Status of World Nuclear Forces. By Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris. Federation of American Scientists. Current update: March 1, 2016.

The world’s nuclear stockpile still remains at a very high level: more than 15,000 warheads at the beginning of 2016. Of these, more than 10,000 are in the military stockpiles (the rest are awaiting dismantlement), of which almost 4,200 warheads are deployed with operational forces, of which nearly 1,800 US, Russian, British and French warheads are ready for use on short notice.

The United States and Russia

Approximately 93 percent of all nuclear warheads are owned by Russia and the United States which each have roughly 4,500-4,700 warheads in their military stockpiles, while no other nuclear-armed state has more than a few hundred nuclear weapons.

During the Cold War Washington and Moscow agreed on a narrow interpretation of the concept of strategic stability, based on “mutual assured destruction” (MAD). In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan agreed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This conclusion was followed

by enormous progress in reducing Cold War nuclear arsenals. But the MAD model survived the end of the Cold War and remains the basis of military-strategic relations between Russia and the United States. The new START Treaty, signed in 2010, does not replace MAD, and in fact makes this model more lasting and stable.

In the polycentric world, the overall balance of forces involves numerous factors. Great imbalances have appeared in conventional weapons. An ever-greater role is played by Ballistic Missile Defense technologies, the potential for Prompt Global Strike (PGS) using conventional warheads, and the possibility to orbit space weapons. Cyber weapons are being developed rapidly. The links between these different factors are becoming increasingly evident.

Thirty years ago, U.S. and Soviet arsenals totaled more than 20,000 deployed strategic nuclear weapons. The United States and the Russian Federation undertook to each meet New START’s central limits of 1,550 deployed warheads, 700 deployed strategic launchers

and heavy bombers, and 800 deployed and non-deployed strategic launchers and heavy bombers by February 5, 2018. U.S. and Russian forces will be at their lowest level since the 1950s.

START-3 enables the United States and Russia to verify information about strategic nuclear arsenals through on-site inspections at nuclear weapons facilities and by providing both sides access to each other's strategic nuclear delivery systems, warheads, and facilities.

Since the treaty came into force, the United States and Russia have sent and received through the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers more than 10,300 notifications regarding the location, movement, and status of their strategic nuclear forces. They performed 10 data exchanges with a full accounting of exactly where weapons systems are located; conducted 180 on-site inspections (each party has an annual quota of 18 inspections) and completed 13 exhibitions to demonstrate distinguishing features and technical characteristics of new types of strategic offensive arms.⁶

The United States and Russia remain on track to meet the START-3 obligations so that by 2018 the number of deployed American and Russian nuclear warheads will be at their lowest levels since the 1950s.⁷ According to data exchanged under the START-3, as of April 1, 2016 the United States had 1642 deployed strategic warheads, compared to 1,735 for Russia. The number of deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers for the United States was 741, compared to 521 for Russia.⁸

The United States and Russia are still reducing their warhead inventories, but the pace of reduction is slowing, while China, Pakistan, India and North Korea are increasing their warhead inventories.

Washington refuses to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). An in-force CTBT will make it difficult for states without nuclear weapons to develop advanced nuclear weapons capabilities. An in-force Treaty would also make it hard for states with more established nuclear weapon capabilities from confirming the performance of advanced nuclear weapon designs that they have not tested successfully in the past.⁹ The security of the world demands that nations—including the United States—ratify the CTBT and conclude a new treaty to end the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.¹⁰

The Obama administration plans to allocate over \$1 trillion in the next 30 years on an entire new generation

of nuclear bombs, bombers, missiles and submarines to replace those built during the Reagan years.¹¹ Nuclear modernization costs will peak during the 2020s and overlap with large increases in projected spending on modernization programs for conventional weapons systems.

“We must demonstrate to potential foes, that if they start a war, we have the capability to win,” Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said on February 2, 2016 in Washington. “Because a force that can deter conflict must show that it can dominate a conflict.”¹²

In October 2015 U.S. Strategic Command conducted *Global Thunder*, an annual nuclear command and control exercise, with involvement from component and task forces. The exercise was held in conjunction within North American Aerospace Defense Command and US Northern Command's Exercise Vigilant Shield. *Global Thunder* is designed to train military forces, assess joint operational readiness, and validate the ability to identify and mitigate attacks across all of U.S. Strategic Command's mission areas, with a specific focus on cyber, space, missile defense, and nuclear readiness. The exercise validates the ability to posture components, task forces, units, and command posts to deter, and if necessary, “defeat” a military attack against the United States. The exercise scenario integrates nearly every conceivable strategic threat to the United States and involves all the U.S. Strategic Command capabilities that would be provided to geographic combatant commanders in a real-world crisis: space, cyber, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, global strike, and ballistic missile defense capabilities.¹³

Exercise *Polar Growl* in April 2015 sent four B-52H bombers on a simulated strike exercise over the North Pole and North Sea in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO's annual nuclear strike exercise, *Steadfast Noon*, was held at Büchel Air Base in Germany in October 2015 and included aircraft from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Turkey, and the United States. The exercise seemed to be intertwined with the Cold Igloo exercise. In addition, nuclear-capable F-16s from U.S. fighter wings in 2015 conducted periodic deployments to the Baltic States, Poland, and Sweden.¹⁴

Approximately 500 tactical B61 bombs of all versions remain in the U.S. stockpile. About 180 of these (versions 3 and 4) are deployed at six bases in five European countries: Aviano (Italy), Büchel (Germany), Ghedi (Italy), Incirlik (Turkey), Kleine Brogel (Belgium), and Volkel (Netherlands). The Belgian,

Dutch and possibly Turkish air forces (with F-16 aircraft), and German and Italian air forces (with PA-200 Tornado aircraft) are assigned nuclear strike missions with U.S. nuclear weapons. Under normal circumstances, the weapons are kept under the control of U.S. Air Force personnel until their use is authorized by the US president and approved by NATO in a war. Some experts claim that U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe pose more of a threat, a temptation for local terrorist networks.¹⁵

NATO has approved a modernization of the nuclear posture in Europe through deployment at the beginning of the next decade of the B61-12 guided, standoff nuclear gravity bomb. The B61-12 will use the nuclear explosive package of the B61-4, which has a maximum yield of approximately 50 kilotons, but will be equipped with a guided tail kit to increase its accuracy and standoff capability. The B61-12, which also appears to have earth-penetration capability, will be a more effective weapon that can hold at risk hardened targets that could not be destroyed with the B61-3 or B61-4.

Russia is concerned by the possibility that the United States will undermine its nuclear deterrence. Washington is in the midst of a nuclear modernization program and is simultaneously pursuing ballistic missile defenses. Moscow believes that these efforts have the potential to break the nuclear balance between the countries, reducing its deterrence capabilities. Specifically, an increasingly precise U.S. conventional and nuclear arsenal coupled with a reliable Ballistic Missile Defense could enable Washington to launch a decapitation strike, which would severely damage Russia's leadership structure and nuclear arsenal in a first strike, while leaving the United States able to intercept and destroy the surviving missiles that Moscow launched in retaliation.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Russia is determinedly modernizing its nuclear weapons program while simultaneously reminding the world of its capability. Russia has also an array of strategic modernization programs underway. It has launched the first three of what are planned to be eight Borey-class ballistic missile submarines, which carry the new Bulava submarine-launched ballistic missile. Russia is also deploying the SS-27 Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile and its multiple-warhead variant, the RS-24 Yars, and plans to begin deployment of the RS-26 intercontinental ballistic missile in 2016. The Russian Air Force is developing a new strategic bomber, the PAK-DA, to augment or replace its Tu-160 Blackjack and Tu-95 Bear-H aircraft.¹⁶ Moscow is

counting on these new missiles to ensure its nuclear arsenal survives against the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defenses.¹⁷

Under its military doctrine, Russia asserts its right to use nuclear weapons to retaliate application of nuclear or other mass destruction weapons against it and/or its allies, and also in the event of conventional weapons used in an aggression against the Russian Federation that endangers the very survival of the state.

Moscow states that further nuclear arms reduction should be considered taking due account of the broader combination of factors that are key to strategic stability. These include, but are not limited to, Ballistic Missile Defense, PGS, ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the threat of space-orbited weapons, and quantitative and qualitative imbalances in conventional weapons.

The United States and Russia accuse each other of violating the INF treaty. For instance, Russia insists that Aegis Ashore deployment in Romania in 2015 and in Poland in 2018 will provide the U.S. with capabilities to launch not only SM-3 interceptors but also Tomahawk missiles, which in that case will become ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs), banned by the INF.

Washington claims that Moscow is developing, producing, and test-launching GLCMs to a distance of 500 kilometers (310 miles) or more. The U.S. government has not publicly identified the missile.¹⁸

Whether or not one believes the U.S. accusation or the Russian denial, the latest cruise missile attacks in Syria demonstrate that there is no military need for Russia to develop a ground-launched cruise missile. Russia's Kalibr ground-launched cruise missile is a long-range conventional SLCM similar to the Tomahawk the U.S. Navy has been deploying since the 1980s.

Following the launch from the Kilo-II class submarine in the Mediterranean Sea on December 9 2016, Moscow confirmed that the Kalibr SLCM as well as the Kh-101 ALCM is nuclear-capable. The Kh-101 is the conventional version of the new air-launched cruise missile, which is called Kh-102 when equipped with a nuclear warhead.¹⁹

Other nuclear-weapon states

Beijing does not provide official information on its nuclear arsenal, so some experts claim that China will catch up with Russia and the United States in a decade or two, or it already has 1,500-3,000 nuclear warheads.²⁰ Beijing tested the DF-41 road-mobile intercontinental

ballistic missile twice last year, which has a range of up to 7,500 miles—road mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles increase survivability because they do not have set locations for an enemy to target—and the latest flight test used two multiple independently-targetable reentry vehicles on the DF-41. China is also developing a new liquid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile DF-5B designed to strike targets anywhere on Earth carrying 4-6 warheads.²¹

Unlike its neighbors India and China, Pakistan has not renounced the first use of nuclear weapons. Instead, Pakistani leaders have declared that they may use nuclear weapons first in order to defend against a conventional attack from India. Pakistan has begun to field short-range, low yield tactical nuclear weapons (TNW). Pakistan will reportedly have enough fissile material by 2020 to build 200 plus nuclear weapons.²²

Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons program brings a threat of destabilization: the necessity to position these short-range weapons close to the border with India, making them more vulnerable to interdiction; the need to move and disperse these weapons during a crisis, thereby signaling a nuclear threat; and the prospects of local commanders being given decentralized control of the weapons — a “use it or lose it” danger if facing an Indian armored offensive. Furthermore, large numbers of small nuclear weapons scattered at different locations increases the risk that some will fall into the hands of terrorists.²³

North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) and Iran obtained designs and materials related to uranium enrichment from a clandestine procurement network run by Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan.

For the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the lesson of U.S. intervention in Iraq and Libya (after Muammar el-Qaddafi gave up his nuclear program) is that nuclear weapons are its insurance policy against U.S. attack and/or regime change efforts. Pyongyang has demonstrated a willingness to sell the means to produce fissile material, missiles, and other destabilizing weapons.²⁴ North Korea has 10-16 nuclear weapons, and its plutonium and highly enriched uranium stocks will continue to rise. The DPRK conducted four nuclear tests and continues to launch ballistic missile tests.²⁵

Since 2006, the UN Security Council has imposed five sanctions resolutions on the DPRK of increasing stringency. The latest, Resolution 2270, imposes new financial sanctions, limits on small arms transfers, and

inspection procedures for North Korean shipping.

Responding to the DPRK threats to “preventive nuclear strikes,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said on March 8, 2016: “Pyongyang should be aware of the fact that in this way the DPRK will become fully opposed to the international community and will create international legal grounds for using military force against itself in accordance with the right of a state to self-defense enshrined in the United Nations Charter.”

Russia and the U.S. were able to agree on sanctions against North Korea for its nuclear testing and attempts to acquire nuclear technologies, including on the U.N. Security Council's March 2 Resolution 2270. China too has been more critical of Pyongyang than in the past. The real test of whether or not international cooperation can halt and reverse the North Korean nuclear program will be the level of cooperation and effort that China will extend. Beijing effectively holds a veto over sanctions policy.

The long-term goal should be to bring North Korea back to the nonproliferation regime and address its security concerns, thereby eliminating its impulse to possess nuclear weapons in the first place. It's necessary to push for the resumption of negotiations with the DPRK, aimed at the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The focus should be on accomplishing a near-term freeze on North Korean nuclear and missile development, to be maintained during negotiations instead.

The problem with admitting that the DPRK is a nuclear-weapon state may push South Korea and Japan to go nuclear. Since abandoning its own pursuit of nuclear weapons in the 1970s, South Korea has relied on United States nuclear umbrella for extended deterrence to prevent either a large scale invasion by the North or a nuclear attack. There are voices in South Korea demanding redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons or “temporary” withdrawal from the NPT. Nuclear power provides a third of South Korea's electricity. South Korea also has designs on becoming a major exporter of nuclear power plants.²⁶ Seoul develops its own missiles, which can carry nuclear warheads. The South Korean public has shown support for domestic nuclear weapon. Polls show domestic support ranging from 50 to 70%.²⁷

Iran

On July 14, 2015, Iran and the six powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany—known as the P5+1) finalized a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, (JCPOA). It's

supposed to ensure that Iran's nuclear program can be used for purely peaceful purposes, in exchange for a broad suspension of U.S. sanctions and a lifting of those sanctions imposed by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations. According to the JCPOA, the International Atomic Energy Agency will monitor Iranian compliance with the provisions concerning its enrichment program and the Arak program. The International Atomic Energy Agency will increase its number of inspectors in Iran and use modern verification technologies. Iran will also allow a "long-term International Atomic Energy Agency presence in Iran." In addition, Tehran agreed to implement the Additional Protocol to its safeguards agreement.²⁸

Under the Additional Protocol, which Iran will legally bind itself to implement as a condition of sanctions relief, International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors can request access to any location they have reason to suspect is related to nuclear activities. This is separate and in addition to the continuous access described above at declared nuclear facilities. U.S. experts have stated that standard practice is to gain access with 24 hours' notice when requesting access to a suspicious location. However, access can be requested in less than two hours in certain circumstances.²⁹

The most time-consuming and difficult-to-hide element of building a nuclear weapon is obtaining sufficient fissile material capable of creating a runaway nuclear chain reaction. There are two principle pathways to this approach. The first involves enriching uranium while the second involves removing plutonium from spent reactor fuel. The nuclear agreement confines Iran's enrichment activities to a low-enrichment level of only 3.67 percent for 15 years. The stockpile of enriched material that Iran is allowed to accumulate will be reduced by 98 percent from pre-agreement levels and restricted to 300 kilograms. This is much less than the quantity necessary for one bomb, which requires a little more than one ton of 3.67 percent enriched uranium.³⁰

The other challenge is the capacity to quickly enrich more uranium using existing enrichment infrastructure. For that reason, the nuclear agreement permits Iran to operate only 5,060 first-generation centrifuges for 10 years. This quantity is sufficient to provide Iran with independent enrichment capabilities, while restricting its breakout time to a one-year period.

Moreover, Iranian enrichment activities will be confined to the site at Natanz. Though Iran is allowed to install 1,044 centrifuges in the heavily fortified enrichment site at Fordow, they will not be used for

enriching uranium. This limits redundancy in Iran's nuclear program.

If fully implemented, the agreement will significantly reduce the risk of an Iranian breakout using the plutonium track. In its current form, upon completion the Arak reactor's annual plutonium production would be sufficient for one to two nuclear bombs.

If Iran complies, the JCPOA buys at least 10 to 15 years before Tehran can significantly expand its nuclear capabilities. If Iran cheats during this period, JCPOA monitoring and national intelligence are likely to detect major violations. If the agreement survives after 15 years, Iran will be able to expand its nuclear program to create more practical overt and covert nuclear weapons options.³¹ The limitations on Iran's nuclear research and development (R&D) start to come off around the 8th year and more so in 10 to 15 years and beyond.³² This could allow Iran to eventually build out new, more efficient generations of centrifuges and allow Iran to shorten the breakout time with significantly fewer centrifuges. Once the uranium stockpile limitations end, Iran may be able to cross the nuclear threshold within a very short period of time.

While the agreement is not ideal, it needs to be weighed seriously against the realistic alternatives. Opponents argue that this agreement could leave in place the potential for Iran to become a nuclear threshold state in 15 years. Critics claim that the United States should have held out, imposed tougher sanctions, and reached a better deal that eliminated any Iranian capabilities that could contribute to a nuclear weapon. The United States and its partners already had tried that approach and it failed.

But it is undeniable that since signing the original interim nuclear agreement in November 2013, Iran has been a responsible nuclear actor by fulfilling all of its commitments under the JCPOA, which keeps Iran from covertly pursuing enough fissile material for a weapon, by adopting the Additional Protocol and other transparency measures. These enhance the monitoring and verification of nuclear facilities, including through snap inspections, as well as enhancing oversight and accountability of the entire nuclear supply chain.³³

Since the recognition of Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program, Tehran has been able to increasingly shift its attention to enhancing the safety and security of its nuclear infrastructure, an aim that would have been aided by its participation at this year's summit. It is also in Iran's interest to work cooperatively with others to

combat any prospects for nuclear terrorism, particularly as parts of the Middle East are under siege by the so-called Islamic State, a threat right on Iran's doorstep.

Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), unlike India, Israel and Pakistan, which attended this year's summit in Washington. The failure to invite Iran to the fourth and final Nuclear Security Summit is a missed opportunity to work toward reintegrating Iran into the international nuclear order and encouraging Tehran to enhance the security and safety of its nuclear program.³⁴

Other challenges

India and Japan plan to build new energy systems based on advanced plutonium-burning reactors. In Japan, the fuel would be supplied by a factory at Rokkasho that will be the world's largest for making plutonium. It has a security system that experts consider too casual.

South Korea has expressed a similar interest in plutonium production to supply reactor fuel, pointing explicitly to Japan as a precedent. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, and Indonesia could also follow Japan's example. Experts also worry about Turkey, Vietnam or Egypt.

Already, Japan has 9.3 metric tons of plutonium stored at Rokkasho and nine other sites in the island nation; about 35 tons of plutonium are stored in France and the United Kingdom. Building such large factories for nuclear materials poses special risks.³⁵

India, meanwhile, completed a reprocessing plant capable of extracting new plutonium from about 100 tons of spent fuel yearly at Tarapur. It joined three older plants that produced an estimated 3.8 to 4.6 metric tons of plutonium over the past 40 years. Another plutonium plant is under construction at Kalpakkam, south of Chennai on the Indian Ocean. A paramilitary force responsible for guarding all of India's nuclear sites is short-staffed and poorly trained.

China criticized Japan's plutonium plans but is considering building a new plutonium plant the site of two decommissioned military plutonium plants at the Jiuquan Complex in Gansu Province.

Another problem is bomb-grade uranium fuel, which is used by the world's nuclear navies, in reactors that propel submarines and aircraft carriers. Indeed, the navies of just three countries—the United States, Russia and Britain—use several tons of bomb-grade uranium annually for fuel, at least four times as much as all of the world's research reactors combined.

Naval highly enriched fuel poses multiple risks. It creates cover for countries to develop nuclear weapons, since naval fuel is excluded from international inspections under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. What's more, such uranium is vulnerable to being stolen by terrorists during transport or storage.

The United States is the world's biggest user of bomb-grade naval fuel. Unless the U.S. Navy switches to safer fuel in coming decades, the United States will need to resume production of bomb-grade uranium for the first time since 1992 to replenish its supply, undercutting Washington's goal of halting such production worldwide. Last year Congress authorized and appropriated funding for initial research and development of low-enriched uranium fuel for America's naval reactors.³⁶

A new report from the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies proposes low-enriched uranium replacements for the highly enriched uranium (HEU) used in naval reactors. The report suggests studying the ramifications of military HEU use on international treaties and "whether there could be an international agreement... to eliminate the use of HEU in naval propulsion reactors."³⁷

The United States said its own national inventory of highly enriched uranium was 586 metric tons as of 2013.³⁸

Russia has been a responsible nuclear steward.³⁹ Contrary to fears, no former Soviet nuclear weapon is known to have gone missing. During and after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991, Russia, with U.S. help, removed nuclear weapons from every former Soviet republic. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program and other U.S. initiatives have helped Russia dismantle nuclear missile silos, bombers and submarines; improve the security of nuclear weapons; and install technology to detect nuclear smuggling. The scale of these U.S.-Russian cooperative endeavors has only one parallel—U.S. aid to the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease Act, which was the principal means for providing aid to foreign countries during World War II. Today, Russia and America co-lead the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, a voluntary partnership of 86 nations and five international organizations, and have concluded accords to reduce strategic nuclear forces.

Over the past five years, Russia has been directly involved in the gradual removal of highly enriched uranium, helping to reduce the number of countries with weapons-grade nuclear material from 32 to 24. The

Russian Research Reactor Fuel Return program has also been a success. More than 60 removal operations from 14 countries resulted in the repatriation to Russia of almost 2,160 kilograms of highly enriched uranium originally supplied to foreign countries by the Soviet Union.⁴⁰

A plant owned by the Russian state atomic agency Rosatom in the Krasnoyarsk region of Siberia, which previously specialized in weapons-grade plutonium, has begun manufacturing an innovative fuel for nuclear power plants with fast neutron reactors. The production facility will use regenerated uranium and plutonium received after reprocessing spent nuclear fuel to create the new fuel type. The advanced technology allows Russia to reprocess 34 tons of plutonium deemed “excessive” for defense needs. The reprocessing is required under the Plutonium Management and Disposition agreement, signed with the U.S. in 2000.

Russia initiated the UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which became the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent weapons of mass destruction from getting into the hands of terrorists. Moscow serves as co-chair of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Moscow supports a more rapid entry into force of the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM)—hopefully by the end of 2016. The Amendment makes it legally binding for countries to protect nuclear facilities, as well as nuclear material in domestic use, storage and transport. It provides for expanded cooperation among countries on locating and recovering stolen or smuggled nuclear material and requires states to minimize any radiological consequences of sabotage. Recently, Washington has joined, and the process has now gone faster. Not much is left to achieve the goal—the Amendment now needs to be ratified by eight signatories of the Convention. Its entry into force will be a landmark event, which will bring the international cooperation in the field of nuclear security to a qualitatively new level and base it on a solid legal foundation. It probably will be made at the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security, which is still on schedule to take place at the ministerial level in December this year in Vienna.⁴¹

Terrorist Threat

While traditional efforts at arms control generally limit the physical arsenals of sovereign states that have weapons in precise geospatial locations, it is becoming increasingly plausible that a non-state actor could pull

off a nuclear attack from an unknown location. So, while formal, legally binding treaties constrain the actions of and impose consequences on states, in crafting countermeasures, new arms control should take into account that new security threats that know no boundaries. Securing nuclear material per a set of universal standards is a productive step towards countering this threat.⁴²

The evidence points to ISIS’s intention to cause nuclear havoc, whether by damaging a nuclear facility, spiking a conventional bomb with radioactive materials, or even building a fission bomb with highly enriched uranium.

The first concern is that sabotage could create a Fukushima-like environment in central Europe. There are worrying indicators of potential ISIS nuclear intent. The Islamic State espouses an apocalyptic vision of a final war between itself and the “crusader” forces. Authorities recently discovered that an Islamic State operative had been intensively monitoring a senior official of a Belgian facility that contains significant stocks of weapons-useable nuclear material. If the Islamic State ever does decide to pursue nuclear weapons, it has more money, more people, control of more territory and more ability to recruit experts across the world than Al Qaeda at its strongest ever had. The combination of terrorist organizations with global aspirations and inadequately protected nuclear-weapons material is dangerous. The catastrophic social, political and economic impacts of an act of nuclear terrorism would be felt in every country.

On September 30, 2015 the United States deposited its instrument of ratification for the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (Nuclear Terrorism Convention) at the United Nations. The U.S. became the 100th State Party to the Treaty. The Convention represents a cornerstone of the global nuclear security and counter terrorism architecture by providing a legal basis for international cooperation in the investigation, prosecution, and extradition of those who commit offenses involving radioactive material or a nuclear device, or any device that may emit radiation or disperse radioactive material.

As it stands, the U.S. budget for nonproliferation efforts is inadequate.⁴³ Yet the prospect of nuclear terrorism presents a very different challenge from proliferation by other countries. Given the destruction that terrorists could unleash with only one weapon, nuclear terrorism is the greatest threat to our collective security.

The fourth Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) was held in Washington, D.C. in the presence of 52 high-profile national delegations and four international agencies. However, Russia was not among them. In November 2015, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement detailing its reasons for staying away from the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, placing emphasis on the procedural regulations that granted privileges to the host nations of previous summits at the expense of other participants. These excessive rights would have prevented divergent opinions to be taken into account in the formulation of the summit's resolutions, the statement read.

A recent NTI white paper noted some shortcomings of the Nuclear Security Summits. Commitments are voluntary and nonbinding. There's no accountability or external review to make sure countries are living up to their commitments. The communique resulting from the summits can often lead to a lowest common denominator outcome.

Following the conclusion of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, in September 2013 the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Russia's state-owned nuclear company *Rosatom* signed a comprehensive nuclear cooperation agreement. This agreement provided for projects in areas ranging from nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful international use of nuclear power to extensive access for scientists to each side's most sensitive facilities and nuclear laboratories—a critical trust-building initiative. But in 2014 DOE banned Russian scientists from visiting any of its nuclear labs while simultaneously banning U.S. scientists from visiting Russia. The 2015 budget also banned most funding for nuclear nonproliferation activities and assistance in Russia and it remains in effect.

As a result, such work as joint security projects at 18 civilian facilities housing weapons material to security upgrades at Russia's seven nuclear "closed cities" was cancelled. Bilateral Russian-American nuclear security cooperation is now dead.

What's to Be Done

"For more than two decades after the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia partnered to secure and eliminate dangerous nuclear materials—not as a favor to one another but as a common-sense commitment, born of mutual self-interest, to protect against catastrophic nuclear terrorism, said former Senator Sam Nunn. "Unfortunately, this common-sense cooperation has become the latest casualty of the spiraling crisis in

relations among the United States, Europe and Russia. It is abundantly clear that unless we change course together, we risk leaving behind a more dangerous world for our children and our grandchildren."⁴⁴

So far, the spread of nuclear weapons has been a classic tale of a global chain of nuclear proliferation, reflecting a perceived security dilemma since the Soviet Union broke the U.S. nuclear monopoly.⁴⁵ The United States and Russia find themselves in a classic security dilemma, where defensive actions by one side are seen as a threat by the other, triggering an escalating cycle of action and response. Both sides must take steps to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons and reliance on nuclear threats as part of their defense strategies. There must be a follow-on to the START-3 agreement and the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, and resolution of mutual accusations of violating the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty.

The United States and Russia should rebuild their cooperation, agreeing on nuclear cooperative initiatives designed to be fully equal, covering both nuclear energy and nuclear security.⁴⁶

Addressing the Nuclear Industry Summit 2016, Sam Nunn said that governments and industry must continue to work together to prevent nuclear and radiological terrorism, and that the U.S. and Russia have special responsibility to lead in nuclear security. "I recently suggested in both Moscow and Washington that President Obama and President Putin should announce a joint working group focusing of the terrorist threat. This group would include our Energy departments, Intelligence agencies, and Defense departments with a clear goal to prevent ISIS, al Qaeda or any other violent extremist group from getting possession of nuclear, radiological, chemical or biological weapons or materials. There is ample authority under UN resolutions for United States-Russia leadership."⁴⁷

"Whatever the differences are, [the United States and Russia] have a common interest in preventing nuclear catastrophe," Bill Perry contended.⁴⁸ He suggested a series of steps to help reduce the growing risks of nuclear war in this century. Foremost among them was to "educate the public on today's nuclear dangers, and to promote policies that can reduce those dangers." He advocates for improving relations between the United States and Russia, because he believes that restoring cooperation in areas of mutual interest is the first step towards reducing the dependence on nuclear weapons. He also reinforced the need to raise global awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons, and

remain focused on the very real dangers of a terrorist group detonating a weapon.⁴⁹

According to one of the leading experts Robert Einhorn, “Russia and the United States have common interests in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and other WMD to additional countries, preventing terrorists from getting their hands on WMD and related materials, and avoiding a direct military confrontation.”⁵⁰

Experts suggest several steps to jumpstart U.S.-Russian nuclear security cooperation.⁵¹

For instance, DOE should propose to Rosatom that the September 2013 agreement between the two sides be reactivated, resuming the extensive scientist-to-scientist collaboration envisioned in the original agreement.

Washington should understand that the narrative from the 1990s whereby the U.S. is a donor and Russia is an aid recipient is no longer acceptable in Moscow. U.S. Russian nuclear cooperation must therefore be reframed as a partnership of equals, with both sides contributing to the conversation. These measures should include:

- Workshops on best practices in fissile materials accounting;
- Comprehensive site visits to each side's key laboratories and enrichment sites to compare security strategies;
- Joint work in other countries. This might also involve joint U.S.-Russian technical assistance projects to assist other countries to improve their nuclear security;
- Establish a joint intelligence task force centered around preventing nuclear smuggling and terrorism.

These activities require providing the Russians greater access to American nuclear facilities, but with the reciprocal benefit that American experts would gain access to Russian facilities.

The United States and Russia—which hold the vast majority of nuclear weapons and materials—have a special responsibility to lead. That’s why it is so dangerous that relations between our countries have become so negative at a time when terrorist threats are growing.

Endnotes

- 1 NTI. March 30, 2016
- 2 The New York Times. March 27, 2016
- 3 Nuclear Security: A vital goal but a distant prospect. Seven years of U.S. pressure has produced only modest progress in locking down nuclear explosives to block their use by a terrorist. The Center for Public Integrity. March 28, 2016.
- 4 The Washington Post, December 15, 2015.
- 5 War on the Rocks. March 8, 2016.

- 6 New START Treaty Fifth Anniversary. Fact Sheet. BUREAU OF ARMS CONTROL, VERIFICATION, AND COMPLIANCE. February 5, 2016.
- 7 The Washington Post. March 30.
- 8 Fact Sheet. Department of State. BUREAU OF ARMS CONTROL, VERIFICATION, AND COMPLIANCE. April 1, 2016.
- 9 America and the Nuclear Future. Rose Gottemoeller. Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security. University of Mississippi, February 25, 2016
- 10 The Washington Post. March 30, 2016.
- 11 The Huffington Post, November 23, 2015.
- 12 Remarks Previewing the FY 2017 Defense Budget. As Delivered by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Washington DC, February 2, 2016.
- 13 Bulletin of Atomic Scientists 2016, Vol. 72, No.2, 63-73.
- 14 Ibidem.
- 15 Foreign Policy. March 31, 2016.
- 16 Brookings, March 17, 2015. Overblown: Russia's empty nuclear sabre-rattling. By: Steven Pifer
- 17 Stratfor, March 11, 2016. The Nuclear Arms Race is Alive and Well
- 18 Kalibr: Savior of INF Treaty? Posted on Dec.14, 2015 by Hans M. Kristensen.
- 19 Ibidem.
- 20 Barry D.Watts. Nuclear-Conventional Firebreaks and the Nuclear Taboo. CSBA, 2013, p. 63.
- 21 Constance Baroudos. New ICBMs: Necessary to Secure the American Strategic Deterrent. Lexington Institute, February 19, 2016.
- 22 War on the Rocks. March 8, 2016.
- 23 Ibidem.
- 24 Reviewing the Administration’s Nuclear Agenda Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee March 17, 2016. By William Tobey. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School.
- 25 Ibidem.
- 26 The National Interest, February 29, 2016
- 27 The National Interest, March 3, 2016.
- 28 Iran Nuclear Agreement. Kenneth Katzman, Paul K. Kerr. CRS. September 29, 2015
- 29 The Iran Nuclear Agreement: The Need for a Full U.S. Implementation Plan. Anthony H. Cordesman. CSIS. August 24, 2015.
- 30 After the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: A GAME PLAN FOR THE UNITED STATES. By Ilan Goldenberg, Elizabeth Rosenberg, Avner Golov, Nicholas A. Heras, Ellie Maruyama, and Axel Hellman. Center for a New American Security, 2016.
- 31 The Iran Nuclear Deal: A Definitive Guide. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Harvard Kennedy School. August 2015.
- 32 Ibidem.
- 33 National Interest. March 31, 2016.
- 34 The Atlantic Council. MARCH 28, 2016. Iran’s Absence from the Nuclear Security Summit is a Missed Opportunity. BY KELSEY DAVENPORT.
- 35 Nuclear Security: A vital goal but a distant prospect. The Center for Public Integrity. March 28, 2016.
- 36 The New York Times. March 25, 2016.
- 37 George Moore, Carvando Banuelos, and Thomas Gray. Replacing Highly Enriched Uranium. NTI, CNS. March 2016.
- 38 The Washington Post. April 1, 2016.
- 39 The National Interest. April 1, 2016.
- 40 Russia Beyond the Headlines. March 30, 2016.
- 41 www.russia-direct.org, March 28, 2016
- 42 The National Interest. March 25, 2016.
- 43 The Honorable Ellen Tauscher, former Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security and Member of Congress from California. Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee March 17, 2016.
- 44 NTI. March 30, 2016
- 45 The National Interest, March 3, 2016.
- 46 The National Interest. March 31, 2016.
- 47 NTI. March 30, 2016
- 48 THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL// APRIL 1, 2016. What Next After Obama’s Final Nuclear Security Summit? Engagement with Russia, Sustained Commitment to Disarmament Sought.
- 49 War on the Rocks. March 8, 2016.
- 50 Robert Einhorn. Prospects for U.S.-Russian Nonproliferation Cooperation. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Task Force White Paper. February 26, 2016.
- 51 Moscow Times. March 31, 2016. U.S. and Russia Must Cooperate to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism. By Josh Cohen.

Strategic Priorities for NATO in the Security Environment of 2016

*Jeffrey A. Larsen*¹

Director of the Research Division
NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy

The past two years have been challenging for European security. The rise of Russia as a great power threat on the eastern flank, including hostile rhetoric, airspace and maritime challenges to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the sovereignty of its member states; nuclear saber-rattling against NATO members; the rise of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as a non-state terrorist threat on the southern flank, including unspeakable behavior in territory under its control, and direct attacks against major cities in Europe; the tentative willingness of many NATO nations to acknowledge the severity of these new threats; and the modest military response of NATO with respect to its obligations to deter adversaries and to defend and assure its member states as a security alliance—all have shocked and tested the Alliance. Unfortunately, finding the proper response to these challenges is not easy. The Alliance has instituted a number of important new conventional preparedness initiatives, but there is debate over whether this has been enough to enhance NATO's military capabilities in a significant way or to prove its political resilience.

The major question facing NATO in today's international security environment is how the Alliance can best prepare to deter and defend against divergent adversaries, and potentially fight them on two or more fronts simultaneously. This is not merely a return to Cold War thinking; it reflects qualitative changes in the types and levels of threats compared with those of the Cold War. For one thing, NATO (and EU) countries now face terrorism on their own territory that is inspired by some of these external adversaries, behavior that the two superpowers studiously avoided during the Cold War. In addition, the use of hybrid warfare approaches

by Russia and Iran has generated new concerns on the best way to respond to non-linear threats.² At the same time, Russia seems to be playing a successful game of chess, capturing or strengthening several key peripheral regions in which to create military bastions or to control the board through anti-access/area denial capabilities. All of this raises the possibility that the Alliance may one day have to face simultaneous conflicts on its Eastern, Southern, and even Northern flanks, in addition to the often-overlooked requirement to defend its Western flank along North America's Pacific rim. Enhancing deterrence may also require public declarations of intent, using strategic communications to inform allied populations and potential adversaries of NATO's capabilities and its willingness to use them.

Russia

Once again the cold winds of security concerns are blowing in from the Urals, and Europe finds itself wondering where this sudden change in the weather came from. Why the increasingly bellicose behavior and language out of Moscow since early 2014? There are many proposed explanations for Russia's behavior, some based on old theories of nineteenth century great power politics, or on President Putin's personality, or the result of the supposed national insult meted out by the West in the way it "mistreated" or ignored Russia at the end of the Cold War, and so on.³ The world is also uncertain over Putin's, and hence Russia's, underlying world perspective. Are they operating out of fear or feelings of relative weakness, recognizing the superior military capabilities of the West, and thus genuinely concerned about their own security? Or are they opportunists, looking for advantage and taking it whenever possible so as to achieve some larger goal?

The answer to this question is not obvious, but it is important, because one's answer will determine the preferred policy responses that should be put in place.

Regardless of the cause, Russia has shaken up the security environment of Europe and the Alliance dramatically in the past two years, and it shows little sign of returning to a "normal" state anytime soon. NATO's desire for a Europe whole, free, and at peace are, at least for the time being, memories. All members of the Alliance officially state that NATO should continue to uphold the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, in case the relationship can be restored, despite Russia's violation of that agreement.⁴ But as members of some delegations now admit, an early return to the previous relationship appears to be a false hope. It has become obvious that Russia no longer shares the same interests and values with the Alliance. One option for NATO would thus be to drop the pretense of partnership altogether, and prepare for the reality that this belligerent neighbor poses.

Another question for NATO is not simply whether it must respond to Russian military threats—it must—but whether to attempt to rebuild political relations with a country with which it cut all practical ties following the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. The NATO-Russia Council is still in place as a potential vehicle for bilateral discussions, although it has been largely inactive for the past two years. Many NATO staff members have unofficially continued to retain their working level contacts with their Russian colleagues, and the most senior levels of the political leadership have also kept their linkages. But for the most part the Alliance continues to operate under the April 2014 decision to "suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation" with Russia.⁵

Even in the depths of the Cold War the two sides talked with one another, establishing arms control negotiation forums, resolving arguments in a diplomatic manner, setting up hot lines, meeting in cooperative bilateral and multilateral stability conferences, and so on. The Wales Summit declaration made it clear that the Allies "continue to believe that a partnership between NATO and Russia based on respect for international law would be of strategic value." But since the conditions for such a relationship are not in place at the moment, "NATO's decision to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia remains in place."⁶ A second option for NATO would therefore be to reverse its April 2014 decision and seek greater communication and consultation with Moscow.

Given Moscow's behavior in the past two years, NATO cannot rule out the possibility of another surprising move against a neighboring state. If that state is a NATO member, neither can one rule out the possibility of conflict, with possible escalation to very high levels. The probability that Russia would deliberately provoke a NATO response through injudicious military action is low, but it is not zero. Great powers have made stupid miscalculations in the past that have led to war. Better for NATO and its member states to deter such a possibility, and to be ready to credibly defend their interests at the lowest possible level of conflict to avoid the dangerous implications of escalation dynamics.⁷

Deterrence and Nuclear Policy

*"Ultimately, our goal should be to minimize the role of nuclear weapons in East-West relations, keeping them in the background even when, as is inevitable, tensions rise and crises brew. As uncomfortable as it makes many people, global security still depends on nuclear weapons and the stabilizing effects of sound deterrence policies."*⁸

The requirement to rebalance NATO's three core tasks in favor of collective defense is now clear.⁹ The decisions made at the Wales Summit were a good start; those now need to be brought to fruition, and more needs to be done.¹⁰ The reasons are obvious. As a senior official from the U.S. Department of Defense recently put it, nothing can match the destructive potential of high-end conventional war between great powers. Nothing can up-end or disrupt or possibly even destroy the global world order more than a potential collision between great powers. So we have to continue to field capabilities that strengthen our conventional deterrence. This is all about deterrence, to make sure that such a collision never happens.¹¹

The Alliance has increased its internal discussions of these matters at all levels. This includes more frequent meetings of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). Of course, deterrence involves much more than nuclear weapons, or even just military forces, but the Alliance has long stated that its deterrent and defense capabilities rest on "an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense forces."¹² The initiatives announced in Wales highlighted two of the three elements of that mix, but the wording on the nuclear dimension was particularly spare, especially given the emphasis on nuclear threats by Moscow. While there are certainly political reasons for minimizing the public visibility of the nuclear elements

of the Alliance's military capabilities, there are also good arguments for reminding the public in NATO nations, and of course potential adversaries, that the "supreme guarantee of Alliance security" continues to rest on a robust, well-trained, modern, and reliable nuclear deterrent.¹³ Now is not the time for further unilateral reductions, or for discussion of the removal of the few remaining U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe. Nor is Russia willing to discuss possible arms control reductions to the two sides' stockpiles of tactical nuclear weapons.

The ultimate security guarantee for the Alliance rests primarily on the nuclear weapons and delivery systems of the United States, but also on the smaller arsenals of France and Great Britain. NATO relies on several European Allies that have dual-capable aircraft and a nuclear delivery mission as part of risk- and responsibility-sharing among NATO member states. However, since 1991 NATO has dramatically reduced its in-theater nuclear forces; it has stopped planning scenarios against any specific potential adversary; it has reduced the regularity and prominence of nuclear planning meetings at Headquarters; it has suffered the same loss of deterrence expertise as have all the NATO nuclear powers; and there has been a significant loss of education, training, and exercising of the necessary components of a successful nuclear deterrent capability.

Given the highly classified nature of nuclear weapons policy, and its sensitivity among some NATO member states that would prefer to eliminate the capability entirely, there is likely to be little publicly releasable discussion over these issues. But one must hope that the Headquarters staff, the Nuclear Planning Group, the High Level Group that supports the NPG, and the political leaders of all member states recognize this shortfall and begin serious efforts to regain the skill sets necessary to understand the issues, recognize the threats, deal with the responsibility, and prepare for demanding contingencies. If the Alliance is to continue to assert that it relies on its nuclear weapons for the ultimate deterrent, and if it is to be credible in saying so, these trends must be reversed. This will enhance deterrence and thereby prevent the use of nuclear weapons—and, through the demonstrated willingness to escalate to their use if necessary, prevent conventional war as well.¹⁴

NATO's ballistic missile defense (BMD) system, including the U.S. contribution called the European Phased Adaptive Approach, continues its scheduled (albeit slightly delayed) deployment in Eastern Europe and Turkey. Expanded capabilities will include ground

based interceptors in Poland by 2018 and BMD warning platforms aboard ships from Denmark and the Netherlands.¹⁵ All of these are designed to meet a missile threat arising from Europe's southern flank. The Iranian nuclear deal of 2015, as valuable as it may be for political reasons and to constrain Tehran's nuclear weapons program for the next decade, admittedly did little to constrain Iran's long-range missile programs, so that threat remains. This requires NATO to continue development of a way to protect its territory and population against known threats.¹⁶

Reassurance

All NATO member states must be confident that they are members of an alliance in which everyone truly believes in the adage that security is "all for one and one for all." Those allies that border Russia have a justifiable desire to be certain that they can rely on their fellow member states to respond to any violation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Ensuring this may require in-place forces, or at a minimum, persistent rotations of non-permanently assigned troops, as well as some forward deployed equipment. It may also be served by the increased level of exercises in the region, by air policing and air exercises involving strategic assets, and the like. All of these were part of the Wales Readiness Action Plan (RAP). But it is also possible that these measures are not enough, and that Poland, Norway, Romania, and the Baltic States, among others, may want more visible presence of allied forces. These desires are not easy to satisfy, given that the Alliance must simultaneously assure Russia that it is not overreacting to moves by Moscow. Neither side wants to get in an escalatory game of one-upmanship such as the world experienced in the summer of 1914. Reassurance includes not only giving comfort to NATO's members, but also avoiding the appearance of aggressive reactions or other behavior that could be misinterpreted by Moscow.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the real threat of a quick conventional military thrust by Russia demands defensive preparations by NATO. As one analysis recently put it, the blunt fact is that Russia today evinces the desire and possesses the capabilities to undermine the Alliance's most fundamental purpose, the collective defense of its member states' political and territorial integrity... This constitutes a challenge to the very essence of the Atlantic Alliance, which has been, and must continue to be, based above all on a credible common commitment to collective defense. If NATO cannot adequately defend its exposed eastern member states, and Moscow seriously exploits this vulnerability, NATO risks not just

local disaster but also, at the very least, the credibility and cohesiveness of the Alliance.¹⁸

The Alliance is currently divided between those member states that see the threat coming from the East, and those that see it to the South.¹⁹ This is dangerous for the future of Alliance cohesion. Some argue that the Alliance cannot afford to alienate some of its member states by focusing too much on one region, such as the Northeastern quadrant that abuts Russia. Rather, they say, it should maintain a 360-degree perspective, looking for and preparing to meet threats coming from any direction. This is true, of course. The Alliance has borders with much of the world: Russia, the Middle East, the Arctic, Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Asia. But this argument neglects the proximate and immediate nature of the threat from the East: a nuclear armed major power that has proven its willingness to invade neighboring countries, that has made clear in public statements that it detests and distrusts NATO, that has threatened NATO member states with nuclear retaliation for supporting NATO missile defense, and that (according to some studies) could occupy NATO territory before the Alliance even had time to say “what happened?”²⁰ Such a scenario could lead to only two responses by the Alliance, both of them very bad outcomes: war, with NATO at a distinct initial disadvantage and the possible escalation to nuclear use; or acceptance of the new status quo, otherwise known as appeasement (or defeat). Regardless of what one calls it, either alternative would likely mean the end of NATO as a credible collective defense pact, and with it, the beginning of a dark era for European and global security. Yes, the Alliance faces threats from all directions. But the one to the East is existential; if NATO loses there, none of the others matter.

It is better for all concerned for the Alliance to prevent this future Hobson’s choice by showing the necessary backbone today. NATO must re-learn the ability to play chess and poker simultaneously, while avoiding the surprises and escalatory pressures that led to previous great power conflict in Europe. Doing so may require the deployment of significant conventional forces in those areas most threatened, which would be expensive and controversial, but would provide multiple benefits: enhancing assurance of allies, bolstering deterrence against potential adversaries, improving defenses in case of conflict, and raising the nuclear threshold by reducing escalatory pressures.²¹

Proliferation and Fissile Material Control

Proliferation of nuclear weapons or nuclear

materials continues to be a concern, although cooperative programs over the past 20 years have significantly reduced the threat posed by “loose nucs” and nuclear smuggling immediately after the end of the Cold War. In particular, the accession of Ukraine to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty regime, the return of all Soviet warheads to Russia, the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, the Department of Energy nuclear cities and related programs, and the international G20 “10 plus 10 over 10” program were all collectively responsible for the safe and secure protection of most nuclear warheads scattered about eastern and central Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These programs also provided alternative work for many of the key thought leaders in the nuclear business. In addition, a U.S.-led multinational coalition ended Iraq’s nuclear program; Libya and South Africa ended their programs of their own volition; and Iran suffered years of economic and political sanctions before last year finally signing the Comprehensive Agreement that controls its nuclear program. The only real state failure in terms of proliferation over the past two decades is North Korea.

That said, of course the world today must deal with threats from non-state actors, as well. ISIL, and al Qaeda before it, have been forthright about their desire to acquire and use fissile materials in a radiological dispersal device or even a rudimentary nuclear weapon. There is a large literature on this subject, and the dangers—and means of dealing with them—are well known. Combatting this problem is understood and not particularly expensive (albeit not particularly easy): one simply needs to securely control all fissile material. You cannot make a nuclear device without plutonium or highly enriched uranium, or a dirty bomb without radiological isotopes. As one recent report stated, “Terrorist use of nuclear weapons may not be a high probability—but the global economic, political, and social consequences would be so severe that even a low probability should be enough to motivate an intense focus on steps such as nuclear security to reduce the risk.”²² The recent Fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC was a good example of the importance the global community places on this potential threat, and the valuable results that can come from concerted international action. But it also highlighted the limits of international diplomacy in dealing with such issues, as the summit was boycotted by several key nations, and no follow-on summit was scheduled.

Arms Control and Disarmament

Arms control and disarmament have come in and out of the public consciousness like a sine wave across

the decades. The high water mark for arms control in the strategic weapons business was the mid-1990s, in the flush of optimism following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. At that time multiple new agreements were signed, old negotiations bore fruit, and former adversaries opened their borders to international and bilateral inspections regimes. The last great arms control treaty was the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed and ratified in 2010 between the United States and Russia. Hopes were high that the success of that negotiation might lead to further treaties in both the strategic and non-strategic nuclear realms, including one that might reduce the imbalance between remaining Russian and U.S. Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe. Such a future treaty was part of the explicit understanding with the Obama administration when the U.S. Senate ratified New START. World events since then, however, have not supported such hopes. The list of Cold War treaties no longer in force, or in abeyance, is long: the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, from which the U.S. withdrew with Russian acquiescence; the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, which Russia stopped complying with and which eventually the western states also stopped their one-way sharing of data; the Vienna Document and Budapest Memorandum, which Russia violated with its military actions in Crimea and Ukraine; and the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which is ostensibly still in force, but which the United States claims has been violated by Russian cruise missile testing. The short-term outlook for any movement between the superpowers in the field of arms control is thus quite bleak.

Disarmament has served as another type of weapons control approach, proving to be of particular interest at several points in the history of the superpowers. Advocates in certain countries believe that disarmament, unilateral if necessary, is still the best policy approach. This view holds that if one side creates the example by taking the moral high road, the other nation-states with such weaponry will follow suit. This represents an optimistic view of international relations that may or may not be true. Opponents of this policy approach argue that the risks of such a policy are too great in an anarchic international system that is populated by self-serving states. A recent empirical analysis considered the argument that the United States should set the example by using weapons reductions as a tool to enhance nonproliferation policy. According to this study, the findings were clear: “alterations in U.S. nuclear force size may not have a meaningful impact on

the proliferation behavior of other states... There is reason to believe that the U.S. government’s efforts to use disarmament as a means of advancing non-proliferation goals might not be met with success.”²³ In fact, the report said, continued reductions in the US nuclear force may not only not help with non-proliferation efforts, but may actually “weaken the nuclear deterrence that provides security to itself and its allies.”²⁴ Thus the Obama Prague Initiative, and the 2013 announcement that the United States could consider unilaterally reducing its nuclear forces by an additional third, may in fact be moving in the wrong way—especially at a time when a potential adversary is actually increasing its rhetoric about the value of nuclear weapons use for intimidation, signaling, and military operations. Some NATO allies agree with this last perspective.

Conclusion

The long term adaptation of the Alliance to the new security environment will require a number of steps, including some that will harken back to the days of the Cold War. Some allies will be uncomfortable with those decisions. But as a military alliance charged with preparing to defend its member nations against adversary threats to Europe and North America, it is incumbent upon the Allies to act to meet that responsibility. The Alliance must develop new strategies, trying not to prepare only for what is expected, but to accept that the new world is, in fact, the new normal. The Allies are unlikely to see the world quickly returning to the comfortable way things were just a few years ago. Accepting this reality will have consequences for the Alliance. For example, this may mean increasing its military presence in those parts of the periphery of the Alliance most threatened (such as the Eastern Flank, the Arctic, and Turkey), perhaps with an institutionalized plan that includes permanent stationing of combat forces in those regions. It may require NATO to strengthen its force structure, including ground forces, airpower, and other long range strike capabilities, with a credible nuclear deterrent as a backstop. It may require improvements to existing command structures. And it will most certainly be expensive, requiring all member states to abide by their defense investment pledge.

More than two years after the Russian annexation of Crimea and its sponsored invasion of Eastern Ukraine, the Alliance must face the world, and its revanchist neighbor to the east, as they really are, not as some states wish them to be. Only then can the Alliance move forward with positive steps in terms of its deterrent

capabilities. And only then can it afford to turn its attention to restoring cooperation with Russia.

Endnote

- 1 Portions of this paper were published by the author as "Time to Face Reality: Priorities for NATO's 2016 Warsaw Summit," NATO Defense College Research Report 126, January 2016, at <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?id=0>. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the positions of NATO or the NATO Defense College.
- 2 See Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey A. Larsen, editors, *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015) at <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?id=0>; and Jacek Durkalec, "Nuclear-Backed 'Little Green Men': Nuclear Messaging in the Ukraine Crisis," Polish Institute of International Affairs Report, July 2015, at https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=20165."
- 3 An overview of the situation in Russia and its internal dynamics can be found in Nicholas Burns and Jonathon Price, editors, *The Crisis with Russia* (Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2014). For more specific policy recommendations on U.S. and, by extension, NATO policy toward Russia in each global region, see James Jay Carafano, et al, "U.S. Comprehensive Strategy Toward Russia," Heritage Foundation, 9 December 2015, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/12/us-comprehensive-strategy-toward-russia>.
- 4 See "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," Paris, 27 May 1997, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.
- 5 Laura Smith-Park and Susannah Palk, "Ukraine Crisis: NATO Suspends Cooperation with Russia," CNN, 2 April 2014, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/01/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/index.html>.
- 6 "Wales Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales," NATO Press Release (2014)120, 5 September 2014, para. 22, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.
- 7 For an incisive analysis of this danger and what is required to meet the challenge, see Elbridge Colby and Jonathan Solomon, "Facing Russia: Conventional Defence and Deterrence in Europe," *Survival*, 57:6 (2015), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1116146>. Also see Andrew A. Michta, "Russia's Shadowboxing with NATO," 4 January 2016, at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/01/04/russias-shadowboxing-with-nato>.
- 8 Paul Bernstein, "Making Russia think Twice about Nuclear Threats," *War on the Rocks*, 23 March 2016, at <http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/making-russia-think-twice-about-nuclear-threats/>.
- 9 The three core tasks of the Alliance, according to the 2010 Strategic Concept, are collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management. See "Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon," 19 November 2010, at <http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>.
- 10 One list of suggested policy and operational initiatives on the Eastern flank can be found in "NATO's New Strategy," pp. 9-11.
- 11 Robert Work, quoted in "Deputy Secretary of Defense Speech," CNAS Forum, 14 December 2015, at <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/634214/cnas-defense-forum>.
- 12 Wales Summit Declaration, para. 49.
- 13 See "Deterrence and Defence Posture Review," NATO Press Release (2012) 063, 20 May 2012, part VI, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm.

- 14 See Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kerry Kartchner, editors, *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).
- 15 For more on NATO's BMD program see "Ballistic Missile Defence," NATO online, last updated 15 December 2015, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49635.htm#.
- 16 The NATO Secretary General made this point quite explicitly in his address to the Munich Security Conference in February 2016 when he said, in answer to a question, that "I very much welcome the Iran nuclear deal, where Russia played a constructive role. But that is about nuclear warheads, nuclear weapons. Iran and other countries are continuing to develop their ballistic missile programmes, so that is a threat which still exists. And our programme is aimed at threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area and we will continue with the programme because the threat is still there." "Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference, 13 Feb 2016," NATO online, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_128047.htm?selectedLocale=en. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept for the first time made the defense of populations a priority mission, stating that it would "develop the capability to defend our populations and territories against ballistic missile attack as a core element of our collective defence." "Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," NATO online, 20 November 2010, para. 7, at http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf.
- 17 See Stephan Frühling, "Political Consensus and Defence Preparations: Why NATO Needs a 'Military Strategy,'" NDC Research Paper No. 125, NATO Defense College, Rome, December 2015, at <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?id=0>.
- 18 Colby and Solomon, pp. 42-43.
- 19 For considerations on the dangers of a divided alliance, see Stephan Frühling and Matthew Rojansky, "Russia, IS, and the Future of NATO," Australian Institute of International Affairs, 22 December 2015, at http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian_outlook/russia-is-and-the-future-of-nato.
- 20 For one example of this scenario, see Christopher S. Chivvis, "The Baltic Balance: How to Reduce the Chances of War in Europe," RAND Commentary, 2 July 2015, at <http://www.rand.org/blog/2015/07/the-baltic-balance-how-to-reduce-the-chances-of-war.html>; also Julia Ioffe, "Exclusive: The Pentagon is Preparing New Battle Plans for a Baltic Struggle against Russia," *Foreign Policy.com*, 18 September 2015, at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/18/exclusive-the-pentagon-is-preparing-new-war-plans-for-a-baltic-battle-against-russia/>. For a recent example of the level to which Moscow dislikes NATO, see Jack Farchy, "Putin names NATO among Threats in new Russian Security Strategy," *Financial Times* online, 2 January 2016, at <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6e8e787e-b15f-11e5-b147-e5e5bba42e51.html#axzz3wZ2GOk8H>.
- 21 See, for example, "Brinkmanship, Deterrence and De-escalation between NATO and Russia," Roundtable Discussion Report, European Leadership Network, 27 May 2015, at <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/06/23/f9c1b2bb/ELN%20NATO%20Russia%20Roundtable%20Report.pdf>; also Colby and Solomon; and Durkalec.
- 22 Matthew Bunn, Martin Malin, Nickolas Roth, and William Tobey, "Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Continuous Improvement or Dangerous Decline?" Project for Managing the Atom, Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School, March 2016, p. ii.
- 23 Matthew Kroenig, "US Nuclear Weapons and Non-Proliferation: Is there a Link?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 53(2), 2016, p. 178.
- 24 Ibid.

Struggling for Islamic Alternative

Alexey Malashenko

Chair, Religion, Society & Security
Program, Carnegie Moscow Center

Islam never ceases to amaze the world. Europe, the U.S., and Russia are surprised by its political activism, radicalism, and extremism, especially as it relates to ISIS and its longevity. The world is appalled by the migrant tsunami.

Despair abounds when it comes to dealing with jihadism, terrorism, and migrant crisis. We would certainly like to see a solution to the problems that have been escalating for decades right before our eyes. Most of us treated these problems as episodic wishing they'd go away. Instead, they turned into a stable and menacing trend.

What's the main reason behind the misunderstanding of the Islamic question? Politics, economics, and even conspiracy theories surface as possible explanations. The Russian propaganda machine is especially fond of conspiracy theories, claiming that radical Islam is a creation of Western intelligence services.

But perhaps the mystery is not about politics and other material factors. Could there be an important psychological factor at play here?

In the aftermath of World War II, Europe, the U.S. and the USSR started believing relatively quickly that the post-war global system was immutable. Bipolarity seemed indestructible; nuclear weapons guaranteed the absence of the new world war, and everything happening beyond the two poles appeared marginal. Of course, there were also anti-colonial revolutionary movements in Africa and Asia followed by the emergence of the "third world"—a turbulent and diverse agglomeration of states whose leaders gravitated toward

populism. The third world also looked like a permanent fixture. Thus, a geopolitical triangle emerged, which is, incidentally, the most stable construct from a geometrical standpoint.

Of course, some unexpected events and crises flared up from time to time, but they couldn't upset the system's balance, let alone destroy the system itself. The 1950-1953 Korean War or even the Soviet invasions in East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia didn't result in the global apocalypses. The conflict in the Middle East became mundane, and no one seriously thought it could be finally resolved to the satisfaction of both adversaries. Such resolution simply didn't exist.

Only once, at the height of the Caribbean crisis in 1962, did the world seem fragile. But once it was over, the importance of preserving the bipolar political arrangement secured by nuclear weapons became abundantly clear. The humanity got used to the arms race, cheered the détente, and signed the Helsinki Accords... No one thought that another era might emerge.

The West was basking in its undeniable superiority, believing that it would last forever. These sentiments were shared in the Soviet Union, which was propped up by a belief in the inevitable communist victory, all the "temporary difficulties" notwithstanding. Many Muslims have the same belief in the triumph of the Islamic state nowadays.

Why the need for the long introduction? It illustrates the emergence of the belief that things will remain unchanged, and nothing new will appear.

But that was not what actually happened. The Soviet Union broke up, although hardly anyone predicted such an outcome.

The collapse of the Soviet Union isn't what concerns us at this point. We are to discuss the appearance of Islam as a political factor and Islamism as another pole in the current multipolar jumble. No one expected Islam's emergence in this role, especially on such a scale.

What is Islamism or Islamic radicalism (it's also known under a myriad of other names – fundamentalism, Wahhabism, Salafism, etc.)? There is nothing a priori negative about the term radicalism, if defined broadly. It sets its sights on the future and aims for cardinal changes. No progress is possible without radical approaches. Their only alternative is stagnation.

Radicals in science, art or politics are creative people. Darwin, Einstein, and Beethoven are some examples. The Prophet Muhammad, who founded the latest and most radical form of monotheism—Islam—can also be called a radical.

But today the word “radical” prefaced by the word “Islamic” has a clearly pejorative connotation. It hampers the possible dialogue with the representatives of the radical movement, who shouldn't be equated with extremists.

Islamism is radical. It is a complex religious, political, and ideological phenomenon that personifies the aspirations of the Muslim community to build a state and a political system around Islamic tradition.

Where did Islamism come from? First, it bases itself on a tradition that Islam is the latest and most perfect monotheism which will eventually be accepted by everyone on earth. Islam is the most down-to-earth religion which thoroughly outlines the principles of economy and state-building partly formulated by the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century C.E.

The second source of Islamism can be found in recent history. In the 1950's through 1970's, Muslim countries faced a dilemma of what path to choose for their future. Their choice was rather limited: some gravitated toward the political order of their former colonial powers, while others were interested in the Soviet experiment—the new, previously unseen system that seemed attractive from the distance. Both the Soviet and market models were imitational and required colossal expenditures, fast and decisive reforms, as well as consolidated elites capable of making an energetic spurt in a certain direction.

There was also a third national path based on the country's own historical development. Actually, there have been countless national paths, most of which had the word “socialist” before the respective national adjective. There were Arabic, Algerian, Egyptian, Indonesian, and other paths. Just like the two previous models, the indigenous paths failed. The promise of prosperity morphed into endless crises, coups d'état, dictatorships, all-too-familiar leaders, lack of reforms, corruption, poverty, and, as a result, general frustration and anger that breeds revolutionary changes.

Despair prompted search for new alternatives. Hopes for the bright future were dashed, which made people turn to the past, particularly toward Islam. The religion was to become an alternative to failed experiments. Hence, Islam entered the stage.

Islamism sought to bring to life the Islamic alternative, return Islam to the public life and eventually build an Islamic state. Why the reislamization? The Islamic alternative implies the restoration of the “true” Islam, which was distorted for hundreds of years. In other words, a Muslim must come back to Islam and finally become a “true Muslim.” Only after that will one be able to build a truly Islamic society.

What's “true Islam”? Muslims themselves often stereotypically refer to such Islam as “Islam of the Koran.” But this answer is just a nice-sounding excuse. After all, Islam has Shia and Sunni branches, and the Sunni Islam boasts four theological and legal schools of thought, known as mazhabs (in fact, there were many more mazhabs in the past). Besides, Islam has traditional and nontraditional interpretations. Traditional Islam practiced in different countries and regions is laden with local ethno-cultural traditions and aspires to being called true. Any outside changes are interpreted as hostile to local traditions. Islam that originated elsewhere is considered nontraditional and “untrue.” For example, Russia's Muslims of the Volga region and the North Caucasus regard Islam imported from the Arab world, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and recently Central Asia as nontraditional.

Thus, it appears that “true Islam” offered as the main Islamic alternative is at best ambivalent or even non-existent.

On the other hand, the Islamic state did exist in the past—it was founded by the Prophet Mohammad in the 7th century. Therefore, the proponents of such state talk of its restoration. They believe that the early Islamic model should be cleansed of later distortions, many of which were borrowed from the West. Their model calls

for the synthesis of tradition and modernity. The modern aspects aren't that hard to attain—the majority of Muslim youth has long been proficient in computer technologies. In other words, Islamic state is possible. The only questions are when and how it can be accomplished.

The Islamists are divided on this account. There are those who think that it can be done gradually. These “moderate pragmatists” believe that society isn't yet ready for total Islamization. It has to be educated. For now, they consider constitutional methods more appropriate. Islamic candidates should take part in elections, gain more seats in the parliaments, strengthen Islamic parties, and become more popular with Muslims. Others are more aggressive and ready to go beyond legal framework. They focus on working with people on the street, whom they rally for massive protests under populist and Islamic slogans. They encourage rioting and vandalism. Yet another group within the Islamist movement is prepared to use any means with no concern for the consequences. These extremists are responsible for numerous and already routine terrorist attacks around the world. They are consumed with taking revenge and punishing their opponents. They are attacking the West for globalization, which is allegedly directed at destroying Islam. The revenge testifies to their despair and inferiority complexes resulting from their inability to prevail in the economic and political realm. They also take revenge on their opponents within the Muslim community.

In essence, the extremists oppose even the so-called Islamic radicals. Whatever we may think of them, the radicals are oriented toward more constructive actions. They intend to build and are already building state and social structures, as evidenced by Hamas in Gaza or even ISIS, which created medical and educational institutions on the territory it controls. ISIS even tried to create its own financial and tax system.

While immersed in the working routine, Islamic radicals aren't interested in the acts of terror. Evidently, they hope to be eventually recognized and even legitimized. After all, Hamas, the Taliban, and Iran's Islamic revolutionaries did gain informal legitimacy. (It's possible that Islamic State would also find its place within the changed borders of the new Middle East).

But the actions of the extremists discredit the idea of building the Islamic state and creating the society based on Islamic norms.

Islamism will probably remain one of the main trends in the Muslim world, and the same applies to the idea of the Islamic alternative in the foreseeable future. In a way, it is an Islamic answer to globalization. The efforts to structure society according to religious law are here to stay. The initial surprise at this phenomenon will eventually wear off. Secularism will no longer be treated as an absolute value, and the attempts to force it on the Muslim world will be abandoned. This is already happening, although some Muslim modernizers do talk of Islamic secularization.

Nevertheless, the actual creation of a religious state appears utopian. Building such a state is an attempt to build paradise on earth. People have harbored such ideas throughout human history, and they led nowhere. On the other hand, the utopian idea—be it religious or secular—will never completely disappear. Therefore, while believing the creation of an Islamic state to be unrealistic, we have to reckon with those who believe in it and respect their dreams and interests. We should make sure not to hurt their feelings.

Islamists will remain and increase their contingents in parliaments of nearly all Muslim states. They are likely to come to power in some of them at some point. We have witnessed such precedents in Egypt and Tunisia during the Arab Spring. Although the Islamist governments were unsuccessful in both of these countries, it was the price they paid for gaining valuable experience to be used in future political battles.

Having acquired power, Islamists are bound to lower the religious gradient of their ideology and political practice and abandon the most aggressive components of the Islamic alternative. Their agenda will be blurred rather than focused on religion. While dealing with day-to-day challenges, they'll become greater pragmatists and will be forced to compromise.

These developments will facilitate the split within Islam with its radical wing becoming more isolated. Its members will demand that their more moderate coreligionists staunchly follow Islamic tradition, the sharia law, day-to-day behavioral norms and keep outward appearances consistent with Islam.

Extremism and terrorism won't disappear. They will continue to exist in two incarnations. The first will resemble ISIS with its attempts to create the Islamic state, caliphate or emirate by any means. The second will look more like Al Qaeda with its thirst for revenge. That's what both Muslims and non-Muslims will have to combat.

Islamist activities, including the attacks carried out by their extremist wing, bring us back to the much-criticized concept of the “clash of civilization.” Until very recently, the uncritical use of this concept had been considered inappropriate. But it is being revisited now, in 2015 -2016. Although the term itself is relatively uncommon, politicians and journalists increasingly talk about a “different world” following the recent string of terror attacks and the Muslim influx into Europe. The recognition of this fact implicitly acknowledges the clash of civilization.

While the concept of the “clash of civilizations” sounds catchy and provocative, it is still quite hazy. I think it’s more appropriate to label this phenomenon as

the “friction of civilizations,” the identity conflict that has always existed and can become more pronounced under some circumstances, at times taking on the most radical forms. The fact that the religious realm isn’t separated from the political one, contrary to some people’s wishes, exacerbates the problem.

The Islamists are at the forefront of this politicized identity conflict that is also part of all other socio-economic and political conflicts. But the current situation is far from apocalyptic. Islamism in its different incarnations has ultimately become a legitimate participant of the global political process and can no longer be seen as a purely negative phenomenon. And that’s what we will have to live with.

Confronting Terrorism, Combatting ISIS, and Middle East Challenges

Joachim Krause

Professor, Institute for Security Policy
University of Kiel (ISPK)

It is commonly assumed that fighting terrorism and combatting ISIS was in the common interest of Russia, the US, and Germany. Many observers think that these commonalities would serve as a vehicle for restoring cooperation between Russia and the West. It is also hoped for that this kind of cooperation could eventually translate into a common effort towards a lasting political settlement in Syria. This paper rather pleads for sobriety. It argues that room for commonalities is quite limited and that even if there were strong common interests, the situation in the region is highly complex and – given the growingly adversary character of the relationship between Russia and the West – might not allow for external settlements through big powers in the short or medium term perspective.

Basic Dynamics of the Middle East

There are some commonalities in the assessment of the dynamics of the Middle East both within the Western world and between Western and Non-Western experts. The basic divide is between those, on the one hand, who look at the current situation in the Middle East in terms of great power competition (and cooperation), and those, on the other hand, who prefer to look at the interplay of societal, economic, demographic and political developments and who conceive of the Middle East as a region where various crises conflate aggravating each other with considerable implications outside.

The great power perspective on the Middle East is shared not only by most Russian experts but also by many Western strategic experts coming from a “realist school” background. What differentiates these Western (mainly US) experts from Russian experts, however, is that they consider the involvement of external powers in

the Middle East as principally fraught with tragic error, in particular if the use of military force is involved. These Western experts see with great concern how the already fragile situation in the region is further aggravated by global (Russia versus the West) and regional (Iran versus Saudi Arabia and Turkey) power competition. Russian experts rather try to emphasize the right of Russia as a global power to intervene politically and militarily in the region, to keep military bases there and to serve as a counterweight to Western, mainly US influence in the region. They view the Middle East as one in which the power vacuum that was left by the US has to be filled by Russian power, lest disorder would prevail in the region. Order is seen as a function of regulation provided for by strong powers or men (either inside or outside the region). Western powers are being considered to be unable to provide for order on a long run, since they tend to destabilize regional states through the support they are giving protest movements.

The above mentioned other perspective on Middle East affairs can mainly be found among liberal Western scholars and regional experts. The core of this line of argumentation is that the Middle East is shaped by the interplay of various structural crises: (1) although most Middle Eastern countries have seen economic growth and the influx of – in part – enormous financial resources, the economic growth is not sufficient enough to make up for the growth in population; (2) although a middle class is emerging, economic growth is not being shared with the majority of the population as predominantly authoritarian and corrupt regimes capture the wealth by capturing their respective state; (3) the emerging middle class and the growing youth bulge (mainly young males with few perspectives for

their personal future) are the main sources of unrest and quest for political change, however, there is no unanimity among them as to the direction political change should take; (4) the problems of the region are being aggravated by the growing role of political Islam, which has become a political ideology claiming to protect the citizens of the Muslim world from the influence of modernity and secularism and which tends to be ignorant towards the real problems of the region; (5) the most radical version of political Islam (jihadist Salafism) has become a totalitarian ideology whose adherents tend to use indiscriminate and brutal violence as a means to further their case both in the Muslim world as well as in Europe and the USA, where they are seen as terrorists.

Adherents to this view of the Middle Eastern dynamics tend to be very skeptical of any use of military force, since violence more than often leads to more radicalization. They cite, in particular, the US led forceful regime change in Iraq in 2003 and the brutal suppression of domestic resistance by the Assad regime in Syria since 2011.

The policies of Western states (be it in Europe or in the US) is mainly shaped by liberal views as well as by realist views of a more skeptical notion (defensive realism). The Russian views are mainly shaped by offensive realism.

Common Challenges for US, Russian and European interests in the Middle East region

Against the backdrop of these different assessments regarding the basic dynamics of the Middle East, there is limited room to assume that there are commonalities:

- The largest common challenge is the so-called “Islamic State” (ISIS) or “Caliphate” (or “daesh” as it is being termed in the region). So long as this state-like entity exists, the danger of terrorist attacks either in Russia, Europe or the US is growing. The “Islamic State” is a major source of instability in the region itself, be it in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria or elsewhere. If it was to continue to exist over a long time period, it might change the whole situation in the Middle East. Destroying its existence might thus be in the fundamental interest of both the US and Russia (as well as of Europe). This common interest is being reflected in US and Russian air forces conducting air strikes against Daesh-institutions and facilities. However, having one common enemy does not necessarily imply joining forces. There are coordination mechanisms between the US air forces

and Russian air forces in the region, but it seems that their main task is to prevent clashes or hostile encounters between US and Russian aircraft.

- There might also be a common interest not to let the strategic competition between Russia and the West in the Middle East end in an open military confrontation. This can be achieved by mostly unilateral steps or discreet discussions between military experts from both sides. It is also a matter of who is sending which kind of naval and air forces into the region on a permanent basis.

Beyond that there are very few commonalities: first because one side – Russia – is considering itself to be a strategic opponent of “the West” in the region and hence plays a zero-sum-game; and secondly, because there are quite different understandings of the basic dynamics of the Middle East and the concomitant recipes for improving the situation in the region.

How central is resolving the war in Syria and combatting ISIS for Berlin, Moscow and Washington, and to what extent are they committed to establishing a sustainable long-term settlement of the Syrian conflict and the ISIS threat?

While all sides might agree that the Syrian war should be ended and ISIS be finished, the differences in the distinctive approaches are a major hurdle against any deeper cooperation. There are fundamental differences as to who is to blame for the violence in Syria and the radicalization and about the question who should be part of any future political solution.

Russia considers the opposition against President Assad as the main cause of the conflict and ISIS as the main catalyst for its escalation. ISIS is being depicted as a creation of the West, at least indirectly. The Western governments hold an opposing view: They see the Syrian President and his highly corrupt and brutal regime as the main culprit for the war in Syria and put the blame for the escalation and the growth of the ISIS on the Assad-Regime and on those states which have helped that regime by sending in weapons, soldiers and fighter aircraft. The brutal way the Assad regime has fought against its own population is being seen as the main reason for the radicalization on the side of the opposition. The Assad Regime’s counter-insurgency strategy is being credited as being both brutal and ineffective, causing the death of more than 200,000 human beings and forcing opponents into radicalization.

While Russia views the Syrian President and his regime as part of the solution (be it with or without the

current President), the Western powers consider Assad and his regime as the major cause of the conflict and exclude the possibility that a political solution can be found that keeps President Assad and his clan in power.

It is hard to imagine how a political settlement can be found in light of these divergent positions, which are becoming more and more unsolvable the more the war continues on the ground. While diplomacy often is the art of the possible, it might at least be prudent to think of diplomacy also as the art of the impossible.

- What is possible in light of this constellation are cease-fire agreements between the regime and those parts of the opposition which are not affiliated with either ISIS or al-Qaeda. We have such an agreement, but its implementation is more and more questionable. So long as President Assad stays in power and so long as he attempts to use the ceasefire in order to consolidate his control of the country, it won't last for long.
- It is unlikely, but at least imaginable that after a face-saving withdrawal of President Assad and his clan from Syria, a basic understanding on the future of Syria might be found which includes the relevant political powers and ethnic and religious groups (excluding ISIS and al-Qaeda). But such a solution won't work as long as the Eastern part of Syria remains under the control of ISIS.

As regards the fight against ISIS, it is hard to see a common strategy on the side of the Western states and

even less if one includes Russia (and Iran and other actors in the region). Both the US and Russia are reluctant to let their own soldiers fight ISIS. They use air strikes and weapons deliveries as their preferred instruments, but most likely this won't suffice to finish off ISIS. The idea that ISIS will be eliminated by a huge international coalition mandated by the United Nation Security Council and led by major military powers such as the US and Russia, is totally unrealistic. Hence, the task of conquering the territory held by ISIS is left to local actors such as the Syrian regime, the Iraqi government, Kurdish militias, Shiite militias as well as other militias (Yesides). None of these military forces was able to solve the problem on their own, all of them are not being trusted in the region (and beyond) and whatever they do, it will be subject to criticism and might face open confrontation.

Resumee

While the idea might be intriguing that the commonly felt threat of ISIS might bring together Russia, the US and other Western states and that it might serve as a vehicle for restoring productive dialogue and cooperation between Russia and the West, in reality many factors rather militate against this idea. There is room for cooperation, but given the new assertiveness of Russia and its pronounced policy of strategic rivalry with the West, hopes for cooperation should not be pitched too high.

The Challenge of the Islamic State: The Record and the Lessons

Rajan Menon

Anne and Bernard Spitzer Professor of Political Science,
City College of New York/City University of New York and Senior Research Scholar,
Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University

The Islamic State (IS), which Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai, better known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, heads as the Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful), suffered significant territorial losses in 2015. The biggest were in northern Syria's Kurdish-majority areas, across the border with Turkey but IS was also driven from key parts of Iraq. Altogether, IS surrendered slightly more than one fifth of its territory in Syria and Iraq between January 2015 and March 2016, mainly to the efforts of the Syrian Kurds and the Iraqi army.¹ The Syrian Kurds, who expanded their territory by 186 percent, made the biggest gains.

For their part, the United States, Australia, Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, Bahrain and Turkey have bombed IS's bastions in Syria. American, Jordanian, British, French, and Australian warplanes have done the same in Iraq. Russian aircraft also struck IS-held areas in Syria, even though most of their attacks were directed at what Moscow considered the main threat to the Assad government, the Jaish al-Fateh radical Islamist coalition, which had gained significant ground, notably in Idlib and Aleppo provinces. (The September 2015 Russian military intervention followed from Moscow's belief that the Syrian government could collapse given that Jaish had begun to threaten the Alawites' historic homeland, the coastal strip stretching from the regions north of Latakia to those south of Tartus and reaching eastward to the Jabal an-Nusayriyah range.)

Aside from this combined air campaign, for all of its multilateral patina an American enterprise (the United States conducted 95 percent of the 3,000-plus

attacks since the air operations began in September 2014), the Caliphate has, as I have noted, been under assault on the ground. Shiite militias trained and equipped by Iran, and attached to the Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) collective, have pushed northward into its Sunni-majority territories, as has the U.S.-backed Iraqi army. U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters from Syria (the YKP, People's Defense Units), Iraq, and more intermittently from Turkey, have attacked IS's northern flank. Russian support (from the air) and Iranian assistance (on the ground) has enabled the Syrian army to retake land controlled by IS.

Syrian Kurdish fighters expelled IS's forces from Kobane (aka Ayn al-Arab) and Tal Abyad, adjacent to the Turkish border, in January and July 2015 respectively.² In March 2015, the Iraqi army evicted IS fighters from Tikrit, a Sunni stronghold and source of oil wealth—and Saddam Hussein's birthplace. In 2015, IS was driven from Sinjar (November), the Baiji refinery (November), and Ramadi (December). In March 2016, the Syrian army, having already reduced the territory held by Jaish al-Fateh because of the Russian military intervention, recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra, which ISIS overran in May 2015.

The loss of the Baiji refinery was a particularly heavy blow. It diminishes the Caliphate's revenues. IS's oil sales total 40,000 barrels a day and generate at least \$1 million daily, but that represents a decline from 110,00 barrels a day. To make matters worse, the Caliphate's oil revenue was also slashed by Russian airstrikes against its tankers transporting oil to Turkey. According to Russian military officials, some 2,000 them had been destroyed by the end of 2015.

Together, IS's opponents possess formidable resources. According to the Defense Department, by the summer of 2015, the United States alone was spending nearly \$9 billion a day battling IS: a total of \$3.2 billion.³ Half of that amount financed the air campaign and operations by Special Forces and private contractors, together reportedly totaling 6,000. For 2017, President Obama has sought more than \$7 billion, an increase by over a third from 2016, to fund the fight, which his successor, Democrat or a Republican, will certainly continue.⁴

The losses in territory and revenue punctured the aura of invincibility that the image-obsessed, media savvy Caliphate has created and used as a tool for recruitment and sowing fear. IS embraces a Salafist-inspired variant of Islam rooted in an idealized conception of Arabia's 7th century Islamic community, but it runs a slick 21st century, Internet-driven, public relations machine geared to disseminating its message and attracting followers. The loss of image thus constitutes a loss of power and appeal as well.

Still, IS cannot yet be pronounced dead. It retains important sources of strength. To begin with, unlike al-Qaeda, it has created a territorial state. With its capital in Raqqa, Syria, and a population of about eight million in mid 2015, the Caliphate extends across northern and eastern Syria to the east of Mosul and then bends south into central Iraq.⁵ In all, this totals some 35,000 square miles—an area larger than Belgium.⁶ Despite the loss of nearly 5,000 square miles in 2015 alone, IS's domain remains sizeable considering that the movement emerged only in 2006 and that Baghdadi proclaimed his Caliphate in June 2014. IS still controls considerable territory and in early 2015 (before it began to lose land) ruled over a population of 2.2 million in Syria and between 3.9 and 4.2 million in Iraq.⁷ As of March 2016, it still holds important areas, such as Mosul, Iraq's second biggest city, which it seized in June 2014.

IS has also created governing institutions, central and provincial, that run the gamut. They impose and interpret Shari'a law, aided by blood-chilling forms of punishment.⁸ They collect taxes from the oil trade, truckers, and businesses. They provide schooling—based on Wahhabi precepts—and various social services. They gather intelligence and recruit and train soldiers. An apparatus of horror specializes in kidnappings, beheadings and forced amputations, mass atrocities, and sexual slavery—all justified by careful reference to Islamic theology.⁹

The Caliphate could not have survived were it led by a small band of sociopaths that relied solely on brutality to extract obedience. In anarchic, violent Syria and Iraq, it has acquired a social base by providing people—more precisely, those who adhere to its draconian theological rules, don't rebel, and refrain from aiding and abetting its enemies—security, functional institutions, and basic economic necessities. Many living under IS rule have no choice, but others are drawn to its millenarian mission of building an Islamic polity and restoring the pieties and glories of old. Successful state-creation explains in part why IS still attracts followers from many countries, many defying the stereotype of jihadist converts as lost souls: anomie-ridden, marginalized, poorly educated, and professionally unsuccessful. The commitment to recreating a transnational Caliphate also accounts for the oaths of fealty (*bayat*) that IS has garnered from Islamist groups in the expanse extending from Pakistan to Libya and southward to Nigeria and the adherents it has attracted from Europe and Russia and other parts of the former USSR.¹⁰

IS has other sources of strength. Its operations are funded by multiple sources of income, including taxes, revenue from selling natural resources, ransoms, and cash from shadowy Persian Gulf sources.¹¹ Its fighters, well-armed, battle-hardened true believers, have acquitted themselves well against enemies with larger numbers and better weapons. These are among the reasons it has eclipsed al-Qaeda.

Yes, American, British, French, and Russian airstrikes have damaged IS by killing its leaders, destroying its political infrastructure, disrupting its capacity to deliver day-to-day public services, and enabling the Kurds and the Iraqi army to wrest territory from it. But demolishing, rather than degrading, the Caliphate will require well-trained, well-armed ground troops capable of shrinking its territorial base and undercutting its social support. This raises the question of how effective Iranian-backed Shiites militias, Hezbollah (which is fighting in Syria), Kurdish forces, and troops controlled by the Shia-dominated Baghdad government will prove in a long war against IS, whose base is overwhelmingly Sunni Arab. In Syria, the big question remains whether the Kurds, having largely created an independent homeland (Rojava, as they call it), will be game for extended battles against IS that inevitably will stretch their military capacity well beyond it and whether the Syrian army proves capable to holding territories it wrests from IS.¹²

The local forces fighting IS in Iraq and Syria bring heavy political baggage to the battlefield—this in a part of the world that in recent years has witnessed massive violence between Shiites and Sunni Arabs and clashes between Arabs and Kurds. Then there is the historic legacy of strife between Arabs and Turks and Arabs and Persians that still hangs heavy. No amount of airpower can negate these longstanding divisions. As for the possibility of deploying troops, after the multi-year military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, Americans, to say nothing of Europeans, have no stomach for yet another one in Muslim lands, particularly given how these two counterinsurgency-cum-nation building ventures have turned out. The Russian government's military withdrawal from Syria in March 2016 shows that it has no intention of getting sucked into a quagmire in the Arab world and that its aims are limited to shoring up the Assad government, while retaining a residual military presence as insurance.

It is good that these impediments to intervention exist. IS emerged from Al Qaeda in Iraq (its leadership remains mainly Iraqi), which itself was nourished by the (continuing) frenzy of Sunni-Shia violence that followed the American-designed 2003 invasion of Iraq. One of the lessons of that war remains relevant to the current debate on what to do about the Caliphate: the hubris produced by the sense of military invincibility can trigger decisions whose calamitous consequences reach far into the future. Iraq does not represent a lone example. IS has been able to create franchises in Libya by cashing in on the chaos and bloodletting that has followed the 2011 U.S.-European-Arab intervention that toppled Gaddafi. Likewise, the violence and chaos in Syria since 2011 helped ISIS establish itself there.

The justification offered for using American military power against the Caliphate is that it poses a serious threat to the United States. Unlike al-Qaeda, however, IS has directed its venom and violence primarily, though certainly not exclusively, against those Muslims it condemns through *takfir* (the judgment of apostasy), above all Shiites. Yes, it has been unspeakably cruel toward various Christian peoples and other religious minorities, notably the Yazidis.¹³ Allowing for the element of sadism, the main impulse for this brutality is an obsession with building a Caliphate based on its own puritanical brand of Islam purged of anything that IS deems to be apostasy. Yes, it has beheaded Westerners and other foreigners, but in retaliation for airstrikes and to advertise its reputation for mercilessness, not in service of a war against the West. And yes, it carried out horrific terrorist attacks in

Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016. Though these are shocking, reprehensible acts, IS's focus has been on creating, consolidating, and expanding a Salafi Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, not orchestrating a Huntingtonian clash of civilizations aimed principally at the West.

It does not have the global support to orchestrate a civilizational struggle because it cannot unify Muslim Arabs, let alone Muslims worldwide, most of whom, in IS's eyes, have deviated from Islam. A Pew opinion survey revealed that the majority in key Muslim countries does not support the movement.¹⁴ This should not be surprising considering that many more Muslims, especially in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, have been killed or maimed by IS's violence than have Westerners. Likewise, IS has thin support among French and American Muslims. Some analysts have parsed the Pew data to back the claim that 63 million Muslims are nevertheless favorably disposed toward IS. Two caveats are in order: first, a positive view does not automatically produce active support (that amounts to a big difference); second, there are 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, and the overwhelming majority is preoccupied with the routines and rigors of daily life, not joining IS, let alone waging jihad against the United States, Europe, and Russia.

The best way to thwart terrorism is through an integrated, sustained strategy that, with due regard to citizens' rights, combines intelligence gathering, law enforcement, and homeland security. Paralleling these measures should be policies designed to foster cohesion, social mobility, and stake holding Western societies inhabited by people of multiple faiths and cultures. If the citizens of the West's multi-religious societies turn on another and the Muslims among them are demonized, IS will have won a massive victory. One of its biggest hopes will have been realized. This workaday response to terrorism will lack the drama of war but will be no less effective for that.

The Caliphate does pose a serious threat to the countries in and around its neighborhood. But ultimately they must take the lead in addressing it. The United States, Europe, and Russia can assist in various ways short of military intervention, above by all helping to forge a political settlement in Syria and pressing Iraq's Shi'a-dominated government to integrate Sunnis into its political institutions. Progress on both these fronts is essential. The bloodshed and sectarian divisions in Iraq and Syria have been a boon for IS. Military power, no matter how formidable, cannot vanquish IS, and even its efficacy against terrorism is

debatable. Given the proven resilience and mobility of terrorist groups a war against terrorism, which after all is a tactic, can become an endless game of whack-a-mole.

The nature of IS and the campaign against it offer several lessons:

- IS (or Al-Qaeda for that matter) does not represent a “clash of civilizations.” Extending from Morocco to Malaysia, the Islamic world is no more a monolith than is Christianity. Its divisions encompass ethnicity, culture, class, language, and Islamic doctrine and practice. IS and similar movements are above all engaged in a struggle for the soul of the Islamic world, which they want to recast to comport with their vision. Their attacks against the West should certainly be taken seriously but are ancillary to this larger objective. Muslims are IS’s main victims, which means that strategy for marginalizing its appeal, and not just military force, must be part of the fight against it.
- The military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya demonstrate that great powers can easily topple a regime. Creating a stable post-war order is another matter altogether. The disorder that follows regime change—and the record shows it does—provides terrorism fertile soil. Once it takes root, eliminating it will prove very hard, even impossible. IS thrives amidst chaos, as witness its creation of the Caliphate’s Iraq and Syria and the emergence of IS affiliates in other places gripped by violence.
- Despite the frictions created by the crisis in Ukraine, Russia and the West have a shared stake in working cooperatively for peace in Syria. Indeed their interests, received wisdom notwithstanding, converge. A chaotic Syria provide a hospitable home for violent extremists, whose deeds will extend far beyond Syria’s borders, as witness the attacks on Paris and Brussels.
- Alas, Syria does not offer a choice between Assad’s Ba’athist government and a moderate, democratic alternative. The strongest groups fighting the Syrian state are comprised of radical Islamists: the Jaish al-Fateh coalition (which includes the Al-Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra) and IS. Given the deep ideological divide between the Assad government and its Islamist adversaries, a settlement aimed at a unified Syria will fail. The best, and certainly the most realistic, hope remains a federal solution of some sort. That won’t be easy, but the alternatives are infeasible.
- Assad’s hands are bloodstained but demanding that he must depart before there can be a political settlement will not be productive. Were he to be forced out by external pressure, his successor will be another Ba’athist, quite possible even more hardline, committed to the survival of the regime. It is good that the United States and Europe have begun to shift their position on Assad.
- The Syrian regime, while brutal and dominated by the Alawite minority, retains support among Sunnis who are urban professionals or engaged in business, Christians (Arab and non-Arab), and Druze. It is simply not as isolated as press commentary and mainstream punditry would have us believe. There can, therefore, be no viable settlement that excludes it or involves awaiting its collapse.
- Russia’s September 2015 military intervention in Syria was meant to protect its 60-year strategic stake in that country, not to divert attention from Ukraine or to display Vladimir Putin’s prowess. Moscow’s move averted the Syrian regime’s collapse and helped produce a ceasefire. Both are positive outcomes, even if the truce may not last. The Russian withdrawal, which began in March 2016, shows that Moscow will not fight an open-ended war on the regime’s behalf and has no illusions that Assad can unify Syria. Moscow wants him to move toward a political settlement and understands that there can be no military solution in Syria. Still, Russia has been careful to maintain a residual military capacity, the effect of which was evident in the support Assad’s army received from Russian airpower in the fight for Palmyra. It has invested too much effort and prestige in Assad’s behalf to let his government collapse or be marginalized in future peace talks.
- Destroying the IS Caliphate, assuming that proves possible, will take years. Meanwhile, the movement will continue responding to military pressure by establishing branches outside Iraq and Syria and launching terrorist strikes against Europe, the United States, and even Russia. And the weaker it becomes the more it will target the West. The governments of Russia and the West therefore have an interest in sharing intelligence information and coordinating efforts to cut off IS’s funding. Cooperation on this front must not be deferred until a settlement in Ukraine materializes.
- No Western government can take the threat of IS terrorism lightly, and every life taken by its attacks

counts. But contrary to the ubiquitous hype, terrorism does not represent an “existential threat” to Western countries—i.e., to their territorial integrity, economies, cultures, and political systems. Moreover, the odds of an American being killed by a terrorist attack in a given year are 1 in 20 million. That compares to 1 in 19,000 in a car crash, 1 in 800,000 in a bathtub drowning, 1 in 99,000 in a building fire, and 1 in 5.5 million in a lightning strike.¹⁵ (The data suggest that Europeans are unlikely to face worse odds, even if one counts the attacks of 2002 in Madrid, 2015 in Paris, and 2016 in Brussels.)¹⁶ Leaders thus have a special responsibility to avoid scapegoating, sensationalism and fear mongering, which merely provide IS free publicity.

- Ultimately, day-to-day security precautions will prove far more effective, not to mention cheaper, in averting terrorism in Europe and the United States and Russia, than military campaigns. The use of military force will, as witness the Paris attacks, inevitably increase the risk of terrorist attacks. Besides, framing the struggle against IS principally in military terms could lead to wars without end all over the world. Promises to “win the war against terrorism” may sound good but they are meaningless.
- Wealthy democratic countries will remain vulnerable to terrorism. They are easy to enter and to move about within and offer numerous targets with large concentrations of people. Moreover, the United States and Europe (and Russia) support Middle Eastern states that IS loathes and seeks to destroy. The challenge in dealing with the IS threat involves, on the one hand, taking the steps needed for security while, on the other, protecting liberty, avoiding panic, and resisting divisive rhetoric in

what are culturally and religiously diverse Western societies.

Endnote

- 1 “Islamic State Loses 22 Percent of Territory,” *HIS Jane’s* 360, March 15, 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/58831/islamic-state-loses-22-per-cent-of-territory>.
- 2 “Kurdish Gains Over Militants Spur Warnings from Turkey,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-turkey-kurds-20150623-story.html>.
- 3 “US Has Spent More than \$3Billion Fight,” *The Hill*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/58831/islamic-state-loses-22-per-cent-of-territory>.
- 4 “Pentagon to Hike Spending Request to Fund Fight Versus ISIS,” Reuters, February 1, 2016.
- 5 Sarah Birke, “How ISIS Rules,” *New York Review of Books*, December 9, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2014/12/09/how-isis-rules/>.
- 6 “ISIS Caliphate Shrinks 14 Percent in 2015 As Kurds Gain,” *Newsweek*, December 23, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-caliphate-shrinks-14-percent-2015-syrian-kurds-gain-408079>.
- 7 Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “How Many Fighters Does the Islamic State Really Have,” *War on the Rocks*, February 9, 2015, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/02/how-many-fighters-does-the-islamic-state-really-have/>.
- 8 Malise Ruthven, “Inside the Islamic State,” *New York Review of Books*, July 9, 2015.
- 9 ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape, *New York Times*, August 14, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html?_r=2.
- 10 Kate Brannen, “Russians Are Joining ISIS in Doves,” *Daily Beast*, July 12, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/12/07/russians-are-joining-isis-in-doves.html>.
- 11 Charles Lister, “Cutting Off ISIS’ Cash Flow,” *Brookings*, October 24, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2014/10/24-lister-cutting-off-isis-jabhat-al-nusra-cash-flow>.
- 12 Jonathan Steele, “The Syrian Kurds are Winning,” *New York Review of Books*, December 3, 2015.
- 13 “Who Are the Yazidis and Why is ISIS Hunting Them?” *Guardian*, August 11, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/who-yazidi-isis-iraq-religion-ethnicity-mountains>.
- 14 Pew Research Center, “In Nations with Muslim Populations, Much Disdain for ISIS,” November 17, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>.
- 15 Ronald Bailey, “How Scared of Terrorism Should You Be?” *Reason*, September 6, 2011.
- 16 “Victims of Terrorist Attacks in Western Europe,” *Statista*, December 2, 2015, <https://www.statista.com/chart/4093/people-killed-by-terrorist-attacks-in-western-europe-since-1970/>.

Collaboration, As Far as Possible; Defense, As Far as Necessary

Karsten Voigt

Former Coordinator for German-American Cooperation,
German Foreign Office

Sometimes you can see more clearly from a distance. A few weeks ago I spoke with Chinese, Ukraine and Russia specialists. Their analysis: the conflict in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine will lead to a greater turning point in European and international politics than the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. I disagreed because it should be our goal to establish a pan-European peace order that includes Russia. But the negative experience of the last few months indicates that this goal is less likely. The break in our relations with Russia is deep. The negative developments in recent months and years resulted not so much from Western policy, but rather from a change in the domestic and foreign policy of Russian leadership.

After the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the mainly peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union, pan-European cooperation deepened and accelerated; Russia was accepted into the Council of Europe and became a partner of the European Union and NATO; Trade and cultural exchanges increased, and the network of pan-European relations became denser. The goal to incorporate Russia as a full member into the European Union and NATO was never realistic, but the West made an effort, though not consistently enough, to foster closer cooperation. In the fall of 2013, the Grand Coalition began with the intent to deepen the cooperation with Russia through new initiatives. But Russian policy has changed in recent years. Russia's leadership now claims that its foreign policy reorientation is a reaction to Western—and especially American—policy. Yes, the United States and the EU have made mistakes in dealing with Russia. But these errors do not justify the annexation of Crimea,

or the political, military, and financial support of the separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Similar to the United States, the reasons behind Russia's foreign policy reorientation lie in domestic policy. President Vladimir Putin considers the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Soviet communism not as an historic opportunity for building a modern and democratic Russia, but as "the largest geo-strategic disaster of modern times." Putin's Russia does not want to be recognized internationally as the country that it is today, but as what it once was: a powerful empire. The nostalgic memories of Russian greatness at the time of the Tsars, Stalin, and Brezhnev are becoming more popular. The pursuit of preservation and reclamation of zones of influence is perceived by most neighbors as Russian revisionism.

In contrast, the Westernization of the country is viewed as a threat. This connects the current Russian leadership spiritually and politically to the anti-Western left and right fringe of the European political spectrum. As long as Russian leadership is marked by this worldview, its policies will remain a problem for the rest of Europe. That is the reality, which we must assume, but our constructive pan-European objectives remain valid.

Our sympathy and solidarity should therefore be given to the forces striving for democracy in Russia, even if they are currently a minority. The country cannot be changed from the outside against the will of its political leaders and certainly not against the will of the majority of the Russian people. The methods of foreign and security policy can counteract the negative effects of today's Russian policies in international relations.

But before a profound turning point in Russian politics can happen, years—but hopefully not decades—will likely pass. In the period that lies ahead of us, it will no longer be about a policy of cooperation and integration, as has been previously practiced. Instead, the motto regarding the now necessary policy on Russia could be: collaboration, as far as possible; defense, as far as necessary.

Russia, the EU, and the U.S. should continue to work collectively, as they have in negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program or a joint action against international terrorism. If the Russian leadership follows the agreements of Minsk, the economic sanctions should also be lifted. Ukraine, Russia, and the EU are only able to carry out the security provisions of the Minsk agreement together, and together they must communicate about possible negative economic consequences of the Association Agreement.

The war in eastern Ukraine should be reason enough to expand the OSCE, to make it more effective and provide it with additional rights. It should be examined whether OSCE Blue Helmets can be used in eastern Ukraine, with equipment that enables them to continue their mission in a fragile security situation. The existing arrangements regarding the announcement and monitoring maneuvers have proven to be inadequate. Whether the Russian leadership is willing to improve the existing rules and transparency in arms control should be explored, at the latest, during the German OSCE Chairmanship in 2016. As a result, members would be strengthened by cooperative security in a world characterized by mistrust and conflict environment.

Because of its behavior, Russia is now regarded by most of his neighbors as a security risk. This skeptical view is understandable and will only change when the Russian leadership changes not only its rhetoric, but also its behavior. Above all, it must end its attempts to destabilize Ukraine. This is the only way to gradually rebuild trust. In a political environment thus positively changed, negotiations between the EU and the Eurasian Union could be successful.

Today, many speak of a new Cold War. It is understandable that public debate reverts to using categories of an earlier conflict constellation. However, it would be better if we also developed new terms and concepts for today's conflict. First, the conflict in eastern Ukraine is not a cold war, but a hot war, which would have been over had the Russian leadership not supported the separatists. Second, in contrast to the Cold War, we are interconnected, at least on paper, by a

common peace policy and democratic values and norms, such as the Charter of Paris.

Because Russia breached international law and European values and standards toward Ukraine, it was right that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has suspended the voting rights of the Russian delegation. We should not put institutions, contracts, and agreements, which continue to link the West to Russia, at risk lightly. On the other hand, if Russia in turn damages this network of relationships, we cannot fix the damage solely from our side.

Moreover, the military, economic, and political situation in Europe today is fundamentally different from the one during the Cold War. Today's Russia still has an arsenal of nuclear weapons that is comparable with that of the United States. While it did modernize its military capacities over the last years, if we compare all the capacities that are at the disposal of NATO with the Russian capacities, there is a clear superiority on the side of NATO. This superiority would take effect in the event of conflicts with NATO countries, which are in Russia's immediate neighborhood. On the other hand, Russia's smaller neighbors, which are not NATO members, cannot rely on this kind of security guarantees. This was already the case during the Georgia war (which the Georgians started because of their flawed assessment of the situation), and it is similar in the case of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

This is where Russia's regional military superiority, from which the Separatists benefit, is effective.

In the light of this situation, we can come up with valid reasons for and against the delivery of weapons to Ukraine. However, it is undisputable that the Ukrainians rightly feel threatened. Germany vetoed a potential NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine—all the more reason for Germany and its partners to strive for a non-military stabilization of Ukraine. This requires a willingness to provide economic aid to Ukraine and to impose economic sanctions against Russia.

However, I dare to predict the following: If the Russian government and the Separatists do not comply with the Minsk agreements, the United States and some European NATO countries will begin military support for Ukraine. After assessing all the risks, Germany could be against military support of Ukraine. However, one cannot deny that Ukraine's aspiration for an improvement of its defense capabilities is entirely legitimate. The argument over tactical means should not jeopardize the common strategy toward Russia.

During the Cold War, Germany's eastern neighbors were tied to the Soviet Union in terms of security. The diplomatic paths to Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest often went through Moscow. Both of these things have changed fundamentally. Today, some of our eastern neighbors behave as if they were located closer to Washington than Brussels. This is not so much a result of American strategies as it is a consequence of Russia's behavior. Henceforth, Germany should continue to avoid policies where the interests of its eastern and western neighbors are ignored.

During the Cold War, Russia was already only really competitive in raw materials and the export of arms. The worldwide financial crisis and the euro crisis led to a weakening of the EU and the United States in the past years. Russia, on the other hand, showed substantial growth rates and its monetary reserves increased. In light of this situation, the Russian government overestimated its own strength and underestimated the strengths of the United States and the EU.

The consequences of this miscalculation are going to become increasingly evident in the next months: Russia's economy and monetary reserves are shrinking, whereas the United States is experiencing high growth rates and the EU and the euro zone is slowly recovering, despite the difficulties with Greece. The worsening of the economic situation in Russia is only partially a consequence of the economic sanctions imposed by the West. The missed opportunities for modernization of the Russian economy during the last few years, as well as the fall of oil and gas prices, are of more significance here. Even if the sanctions were lifted, Russian policies could not rectify these two negative factors in the short term.

During the Cold War, the communist ideology represented by the Soviet Union claimed universal

validity. Its attractiveness diminished over the decades, but the global ambition remained. Today, Russia's government is once again resisting the universalistic entitlement of "Western" values. But contrary to the time of the Soviet Union, the Russian government is now adopting a defensive approach, even though it is propagated offensively through the media. Its ideological stance bears a certain appeal for political groups from the left and the right wing: They polemicize together against the West, particularly against the United States and, of course, against European integration, the euro, and globalization. This undoubtedly also finds support within the EU, and sometimes even reaches deep into the center of society.

However, none of the concepts that emerged from this smorgasbord of resentments is appropriate to solve the problems of the twenty-first century. This is why the children of Russian elite prefer to study in the United States or in EU member countries. The ideology of the Russian leadership is only effective in places where Russia is exerting power, and not because its model of society is attractive. This, and not some wide-ranging American or European strategy, is the most important reason that Russian-speaking Ukrainians also support a European orientation for their country. Their European orientation is not ethnically, but politically and economically warranted. Because the Russian government is aware of this fact, it decided to bet on military power and destabilization within Ukraine. The EU should, by contrast, participate in the stabilization of Ukraine and invest in a policy that would strengthen the attractiveness of Europe in the eyes of the Ukrainian citizens.

*Translated from German by Alix Auzepy and Amin Nagazi
This article originally appeared in German in Berliner Republik*

A Long View of Transatlantic Crises: Increasing closeness, increasing friction

Karsten Voigt

Former Coordinator for German-American Cooperation,
German Foreign Office

In 1969, when I was elected national chairman of the Young Socialists (Jungsozialisten – JUSOs), the SPD youth organization, the future U.S. ambassador to Germany John Kornblum was a young diplomat stationed in Bonn. Many years later, he told me that after this Young Socialist congress, American diplomats had been gripped by the fear of a grave future crisis in transatlantic relations. The prevailing analysis was: “If this generation of Young Socialists one day assumed the leadership of the SPD or—even worse—control of the federal government, relations between the U.S. and Germany would be plagued by conflict and mistrust.” Henry Kissinger expressed similar skepticism to me when Joschka Fischer became foreign minister. These pessimistic scenarios of the future have proven to be wrong.

Since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany, its relations with the U.S. have shaped not only its foreign but also its domestic policy. In the future, too, the U.S. will remain Germany’s most important partner outside the European Union. Differences between the U.S. and Germany notwithstanding, common interests and values prevail. But relations between the two countries over the past several decades have been subject to repeated periods of discord. Some of these have passed quickly. Others have developed into serious crises.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive outcomes in retrospect, one will never be able to count on transatlantic crises resolving themselves. On the contrary, in politics there is no law of the series—especially not of a positive one. Each generation will therefore have to begin anew the work of overcoming differences in opinion and forging commonalities. This

is all the more true given that, in years to come, German and American politics will have to prove themselves in the face of completely new challenges.

My predominantly positive view of American politics up to that time had been shaken first during the Hungarian crisis of 1956. Over half of my school class was made up of boys who had fled Germany’s Soviet-occupied zone with their families after the uprising on June 17, 1953. That’s why we were, more than other students, interested in developments east of the Federal Republic of Germany. The American government’s rhetoric at the time had created the impression in me that that the U.S. would rush to come to the aid of the Hungarian democrats against the Soviet troops. From my vantage point, the contradiction between the U.S. government’s words and its actions robbed the roll-back rhetoric of the American secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, of all credibility.

After the Berlin Wall went up, in 1961, I perceived the actions of the U.S. administration as being ambivalent: On the one hand, the tanks at Checkpoint Charlie confirmed the American security guarantees for West Berlin. On the other, it became clear once and for all that, indispensable as American military power was for the protection of the West, it was unsuited and ultimately largely irrelevant in the quest for bringing change to East Germany and Eastern Europe. Later—in my opinion, much too late—President Kennedy flew to Berlin, where he was welcomed by jubilant crowds. Despite the cheers, however, I understood that American and German priorities weren’t always identical. The experiences of that period prompted Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr to develop their Ostpolitik. For

similar reasons, they led me to join the SPD, shortly after the building of the Wall.

The decades that followed 1961 were fundamentally shaped by an unchanging constellation: West German politics was always aware that it needed U.S. backing for its Ostpolitik and domestic policies. At the same time, it was clear to the politicians in both Washington and Bonn that the perspectives, aims, and methods of the two governments were by no means always identical. Listening to Egon Bahr and Henry Kissinger speaking about this period, one could clearly feel the simultaneity of intensive cooperation and mutual reservation. German and American Ostpolitik had, in part, differing motives. But they complemented each other in their outcomes.

The Vietnam War didn't substantially influence the relationships of various West German governments with the US. But it changed a whole generation's image of the United States. While young Germans of my generation could identify with domestic American resistance to U.S. policy, it was the actions of U.S. administrations that dominated our perception of the country, painting a negative picture in our minds. Willy Brandt was indignant about the fact that I publicly accused him of having an insufficiently critical stance toward America's Vietnam policy. He saw in this reproach a challenge to his moral integrity. And this moral integrity was, above all else, what it was all about: Western values were being betrayed by Western policies. An accusation then, and later again, during George W. Bush's Iraq War.

The weak reaction of the U.S. and other NATO members to the coup by Greek colonels in April 1967 increased the suspicion that, for the U.S., geostrategic considerations took precedence over respect for democratic values. And when, in August 1968, Soviet troops violently ended the experiment of a "Socialism with a human face," it reinforced the narrative among the undogmatic Left that the two world powers, America and the Soviet Union, resembled each other to the degree that, in their respective spheres of influence, they made the limits of the democratic right to self-determination dependent on their geostrategic interests. When we demonstrated with red banners in Frankfurt's Niederrad district that August in front of the Soviet military mission, against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the mission was protected not only by the German police, but also by American soldiers. Our suspicions were reinforced when Allende's democratically elected leftist government was

toppled—with U.S. assistance—in a bloody military coup, in September 1973.

The Vietnam War and the military coups in Greece and Chile shook U.S. democratic credibility. But they didn't lead to serious conflicts between the U.S. and West German governments. This was different with the Yom Kippur War, in 1973. Back then, the U.S. delivered weapons to Israel via West Germany without informing the federal government in advance, let alone asking for its permission. After tolerating these shipments for a time, the Foreign Office protested against the further use of Bremerhaven for this purpose (Chancellor Willy Brandt seemed at the time to have taken a different position on the matter than Foreign Minister Scheel). The U.S. and, of course, Israeli governments reacted with indignation.

Two problems played a role in this conflict that repeatedly led to friction in the following decades. One was to what extent the consideration of Arab sentiments and interests limited German solidarity with Israel. The second was the extent to which actions by U.S. government agencies on German soil compromised the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany. The latter point is central to an understanding of the current conflict over the behavior of the National Security Agency. Sometime after the end of the Yom Kippur War, before I had become a member of parliament, I traveled to Washington for the first time, where I was asked at the State Department what position I would have taken as a German politician in this situation. My answer back then was that such American arms shipments from German soil without the prior knowledge and approval of the federal government were unacceptable. But with an eye to our relations with Israel, I would have agreed to an American request of this kind.

In the latter half of the 1970s, questions of nuclear strategy and related issues of nuclear-arms control began to strain transatlantic relations. The resulting conflicts didn't confine themselves to national borders. While the protests of the peace movement in Germany were aimed primarily at the policies of various U.S. administrations, they also demonstrated against decisions the U.S. had made in substantial part with the involvement of—and, in some cases, only at the urging of—the German federal government.

In West German public opinion, an antinuclear mood had been dominant since the end of World War II. At the beginning, it had been directed above all against the positioning of nuclear weapons on German soil, and

especially against Franz Josef Strauss' advocacy at that time for German possession of nuclear weapons. The use of nuclear technologies for civil purposes, on the other hand, had the support of the majority of the population. This changed gradually over the course of the 1970s. For their part, Federal Chancellor Schmidt and his government endorsed not only an expansion of the civil use of nuclear energy, but also the modernization of nuclear weapons as part of the Western strategy of deterrence.

When the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. reached a SALT accord, Helmut Schmidt was disposed to agree to the stationing of neutron weapons in West Germany, given the superiority of the Soviet Union and its allies in the area of conventional arms, should arms-control negotiations not result in Soviet willingness to reduce its stocks of conventional weapons. When the Soviets began stationing SS-20 medium-range missiles, Schmidt feared the possibility of nuclear blackmail by the U.S.S.R. in a crisis, since the strategic parity agreed to in the SALT treaty—even as the Soviet Union preserved its simultaneous superiority in other areas—would undermine the American security guarantee. In this sense, Schmidt's 1977 speech at the IISS in London was, above all, a declaration of mistrust toward President Jimmy Carter. Schmidt's reservations were heightened when Carter, in 1978, surprisingly and without consulting his allies, decided against the production of neutron weapons.

Jimmy Carter's decisions regarding nuclear weapons and his initiatives against nuclear proliferation were quite popular among left-leaning sections of German society, in part more popular than those of Helmut Schmidt. I wasn't convinced by Schmidt's military arguments for the development and placement of new U.S. medium-range missiles. Even after the SALT accord, I thought the existing American nuclear weapons were sufficient to deter the Soviets from embarking on any military adventures in Europe. However, after numerous trips to the U.S.S.R., I didn't believe that without the threat of the stationing of American medium-range missiles the Soviet Union could be moved to reduce, let alone dismantle, its nuclear weapons. Giving priority to arms-control policy, I then voted for the NATO double-track decision in 1979. At that time, I was still the spokesman for the left wing of the SPD. My stance on the NATO double-track decision led to my being removed from this post in 1982, primarily at the instigation of Oskar Lafontaine.

In the subsequent years, the implementation of the NATO double-track decision repeatedly led to serious

strains in the German-American relationship. Relations between the governments during the period of the Reagan Administration revolved, above all, around the significance of arms control, which the U.S. didn't prioritize as highly as did Germany. The two countries' respective rhetoric and policies toward the U.S.S.R. also figured prominently. Anyone who, like President Reagan, spoke of the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire" had no credibility with Germans committed to policies for peace. The reservations vis a vis the Reagan Administration were significantly greater among the German population than in the government. The mistrust of these segments of the population, however, was directed not only at the US, but also at their own government. It was primarily the conflict with its own political base that ultimately brought down the Schmidt government.

No issue in the transatlantic conflict moved more people to demonstrate publicly in the following years than the conflict around the stationing of medium-range nuclear missiles. Helmut Schmidt wasn't always right in his political and military beliefs. In terms of outcome, however, history proved him right. I know many former protesters who still have difficulty admitting this. When, in later decades, the remnants of the peace movement, members of parliament, or even members of the federal government tried to take up the issue of "nuclear arms in Germany", they found that it never even remotely resonated with the public as it had in the early 1980s. After the end of the East-West conflict, with the change in Germany's geostrategic situation, the fear of nuclear war on German soil began to wane.

After German reunification, the topics subject to transatlantic conflict also changed. Geostrategically speaking, Germany today finds itself better situated than it has for centuries—surrounded by nations that are friends, want to be friends, or at least claim to be friends. For this reason, Germany today is in demand as an exporter of security and stability, unlike during the Cold War, when the potential conflict-situations and the associated range of deployment scenarios for the German armed forces were clear. This is no longer the case, which makes decisions more difficult, and at the same time increases their urgency.

At the start of the Gulf War in 1991, Helmut Kohl could still claim that the Basic Law barred German participation. Based on this argument, he limited Germany's contribution to financial support of the U.S. campaign. From the German side, one could have also said more honestly that it would be unwise to commit German soldiers for foreign military operations so long

as the Soviet troops hadn't been completely withdrawn from Germany. Yet in parts of the peace movement, too, the constellation that had defined the debate on the NATO double-track decision had changed: a minority of those who had demonstrated against it showed an understanding for the American action against Saddam Hussein. Others protested against the "War in the Gulf" and consciously avoided demonstrating in locations where American soldiers and war materiel were loaded to be sent to the Gulf. Thus, for months, American transport planes took off from the military section of Frankfurt Airport, in full view of civilian passengers, without conflicts arising, as they had in the early 1980s.

The Gulf War begun by President George W. Bush, in 2003, took place against a completely changed backdrop: immediately following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington there were spontaneous professions in Germany of sympathy for the U.S. Federal Chancellor Schröder promised the U.S. the "unlimited solidarity" of the Germans. And this didn't remain limited to words. In a departure from German postwar tradition, the German military took part in the mission in Afghanistan. Cooperation between the intelligence services was intensified and common strategies against international terrorism were developed.

But when President Bush took the attacks of 9/11 as a pretext for war against Iraq, in violation of international law, the mood in Germany quickly turned; one of the most serious intergovernmental crises of the postwar period ensued. Schröder's "No" to the Iraq War was justified, and remains so, too, from today's perspective. His "No" was aligned with the principles of German postwar policy with regard to peace policy and international law. His rhetoric, on the other hand – especially his speech in Goslar—was influenced by the national election campaign underway at the same time.

Shortly after the start of the war, I traveled to the U.S., seeking to help prevent lasting damage to the German-American relationship. This was in keeping with the aims of the federal government. Although it had spoken out very clearly against the war and thus against the policy of the Bush administration, it had no objections to the use of American bases in Germany. This was taken for granted by the U.S. As could be seen in the behavior of the Turkish government, however, it shouldn't have been. Had the German government at the time taken the stance of the Turkish government, the bitter conflict between the Bush Administration and the Schröder/Fischer government would have resulted in a lasting crisis in transatlantic relations.

The federal government went a step further: it made available 8,000 German soldiers to protect the American military bases. In this way, it contributed indirectly to increasing the numbers of deployable U.S. troops. The German government opposed America's war. But, of course, it still wanted the U.S. to win this war. And it searched for new common ground. Out of this arose the German-American cooperation to prevent Iran from developing atomic weapons.

When I explained during my American visit how Germany, despite its clear and principled "No" to the Iraq War, supported the U.S. more substantially than did a number of the other countries that had stridently voiced their backing of the U.S., Germany's behavior was taken as a matter of course. Yet it wasn't at all. This assistance ran counter to Article 26 of the German Constitution, which made preparations by the federal government for a war of aggression a punishable offense. In Germany at that time, when the accusation was levied that practical support for the U.S. marked a violation of Article 26, I responded evasively.

The terrorist attacks on New York brought lasting changes to the USA, both internally and in its actions toward the outside world. In the perpetually contentious balance between security and freedom, the pendulum swung heavily to the side of security. Meanwhile, small corrections have been made, yet compared to the pre-9/11 era, the emphasis has remained on security. When I taught at a college in Arkansas during the "German Autumn" of the 1970s, German measures to combat terrorism were seen as a revival of German authoritarianism. Today, I more often hear the accusation that the Germans, because of their history, lack the resolve to decisively act against terrorist dangers.

The controversy over the actions of the National Security Agency fits into this context: in the past, too, the American intelligence agencies played a different and more important role than the German intelligence agencies. Covert military operations on the ground in other countries, especially without prior parliamentary authorization, and targeted killings of presumed terrorists using drones would constitute a violation of Germany's legal order. When leading German politicians and diplomats assumed that their American allies wouldn't eavesdrop on their telephones and computers, this was naïve. In America, Britain, and several other NATO countries, friendship doesn't preclude spying on one another. Many of my American interlocutors assume that this is—in contrast to German practice—German policy as well. Any hope by German

politicians that they might move the U.S. to conform to German practice is an illusion. In the future, we will have to continue to deal with this difference between the political cultures as unemotionally as possible.

Germany and the U.S. invoke essentially the same fundamental values. But in individual cases, they practice a different hierarchy of values. Their political cultures, history, and self-conception also differ. The more one works to achieve an understanding of these differences, the more constructively one can deal with any conflicts that may arise. This will be even more important in the future than it was in the past, as Germany will have to engage more strongly in matters of foreign and security policy on the borders of and outside of Europe. This role is new for Germany. Understandably, we are still unpracticed and unsure in filling this role. The U.S. should practice understanding and patience in this area. On the other hand, Germany

should continue to be not only a partner, but also a counterpart, when the U.S.—as in the Iraq War—causes additional instability rather than fostering stability.

The U.S. and Europe increasingly have relations not only in foreign policy but also in areas of domestic policy. The fight over TTIP, the protection of privacy, and the limits to the freedom of expression on Facebook touch on conflicts which used to belong primarily to domestic policy, but today are matters of both domestic and foreign policy. Out of this increasing dissolution of domestic policy boundaries arise new points of friction. The resulting conflicts are seen by some observers as a sign of “estrangement.” I see them, on the contrary, as a result of increasing closeness. Increasing closeness doesn’t always lead to greater sympathy, but often also to additional points of friction. Foreign policy actors on both sides of the Atlantic must in the future, more than before, learn to deal with these “problems of closeness.”

George F. Kennan, Containment, and the West's Current Russia Problem

*Matthew Rojansky*¹

Director, The Kennan Institute,
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

At the core of the Western strategy for managing the Cold War, from the late 1940s to the 1980s, was an American-led policy of “containment” of Soviet power and influence. This containment policy, which is generally credited to U.S. diplomat George F. Kennan and his influential writings in the early Cold War period, diagnosed in Soviet foreign policy an expansionist undercurrent, which had the potential to threaten the foundations of economic prosperity and political stability on which vital Western interests depended. Accordingly, Kennan advised “a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies,” not only in Europe, but globally.²

Containment was a mode of East-West relations that many presumed would be relegated to the dustbin of history at the end of the Cold War. Yet the current period might accurately be dubbed the era of “new containment,” with many urging the United States, NATO, and Europe to once again contain, constrain and counter what they view as Russia’s expansionist policies and malign influence on the world stage.³ From the West’s perspective, there may now be compelling reasons for adopting a renewed containment approach toward Russia.⁴ It is therefore important to revisit not only the core assumptions that underpinned Kennan’s vision of containment during the early years of the Cold War, but to inquire whether the current period in East-West relations merits a similar response, and on what basis it might be developed.

This paper will argue that although the circumstances around the conflict between Russia and the West today differ considerably from those of the Cold War, it nonetheless poses a serious threat to

European security and stability, and demands a careful and comprehensive Western response. Accordingly, it will present Kennan’s rationale for a containment policy in response to the threat from Moscow, with reference to the potential application of his arguments in the present conflict. It will then describe Kennan’s own understanding of containment, as a primarily non-military strategy, focused on recognition of the adversary’s vulnerabilities while strengthening the West’s capacity to solve pressing problems and inspire others to do the same. Finally, the paper will recall Kennan’s specific recommendation that defeating the Soviet threat requires a robust Western capacity to understand Russia—a capacity that Kennan would judge to be sadly lacking today.

Russia and the West in the Cold War and Today

“The Russians look forward to a duel of infinite duration, and they see that already they have scored great successes.”⁵

Russia’s military interventions in the post-Soviet neighborhood, particularly in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine since 2014, have made other nearby European states nervous about their own security vis-à-vis a militarily resurgent Russia, and have thus dragged into the spotlight NATO’s “Article V” promise of collective defense. This is most acutely felt in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, where NATO member states share land and sea borders either with Russia directly, or with Russia’s most vulnerable post-Soviet neighbors, and where Russia is presumed to be able to project military, economic and political power with relative ease.⁶

Many European states and international observers

have also begun to think of Russian non-military influence in its neighborhood and globally as a malign force, in much the same terms that the West perceived Soviet influence to be inherently threatening during the Cold War.⁷ Thus, in addition to imposing economic, diplomatic, and political sanctions as a direct response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, which have been answered by Russian counter-sanctions, Western governments have begun to search out and closely examine Russian investments, diplomatic and cultural activities, and links with political actors within their own borders—all reminiscent of the Cold War's rivalry not only of arms, but of ideologies, economics, and diplomacy.⁸

There are even surprisingly significant stylistic and structural similarities in the current East-West conflict to the state of relations during the Cold War. On both sides, demonization of the other has largely replaced reasoned dialogue, let alone introspection. As Robert Legvold has argued, both sides have now been conditioned to think of the other side as fully responsible for the creation of the current crisis, and each side portrays the other as intentionally and nefariously seeking to exploit the situation to damage, disadvantage and undermine the other's interests.⁹ In fact, political leaders have begun consistently labeling one another as adversaries, and have fully embraced the threat narrative with respect to the other.¹⁰ The most troubling structural similarity between the current East-West conflict and the worst decades of the Cold War may be the reemergence of proxy conflicts between Russia and the West. Of course, armed clashes that occasionally involved Russian forces broke out around the post-Soviet periphery in the 1990s and afterwards, and Russia and the West disagreed sharply over the handling of crises and conflicts from the Balkans to the Middle East during the same period. Yet the past two years have for the first time in decades witnessed not only direct military conflict between forces supported, equipped and trained by the West against those backed by Russia in Syria and Ukraine, but also numerous airspace interceptions between NATO and Russia, and even one case in which Turkey, a NATO member state, shot down a Russian jet in November 2015.¹¹ Rather than isolated incidents in an otherwise harmonious international environment, these episodes illustrate the degree to which both sides are striving to separate friend from foe globally, and to secure favorable international alignments or coalitions reminiscent of Cold-War geopolitical "blocs."¹²

Of course, a broad strokes analogy between the current Russia-West conflict and that of the Cold War clearly fails when one considers the vast disparity between Russian and Western power today. While Russia has significantly recovered from the economic, demographic and political collapse it suffered after losing its East European and Soviet empires in 1989-1991, it is no longer close to equal to the United States in economic, demographic, or conventional military terms, much less to NATO or the West as a whole. With a far wealthier and more developed China increasingly flexing its diplomatic and political muscles, Russia is no longer even the predominant power in Eurasia. In practical terms, the only geographic areas in which Russia evinces a capacity to balance or potentially supersede the West are in its immediate post-Soviet periphery, and even then, only if it applies overwhelming force against relatively soft targets, and then relies on its vast nuclear arsenal to seek to deter a Western response.¹³

Even if one accepts that Russia and the West may have reignited a Cold War style geopolitical rivalry over the post-Soviet space, the domestic and global context of the current period is nothing like that of the early Cold War. Despite divergent media narratives and the imposition of sanctions and counter-sanctions, Russians and Westerners are far more interconnected by trade, professional, community and family ties than at any time in the past, and both are deeply engaged with China and the global economy. Ideological elements of the current conflict, while apparent in debates over human rights, democratic legitimacy, and international law, are still relatively limited by comparison with the Cold War's all-encompassing struggle of free market capitalism versus communism.¹⁴ Moreover, Russia and the West have maintained some channels of communication and have cooperated successfully on important global and regional security issues, most notably the Iran nuclear agreement, even in the context of an overall deterioration in relations.¹⁵

Still, reminders that the world has changed and that the Cold War is long in the past offer cold comfort to governments and societies worried that Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine signal its ambitions to upend the relative security and stability that Europe has enjoyed for the past quarter century. Even for those in the West who reject the new Cold War paradigm and perceive no direct threat from Russia today, a new containment policy might be justifiable on the grounds that the importance of reassuring nervous European

neighbors far outweighs the cost of lost partnership and engagement with Russia, which might well be illusory in the first place. After all, Russo skeptics argue, the Russian leadership has been habitually dishonest about its intentions in Ukraine, Syria, and elsewhere, while its state-funded media organs are engaged in a systematic global disinformation campaign.¹⁶ How, they ask, can there be any value to partnership with a regime that cannot be trusted?¹⁷

The Need for Containment Then and Now

“This would of itself warrant the United States entering with reasonable confidence upon a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interest of a peaceful and stable world.”¹⁸

Taken together, Western perceptions of the threat posed by Russia make an apparently credible case for the restoration of a kind of containment doctrine today, a quarter century after the end of the Cold War. So it is no surprise that George F. Kennan, as the intellectual father of containment, is now again frequently cited to justify the restoration of this approach.¹⁹ But would Kennan in fact have recommended such a policy in response to the present crisis in East-West relations, and if so, how might it have differed from the current policy?

It is beyond dispute that Kennan, in both his famous “Long Telegram” of 1946 and his equally famous “Mr. X” article from the following year, argued for a policy of strong resistance against Soviet expansionism, which he and others characterized as a containment doctrine. Kennan even described Soviet foreign policy in terms not dissimilar from those used in the growing Western consensus about Russian foreign policy today. Kennan assessed the Soviet leadership to be, on the one hand, sincere in its belief that the world was gripped by a titanic ideological struggle, and thus inclined to spread the Soviet worldview and political influence by all possible means, but on the other hand, entirely pragmatic in its inclination to push outward only when “timely and promising,” and to hold back when resistance was encountered.²⁰

Accordingly, the most widely cited component of Kennan’s recommendation for a containment policy was to ensure that expansionist Soviet moves encountered resistance from the West wherever and whenever possible. Kennan called for “the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points,” in which he

included both Western societies themselves, and the wider world in which Soviet and Western interests collided.²¹

In Kennan’s view, the danger of an expansionist Soviet foreign policy came not only from the Bolsheviks’ distinct ideology, but from their access to the vast power and potential of Russia itself. Although ideological differences are now much less pronounced, Kennan’s assessment of the potential disruptive power of Russian foreign policy for Western interests should be heeded as well today. “This political force,” Kennan wrote of the Kremlin, “has complete power of disposition over energies of one of world’s greatest peoples and resources of world’s richest national territory, and is borne along by deep and powerful currents of Russian nationalism.”²²

Kennan’s assessment of the methods of Soviet expansionism might also be profitably compared to the behavior we see from Russia today. In his 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article, he described (with unfortunate overtones of racial and cultural bias) an opportunistic and flexible but inexorably outward-pushing Russian challenge:

[It] Expands where permitted to do so: Here caution, circumspection, flexibility and deception are the valuable qualities; and their value finds natural appreciation in the Russian or the oriental mind. Thus the Kremlin has no compunction about retreating in the face of superior force. And being under the compulsion of no timetable, it does not get panicky under the necessity for such retreat. Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. Its main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power. But if it finds unassailable barriers in its path, it accepts these philosophically and accommodates itself to them.”²³

Russia Today

While today’s Russia may bring to bear more modest resources in terms of national wealth, population, and even military potential, it is still a force to be reckoned with, one of the world’s two nuclear superpowers, a major international power broker, and by far the strongest national military present in the European theater. Likewise, Russian “expansionism” today varies from overt seizure and annexation of territory, as in Crimea, to murkier “hybrid” interventions in neighboring states as in Ukraine’s Donbas region, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, to the assertion of a right to protect the ethnic Russian diaspora

living beyond Russia's borders, from the Baltics to Central Asia. Just as Kennan argued regarding Soviet expansionism, Russia's current policy towards its neighborhood is pragmatic and flexible, but appears inexorably focused on the establishment of a sphere of influence, at least in its so-called "near abroad."²⁴

While the Kremlin today evinces little interest in promoting more widespread adoption of its particular political ideology of state capitalism and a strong "power vertical," or in dominating territory beyond its immediate periphery, it nonetheless does seek to project influence globally in ways not unlike those described by Kennan during the Cold War. The main goals of Russian policy in the West were, according to Kennan, "to disrupt national self-confidence, to hamstring measures of national defense, to increase social and industrial unrest [and] to stimulate all forms of disunity." He warned that within Western societies, "poor will be set against rich, black against white, young against old, newcomers against established residents, etc."²⁵ These very approaches are evident in current Russian-sponsored media and political activity in the West, and beyond.

Much has been written in recent years on the topic of Russian-supported broadcast and online media activity around the world, which Westerners have accused of promoting a deceptive and propagandized narrative in service of Kremlin interests.²⁶ Some even cite Russian media activities as a core component of the so-called "hybrid" threat to Russia's nearest neighbors, including NATO members.²⁷ The Russians themselves argue that Russian international media activity is no different from that of any other country, and in particular no different from the U.S. media, which has for decades enjoyed an outsized international footprint.²⁸ Either way, there can be little doubt that Russian-backed TV and radio broadcasting, news agencies and web portals, and apparent armies of paid internet "trolls," all operate in the West today with the goal of "stirring the pot" of anti-government political views, and more broadly undermining public confidence in core Western institutions, from national and local government to major corporations and prominent NGOs.²⁹

Russia's media activities in the West are complemented by Kremlin-backed political activities aimed at strengthening not only policies favorable to Russia's interests, but also establishing connections with fringe political groups on both the right and left of the political spectrum. These contacts go beyond merely fostering fellow-traveler sentiments among the

most vocal critics of the United States, NATO and the established European order, to include providing direct financial assistance to political parties, and even payoffs to individual politicians in the form of consulting fees.³⁰ Once again, Kennan's assessment of Soviet interference in domestic politics in Western countries appears relevant to the present conflict. "Where suspicions exist," Kennan wrote, "they will be fanned; where not, ignited. No effort will be spared to discredit and combat all efforts which threaten to lead to any sort of unity or cohesion."³¹

Kennan's Containment Doctrine

"This is [the] point at which domestic and foreign policies meet. Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués."³²

The striking similarity between Kennan's insights about Soviet foreign policy at the outset of the Cold War and today's well documented trends in Russian policy toward the West suggests that Kennan's analysis and his conclusions are indeed likely to be relevant in developing a coherent Western response to the Russian challenge. To the degree that Kennan's containment doctrine entailed vigilance, strength and readiness to defend against and deter Russian expansion, it is already being actively discussed and widely endorsed by Western political leaders.³³ This is especially true of NATO, where the declaration of the 2014 Wales Summit identified Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine as a game changer for the vision of Europe "whole, free and at peace," and accordingly reiterated NATO's mandate for collective defense, security, and crisis management.³⁴ The NATO Warsaw summit in 2016 is likely to produce further focus on the Alliance's current and future capabilities to respond to Russian aggression, from the Baltic to the Black Sea region and elsewhere.³⁵

Despite his later reservations about an overly militarized response to the Soviet threat, and his vocal opposition to post-Cold War NATO enlargement, Kennan was a supporter of NATO's central role in European security.³⁶ He was himself at the center of early Cold War strategy discussions that produced the U.S. proposals for a North Atlantic Alliance and the Marshall Plan, key instruments of containment in Europe.³⁷ Yet close attention to Kennan's writings suggests he intended containment to entail much more

than a geopolitical game of “whack a mole,” deploying countermeasures and closing Western ranks in response to any and every Soviet provocation. In fact, Kennan was especially concerned to ensure that it was the West, not the Kremlin, which would control the agenda, believing that the challenge was “within our power to solve...without recourse to any general military conflict.”³⁸

Kennan’s certainty that the Soviet threat could be deterred in order to prevent overt military conflict derived from his previously cited analysis of the basic Russian approach to power projection. Because the Russians were inclined to think of geopolitical competition as a long term struggle, and were thus potentially prepared to cede ground on any given issue in the face of firm opposition, Kennan advised that deterrence could be highly effective in preventing divergent interests from sliding into general conflict between Russia and the West. “If the adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely has to do so,” Kennan reasoned, so that “if situations are properly handled there need be no prestige-engaging showdowns.”³⁹

By the same token, Kennan warned against needlessly bombastic, blustering responses to the Soviet threat, which he worried Russians might perceive as weakness, or which might push the Kremlin into a domestic political corner where it was forced to escalate:

It is important to note, however, that such a policy has nothing to do with outward histrionics: with threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward “toughness.” While the Kremlin is basically flexible in its reaction to political realities, it is by no means unamenable to considerations of prestige. Like almost any other government, it can be placed by tactless and threatening gestures in a position where it cannot afford to yield even though this might be dictated by its sense of realism. The Russian leaders are keen judges of human psychology, and as such they are highly conscious that loss of temper and of self-control is never a source of strength in political affairs. They are quick to exploit such evidences of weakness. For these reasons, it is a sine qua non of successful dealing with Russia that the foreign government in question should remain at all times cool and collected and that its demands on Russian policy should be put forward in such a manner as to leave the way open for a compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige.⁴⁰

If the West is to benefit from Kennan’s insights today, it is essential that it balance between

demonstrating the collective political will necessary to maintain a credible deterrent, and charting a way forward for negotiated settlement of differences, selective cooperation, and even eventual reconciliation in Russia-West relations overall. At a time when European and trans-Atlantic unity have been strained by a seemingly relentless spate of crises, striking this delicate balance is no small challenge.

The most difficult dimension of a successful containment strategy may also be the most often forgotten or misconstrued from Kennan’s original writings: Kennan flipped on its head the Marxist-Leninist contention that capitalism contained the “seeds of its own destruction” to argue that in fact, it was the Soviet system that would eventually bring itself to ruin thanks to its internal contradictions, reactionary leadership, and fundamental structural flaws.⁴¹ Thus, rather than be provoked into rash action in the name of preventive security, or pursuing adventurist interventions inside Russia itself, Kennan advised the West to practice strategic patience, in the confidence that much of what was threatening about Soviet power would ultimately ensure its own demise.

Once again, Kennan’s insights offer vitally important lessons for Russia-West relations today. For example, the fact that the Soviet leadership evinced innate hostility toward the West and the wider capitalist world—what Kennan referred to as the Kremlin’s “aggressive intransigence”—was emblematic of the Bolshevik regime’s tendency toward paranoia and self-isolation.⁴² Moreover, Kennan wrote, “the very disrespect of Russians for objective truth—indeed, their disbelief in its existence—leads them to view all stated facts as instruments for furtherance of one ulterior purpose or another.”⁴³ Western politicians have lamented similar strains of self-isolating,⁴⁴ and deliberately dishonest or manipulative behavior on the part of the current Russian leadership.⁴⁵

Following Kennan’s advice, a successful containment strategy would treat these unsettling Russian behaviors not as threats in and of themselves mandating a forceful Western response, but rather as confirmation of the inherent brittleness of the current Russian political system. Ironically, it is almost certainly the hawkish Western rhetorical response to Russian provocations in the human rights arena, and around the Ukraine and Syria crises, that has helped boost President Putin’s popularity from a low near 60% prior to his reelection bid in 2012, to 80% or higher for much of the past two years.⁴⁶ If it is true that the Russian

leadership has been dishonest in its dealings around Ukraine and Syria, and if it has in fact isolated the Russian people and the Russian economy from the wider world, then Kennan's vision of containment would suggest that the West's task is now, to echo the oft-repeated slogan on the British home front in World War II, to keep calm and carry on.

Even if it weathers the storm of economic and political isolation it has stirred up by its hostile actions in Ukraine, the Russian state faces an existential challenge entirely of its own making in the coming decades. Once again, Kennan's insights are indispensable. He cautioned that despite its outwardly strong appearance, the Soviet regime was fundamentally weak, and that its weakness would become evident as it attempted to perpetuate itself and propagate new leadership generations: "That they can keep power themselves, they have demonstrated. That they can quietly and easily turn it over to others remains to be proved. Meanwhile, the hardships of their rule and the vicissitudes of international life have taken a heavy toll of the strength and hopes of the great people on whom their power rests."⁴⁷

If the objective of Western policy is to achieve a radical transformation in Russian policy by altering the composition or the mindset of the Russian leadership today, then it is surely doomed to fail. Such an approach would wrongly substitute urgency for gravity, and would clearly overreach in terms of the West's actual capacity to influence events within Russia and its immediate neighborhood. As Kennan observed of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, the Russians are "still by far the weaker force" when gauged against the West as a whole. Thus, he argued, "their success will really depend on [the] degree of cohesion, firmness and vigor which the Western World can muster. And this is [a] factor which it is within our power to influence."⁴⁸

Effective containment, in Kennan's view, required not only cohesion for the sake of resisting the Kremlin's "divide and conquer" tactics within the Western camp, but also consistency over time and across many related areas of national life and state policy. He advised the United States to "formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of [the] sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of [the] past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security."⁴⁹ Far

from a dated reference to Europe's exhaustion and vulnerability in the aftermath of World War II, Kennan's words capture a renewed sense of vulnerability to internal and external threats in Europe today, and underscore the continuing indispensability of U.S. leadership.

The West's challenge in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, its exploitation of far right politics throughout Europe, and its media activities around the globe, is clearly not only determining how to defend NATO allies militarily. It is also to strengthen the bulwarks of healthy and successful politics, security and commerce, by offering a compelling alternative future vision. In Kennan's words, "It is rather a question of the degree to which the United States can create among the peoples of the world generally the impression of a country which knows what it wants, which is coping successfully with the problems of its internal life and with the responsibilities of a world power, and which has a spiritual vitality capable of holding its own among the major ideological currents of the time."⁵⁰ Containment, in Kennan's own words, was as much about reaffirming and broadcasting the vision at the heart of Western power and prosperity, as it was about devising a direct response to Russian power.

The Missing Piece: Understanding Russia

*"We must see that our public is educated to realities of Russian situation. I cannot over-emphasize importance of this. Press cannot do this alone. It must be done mainly by Government, which is necessarily more experienced and better informed on practical problems involved."*⁵¹

Kennan's focus on restoring vitality and credibility at home and abroad of the Western vision for peace, prosperity and problem solving within a rules based international order is not matched by the efforts of today's European and U.S. political leaders. Still, these basic challenges are very much on the table in policy discussions around the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, and in the lively debate around the future of the European Union. Yet to extract from Kennan's writing on containment only the paired recommendations of forcing Russia to confront its own systemic weaknesses while offering a clear and compelling alternate vision globally, would be to miss the third and most fundamental pillar of his analysis.

In the policy recommendations at the conclusion of his famous Long Telegram, Kennan advises Americans, and the wider West by extension, to know much more

about Russia and Russians on both the official and general public levels, cautioning that, “there is nothing as dangerous or as terrifying as the unknown.”⁵² Those words could hardly be truer or more relevant today, and yet this absolutely central message of Kennan’s work has all but disappeared in the quarter century since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

While Kennan’s central message about the importance of knowing Russia in order to handle it as a foreign policy problem is more relevant than ever, Kennan himself would likely have agreed that much more work is needed to update and build on his analysis of the sources of Russia’s worldview and foreign policy conduct from the middle of the last century. Do the U.S., NATO, or Western countries, collectively or individually, now have the capacity to do this as a foundation for developing an effective policy towards Russia? Unfortunately, the answer is mostly negative. Even with Russia constantly in the headlines, there has been only limited investment in sustaining expertise on Russia in North America and Western Europe over the past two decades.

In the United States, Russian area expertise has suffered as a casualty of trends promoting quantitative methodology in academia, across-the-board cuts to government programs supporting Russian education and research, including cuts of over 50% to critical language training, and near complete elimination of advanced research fellowships for Americans on Russia and the region.⁵³ These reductions in the overall pool of academic expertise have been reflected inside government as well, where analysts and diplomats working in support of policymakers have seen career incentives reoriented to favor expertise on other regions, such as the Middle East, or on crosscutting issues such as counter-terrorism or democracy promotion and development.⁵⁴ The situation in Western Europe has been similar over the same time period, with increasing pressure in recent years for area expertise focused on the South, rather than the East.

As a recent externally funded field study of Russia expertise in the United States concluded, “Russian studies within the social sciences are facing a crisis.”⁵⁵ Political science faculties in the top three-dozen U.S. universities have together awarded an average of only 7 PhDs per year with at least a minimum (defined as 25% or more) focus on Russian area studies.⁵⁶ The situation in economics and sociology is even more dismal, with a grand total of only 4 economics and 5 sociology PhDs

with a focus on Russia awarded since 2009. Even the broader field of Slavic Studies, which includes language, literature and culture experts, is in decline, with barely a quarter of its PhD graduates from this decade employed in tenure-track teaching jobs.⁵⁷ Given declining interest in Russian studies among incoming students reported for most of the past decade, and the elimination of many faculty positions that were previously earmarked for Russian specialists, it is no surprise that universities have fewer students enrolled in Russia-focused electives and core courses that might equip the United States’ future political, social and business leaders with even a basic knowledge of Russia.

The news is not uniformly negative about Russia expertise in the West. Central and Eastern European states have tended to maintain a much stronger capacity to understand and analyze Russia, which has in many cases proven indispensable to NATO and the European Union. In fact, the divergence of expertise between East and West had become so pronounced by the end of the last decade that in many intra-European and Euro-Atlantic forums, a de facto division of labor emerged in which representatives of Central and East European member states assumed primary responsibility for analyzing and developing collective policy recommendations towards Russia and the former Soviet space. Yet for the United States, NATO and the West as a whole, understanding Russia by proxy is patently inadequate to the task at hand.

Restoring Russian Expertise

If we are to follow Kennan’s advice to study Russia with “courage, detachment [and] objectivity,”⁵⁸ what can we now do to enhance Western capacity as a foundation for developing and implementing an effective comprehensive policy towards Russia? First, the United States and Western Europe must restore financial support for the development of robust Russian area expertise as a top national security priority. Funding for language study, scholarship, research and exchange is essential to broadening and deepening knowledge of Russia in the West, and neither universities themselves nor the private sector have shown sufficient ability or resolve to substitute for Cold War era government programs that have been cut or eliminated. While many Western governments are under intense public pressure to cut expenditures, this investment is comparatively small—at its height, the entire U.S. “Title VIII” Russian area studies program cost around \$5 million per year—and it should be

recognized as a national security imperative, not a luxury.⁵⁹

It is instructive here to recall that Kennan himself underwent his early training in Russian studies at the University of Berlin, and then gained close up expertise on the Soviet economy while serving at the U.S. legation in Riga, Latvia. Now as then, it is important that universities and research institutions remain bastions of intellectual freedom, while fostering contacts with government and offering timely and policy-relevant insights through publications, seminars and media commentary. Likewise, Kennan's own academic and professional experience crisscrossing the United States and Europe reminds us that the development of Western expertise on Russia should be a shared undertaking. Individual institutions and experts from North America and all parts of Europe should be encouraged by their governments to collaborate, mirroring the NATO Alliance's foundational commitment to collective and cooperative security.

Some important limitations and rules of thumb should inform government programs supporting scholarship on Russia, and should likewise guide the policy-oriented work of Russia experts themselves. Far too often, the call for expertise on Russia from the press, civic groups, private grant-makers and government agencies is focused primarily on "understanding Putin," or explaining "Putin's Russia" in a particular context. This preoccupation with Putin is echoed in a similar trend of universities and think tanks that have reacted to Russia's political and foreign policy shift during the Putin presidency by recasting much of their work as a new brand of "Kremlinology." As one prominent Russian scholar has pointed out, the focus by Westerners on "Putin's Russia" gets it exactly backwards, because the current occupant of the Kremlin would be much better understood as "Russia's Putin."⁶⁰ Though his own perceptions are necessarily shaped by his unique personal experience, Putin is more than anything a reaction to and expression of much broader trends in Russian society, politics and economic life over the past several decades.⁶¹

Finally, while close study of Russia can cast considerable light on the trends and context influencing elite decision-making, there is generally little basis for the type of palantir-gazing "Kremlinology" depicted in films and spy novels. These approaches also seem to neglect a vital lesson of the Cold War, during which not even the most ingenious Russia watchers had much success reading the minds of the Kremlin elite, much

less predicting the most consequential developments in Soviet foreign policy or within the Soviet Union itself. As a former senior U.S. diplomat recalled, even by the summer of 1991, most Russia experts in government and universities were expecting that during the following year, Moscow would at most slightly relax its control over the Baltic Republics, but that the Soviet Union would remain strong and intact for a long time to come.⁶²

In pursuit of restoring and renewing the West's Russia expertise, we must embrace both caution and humility, since there are seldom demonstrably right answers in the study of human societies and cultures, and the most important insights are seldom those that seem obvious to most people. We must also be patient, as deep and balanced understanding of any people and place develops over years, even decades, though renewed investment may be well rewarded even in the short term by attracting back to policy relevant work the most capable and experienced Russia experts who have migrated to other fields. Finally, we must approach the study of Russia with a truly open mind, avoiding convenient but false assumptions based on deep-rooted prejudice, or on all too common Western literary, cinematic and political stereotypes of Russians.

The Long Road Ahead

*"Surely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin's challenge to American society."*⁶³

It seems to be the habit of every generation, and perhaps it is a conceit of human nature, to imagine that the challenges of the modern world must be quite distinct from anything we have seen before. Advances in technology, prosperity, and shifts in religious and political beliefs, plus of course the lessons of history themselves, are most often cited to justify why this is so. Yet some insights are undeniably as relevant today as they were in the past, including on matters of international security and relations among today's great powers. Kennan's evaluation of the sources of Russian foreign policy and his recommendations for a comprehensive Western strategy of containment stand out as particularly valuable in the face of the current challenge facing Western policymakers.

Kennan's firsthand analysis of Russia in the early years of the Cold War, and his recipe for a sophisticated, sustained containment policy as recounted above, have

tracked to a considerable degree with key elements of the Western policy response to Russia in the current period. Faced with the Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine, the West has imposed punitive economic, political and diplomatic sanctions, maintaining a united front against considerable political countercurrents, thereby deepening Russia's self-imposed isolation from much of the global economy. Western governments have also provided direct assistance to strengthen Ukraine's ability to defend its sovereignty while conducting extremely difficult but vital reforms aimed at rooting out corruption and breaking the monopoly on power of a few oligarchic cliques.

These efforts have hardly had a transformative impact on either Russian policy or Ukraine's political, social and economic hardships, but if considered in terms of Kennan's containment doctrine, they need not do so. Rather, Western policy toward Russia today, just as in the Cold War, should be oriented towards success over the longer term. Strengthening the pillars of the West's already considerable economic, political and cultural accomplishments presents an attractive force for individuals and whole societies caught between the geopolitical forces of Russia and the West, and by the same token blunts Russian interventions designed to exploit internal weakness or sow divisions within NATO or the European Union.

Demonstrating sufficient unity and resolve to pose a strong deterrent against military aggression, the West can also choose not to engage with Russia in a tit-for-tat competition of maneuvers and symbols in the post-Soviet space. This will deny the Kremlin one of its most powerful fonts of anti-Western propaganda, and leave Russians to decide for themselves whether they are satisfied with their political leaders and their country's role in the world. Targeted and sustained investments in enhancing the West's capacity to understand Russia can help divorce fact from fantasy, and illuminate not only what Russians think about their own country and the world, but why they think it.

Not surprisingly, some in the West today would find Kennan's vision of containment unsatisfying. Many already argue that Russia's military aggression, defiance of basic international norms, and attempts at geopolitical and even historical revisionism deserve a tougher and more immediate response than careful analysis, strategic patience and unity on collective security, deterrence, and shared values.⁶⁴ Even within the U.S. administration he served, Kennan faced strenuous

opposition from more hawkish colleagues, most famously Paul Nitze, who thought about the Cold War as "a battle of will and numbers," and argued for overwhelming the Soviets with superior capabilities and deployments across the board.⁶⁵

It is certainly true that a containment policy cannot succeed if it is perceived to be a path of least resistance, or if the term is invoked merely to paper over internal political differences. If the West is to revive containment as a guiding principle of its Russia policy in the current period, then it is essential to be clear about what we mean by the term, and consistent in applying the policy. Most importantly, political and thought leaders who advocate a new containment doctrine should be well equipped to explain why it is the right response to Russia's challenge to the West, and how it will, over the long term, deliver a much brighter future for Westerners and Russians alike.

Endnote

- 1 The author served as a visiting scholar in the Research Division at the NATO Defense College (NDC) in November/December 2015. NDC originally published this article in January 2016. All views and recommendations in this document belong solely to the author, and should not be attributed to NDC, the Wilson Center, or any other institution. The author is grateful to the NDC leadership for providing a welcoming and intellectually stimulating environment and especially to Dr. Jeffrey Larsen, Director of the NDC Research Division, and his fellow faculty, fellows and scholars for their support in the development of this paper.
- 2 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25). Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct>.
- 3 Rubin, J. (2015). What a real Russia policy would look like. *Right Turn, The Washington Post*, [online]. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2015/12/01/what-a-real-russia-policy-would-look-like/?tid=hybrid_content_2_na.
- 4 Chausovsky, E. (2015). Why the U.S. Feels It Must Contain Russia. *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, [online]. Available at: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/why-us-feels-it-must-contain-russia>.
- 5 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).
- 6 Fallon, M. (2015). Russia a threat to Baltic states after Ukraine conflict, warns Michael Fallon. *The Guardian*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/feb/19/russia-a-threat-to-baltic-states-after-ukraine-conflict-warns-michael-fallon>.
- 7 Goldberg, E. (2015). Russia: And the Danger of an Irrelevant Gas Station. *The World Post, Huffington Post*, [online]. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/edward-goldberg/russia-and-the-danger-of_b_8327376.html.
- 8 Kramer, A. (2014). Russia Seeks Sanctions Tit for Tat. *The New York Times*, [online]. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/business/russian-parliament-moves-closer-to-adopting-law-on-compensation-for-sanctions.html?_r=0.
- 9 Legvold, R. (2014). Managing the New Cold War. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (93 (4)). Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ united-states/2014-06-16/managing-new-cold-war>.
- 10 Green, J. (2015). Pentagon: Russia poses 'existential threat' to the US once again. *WTOP*, [online]. Available at: <http://wtop.com/national-security/2015/08/pentagon-russia-poses-existential-threat-us/>; Sonne, P. (2015). U.S. Is Trying to Dismember Russia, Says Putin Adviser. *The Wall Street Journal*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-is-trying-to-dismember-russia-says-putin-adviser-1423667319>; Nye, J. (2015). The Challenge of Russia's Decline. *Project Syndicate*, [online].

- Available at: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-decline-challenge-by-joseph-s-nye-2015-04>.
- 11 BBC News, (2015). Turkey's downing of Russian warplane - what we know. *BBC News*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34912581>.
 - 12 Moscow's efforts to cajole, constrain and coerce its closest post-Soviet neighbors to support its position on Ukraine are a prime example of the goals and potential difficulties of maintaining Cold War type "bloc" positions on today's controversial questions of European security. See, e.g. Taylor, A. (2014). Why Kazakhstan and Belarus are watching Crimea very, very carefully. *The Washington Post*, [online]. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/03/11/why-kazakhstan-and-belarus-are-watching-crimea-very-very-carefully/>.
 - 13 Colby, B. and Solomon, J. (2015). Facing Russia: Conventional Defence and Deterrence in Europe. *Survival*, Vol. 57, Issue 6.
 - 14 Rojansky, M. (2015). Triple Threat: America, China and Russia on the Path to Conflict? *The National Interest*, [online]. Available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/triple-threat-america-china-russia-the-path-conflict-14020>.
 - 15 Lukyanov, F. (2014). US-Russia Mideast cooperation in balance over Ukraine? *Al-Monitor*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/ukraine-middle-east-russia-syria-us.html#>.
 - 16 CBN News, (2014). Russia 'Dishonest' About Counteroffensive Actions. *CBN News*, [online]. Available at: <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2014/August/Russia-Dishonest-About-Counteroffensive-Actions/>.
 - 17 Chorley, M. (2014). 'Putin is a thug and a liar': British diplomat tears into Russian President as EU targets banks, arms deals and energy firms. *Daily Mail*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2709324/Putin-thug-liar-British-diplomat-tears-Russian-President-EU-tightens-economic-stronghold.html>.
 - 18 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).
 - 19 Skidelsky, R. (2014). Kennan's Revenge. *Project Syndicate*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/robert-skidelsky-uses-the-ukraine-crisis-to-revisit-the-west-s-cold-war-era--containment--doctrine>.
 - 20 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers. Available at: https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf.
 - 21 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25). p. 11.
 - 22 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers.
 - 23 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).
 - 24 Beaumont, P. (2014). Russia makes latest high-risk move to keep pieces of its 'near abroad' in check. *The Guardian*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/02/russia-moves-keep-near-abroad-soviet-states-in-check>.
 - 25 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers.
 - 26 Kates, G. (2014). Russia's Media Machine Looks West. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-media-machine-looks-west/26767603.html>.
 - 27 Johnson, D. (2015). *Research Paper No. 111: Russia's Approach to Conflict - Implications for NATO's Deterrence and Defence*, [pdf]. Rome, Italy: Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome. Available at: <http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?code=449>.
 - 28 Babich, D. (2015). Why West paints Putin as villain & Russian media his evil servants. *RT*, [online]. Available at: <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/317524-west-syria-ukraine-putin-propaganda/>.
 - 29 Kofman, M. and Rojansky, M. (2015). *A Closer look at Russia's "Hybrid War"*, [pdf]. Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center. Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/7-KENNAN%20CABLE-ROJANSKY%20KOFMAN.pdf>; Chen, A. (2015). The Agency. *The New York Times*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html>.
 - 30 In the Kremlin's pocket. (2015). *The Economist*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21643222-who-backs-putin-and-why-kremlins-pocket>.
 - 31 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers.
 - 32 Ibid.
 - 33 Mohammed, A. and Zengerle, P. (2014). In U.S. strategy on Ukraine, a whiff of Kennan's 'containment'. *Reuters*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/07/us-ukraine-crisis-containment-idUSBREA2600320140307>.
 - 34 Wales Summit Declaration, [pdf]. (2014). European Parliament. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/sede/dv/sede240914walessummit/_sede240914walessummit_en.pdf.
 - 35 Kamp, K. (2015). *Security Policy Working Paper No. 9: The Agenda of the NATO Summit in Warsaw*, [pdf]. Bundesakademie fur Sicherheitspolitik. Available at: https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_security_policy_9_2015.pdf.
 - 36 Kennan called NATO enlargement after the end of the Cold War "a tragic mistake," and worried that it would be the beginning of a new Cold War. He predicted that "the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies," while forecasting one of NATO's chief political challenges today, namely that it has "signed up to protect a whole series of countries, even though we have neither the resources nor the intention to do so in any serious way." In the same 1998 *New York Times* column in which Tom Friedman conveyed Kennan's concerns, he commented that we might hope for a future in which, "the forces of globalization integrating Europe, coupled with the new arms control agreements, proved to be so powerful that Russia, despite NATO expansion, moved ahead with democratization and Westernization, and was gradually drawn into a loosely unified Europe." We know now that this hopeful vision was not fulfilled, and the retrospective debate over NATO's post-Cold War enlargement seems to rear its head every time there is a new crisis in relations between Russia and the West. Friedman, T. (1998). Foreign Affairs; Now a Word From X. *The New York Times*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html>.
 - 37 U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, (n.d.). *Milestones: 1945-1952: Kennan and Containment, 1947*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/kennan>.
 - 38 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers.
 - 39 Ibid.
 - 40 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).
 - 41 Ibid.
 - 42 Ibid.
 - 43 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers.
 - 44 Bloomberg News, (2015). *Obama: Russia Is Isolating Itself From the World*, [video]. Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/b/4469c476-4689-466d-bc6a-eff918a49e1f>.
 - 45 Good, C. (2014). Obama Accuses Putin, Russia of Dishonesty on Ukraine. *ABC News*, [online]. Available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-accuses-putin-russia-dishonesty-ukraine/story?id=23562277>.
 - 46 Treisman, D. (2014). What you need to know about Putin's popularity. *The Washington Post*, [online]. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/07/what-you-need-to-know-about-putins-popularity/>.
 - 47 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).
 - 48 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Eelsey Papers.
 - 49 Ibid.
 - 50 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).

- 51 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Gerber, T. (2015). *The State of Russian Studies in the United States: An Assessment by the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES)*, [pdf]. Pittsburgh: Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Available at: <https://pitt.app.box.com/FINAL-ASEEES-assessment>. p. 4-5.
- 54 Karoun Dimeirjian, "Lack of Russia Experts has some in U.S. Worried," *The Washington Post*, 30 December 2015, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/12/30/lack-of-russia-experts-has-the-u-s-playing-catch-up/>.
- 55 Ibid., p. 4.
- 56 Ibid., p. 4.
- 57 Ibid., p. 4.
- 58 Kennan, G. (1946). *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"]*. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers.
- 59 Federal Cuts for Eurasian and Eastern European Studies. (2013). *Inside Higher Ed*, [online]. Available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2013/10/23/federal-cuts- Eurasian-and-eastern-european-studies>.
- 60 Zlobin, N. (2014). *Russia's New Course*, [audio recording]. Wilson Center. Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/russias-new-course>.
- 61 Hill, F. and Gaddy, C. (2013). *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- 62 Collins, J. (2010). *Author Interview with Ambassador James F. Collins*.
- 63 Kennan, G. (1947). The Source of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, [online] (25).
- 64 Ben-Ami, S. (2015). Taking On Revisionist Russia. *Project Syndicate*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/revisionist-russia-ukraine-fight-by-shlomo-ben-ami-2015-03>.
- 65 Youngsmith, B. (2010). Warriors, Hot and Cold. *New Republic*, [online]. Available at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/77221/hawk-and-dove-nicholas-thompson-nitze-kennan-cold-war-soviets>.

The U.S.-Russian ‘Value War’

Nikolai Zlobin

President and Founder,
Center on Global Interests

Russian politicians, experts and journalists have begun to talk frequently about a “new Cold War” that the West, led by the United States, has allegedly declared against Russia. On the one hand, these assertions immediately shift any discussions about foreign policy into the “black-and-white” format of confrontation that is more comfortable for the Russian elite. In this context, Russia takes on the traditional role of the “besieged fortress.” On the other hand, these statements provide a concrete basis for the mobilizing and restrictive domestic policies that are no less beloved by the Russian elite and which stimulate domestic propaganda.

There is no doubt the Russian leadership understands that there is not a single country in the West that poses a military threat to Moscow. Talk of a new Cold War, however, gives the Kremlin an opportunity to reestablish even a small semblance of parity between the United States and Russia. This semblance is not only a matter of honor and a desired goal for the Russian leadership, but an effective tool for promoting the country on the global market. In other words, Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, appears to offer an alternative approach to global politics, one based on values and perceptions that fundamentally differ from those of the West and of the United States in particular.

But clearly, this is not really the case. In contrast to the Cold War period, the U.S.-Russia relationship today does not constitute the heart of international relations, but is rather a point on their periphery. The world is no longer divided into two different socio-political systems that are locked in competition with one another. Russia, despite being far from the standards of a Western

democracy, is still more or less a liberal economy, and the United States and Russia do not have any serious ideological disagreements. Indeed, both find themselves in a confrontation with Islamic fundamentalism. Moreover, despite its growing military strength and influence on the international stage, Russia is not capable of competing with the United States on equal footing in any sphere but the nuclear one. Russia plays the role of the spoiler of Western policies in certain cases, but even its successful operation in Syria failed to give Russia greater standing in other parts of the world—if anything, the Syria campaign sparked a reevaluation of Moscow’s foreign policy among the international community. Finally, Moscow today has neither the backing of an international communist movement, which at one time exerted a significant influence on the mindset of a large part of the world, nor of a military bloc akin to the Warsaw Pact.

In other words, the “new Cold War” is not taking shape. In using this term, Western leaders only make the mistake of playing into the hands of Russian propaganda. But since the current conflict between Russia and the West needs a logical justification—and since the reasons behind the old confrontation no longer apply—the Kremlin has quickly and effectively formulated a new basis for the conflict: a fundamental difference in values and approaches, in which Russia acts as the carrier of “correct” traditional values that need to be protected from the political revisionists in the West, who allow people from different parts of the world, people with different mentalities and beliefs, to dilute and distort them. By contrast, Russia presents itself as the “traditional West” of today. It loudly proclaims the necessity to preserve what it sees as

“traditional values”—from national sovereignty and self-determination, to nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other countries and preservation of the international system that was founded upon the outcome of the Second World War.

In this regard, Russian foreign policy faces a challenge that has three main components. The first—and the most important at this stage—is to prove to its own population (and, if possible, to anyone else who might be in doubt) that the West is no longer the ideal role model of freedom and democracy. The achievements of the West are in the past; therefore, the Russian population shouldn't look to the West (and especially to the United States and Germany) as successful examples of how to solve the country's problems. There is no use in listening to Western politicians or especially in adopting Western practices at home. National sovereignty, in the broadest sense of the term, trumps everything else. Moscow has met this first challenge rather successfully.

The second challenge for Russia is to appeal to traditional values in order to win over to its side not only individual countries, but individual political and social groups in the West—from moderate nationalists and conservatives to traditionalists and advocates of a strong state, as well as those opposed to globalization. In other words, to create a stable, multipolar force that could counter the formation of a new global order based on the main principles of U.S. and Western policy. This is taking place against the backdrop of widespread dissatisfaction with Western foreign policy, as well as internal competition among the dissatisfied states to secure a leading position in this group. Of course the annexation of Crimea, the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the military campaign in Syria have undermined the purity of Russia's intentions. But Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to be the most popular symbol of an alternative system to American hegemony.

The third challenge for Russian foreign policy is to limit the global influence of the United States to the maximum extent, which, according to those in the Kremlin, will lead to an automatic increase in Russian influence. This goal is not a new one for Russia. Moscow has traditionally viewed any actions that increase Western influence as being directly aimed against itself. So far there has been little progress in meeting this third challenge. However, Russia has demonstrated to a significant effect that foreign powers cannot influence its politics. This is presented as not

only proof of Russia's independence on the global stage, but as an example for other countries to emulate.

While the battle between the Soviet Union and the United States was primarily about ideas, today Moscow has completely refashioned it into a battle of values. Unlike ideas, the conflict of values that is cultivated by Moscow carries a deep-rooted, fundamental character. Values take time to change and are not necessarily tied to politics, nor are they dependent on specific situations or events. For that reason a compromise over values is very difficult, if not impossible to achieve. While ideas can compete, values are of a nonmarket character. They cannot be defeated; they can only be discredited. This is what Moscow is actively trying to do in relation to the West.

Instead of an ideological disagreement with accompanying arguments and counterarguments, what we have today is deprecation, humiliation, and distortion of meaning and plain falsification. The impact of these efforts has turned out to be surprisingly strong. Western democracy in its most basic form has been completely discredited in the eyes of the Russian population, as well as among certain groups in other countries, including Western ones. The current presidential elections in the United States are portrayed in the Russian mass media as a “battle of clowns,” and TV reports on the candidates' debates are accompanied by commentaries about their low cultural and educational value. Europe (or Evropa in Russian) is long since referred to as Gay-ropa, while U.S. President Barack Obama is the object of racist humor at the lowest level, manifestations of which are ubiquitous in the streets of Moscow. Russian propaganda refers to countries as “occupied” by America if they house U.S. military bases, while Europeans and Americans are consistently portrayed as immoral perverts. Today's Russia, in contrast to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, respects neither the United States nor Europe and turns this disrespect into a policy. The offensive and disparaging tone in relations that we see today did not exist even at the height of the real Cold War. The Kremlin is acting on the belief that it is in the middle of a global information war against Russia, and in that war anything goes.

If we move away from the narrow political content of the current propaganda, it becomes clear that the problem has very real foundations. Russia demands to be treated as an equal by the United States and the West—the way the Soviet Union was treated before it—despite the fact that today's Russia lacks the military,

political and economic strength, as well as the potential ideological appeal of the latter. As a result the equal treatment is not forthcoming, which in the eyes of Russians—all the way from the elites to the broader public—is viewed as a national humiliation, an offense to the country and its citizens.

Throughout Russian history, this kind of situation has always led to a national consolidation around the leader. The difference today is that there is a strong economic factor working against the leader's favor. By and large, however, the expectations of Western proponents of Russian sanctions did not play out. Amid deteriorating material conditions, the Russian population, in contrast to its Western counterparts, does not wish to change the government and instead rallies around its leaders even more strongly. This is also a Russian tradition. Not a single time during the country's history has economic hardship alone led to political change, or even to a drop in support for the country's leadership.

Instead, there has formed in Russia a massive and stable consensus that is anti-Western and anti-American, and which will be difficult to overcome because it is based not on differing ideologies or even differing political realities, but on a deep conviction that the values of each side are simply incompatible. Moreover, these perceived differences are of a systemic nature and run through the entire spectrum of values—from cultural and lifestyle values to political ones. The United States and Russia have very different understandings of such notions as legality and responsibility, morality and ethics, justice and independence, sovereignty and freedom. This “value rift” is compounded by an additional four factors: a record level of mistrust between the two countries; the absence of not only a single, but even of a similar understanding of how the future world should look; a significant difference between what Moscow and Washington would consider an improvement in relations; and, finally, a deep and in many ways legitimate Russian sense of betrayal by the United States during the last two and a half decades of the country's existence. This leads to the conclusion that today there is neither a basis nor a demand on either side to pursue a fundamental improvement in the relationship.

In the current situation there are three paths of development for U.S.-Russian relations, and these paths can be pursued simultaneously. The first is to identify opportunities for official, albeit narrow and pragmatic areas of cooperation, and hope that this forced

cooperation will gradually lead to a restoration of trust between the two governments and revive the idea of a strategic partnership. This could include bilateral projects as well as active participation in multilateral formats on issues such as Syria and Ukraine, Iran and North Korea, nuclear nonproliferation and climate change, cooperation in the Arctic and in the post-Soviet space. It would also include the fight against terrorism and addressing new threats to security. In order to pursue this path, the two sides would need to restore previously existing channels of bilateral dialogue and drastically reduce their hostile, aggressive and offensive rhetoric towards one another.

The second path entails a return (despite the difficulties) to a broader dialogue between U.S. and Russian civil societies. The political isolation of the Russian leadership from the Western side has led, whether intentionally or not, to the global isolation of the entire Russian population. This has not only offended the Russian people, but has allowed them to become a monopolized object of manipulation by Russian state-run media and institutions. At the same time, both Russia and the United States are witnessing a blurring of the line between professional analysis and propaganda when portraying the actions of the other side, which further aggravates the relationship. The restoration of non-state channels of cooperation—including in the fields of research, culture, education and sports—could have a positive impact on the dynamics of the bilateral relationship.

The third path requires an understanding that Russia, whether one likes it or not, differs from the United States and other Western democracies in that it has always been a country of strong leaders. Any state institutions that have functioned in Russia have done so purely upon the will of one person—the leader of the country—and only when he has needed their services. The direction and content of state institutions' work, including their current anti-Western mindset, cannot be changed one iota if there is no desire to do so at the top. The system of government that is traditional for Western democracies, with its rule of law, its checks and balances, its independent courts and public opinion, was not able to take root in Russia despite the efforts of the last two and a half decades. This situation is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. Irrespective of who occupies the top position in the Russian leadership—be it Putin or someone else—his role in the country will be incommensurably greater than the role of any Western leader, while the role of Russian society will be that

much smaller. Russia is a country of vertical power, in which the current power could be effective or not effective, more liberal or more conservative, but vertical nonetheless. If the leader is more democratically inclined, the entire country will shift towards greater freedom and democracy. If he is more conservatively disposed, then democracy takes a nosedive and the country moves towards authoritarianism. Russia's partners—those who want to reach some kind of cooperation or understanding with Moscow—will simply have to work with the person at the top much more closely than they do with the leaders of other countries, in an attempt to influence the nuances of his personal outlook on a particular issue of international concern.

There is no doubt that the “value war” between Russia and the West, which has become an integral component in the broader concept of Russia's hybrid warfare, was launched at the command of the Kremlin.

Amid the current absence of trust between the world's leading countries, a lack of real allies and dwindling economic strength, the Russian leadership is relying on precisely this value war to protect its national interests and expand its influence abroad while maintaining the greatest possible control over the situation at home. Naturally, the West is not thrilled with this method of conducting politics. But if it needs cooperation from the Russian side, it will have to offer Moscow some kind of political alternative to the status quo—or, in the very least, to renew a full-scale dialogue on this topic. The current situation is not a reincarnation of the Cold War, but it is reminiscent of that period in at least one respect: normalization of the relationship between Russia and the West will take a long period of time, and will require a hefty dose of political mastery and self-control.

Translated from the Russian by Olga Kuzmina

Closing the Gap by Looking to the Future

Mathew Burrows

Director, Strategic Foresight Initiative
The Atlantic Council

In late 2015, the Atlantic Council, a prominent think tank in Washington DC, published the English language version of a joint report with the Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) about the world in 2035, entitled *Global System on the Brink: Pathways Towards a New Normal*.¹ In view of the crisis in U.S. and Russian relations, the fact the two of us were able to come and publish anything together is extraordinary. The Primakov Institute is a Russian government-funded think tank and the Atlantic Council is well known for taking a harsh view of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

For a decade, I had worked at the CIA and National Intelligence Council, authoring the *Global Trends* publications. I always visited Moscow, along with twenty or so other foreign capitals, to solicit comments on my draft before publishing and briefing it to the next Administration's senior foreign policy team. IMEMO has a decade-long experience of forecasting, based on original statistical methodology. After working for years separately, we conceived the idea for producing a joint assessment to help guide policymakers in U.S. and Russia. Then the Ukraine crisis hit and, if anything, understanding the trajectory of the global order became even more urgent. We could see our countries on a collision course if our governments and societies got stuck in near term differences, ignoring the future.

Indeed, the crisis in U.S.-Russian relations is only one facet of a world at an increasingly difficult inflection point:

- The risk of conflict is growing among the big powers, not just between the United States/NATO and Russia, but also with China and its neighbors.

Conflicts between second-tier powers, such as those between India and Pakistan, could spill over into nuclear war. Sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shias, and between Kurds and Arabs are worsening, potentially sparking a major war along religious, ethnic, and political lines. The growth of armed Islamic extremism as an answer to external interventions and societal decay is another long-term destabilizing factor. The incidence of conflicts has been at a historic low since the end of the Cold War; its reversal is the single biggest threat to longer-term global economic growth and globalization itself. The old confrontation between capitalism and communism has given way to conflicts of moral values with nationalist, religious, identity and historical-psychological overtones.

- Developing countries will increasingly drive the global economy. The Chinese renminbi (RMB) will join the dollar and euro as a third reserve currency. A globally aging population introduces a new risk factor, particularly if it pulls down growth and puts heavy pressure on public finances. By 2035, an increasing portion of the world's financial resources will be concentrated in regional clusters away from the U.S.-UK financial hub.
- The global energy sector will experience price and investment uncertainty. A peaking in global oil consumption is likely to happen by 2035-40, but could be accelerated if the Chinese economy slows down faster than expected and India's economy fails to reach high growth rates.
- New technologies, such as robotics and automation, will take more jobs away from people, triggering a

social and political backlash against established national and multilateral institutions. Over time, growing domestic inequalities may be lessened as new, well-paid jobs are created and education and skills increase.

For the first time since the end of the Cold War, countries are developing competing visions of the world order. In addition to the re-emergence of major powers such as China and India, a burgeoning strata of dynamic rising middle powers (particularly Brazil, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey) is already playing an increasingly important role in regional security and global rules-shaping. Some of these emerging states—democracies (liberal and illiberal) as well as authoritarian regimes—harbor resentments against the U.S.- and Western-created and controlled global institutions, whose governing structures have been largely unchanged since 1947. Whether it is evidenced by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (the BRICS) launching their own dialogue framework and development bank; China pushing its “One Belt, One Road” mega-strategy and initiating an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to support it financially; Turkey becoming an illiberal democracy and distancing itself from the United States; or radical Islamists becoming increasingly intent on bringing about a clash of civilizations, a paradigm shift in global governance is unfolding.

Ironically, much of the danger ahead stems from the success of the post-World War II international system: in the two decades since the end of the Cold War, globalization—the transborder flow of information, money, goods, and people—has connected economies, people, and nations more tightly than ever before and led to the massive ongoing shift of wealth and population from West to East and North to South. Globalization provides many opportunities, but it also poses serious risks. As the world becomes more interdependent and interconnected, a plethora of state and non-state actors—some of which see themselves as marginalized by globalization—are vying for power, creating greater instability and fragmentation.

Given the depth and breadth of the changes that will transform the global landscape, a new international order is inevitable. However, no hegemonic force can shape the global system, as was the case in the post-World War II order, and no consensus exists on what kind of new international order should be established.

Today’s world is fragmented and messy, but not

classically multipolar, as characterized by relatively equal poles. The United States remains the sole military superpower, with a defense budget larger than the rest of the world combined. Yet—as evident in the outcomes of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—military force is often of limited use in solving regional problems. A stable, modernizing Middle East is not, for example, an outcome that the application of external military power can achieve. Solving global problems such as poverty, disease, or climate change may lie more in public-private partnerships than diplomatic arrangements among states or military action.

In this increasingly post-Western world, developing countries question Western policies and norms, viewing them sometimes as even threats to their national sovereignty. Thus, values-based issues such as democracy promotion and the Right to Protect (R2P) tend to spark strong counteraction from not just authoritarian regimes but also many emerging democracies that worry about maintaining their national sovereignty. India, for example, is reluctant to “name and shame” other nations or favor regime change. “Humanitarian interventions,” such as the 2011 one in Libya that resulted in the overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi but led to violent internal conflict, have undermined the sense of legitimacy of such policies.

The lag between the diffusion of power in the international system and the distribution of power in the structure of multilateral institutions fosters resentment in countries with emerging economies and complicates efforts at global problem-solving. It is relatively easy for nations to block global actions, such as the Doha global trade round, or UN efforts to forge a treaty to cut off production of fissile material. The growing trend of trying to fashion alternative institutions—from the Chiang Mai Initiative spurred by the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis to China’s AIIB—increases the difficulty of forging international cooperation to address global problems.

Developing inclusive mechanisms—such as those that existed with the P5+1 engagement with Iran over its nuclear program—to deal with major issues will be critical for successfully resolving them and may help to resolve existing differences. Another example is the six-party process (China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States), which has gradually lessened differences between the parties and established a consensus among the five principal outside actors on their policies toward North Korea. The worst outcome

from the current differences would be the emergence of a new bipolar division between Russia and China on one side and the United States and Europe on the other.

Both the United States and Russia face critical strategic choices if they want to successfully navigate the increasingly treacherous seas of global interdependence.

Russia's strategic choice: Russia is both a European and Pacific power with substantive economic and security interests in the East and compelling historical, economic, cultural, and security interests in Europe. Securing inclusion in a broader transatlantic economic and security architecture will remain critically important as Russia explores a broader agenda of cooperation with its Eurasian neighbors, including China.

The United States' strategic choice: In moving from primacy to *primus inter pares*, the United States needs to update the international system to reflect the new weight of emerging economies. Finding ways to overcome differences in interests and values will ensure that an international system does not fragment and remains open to the free flow of commerce, technology, and new ideas. In the case of the conflict over Ukraine, there are areas where U.S. and Russian interests on Ukraine overlap, areas where there is a wide gap, and areas where efforts to reconcile them are needed:

- Neither the United States nor Russia want Ukraine to become a failing, unstable state or the economy in eastern provinces to remain shattered.
- In regard to trade, Ukraine (and Russia) could have trade agreements with both the EU and the Eurasian Union. Ukraine's trade goes in both directions.
- Minsk 2 and future formal processes should seek to find a balance of U.S., EU, and Russian interests. To the United States and the EU, Russia's actions constitute a violation of another country's sovereignty; for Russia, it is about historical interests, culture, identity, and respect for Russian interests in the post-Soviet space.
- A stable, prosperous, and military-neutral Ukraine that is integrated into the regional and global economy is in everybody's interest. There is a need to move beyond another "frozen conflict" and define mutually acceptable understandings and commitments on European security and an inclusive Russian role.

Knowledge of the forces eroding the foundations of the post-Cold war international system can serve to

animate a sense of mutual responsibility. This can narrow the gap in global governance and motivate efforts to develop an inclusive, rules-based multilateral order that can lower the risks of conflict, while providing the basis for global cooperation.

Keeping the communications channels open is critical for both sides. A lack of mutual understanding can only aggravate the sense of resentment and hostility on both sides. The U.S., Russian, European, and Chinese governments should encourage efforts by universities, think tanks, and scientific and business organizations to step up their exchanges. These exchanges remain critical at this time of heightened tensions.

I can't emphasize too much our view that the worst outcome would be the emergence of a new bipolarity, pitting a grouping around China and Russia against the U.S. In this scenario, major state-on-state conflict would no longer be unthinkable. Multilateral institutions like the UN or G-20 would be completely paralyzed. Globalization would itself be threatened.

Another bad scenario we looked at is the internal decay within all states. The wrecking ball is not a war with one another, but internal decay. Technological revolution is taking away jobs, and governments are not seen as dealing with the real challenges in the eyes of the citizenry. The advanced democracies prove just as vulnerable as the emerging democracies.

Another scenario saw a developing Eurasia as cementing Russian and Chinese cooperation. Beijing and Moscow use their successes there to showcase the non-Western model of state-centric capitalism.

The final scenario we describe is a new global concert, which is obviously the optimistic scenario. However, we don't see it happening without intervening crises in Middle East or South Asia—in this case the threat of nuclear war—pulling together the great powers to start anew a global concert. Such a rosy future is attainable, but we are realists, believing crises will be needed to jolt the international community towards sustained cooperation.

The English version of the report was launched several months after the Russian military intervention in Syria, which abruptly halted the downward spiral in East-West ties after the Ukraine crisis. Secretary of State John Kerry has undertaken several trips to Russia, engaging Russian leaders on a ceasefire and peace plan for Syria. Russia is seen as a partner in the Geneva talks even if there remain differences over the role of Assad in a post-conflict Syria. Last December 2015, the head

of IMEMO, Alexander Dynkin, and I published articles in Washington and Moscow, calling on U.S. and Russian leaders to use the opportunity of shared interests in Syria and the rest of the Middle East to build cooperation and lessen tensions. We nowhere sought to disguise the differences over Ukraine, but U.S., Russia and the other big powers all share key interests and huge stake in fostering global cooperation. In this new polycentric world, if we want to see results on those common interests, we may not have the freedom we once had to choose our partners.² Too much is now at stake for us to revert to mutual isolation, however morally satisfying.

Endnote

- 1 The English version of the joint report is available on the Atlantic Council website:
- 2 http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Global_System_on_the_Brink.pdf. This essay includes text from the report. For further background on the production of the report, please see a short piece commissioned by Carnegie Corp for its website: “5 Questions: The World in 2035,” <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/5-questions-world-2035/>. The Russian version is expected to be released in Moscow on 25 April 2016.
- 3 See the article that Alexander Dynkin and I published in *National Interest*—“Here’s the Playbook for Betting U.S.-Russian Cooperation Back on Track,” December 7, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/heres-the-playbook-getting-us-russian-cooperation-back-track-14527>. A similar co-authored article was published in *Rossiskaya Gazeta*: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/12/16/opasnost.html>.

Dialogue with Members of the U.S. Congress, The Russian Duma and the German Bundestag: *Addressing Mutual Foreign Policy Challenges*

PARTICIPANTS

April 30-May 4, 2016
Briesen, Germany

Members of Congress

Representative Brendan Boyle

Representative Bradley Byrne

Representative Jim Himes

Representative Reid Ribble

Representative Tom Rice

Representative Peter Roskam

Representative Mark Sanford

Representative Scott Tipton

Representative Peter Welch

Admiral Vladimir Komojedow
Chairman, Defense Committee,
Duma, Communist Party

Konstantin Kosachev
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee,
Federation Council, United Russia Party

Aleksej Majorow
First Deputy Chairman, Committee on
Economic Policy, Federation Council

Viktor Ozerow
Chairman, Defense Committee,
Federation Council, United Russia Party

Vladimir Pligin
Chairman, Constitutional Law and Nation
Building Committee, Duma, United Russia
Party

Members of the Russian Duma and Federation Council

Olga Kazakova
Deputy Chair, Committee for Public
Associations, Duma, United Russian Party

Alexsey Pushkov
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee,
Duma, United Russia Party

Aleksandr Romanowitsch
Deputy Chair, Foreign Relations Committee,
Duma, A Just Russia Party

Robert Shlegel
Member of the Committee on the
Commonwealth of Independent States,
Eurasia Integration and Relations with
Compatriots, Duma, United Russian Party

***Members of the German Bundestag
and the European Parliament***

Niels Annen
Foreign Relations Committee,
Social Democratic Party

Elmar Brok
Foreign Affairs Committee of the European
Parliament, Christian Democratic Union

Wolfgang Gehrke
Foreign Affairs Committee,
the Left Party

Omid Nouripour
Foreign Affairs Committee,
the Green Party

Norbert Röttgen
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee,
Christian Democratic Union

Tobias Zech
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of
Europe, Christian Social Union

Scholars

Mathew Burrows
Director, Strategic Foresight Initiative,
The Atlantic Council

Richard Burt
Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany

Sharyl Cross
Professor & Director, Kozmetsky Center,
St. Edward's University
Global Policy Scholar, The Kennan Institute,
Woodrow Wilson International Center for
Scholars

Gernot Erler
Special Representative for the
German OSCE Chairmanship

Alexey Gromyko
Director, Institute of Europe,
Russian Academy of Sciences

Dan Hamilton
Executive Director, Center for Transatlantic
Relations, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University

Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger
Chairman, Munich Security Conference

Karl-Heinz Kamp
Director, German Federal Academy for Security
Policy

Jochen Krause
Director, Security Institute, University of Kiel

Jeffrey Larsen
Director of Research, NATO Defense College,
Rome, Italy

Alexey Malashenko
Chair, Religion, Society & Security Program,
Carnegie Moscow Center

Rajan Menon
Anne and Bernard Spitzer Professor of Political
Science, City College of New York/City
University of New York
Senior Research Scholar, Saltzman Institute of
War and Peace Studies, Columbia University

Matthew Rojansky
Director, The Kennan Institute,
The Wilson Center

Sergey Rogov
Director Emeritus
Institute for the US and Canada,
Russian Academy of Science

Karsten Voigt
Former Coordinator for German-American
Cooperation, German Foreign Office

Feodor Voitlovsky
Deputy Director, Primakov Institute of World
Economy and International Relations

Nikolai Zlobin
President and Founder, Center on Global Interests

Observers

Deana Arsenian
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Atje Drexler
Robert Bosch Foundation

Betsy Hawkings
The Democracy Fund

Christian Hänel
Robert Bosch Foundation

Verena Heinzel
Robert Bosch Foundation

Klaus Wittman
Aspen Germany Board of Directors

Aspen Institute Congressional Program

Bill Nell
Deputy Director

Carrie Rowell
Conference Director

Aspen Institute Germany

Rüdiger Lentz
Executive Director

Anna Kuchenbecher
Deputy Director

Yvonne van Diepen
Program Officer

Alexandra Avril
Program Assistant

Rapporteur

Peter Eitel, M.Sc.
University of Kiel PhD candidate;
consultant to Aspen Institute Germany

Dialogue with Members of the U.S. Congress, The Russian Duma and the German Bundestag: *Addressing Mutual Foreign Policy Challenges*

AGENDA

April 30-May 4, 2016
Briesen, Germany

SATURDAY, APRIL 30

American participants depart the USA

SUNDAY, MAY 1

All participants arrive in Briesen.

Working Lunch

WHY WE NEED A LEGISLATIVE DIALOGUE

Rüdiger Lentz, *Aspen Institute Germany Executive Director*

Afternoon Roundtable Discussion

THE MINSK PROCESS AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

The crisis and the conflict in Ukraine pushed an already strained relationship between Russia and the West into outright conflict in 2014. Ukraine remains at the heart of the tension in relations today. The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine and the broader political crisis in which Ukraine finds itself are continuing destabilizing factors for the wider region, including Russia and Germany.

- What is the status of the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine?
- Is the relationship between the central government and the two eastern provinces (Luhansk and Donetsk) becoming another “protracted conflict?”
- How well has the Ukrainian government done since its election in October 2014 in meeting the challenges the country faces? How deep is the current political crisis and is the government likely to emerge intact?
- Are the Minsk agreements a realistic roadmap for resolving the conflict? What is or should be the role of the United States, Germany and Russia in containing or resolving this crisis going forward?
- How will recently announced increased U.S. and NATO deployments in the region affect prospects for maintaining peace and stability in the wider region?

Alexey Gromyko, *Director, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences*
Matthew Rojansky, *Director, The Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center*

Pre-Dinner Program

**A GERMAN PERSPECTIVE ON MUTUAL FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES
OUTLOOK & ANALYSIS**

The world is undergoing tectonic shifts, exacerbated by the manifest danger of extremist violence and economic turbulences. What do these longer term trends mean for Russia, the West and the wider world? Is a joint approach to tackling these challenges feasible in the current environment, and if so, are both sides prepared to commit to pay the high costs for it over the long term?

Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman Munich Security Conference

Working Dinner

MONDAY, MAY 2

Morning Roundtable Discussion

**REDUCING THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS:
THE STATUS OF THE IRAN AGREEMENT AND MULTILATERAL EFFORTS TO LIMIT THE
SPREAD OF NUCLEAR ARMS**

The Iran nuclear agreement has been cited as a triumph of multilateral diplomacy, and as evidence that cooperation among the world's big powers, including Russia and the West, remains possible despite apparently deep disagreements in other areas. Yet trust among the parties to the Iran nuclear deal remains extremely low, a breakdown in implementation of the agreement from either or both sides remains very possible, and politicians on all sides have spoken about military action as a fallback in case the agreement fails.

- How likely is the Iran nuclear agreement to hold in the coming months and years?
- If there is a breakdown in implementation, what will happen and what will it mean for relations between Russia and the West?
- Is there any realistic prospect of further cooperative action between Russia and the West to reduce nuclear proliferation or even to extend or deepen the limitations imposed on U.S. and Russian arsenals under the 2011 New START agreement?
- Is nuclear deterrence between Russia and the West still relevant and effective? Are steps now being taken by both sides strengthening or weakening strategic stability?

Karl-Heinz Kamp, Director, German Federal Academy for Security Policy

Sergey Rogov, Director, Institute for the US and Canada, Russian Academy of Science

Jeffrey Larsen, Director of Research, NATO Defense College, Rome

Working Lunch

Discussion continues among members of the U.S. Congress, the Russian Duma and the German Bundestag and scholars.

Afternoon Roundtable Discussion

CONFRONTING TERRORISM, COMBATTING ISIS, AND MIDDLE EAST CHALLENGES

Despite deep disagreements over Ukraine, Russia and the West appear to share a common challenge in the form of Islamic extremism originating in the Middle East and spreading into Europe and beyond, including the threat of violent terror attacks against the civilian population. Indeed, the acute challenge posed by ISIS may be a vehicle for restoring productive dialogue and cooperation between Russia and the West.

- What are the divergent views and common perspectives among German, Russian and U.S. experts about the basic dynamics of the Middle East today?
- How central is resolving the war in Syria and combatting ISIS, among competing regional and international priorities for Berlin, Moscow and Washington?
- What are the common challenges for U.S. and Russian interests in the region, and to what degree do policy options converge?
- To what extent are Europe, the U.S. and Russia committed to establishing a sustainable long term settlement of the Syrian conflict and the threat of ISIS?

Joachim Krause, Director, Institute for Security Policy, University of Kiel
Alexei Malashenko, Chair, Religion, Society & Security Program, Carnegie Moscow Center
Rajan Menon, Senior Research Scholar, Columbia University &
Anne and Bernard Spitzer Professor of Political Science
City College of New York/City University of New York.

Dinner Program

CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING: THE GERMAN OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP, THE CRISIS IN AND AROUND UKRAINE, AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Gernot Erler, Special Representative for the German OSCE Chairmanship

TUESDAY, MAY 3

Morning Roundtable Discussion

RECONCILING DIFFERENT RUSSIAN AND WESTERN VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE UKRAINE CRISIS

Disagreements between Russians and Westerners often turn on disparate perceptions of the very same events, which some argue is proof of a deep “values gap” between Russia and the West. Yet after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia rejected communism and embraced the same basic principles and forms of the free market and democratic government which the West advocated and practiced. The annexation of Crimea has stopped this integrational process. And many of the current problems related with the crisis around Ukraine and Russia-West relations are now attributed to disputes over “values” issues: human rights, corruption, rule of law, sovereignty, and individual freedoms as well as national self-determination, among many others.

- Are Russian, German and American worldviews compatible?
- What is the overarching sense of the Russian, German and American people about their own values and their outlook on one another in terms of those values?
- How important are values or identity in defining Russian, German and U.S. foreign policy priorities? Do Russians and Germans share a “European identity?” Do Germans and Americans share a “Western” identity?
- Do Russians and Americans share a “superpower identity” and commensurate responsibilities?
- Do Russia, Germany and the United States share any values? Can conflicting values be reconciled with shared interests?
- And what about Ukraine’s identity and its right of self determination .
- Does the emergence of a “millennial” generation in all these countries promise the convergence of or divergence of values, and what does this suggest for relations among the three countries? Is ascendant nationalism a factor?

Karsten Voigt, former Bundestag Coordinator for Transatlantic Relations
Matthew Rojansky, Director, The Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center
Nikolai Zlobin, Founder and Director, Center on Global Interests

Working Lunch

Discussion continues among members of the U.S. Congress, the Russian Duma and the German Bundestag and scholars.

Afternoon Roundtable Discussion

LONG-TERM PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

U.S.-Russia relations have been described as “cyclical” throughout the post-Cold War era, alternating between periods of optimism and effective cooperation and periods of greater discord and confrontation. Yet certain underlying principles have continued to govern relations for more than a quarter century, including the desire by both sides to remain connected economically and diplomatically and to avoid escalation of limited regional conflicts to direct military conflict between Moscow and Washington.

- What are the basic drivers of the current downturn in US-Russia relations?
- Is the “cyclical” character of relations inescapable? Does it depend more on individual political leaders or deeper factors?
- Does the latest downturn promise further deterioration in the future, or is a recovery towards cooperation reasonably likely within the next few years?
- If cooperation is possible, what are the areas in which cooperation might be productive and how could that be managed given the deep distrust on both sides?

Mathew Burrows, Director, Strategic Foresight Initiative, The Atlantic Council

*Feodor Voitlovsky, Deputy Director, Primakov Institute of World Economy
and International Relations*

*Commentator: Dan Hamilton, Executive Director, Center for Transatlantic Relations
SAIS, Johns Hopkins University*

Dinner Program

AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Richard Burt, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4

Return travel

