Report

THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Starting the Process of Trust-Building in NATO–Russia Relations: The Arms Control Dimension

Warsaw
October 2013

Authors: Jacek Durkalec (PISM), Ian Kearns (ELN), Łukasz Kulesa (PISM)

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Warsaw, October 2013

Editor: Anthony Casey

Technical editor and cover designer
Dorota Dołęgowska

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This study was commissioned by the Nuclear Security Project (NSP) of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI). The views expressed in this report are entirely the authors' own and not those of the Nuclear Security Project. For more information, see the NSP website: www.nuclearsecurity.org

ISBN 978-83-62453-71-9

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Executive Summary

The security climate in Europe has chilled considerably. While we are far from a threat of a military confrontation, worst-case assumptions are frequently being made about the intentions of "the other." A fundamental change of the climate of the relationship is possible if the West and Russia work together to increase mutual trust in the military field.

Trust-building in the anarchic international environment is inherently difficult, but three approaches stand out: graduated reciprocation (a sequence of limited conciliatory steps), costly signals (bold concessions aimed at showing trustworthiness), and reliance on inter-personal dynamics, especially contacts between leaders. In the NATO–Russia context, only a combination of these three approaches aimed at reaching specific, realistically selected arms control aims can bring about notable progress. Mutual restraint and increased transparency should be the guiding principles.

The report offers specific recommendations in the following areas:

Political rhetoric. NATO countries and Russia are urged to refrain from aggressive or provocative statements aimed against each other, and to correct manifestly false information about NATO and Russian policy and military potential in the media.

Military doctrines. Both sides should discuss the conceptual approaches to new capabilities such as cyber-warfare and the military use of space in order to provide more confidence and predictability in any future crisis situation.

Exercises. NATO and Russia need to strive to exclude from the scenarios of major exercises specific activities which could be seen as excessively provocative; agree on providing information and issuing invitations to observe major exercises conducted in the NATO–Russia border area, even below or outside the limits of the Vienna Document.

Conventional Forces modernisation and deployments. Russia and NATO countries should provide advance information about the timing and context of acquiring and deploying major new weapons systems; NATO should be open to re-confirm and elaborate the 1997 "substantial combat forces" pledge while Russia should consider pledging restraint in strengthening military units deployed in the vicinity of the NATO area.

Missile Defence deployments. NATO should elaborate and communicate to Russia a list of criteria that will be taken into account when deciding on the implementation of the next phases of Missile Defence deployments; Russia ought to provide information about the aims and scope of modernisation of the MD component of the Air-Space defence systems.

Tactical nuclear weapons. Both sides could agree on a set of transparency measures, such as information exchange, and basic constraints, including a pledge of not increasing the number of tactical nuclear weapons.

Sub-regional approach. Interested NATO countries, Russia, and other Eastern European states may explore the benefits and challenges of agreeing specific additional confidence and security building measures for Central and Eastern Europe.

Introduction

The security climate in Europe has recently chilled considerably. The spat over U.S./NATO missile defence plans persisted, alongside older controversies over NATO enlargement, non-strategic nuclear weapons and conventional force imbalances in Europe. Sweden has seen a stormy debate about the inability of its armed forces to repel a military incursion, spurred by press reports of Russian air force drills practicing strikes against targets on Swedish territory.[1] Poland has declared the need to strengthen its own offensive deterrence capabilities against any potential enemies.[2] Moscow has announced plans to deploy fighter aircraft to Belarus, seemingly as a response to the activation of the U.S. training aviation detachment in Poland.[3] In autumn, Russian–Belarusian West 2013 war games and NATO's Steadfast Jazz 2013 exercises in Poland and in the Baltic states were conducted back-to-back. Although the U.S. and Russia are now cooperating on Syria, their collaboration comes on the back of profound and damaging disagreements over how to respond to the civil war there over the past two years.

While we are far from a military confrontation, these developments point to a situation where worst-case assumptions appear to be being made across the Euro-Atlantic space regarding the intentions of the other side. Over the next few years, on the current trajectory, the NATO–Russia relationship may see stagnation (if we are lucky), but may also suffer a series of security crises, forcing all countries involved to commit political, military and intellectual capital, and—crucially—spend extra money, in a mini-reprise of Cold War dynamics, or a Cold Peace. That would please the hardliners on both sides, but it would hurt both the NATO countries and Russia. The Alliance would be forced to act to reassure some of its members situated closer to Russia, instead of concentrating on the more pressing challenges in its southern and south-eastern neighbourhood. Russia would waste its resources to equip and train for an improbable war with the West and complicate its relations with European and American partners.

The aim of this report is to provide recommendations on how to avoid such an outcome. The main premise of the report is that, while differences of interests and perceptions regarding some security issues are likely to remain, **stabilisation and a fundamental change of the climate of the relationship is possible if the West and Russia work together to increase mutual trust in the military field**.[4] While we recognise that the relationship is broad and spans many institutions and issues, we focus this paper primarily on the NATO–Russia relationship.

The idea that this relationship is currently dominated by mistrust is shared by many experts, but there have been few attempts to apply notions of trust and trust-building, systematically and explicitly, to its further evolution. The first section of our report therefore lays the foundation by defining trust and trust-building in international relations, and by setting out some of the barriers and options with regard to trust-building in those relations as a whole. We draw on literature beyond that related to the specifics of the U.S./NATO–Russia relationship, to identify structural and psychological factors that can act as barriers to trust and as drivers of mistrust in international relations per se, and ask how relevant these might be to the particular dynamics of the NATO–Russia relationship. We also draw out from the wider literature three

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1 J. Gotkowska, "Sweden's Reaction to a Simulated Russian Attack," *CE Weekly,* no. 15 (195), 24 April 2013, www.osw.waw.pl/en.

2 "Flexing Its Muscles," *The Economist,* 17 August 2013.

3 A. Dyner, "Prospects and Consequences of Military Cooperation between Belarus and Russia," PISM Bulletin no. 61 (514), 4 June 2013.

4 See the recent reports on similar themes prepared by the groups of researchers, scholars and former decision-makers: *Toward a Euro-Atlantic Security Community*, EASI (Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative) Final Report, February 2012; D. Browne, W. Ischinger, I. Ivanov, S. Nunn, *Building Mutual Security in the Euro-Atlantic Area*, Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2013.

possible approaches to trust-building that could offer insights into how to move the NATO–Russia relationship forward.

The second section sets out the current context of the NATO–Russia relationship in much more detail. Initially, and perhaps counter-intuitively, given the current relationship dynamics, it outlines the areas where worthwhile cooperation has taken place in recent years. It then goes on to describe and analyse the differences and suspicions that still play a major role.

We then turn, in the third section of the report, to the application of prevalent trust-building ideas to the particularities of the NATO–Russia relationship. Here, we explore the track record, limitations and prospects for different approaches to building trust in this relationship and make some judgements about which options might make most sense for the immediate future. In section four, and against this wider backdrop, we spend some time on the important role that can and should be played by arms control and set out some specific ideas to increase trust through arms control measures, especially for Central Europe. Finally, in section five, we explore the role which could be played by the OSCE and the European Union to support trust-building in the military sphere.

I. Trust and Trust-building in International Relations[5]

Trust is usually defined as a "psychological state in which positive expectations are held regarding the motives and intentions of another actor."[6] **Trusting relationships are distinct from trust.** They are entered into in order to enjoy benefits that otherwise would not be available to either party involved, and when a decision is made by one player or group of actors to trust another, this decision is made in the knowledge that potentially negative consequences could follow if the chosen partner proves untrustworthy. Vulnerability is central to trusting relationships.

Barriers to Trust in International Relations

Historically, such relationships have not been the dominant feature of international affairs. This reflects a number of powerful barriers to trust, or sources of mistrust, that are embedded in the international landscape. Chief among these is the security dilemma that confronts states in an international system that is essentially anarchic (where anarchy is understood as the lack of any central authority to regulate inter-state affairs).

According to Robert Jervis's classic account in Perception and Misperception in International Politics, states suffer a dilemma of both interpretation and response when viewing the actions of others in the context of anarchy.[7] With regard to interpretation, **they have to judge whether another state's actions, especially in the military sphere, signal defensive intent or offensive purpose.** With regard to response, the danger is that they can either respond with misplaced suspicion, and thereby contribute to mutual hostility in a relationship where neither side intended it, or they can respond with misplaced trust, exposing themselves to coercion by those who are hostile. The constant struggle to manage these dilemmas creates the very real danger that a state taking action to make itself feel secure can often make others feel insecure in the process. This dynamic is obviously corrosive to trust and represents a significant structural barrier to the creation of more trusting relationships.

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[5] This section draws heavily on the work of Nicholas J. Wheeler, Professor of International Relations at the University of Birmingham in the UK. Individual works are cited below.

[6] N.J. Wheeler, "Trust-building in International Relations," *South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, vol. 4, no. 2, Winter 2012. See also, J. Ruzicka, N.J. Wheeler, "The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty," *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 1, 2010, pp. 69–85.

[7] R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.

It is reinforced by a second and this time psychological phenomenon, namely the **peaceful or defensive self-image each player tends to have of itself.** This self-image leads to the assumption that others must surely see us as peaceful or defensive in character. The consequence, given that others cannot see inside our heads or know our real intentions, is often an inability to see ourselves as others might see us, and an inability among many policy-makers to recognise that one's own actions could be seen as menacing or aggressive by others. A concomitant belief is that another player's possible hostility in response to our actions must only be explicable as aggressive intent and not by fear or genuine suspicion. Again, the cumulative effect of these relationship dynamics can be a spiral of worsening relations and a negative impact on attempts to build trust when neither side intended it.

These structural and psychological barriers to trust-building in international politics are complicated by at least two other phenomena. The first is the **difficulty in distinguishing between offensive and defensive weapons deployments**. As states invest for what they see as sensible defensive purposes, others worry that such deployments might signal aggressive intent. The deployments themselves can become contested symbols of a state's intentions.

Second, there is **the issue of ideology**. This is often used to remove ambiguity from a relationship by attributing ideological motives to all the actions of another state, whether the Soviet Union during the Cold War or Iran today. This judgment may be wise, or it may be misplaced, but at the time of making a policy decision there is no sure way to know. However, the consequence of attributing ideological motives is often that an "inherent bad faith model" takes over: assuming the worst about any action taken by a potential adversary with whom there is an ideological difference, and making it exceptionally difficult to build trust.

Approaches to Trust-Building

Trust-building in this environment is inherently difficult, but when it comes to efforts to overcome mistrust, three approaches are notable in the existing conceptual and historical literature. The first, known as "**graduated reciprocation,"** was put forward by social psychologist Charles Osgood in the early 1960s. It suggested that the United States could take a series of limited conciliatory steps toward the Soviet Union. These, it was argued, might trigger a positive Soviet response and result in a "spiral of trust." The steps themselves would need to be consistent with the needs of national security and therefore would not amount to unwarranted risk taking in pursuit of a more trusting relationship.

A second approach comes under the heading of **"costly signals**." This approach suggests that smaller steps might not be sufficient to break through the cycle of mistrust and that bolder moves may be needed. A costly signal, according to Andrew Kydd, is one "designed to persuade the other side that one is trustworthy by virtue of the fact that they are so costly that one would hesitate to send them if one were untrustworthy."[8] Such signals may be necessary because smaller and less significant moves could be seen as cheap talk and therefore may not achieve the desired effect. In this view, states wanting to be seen as trustworthy must be willing to take some risks.

Neither of these approaches says much about what makes individual policy-makers seek a more trusting relationship with a potential or actual adversary in the first place. A third approach, focused on the importance of **inter-personal dynamics** among key policy-makers, tries to fill this gap. It places a greater emphasis on the role of individuals and suggests that for a trusting relationship to develop at least one of the policy-makers involved must have or develop some "security dilemma sensibility," i.e. some capacity to appreciate that the other side may be acting from fear rather than malevolence and, moreover, that one's own behaviour may be contributing to that fear. In addition, this approach suggests that policy-makers will be

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[8] A. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005.

required at some point to make a "decision to trust" and in that process, personal relationships will be vital. In his memoirs, Mikhail Gorbachev called this the "human factor." Sir Malcolm Rifkind, former UK Foreign and Defence Secretary, who was present at the first Thatcher–Gorbachev summit meeting in the UK, has made similar observations about the importance of face to face meetings between leaders.[9]

One of the problems with trust-building based primarily on personal dynamics is, however, the vulnerability of these relationships to disruption and to leadership changes. To embed trust requires interaction not only at leadership level but also deeper and stronger interaction between lower-tier officials, military establishments, and societies.

II. The Relations between NATO and Russia: The Current Context

Recent years have seen important bi-lateral cooperation in the security sphere between the United States and Russia, as part of the wider attempt at a U.S.–Russia reset led by the Obama administration. The two countries have agreed a New START Treaty to cut the strategic nuclear forces of both, an amendment to a Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement that led to the safe disposal of enough plutonium for seventeen thousand nuclear warheads, and joint measures aimed at bringing Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons to a close.

Cooperation with Russia has also taken place through NATO. **Afghanistan has taken the most prominent position,** as the Alliance has been drawing up plans to end its major combat engagement in the country by 2014.[10] NATO has used the NATO–Russia Council format to brief Russia on its assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and Russia has provided expert assessments on the security situation in the north of the country. Russia has also been cooperating with the U.S. and NATO on strengthening the Afghan security forces and in facilitating the withdrawal of NATO troops, though it originally tried to persuade the U.S. and others not to withdraw. More specifically, Russia has been involved in training Afghan MI-17 helicopter maintenance personnel and pilots, and in providing spare parts through the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund. It has also been involved in training Afghan and other Central Asian counter-narcotics officers, and in providing the Afghan army with donations of small arms and ammunition.

Crucially, Russia agreed to broaden the use of its territory as part of the northern distribution network for moving ISAF cargo by land and air in and out of Afghanistan, including the use of the transport hub in Ulyanovsk as a transit point.[11] As of January 2013 an over-flight arrangement had also allowed some 460,000 U.S. military personnel and equipment to cross Russian airspace en route to Afghanistan.

There have been joint initiatives regarding counter-terrorism, including sharing of lessons learned from recent terrorist attacks, the Cooperative Airspace Initiative (to prevent airborne terrorist attacks), and joint development of a stand-off technology to detect explosives in crowded places and mass transportation systems (STANDEX). Civil emergency planning and disaster response cooperation, including work on possible responses to a nuclear weapon incident and a series of exercises involving theatre missile defence have taken place. The NRC working group on Defence Transparency, Strategy and Reform (DTSR), has seen nuclear experts of the four nuclear powers in the NATO–Russia Council (the U.S., France, the UK and Russia) exchange information on their respective nuclear doctrines. There has been in-theatre cooperation of the respective Russian and NATO counter-piracy missions around the Horn of Africa.

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[9] Comments made to the authors on the 1984 Thatcher–Gorbachev meeting.

[10] For further information on this and on the workings of the NATO–Russia Council in general, see S. Lunn, *The NATO–Russia Council: Role and Prospects*, 2013, www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org.

[11] Still, transit via Ulyanovsk encountered difficulties due to pricing disputes, see: "NATO avoids 'costly' Russian transit hub," *RIA Novosti,* 15 August 2013, www.en.ria.ru.

Besides the NATO context, **bilateral contacts between NATO or EU countries and Russia in the military sphere are rare.** In most cases, they are of small scale and routine character (exchange of visits, MoD consultations on general topics). One area of more frequent contacts is that of joint naval training, for example the BLACSEAFOR cooperation, Russian participation in the BALTOPS exercises, and Norwegian–Russian Pomor exercises. It may be argued that this kind of cooperation is made possible due to its de-politicisation and by the fact that it is focusing attention on safe topics, such as rescue at sea, prevention of transport of illicit materials, or the fight against piracy and smuggling.[12]

The issue of the scope of **defence industries' cooperation** with Russia remains a dividing issue within NATO, but some initiatives have been pursued by individual member states. One can note the Franco–Russian agreement on the construction of the four Mistral-class amphibious assault ships concluded in 2011, and the German Rheinmetall's 2011 contract to build a modern army training centre for the Russian ground forces in Mulino.[13]

All areas of cooperation with Russia are valuable. Nevertheless, they are a far cry from the more ambitious ideas of deepened cooperation and consultations embodied by the 2002 Rome Declaration mandating the establishment of the NATO–Russia Council as an all-topic, all-weather forum of dialogue or by 2010 Lisbon summit call for a "true strategic and modernised partnership."[14] In addition, the pragmatic cooperation results pale when compared to the areas of disagreement and discord evident in the relationship.

Areas of Disagreement: The Russian Perspective

Russia is mistrustful of the West in the security domain and has been constantly criticising what it perceives as **deliberate efforts to reduce Moscow's international position and influence over the last 20 years,** through enlargement of NATO and the EU to the east, the fostering of close relations with the post-Soviet countries in the security domain (including establishing military bases in Central Asia), and support for pro-democratic regime changes in Moscow's near abroad.

Worst-case assumptions appear to be made regarding the strategic plans of the U.S. and NATO vis-à-vis Russia. In this context, **the build-up of NATO's presence (deployments, exercises, and military infrastructure) in the vicinity of Russia are treated as external military dangers**.[15] Already, in the 1990s, Moscow was trying to obtain legal guarantees regarding the consequences of the NATO enlargement in terms of infrastructure building, force deployments, and defence planning of the Alliance. Instead, it only succeeded in securing a number of politically-binding declarations, written down in the 1997 Founding Act. A negative attitude toward NATO enlargement has been thus a recurrent theme. As put recently by Prime Minister Medvedev, "all new members of the North Atlantic Alliance that appear in proximity of our state eventually change the parity of military forces. And we have to react to this."[16] Russia has also threatened to take specific counter-measures in the context of the deployment of the U.S. missile defence system elements in Central Europe. As part of its campaign to curb the interventionist policy of the West, Moscow has also been constantly opposed to what it

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[12] See, e.g., "NATO ships visit St. Petersburg," 16 October 2013, www.nato-russia-council.info.

[13] These agreements generated a wave of criticism in Central European countries, as they would result in a significant upgrade of Russia's military potential, introduce new technologies for its military-industrial complex and new capabilities for its armed forces.

[14] "NATO–Russia Council Joint Statement at the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council," 20 November 2010, Lisbon, www.nato-russia-council.info.

[15] "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," approved on 5 February 2010, part III point 8, unofficial translation, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf.

[16] "Russia has to react as NATO moves closer to its borders—Medvedev," *Russia Today,* 4 June 2013, www.rt.com.

describes as NATO's attempt to "assume global functions," by which it means the Alliance's willingness to project force out of area even in the absence of UN Security Council approval.

What seems to lie at the heart of these concerns is **the suspicion that the ultimate goal of the West is to undermine the Russian regime's grip on power by isolating it internationally and bringing down its allies.** Russia also sees both the attempts to circumvent its veto at the UN Security Council and the new approaches to international law that have gained ground in the West (based on humanitarian intervention, the use of force against non-state players, etc.) as part of the same pattern: an attempt to unilaterally re-draw the rules of the international system in a way which is detrimental to Russia. The Russian approach to Syria and its willingness to broker an agreement on Syrian chemical weapons stems from its deep-held convictions about the nature of international relations and its resistance to the U.S. willingness to act as a global policeman.[17]

The United States occupies a special place in Russia's outlook, as the number one potential opponent. In the security sphere, a number of U.S. actions are brought up as examples of the U.S. attempt to replace strategic stability with hegemony, including the build-up of the U.S. missile defence system, development of non-nuclear high-precision weapons with strategic characteristics, advances in the military use of outer space and cyber warfare, deployment policy of the U.S. military, and wider conventional forces imbalances.[18] For a number of Russian experts, even proposals regarding further nuclear reductions represent an attempt to weaken the Russian nuclear deterrent, thus opening the way for the imposition of the U.S. political agenda on Russia.

A related problem is the assertion that **Russia is not treated as an equal partner, but as an outsider with inferior motives.** As examples, Moscow points to the lukewarm or hostile reaction to its numerous proposals regarding the regulation of the conventional forces balance in Europe, missile defence cooperation, and especially President Medvedev's proposal of a treaty on European Security. In the same vein, Russia is dissatisfied with the dismissive reception of its arguments relating to the interpretation of international law governing the use of force and national sovereignty in the cases of Kosovo, Libya and Syria.

NATO Members' Perspective

Turning to attitudes within NATO, the readiness to support an ambitious agenda of engagement with Russia on security issues depends on a number of factors. Both **geography and history still matter.** Memories and historical experience of past domination and the imperialist policies of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union still influence the position of most of Russia's Central and Northern European neighbours, a common thread that is not entirely shared by the Western European and North American allies.[19] **The countries of central and northern Europe are hypersensitive to any signs of Russia's assertiveness**, and tend to interpret developments in Russia through the prism of a possible return to a coercive policy vis-à-vis its former sphere of influence. A related history-based source of mistrust has been the direct political, economic and military contacts between Russia and major Western European partners, especially Germany and France, which bring back the spectre of the return of the 19th century Concert of Europe.

Perceptions of the **internal dynamics in Russia** also have some influence. There is concern that Russia is sliding towards more authoritarian rule at home, with increased suppression of civil society and a renewed emphasis on the importance of its military strength as

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[17] V. Putin, "A Plea of Caution from Russia," *New York Times,* 11 September 2013.

[18] See e.g.: V. Mizin, "The Russian View on ABM and Its Impact on Nuclear Deterrence," in: M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Regional Approaches to the Role of Missile Defence in Reducing Nuclear Threats*, PISM Report, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, July 2013, pp. 15–16.

[19] Ł. Kulesa, "The New NATO Member States," in: P. Foradori (ed.), *Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Euro-Atlantic Security,* Routledge, London–New York, 2013, pp. 144–145.

a guarantee of sovereignty and national cohesion. The consequences of that, it is feared, may translate into more aggressive anti-West rhetoric or actions.

Russian security policy as such remains a reason for mistrust as well.[20] Moscow's aim of being treated as an equal partner is seen as a way of recovering a sphere of influence by gaining undue influence over the decision-making of NATO and the European Union and bringing the actions of these institutions in line with Russian interests. Its calls for the creation of a new security architecture in Europe are interpreted as an attempt to undermine the role of NATO.

Confrontational attitudes towards the U.S. and NATO, as well as military muscle-flexing, are perceived as proof that Russia would be willing to use its armed forces as instruments of intimidation. In the eyes of many Central Europeans, the readiness to use force as a foreign policy instrument and a means of strategic communication about the limits of incursions by the West into the Russian zone of interest was demonstrated during the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008.

Taking into account the anxieties over the present and future goals of Russian foreign policy, **the range, pace and aims of Russian military reform** also emerge as a problem. Before the 2008 "New Look" policy was introduced, attempts to modernise and upgrade the combat value of the Russian armed forces had been based on over-ambitious assumptions and had usually been abandoned quickly, or not completed successfully. The threat was therefore connected more with the possibility of collapse of discipline and loss of control over Russia's nuclear forces and materials than with the capabilities of the Russian conventional forces. Poor performance of the Russian troops during the Chechen wars and in the 2008 Georgian conflict served as evidence that, despite additional funding, Russia's military forces could not serve as a credible instrument of coercion or intimidation against more advanced militaries.

In contrast to the past, however, the current ongoing reform of the Russian armed forces, together with the introduction of new types of weaponry and C4ISR capabilities, brings for the first time in decades the perspective of Russia having at its disposal modern, deployable forces with significant combat potential.[21] While both the re-armament programme and the reform itself have not proceeded without problems, the developments since the dismissal of Russian Defence Minister Anatoly Serdiukov in late 2012 show that the main directions of the reform have been upheld and the process is continuously supported by Russia's highest authorities, including President Putin personally.

Importantly, the implementation of the reforms is being tested in the field. In parallel with the large-scale strategic exercises in all Russian Military Districts, a series of snap exercises have been conducted to check the actual combat readiness of the various elements of the armed forces. In some recent exercises, the most likely potential enemies have been the United States and NATO countries and their partners (Mach 2013 Black Sea drills, May 2013 snap air and missile defence exercises, Russian–Belorussian West 2013 exercises in September).

In addition to its conventional component, the Russian military would also continue to possess a diverse and large arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons. One of the reasons for their retention seems to be the option of using or threatening to use them in de-escalation scenarios of a conflict with a militarily superior opponent, such as the United States or NATO.

Clash over "Legitimate Interests:" Real or Artificial?

The entire NATO–Russia relationship is also clouded by disagreements over what each side sees as its legitimate interests. Depending on the interpretation, the definition of Moscow's

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[20] See e.g.: K. Kaas, "The Future of NATO's Defence and Deterrence Posture: The Baltic States Perspective," in: Ł. Kulesa (ed.), *The Future of NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture: Views from Central Europe*," PISM Report, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, December 2012, pp. 16–17.

[21] C. Vendil Pallin (ed.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective—2011,* Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), August 2012.

"legitimate security interests" can include exercising a veto power over the scope of military activities in the areas adjacent to Russia and over NATO enlargement, guaranteeing for itself a right to co-decide on the major security developments in Europe, or exerting influence over the strategic choices of all the countries in the post-Soviet space. The latest example of Russia attempting to do the latter was threatening trade sanctions against Ukraine in response to Kiev's ongoing pursuit of an Association Agreement with the EU.

NATO's perception of its own legitimate interests, on the other hand, involves the freedom to pursue further enlargement to the east (where aspirant members may both exist and meet the requirements and obligations of membership), the right to conduct military exercises anywhere on NATO territory, and the right to restrict discussions on matters defined as internal to the Alliance to the members only.

These two catalogues seem to be inherently contradictory, and guarantee a constant friction between NATO and Russia. However, **it remains open to discussion to what extent both sides actually believe that a clash over their respective legitimate interest is likely.** It can be argued that anti-West arguments are used by the Russian leadership to justify a more assertive foreign policy and a major Russian armed forces re-armament programme, as well as to gain support from certain segments of Russian society, especially the military and industrial elites. At the same time, the more positive Russian attitude towards the West in the economic and social spheres (such as seeking closer economic ties and expressing support for a visa-free travel regime with the European Union) contradicts the bellicose statements regarding the state of European security.

Similarly, it can be argued that the concerns of a number of Central European NATO countries over Russian security policy stem from their unique historical experience. They also reflect their lack of trust in the durability of Euro-Atlantic security institutions and fear of abandonment by the West. Moreover, their own security policies, which usually include a readiness for cautious engagement with Russia, support the claim that despite their often-expressed mistrust towards Moscow, these countries do not genuinely fear armed confrontation.[22]

The key challenge facing current policy-makers in terms of trust-building in this context is to judge **how much of the mutual mistrust is grounded in real policy differences, how much in misunderstandings rooted in more general security dilemma dynamics and/or a failure of each side to see itself as the other side sees it, and how much is politically manufactured for domestic political or other reasons**. It is also to assess and judge what approaches to trust-building have been tried before and failed and what options might offer the best route forward from here. Neither Russian concerns, nor anxiety felt by a number of NATO countries can simply be wished away or sidelined. Without addressing head-on controversial security problems, these anxieties will continue to have a corrosive impact on the relationship as a whole.

III. Trust-Building in the NATO–Russia Relationship: Limitations and Options

It has often been argued that, due to its technological and military advantage, NATO should initiate or "kick-start" the process of trust-building through unilateral actions, for example by refraining from contentious military activities in the vicinity of Russia or reducing the deployment of missile defence infrastructure. Withdrawal or reduction of the number of

[22] In some cases, the Central European countries also undermine their "threat from Russia" narrative by maintaining low defence expenditures, see: J. Gotkowska, O. Osica (eds.), *Closing the Gap? Military Cooperation from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea,* Center for Eastern Studies Report, December 2012, p. 13.

U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons stationed in Europe has also been suggested as a means for bringing about more Russian cooperation.[23]

Graduated Reciprocation

Applying the framework developed in section 1, it is clear that **graduated reciprocation has been a path most frequently suggested in the recent policy debate on NATO–Russia relations**. However, such proposals have so far gained little traction. For a number of Allies, direct reciprocity rather than graduated moves initiated by NATO remains the key condition, and they subscribe to the notion that it is not only NATO that needs to reassure Russia about its intentions, but also the other way around. From their viewpoint, engagement with Russia on arms control issues makes sense only if it lessens the level of tensions in the NATO–Russia neighbourhood, which requires actions by Moscow too. The actions would not necessarily need to be identical, but they should be roughly equivalent.

Linas Linkevicius, the current Foreign Minister of Lithuania, spoke for many in Central Europe when he said that the question was not so much what NATO could offer but "what NATO can offer that it has not already offered before?"[24] He noted that NATO had, in the early 1990s, reduced the number of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, reduced the number of locations where they were deployed, and reduced the number of countries hosting them, all regardless of Russia's much larger inventory of non-strategic nuclear weapons. It had, in 1997, he went on, made the unilateral commitment to refrain from the deployment of substantial military capabilities in the territories of the newer member-states of the Alliance, and made the famous declaration of three no's: no NATO intention, no need, and no plans to deploy nuclear weapons in the territories of the newer members. And in 2002, it had set up the NATO–Russia Council, with many NATO members at the time being strongly opposed to the pre-coordination of Allied positions before going into NATO–Russia Council discussions, only to see Russia make full use of internal NATO differences to attempt to split the Alliance.

This sentiment of seeing its own initiatives not reciprocated is also evident on the Russian side. The Medvedev proposal on new security architecture in Europe (later developed into the draft Treaty on European Security) was presented by Russia as a bold and forward-looking gesture.[25] It was argued that it would bind Moscow in the same way as other European states and provide crisis-management tools which would apply to Russian behaviour as well. However, instead of generating discussion on the merits of the proposal, Moscow observed with disappointment that the reactions focused on questioning the sincerity of Russia and the (perceived) failings of its own foreign and security policy.

This illustrates some of the wider problems with trying to base policy on the graduated reciprocation approach. It can be difficult to know what kinds of measures will appear as credible trust-building initiatives on the other side. If a state or institution takes what it believes is a reasonable trust-building measure but this is ignored or snubbed, the result can actually be a worse relationship than the one in existence prior to the attempt being made. Unilateral initiatives also come with domestic political risks for those taking them. Leaders who are seen to make a series of unilateral decisions without reciprocation can be branded as weak or inept by their domestic political opponents.

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[23] Though there is a debate within NATO on this. Some would see changes to NATO non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe as a contribution to a possible graduated reciprocation strategy while others would see such moves as a risky "costly signal."

[24] L. Linkevicius, "Building Trust in the NATO–Russia Relationship: What NATO Can Offer," 8 March 2012, www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org.

[25] See R. Weitz, *The Rise and Fall of Medvedev's European Security Treaty*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, May 2012.

There may also be **domestic interest groups opposing graduated reciprocation** for their own reasons. Some NATO member states argue that the limited scope of military-to-military engagement between NATO and Russia results from a fear among Russian elites that such cooperation could undermine the rhetoric of a "threat from the West" which is integral to the attempt to shore up their own legitimacy. It is also suspected that some in Moscow worry that greater interpersonal exchanges among senior military leaders may change the Russian military in an undesirable way.

Costly Signals

The prospects of one side or the other breaking the log-jam by sending a costly signal of its commitment to a more trusting and cooperative relationship seem remote. As the U.S.–Russia relationship has worsened in recent months through the Snowden affair, Syria and the failure to make progress on missile defence, the domestic political risks and costs for any side sending such a signal remains prohibitively high.

The different definitions of each side's legitimate interests are also relevant here. For any signal to move beyond a cautious first step and be seen as sufficiently bold, **one side or the other would need to bring in something fundamental.** To reach a breakthrough, Russia might contemplate such steps as changing its negative position on NATO and its eastern enlargement, being fully transparent about its military holdings in the joint neighbourhood, limiting the introduction of new equipment or withdrawing certain types of weapons from the area, desisting from overt attempts to influence the strategic choices of its neighbours in the post-Soviet space, and putting a brake on its military cooperation with Belarus.

For NATO to send such a powerful signal, the price would likely have to be as high. NATO would most likely have to offer one of the following: a "no further enlargement" commitment, an end to the development of deployment of some future weapons system (missile defence first and foremost), a declared intent to desist from military exercises on NATO territory anywhere near Russia or its core interests area, and/or a decision to open up NATO internal discussions to Russian participation.

Such a transformation of current positions on either side is not very likely. Moving in this direction would, from the Russian perspective, leave Russia as not only a cooperative but potentially a subordinate partner of NATO. On the side of the West, the "costly" moves would have significant consequences for the functioning of NATO, the external activities of the European Union, and the security policies of most of Russia's neighbours. Needless to say, such moves would also be difficult for Poland and other Central European countries to accept, as these are nations which have concerns regarding Russia's behaviour in the vicinity of their borders and would like to see its influence diminished rather than sanctioned through mutual consent.

It must also be kept in mind that **NATO–Russia relations do not exist in a vacuum**. The choice of military policy and posture on both sides is not dictated solely by their perceptions of each other but by their perceptions of developments in the broader international security environment.

The notion that the West should deliberately lower its military potential or reject the development of key future weapon systems which would put it in an advantageous position vis-à-vis Russia may make little sense when considered against wider trends in international affairs. The bulk of military capabilities in western states are not, after all, "Russia-specific," but developed in a generic fashion, to serve both for national defence tasks and expeditionary operations. In the case of missile defence, for example, decisions on a system's development are largely driven by perceptions of uncertainty and challenges stemming from proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear capabilities globally.

Similarly, the modernisation of Russian conventional forces, and Russia's efforts to maintain a robust nuclear arsenal, including non-strategic nuclear weapons, is driven by a Russian desire to preserve its status as one of the world's military superpowers. Russia's armed

forces developments may also be driven by concerns related to a rising China and Russia's position vis-à-vis its other southern and south-eastern neighbours. In this context, the arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons in particular might be perceived as a hedge against a situation in which Russia may have to face a direct major military threat on one side of its territory and an uncertain situation on the other.

Inter-Personal Dynamics

The role of personal relationships and inter-personal dynamics as a route to trust-building is worth exploring further. Given that the Obama–Putin summit planned for September 2013 was postponed by the U.S. side, the prospects for this approach would appear no better than for either graduated reciprocation or for an approach based on costly signals. However, despite all the disagreements in the relationship, it is important to note that the Obama administration was keen to point out that the summit may still take place at some point in the not too distant future. Students of the Cold War will also recall that U.S. and Soviet negotiating teams sat down to begin negotiations on what became the SALT Treaty barely a year after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968.

Even as the planned high-level U.S.–Russian summit was postponed, it was announced that contacts at the level of foreign and defence ministers would continue. Indeed, Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appear to have built a positive working dynamic that has been delivering results on Syria.[26]

The working-level contact and their role in trust building should not be underestimated. Whether we like it or not, and despite all the problems described, the level of perceived urgency in the U.S./NATO–Russia relationship today does not appear to be high enough to warrant direct intervention at the highest level. Engagement at lower tiers would therefore seem to be the most practical way forward. Moreover, by focusing on pragmatic steps rather than grand political leadership gestures or politically charged costly signals, elements of graduated reciprocation may also be re-introduced into the relationship, in a way described in the next chapter.

IV. Specific Actions to Increase Trust through Arms Control Measures

It is striking that **many of the grievances and misgivings in the NATO–Russia relationship could be addressed, at least partly, by a return to the arms control** and the confidence and security building measures developed during the Cold War era and the early 1990s. It could be a way to address the sense of insecurity felt both by Russia and some of its NATO neighbours, tone down the rhetoric on both sides, and at the same time provide the vehicle for all parties to safeguard their core security interests. It might even be possible, over time, to facilitate, through incremental steps, the opening of negotiations on further reductions of nuclear weapons and a new agreement on conventional arms control.

Arms control measures could incorporate the elements of all three approaches to trust-building presented in this report, overcoming their inherent limitations. To start the arms control process, there is a need of one side taking relatively modest initiatives that would not be detrimental to one's own perception of security. While some steps would only be taken on a reciprocal basis, in some cases there is a room for limited unilateral steps directed at kicking off the arms control process, following the "graduated reciprocation" approach. Arms control could also offer opportunities for low profile contacts between the security establishments and the militaries, and create habits of collaboration at working level. Together with the

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[26] See: "Remarks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov," Geneva, 12 September 2013, www.state.gov.

inter-personal relationships required to implement any arms control agreement, it could usefully contribute to building trust. Arms control negotiations could in fact provide a pretext for more frequent high-level political meetings. Finally, pursuing some arms control goals could still require costly signalling: showing willingness or actually resigning from entrenched positions blocking progress in negotiations, but it is not necessarily the starting point to engage in an arms control dialogue.

While **it is unrealistic to assume, in the current context, that movement in arms control can eliminate all sources of disagreement between the NATO countries and Russia,** it can reduce the friction between the two sides and prevent the relationship from worsening. It should provide room for discussing the different approaches to security problems and give each side some measure of predicting the behaviour of the other.

Taking an arms control approach can of course be seen as a step back, as it would tacitly acknowledge our inability to move on from an adversarial relationship with Russia to a de-militarised one based on cooperation or even the creation of a security community (where the threat or use of force is permanently excluded) in the whole Euro-Atlantic area. By assuming that a confrontation or conflict between the West and Russia is unlikely but still possible, a focus over the next few years would be the important and classic arms control task of "reducing the likelihood of war, its scope and violence if it occurs, and the political and economic costs of being prepared for it."[27] This would require modifying the current military postures and deployment modes on both sides, introducing better quality transparency and information exchange (not only limited to numbers), and assuring better communication, especially during crises. These modest gains would be well worth having, without allowing arms control talks to fall into the trap of expectations that are unrealistic, and therefore likely to be unfulfilled.

The concepts of mutual restraint and increased transparency could help both sides to manage some of the uncertainties inherent to the security dilemma in which they find themselves. The notion of **mutual restraint** was evident in the logic of the 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act. In 2010 Russia fielded a proposal regarding the conclusion of a legally binding agreement on limits to NATO infrastructure-building and deployments in the countries admitted to the Alliance after 1999.[28] Although the Russian proposal was a non-starter for NATO countries because of its one-sided focus, a more balanced approach to restraint, which takes into account also the Russian political obligations from the 1997 document to exercise "similar restraint [to NATO] in its conventional force deployments in Europe," might be more fruitful.

More specifically, while recognising that the processes of the modernisation of the Russian and NATO countries' armed forces would continue in a manner "commensurate with individual or collective legitimate security needs," all sides could agree on a set of restraint measures and instruments to prevent or offset any negative international repercussions of these modernisation processes.

Increased transparency, for its part, is the logical and indispensable twin of restraint. Only by establishing a comprehensive picture of the security situation in the Euro-Atlantic area can restraint be put into the context of actual military doctrines and capabilities in the region. While one must accept that the degree of transparency would always be limited by the security interests of the parties and by the need to maintain a degree of secrecy in military planning, additional transparency measures could still significantly increase the level of confidence between all the parties.

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[27] T.C. Schelling, M.H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control*, Pergamon-Brassey's Classic, Washington, 1985, p. 2.

[28] "Agreement on Basic Principles Governing Relations among NATO–Russia Member States in the Security Sphere." For details see: P. Nopens, "A New Security Architecture for Europe? Russian Proposals and Western Reactions Part II," *Egmont Security Policy Brief*, no. 10, August 2010.

Political Rhetoric and Military Doctrines

The NATO–Russia documents agreed in the past emphasise the indivisibility of security in the Euro-Atlantic area, speak of the security of NATO and Russia as "intertwined" and declare the renunciation of the threat or use of force against each other. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept explicitly stated that the Alliance "poses no threat" to Russia, while the Russian 2010 Military Doctrine lists NATO as one of the organisations with which Moscow wants to "develop relations" in the field of international security. Yet some opinion leaders of Russia and NATO member states trade accusations regarding the "true objectives" of their security policies, hinting at the plans or preparations for offensive military actions against each other. This creates an environment in which not only the bureaucracies and expert community, but also the media and public opinion, tend to view the relationship as inherently adversarial.

The representatives of administration and the political class should bear this aspect in mind and **refrain from aggressive or provocative statements** which go against the spirit of the jointly agreed NATO–Russia documents. **Efforts should be made to correct manifestly false information about NATO and Russian policy and military potential if they appear in the media**.

While toning down the rhetoric can be helpful to decrease of level of mistrust, attention should be focused also on the military doctrines of Russia and NATO members and their implementation. The doctrines shape the way of thinking of the military establishment about the international security context, the nature of future conflicts and the conditions and modes of using force during a crisis or at war. They influence the directions of the development of the armed forces, including the acquisition of new capabilities and training priorities.

As long as the political leadership in Russia and some NATO countries see the mutual relationship as adversarial, their military doctrines will include elements needed to sustain the readiness to defend against the threat of aggression or coercion by "the other side." This is unlikely to be changed through greater transparency. In fact, in-depth examination of doctrines would only confirm that most of the European countries still take into account Russian military potential as a reference point (to various extent), while Russia looks into the capabilities of NATO and its members when doing its own military planning. Debates on military doctrines can be useful especially as an opportunity to challenge each other's assumptions about their hostile intentions, but are unlikely to raise mutual confidence.[29]

Focusing on the perceptions of the significance of new capabilities introduced to the armed forces can be much more promising as a confidence-building measure. Cyber warfare may be a perfect example. The use of **cyberspace** for intelligence gathering, as a tool of sabotage, or a means of attack or defence, has already brought up questions about the continued relevance of the traditional reading of the concepts of deterrence, armed attack, self-defence or the proportionality of response.[30] Countries may have different approaches as to which actions in cyberspace may result in retaliatory actions (retaliation in kind or in other domains), or how the adversary's activities in cyberspace may impact their decision-making during a crisis. Similar discussions could be held regarding the military use of outer space and the perspective of disruption of access to space, or about the perspective of the introduction of new generations of unmanned systems.

These new elements can re-define thinking about the conduct of war and introduce a new dynamic into future security crises in Europe. To avoid misperceptions and unintended

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[29] The point about limited usefulness of discussing doctrines was made by the several participants of the February 2013 Warsaw Workshop of information sharing and confidence-building measures with regards to the non-strategic nuclear weapons.

[30] For an in-depth discussion of some of these themes, see: M.N. Schmitt (ed.), *Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, www.ccdcoe.org.

crisis escalation, early comparison of the conceptual approaches which are being developed in Russia and in the NATO countries and the way in which these new capabilities are being introduced into the military doctrines would be beneficial.

Exercises

The need, on the one hand, to test the progress of Russian military reform, and on the other, the renewed emphasis in NATO on joint training within the framework of the Connected Forces Initiative, seem to guarantee that the issue of exercises would feature high on the NATO–Russia list of controversies in the foreseeable years. The scale and mode of conducting the Russian–Belorussian West 2009 and Ladoga 2009 exercises, in which the joint forces practised repelling an attack from NATO territory and conducting a counterattack, with the participation of aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons from Long-Range Aviation units, caused an outcry among many European Allies.[31] On their part, Russian and Belarusian officials pointed to the increase in the number of military exercises conducted on the territories of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as a factor to be taken into account in their defence planning.[32] **Typically, while the side conducting the exercises has been careful to portray them as purely defensive, the sceptics assert that they signal an aggressive political agenda and rehearse offensive operations disguised as defence**.[33] The mistrust is increased by keeping the number of troops and equipment involved in the majority of the exercises below the levels stipulated in the Vienna Document, which makes release of information and outside monitoring entirely discretional.

It is unrealistic to expect that NATO and Russia would refrain from conducting territorial defence exercises near their borders. Training similar to the major exercises conduced in autumn 2013 (West 2013 and Steadfast Jazz 2013) will take place in the future. However, Russia and NATO may jointly agree on measures that would decrease a risk that any military exercises could lead to a major increase of mutual distrust. It is useful to remind the decision-makers about the unintended consequences of the 1983 NATO Able Archer exercises and their misinterpretation by the Soviet decision-makers.

Russia and NATO countries could jointly elaborate a principle of restraint in conducting military exercises. They could strive to exclude from the scenarios of major, multi-national exercises conducted in the vicinity of the joint border, any specific activities which could be seen as especially provocative, for example scenarios of conducting large-scale offensive operations, practicing amphibious warfare, or enforcing a naval blockade.

The size and rate of the exercises with extensive territorial defence scenarios should also be reviewed with the aim of balancing them against other priorities of the armed forces. This would not mean a complete elimination of such kind of training, as it is an important part of both NATO and national security doctrines. Still, in the present threat environment, scenarios connected with possible contingencies beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, crisis management and peacekeeping, seem to be more useful for the militaries than the rehearsals of tank battles in the Middle European plains.

Finally, as a confidence-building transparency measure, **NATO and Russia should consider agreeing, on a reciprocal basis, to provide advance information, pre- and post-exercise briefings, and to invite** (with necessary notification time) **observers, to major**

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[31] "23.11.2009: NATO–Russia: NAC discusses Russian military exercises," Wikileaks-obtained materials, www.aftenposten.no.

[32] R. McDermott, "Belarus and Russia Prepare Zapad 2013 Military Exercise," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 10, no. 71, 16 April 2013, www.jamestown.org.

[33] President Toomas Ilves of Estonia expressed an opinion that *West 2013* exercises were aimed at testing readiness to conquer the Baltic States, see: "War Games again on Baltic Borders," 19 September 2013, www.baltictimes.com.

exercises which would otherwise fall below or outside the limits of the Vienna Document. As defining the lower threshold would be a major problem in itself, an alternative solution could include the two sides presenting to each other lists of major exercises planned for the next years, with the other side choosing the ones which it considers important enough to include in the information exchange and observation regime—within an agreed quota.[34] Other countries, such as Belarus, Finland, Sweden and Ukraine, should be invited to join the arrangement.

Conventional Forces and Missile Defence

This may prove to be the most controversial part to agree, as Russia has insisted on legally binding limitations of NATO's freedom of deploy conventional forces, while a number of NATO Allies (including the United States) have vigorously resisted any such formulas.

Developments on the ground should also be taken into account, as **it is unlikely that the states would withdraw from recently made decisions on modernisation and deployments.** On the NATO side, these developments have included the construction of U.S. missile defence installation in Romania and Poland, U.S. training arrangements with Romania and Bulgaria, a small, training-focused air detachment in Poland, and the NATO Air Policing mission in the Baltic states. One should add the national armament programmes of some of Russia's neighbours (Poland, Norway, and non-NATO Finland), which would equip their armed forces with new offensive and defensive capabilities.

On the Russian side, its military spending grew by 113% in 2003–2012, with the plans under implementation to spend 20.7 trillion rubles (approximately $705 billion) on equipment by 2020.[35] The introduction of the new weapon systems into the units stationed in the Western Military District has been an ongoing process, including new ships for the Baltic Sea Fleet, aircraft, air defence systems (incl. S-400), and Iskander tactical ballistic missiles. Russia has been also stepping up its military cooperation with Belarus, with the delivery of modern air defence systems and plans to deploy Russian fighter aircraft on its territory.[36]

Taking all these developments into account, **it would be unrealistic to expect a complete freeze, let alone reversal, of the plans to introduce new military capabilities into the region.** At the same time, arrival of particular weapon systems, if not handled properly, can aggravate tensions. The controversy over the planned missile defence installations in Romania and Poland is a case in point.

There are currently no legal or political obstacles limiting or preventing further deployment of offensive conventional forces along the NATO–Russian border (leaving aside the CFE limits). Some deployments are also not covered by the OSCE exchange of information regime. Restraint might be difficult to obtain, especially since, for Russia and some of its neighbouring countries, publicising the deployment of these weapons might be aimed at sending a political signal and achieving specific aims, for example displaying deterrence potential and assuring the public about the readiness of the armed forces to fight aggression**. Soft transparency measures such as providing advance information, including through the media, about the timing and context of acquiring or deploying particular systems, might be recommended as the most viable option.**

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[34] That would follow the logic of the October 2012 decision by the OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation (FMC Decision no. 9/12), requesting states to provide at least one notification of a planned significant military exercise, if a given country does not plan to conduct notifiable activities above the Vienna Document thresholds.

[35] According to the Russian State Armaments Program for 2011–2020. See: "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2012," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, April 2013. See also: J. Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, no. 7-5700, 24 August 2011.

[36] A. Dyner, "Prospects and Consequences of Military Cooperation between Belarus and Russia," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 61 (514), 4 June 2013.

For a general restraining of conventional forces deployment, **NATO should be ready to re-confirm and elaborate further on its 1997 "substantial combat forces" pledge.**[37] Under the present circumstances and in the short- to mid-term perspective, it is doubtful that any NATO country would be willing to consider permanent stationing of large combat units on the territories of the member states admitted to the Alliance after 1999. It is difficult to see why the Alliance would insist on keeping this hypothetical option open. **Russia would, however, need to be ready to provide reciprocal assurances of restraint regarding the strength of its military units deployed in the vicinity of NATO territory**, including the Kaliningrad Oblast and Western Military District, the flank zones envisaged by the CFE and ACFE Treaties and the Russian military cooperation with Belarus.

Transparency, including that provided by joint collaboration, is also the most viable option of steadily building trust in the field of **missile defence**.[38] Russian proposals to agree via a legally binding instrument on the "forbidden" zones for the missile defence systems (for example a given radius from major Russian ballistic missile bases, or maritime zones where the deployment or movement of Aegis ships would be prohibited or limited) are treated by the United States and NATO countries as unacceptable, as they would both impede the effectiveness of the system and constitute a major unilateral concession towards Russia. Such proposals are unattractive politically, and difficult to enforce from the operational point of view.

So far, NATO and U.S. proposals on transparency measures towards Russia have included exchanging plans for MD system developments and sharing information on some of their characteristics, invitations to participate in missile defence tests and joint collaboration via data exchange centres. These measures could significantly increase knowledge on the NATO system on the side of Russia.

NATO members and the U.S. could however go further in their proposal of reciprocal transparency measures. The U.S. together with other NATO members should jointly elaborate a list of criteria that will be taken into account when deciding about the implementation of the next phases of European MD development. The list of criteria could include a list of specific Iranian actions perceived as sufficient to stop, slow or accelerate implementation of EPAA (such as developments in Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programme, testing and deployments). NATO could also elaborate a general list of circumstances that would require improvements to the missile defence system in the future (for example, the information about potential opponents' work on decoys or the rate of production of ballistic missiles).

The list does not have to be prepared in consultation with Russia, which may not agree with the methodology accepted by NATO. Still, **communicating general guidelines on further development of NATO missile defence will provide Russia with a sense of predictability,** and goes beyond providing quantitative information about the number of missile defence systems that the U.S. plans to deploy in the next decade. NATO and the U.S. would inform Russia in advance under what circumstances and why missile defence systems would be enhanced. NATO compliance with its own system development criteria may build trust in relations with Russia, even if NATO and Russia had different interpretations about the strategic significance of missile defence.

The advantage of NATO preparing such a list is that sharing it with Russia (and possibly also China) would signal clearly which Iranian and North Korean steps would spark U.S./NATO

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[37] "NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces." In: *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, 27 May 1997.

[38] For an overview of the cooperation options, see: A. Arbatov, V. Dvorkin (eds.), *Missile Defence: Confrontation and Cooperation,* Carnegie Moscow Centre, Moscow, 2013.

reactions. In consequence, it would be in China and Russia's interest to work on preventing certain developments in missile and nuclear programmes of these states too.

Russia should provide NATO with similar transparency measures regarding its missile defence plans. The development of the Russian Air-Space Defence system can also invite questions about its impact on the security of the NATO states. Issues such as the mode of operation (possibility of intercepting targets beyond Russia's borders) or the potential consequences of the use of nuclear-tipped missiles by missile defence batteries can be discussed. The Russian side should be encouraged to provide information about its own threat perception providing rationale for building an advanced missile defence system and provide quantitative transparency measures as a reciprocity measure for NATO's actions.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons

Tactical nuclear weapons constitute an unresolved problem in the European security environment. **There is an asymmetry of NATO and Russian interests in this area.** On the one hand, NATO members are generally inclined to further reduce the role and number of these weapons, contingent on reciprocal Russian steps. Some NATO member states express concerns regarding Russia's disproportionally large nuclear arsenal and the location of Russian nuclear storage sites near NATO members' borders, particularly in Kaliningrad. On the other hand, Russia perceives its tactical weapons as an equaliser of NATO's overall conventional superiority and makes any discussions on this issue dependent on withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe and on dismantling associated infrastructure.

As a first step, there must be **mutual recognition that a compromise on tactical nuclear weapons** (even very modest agreement on constraints and transparency) **can be found.** Without any progress in this area, the trust building process between NATO and Russia will be seen as incomplete.

The menu of possible options is rich.[39] As a relatively non-intrusive transparency measure, NATO and Russia could exchange information about the number of non-strategic nuclear weapons. At the initial stage, they will not have to provide accurate numbers. The data could be "fuzzy": NATO could declare for example that there are between 100 and 200 U.S. warheads based in Europe, and Russia could state that in the European part of its territory it possesses between 500 and 2000 tactical nuclear warheads. NATO and Russia could also share historical data about the number of nuclear warheads that have been dismantled or deactivated as a result of implementation of the U.S. and Soviet Union/Russia reductions announced in 1991 and 1992 (the so called Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, or PNIs). A general exchange of data could be a first step towards increasing transparency on tactical nuclear weapons, and it would not necessitate exchange of sensitive information. Russia would not have to confirm or deny at this stage whether it has implemented all its PNI commitments, especially the elimination of nuclear warheads for short range missiles. One step further for both NATO members and Russia would be an exchange of information on the number of inactive nuclear storage facilities in their territories. By providing such information, they would not have to share or indirectly provide sensitive information about the location of the current arsenal. It could, however, indirectly indicate overall reductions in the size of the nuclear arsenal.

The restraint measures that might be taken by both sides include a **pledge of not increasing the number of tactical nuclear weapons, or as a step further, not to increase the number of tactical nuclear weapons in each of the existing storage facilities.** Even if this were not verifiable, it might provide political assurance against the risk that the number of tactical nuclear weapons near NATO and Russia borders will grow.

[39] For more options, see: P. Schulte, P.S. Hilde, K. Zysk, Ł. Kulesa, J. Durkalec, *The Warsaw Workshop: Prospects for Information Sharing and Confidence-Building on Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe*, PISM Post-Conference Report, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, April 2013.

As a more ambitious measure of restraint, NATO members may strengthen the politically binding 1997 pledge of the "three no's" with a political statement that NATO countries admitted to the Alliance after 1999 have no reasons, plans or intentions to modify and certify their fighter aircraft for a nuclear-delivery role. Still, strengthening of the "three no's" will most likely depend on reciprocal Russian steps. An ambitious Russian step would be to make a political pledge that it has no reasons, plans or intentions to store nuclear warheads near the borders of new NATO members, nor to equip with or assign certain dual-use military capabilities located near the borders of these countries (such as short range missiles) to a nuclear delivery role. Such a political pledge would assure that nuclear storage sites located in Kaliningrad would not host nuclear warheads, however, without a need of dismantling the infrastructure already in place. Russia could also show its continuous commitment to implement the PNIs. Again, even if the pledges were not verifiable, Russia most likely would avoid any activities that might alarm its neighbours, such as activities that might indicate nuclear weapons with associated delivery vehicles are stored in Kaliningrad.

Sub-Regional Approaches and the Case of Central Europe: Advantages and Pitfalls

Some of the mutual restraint and transparency arrangements covered above could usefully be applied at sub-regional level. One logical and very tempting way of beginning the NATO–Russia trust-building process seems to be addressing the most pressing and visible concerns that exist at that level.

The benefit of focusing on the sub-regional level is that the most probable tensions between NATO members and Russia (namely misunderstanding or wrong assessment of military activities, concerns about the risk of small-scale surprise attacks, or small regional arms races) would most likely emerge along the NATO–Russia borders. **Concentration on sub-regional anxieties may enable both sides to build trust in areas in which its deficit is most pressing and may pave the way for further progress.** Some sub-regional measures may also allow for an increase of direct mil-to-mil interaction, may allow greater space for personal relationships to build trust, and may build the spirit of cooperation between neighbouring states.

The advantage of a sub-regional focus is also that it may lead to agreement on measures on which there will not be consensus at the pan-European level. Also, it provides for flexibility to tailor specific measures to different sub-regional specifics. There is no need of a one-size-fits-all approach. There could be a set of different sub-regional regimes, each crafted to security needs and political realities in each area. For example, measures that would satisfy Poland and the Baltic states may not necessarily be seen as relevant or needed in the case of Turkey and vice versa.

In Central and Eastern Europe, countries like the Baltic States and Poland might agree on some extensive confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) with Russia. The benefit of such an approach is that agreement of CSBMs might not necessitate overcoming differences between Central and Eastern European states and Russia on the need of definition of the "substantial combat forces." Nor would it necessitate any constraints on the movement of Russia's forces that would resemble flank limitations. Creation of sub-regional CSBMs between NATO members and Russia might therefore be a good starting point for further steps.

Some good examples on how to establish regional CSBMs exist. For example, Poland already concluded bilateral agreements with Belarus and Ukraine complimentary to the Vienna Document, expanding mutual CSBMs by adding evaluation visits, inspections and inviting observers to military activities conducted at the levels lower than envisaged in the Vienna Document. There is no similar mechanism between Central European NATO members and Russia but these measures add to transparency and predictability, are grounded in reciprocity and therefore could enhance trust.

Still, to reach such a goal, some political and technical challenges have to be overcome. The area of application would have to be designed in a way to alleviate at least some security concerns of both Central and Eastern European NATO members and Russia. Central and Eastern European states, including Poland and the Baltic states would most likely be interested in more transparency with regards to Kaliningrad Oblast and the western part of Russia.

Additionally, as Russian and Belarusian armed forces are becoming more integrated, and Russia's presence in Belarus is increasing, the participation of Belarus in a sub-regional arrangement might be seen as valuable from the perspective of NATO members. However, as a first step, an arrangement limited only to Russia could be sufficient.

The question is whether Russia will be interested in providing more transparency on their territories, and what they would like to receive in exchange. It might be a matter of a debate whether extensive transparency measures should apply to the symmetrical areas on both sides of NATO members' and Russian borders, or whether they should apply to areas in which the number of military units and installations on both sides would be proportional. Any regional arrangement would have to be designed in a way that did not create the perception that one side was giving disproportionately more than the other.

It is also necessary to keep in mind that while sub-regional measures would be a good start for building trust, they will need to dispel some broader concerns. Therefore, at some stage they would have to be complemented by the overall pan-European arrangements.

Although military developments in the border areas catch the attention, both Russia and NATO members look at their overall military capabilities. Russia is anxious not only about capabilities located in the territories of its NATO neighbours but also about overall NATO capability to rapidly relocate military equipment in the Euro-Atlantic area, which can offset "the significance of sub-regional thresholds."[40] Also, Russia is in favour of establishing a kind of overall balance between Russian and NATO military forces.

Similarly, for NATO members that border Russia, sub-regional measures will not alleviate all concerns either. Central and Eastern European experts express worries that the aim of Russian military modernisation is to strengthen Russia's ability to redeploy its own forces rapidly within its own territory, and to engage in large-scale joint military operations over vast areas. The exact locations of Russia's military units are of lesser importance.[41] Therefore, transparency and predictability with regard to overall Russian military forces would remain a matter of high importance.

Nonetheless, measures taken at sub-regional level, and measures in pursuit of mutual restraint and transparency, have a chance to meet the interests of both sides. They have the potential to increase the scope for personal contacts and to find routes to trust through those inter-personal dynamics and, because many of the limited steps proposed would be reciprocal in character, they also offer some more realistic prospect of trust-building through graduated reciprocation.

V. Engagement in Other Institutions

Most of the recommendations included in our report focus on the relationship between Russia and NATO and its member states. This reflects the enduring centrality of the NATO–Russia framework for discussing European security and the decisive impact of military issues on the deficit of trust currently observable on the European continent. Visible progress on

[40] "Speaking notes of Deputy Defence Minister of the Russian Federation Anatoly Antonov," NATO–Russia Council meeting, 24 July 2013, www.natomission.ru.

[41] R. Kaljurand, K. Neretnieks, B. Ljung, J. Tupay, *Developments in the Security Environment of the Baltic Sea Region up to 2020*, International Centre for Defence Studies, Tallinn, September 2012, www.icds.ee, pp. 21–22.

overcoming the trust deficit in Europe would not be possible if the most contentious relationship, between NATO and Russia, is not given priority.

Still, both the OSCE and the European Union need to be engaged in the efforts to increase the level of trust in Europe, and they both have unique features which can be utilised in pursuit of this goal. Most importantly, they provide platforms through which other countries can engage in the dialogue on new trust-building initiatives and provide their own perspectives and proposals. They may also be the forum in which "gradual reciprocation" steps and "costly signals" may be presented, explained and discussed.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Despite recent efforts to raise its importance as the most inclusive forum for dealing with security in a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian dimension (such as the 2010 Astana Summit or the launch of the Helsinki +40 process), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe suffers from a lack of political attention from the main powers, and from internal weaknesses.[42]

The OSCE has been the main forum for the development and implementation of confidence and security-building measures. This is a natural legacy of its Cold War pre-history, but also its present mandate and its inclusive character. The richness of the CSBM acquis accumulated though the OSCE is unprecedented. Its Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) meets every week to discuss CSBM implementation, including the Vienna Document, and to exchange information on various aspects of military security in the OSCE area. OSCE is also an umbrella organisation for the Joint Consultative Group (dealing with compliance issues arising from the implementation of the CFE Treaty) and the Open Skies Treaty's Consultative Commission. Crucially, the member states accumulated most of their own experience in dealing with conventional arms control issues through engagement with the OSCE.

With the CFE Treaty in limbo, **the Vienna Document and related bilateral and regional arrangements emerge as the most useful framework for the exchange of information and notifications, organisation of weapon demonstrations, inspections and evaluation visits**.[43] The political nature of the arrangement has increased its attractiveness, taking into account the difficulties connected with the perspective of starting the work on any new legally binding documents. As mentioned above, the experience from negotiating and implementing the Vienna Document can be a point of reference for the creation of a more tailored set of transparency measures between NATO and Russia. The OSCE can also be a forum for discussing the outline of a new pan-European conventional arms control system to hopefully emerge from the wreckage of the CFE.

The Vienna Document, despite all its features, remains an inadequate tool for encouraging restraint and increasing the transparency of military activities.[44] The scope of information exchange under the Vienna Document does not include naval forces, air and missile defence systems, ballistic missiles or UAVs. The thresholds for prior notification of exercises and invitation of observers from all OSCE countries remain too high, taking into account the size and the training patterns of the modern armed forces. While several proposals have been made to modernise the document, they have so far not received enough political attention to succeed and it is unlikely to change soon.

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[42] For an overview of the challenges, see: "Towards a Euro-Atlantic and Euroasian Security Community: From Vision to Reality," Final report of the IDEAS Project, Hamburg, Paris, Moscow, Warsaw 2012.

[43] Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence and Security-Building Measures, FSC.DOC/1/11, 30 November 2011.

[44] S. Lunn, *Conventional Arms Control in the Euro-Atlantic Region: Is It Desirable? Is It Achievable?*, European Leadership Network Policy Brief, October 2013, p. 2.

The OSCE should therefore continue to play its role in confidence-building, but the work conducted through the Organisation will (unfortunately) remain of interest mainly to the small, albeit dedicated groups within MFA and MoD bureaucracies. The attention of the decision-makers, especially in Washington and Moscow, can be better guaranteed by framing the issue of trust-building as an urgent task for the NATO–Russia Council and their bilateral agendas.

European Union

Historically, the European Union has been an integration project based on a political and economic rationale rather than a common perception of security threats, and is therefore ill-suited to deal with the military aspects of trust-building. Its nascent Common Security and Defence Policy is focused on crisis prevention, crisis management and capacity building in the immediate neighbourhood. **The EU's relationship with Russia, even though formally involving security aspects, remains concentrated on the economic dimension, including the energy relationship.**

It would seem natural to expect the EU to act as an initiator and facilitator of non-military trust building initiatives towards Russia, especially since Moscow does not consider the EU as a prominent player in the European "hard security" landscape. Until recently, it was frequently assumed that the European Union could form a more promising partnership with Russia than NATO in tackling the security challenges in the joint neighbourhood, especially the soft security issues (like migration or organised crime) and the frozen conflicts. The EU involvement in facilitating the Georgian-Russian ceasefire in 2008 and the deployment of the EU Monitoring Mission to the areas around Abkhazia and South Ossetia seem to confirm the notion that the EU presence is more "tolerable" for Russia than interactions with NATO.

Unfortunately, the EU has of late been increasingly seen in Russia as a competitor in the struggle for influence in the post-Soviet space, and as a critic of Russian internal developments. Russia is taken aback by the insistence of the EU to pursue its interests on a range of issues, including the Eastern Partnership, trade, energy and environment, without taking into account the Russian position. That makes the Russia–EU relationship nearly as troubled as the NATO–Russia relationship.[45] Instead of supporting the NATO–Russia track, it requires perhaps its own separate set of trust-building measures that are beyond the chosen scope for this paper.

Concluding Remarks

It may be tempting to argue that the challenges which are common for Russia and NATO countries, such as terrorism, regional instability in Central Asia and the Middle East or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, would eventually lead to the change of the present unsatisfactory state of the bilateral relationship. Unfortunately, the assumption that pragmatic cooperation based on shared interests would have a spill-over effect and overcome the atmosphere of mistrust has so far not been validated. That is why this report argues that only identifying the sources of mistrust and applying specific trust-building measures can bring about a fundamental change of climate in the NATO-Russia relationship, allowing the two sides to rise above the legacy of hostility.

Unlike some other reports devoted to security relations between Russia and the West, this one does not include specific proposals on timing or the list of priorities in the short, mid and long-term perspectives. The measures proposed here can be pursued instantly, as they do

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[45] On the sources of the clash, see D. Trenin (ed.) *The End of an Era in EU-Russia Relations,* Carnegie Moscow Center, May 2013, www.carnegieendowment.org.

not require major changes of policies or military doctrines. Moreover, they can be based on politically binding declarations rather than legally binding instruments. Therefore, the 2014 meeting of the NATO-Russia Council at the level of the heads of states (conducted in the framework of the NATO Summit planned to be held in the United Kingdom) would be a perfect opportunity to announce an agreement on some of the steps towards restraint and transparency outlined above.

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ISBN 978-83-62453-71-9