



# REPORT

THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## IS A NEW COLD WAR INEVITABLE? CENTRAL EUROPEAN VIEWS ON REBUILDING TRUST IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC REGION

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in the Euro-Atlantic Region

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## Introduction

When the idea to invite Central European experts to share their views on overcoming the acute deficit of trust in the relationship between the West and Russia first originated in early 2014, there was still some hope that the Ukraine crisis would not mark the beginning of a new period of confrontation in Europe. With that in mind, PISM asked the authors not only to comment on the state of the relationship with Russia but also to assess to what extent various proposals (including Carnegie's Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative papers and the 2013 report by U.S., Russian and European experts, "Building Mutual Security in the Euro-Atlantic Region") regarding military confidence building and arms control dialogue with Russia would advance the security of Central European countries.

However, as the situation deteriorated with Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for eastern Ukraine separatists, the focus inevitably had to turn from dealing with the symptoms (mutual mistrust) to addressing the root causes of the spat between Russia and the West, which now threatens the very foundations of the European security system. Previous approaches to mending the relationship, such as those focused on finding areas of cooperation based on common interests (e.g., dealing with terrorism or the Iranian nuclear programme), were unlikely to be sufficient.

Only by understanding better the sources of the current crisis and assessing realistically the likelihood and terms of future rapprochement, can we be able to develop new policy proposals on the future of European security. This is where this publication can make a contribution. The authors offer a number of observations and suggestions that need to be taken into account by European decision-makers, especially at a time when both the West and Russia are entering a period of hostility and the perspective of a major conflict can no longer be discarded as impossible. The texts were finished before the conclusion of NATO's Wales Summit, but since the results are largely in line with the predictions made by the authors, their advice should inform the development of Alliance policy.

The authors contributing to this publication make it clear that the reasons for the Russia–West crisis run much deeper than a deficit of trust or inadequate channels of communication between the parties. The mistrust itself is not a product of misunderstanding of the motives of the other side, but rather reflects fundamental differences in the sphere of values and conceptualization of interests between the West and Russia. As Zdzisław Lachowski and Martina Heranová explain in more detail in their contributions, the relationship deteriorated long before the start of the Maidan protests. The Ukraine crisis acted merely as a catalyst for a combusive mix of mutual resentment. In Raimonds Rublovskis' analysis, he calls attention to the importance of the sides' different interpretations of history: for example, for most Central Europeans, memories of their late 20th century experiences include liberation from Soviet/Russian domination, while in Russia the narrative of attempts to weaken and push Russia back by a "predatory" West, and NATO "expansion" seem to prevail.

Another common thread in the texts is that the authors currently see little or even zero chance of rebuilding trust between the West and Russia without tackling the fundamental differences between them. From Central European perspective, progress will not be made merely by talking more frequently with Russia, or finding specific items on the global agenda where common interests can be identified. The crux of the problem lies with the tenets of Moscow's foreign and security policies. Under Vladimir Putin's leadership, Russia has been put on a collision course with the West, which remains unwilling to accommodate or acquiesce to Moscow's expectation of a privileged position in what it calls its "near abroad." Granted, in some areas (such as arms control) the West, or more specifically NATO, has made mistakes and missed some opportunities

for engagement, but that should not overshadow Russia's primary responsibility for undermining the European security system.

Individual chapters show that despite their different approaches, all of the authors remain concerned about the possibility of the current crisis growing out of control, confronting Central Europe with the threat of a high-speed arms race or direct military conflict with Russia. While there needs to be clarity in condemnation of Russia's actions, as well as NATO's willingness and ability to defend its partners, steps should also be made to signal that the West is serious when it says it does not have an aggressive agenda vis-à-vis Russia. How to strike the right balance between deterrence and assurance of Moscow is, of course, subject to debate. For example, while Martina Heranová supports the permanent stationing of NATO units in the region and moving forward with missile defence as a way to send a clear deterrence signal to Russia, Rublovskis is concerned that it may trigger a Russian response that would test the limits of the Alliance's solidarity. Still, all of the authors seem to agree that efforts are needed to prevent the further disintegration of the European security system. Notably, both Rublovskis and Lachowski highlight the crucial role that can be played by the OSCE, as the most inclusive European organisation dealing with security issues.

Finally, the experts point to the importance of salvaging the European conventional arms control, transparency and confidence-building system. The NATO countries, Ukraine, and especially Russia may at some point be interested in using the organisation to de-escalate tensions, possibly even to make it more effective to control one another's moves. Even if a new "Cold War" may not be a repeat of the previous one, instruments devised before 1989 and meant to decrease the likelihood of a clash between NATO and the Warsaw Pact may turn out to be useful again. Also, while engaging on these issues does not currently offer a way out of the crisis, given its depth and complexity, doing so may at least provide some degree of stability amidst the turmoil.

*Łukasz Kulesa*



## **Back to the Future? Euro-Atlantic Arms Control in a “Post-Ukraine” Era: A Polish View**

Zdzisław Lachowski

In recent years we have witnessed numerous proposals coming from interested organisations and think tanks which seek to help overcome the existing impasse. They have submitted many innovative ideas, both in substance and form. An interesting initiative put forward in 2013, i.e. before the current developments, addresses a broad range of steps and arrangements (measures, forums etc.) with the aim to help build mutual security in the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>1</sup> These arrangements embrace nuclear forces, missile defences, prompt-strike forces, conventional forces, cybersecurity and space as well as the establishment of a new security forum for their implementation.

This analysis is not that ambitious, although Central Europe remains pivotal to the security issues in the Euro-Atlantic region. Consequently, this contribution deals with three realms of importance from the Polish point of view: conventional armed forces, tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs), and missile defence. In order to put issues of confidence building in the right perspective, the status of arms control is discussed briefly and major factors of the global political process are addressed. The main actors’ political game in the Euro-Atlantic dimension, critical for the condition of trust building, is also reviewed here. And, finally, the status of arms control in the above-mentioned dimensions today is assessed.

### **Legacy of Arms Control in Europe and the Ukrainian Crisis**

Central Europe is a specific region from the point of view of arms control and trust building. In spite of the end of the Cold War some 25 years ago, the old dividing lines remain discernible there. NATO and Russia continue to compete for influence in the region and its vicinity. Today cooperative security seems to be gone and Ukraine’s crisis has brought into relief confrontational features.

Arms control and confidence-building measures are fairly well-defined and separated from each other. However, since they overlap in certain areas (transparency, stability, verification, etc.) one can subsume them into the category of trust building (confidence-building measures are said to belong to the category of “soft” arms-control).

After the end of the Cold War, arms control got a new lease on life and resulted in an impressive suite of relevant treaties and agreements. In Europe, the focus was primarily on conventional weapons (CFE treaty, Vienna CSBM Documents, Open Skies treaty, etc.). Also a nuclear disarmament accord in the form of the 1991/92 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives by the Soviet/Russian and U.S. leaders, respectively, provided a basis for unilateral substantive cutbacks in the arsenals of tactical (substrategic) armaments. Regrettably, the string of arms control successes hardly continued beyond the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, measures to consolidate security either expanded into “less militarised” domains (such as cybersecurity,

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<sup>1</sup> “Building Mutual Security in the Euro-Atlantic Region. Report prepared for Presidents, Prime Ministers, Parliamentarians, and Publics,” Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2013, [www.BuildingMutualSecurity.org](http://www.BuildingMutualSecurity.org).

combating terrorism, etc.) or were based on coercion (such as the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq), while arms control gradually was relegated to a secondary place. The New START of 2010 was an exception to the rule rather than a new opening. U.S. efforts to extend the strategic talks to tactical nuclear weapons have so far fizzled out.

By the mid-2000s, cooperative relations between the main protagonists, NATO and Russia, had been worsening for a variety of political, military, humanitarian and other reasons, leading nearly a decade later to a dramatic tearing of the web of premises, mutual understandings, international norms and principles that originated in the time of bloc confrontation and have been further developed and shaped during the past quarter-century.

The developments in and around Ukraine have changed dramatically the existing assumptions concerning security relations in the Euro-Atlantic area. There is a fear that the window of opportunity for building trust and confidence is being definitively closed.

Low-intensity conflicts are not an alien phenomenon in places across Eastern Europe and they do not much change the European status quo. Ukraine, however, is an exceptional case due to its geopolitical position, weight and prominence. At the time of this writing it was not known how far the situation would escalate (or de-escalate). Scenarios vary from one extreme to another. At the moment it is difficult to imagine a best-case scenario—a return to the status quo ante.

In the face of the gradual dismantling of Ukraine's sovereignty, any trust building is out of the question. However, if a sensible course of future events were to follow, sooner or later the parties concerned would stand a chance to find a *modus vivendi* despite disagreements over Ukraine's sovereign political and military status, its territorial integrity, stability and other norms and tenets that have been violated by Russia.

Conventional wisdom suggests that crises are likely to give a powerful incentive to rethink the situation in order to re-establish the order and set rules of coexistence between states. As political analysts readily compare the current moves by Russia towards Ukraine with Austria's Anschluss and the Sudetenland crisis in 1938, one can provide another precedent: the Brezhnev doctrine-inspired invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. While indignantly condemned by the Western world, it was soon to be recognized rather as a "bump on the road," thus helping accelerate the advent of *détente* and set in motion the so-called Helsinki process in East–West relations several years later. Whether a similar course of events will take place remains to be seen.<sup>2</sup>

In order to see prospects for reviving trust and confidence it is advisable to review the existing condition of the military-related agreements and understandings that have underpinned the post-Cold War order in the Euro-Atlantic region. An adequate assessment of these should contribute to finding viable solutions and propositions that could help rebuild minimum confidence and provide a better sense of security among the interested actors. As far as the West (NATO) is concerned, a breakthrough comparable to the Harmel Report of 1967 would be required which, among other things, would redefine its attitude towards Russia and other post-Soviet actors, review the existing mechanisms, and work out, if possible, new approaches to tackle various risks and threats existing in the region. Seemingly, the original features of confidence building dating back to the Cold War period may gain prominence in this atmosphere of tension and a concomitant trust deficit.

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<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Karl Marx has warned that history, if it repeats itself, results in a farce....

## The Relevance of Arms Control

Arms control in Europe remains, basically, a brainchild of the Cold War. Its roots go back a long way to the time of bloc confrontation and distrust. Nevertheless arms control is not doomed to face an early fall. Indirectly, this is proven by the fact that Russia has not decided to terminate its CFE state party status and continues to participate in the Vienna CSBM Document regime. It is difficult (albeit not impossible) to imagine that the European security edifice could be maintained without its arms control foundation.

True, some of its traditional functions and elements are objectively less urgent or inadequate today. However, the overall framework of trust building created in this region retains some unique major advantages: it is by far the most elaborate system of its kind in the world and provides a substantial stabilising role in intra-European relations based on political cooperation and commitments including openness, predictability, transparency and mutual reassurance. It also remains a kind of insurance policy against a worst-case scenario of large-scale conventional warfare, just in case the trend of history is reversed, as seems to be taking place at present.

Arms control is of special significance for Poland owing to its historical experience and geopolitical location. Hardly any existing major Euro-Atlantic security threat or risk leaves Poland out. Today, Poland's NATO "frontline" status gives it a special role, and at the same time makes it remarkably exposed to potentially disadvantageous developments. Therefore, it is critical for the country to stave off adverse security changes, including a lapse in control of armaments.

## *Global Challenges*

Before discussing the pertinence of arms control today, one should take a brief look at the principal obstacles it faces. A variety of phenomena of a general character have contributed to the relative decline of arms control in Europe:

- Mass-scale conventional or nuclear attack, which was the main rationale behind the search for a disarmament deal, seems at present an improbable scenario. Even the dramatic events in Ukraine do not appear to invalidate that proposition.
- In response to a wide spectrum of new threats, risks and challenges, other ways and means have been employed in Europe to cope with them. For various reasons, arms control solutions play a negligible role in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. This state of affairs has been aggravated by the relative declining status of NATO, the main institutional pillar of the European arms control dialogue.
- The conduct of the U.S. under the George W. Bush administration, which sought more active methods of tackling security problems (pre-emption, coercion including the use of military force, unilateralism, etc.), resulted in growing scepticism about arms control approaches and tools. In the past decade, multilateral diplomacy, institutions and other international-legal arrangements have often taken second place to expedience and unilateral steps and arrangements. The return to multilateral diplomacy by the Obama administration gave rise to hopes for a positive change.
- The security vectors have been redirected from Europe-oriented security problems towards the Asia-Pacific region, against different challenges and menaces of worldwide impact.
- To combat threats from failed or failing states, non-state actors, terrorism and proliferation of WMD, arms control can plausibly offer only a few advantages.

- Increasingly visible is the challenge posed for classic arms control by new developments in the armed forces and their modes of operation. The new missions of military (and other) personnel and the new generations of weapons and technologies used by them need to be addressed and verified against existing and developing military doctrines if the inclusive and cooperative pattern of security relations is to be preserved.

### *Neglect versus Assertiveness*

While addressing possible contributions that the Euro-Atlantic states could make to meet the security challenges and fend off threats and risks, almost everybody would agree that Europe today is confronted with the need to revisit the whole spectrum of axioms that held good for a long time.

A long-drawn-out issue is who bears the responsibility for the current state of affairs. The easiest answer is: both protagonists—NATO and Russia. More difficult is to apportion the blame, as each of them accuses the other of ill will and harmful activities. For the past decade or so, the mistrust has gradually permeated the Euro-Atlantic area, thus creating a dichotomy between the two protagonists.

The main arms control regimes have long been eroded by *neglect and disinterest*. Their participants failed to set course for new goals adequate to the changing political and strategic environment. At least since the second post-Cold War enlargement of NATO (2004), the Euro-Atlantic community has faced a growing *crisis of confidence and credibility* that hampered both the application of sufficient political energy to resolve existing blockages and the opening up of new avenues in the whole spectrum of security issues.

The NATO states have long prioritised Russia's complete implementation of the CFE-related Istanbul commitments over the ratification of the adapted treaty. The U.S., in particular, has long regarded European arms control as finished business and merely an element in its political game with Russia. Most European NATO states have more or less reluctantly followed suit, with only a few seeking ways out of the deadlock.

When the U.S. and NATO realised the ensuing risks, it was too late to salvage the "cornerstone of European security"—the (adapted) CFE regime. The missile defence problem, which constitutes the third tip of the strategic triangle in the Euro-Atlantic context, was attenuated by the Obama administration's concessions, including the cancellation of phase IV of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA); however, it remains a major bone of contention between the interested states. The New START agreement, concluded under the same U.S. administration, was apparently the sole accord that acknowledged Russia's equal strategic status.

Russia has long suffered from a loser complex in the Cold War rivalry and arms race. On arms control, it opposed the aforementioned West-imposed linkage regarding the CFE Istanbul commitments. In a desperate move, Russia in 2004 ratified the adapted CFE treaty, however to no avail. Moscow became increasingly exasperated seeing the U.S. and NATO give the cold shoulder to its demands, along with their encroachment on the USSR's former territory as a consequence of their progressive enlargement strategy. Russia proposed that if the CFE regime could not be adapted, then a new system of arms control and confidence-building measures should be developed. Such proposals, however, were ignored. The U.S./NATO missile defence programmes reinforced the Russian obsession with encirclement and subversion by the West. Consequently, from the second half of the 2000s on, the Russian Federation was increasingly turning to aggressive self-assurance. The impending crisis could not be staved off because the two main actors were unable to overcome the *asymmetry of strategic perspective* between them. Ukraine has, among other things, fallen victim to those diverging security agendas and policies.

### *Tactical Nuclear Weapons*

Being one of the critical domains of European disarmament efforts, substrategic nuclear weapons keep defying a solution. For Europe, especially its central part, the need to control nuclear weapons increased in significance in the wake of the New START and U.S. insistence on including the tactical component in future talks. The body of various ideas and propositions, both governmental<sup>3</sup> and non-governmental,<sup>4</sup> concerning transparency, security and confidence building with regard to TNWs grew rapidly; however, their number remained in total reverse to the disappointing results. The Polish think tank PISM has recently compiled a list of transparency and confidence-building measures between Russia and the West (NATO and the U.S.) with the aim of finding out where consensus could be possible or feasible in case a relevant negotiation process starts.<sup>5</sup>

The linkage established by Russia between nuclear and conventional weapons as well as missile defence has effectively held up progress until today. Consequently, progress in tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is held hostage to extraneous factors. Russia's intransigence in this regard is best illustrated by its refusal to disclose information on the number of non-strategic weapons in its possession. (An even more modest suggestion, as proposed by PISM, is to pledge not to increase the number of TNWs.)

The Ukraine crisis has dealt another big blow to the efforts to embark on a nuclear confidence building and disarmament process. One can assume that politics will dominate arms control progress for a pretty long time in NATO–Russia relations. However, it should not impair irretrievably the endeavours to solve the problem of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

The drawn-out stalemate over the issue has additionally been adversely affected by the violation by Russia of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which provided political “security assurances” to Ukraine regarding its territorial integrity in the context of safeguarding that state's non-nuclear status. The breach of that agreement is bound to have a severe impact on the nuclear weapons dialogue, not only in the regional but also in the global dimension.

Poland and other Central European states will continue to support nuclear disarmament with all the well-known preconditions calling for guaranteeing strategic NATO stability and adequate reciprocation on the part of Russia in the march towards that goal.<sup>6</sup> Reductions in this respect are highly unlikely, albeit various soft arms control measures are apparent. The Central European positions concerning TNW transparency and confidence-building measures probably will not basically change except for increased mistrust and caution, and the concomitant adoption of hard bargaining options.

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<sup>3</sup> The non-paper presented in April 2011 by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, which builds on previous initiatives, offers a menu of crude CBMs, such as the use of the NATO–Russia Council, exchange of basic TNW information, a standard reporting blueprint, notification of plans to transfer TNWs, visits of military personnel, preparation for gradual reductions, and an NRC seminar on nuclear doctrines.

<sup>4</sup> For recent CBM contributions to the debates, see, e.g.: S. Andreasen, I. Williams (eds.), *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe. A Framework for Action*, The Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2011; F. Lindval, J. Rydquist, F. Westerlund, M. Winnerstig, *The Baltic Approach: A Next Step. Prospects for an Arms Control Regime for Sub-strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe*, FOI, Stockholm, February 2011; P. Shulte (lead author), P. Sigurd, K. Zysk, Ł. Kulesa, J. Durkalec, *The Warsaw Workshop: Prospects for Information Sharing and Confidence Building on Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe*, Post-Conference PISM Report, Warsaw, April 2013; J. Durkalec, I. Kearns, Ł. Kulesa, *Starting the Process of Trust-building in NATO–Russia Relations: The Arms Control Dimension*, PISM Report, Warsaw, October 2013.

<sup>5</sup> J. Durkalec, A. Zagorski, *Options for Transparency and Confidence-building Measures Related to Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Cost-Benefit Matrix*, Polish Institute of International Affairs, July 2014.

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of Poland's dilemmas in this field, see, e.g.: A. Sommerville, I. Kearns, M. Chalmers, *Poland, NATO and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe*, RUSI/ELN Occasional Paper, February 2012, [www.rusi.org](http://www.rusi.org), [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org).



Additional complicating factors are and will be issues of conventional weapons imbalances between NATO and Russia. Conventional arms asymmetries are likely to have an impact on the nuclear weapons status in the European context. In the worst case, with a collapse of the conventional arms control regime, disarray within NATO and pressures from new Central and European members most anxious about Russia's intentions and posture, the trend towards a reversal of de-nuclearisation in Europe (and elsewhere) would probably usher in all the adverse consequences for the nature and sense of security on the continent.

### *Conventional Weapons*

As argued above, controlling conventional weapons in the OSCE area is the most advanced—peerless in fact—instrument of European security. After the success of the CFE and CSBMs during the first decade of both regimes' operation when they demonstrated impressive adaptability, strong leadership and coherence of state parties, the following years resulted in political squabbles, inertia and stalemate. The adapted CFE treaty lost much of its relevance, particularly in Russia's (and, alas, the U.S.'s) eyes, as a result of the 2004 NATO enlargement and missile defence disputes. Having for years been an underdog, the Russian leadership turned to a stronger, more assertive and consequently less malleable course in its security policy.

At the same time, however, Russia has demonstrated that it is not interested in a collapse of the European arms control system. Apparently, the price of withdrawal would be too high. For all of the Russian exhortations in 2008-9 to elaborate an entirely new system (a "European security architecture"), negotiation of a new arms control regime outside the CFE framework could mean facing daunting risks and obstacles stemming from the changes and shifts that have occurred within and outside the treaty regime in recent years. Therefore, although Russia "suspended" implementation of CFE, it has not invoked the *rebus sic stantibus* clause that would allow it to withdraw from the regime.

Experts agree that the CFE treaty regime is no longer adequate to Europe's security conditions—and a majority of observers claim that it is dead—although it was long capable of continuing operation in its procedural and institutional form. However, big chunks of the treaty, such as the transparency and inspection provisions, would be easy to incorporate into a revised or new agreement.

In the context of mistrust in Russia–NATO relations, a renown German analyst points to the main concerns that must be addressed regarding conventional arms control now and in the future:

- the issue of the overall force balance, undergirded by a concept of reasonable sufficiency;
- prevention of destabilising force concentrations, especially in close vicinity to the NATO and Russian borders;
- the related potential of rapid reinforcement, including air and sea lift; and,
- long-range strike capabilities (global strike systems, drones, cruise missiles).

Reciprocity and non-discrimination as well as transparency and verification should underpin that fundament.<sup>7</sup>

Addressing these issues is in Poland's interest as well. However, the devil is in the details and the Polish negotiators would face a great challenge in safeguarding its security both individually and alliance-wide.

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<sup>7</sup> W. Richter, *Challenges to and Future Role of Conventional Arms Control in Europe*, OSCE Security Days, 4 March 2013. PC. DEL/138/13, Vienna, 5 March 2013.

Given the current CFE deadlock, CSBMs are relatively gaining in importance. Although in their present form they cannot fully substitute for the CFE regime, it appears that the protagonists in Ukraine appreciate their interim usefulness and operation.<sup>8</sup> Regrettably, in the short term the challenge is not to elaborate new CSBMs, but rather to conform to or possibly tighten those already in force under the Vienna Document 2011 (VD). While it is commendable to further develop substantially the Vienna Document, the CFE treaty provisions could be used as politically binding arrangements towards a better security-enhancing regime, either in the VD format or outside it.<sup>9</sup>

Renewed negotiations concerning CSBMs could address measures that are outdated or require amendments or would better respond to the recent changes. Russia has been active in putting forward numerous concrete proposals addressing the existing security environment, such as exchange of information on naval forces, large-scale transits and activities of multinational rapid-reaction forces. These long-standing ideas have so far been opposed by the NATO states. The West has unsuccessfully opted for more military transparency, lowering the pre-notification thresholds in particular. Russia and NATO have also opposed raising the numbers of inspections and evaluation visits, apparently for fears that this could be used by either party as a substitute for the frozen CFE treaty regime. This situation may well change in the light of the current exigencies.<sup>10</sup>

From the Central European point of view it is important to keep alive the political CFE Istanbul commitments concerning stability and predictability in this subregion. Also, the existing bilateral confidence-building accords between the “front” NATO states (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland), on the one hand, and Russia (Kaliningrad oblast), Belarus and Ukraine, on the other, could be expanded, e.g., with restraint and other commitments concerning movements and exercises in the border areas of the contiguous countries<sup>11</sup> (later, this could be developed into a multilateral regional arrangement, in accordance with Chapter X of the Vienna Document).

Alas, the termination by the Russian Federation of its CSBM agreement with Lithuania augurs ill for this kind of trust building in the near future.

### *Missile Defence*

The controversy over missile defence (MD) programmes stems from Russian strategic concerns and overall sense of inferiority. The 2013 U.S. concession regarding the fourth phase of EPAA, thus meeting halfway Russia’s strategic anxieties, failed to allay this vulnerability. As in the case of other elements of the “triad” controversy, political will will be decisive in overcoming mistrust and embarking on substantive negotiation. Russia’s *nyet* to the MD problem looks at the moment insurmountable, and successive Western proposals are rejected out of hand. Russia is facing a dilemma: either make a deal with NATO and the U.S. or encounter a formidable challenge of a (possible) Republican administration after the election in 2016. Transparency and confidence-building measures that are already at the OSCE actors’ disposal would have a reassuring impact.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g.: “Factsheet on OSCE engagement with Ukraine,” 22 April 2014, [www.osce.org/home/116940](http://www.osce.org/home/116940).

<sup>9</sup> “Building Mutual Security...,” *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Since the suspension of the CFE treaty, Russia has shown increasing interest in conducting more Vienna Document-mandated inspections of its OSCE partners, e.g., in 2010 it requested and carried out most of the verification visits—one-third of all inspections and almost half of all evaluation visits.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth mentioning that there is also a CBM accord between Belarus and Ukraine. Russia has not entered into a CBM agreement with Ukraine; such an arrangement would have been an impediment in Russia’s blackmail use of troop concentrations on the Ukrainian borders. For a list of bilateral CBM agreements in Central Europe and elsewhere, see: Z. Lachowski, *Confidence- and Security-building Measures in the New Europe*, SIPRI Research Report No. 18, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of submitted and possible measures, see: J. Durkalec, I. Kearns, Ł. Kulesa, *Starting the Process of Trust-building...,” op. cit.*, pp. 22–23.

## A New Lease on Life for the OSCE?

Trust building can be realized uni-, bi- or multilaterally. Such processes go on more or less successfully in the Euro-Atlantic region, with the well-established multilateral frameworks in the lead. For a number of reasons the Organisation for Security and Cooperation appears to be the most appropriate. Recently, this long-standing security institution has been “disappearing” from the European horizon, being pushed away from its former standing and neglected by two key Western organisations: NATO and the EU. In the new circumstances in which confidence building should be conducted in a pan-European framework, the OSCE provides a ready-made forum.

Given its weakness and neglect, the OSCE may have a potential rival. A new “Euro-Atlantic Security Forum,” as proposed by the authors of the *Building Mutual Security* report, has the plausible advantage of homogeneity and comprehensiveness. However, caution is in order here: first, Occam’s razor should be applied if there is no obvious advantage. The OSCE, devoid of bloc character, is already in place with its modalities, structure (the Forum for Security Cooperation) and institutional memory. Second, theoretically, while it is enticing to create an all-embracing arms control forum, the complex architecture of Euro-Atlantic security and often irreconcilable differences between its participants can result in counterproductive haggling and mutual blocking. Third, while conventional arms control including missile defences can be pretty easily tackled in the OSCE FSC, the TNW problem will eventually have to be dealt with in the intra-alliance and U.S.-Russia frameworks.

## Conclusions

To summarise the above analysis, one should point to the following:

The Ukraine–Russia conflict has injected elements of chaos into the eastern periphery of Europe. The violations of the principles of territorial integrity and non-interference in the domestic affairs of Ukraine as well as steps affecting the implementation of other tenets of the Helsinki Final Act decalogue aim at changing the rules of the game in the Euro-Atlantic region. Confrontation and mistrust are superseding cooperative security and trust, which were the epitome of post-Cold War rapport.

Whether the European arms control regimes will break down or survive depends *not so much on technical merit as on the political context*; whether the actors are able or committed to gather anew the necessary political will and determination to overcome the sustained neglect and address their respective and common security interests with reinvigorated stamina. The present makes the prospects of trust- and confidence building uncertain. On the other hand, the case of Ukraine potentially constitutes a stimulus for new approaches and redefinitions.

Europe’s security is being put to the test by *sub-regional and local crises and conflicts*, on its peripheries. Ukraine makes this requirement increasingly urgent. The centre of gravity in arms control must even more clearly move toward sub-regional contexts to hedge sub-regional instabilities, crises and frozen conflicts and arms races.

Broadly-conceived trust building should remain part of the European agenda in an age when military postures, capabilities and doctrines are being constantly updated for generally more active applications. Confidence building is not a panacea for all ills. Even worse, trust building is not only in crisis but also overtaken by events; it is being implicated in finishing the business of the former era, which makes it more complicated to address emerging new threats and challenges.



Poland must not confine itself to abiding by the existing treaties and accords; some of them have been either suspended or are insufficient, particularly in the context of developments east of its borders. Given its strategic position, it should work more intensely to better safeguard its security interests, especially in connection with its NATO forward posture.

The future debate will not be free from controversies and conflicting viewpoints. The menu of transparency and confidence-building measures is for the most part ready. Nonetheless, the state parties need to demonstrate once again strong political determination and conduct a thorough reappraisal of the state of affairs if they really want to salvage arms control. In short, Europe is faced with the task of performing a *new balancing act* between the arms control *acquis* and new requirements to revitalise its architecture.



## **NATO–Russia Relations: Lost in Translation, Lost Forever? A Czech Viewpoint**

Martina Heranová

“The return of the Cold War.” These are the words we are hearing most often in connection with developments in Europe in the year 2014. After more than 20 years, European states are facing a situation they thought would never come again. The illusion of harmony and common interests between the Western allies and their big eastern neighbour disappeared quickly when it became clear that occupation and annexation as methods for securing key national interests had made a comeback on the European scene.

What happened in these past 20 years? Why do NATO members and Russia find themselves today on opposite sides? Where was the mistake made? To answer these questions, we must not only look back but also, first of all, try to understand the other’s motives behind the policies each applied in Europe in the last two decades.

### The Development of the Relationship

Relations between NATO and Russia have not been easy since the very beginning of the new age in Europe following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, as well as the Soviet Union itself in 1991. The first signs of newly developing friendly relations and cooperation within the framework of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council turned very quickly into deep frustration on the Russian side in connection with the enlargement plans of NATO that were fully revealed in 1994. Months of negotiations on the new status of relations based on the Individual Partnership Program for Russia within the Partnership for Peace initiative, which marked the exclusivity of the NATO–Russia relationship, were thrown away as soon as the Russian representatives realized these plans were prepared behind their back without taking into account Russian objections.<sup>1</sup>

The new negotiations that started after several months of a “Cold Peace” were influenced by Russian mistrust and a determination not to lose face again. In the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, signed in 1997, Russia gained confirmation that NATO had no intentions, plans or reasons to deploy nuclear weapons or any nuclear installation on the territories of its new members. Simultaneously, the new NATO–Russia Permanent Joint Council was established as a forum for political consultations in which any future controversial issues should have been discussed on the basis of goodwill and mutual respect. Both sides declared that they did not consider each other to be adversaries and expressed a political commitment to cooperate in creating a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> After NATO revealed its enlargement plans, Russia refused to sign the Individual Partnership Programme in December 1994 and announced its withdrawal from the Partnership for Peace initiative. For more on the negotiations between NATO and Russia, see: J. Fidler, P. Mareš, *Dějiny NATO*, Praha–Litomyšl, 1997, pp. 229–231.

<sup>2</sup> Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, signed on 27 May 1997 in Paris, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

The peak of the positive mood in mutual relations was reached in 2002, when in the aftermath of 9/11, a declaration about the new quality of the relationship was signed and a new NATO–Russia Council was established. The council should have served as a tool for handling security issues and joint projects between NATO and Russia and involved consensus-building, consultations, joint decisions and joint actions. Key areas of cooperation included, above all, fighting terrorism, crisis management, non-proliferation and arms control, and military-to-military cooperation.<sup>3</sup> But the year 2002 brought at the same time the first signs of future dissonance following the decision by the United States to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, concluded between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in 1972, in order to move forward with plans for a new missile defence (MD) system.

NATO–Russia relations started to heat up again in 2007 when the U.S. officially presented the details of plans for an anti-ballistic missile defence installation in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic. Although the system was intended to protect the Western allies from possible nuclear missile attacks by Iran or North Korea, Russia viewed it as a potential threat and a strategic game-changer in the European balance of power. The Russian suspicions were further intensified in the next year with NATO's decision to deepen relations with Ukraine and Georgia (offering a membership perspective without granting them a Membership Action Plan).<sup>4</sup> The possibility of NATO enlargement to Russia's near neighbourhood again without taking into account its concerns and objections led to the biggest crisis in mutual relations since the end of the Cold War when Russian forces invaded the territory of Georgia and later recognized its separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states.

The subsequent suspension of the NATO–Russia formal meetings and cooperation in some areas lasted only a limited period of time. Following the beginning of the U.S. "reset" policy towards Russia, the NATO allies started again to approach the eastern partner in 2009, with an imminent interest in continued cooperation on Afghanistan. This effort culminated a year later in the Joint Review of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Common Security Challenges, which both sides endorsed and agreed to work towards achieving a true strategic and modern partnership.<sup>5</sup> However, the tensions over the anti-ballistic missile defence shield were not overcome. The system created by the U.S. became a core part of the NATO's new MD plans, with interim operational capability announced in 2012.<sup>6</sup> Although it was again stressed that the MD capacity was not directed against Russia or intended to undermine its strategic deterrence, Russia did not change its negative stance towards these plans and started taking steps that would ensure evasion of the system if needed.<sup>7</sup>

## NATO Policy and Goals

Western optimism associated with the end of the Cold War and the conviction that democratic standards would prevail in all of the countries that had involuntarily suffered under many years of communist rule did not sufficiently take into account the position of Russia. Apart from the former Soviet satellites, which welcomed their new freedom and the end of long-lasting bipolar tensions, for Russia this radical change was more bittersweet. While the totalitarian regime

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<sup>3</sup> "NATO–Russia Relations: A New Quality," Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation on 28 May 2002, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>4</sup> "Bucharest Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008," par. 23, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>5</sup> "NATO–Russia Council Joint Statement issued at the meeting of the NATO–Russia Council held in Lisbon on 20 November 2010," [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>6</sup> "Chicago Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012," par. 60, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>7</sup> "Meeting with Commanders of 60<sup>th</sup> Division's Missile Regiments," 21 February 2012, [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru).

had fallen so also did the entire Soviet empire. The nation lost not only the heritage of the Soviet Union but also of the great tsarist Russia.

The assumption of the Western allies that cooperation with the new democratic Russian state would have nothing to do with its anti-democratic Soviet past was wrong from the very start. In the Russian view, it was not the Soviet regime that had been defeated, but the nation itself. Such defeat and humiliation is hard for Russians to forget. Treating Russia as any other post-communist partner of NATO, even though the most important one and the largest country on Earth with a long history of great power, would not be acceptable. Even economically weak and shaken after the collapse of the empire, Russia still wanted to be a key part of the decision-making in Europe, one whose opinion is heard and taken into account.

NATO's focus on maintaining a positive agenda in mutual relations with the country could not overcome this lack of understanding of Russian national interests and behaviour. Engaging Russia in cooperation on common security goals without knowing what Russia's real interests were was therefore a blind policy that could not bring about substantial fruit. The belief that NATO and Russia shared strategic priorities and faced common challenges has turned out to have been wrong. There is only a limited number of common interests and it is questionable how many of them are treated by Russia as strategic.

One can point to the example of a key NATO priority in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: the fight against terrorism. Although this interest is shared by Russia, it is at the same time viewed from a slightly different perspective. While NATO is concentrating on the global reach of terrorism and the external threat emanating from unstable regions where terrorist groups tend to find safe havens, Russia considers terrorism as more of an internal threat connected with separatism in the Caucasus region inside the country. All major attacks in Russia in recent years confirm this link.<sup>8</sup> Unlike NATO members, Russia so far has not been a target of external terrorism connected with radicals from Al Qaeda, which is primarily interested in fighting the West and what it perceives as Western values.

Another NATO priority is cooperation with Russia on Afghanistan. On this issue, close collaboration is mainly sought by the NATO allies. The smooth transit of non-military equipment across Russian territory for the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan is crucial for the successful management of the whole operation. Among the Russian interests is the possible added value of jointly fighting threats posed by trafficking of narcotics from Afghanistan. A project that includes Russia in training Afghan helicopter maintenance staff is nothing more than a further NATO attempt to engage Russia in the stabilization of Afghanistan despite Russia's own negative historical experience there.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a topic on which both sides speak a common language. Multilateral control regimes are jointly supported and welcomed. On the other hand, in mutual relations the lack of a suitable arms control agreement is a growing problem. Conventional arms control based on the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe is not functioning and the unsatisfactory situation in trust building on nuclear weapons is deeply influenced by NATO's missile defence plans and Russia's modernisation of its ballistic missile arsenal.

Last but not least, there are the possible common challenges and threats from a geopolitical point of view and the different perceptions espoused by both sides. So far, one of the most problematic countries for the NATO allies has been Iran, with its unpredictable regime and intentions to acquire or develop nuclear arms. The Iranian government's sharp anti-Western rhetoric and nuclear ambitions led to NATO's decision to develop an anti-missile defence shield

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<sup>8</sup> See the statistical summary: "Terrorist attacks in Russia 1994–2014," compiled by Wm. R. Johnston, [www.johnstonsarchive.net](http://www.johnstonsarchive.net).

as a safeguard in case Iran's nuclear programme reaches its goal. Russia has never shared the fears of the Western allies about the Iranian capabilities to substantially hit the territory of Europe. Its own cooperation with Iran is based on pragmatic motives and long-term common interests to counter U.S. influence in the region, concentrating on collaboration in the security and economic spheres.<sup>9</sup> The preliminary agreement on the limitation of Iran's nuclear programme reached last year is therefore, for Russia, a tool to further push NATO to give up its missile defence plans, as the Iranian threat dissipates.

There are similarly different views on China, or more precisely on the impacts caused by the likely future increase in Chinese geopolitical power. The conviction of the NATO allies that all of China's neighbours see the rise of this Asian power as a potential threat to their future security is groundless in Russia's opinion. Relations between Russia and China are very good. Both countries have established a strategic partnership and actively cooperate in many spheres, with a special emphasis on economic and military areas. Their national interests are not contradictory, on the contrary, they share the same fundamental positions on key global issues as well as on the regional situation with a clear aim to redesign the post-Cold War world political architecture.<sup>10</sup> In 2001, they jointly created the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to control developments in Central Asia. Iran was invited to join as well, and it officially applied for membership in 2008.<sup>11</sup>

### The Russian Viewpoint and Interests

The post-Cold War developments in Europe became for Russia a source of great frustration. It not only lost its empire but also the ability to influence European affairs. Because of its weakness in the first decade of the new post-totalitarian epoch, the country was unable to stop substantial geopolitical changes that went against its historical national interests. On national security, the biggest problem for Russia became the persistence of NATO. Its expectations that all relics of the Cold War rivalry between East and West would be removed, were not fulfilled. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved, but NATO survived. And even though it transformed itself and was not directed against Russia, it remained in Russian eyes an active U.S. policy tool to influence Europe.

According to Russia, security and stability in Europe should be based on principles of equality and indivisibility, in which one's security does not come at the expense of the other's. Notably, Moscow developed its own interpretation of these principles. In this viewpoint, NATO enlargement or any new military infrastructure of the bloc close to Russian borders is assessed as a military danger that violates these principles. This includes also the creation and deployment of any strategic MD system that can be viewed as a unilateral hostile action undermining strategic stability and international security.<sup>12</sup>

With these principles we can quite easily explain the Russian policy and security decisions taken in recent years that, for Western allies, were in many respects so surprising. Starting with the year 2007 and the U.S. announcement of its MD plans and including the construction of required installations on the territory of the new NATO members, Russia was for the first time forced to take active counter-measures to protect its national interests. A lack of respect for its public negative

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<sup>9</sup> For more on current Iranian–Russian relations, see: B. Khajepour, "Iran Opens New Chapter in Relations with Russia," *Al-Monitor*, 7 February 2014, [www.al-monitor.com](http://www.al-monitor.com).

<sup>10</sup> For the Russian position on China, see: "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation," approved on 12 February 2013, par. 80, [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru).

<sup>11</sup> The current members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Iran still has only observer status due to international sanctions that prevent its full membership.

<sup>12</sup> See: "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," approved on 5 February 2010, part II, point 8 a), 8 d), <http://carnegieendowment.org>, and also, "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation," approved on 12 February 2013, par. 32 f), [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru).



position led Russia to suspend its commitments under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and subsequently to the end of the whole control regime in Europe. The next crisis came only a year later in relation to NATO's decision on the future enlargement of the Alliance by granting candidate status to Ukraine and Georgia. The Russian reaction to what it considered an imminent threat was the military invasion of Georgia and establishment of the separatist states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, counting on the fact that no country with unresolved territorial disputes can become a NATO member.

The U.S. and NATO's attempt to restart relations with Russia in 2009 was a good move, but had only partial results. The main success came in the form of a new nuclear arms reduction treaty between the U.S. and Russia, which was signed in 2010 in Prague but which had no permanent impact on an improvement in mutual relations. The U.S. MD project was not abolished, only changed and transformed into a new NATO capability under the European Phased Adaptive Approach. The negotiations on possible Russian involvement and cooperation in this field as part of NATO trust-building measures failed due to the incompatibility of visions for the future of the project. Proposals from the Russian side to improve mutual trust were not properly taken into consideration. A key initiative aimed at creating a common space of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area in the form of a new pan-European security treaty became a non-starter for the NATO allies as soon as its specific text was unveiled at the end of 2009.<sup>13</sup>

With the lessons learnt from these years, Russia decided to undergo a large structural reform of its armed forces and boost annual defence spending. The targeted national defence spending as a percentage of GDP should amount to 3.4% in 2014 and 3.7% in 2015.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, according to the State Armament Programme for the years 2011–2020, a huge amount of money should be allocated to purchase new hardware for all parts of the Russian armed forces. The aim is to increase the amount of modern equipment for the army, navy and air force to 30% by 2015 and to 70% by 2020.<sup>15</sup> On nuclear weapons modernisation, Russia has already developed a new version of its Topol-M missiles with multiple warheads (RS-24), which are understood to be able to penetrate any missile defence system, and continues to work on further advancements.<sup>16</sup>

### Trust-building Prospects

The latest developments in Europe make it extremely difficult to come up with any trust-building measures that could be immediately applied to NATO–Russia relations. To be frank, the perspective for the development of the relationship has not been rosy for some time now and at least since 2012 when the Russian leadership change brought with it a hardening of the country's foreign policy line. A long-term lack of mutual understanding and the incompatibility of goals and interests on Europe have become more visible and have created an atmosphere in which any dialogue has no chance to succeed. The distinct positions on both sides on key areas of conflict—NATO enlargement, its MD plans and military installations near Russian borders—make any present or future breakthrough impossible.

The current crisis over Ukraine is only a continuation of the misunderstandings between Russia and the West, this time represented not by NATO, but the European Union and the U.S. By

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<sup>13</sup> For the proposed text, see: "The Draft of the European Security Treaty," published on 29 November 2009, [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru), and for its analysis from the Western point of view: S. McNamara, "Russia's Proposed New European Security Treaty: A Non-Starter for the U.S. and Europe," 16 September 2010, [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org).

<sup>14</sup> "Russia to Boost Defence Spending 59% by 2015," *RIA Novosti*, 17 October 2012, [www.en.ria.ru](http://www.en.ria.ru).

<sup>15</sup> "Russia to Keep Arms Procurement Budget Intact," *RIA Novosti*, 8 August 2012, [www.en.ria.ru](http://www.en.ria.ru).

<sup>16</sup> "Russia's Missile Forces to Replace Topol-M with Multiple-Warhead RS-24," *RIA Novosti*, 30 November 2010, [www.en.ria.ru](http://www.en.ria.ru), and on new types of Russian missiles, see: N. Sokov, M.A. Pomper, "Is Russia Violating the INF Treaty?," *The National Interest*, 11 February 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org>.

supporting the Ukrainian opposition activists in their fight against the legally elected government, both the EU and the U.S. crossed a red line of Russian national interests. Ukraine was for Russia a priority partner within the Commonwealth of Independent States and was treated in recent years as almost an ally with further integration potential, mostly in the Eurasian Economic Community. Interference in the internal affairs of any Russian allies and attempts to destabilise the situation in these states is considered an external military danger that requires a reaction.<sup>17</sup>

Backed by its relative economic and military strength, Russia feels strong enough to safeguard its national interests by all necessary means and to face any sanctions imposed by the West. Apart from the EU and the U.S., Russia survived the global financial and economic crisis quite well. Moreover, it has launched and intensified its military reform and armament programme. In comparison with the NATO members, which have substantially diminished their defence spending due to the impacts of the crisis, Russian military spending is sharply rising. In 2013, the defence expenditures of only three NATO countries—the U.S., U.K. and Greece—exceeded the required level of 2% of GDP, and only another three countries—Poland, Estonia and France—even closely reached that level.<sup>18</sup>

In such a situation, the Russian leadership sees an opportunity to realize its long-term policy goals of a revival of the Russian empire and its role as one of the most influential and competitive poles of a polycentric world. Following international developments in the last year, the U.S.'s and NATO's positions have in Russian eyes significantly weakened. Russia was able to secure its interests in Syria as well as in Iran and publicly discredited NATO's capabilities during the allies' "Steadfast Jazz" live exercise in Poland and the Baltic states. Its own, much larger live exercise, "West 2013", coordinated with Belarus, could not have been more satisfying to Russia's leadership. Its military preparedness reached a much higher degree than the allied forces, which were deeply affected by the inadequate or lack of participation of some states.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, an important question arises: how many forces would NATO be able to mobilise in case of a sudden Russian operation in the near neighbourhood of the Alliance's common borders? NATO members with large Russian minorities living on their territory are seeking a clear answer. The trust among the allies has been shaken. Recollections of inter-war appeasement is back, together with the famous quote by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.... However much we may sympathise with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour, we can not in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight, it must be on larger issues than that."<sup>20</sup>

Face to face with this challenge, it is crucial to maintain the unity of the NATO allies, not only in a declaratory manner, but in a true partnership of like-minded countries prepared to fulfil at any time their military commitments within the framework of collective defence under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. There is no time for different perceptions of security threats or different national interests. Economic ties with Russia cannot take precedence over relations with the allies and be developed at their expense. Russia is prepared to use all political, diplomatic,

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<sup>17</sup> See: "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation," approved on 12 February 2013, par. 48 e), [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru), and also, "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," approved on 5 February 2010, part II, point 8 b), 8 e), <http://carnegieendowment.org>.

<sup>18</sup> "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2013," published on 27 January 2014, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>19</sup> For more details on comparison of both exercises, see: M. Weiss, "The Return of Russian Hard Power?," *The Daily Beast*, 23 November 2013, [www.thedailybeast.com](http://www.thedailybeast.com).

<sup>20</sup> N. Chamberlain, "A Quarrel in a Far Away Country," in: R.J.Q. Adams, *British Appeasement and the Origins of World War II*, Toronto, 1994, pp. 98–100.



legal, military, economic, financial or other tools to secure its national interests, and NATO must be ready to respond to them in a strong and unanimous manner.

First of all, NATO members must substantially increase their defence budgets in order to be able to generate enough forces for rapid deployment along the eastern border of the Alliance, if need be. Second, the NATO missile-defence shield should be completed as soon as possible to serve as a reliable deterrent against the Russian strategic and non-strategic nuclear arsenal, even if it was not designed for it. Third, it is worth thinking about new permanent NATO deployments in Central and Eastern Europe as an appropriate counterbalance to Russian conventional forces and to enhance the interoperability of allied forces through regular exercises. Only then can NATO try to re-open the dialogue on trust-building measures, not only on nuclear weapons but also on conventional armed forces, in order to help rebuild basic military stability and predictability in Europe. Without these steps, any NATO attempt to increase transparency or introduce confidence-building measures in mutual relations would be treated from the Russian side as a sign of weakness and inability to militarily respond to any Russian political steps and decisions.

The Czech Republic supports the strengthening of NATO defence capabilities in the eastern regions of the Alliance and is ready to contribute part of its national air forces and a rapid response unit to help secure common allied borders.<sup>21</sup> The most problematic area in the current situation, however, is overall defence expenditures. The Czech defence budget is at its lowest level in history—only 1.1% of the national GDP. Although there is political consensus that this level is highly insufficient, to reach the required 2% of GDP still remains beyond the country's possibilities, even in the long-term perspective. According to a declaration of key political parties signed by their chairmen on 12 March 2014, the Czech political representation is prepared to enforce jointly all necessary steps for securing the country's defence, development of its defence capabilities and fulfilment of allied commitments.<sup>22</sup> When and how this goal will be achieved nevertheless remains an open question.

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<sup>21</sup> At NATO's disposal are four Gripen fighters and 300 soldiers from rapid response forces that can be deployed within one week. For more details, see: "Česko nabídlo čtyři gripeny a 300 vojáků na posílení obrany před Ruskem," official portal of the NATO Information Centre in Prague, 18 April 2014, [www.natoaktual.cz](http://www.natoaktual.cz).

<sup>22</sup> For the full text of the declaration, see: "Deklarace předsedů politických stran k zajištění obrany České republiky," official portal of the NATO Information Centre in Prague, 12 March 2014, [www.natoaktual.cz](http://www.natoaktual.cz).



**Options for NATO–Russia Confidence-building Measures  
in the Light of Ukraine Crisis:  
The Baltic Perspective**

Raimonds Rublovskis

### Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse and assess the current state of relationships between NATO and Russia from the Latvian (Baltic) perspective. Historical background, geographical location, common institutional history within the former Soviet Union, the Russian factor, the relatively small size of the territory and population, limited manpower and financial resources available for defence in all three Baltic States, along with heavy reliance on NATO membership and bilateral strategic cooperation with the United States, are the key factors influencing the state security and defence policy in Latvia and the other Baltic States. Certainly, they have a substantial impact on the threat perception in the Baltic region, forcing the Baltic States to pay close attention on the developments of global security dynamics and, subsequently, on security and the defence policies of NATO, the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as the status of the relationships between the United States and Russia, and NATO and Russia.

This article will also focus on the assessment of proposals to increase the level of mutual trust between NATO and Russia. There are several core issues that have a fundamental impact on the global and regional security environment and, subsequently, the level of trust between the United States and Russia, as well as relationships between NATO and Russia. NATO's missile defence project in Europe, developments within the domain of conventional arms controls (CAC), and tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, are only a few important security issues that will have a fundamental impact on any future developments. Taking these into account, in this article I will develop and provide a set of recommendations for NATO and Russia in order to improve confidence-building measures between the two parties.

### The Current Status of the Relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation within the Global Security Environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

One would argue that, due to ongoing escalation of the confrontation in Ukraine, the current relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation, as well as the relationship between the United States and Russia, have reached the lowest point since the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. Due to the historical background of Russian–Ukrainian relations, the geographical location of Ukraine, the large size and population of the country, and the current discourse between NATO, the United States and the Russian Federation over the events in Ukraine, these aspects will have a long-lasting negative effect on current and future relationships between NATO and Russia. Furthermore, the events in Ukraine were not the only factors that had a negative impact on the status of bilateral relationships between the United States and Russia and, subsequently, relationships between NATO and Russia. One cannot analyse current relationships

between NATO and Russia, or predict the development of those relationships, without analysing global security dynamics in which the United States, NATO and Russian Federation have substantial involvement. There are several other factors and dynamics that have, and will continue to have, a profound impact on these relationships.

First, the legacy of the global financial crisis and severe decrease in defence budgets of the European members of NATO have led to a subsequent decrease of European military capabilities and a wider gap between American and European defence spending and military capabilities. The average defence spending among European members of NATO is well below 2% of GDP benchmark, and this leads to further disproportion between the European and American pillars of NATO. A rather obvious example of this problem is the Latvian defence budget of 2014, and the budget forecast for 2015 (0.91% of GDP). Consequently, the European pillar of NATO is increasingly seen from the American side as a security consumer rather than security provider. Current dynamics within NATO will challenge the internal coherence of the Alliance, with increasingly negative political consequences for Europe, resulting in a significant decrease in Europe's role as a credible player in the global hard security domain.

Second, there remains the question of further enlargement of NATO, and the impact of such on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Alliance in the foreseeable future. The Chicago Summit of 2012 clearly confirmed NATO's open door policy for nations that have the political will and certain level of preparedness to join the Alliance. Finland and Sweden in the Baltic region, Georgia in the Caucasus, and Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro in South-East Europe, would be among the candidates. However, most of these countries would join the Alliance as security consumers, and the core questions of how to enlarge, when, and how far, remain open. What would be the political, economic and military costs of further enlargement, and what, ultimately, will be the reaction of the Russian Federation?

Third, although Ukraine currently is the most dangerous and the most urgent challenge in terms of global and regional security, there are substantial global security challenges elsewhere, in which the United States, NATO and the Russian Federation are engaged. The Jihadist threat in Iraq, which escalated in spring 2014, could even overshadow Ukrainian events in terms of subsequent negative effects on global and regional security. One could witness a significant shift within the global security environment due to the fact that there are more urgent and important regions for global security than Europe itself. Among the issues that will have significant impact on the regional and global security agenda in the years to come are Afghanistan beyond 2014, current and future security developments in the Arab world, including the most urgent cases in Iraq, Syria and North Africa, Iran's ongoing nuclear programme, and the rise of China.

Although Ukraine is currently the most urgent global security challenge, the previously declared global strategies of China, Russia and the United States are still valid. The United States has already responded to the emerging security challenges in the Far East with its Pacific Pivot strategy. What might be the consequences of this for NATO and Russia? Is there any role for the EU and/or European members of NATO to play in those circumstances? It is obvious that the United States will reduce its commitment towards Europe, despite current security challenges in Ukraine, in order to address China's political and military ambitions in the Pacific. It is also obvious that ongoing and emerging security developments in Ukraine, the Arab world, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Pacific region will further involve significant regional and global players, such as China, Japan, Russia, India, Israel, etc. It also means that the United States will have to support its Pacific shift strategy with substantial military capabilities, which have to be deployed much closer to the Pacific region, and that the global force projection capabilities of all United States forces will be deployed much closer to the areas of emerging security threats.

From the American perspective, the shift of military capabilities to the Pacific has an immediate effect on the transatlantic link with Europe. On the other hand, both China and Russia

have been sending clear political and military signals that they consider the Pacific area as vital for their own strategic interests, and that they are also capable of deploying military power projection capabilities in order to counterbalance the United States' increasing military assets in the region.

All these examples send a very clear message to European members of NATO; they have to accept the truth that the United States will not be the ultimate defender of Europe in the years to come, and this means that European countries (EU Member States and European members of NATO) must find the political will and necessary resources in order to take much more responsibility for European security. Of the significantly growing strategic importance of other regions for global security, along with the United States' subsequent shift to the Pacific region, and severely decreased defence budgets and military capabilities of European members of NATO and pacifist-oriented societies in Europe, bring substantial challenges for NATO's transatlantic link, the effectiveness and efficiency of NATO as a global military organisation, and the ability of Europe to play a significant role in the security environment in the near future.

It is obvious that the state of the relationships between Russia and NATO, and between the United States and Russia, will continue to have a profound impact on the security and stability of the Baltic region. The ongoing political and military crisis in Ukraine has an extremely negative impact on these relationships and, consequently, also on security and stability in the Baltic region. Furthermore, different approaches of the United States, NATO and the Russian Federation, not only to the current situation in Ukraine, but also to Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and other global and regional security challenges, have created very negative, long-lasting effects on the global and regional security environment, including the Baltic region.

One would conclude that the current status of the relationships between NATO and Russia have reached the lowest point due to, primarily, extremely different approaches to the Ukrainian crisis, as well as different points of view on other vital global security challenges. The relationships are likely to worsen further, with long-lasting negative effects across the full spectrum of NATO-Russia relationships.

### Fundamental Sources of Mutual Mistrust between NATO and the Russian Federation

The core reasons and sources of mutual mistrust between NATO and the Russian Federation relate to the historical background of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the aftermath of the Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Other aspects are the different sets of basic values, and the fundamentally different threat perception, between NATO (especially new NATO members from Central and Eastern Europe) and Russia. This historical background has a significant influence on threat perception in both the Russian Federation and NATO's Baltic members. Taking into account the very fact that the Baltic region was a place of almost permanent military conflicts between Russia, Sweden and Poland, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the territory of the Baltic States had been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sweden, and the Russian Empire, it is easy to see why history has a considerable influence on the security and defence policies of the Baltic region countries.<sup>1</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> century had an especially profound impact on the threat perception in the Russian Federation and NATO. Two world wars, the subsequent creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and the Cold War, have established a solid base for deep, mutual mistrust between NATO and Russia. The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, marked the beginning of profound changes within security and defence policies and arrangements in Central and Eastern Europe. The three Baltic States had been part of the Soviet Union from 1940 until 1991, and Latvia and Estonia also have significant Russian-

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<sup>1</sup> S.J. Blank, *European Security and NATO Enlargement*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, 1998, p. 122.

speaking minorities, so this issue affects Baltic security and defence considerations, as well as the region's bilateral relationships with Russia.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the issue of the Russian-speaking minority has always been important, even before the accession of Latvia and other Baltic States to NATO, for it was difficult for some players in the West to imagine a NATO member with a significant Russian minority.<sup>3</sup>

The enlargement of NATO further into Central and Eastern Europe created new security frameworks, which included the former Soviet sphere of influence and even part of the former Soviet Union, including the Baltic States. These fundamental changes in the post-Cold War security environment further developed mistrust between NATO and the Russian Federation, fuelling the Russian threat perception. The Russia factor, and the issue of the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic region, are significant aspects of influence regarding wider security and defence considerations. Russia presents a difficult problem for Latvian and Baltic policy makers.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the historical and geographical aspects, which have fuelled mutual mistrust between Russia and NATO continuously over the past 20 years, have created a situation where the Baltic States have built for themselves an image of hopeless Russophobes, not only in Russia itself, but also in both NATO and the EU, to the point that they are considered "one issue nations" that do not care about anything else.<sup>5</sup>

Relationships between the United States and Russia, and NATO and Russia, have a significant effect on bilateral relationships between Latvia, other Baltic States and the Russian Federation. The core issues within the framework of bilateral and multilateral relationships include Russia's own security and defence concerns.<sup>6</sup> Russia's current military doctrine was approved in February of 2010, and is based on the national security strategy, approved in May 2009.<sup>7</sup> Both documents were approved after the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, which raised significant security concerns in Latvia and other Baltic States, as well as in NATO in general.<sup>8</sup> The core principles of these national security and defence documents outline the basic threat perception of the Russian Federation, and show profound sources of mistrust towards NATO. According to these documents, Russia's main security concern is its strategic position in the world, as it has been challenged by some countries and/or groups of countries. According to the military doctrine, the most dangerous military threats to the Russian Federation are, first, regional conflicts close to Russia's borders and, second, the ability and capacity of NATO to deal successfully with emerging security and defence challenges on a global scale, which can and will undermine Russia's ability to play a significant role globally in the near future. Very important issues, which could be considered by Russia as a direct military threat, is the possible further enlargement of NATO, and the further development and deployment of NATO's military infrastructure and military capabilities close to Russia's borders. One can see a close similarity of discourse in the national security strategy of 2009 and the military doctrine of 2010, with the security and defence concerns expressed before and during subsequent waves of NATO enlargement involving Central

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<sup>2</sup> O.F. Knudsen, *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> R.D. Asmus, R.C. Nurick, *NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States*, RAND, Santa Monica, 1996, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> K. Paulauskas, "The Baltic Quest to the West: From Total Defence to 'Smart Defence' (and Back?)," in: T. Lawrence, T. Jermalavičius (eds.), *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States*, International Centre for Defence Studies, Tallinn, 2013, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> 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, 2012, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> J. Leijonhielm, "Russian Foreign, Defence and Security Policy," in: B. Hugemark (ed.), *Friends in Need. Towards a Swedish Strategy of Solidarity with her Neighbors*, Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences, Stockholm, 2012, p. 96.

<sup>8</sup> E. Mannik, "The Evolution of Baltic Security and Defense Strategies," in: T. Lawrence, T. Jermalavičius (eds.), *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States*, International Centre for Defence Studies, Tallinn, 2013, p. 13.



and Eastern Europe at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Russian discourse encompassed several core statements, which included the approach that NATO is an aggressive military bloc that attacks sovereign countries,<sup>9</sup> that the Baltic States' membership of NATO is a direct threat to Russian national security,<sup>10</sup> that Russia's historical experience includes numerous invasions from the West,<sup>11</sup> and that the territory of the Baltic States could be used by NATO to carry out a military assault on Russia at very short notice. One would conclude that the historical experience of both the Russian Federation and NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe laid the foundations for mutual mistrust, rather than encouraging trust, between Russia and NATO. Mistrust has been fuelled even further by the collision of the different set of values established, on the one hand, within NATO and the EU, and on the other within the Russian Federation. Therefore, one would consider the task of confidence-building measures between NATO and Russia, under the abovementioned aspects and the current security challenges in Ukraine, as extremely complex and complicated, with no prospect of a positive breakthrough in the near future.

### Analysis of Proposals to Increase the Level of Trust between NATO and Russia

Taking into account the ongoing military, political, economic and social crisis in Ukraine, which have had a profound and negative role in shaping relationships between the Russian Federation and NATO, the EU, and the United States, it is extremely difficult to predict how long these negative consequences will continue. Moreover, it is very hard to propose effective measures that might improve and increase the level of mutual trust between NATO and the Russian Federation.

The NATO summit in September will definitely bring substantial improvements to the effectiveness of the Alliance, and therefore one would state that this summit will be one of the most important in the history of NATO, due to the extremely challenging and complex global security environment. The Latvian political leadership has stated that the Baltic States urgently need increased defence budgets, and at the same time there are political calls for permanent NATO bases in the Baltics. However, one would see this approach as unrealistic due to the reluctance of key NATO members to challenge the Russian Federation directly in the Baltic region. A short-term improvement in mutual trust building, and a substantial decrease of mistrust between NATO and the Russian Federation, seem to be quite unrealistic due to fundamentally different approaches to the Ukrainian crisis and security issues.

However, even within such a complex and complicated security environment, one could find a variety of approaches in order to improve the relationships in the long-term perspective.

First, due to the fundamentally different approaches on global, regional and national security issues, as expressed in NATO and Russian strategic documents, NATO should clarify, both for its members and for the Russian Federation what exactly its open door policy means. It is obvious that the issue of the potential membership of Sweden and Finland in the Baltics, Georgia in Caucasus, and Ukraine, is extremely important for both NATO and Russia, taking into account that any further enlargement of the Alliance towards Russia's borders will be viewed as a direct military threat to Russia, and will subsequently be addressed by the Russian Federation by increasing its land, maritime, air, special forces and nuclear capabilities in the Baltic region. Therefore, the first proposal for NATO would be to reassess its open door policy in the immediate Russian neighbourhood.

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<sup>9</sup> J. Simon, *NATO Enlargement. Opinions and Options*, National Defense University, Washington DC, 1995, p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> A. Arbatov, *Russia and the West. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, Armonk, New York, 1999, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> T.R. Trampenau, *NATO Expansion and the Baltic States*, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 1996, p. 88.

Second, the Ukrainian crisis has triggered discourse on a permanent NATO base in the Baltics. This discourse includes deployment of land, maritime and air assets to the Baltic States on a permanent basis. Such a deployment would, in line with Russia's strategic documents, be viewed as a further direct military threat to the Russian Federation, and would trigger a massive military build-up of Russian military capabilities in the Baltic region. Further consultations on Conventional Arms Control (CAC) would have an extremely important place in the development of further relationships between NATO and Russia. The second proposal for NATO is, therefore, to be extremely cautious in responding to the calls of political leaders in the Baltic States to deploy permanent NATO land, maritime and air assets. Otherwise, it could trigger classical security dilemma.

Third, other international security organisations could be used in order to increase the quality of dialogue and, in the long-term, decrease mutual mistrust between NATO and the Russian Federation. Russia and most NATO members are part of the OSCE, which could be used as a platform and format to discuss relevant security issues in order to make further progress. OSCE's presence on the ground would be preferable to direct NATO or Russian involvement, therefore the OSCE format could also be used effectively in order to improve relations between NATO and Russia.



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