



СОФИЙСКИ ФОРУМ ЗА  
СИГУРНОСТ  
SOFA SECURITY FORUM



Konrad  
Adenauer  
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# STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL SECURITY. THE ROLE OF EU AND NATO IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA.

Edited by Yordan Bozhilov





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# **STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL SECURITY. THE ROLE OF EU AND NATO IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA.**

Edited by Yordan Bozhilov

This publication contains speeches and materials presented at the  
International conference  
“The role of NATO and EU in the wider Black sea region”,  
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## PREFACE

### BLACK SEA SECURITY: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

*Yordan Bozhilov*

The complex security situation in the Black sea region requires a complex and comprehensive approach. The resolution of the existing disputes and security challenges can be found only on the negotiation table. For the stabilization of the region and its further development the role of NATO and EU is crucial. Led by these principles, Sofia Security Forum in cooperation with Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and Konrad Adenauer Foundation has organized an international conference “The role of NATO and EU in the wider Black Sea region”. The conference took place in Sofia, Bulgaria on September 9-10, 2015 and created a platform for discussion with the participation of representatives from renowned think tanks and academic circles of different countries, including all Black sea littoral countries, as well as representatives of international organizations and of the diplomatic corps accredited to Bulgaria, the Bulgarian government and NGOs. This book contains materials which have been presented at the conference.

The main purpose of this event was to generate a productive and lively discussion about the following topics: threats to the security in the wider Black Sea region, the specific role of NATO and EU in the new geopolitical configuration, the future relations with Russia and the European security and regional stability after the conflict in Ukraine. The theme also points to the relevance of the Republic of Bulgaria as an active contributor to this debate mainly because of its geographic location, membership in NATO and the EU, and commitment to their causes. Moreover, this discussion was indicative of the continuous efforts required by all participating states to develop collective responses

to the challenges we face.

The potential, especially in economic terms, of the Black Sea region for years was viewed with optimism. A region, which has been the meeting point for millennia for numerous cultures and civilizations from different continents. Unfortunately, today this optimism is close to utter evaporation. Unresolved security issues, primarily in the breakaway regions, the rising tensions between the international community and the Russian Federation as well as the proximity to the Islamic State, pose serious risks to both the region and the EU and NATO member states.

In the recent years, we witnessed an unimaginable transformation of the Black Sea region from a center of cooperation into a buffer between Europe and the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, this change in events and circumstances is extremely unproductive for all sides in this relationship and serves as an example of the complete opposite of what the Euro-Atlantic values stand for. Moreover, we witnessed how the Russian Federation built a wall between itself and the West. It goes without saying that the main victim of this self-isolation will be the Russian Federation and Russian people. Russian Federation's compliance with international obligations and especially collaboration with Ukraine over the Minsk Protocol will be seen as a step in the right direction from both sides.

In the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a more secure environment was gradually being established in the Black Sea region through the signing of numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements. However, the conflicts in Northern Georgia in 2008 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine are signs of the security deficit that the region experiences today. The mechanisms that were put in place to ensure the regional security proved unable to cope with the problems that arose. Therefore, we should concentrate our efforts on finding a realistic way to increase the level of security in the Black Sea region. Our suggestion for overcoming the security deficit is through the

increase of the role of NATO and EU in the region, which was also the main topic of the conference.

The first part of the book consists of materials, presented during the plenary session of the conference. The second part is a summary of discussions in the working groups which took place in the second conference day. The main task of the working groups was to generate policy recommendations for both EU and NATO with regard to their role in the wider Black sea region.

We hope that this book will further stimulate the discussion on security challenges in the Black sea region and the role of different stakeholders.

*Yordan Bozhilov, President of Sofia Security Forum*





# PART ONE

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## **Keynote speech of H.E. Daniel Mitov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria**

It is a pleasure to be again a guest of Sofia Security Forum's annual conference! The Sofia Security Forum is rapidly becoming an important European platform for discussion on matters of security, foreign and defense policy. I note with satisfaction the rising quality of experts who have taken the time to be with us in Sofia. Such events are particularly important for the wider Bulgarian society for whose attention the discussed themes are often sidelined. The sharp deterioration of overall security in key regions over the course of the lapsed year makes today's discussion all the more timely and useful.

### **Context / Security**

During the last year we have witnessed the deepening and widening of the array of security risks. There is in reality an arch of instability to the south and the south east which is a complex mix of various processes. In some the political dynamic is creating de facto 'failed states' where institutions do not function and violence and chaos prevail. In many societies in North Africa and the Middle East there prevails an acute feeling of social impasse and a lack of prospects for development. The economies are struggling in times of global economic uncertainty. There is a risk of a whole-scale disintegration of the state system established a century or so ago which would lead to an unprecedented increase in non-state structures, new quasi-states, new areas of lawlessness, etc. The rising threat of terrorism is most visible in the persistent influence of the so-called 'Islamic state' which is not just attacking our civilizational values but is strengthening its positions in the region. It is also clear that the current refugee and immigrant crisis is among the biggest challenges in decades.

The risks to the North East are not of smaller magnitude. The annexation of Crimea and the efforts of Russia to destabilize Ukraine have drastically transformed the general security situation in Europe

as well as in the wider Black Sea region. These actions constitute direct violation of key values and principles of the European order: the inviolability of borders, respect for the sovereign rights of other nations, non-use of force in conflict resolution. Moreover, with such behavior the Russian side has rejected the approach of co-operation and gradual convergence which the EU has had for decades and which has been central in the implementation of its various initiatives and policies with Russia. At the present time, these risks ought to be defined as long-term and requiring a series of measures.

This entire context puts Bulgaria in a new situation! From just an ‘external border’ of the EU we are truly becoming a ‘first line of contact’ with numerous, long-term risks and threats. From this perspective, there is a need to change our set of instruments for reaction as well as our overall foreign policy behavior. Changes are required in the policies of our common institutions, the EU and NATO. There is a need for new regional measures to help us respond better to these long-term risks for our security.

Europe finds itself in a new situation! The present risks are here to stay, they are very complex and intertwining. They require quick, systematic and common responses and not a series of piece-meal and uneven reactions. Bulgaria will be an active participant in this process!

### **Responses**

NATO has already taken significant steps in order to create a more comprehensive defense infrastructure and the implementation of the Readiness Action Plan is advancing. Just a few days ago we opened in Sofia one of the six NATO Force Integration Units which will make an important contribution to the increasing security of the NATO member states. Bulgaria has made the commitment and is beginning to increase its investment in defense in view of implementing the decisions taken at the Wales Summit.

The EU has also made some changes in response to the deterioration in the security situation. We have witnessed the partial strengthening of

the capacity of FRONTEX, some increase in funding for reaction along the external borders of the union, a more comprehensive migration programme has been adopted, etc. Over the last few weeks we are encouraged by the burgeoning political debates on wider refugee policy reform, repatriation and other policies. However, this leaves a sense of a piece-meal approach and short-termism.

We are considering new ideas and initiatives. Within the EU and at the policy level, we see a need for serious re-evaluation in at least a few directions. For instance, it is necessary to further Europeanize the refugee policy and to ensure more systemic and institutional support for the external border member states. We ought to change at the level of institutions as well. It is time to restart the debate on creating stronger community institutions, for instance a European border police. Of course, it is particularly important that the response to the current refugee and immigrant crisis is not at the expense of key European achievements such as the free movement of people.

Further, we need braver political debate! It is evident that without greater presence in the countries of origin of these threats, the overall picture will hardly improve. The flow of refugees will not cease if the processes of state failure, dysfunctional institutions and weakening economies continue. We face the hard task of finding the right approaches and measures with which to respond to these phenomena!

### **Black Sea Region**

Allow me to make a couple of points in relation to the Black Sea region. For us it has always been important and we constantly engage in efforts to turn the region into a secure and prosperous part of the international community. Bulgaria has always been among the most active in the various formats and initiatives and has lent its support to the states in transformation. Within the EU and NATO, we have insisted on the importance of the region for overall security and development. In the course of the last few years we have reinvigorated most actively our relations with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

The current situation, however, places under serious doubt the possibilities for wider active and beneficial cooperation. The region can continue its development only on the basis of full recognition and respect for the right of every state to freely choose in which economic and political communities to belong and the preservation of its territorial integrity. Bulgaria is unwavering in its support for this sovereign right and assists to the best of its abilities the countries making efforts to align themselves to the maximum possible extent with the EU and NATO. At the same time, we will respond positively to every opportunity for reducing tensions in the region and for the quick resumption of fruitful cooperation with all states within it.

We continue to insist that ‘encapsulating’ the Black Sea region is among the worst case scenarios for all of us. It remains important not just for those countries within but for the wider more general European and Trans-Atlantic context. In this sense, Bulgaria will persist in being among the most active in the efforts to prevent its marginalization in the European and Trans-Atlantic agenda.

### **Concluding remarks**

During the last few years many countries have understandably made efforts to find their place in a world that has shifted to the East, to seek economic, trade and investment opportunities in Asia. Undoubtedly, this process deserves our further political attention due to a variety of security issues in these parts of the world and requires efforts on the part of the Western world. At the same time, the changes from the last few years and the heightened risks shift our focus to what is happening around us.

It is time for a new ‘re-balancing’, one towards our common institutions and political communities and towards the regions which are closest to us and upon which our freedom, security and prosperity depend most! Without strengthening our common capabilities for response and governance of the new risks, the West will not be in position to guarantee successfully its future.

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*Prof. Sven Gareis*

I was asked to give a brief statement on the strategic implications that the Ukrainian crisis and the other security issues that have already been mentioned have on the Western communities in NATO and in the European Union and of course on their partners in the region.

When it comes to strategy, the first question that we have to ask ourselves is: What do we want to achieve? The second question is always: How do we want to achieve it, what are our approaches, and which instruments do we want to apply? An important third aspect that is sometimes overlooked in such strategic discussions is: What are the interests of the other players, especially of those who object to our approaches? What are their interests and what might be the actions they will take?

What is the overall strategic objective of the West in the current crisis with Russia, but also in the ongoing problématique with Islamic State (IS), with the instabilities in the Middle East and the migration and refugee dramas that are going on right now? My answer would be that the overall strategic objective is the re-establishment of a stable and peaceful political order in Europe, its neighborhood, and in its periphery. Where are we now on this?

First of all, the current situation is far from a peaceful and stable political order. Russia brought the war into Ukraine and threatens countries in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe. It is crystal clear that Russia carries the main responsibility for the severe blow that its recent actions gave to the political order in Europe or what many in the West perceived as a new peace order that emerged after the end of the Cold War.

The annexation of Crimea, the hybrid warfare in Ukraine, threats to the region – that is all unacceptable, of course. But at the same time, we have to ask ourselves: What mistakes did we make in the West over the last twenty-five years and what are the problems that we might have

caused? Did we always deal with Russia on an equal footing, and did we always treat Russian interests with the kind of respect that a major power in Europe deserves?

I am not at all in favor of a Russian say or a veto when it comes to the decision of sovereign countries to join NATO or to join the European Union. That has to be the free choice of sovereign countries. But the questions that we should ask ourselves have to do with the status of Russia and its significance to the region and the world. My most important question in this regard is "Can we imagine a European peace order without or even against Russia?" I do not ask this question just with regard to the current crisis with Russia over Ukraine, but also against the backdrop of what is going on in the Middle East, what is going on in terms of the IS, what is going on in the negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program and other even global issues that affect our security here in Europe. My answer to this question would be No. I cannot imagine a lasting peace in Europe and beyond against or without Russia. The country is too big, it is too important, and it is too interconnected with Europe and the rest of the world.

How to deal with this important but difficult actor? I think that Western, EU and NATO strategy, should be twofold: First, we need to support and re-assure allies and partners. This is also a question of cohesion of the Alliance. Actually, this is an opportunity for the Western camp to come more closely together and to create stronger unity. But at the same time, we need to keep the door open to Russia, engage Russia, build bridges and try to re-establish a more stable and trusting relationship with Russia. Both avenues are crucial for reaching that overall strategic objective of peace in Europe. To not stand firm, would challenge the cohesion of NATO and the European Union and would make the situation for allies and partners in the Eastern and Southeastern part of Europe and NATO much more uneasy. To fail to engage Russia, however, could bring us into a situation where we could face a "protracted" kind of a conflict and a "protracted" kind of



instability here in Europe.

What is to be done? I have five brief recommendations in that respect. First, I think that we have to state that there is a war in Ukraine, where the violent annexation of the Crimea took place and where Russia is militarily engaged in Eastern part of the country. Military protection is, without any doubt, necessary and important - but military solutions will always result in military answers and military responses. We also have to accept that this is a political conflict by nature and that political answers have to be found to settle it. So a wise strategist would seek common ground for political interaction beyond violence.

The second recommendation is to stand firm. Yes, there are sanctions in place. Those sanctions always send a message in two directions. The first direction is our own community, the European Union and NATO. It is about cohesion, reassurance, and solidarity. At the same time, it is also a message to Russia: we must clearly communicate our view that this behavior is not acceptable.

That is why we did a lot of things after NATO's summit in Wales 2015: we adopted the Readiness Action Plan, created the VJTF (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and put in place the reassurance measures and the country packages for Ukraine or Georgia. All of this is intended to curb Russia's aggression, and - that is always the aim of sanctions - to persuade Russia to return to normalcy.

My third recommendation would be to avoid escalation. As I already mentioned, military logic will or at least has a huge probability of ending in military response and in the protraction and prolongation of military problems. Russia is, without any doubt, weaker than it presents itself, especially when it comes to the military. This always carries the problem of assertive postures.

My fourth recommendation would be: "Support partners!" That is most important and we have already accomplished a lot in this regard. I already mentioned capacity-building and reassurance. But what should be our major focus? Should it be military? Should it be border

protection as a first priority? Or should we concentrate our efforts on the establishment of democratic institutions, on human rights, on the rule of law, on the welfare and improved living conditions for all citizens? In my view stable and coherent societies are the best protection against hybrid warfare.

My fifth and last recommendation would be to engage Russia and to look for common interests. I think that there are already many common interests. We saw this in the case of the Iran negotiations, we will see this with regard to the Islamic State, the problem of how to deal with the situation in Afghanistan after NATO's withdrawal, and of course, Russia's role in Syria. Those are problems that affect all of us in an interdependent world. The recommendation would be to treat Russia as what it is: an indispensable power here in Europe and the world. The fora are there, the NATO-Russia Council, the OSCE<sup>1</sup>, the United Nations Security Council, they can be used or reactivated, if there is political will on both sides.

This leads me to my conclusion. Of course, engaging Russia is easy to recommend and to request yet so hard to achieved in political practice. We have to be aware that cooperation might not work but it has to be attempted. Confrontation will not, most likely, ease the tensions and improve the situation. I want to conclude with the reminder that Europe as it is – so interconnected, so interdependent and so intertwined - will see no victors or losers in a great conflict. It will only see losers. That is what we should avoid.

*Sven Gareis, Ph.D, Deputy Dean (German), George C. Marshall  
European Center for Security Studies*

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<sup>1</sup> OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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*James Nixey*

## **THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE**

The crux of the "Russian challenge" lies in its possessive attitudes towards the other 14 formerly Soviet states. In violation of post WWII norms and principles the Kremlin regards its Soviet-era control as allowing it rights to modern-day control. As that control is unacceptable (to varying degrees) to those 14 countries, it has slowly become unacceptable to the West by extension. Old style dominion - a land grab - is either too difficult or downright unattractive.

At a minimum Russia is looking for 'Finlandization plus' - whereby former Soviet states have closer political and military ties to Russia than anyone else. Recognizing them as fully sovereign is unacceptable to Russia (and when Russia says unacceptable, unlike the West, it means it). The notion of an independent Ukraine for example has no meaning when the country's existence is regarded as an accident of history. President Putin talks openly about how Russia gave up those territories

Russia opposes an influx of western liberal ideas into itself. In one sense, the post-Soviet states can be regarded as a buffer or cordon sanitaire or a defensive space enhancing Russian political and social stability.

A Russia able to accept a decision in Kyiv about closer relations with the EU would be a sign of Russia shedding its imperial past. This is not currently observable. To "lose" these countries is regarded as compromising the safety and security of the Russians federation. Ukraine is both a cause of the breakdown and a symptom.

Western political and security involvement in the post-Soviet Space is regarded as illegitimate. For the Kremlin it is part of 'Russians protecting Russia'. Russia sees an arc of crisis around it. And it is mobilizing as a result.

Moreover, as Russia is fighting a losing battle in this - pushing against the tide of history, Russia compensates for its own structural

weaknesses by making others weaker. In other words, what it can't have, it will wreck.

For the West, all this means that ultimately it does not have so much of a Ukraine problem as it ultimately does, a Russia problem.

#### WHAT TO DO

The inevitable ultimate defeat of Russia's ambitions towards its one-time dependencies may suggest to some that the West need not get involved. And indeed, nor should it – unless of course its assistance is requested - and requested by a state that is at least trying to reform, as opposed to one which is, effectively, an autocratic clone of Russia.

But if the West is to get involved, as it surely must, a very different strategy for dealing with Russia is needed - one based on the reality of that country's leadership, rather than naive and unworkable diplomacy.

First of all, it is worth asking, why do America and Europe persist with the fantasy that they can work with Vladimir Putin? You would think western politicians would have realised that this is not a man with whom they can do business, never mind whether they should or not. But no, Kremlin crime after Kremlin misdemeanour, the West keeps going back for more.

Trying to negotiate a solution that suits Russia, Ukraine (and the West by proxy) is not possible. Their objectives are mutually exclusive. The two possibilities are allowing Russia a sphere of influence or denying it one. There is no middle way.

Accommodating the Russian leadership hasn't worked in the past and it won't work now. It's wrong in principle and it's bad policy to boot. Even if the West does (or already has done) some kind of shabby deal with Russia and allowed it a Cold War sphere of influence around its borders, thus condemning 147 million people in 15 supposedly independent, formerly Soviet countries to a foreign policy decided in Moscow, there is no evidence that there would be an improvement in East-West relations. The Russian leadership effectively believes these countries are theirs.

This new set of policies will not change the unpleasant regime in Russia. The West cannot and should not do that. Nor can they change Putin's mind. This is also not possible.

However, policies such as those outlined below will make life deliberately uncomfortable for the Russian leadership, as a response to its illegitimate pursuit of what it sees as its natural rights in Ukraine and elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- reaffirm commitment to the full sovereignty of all of the post-Soviet independent states at every opportunity;
- find new ways to counter Russian propaganda and communicate with the wider population of Russia that it is in their interests to be part of a rules-based Europe;
- support the reconstruction of Ukraine and the development of all other post-Soviet states if (and only if) they show evidence of a path towards western norms and values;
- deprive Russia of leverage in EU energy markets;
- restore more conventional deterrent capabilities;
- regenerate Russia expertise in the West so as to better understand and predict Russia's actions;
- prepare for the eventual and inevitable change of regime in Russia (be it an improvement or a further deterioration);
- maintain sanctions for as long as Russia remains illegally in Ukraine.

The recommendation on sanctions merits further elaboration. The duration of sanctions is at least as important as their severity. To reiterate, they are not designed to do the impossible - change Vladimir Putin's mind - and they most certainly should not represent the totality of the western response. But they are a technocratic means of what civilised and mature nations can do when confronted with aggression, as opposed to responding with force.

This is not another Cold War. Russia has retained some of the characteristics of its Soviet predecessor, but it is no longer a global superpower. Those who are critical of Russia are often been accused of being Cold War warriors or of having a Cold War mentality. But there is nothing more "Cold War" than demanding - or allowing - a sphere of privileged interests beyond borders.

Russia claims a moral equivalence between its actions and those of the West. But the West did not provide weaponry which shot down a Malaysian airliner killing 298 people; nor is it so dangerous for its opposition politicians and journalists to be critical of their governments.

Optimism that things will get better is clearly not a policy. Given a little backbone, and a lot more political will, this new set of more robust policies can slowly change the paradigm and induce a better relationship with Russia in the longer term.

*James Nixey, Head, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House*

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## *Petr Lunac*

We are talking about the ongoing Russia/Ukraine crisis and its impact on the Black Sea region. Let me use this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on the larger context of the Russian challenge we are all facing.

After more than two decades of hard work to build bridges with Russia, to from a deep and lasting partnership, all that effort is crumbling to dust. For of late we have witnesses the rise of a new Russia. an angry, aggressive and revanchist Russia, a Russia we have not seen for a very long time. A Russia that is determined to ignore international law and overturn the principles of the post-Cold War system – principles that Russia itself helped to establish.

The open rules-based system that respects international borders and the right of states to choose their own future has been undermined by Russia despite the fact that Russia not only signed up to these rules but also helped draft them. The OSCE documents (the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter), the NATO-Russia Founding Act, you know all this sort of "Magna Carta" of our relationship with Russia, the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 that Russia explicitly guaranteed Ukrainian sovereignty and borders on a number of times in exchange for a transfer of nuclear weapons from Ukraine to Russia.

On setting out the challenge from Russia, the question that usually follows is whether this is a new Cold War. As a trained historian, I would be very careful about making sweeping historical comparisons. The world is a very different place than what it was. In today's globalized world, no country – with the exception of the excentric North Korea – can shut itself off behind an Iron Curtain. Russia is a significant trading partner to many NATO Allies, Germany in particular, and it supplies gas to half of Europe. And Russia can still be positive force where our interests meet such as with the Iran nuclear deal.

Even the most fervent hard-liners in Russia do not propose such a way forward. At the same time, the current Russian elite seems to have learnt how to weaponize globalization by using the situation where they are part of our world to the extent they chose to: enjoying Western lifestyle, sending their kids to Western schools but breaking every rule on which our world is based.

So, what we are seeing is not The Cold war but it's a cold war in many ways. It's not the Cold war that my generation remembers when the rules were pretty much set. The Brezhnev and even the Andropov and let alone Gorbachev leaderships were not seriously thinking about undermining the rules that were established in the course of the Cold War. What we are seeing here today is something probably similar to a cold war of the earlier period when many of the principles were actually not agreed or understood. What we are seeing is a situation where a crucial player in European security decided to turn the European security system upside down, disrespect rules, disrespect sovereignty of other countries.

Today we have to contend with a Russia that wants to go back to Europe based on spheres of influence, on limited sovereignty, policies that are a throw-back to earlier times. This is something that we all believed that we all put behind us.

In a way, Russia has created a situation that is in many ways more volatile and potentially more dangerous than the stability of the Cold War.

Russian propaganda would like us to believe that we need Russia more than Russia needs us, but it's actually the other way around. We need to be patient, stick to our principles, and recognize that time is on our side.

Have we made mistakes in dealing with Russia in the past? Probably yes. But I do not believe our Russia policy justifies in any way Russia's current policy of confrontation with the West or its unprovoked aggression against its neighbours.



Russia's narrative -- and false narrative, let me stress -- is that of a country humiliated by the West that has tried to take advantage of its weakness since the end of the Cold War. NATO enlargement, in particular, has been invoked by many commentators both in Russia and the West. But when the process of NATO enlargement was set in motion no effort was spared to make sure that an enlarged NATO would contribute to European security and that it would not be directed against Russia. This included a number of unilateral commitments to refrain from permanently deploying substantial multinational combat forces and nuclear weapons in new member states. And despite Russia's aggressive actions we have held to these commitments.

What are the sources of Russia's conduct? I believe the principal source of Russia's conduct is the nexus between domestic and foreign policy. Ukraine's revolution of dignity had nothing to do with Russia. It was a revolution for more democracy and less corruption, it was a revolution against a kleptocratic regime. Unfortunately, it seems that Russia's prefers a different Ukraine - a country where leaders can be bought and people ignored or shot at. A democratic revolution in Ukraine, a country that is for historical and other reasons inescapably so close to Russia is anathema to Putin and the people around him - especially after the current Russian leadership witnessed the social unrest in the wake of the flawed Duma and presidential elections in 2011 and 2012 respectively. On Putin's watch, Russia travelled a long journey from the chaotic Yeltsin pluralism to the current hard authoritarianism. The current Kremlin leadership views liberal democracy as a direct challenge to the personalized system of power.

Like many times in Russia's history, the Russian leadership turns to expansionist policy to divert attention from the failure of the government to modernize - both politically and economically. President Putin embarked on a campaign of ethno-nationalism based on an ideological blend of Tsarist autocracy, Soviet anti-western resentment and post-Soviet consumerism. The current Russian leadership presents Western

and Russian values as incompatible, even in being in direct conflict, reinforcing the siege mentality in the Russian people.

This is the reality we must face as NATO. We need to prepare ourselves for a long period of strategic competition. Of rivalry that has more in common with the rivalry of the great powers of the nineteenth century than the superpowers of the 20th. This competition is not our choice - we have expended much time effort and energy to build a true strategic partnership with Russia. But it appears to be Russia's choice.

In these circumstances, it is hard to move forward with even limited engagement with Russia, and impossible to consider a return to business as usual.

What do we have to do about it? First and foremost, we must recognise Russia as it is and not how we would wish it to be. For we cannot base our policy on wishful thinking. And if we are to deal with Russia effectively as an Alliance, and as an international community, then we must do so from a solid foundation of unity and solidarity – and not of the lowest-common-denominator variety.

First of all, we need to make sure that we are resilient, with a modern and flexible collective defence and strong, open societies. An important first step is to increase defence spending. All Allies agreed to increase defence spending at our Wales summit in September 2014. That is important politically as it is militarily. It demonstrates a sense and a collective awareness that NATO's military posture needs to be adjusted in light of these new realities.

The challenge from Russia to NATO is clear and present. In the Baltics and the Black Sea, Russia's so called A2AD or "Anti-Access and Area Denial" capability has already become a cause for concern. Putin's tactics have the potential to create a buffer zone (or "bubble", as General Breedlove has called it) at several points along NATO's borders, from the Barents Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, within which our own forces could be denied full access.

In light of this, as we consider the long-term adaptation of the

Alliance in the run-up to next summer's Warsaw Summit, we will have to re-assess our requirements for the pre-positioning of equipment, the pre-positioning of enablers, and, perhaps, additional forward stationing of combat units - notwithstanding sensitivities relating to the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

The centerpiece of NATO's adaptation is the Readiness Action Plan. The RAP is about making sure that we have the right forces and with the right equipment. That they are ready to move at very short notice to defend any Ally against any threat.

Since our summit in Wales, we have made rapid progress. We now have an operational Spearhead Force, able to deploy within a matter of days. We have doubled the size of the NATO Reaction Force to up to 40 000 troops, and we have opened six new headquarters (with two new ones underway), in NATO's Eastern Allies - where we also maintain round-the-clock assurance measures in the air, on land and at sea.

Nations are starting to address some of our priority areas, such as precision-guided munitions, air-to-air refueling, drones, and aircraft for our Special forces. Allies are addressing important issues such as Ballistic and Theater Missile Defence and cyber threats. And they are doing it not just on an individual basis, but collectively, through NATO's Defence Planning Process. We have made a good start in understanding the implications of "hybrid" warfare and in designing a comprehensive - that is political as well as military - response.

Together, this is a huge step forward, but it is only the first step. In the years ahead, if we are to be in a competition with Russia for the long-term, we need to adapt our alliance for the long-term. We need to get better at sharing intelligence, at identifying potential vulnerabilities and at combating hybrid and cyber-attacks, including doing so with other international organisations, the European Union in particular.

The Readiness Action Plan / RAP alone is not enough. We need to relearn and reinvigorate deterrence, taking into account Russia's military build-up; its ability to mobilize large forces very quickly (as

seen in the many "snap" exercises); its A2AD capabilities that could impede NATO reinforcements; its apparent lowering of the nuclear threshold; and its demonstrated expertise at hybrid warfare.

In addition to strengthening our defence capabilities, we need to speed up our decision-making, and get better at sharing intelligence, at identifying potential vulnerabilities, so that we can prevent or counter hybrid and cyber-attacks, including doing so with other international organisations, the European Union in particular.

We are, in my view, in for a long-term competition with Russia. But it is important that we manage that competition and prevent the situation from getting out of hand, especially with regard to dangerous military situations. Where our militaries come into a close contact, such as in here in the Black Sea region, the Baltics and now in Syria, it is vital that proximity and confusion do not lead to accidents that could spiral out of control. While predictability is not on the top of President Putin's list of priorities just now, we need to press him on the importance of, if not cooperating, then at least de-conflicting our movements.

Strengthening our partners so they are better able to stand up to outside intimidation and interference is a major area where NATO, nations and the EU can help. A strong neighbourhood strategy is an essential part of our Russia strategy. Here too, NATO has made a good start in its areas of expertise, with the five Ukraine Trust Funds, the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, and an initial Defence Capacity Building package for Moldova. But there is scope for a considerably larger effort if want to have a more substantial impact, and NATO's efforts in the security and defence sector need to be complemented by strong EU and bilateral support in the political and economic spheres.

We can also help Russia's neighbours to counter Russian propaganda, not with propaganda of their own, but with the truth – with a free, open and honest press and with effective strategic communications. The importance of this work cannot be overstated. We need to do more, including investing in Russian-language broadcasting and in a more

effective use of social media.

If we do not stand by our partners, we risk the return of a sort of neo-Brezhnevian world of limited sovereignty for Russia's neighbours, and the return of sphere of influence geopolitics in the Euro-Atlantic area. We need to shore up their sovereignty, and that includes maintaining NATO's Open Door.

And let's not forget that Russia is also attempting to gain influence in other ways, through corrupt business practices, manipulation of energy trade, and other means. When Kremlin-controlled Russian banks bankroll the French National Front to the tune of millions of dollars, as well supporting other far-right parties across Europe, we know that something is very wrong. In short, the competition from Russia is not only external, it is internal, within our own countries.

So, we need to be on our guard and decide how we can best protect our open societies, how we can best preserve and promote our values at home as well as around the world. But we must also do this in a way that does not compromise our own values or needlessly escalates the already tense relationship we have with Russia, causing it to descend into an endless round of tit-for-tat actions and reactions. It will not be easy.

To conclude, Putin's Russia is a fact, and likely to be with us for some time to come. We cannot ignore it and we cannot fully contain it. We have to engage with Russia, but we must do so with our eyes open and with no illusions as to its behaviour or its intent. While it is essential to keep our lines of communication open, especially through military-to-military contacts around Syria, any idea of a return to the degree of partnership we enjoyed just a few years ago is a distant prospect indeed.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

What are the methods that Russia was using in order to undermine the international system? I think there are three methods – direct action, non or selective compliance with its obligation commitments and generation of new and amended international arrangements.

Direct action by Russia has included military threats to target allies. Let's mention, for example, threats to Denmark, you know, if it hosts elements of missile defense. Direct action also includes large-scale military deployments, exercises near allied borders and using scenarios involving allied and partners' territory.

Non-compliance with international obligations includes the violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) when at least one NATO ally believes that Russia is in breach of the INF treaty. This is not an agreed NATO position but, you know, the US, at least, believes that this is the case. The way Russia has been instrumentalizing Open Sky Treaty and the last, but not least the new arrangements on the new initiatives that Russia has been using or suggesting is, for example, the Medvedev Draft of the European Security Treaty which basically would mean encapsulated rather dramatic change in European security system. The course for drafting a legal charter of the OSCE, that is another Russian initiative and so forth.

I think and let's make it very clear from the very beginning – our policy is not a regime change; it is a policy change.

Let me say a few words about "What to do in the immediate future?"

I think, before we can re-engage with Russia, Moscow must de-escalate the situation in Ukraine. That is an absolute prerequisite of any thought of re-engagement. It must stop sending weapons and supplies to the rebels in the Donbass. It must pull all of its soldiers, advisers by the way, from Eastern Ukraine. It must work constructively to implement the Minsk Agreements in full and not selectively.

We must also continue to make it clear to Russia that it cannot have the benefits of integration without respecting the rules. And I think really what we should strive at this point is trying to go back to a rules-based system. Russia cannot or should not be allowed to select the rules it wants to obey and ignore the others. And it cannot impose on the rest of us a new European security order based either on their own rules or on no rules at all. My suspicion is Russia would be happy with no rules

whatsoever.

I think in the long run our, and that is NATO's policy, should be based on patience and consistency. I think Russia expects us to give up sanctions and go back to business as usual without changing its own conduct. That is basically, let's be honest here, what we did after the war in Georgia in 2008. But this time around having chosen our course we must stick to it. We must stay united, stay firm and increase the cost to Russia of its aggression. Over time, I hope and we hope, that Russia will see that it is in its own best interest to return to a policy of cooperation but only if we show that we take our principles seriously.

#### Putin in Syria

I believe that President Putin has three principal goals in mind in Syria.

First, he is showing that Russia is capable of protecting its clients. He sees the US-led coalition's attacks on ISIL (The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) as a prelude to regime change; and by intervening, he wants to show he can stop this – not just in Syria, but in Russia itself.

Second, Putin is protecting Russian bases in the region, specifically its naval base in Tartus and its new airbase in Latakia; maintaining a strategic presence in the Middle East mainly to thwart US and allied objectives in the region, rather than to play a constructive role.

And third, by intervening, Putin is forcing the international community to deal directly with Russia in Syria and in the Middle East writ large. He's saying that Russia will not be ignored or isolated. He's telling us that the Gromyko Rule (that no international problem can be solved without the participation of the Soviet Union) is still in effect.

So, Syria gives Russia an opportunity to demonstrate its ability to project power, its reliability as a patron, and its ability to undermine US dominance in the region. But his primary audience is the Russian people: Putin aims to promote patriotic, chauvinistic feelings of national pride over Russia's return as a great power and to make them forget his responsibility for the declining economy and Russia's increasing

isolation after its aggression in Ukraine.

Whatever your view of Putin's motivations, a potential long-term Russian presence in the Middle East has significant implications for the management of the crisis and for NATO Allies in the south, as we have already seen with Turkey. A substantial and active Russian military presence in Syria also raises questions about NATO's ability to operate freely in the Eastern Mediterranean region and other areas of vital interest to the Alliance.

*Mr. Petr Lunak, Senior Officer, Russia and Ukraine at NATO PDD*



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## *Vessela Tcherneva*

Today the EU is expected to wake up as a foreign policy actor for a variety of reasons. The crisis over Russia is one of them, the refugee crisis is another. In his State of the Union address, the president of the European Commission, Mr. Juncker talked about the way forward for Europe. He focused on five major topics - the refugee crisis, Ukraine, the fallout of the Greek crisis, climate and Brexit.

When we go through this list, however, it becomes obvious that Europe does not really speak about Russia. The European Union has difficulties discussing its Russia policy. Nevertheless, when we discuss Ukraine it actually means also formulating EU's policy towards Russia. The reason for this is that the return of caught Europe completely by surprise. In the 90s the Europeans were still imagining that they can change the world, that there are regions which would like to follow the path towards European integration, that the postmodern relationship towards borders will become the new normal. In a way, the 2008 crisis turned Europe towards itself. It made it much less imaginative or at least its imagination was not employed in the domain of foreign policy. Then, the annexation of Crimea and the following war in Eastern Ukraine, made it clear that the game of geopolitics is something totally alien to the European Union as a philosophy and a set of principles.

At the same time, the EU needs to maintain a relationship with Russia. At the moment, to the most promising idea is to have a twofold relationship- relationship of containment and relationship of engagement at the same time.

Engagement appears to be difficult. The level of unpredictability of the current leadership in Russia makes Europe feel helpless. Angela Merkel said that she has been so often lied to by Mr. Putin that she would not know if she could find the conversations with him at all useful. The fact that a simple statement cannot be upheld by the Russian leadership

makes it very difficult for EU's machinery to develop even a short-term strategy towards Russia. It seems that on the engagement side we have to wait for the moment when we can again go back to talks that would bring credible results.

When it comes to containment, we can illustrate this part of the relationship with the sanctions policy. EU's sanctions policy has been incredibly successful despite the fact that many have predicted that the EU will stumble over it, that there will be splits and that the tensions between East and West are going to disrupt the consensus. Unfortunately, however, in the last weeks the crisis with the refugees has become a threat towards this consensus. There are people in Brussels who feel that the level of disunity on the refugee crisis among the European member states can be compared to the 2003 Iraq war stand-off. This argument might be exaggerated, but the fact is that we are facing a situation in which there is a very strong sense of lack of solidarity. Interestingly, some of those who demanded solidarity regarding Russia just several months ago are now refusing to show solidarity when it comes to the refugee crisis. How this is going to play out in the renewal of the sanctions against Russia towards the end of the year is still unclear but considering the signs from some of the Southern member states it is not impossible for the consensus to break down.

In general, the solidarity conundrum is something that the EU institutions but also the EU member states will have to deal with within the next months. EU's relationship with Russia will be a part of this discussion but we are seeing a negative relationship between at least four of the five topics mentioned above. The migration issue is negatively influencing the Ukraine dilemma and the Greek crisis was threatening to create a break in the consensus vis-à-vis Russia. The fact that the refugee crisis has exacerbated all these weaknesses and deficiencies is a new game changer and we are going to see to which extent Europe is going to be able to construct a positive relationship and come out of this crisis in a better shape.

Regarding Russia and Ukraine, EU's policy towards Ukraine is mainly based on the Agreements reached in the Normandy format. The Minsk implementation is something that will be reviewed very soon. The final judgment will be made in the beginning of next year. Russia's decisiveness to meet its objectives in the evaluation of the Minsk implementation is not to be underestimated and Europe should come prepared. There will be a very serious political blame-game – who has fulfilled what, to which extent and who is to blame for not fulfilling part of the Minsk agreement. Russia does not want to continue this war as it is a costly one. It will most probably try to continue destabilizing Ukraine by using administrative, constitutional, economic and, of course, political tools. This is a game that the EU has to be prepared to play very soon.

Europe should not underestimate or ignore Russia's active engagement in Syria. The fact that we neglected Syria for many years is one of the root causes of the current refugee crisis. What is going to happen in Syria is still unclear. It seems that Russia is trying to prop up Assad as much as possible, but at the same time, some of the European member states are trying to push forward the idea that talking to Assad is now possible. Whether this will mean getting another venue of negotiation with Russia, this time over the future of the regime in Damascus, is also a question that Europeans have to answer for themselves.

Apart from our Eastern Neighbourhood and the Black Sea region, we also have to pay attention to the Western Balkans - the other immediate neighbour of ours. This is a region that has experienced its own institutional weaknesses, economic weaknesses and lack of social cohesion through the refugee crisis. Russia is trying to be active in the Western Balkans, at least rhetorically. The refugee crisis is the latest signal that the EU has a job to finish there, a job that has been neglected for too long.

To summarize, what is important to focus on when we talk about Europe's policy towards Russia is that EU's awakening in foreign policy

is inevitable. If we do not want to change the world, the world is going to change us. This is something that Europe is painfully realising. The question is: What is Europe's strategic awakening going to look like?

*Ms. Vessela Tcherneva, Programme Director and Head of ECFR  
Sofia Office*

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*Prof. Mustafa Aydin\**

I will try to look into the Black sea region from a wider perspective. I will try to first explain the non-existence of security architecture in the Black Sea since the end of the Cold War; then will look at new and emerging challenges to NATO in the region. I will look at the Black Sea, not from a 10-year perspective, but from a 25-year perspective, that is from a longer term.

The region has changed tremendously since the end of the Cold War in various aspects; sometimes we do not realize the extent of this change in the “heat of the moment”. As most of us are caught in our daily routine, we do not see how much the Black Sea security environment has changed since the end of the Cold War. In the early days of the post-Cold War era, the debate was centered on whether the Black Sea was a region or not. I was among the initial group that started the discussion and argued over the issue for a long time. Today, there is no such a discussion anymore. Whether we agree or not that it is a region or maybe it is still a “region in the making” as we used to say, no body discusses anymore whether the Black Sea geography constitutes a political region; the current discussion the Black Sea has moved on. Today, most of the issues that are discussed in connection with the Black Sea are not solely related to the Black Sea anymore. Events have taken over the idea of Black Sea and its security, and current discussion centers around much wider, in fact global issues, that one way or another affects the Black Sea region. This has been happening in the last 7-8 years; at least since 2001-2002, i.e. since the 9/11 attacks to be exact.

Looking at the evolvement of the security architecture of the Black Sea in the post-Cold War era, we have witnessed emergence of a number of multilateral regional cooperation initiatives, most of which are still in existence like the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. There are others that specifically relate to the security area, such as the Black

Sea Force and the Black Sea Harmony operation. Most of these structures still exist, but they are not anymore significant contributors to the security discussion in the Black Sea region, mainly because what happened between 2008 and 2014 in terms of Russian military interventions in the region.

There was a period, which I would call as the “oblivion period”, during which no one showed any interest on the Black Sea. This was between mid-1990s to mid-2000s. The European states and the US were at this time very much focused and preoccupied with the idea of European enlargement, internal problems of the EU, and the various political and security problems of the Eastern Europe. On the other side, Russia was quite disorganized and struggling to put forward it’s position in its near abroad. Thus, in late 1990s and early 2000s, an uneasy equilibrium in the security sense emerged in the Black Sea; and Turkey and Russia somehow balanced each other; and mostly as a result this, the rest of the countries in the region were able to cooperate within various multilateral cooperation initiatives that emerged. At the same time, Russia was able to put forward its concept of “near abroad”.

Then came the 9/11, which changed everything in the region. We witnessed a heightened international attention towards the region between 2002 and 2007. Especially the US wanted to be present in every corner of the world, including the Black Sea region; the EU followed suit. Thus we saw emergence of two concepts from the US at this time: The “Greater Middle East” and “Wider Black Sea Region”. The “Wider Black Sea Region” concept was actually developed during the academic exchanges organized by the German Marshall Fund of the US in late 1990s; and was later on adopted by the political leadership in the US. At the same time, the EU started to recognize its own interests in the region, and the Black Sea Synergy and the European Neighborhood Policy were developed in connection with this.

So; by the early 2000s, all the bigger player of today in Black Sea area, i.e. the EU, the US and Russia, have all developed concepts that specifically aimed at this region. At the same time, other regional actors

beside these bigger players started to put forward their own interests and projects, such as Romania and Turkey. This was a moment of heightened international interest in the region, which helped to thaw some of the frozen conflicts as well.

Then came the Russian-Georgian War of August 2008 and the period between this and the Russian invasion of Crimea in March 2014. This has been a period of a resurgent and more assertive Russia in the region. Turkey's focus at during this period was shifted towards the Middle East. It also coincided with the withdrawal of the US from the region. And the EU was a rather disorganized player. All of which left much more confused regional states facing each other in the region. This was also a period, during which we have witnessed the emergence of the "survival instinct" among the ruling elites of the regional countries, especially in those countries bordering Russia directly. This instinct dominated most of the security discussion in the region since then and the March 2014 events proved the dangers of indecision between the West and Russia. This has been rather trying period for the regional leadership.

Finally, today: It is a high-tension period that started with the Russian aggression in Crimea and its challenging behavior towards international borders. Let me mention one curious fact at this point about this region. It has been 25 years since the littoral countries have declared their independence, but none of the problems that emerged in this region all those years ago have not been solved, and most of the remained unchallenged. If you look around the world, there are very few places where you can observe such a persistence of problems. In the Black Sea region, we have many challenges and threats, such as frozen conflicts, uneven economic development, environmental degradation, inconclusive attempts at democratization, Russian insistence on special regional role and domination, international competition for influence, etc. None of them have been dealt with satisfactorily since their emergence.

Since March 2014, it is now pretty clear that Russia is the main challenge for the regional security and stability. Moreover, even in political terms, it

presents various challenges and dilemmas to regional countries. It seems that both the regional countries and the global players have not yet been able to develop a strategy to handle this Russia. It seems none of the actors have a firm idea about which policies might work; and even some of the policies that are implemented by NATO countries and some the regional countries seem inconclusive. In fact, Russia seems to be unilaterally imposing its own “solutions” to the region by force. Despite all the talk in the last 25 years about multilateral arrangements, we have a Russia today that is unilaterally and aggressively imposing its own solutions. I will not spend more time on Russia’s or Putin’s strategic interests in the region, which is beyond the scope of this talk, but it is clear by now that its main interest in the region has been to create a “buffer zone” with the West in Ukraine; and once it concluded that Ukraine would not cooperate with Russia on this idea, the annexation of Crimea came, and the rest of the troubles followed.

The situation on the ground seems rather tense at the moment. I would like to quote some of the figures from a report released by the European Leadership Network in late August 2015 to illustrate this point. According to this research;

- 66 incidents took place since March 2014; around 50 of them were regular incidents between Russian and NATO forces, but others were much more serious. 3 were classified as “high risk situations”. According to the report, there were at least 3 times since March 2014 that forces of Russia and NATO came very close to blow up. Three times in less than a year is a huge risk.

- NATO has reported that it conducted over 400 intercepts of Russian aircrafts in 2014, which is 4 times higher than 2013. In return, Russia stated that it counted twice as many flights of NATO tactical aircrafts near its border in 2014, numbering more than 3000. Sweden and Finland had to conduct subsea search operation for “mysterious underwater objects”.

- Russia has increased the size and number of its military exercises near NATO border and conducted most of them without notification;



sudden snap exercises next to NATO territory. It deployed additional aircrafts, ships, air-defense and anti-ship missiles in Crimea, so heightened its readiness there. In return, NATO also increased its military footprint along its Eastern borders and the scale of Baltic air policing mission. According to NATO data, 162 military exercises were conducted in 2014 under NATO Military Training and Exercise Program, which doubled the number in previous year. The trend still continues.

These figures by themselves show much heightened tension and huge risk run by both sides. Yet this is not the only challenge to NATO today in the region. Some people have already mentioned hybrid threats, which is interesting because NATO was not originally designed to counter hybrid threats. Since everyone in the audience might not be familiar with the concept, let me briefly mention few components of it: The use of traditional military forces, aggressive information warfare, propaganda campaigns (with the use of TV, radio, newspapers), social media exploitation, cyber-attacks, infiltration of special forces, local militias, economic embargos, sabotages, etc., all together. NATO is not designed by definition to respond to these kinds of threats. Anything below Article 5 type of threat should by definition not on the agenda of NATO. Thus, it is usually very late, like in Ukraine, when NATO comes into the picture, when the threat perception elevated to Article 5 or at least Article 4 level; then it is already too late on the ground to respond appropriately.

As NATO's forces are earmarked to NATO, but dispersed around the NATO countries, it would take time both to have a decision and rearrange them towards new tasks. And unless there is an Article 5 type of threat and related decision, NATO forces do not come under the same command. However, hybrid threats do not give time that NATO needs to get a decision; as they emerge suddenly, it is already too late by the time NATO members have time discuss it properly. Moreover, NATO has no economic or other tools in its toolbox besides military measures. In this context, how to counter propaganda warfare for example? NATO

obviously is not a broadcasting organization. So, other institutions and states have to come on board to respond to these kinds of challenges, which would present another challenge as to how to organize that.

Thus, main problems seem to be how to define the threats and how to respond to them, while all these are taking place when NATO member states are decreasing their military budgets, which affect their military capabilities. Remember 2011 Libya campaign: NATO is still heavily relying on the US for intelligence, surveillance, and transportation; these are all very critical capabilities. Moreover, members do not maintain their “Wales pledges”; that they will spend 2% of their national budgets on defense. Only couple of countries is doing it and they are also decreasing it. In order to overcome these shortcomings, NATO is trying to increase its military readiness and to create a “Spearhead Force” by 2016, which I have doubts about.

Since I have highlighted all the dangers, I wish to say few words about the EU, as well. Since the emergence of this crisis, the EU has been kept on line through Germany’s determination and Chancellor Merkel’s insistence. We all see that there are differences of opinion within Europe about how to respond to Russia. This is another challenge for NATO as well, because if you cannot present a united political front to Russia within the EU, how can you create a military front against Russia within NATO. NATO’s role in countering Russian hybrid warfare would be limited to security measures, but it cannot for example impose economic sanctions on Russia; these could be implemented only by the EU and the USA; thus the NATO need to cooperate with other institutions or states to respond to hybrid threats properly, which is yet another challenge.

*\* This material is prepared based on the audio-recorded conference presentation by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Aydin, Rector, Kadir Has University, Turkey on “Emerging security environment in the Black Sea and new challenges for NATO”.*

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*Liviu Mureșan*

## **GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES IN THE BLACK SEA: A ROMANIAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE**

Summary:

The Romanian perspective on security in the Black Sea is necessarily complex and multifaceted. It cannot be described, in a reductionist view, as simply being about past and present Russian power, though that aspect cannot be ruled out. The Romanian perspective integrates both military and non-military risks and threats, ranging from energy security, transborder organized crime, terrorism and extremism, but also the changing geopolitical landscape of the wider region, which may also affect the Black Sea space. While Romania is a productive partner to ascendant powers such as China, which it also views as a European power in the vein of Russia and the US, it is also aware that the strategic Black Sea space will not remain stagnant while the rest of the world shifts towards new balances of power. Whether the new situation favours Romania and its general interests, and whether Romania can effect meaningful positive change in favour of stability and peaceful cooperation in one of the least institutionalized strategic spaces in the world, remains to be seen. Given its status as a border region between competing power blocs, the Black Sea will ultimately challenge Romania's security and its and its neighbors' preference for a stable, predictable and equitable international system.

The concept of security is highly fluid and ambiguous, sometimes difficult to harmonize between disparate security actors and philosophies. There are different and conflicting interests in the security field even among the allies from NATO. A study from 2012 by Olivier de France and Nick Whitney from the European Council of Foreign Relations (*“Europe Strategic Cacophony”*, Policy Brief) found that *“Europe’s*

*defence ambitions are crippled by the lack of a common strategic outlook. Most EU member states have a national security strategy; but most of these documents are incoherent, derivative, devoid of the sense of a common European geostrategic situation, and often long out-of-date”.*

That is why organizations like NATO and European Union play such an important role – they internalize security dilemmas and challenges and make conflict too onerous to be realistically taken into consideration, at least until now, by decision makers. Absent such harmonizing devices, small and medium states would be in a state of permanent anxiety or conflict, making them easier prey for patient powers. The West failed in engaging the Russian Federation through this approach, both for subjective and objective reasons.

Moreover, we clearly need a broader approach, already recognized by some time by these organizations. NATO explicitly states, in its “*Strategic Concept*”, that “*key environmental and resource constraints, including health risks, climate change, water scarcity and increasing energy needs will further shape the future security environment in areas of concern to NATO and have the potential to significantly affect NATO planning and operations*”. And this is just the tip of the iceberg: “*instability or conflict beyond NATO borders can directly threaten Alliance security, including by fostering extremism, terrorism, and trans-national illegal activities such as trafficking in arms, narcotics and people*”.

But a Wilton Park report released in March 2014, “*NATO’s post 2014 strategic narrative*”, also emphasized the failings of NATO itself, which, as an organization, suffers from too much political, historic and economic baggage to be easily adaptable to the shifting times. Even when NATO decided to pursue new missions other than National defence, crises such as those in Georgia and Ukraine proved that territorial defence is as relevant as it has ever been, especially in Eastern Europe, and that NATO’s evolution did not take into account

the shifting of the means of conflict towards hybrid and asymmetric dimensions. Foreign Affairs wrote, in May 2014, that “*the Alliance drifted from its core mission and the world is paying the price*”. The report highlighted the over-exploitation of the US security premium by NATO nations, setting them up for rude awakenings and significant political risk should the American appetite for garrisoning the world ever fade, but also the profound gap between the political narrative and the strategic reality within NATO. This feeds into issues such as doubting the utility of the Alliance, undermining the legitimacy of the use of force or threat of force, and also explaining the importance of the Alliance to the publics of the Member States.

How does Romania fit into this complicated security environment? Romania’s National Defence Strategy (2015), a constitutionally mandated document, points to NATO as the guarantor of Romania’s integrity and sovereignty. The political robustness of the Alliance is key to its ability to act towards the defence of its constituents when prompted, within a reasonable timeframe. Romania is right to be weary of NATO’s capability to respond to new forms of warfare, or to even recognize it as such, as well as to muster the political capital necessary to mount an appropriate response given some sort of rapid “*fait accompli*”, such as Georgia, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine and Syria.

At the same time, Romania is a key NATO Member, because of its strategic positioning in the Black Sea region, controlling the mouths of the Danube which constitute a gateway to the heartland of Europe. Its presence in a challenging security environment inevitably colours Romania’s perception of geopolitical issues in the Black Sea and of the importance and attention it should be afforded due to its proximity to regional conflict areas such as Transnistria, Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula. Moreover, like all Black Sea players, Romania is aware not just of the complexities of the region, including the continued relevance of pre-World War 2 agreements such as the Montreux Treaty, but also its wider potential to act as a corridor of insecurity or opportunity for

other regions, such as the Caspian space. And the potential security threats come not just from state actors, but also from non-state actors and other sources, running the gamut from environmental factors to organized crime, extremism, terrorism, nuclear proliferation and others.

With this in mind, Romania's security perspective on the Black Sea is necessarily complex, but hinges on a few, fundamental, objectives:

- Contributing to the proper governance of the Black Sea's myriad risks, including through institutional construction and cooperation efforts for collective problem solving;
- Minimizing Romania's exposure to threats from the region and maintaining the viability of its economic and infrastructural ties to the rest of the world through it;
- Managing the renewed assertiveness of Russia, whose actions in Crimea have placed it, after almost a quarter of a century, once again on the border of Romania;
- Managing the effect of the nexus of risks in the Black Sea on Romania's interest in the stability, security and eventual Western orientation of Ukraine and, especially, Moldova.

### **Russia at the gates?**

The Russian Federation was once labelled „*a strategic partner to the EU*” and was the beneficiary of special accommodation of its interests on the part of NATO, also in an institutional form, but is now considered by some „*a strategic problem*” in important aspects. And others, like the former Swedish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Karl Bildt, even call it now „*a strategic adversary*”. We may quote the president of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who qualified it as „*an aggressive revanchist power*” that, according to The Wall Street Journal, „*makes the unthinkable thinkable*”. The Estonian president considered that predictability in the behaviour of actors in international relations is the most important thing for the global security. He has also memorably endorsed a proactive stance on strengthening the legitimate framework of international governance, by saying, with respect to the difficulties in

reforming former Communist countries, that *“one can boil a fish tank and turn it into fish soup, but not the other way around”*.

Russia’s newfound assertiveness is concurrent with a crisis of cooperation within the European Union and NATO, where the divergent interests and perspectives of its members render the organization unable to meaningfully act in a collective manner on the various issues and crises that have been associated with Russia’s re-emergence of power in its *“near abroad”*. Part of this incapacity is the product of excellent diplomacy at multiple levels on the part of Russia, but another is the natural drift encountered in long-running organizations whose members differ substantially in resources, security profiles and geopolitical outlook. Germany and France would rather maintain favourable trade links and other commercial opportunities (including in the area of arms’ exports) than risk them based on the perennial fears of former Communist nations towards Russia. It should not be forgotten that the long-running Franco-Russian deal for the purchase of top of the line Mistral ships went on even after the threat to NATO countries and partners became apparent. Great Britain would not risk its Russian inflows of capital and other opportunities. Even after such fears were partially realized, the allure of the status quo has kept a decisive response from being issued.

Answering the security needs of the Eastern members of NATO would also require shifting the organization eastwards, in a manner that would be directly opposite to the long-running policies of accommodation with Russia that saw a NATO-Russia Council in operation. Changing this has already started, but the process takes time and might even be a decades-long process, subject to many political risks along the way. A useful element to remember is the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, by which NATO gained Russia’s consent for former Communist and USSR nations to join NATO in exchange for the *“three NOs”*, that NATO had *“no intentions, no plans and no reason”* to place significant military assets, including especially tactical nuclear weapons, in Central

and Eastern Europe. NATO kept its promise, and left CEE Member States security to the guarantees of Article 5. At the time, it was thought to be a useful compromise between Russia's historical sense of physical insecurity, brought on by repeated invasions along favourable European corridors, and the impassioned pleas of the former Communist nations themselves for a new security paradigm that would maintain their independence and sovereignty.

A report by CEPA (the Center for European Policy Analysis in Washington), which was published before the current resettlement of forces in the region, highlighted the depth to which NATO's presence in CEE countries was mostly a legalistic and organizational affair:

- Of 28 NATO installations, only 5 were located in CEE, none of which were of higher tier;
- Of 66,217 U.S. forces in Europe (arguably the principal NATO forces), 66,081 were located in Western Europe and 136 only were located in CEE member states. There were more U.S. forces in the Netherlands than in all CEE nations combined;
- Of 200 non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, none were located in CEE states;
- Less than 10% (around 300.000) of NATO troops were located in CEE (basically, only the militaries of the CEE countries) and had neither the numbers, the training nor the materiel and technology to resist a threat to the National territory;
- Countries such as the Baltics, of particular interest to Russian security concerns, had no NATO contingency plans in place for a military conflict until 2009, despite entering the Alliance in 2004;
- Countries such as Poland had their first large-scale enhanced NATO exercise in 2013, Steadfast Jazz, with only 20.000 troops, despite Russia's yearly Zapad (West) exercises involving 150.000 soldiers and ending in mock nuclear attacks.

Following the commencement of the Ukraine Crisis, Alexander Vershbow, the Deputy Secretary-General of NATO, remarked that



current defensive measures do not invalidate the 1997 Treaty, while Russia's actions in Ukraine meant that "*we would be within our rights now*" to set aside the 1997 commitment by permanently stationing substantial numbers of combat troops in Poland or other NATO member nations in Eastern Europe.

The mixed blessing of the Ukraine Crisis is keenly felt in Romania. At once, it shattered whatever veneer of security Romania felt towards Russia and the current possibility of pursuing normal relations with its hegemonic neighbour under the protection of NATO. At the same time, it injected some much needed urgency in the Romanian political body and the security institutions regarding, on the one hand, the new facets of warfare, and, on the other hand, the importance of properly funding and equipping the Armed Forces. Romania, until recently, was far from the only country in the Alliance or even Eastern Europe to neglect military spending as a percentage of GDP, even when that is made even more important by the low absolute values of the budgets that would entail. Of Eastern European countries, only Poland and Estonia managed close to around 2% military spending on GDP, and, of the whole of the Alliance, only the US and the UK managed to spend more than 2% of GDP.

While Estonia was quick to publish reports on the responsiveness of its armed forces in case of attack or on its vulnerability to hybrid warfare, it was Romania that felt the largest change in its geopolitical circumstance. Once the Crimean Peninsula came under the control of the Russian Federation, its assigned Exclusive Economic Zone also came under Russian control. But the Western boundary of that particular area is Romania's own Exclusive Economic Zone. It might not seem like much, but, for the first time since Moldova exited the USSR, Romania was once again a direct neighbour to Russia, a realization whose symbolism sent ripples throughout the society and its security decision makers.

Romania participated in the Whales Summit with a clearly defined set

of principles and positions, which not only reflected increased concerns regarding Romania's exposure to forms of warfare not necessarily covered by Article 5, but also wider geopolitical implications of Russian moves. One of these points was regarding The Republic of Moldova, whose perennial oscillation between East and West was linked not only with the situation in Ukraine, but also that in Transnistria. Should a stronger Russian play for the settlement of the Transnistrian issue have been attempted, it would most likely have involved a federal or confederal arrangement with Moldova and its Găgăuzia Region, which would then ensure a veto over any Moldovan ambitions towards the West. This solution was explicitly rejected by Romania as being detrimental to its security interests and the long term interests of Moldova itself and the perspective of further Russian geopolitical interest in the so-called Novorossiia maritime portion of Ukraine would automatically impact Moldova, its conflict with Transnistria and Romanian security.

The Black Sea, itself, is a "*canary in a coal mine*" for Russian ambitions in the surrounding region. Russia is investing in renewing its Black Sea fleet (with a new very silent submarine added recently), in expanding its secondary military harbor at Novorossiysk, in testing new military equipment and testing new doctrines for hybrid and asymmetric warfare. Slowly but steadily, it is reestablishing its zone of influence and is turning the Black Sea (and the Azov Sea) into a "*mare nostrum*", as evidenced by the reach of its missile systems placed on the "*unsinkable aircraft carrier*" of Crimea.

### **China and the Black Sea**

As the United States of America and the Russian Federation before it, China is already a European power. It was neither a surprise, nor an unwelcome move, from the Romanian perspective, that the Chinese authorities sent two military ships to visit the Romanian port of Constanța and the Ukrainian port of Odessa in August 2012. A new visit in September 2015, by the two guided missile frigates, the Linyi and the Weifang, proved to have an even greater symbolism for China's

new confidence and the global nature of its interests, even though an American-style capacity for global power projection is still a long way into the future. According to the new foreign policy under President Xi Jinping, “*China has articulated numerous goals for shaping the global and regional orders and for defending its core interests*”. In May 2015, the Chinese media announced that nine Russian and Chinese vessels executed naval exercises in the Black Sea, near Novorossiysk. The formal objective was that the drills “*clearly demonstrate that both countries will work with each other to safeguard peace and post-war international order*”. The Black Sea exercises were the farthest ones from home ever held by the Chinese Navy.

It is important to take in consideration the position of China regarding the United States’ position of global leadership. Vice-Prime Minister Wang Yang made a remark in Chicago in January 2015 that “*it is the United States that leads the world ... China does not have any ideas or capabilities to challenge the leading role of the United States*”. This did not stop President Xi from also calling for “*a new type of Great Power relationship*”, a paradigm which would see the US’ costly global hegemony maintained for the foreseeable future, while enabling Chinese dominance in the area it views as its natural sphere of influence. The very nature of China’s military build-up, with the exception of symbolically charged investments such as aircraft carriers, highlights a defensive approach focused on regional dominance and denial of other forces, as opposed to the vigorous and long-term power projection capabilities espoused by the Americans.

Chinese interests in the Black Sea are mostly in connection with the new regional cooperation networks proposed by President Xi in autumn 2013: the “*Silk Road Economic Belt*” and the “*Maritime Silk Road*”, brought together under the “*Belt and Road*” initiative, which can be interconnected in the Black Sea enlarged region, in the context of deeper EU-China cooperation, including the accommodation with the Junckers Plan.

The Black Sea space is also a key maritime coordinate for the 16+1 Initiative launched by China with the participation of 11 European Union member states and another 5 European countries in the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia). The Initiative is slated to have multiple areas of cooperation, but the economic dimension is a principal one, since, from the perspective of enhancing Chinese trade with Europe, the only low hanging fruit left in the region are the Central and Eastern European countries. This means that the 16+1 will be linked to the “Belt and Road” initiative. Romania has been promoting its capacity to provide a useful link not only between these initiatives, but also with the Danube Macro-region Strategy of the European Commission, meant to holistically develop this strategic corridor. Romania’s strategic position at the link between the Danube and the Black Sea, providing a potential gateway to Central Europe that is currently underutilized, is being promoted to Chinese authorities as an important opportunity. The fact that 12 of the Danube Strategy countries are also members of the 16+1 Initiative underlines the synergies which are possible.

In the long run, this will attract more Chinese trade through the Black Sea towards, among others, the largest Black Sea port, Constanţa, and river ports such as Galaţi, with multimodal transport options for a connection with Duisburg (Germany), the Western end of the strategic railroad starting in Chongqing (China). At the same time, new connections to Moldova and Ukraine can be harnessed for Chinese economic interests.

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<sup>1</sup> The Martens Centre, following EU and UN practice, uses the provisional reference ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’



*Map of some of the possibilities for multimodal transport to and from Romania, courtesy of Metaltrade SRL*

This means that China will have become co-interested in the stability and safety of the Black Sea region, in order to protect its trade and investments. For Romania, the possibility of offsetting the security calculus of potential disruptors of regional peace through the purely economic interests of a new power player in the region should be very attractive, especially since the limitations on foreign military presence in the Black Sea placed by the Montreux Treaty safeguarded by Turkey means that its indispensable security ally, the US, is severely constrained in the region. At the same time, China possesses other forms of leverage over actors such as Russia, which it currently chooses not to employ, despite the damage to its economic interests because of the conflict in Ukraine.

Finally, another avenue of Chinese interest in the Black Sea is its leading role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which,

through Russia, has its border with NATO on the Black Sea. In the long run, as the SCO's institutional development begins to match its ambitions, we might start to see further Chinese interest in the Black Sea area as the natural friction point, other than the Pacific, between NATO and SCO. Here, too, Romania can welcome China as a moderating influence on the established regional powers and also provide a trusted communications link between NATO, EU and SCO, based on the goodwill generated through cooperation with China on its various economic initiatives. Such a role for Romania has already been field-tested, when a Romanian Think-Tank, the EURISC Foundation, organized, with the German Marshall Fund's Black Sea Trust, the First NATO/EU-SCO Think Tank Meeting in Bucharest, in September 2013. The Conference was attended by leading Think-Tanks from West and East and sought to bridge a significant gap in communications between NATO, EU and SCO, by fostering objective discussions without political sensibilities between specialists. This was especially important given the constant refrain of impending and inevitable rivalry with which the mainstream media qualified NATO and SCO relations. The security issues affecting the Black Sea space, extended towards the Caspian and Central Asia as a corridor for energy, organized crime and instability, were a highlight of the discussions and revealed not just the underlying Romanian security concerns, but also the extent to which many were shared by non-partners.

### **Iran: the submarine coming to the surface**

The title of this section is taken from a magazine article published by the authors in Romania and then adapted as an essay in a forthcoming book on Romanian strategic interests. The rise of Iran is expected to take place in different phases, each one "*creating waves*" for the states around it and beyond. Should the nuclear deal proceed as planned and result in the lifting of sanctions on Iran, then the country's innate advantages (young, educated population, diverse industry, significant infrastructures, extensive oil and gas reserves and strategic positioning

straddling the whole region from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea) will give it a strong claim to regional pre-eminence that can only be kept in check by Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Such a balance of powers may even be what the United States intended, in addition to empowering a certain ally in the fight against the terrorist group Daesh.

From the perspective of the Black Sea, the rise of Iran constitutes a potential, but unexpected, transformation of geopolitical circumstances. The Black Sea and the Caspian Sea can even be considered to be a single geopolitical space or corridor, to which some experts would also affix the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. In this space, a new paradigm of energy transfer towards Europe can be considered, bolstered by Iranian reserves and potential for financing infrastructure, changing the entire energy landscape of Europe at least partially away from its current Russian dependence.

Iran is expected to develop itself from a producer of insecurity to a provider of security, especially with regards to the fight against Daesh (a source of humanitarian concerns, refugee flows but also terrorist infiltrators heading towards Europe and even the Black Sea region), but also in other respects. For instance, Iran is an important transit country for drugs on their way to European markets from the fields of Afghanistan. Despite its troubles with the international community, Iran has continued to fight against the scourge of trafficking, suffering 4,000 dead and 10,000 injured among its police force in a decade long struggle against traffickers. The Black Sea is a nexus for traffickers of people, drugs, weaponry, forbidden technology and contraband goods. Having Iran as an upstream partner available for direct cooperation in the governance of the risks posed by organized crime to the safety, security and integrity of states, peoples and institutions can make a significant difference in eventual security outcomes.

### **Thinking the unthinkable**

Romania finds itself between three instabilities. First of all, there is the instability in Ukraine, where the post-war international order has

been undermined to a significant extent by unilateral Russian action. The proximity of potential combat areas to Romania is a source of risks, but there is also the possibility of refugee flows, or a breakdown of law and order in areas not under current dispute, whose instability may spill over into Romania or Moldova. At the same time, the hybrid warfare in Ukraine has already claimed the Crimean Peninsula for Russia, moving the potential hegemon closer to Romania, thereby bringing both Romania and Moldova closer to its orbit and its span of interest. One can even say that Russia has gained another “*unsinkable aircraft carrier*”, whereas, until now, it only had Kaliningrad which deserved this moniker.

Secondly, there are the conflicts of Syria and Iraq where, until recently, the possibility of local instabilities reaching all the way to Eastern Europe in effects and consequences was discounted.

The third instability is in the Western Balkans, where institutional development and reform is hobbled by pervasive organized crime, the recent refugee flows are placing extreme pressures on weak states and Russian overtures are gaining potential partners as opposed to the fickleness and perceived crisis of the European Union and NATO.

There are also a few more areas that should be kept under scrutiny. The Greek and Syrian connections to Russia are growing rapidly and it will be a future challenge to gauge to what extent Russia will exploit its newfound strength in the Eastern Mediterranean. To a certain extent, from the Romanian perspective, it can translate into a lesser American presence in the Black Sea and a sort of encirclement which is morally detrimental to the pursuit of greater Western presence in Eastern Europe. It should also be noted that Hungary is cultivating a special connection to Moscow. Finally, Turkey is undergoing a geopolitical shift towards vying for hegemony in the Middle East, as opposed to its prior European orientation. Its position as a NATO Member is of the utmost importance, being the gatekeeper of the Black Sea, yet it has also parlayed its regional ambitions into opportunities for cooperation



in the Black Sea with Russia, although Russia's intervention in Syria is set to cool that relationship. Regardless, Turkey is its own player in the Black Sea and its political evolution and pivot towards the South might make it a wild card in terms of contributing to collective security governance in the region.

To illustrate the great variety of challenges that can arise in the Black Sea region, one can perform a mental exercise regarding an issue that may seem trivial, should it come up, but harbours the possibility for significant geopolitical risk and escalation:

Romania had a disagreement with Ukraine for a number of years regarding the extent of the Exclusive Economic Zones of the two countries in the vicinity of Serpent Island, an uninhabited island too small to even have a water source that has been disputed by Romania and Ukraine, but now belongs to Ukraine. They decided to submit to the ruling of the International Court of Justice in The Hague regarding the settling of the border, and the disagreement has been considered closed. Romania is now concerned because the changes in the status of the Crimean Peninsula place Russia at the edge of the Romanian Exclusive Economic Zone. Serpent Island and Ukraine's awarded water area (plus undersea exploitation rights) are nearby but not yet claimed by Russia. Given the Russian penchant for a "*fait accompli*", it would not be farfetched to consider how it could, at one point in the future, try to obtain this island, which had been the property of the Russian Empire and the USSR at various points in history. For instance, just as a scenario, one can imagine an emergency helicopter landing due to a "*malfuction*" which could disgorge enough soldiers to overpower whatever troops Ukraine maintains on the island and capture the buildings with which Ukraine justified its sovereignty over the area. Then, more soldiers follow to rescue the first. The island can serve as a useful staging point for certain military assets (sensors, anti-air and anti-maritime defense) and presents a useful vantage point for controlling the mouths of the Danube, which are nearby. In addition

to hobbling Ukraine's remaining maritime access, Russia would also gain the Exclusive Economic Zone around it and may even reopen the disputes regarding the apportioning of the area that had been settled by international authorities. Romania would have few recourses faced with such tactics, since Russia is a master practitioner of "lawfare", the art of using international law and institutions in a way other than they were intended in order to reach a strategic goal, hobble a rival or generate propaganda. Lawfare is especially amenable to issue regarding disputed territories, as the disputes in the South China Sea can attest.

Of course, Romania should keep in mind the various other security threats in the region, including transborder organized crime, which we presented beforehand and is a special threat because of its potential to compromise people and undermine institutions, leaving states vulnerable to other threats, but also the possibility of proliferation of nuclear technology and materials through the Black Sea space. According to a report by the EU Non-proliferation Consortium, over 630 nuclear trafficking incidents were recorded in the Black Sea states between 1991 and 2012, five of which involved highly enriched Uranium. A report by Kadir Has University in Turkey published in July 2015 also stated that 5 of the 7 most recent nuclear material trafficking incidents took place in the Black Sea.

Many of the security issues facing the Black Sea can be traced to a lack of institutional development in the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Communism. Lingering anxieties and a lack of leadership and institutional capacities in the Black Sea states stunted the development of a new security architecture and other arrangements for handling collective issues regarding the environment, economic development and so on, while recent tensions guarantee that this situation will continue for a while longer. Given the importance of the Black Sea, the variety of hard and soft security issues and the ability to act as a conduit for the transmission of risks, vulnerabilities and threats from outside the region as well, the absence of such development

is a serious issue.

In terms of cooperation, Romania is well aware of the potential and successes of other sub-regional groups, including for defence and even among NATO Member States – The Visegrad Group, NORDEFECO, Benelux and others prove that there is potential in such arrangement. Romanian security specialists are proposing to take into consideration a potential cooperation between Poland, Romania and Bulgaria (POLROB), which are very important as NATO countries, to enhance security in Eastern Europe and the wider Black Sea region.

### **Final words**

Romania views the Black Sea, along with its Danube space extension, as one of the main coordinates for its geopolitical interests and for its security. The Black Sea space holds tremendous economic, energy and geopolitical potential, while also presenting a challenging security environment. Most eyes are set towards Russia and it is true that the latest development in the region have been greeted with unease in Romania, especially the symbolic new proximity to Russia that the Crimean annexation entailed. At the same time, it is difficult to ignore the potential of the Black Sea as a vector for threats from other regions. And it is also important to consider the interest and potential of non-Black Sea states to effect change in the region through their activities. We have presented China and Iran as possible Black Sea actors, one directly and the other indirectly. Last, but not least, the underdeveloped state of institutions to handle collective security issues has enabled the rise of other threats in the Black Sea, such as transborder organized crime and even nuclear proliferation. These, too, must factor into the Romanian security calculus, which is inseparable from the geopolitical issues in the region.

Representatives of EURISC Foundation have been present for discussions on the occasion of the 4th Moscow International Security Conference in April 2015. The subject of discussions were on security issues, on credibility and so on. General Gerasimov, the Chief of Staff

for the Russian Army, understands that regional solutions require international dialogue, reminding listeners of the last sentence of President Putin's open letter in The New York Times on September 11th, 2013: "*We must forget the language of force and return to the path of diplomatic settlement*". Despite these encouraging declarations, the reality in 2015 has been far from this ideal, and it is to be hoped that the main security actors at regional and global levels will find the means and the willingness to cooperate to pass over the use of force in favour of diplomacy.

*Dr. Liviu Mureşan, Director, EURISC Foundation, Romania and Alexandru Georgescu, PhD student*

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*Sergey Utkin\**

## **RUSSIA'S PERCEPTION OF NATO AND EU POLICIES IN THE BLACK SEA REGION**

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak at this very distinguished event. We cannot discuss what is happening in the Black Sea region without referring to the crisis that people use different definitions for. I know that in Ukraine many are unhappy when it is called “the Ukraine crisis”; if I use this definition, please do not take it as a sign that I blame the Ukrainians for it, it is more that the developments happened around Ukraine. I agree that we have to look at the developments in the region in a historical perspective but if we just look at different eras in the relations between countries in the region, it doesn't necessarily give us a clue as to how to go forward. There were significant changes in each historical era, we saw how sometimes these changes happened in a very abrupt manner and you couldn't predict that they would happen.

One of these changes was definitely the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist system in general, which brought new realities in the Black Sea area. If you judge from the perspective of the Cold War, what you had before the end of the Cold war in the region was one NATO country and the rest were a socialist bloc, which could control the area easily. Now we have a completely different situation. We have a number of NATO countries, EU countries, NATO and EU aspirants and countries who want to join these Western alliances. And this makes Russia kind of isolated. At least this is how Russia perceives itself. If we judge in terms of how institutional structures develop in the region, we see that all the countries in the region are deeply related to the West through membership in, or some additional agreements with, Western organizations. And you have a tough choice for Russia or at least for its leaders. You can either follow the same route and cooperate with

Western institutions while bearing in mind that they will always remain Western and you will not play a crucial part in their decision-making. It will not lead to Russia having veto rights in these institutions, but you can draw some benefits from cooperating with these institutions. I was always in favor of this option, that even without being involved 100% in the decision-making, we can formulate the decisions that could be adopted jointly by the EU and Russia, NATO and Russia, and that would be a good thing for the Black Sea region. Unfortunately, this option is practically excluded in the political situation we have now. Therefore, in this political era in which we currently find ourselves, it is useless to discuss this kind of optimistic options. We have to discuss the political realities and this is that Russia is an unhappy giant, unhappy with the developments that happened between the countries in the region and Western institutions. What complicates things further is that we have a very different perception of the political map. If you take any Russian officially published map, you will find Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, and Crimea as part of Russia - and it's not just the fact that each of these cases represents a very difficult international problem and a matter for serious negotiations and you don't really have a lot of reasons to believe that these negotiations will drive us towards a positive result, but it is also about the dynamics. These changes in terms of officially recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Crimea as part of Russia, this happened in historical terms in a very short time. This makes many people in the West and in the Black Sea area think that the Russian approach is to consider borders on the move. Officially, this kind of concern is refuted by Russia. The Russian officials say that they reacted to external challenges when they had no other option. Of course, this kind of explanation is not well received in the West and it does not change the negative perception of Russian policies which you can find in the West. There are more and more political issues that divide the West and Russia. It is easier to recognize the independence of a state or the change

in existing borders than to withdraw the recognition afterwards. The facts that were established by the Russian government will be very hard to change even years from now. This is something we should bear in mind. What could be a driving force towards a positive change is another kind of very basic interest that states in the region certainly have, namely trade. They trade with each other and could potentially get a lot of benefit from mutual economic cooperation and could make them think that it is probably not a good opportunity to get in ever increasing confrontation. We should probably look for cooperative solutions. Unfortunately, trade interests are not strong enough in the Black Sea area. In most cases, the trade relationships between Russia and other countries in the region are not of vital importance for Russia, so you can sacrifice them for other reasons. In the Ukrainian crisis, the Russian leadership was ready to sacrifice quite a number of its basic economic interests for the reason of geopolitical gains. There is a greater possibility of having a spillover that goes from the geopolitical rivalry to the economic field than having a spillover in the opposite direction from economic cooperation to political stabilization. One of the unfortunate developments that we have already had in the context of the crisis in the economic field is that the economic relations between Russia and Ukraine are on the downturn for obvious reasons and it looks like both Russia and Ukraine think it would be a good thing, if they had no kind of economic interdependence, which would make their relations even more dangerous. If you have no economic interdependence, you can play dangerous political games. On the other hand, you have a different example of development of Russia's relation with one of the countries in the region, which presents a different example. I mean Russia's relations with Turkey. By many in Russia, Turkey is seen as a hope, I would say. They look at the political developments inside Turkey, they seen that the West is often very critical of these developments, and they put an opposite sign to the West. Russians think that Turkey is becoming more independent from

the West. It is abandoning the fruitless dream of EU membership. It is aiming at playing more on its own rather than as a part of Western alliances, this is a perspective for the Kremlin. This is one of the unknowns in the region. We don't know what the role of Turkey will be. Indeed, it is up to Turkey to decide its foreign policy course and its relations with Russia. We know that Crimea issue is not completely foreign for Turkey. They have an ethnic and historical relationship with Crimean Tatars and offered a place for the recent Crimean Tatar congress to be held and, at the same time, they managed to avoid a direct clash with Russia on this very painful issue. This is also very telling of the possible developments of relations in the Black Sea area in the future. Eventually, I think we are indeed in a situation, which has already been mentioned in the first session, where we can choose between rebuffing the Russian claims in the region and on a broader scale in relations to the West, or you can try to somehow accommodate the Russian concerns. The tricky point here is that the actions that you think should rebuff the Russian aggressive moves may eventually lead to regional stalemate, which will be even worse than the situation we have today. Indeed, we have an increasing number of military activities. We have more military exercises, ideas of how to install more military infrastructure in the region and both sides see it as a response to the policies of the other. The result will be unfortunate for the region - you will have an arms race, a definite lack of confidence building measures and incident-prevention mechanisms. It is probably one of the things to work on. One of the possibilities to find a middle way between accommodating Russian policies and rebuffing them is to work on those problems. One of the possibilities for achieving this is through the NATO-Russia Council, which got stalled because of the crisis. The work of this institution has been postponed. If we manage to put a different tune in NATO-Russia relations, this could be beneficial for other areas, as I mentioned in the spillover example. In the eyes of the Kremlin, the relations with NATO play the role of a locomotive. If you have these relations deteriorating,



it is not helpful in terms of ensuring the stability of the region. Probably the key towards getting on a better track is precisely in the NATO-Russia relations. I want to finish with one thing. There was an idea that one of the strategies for the West could be to sit out Putin. However, it is more likely for Putin to sit out some of Western leaders as we might have him for another 10 years or more. The more optimistic strategy is not currently on the agenda. You have to limit the damage. You have to ensure that no incidents happen between Russia and NATO. You must think of what NATO and Russia could refrain from doing, but you may not hope for an overwhelming solution in the foreseeable future that will solve the Crimean and Ukrainian issues and all other issues that divide Russia and the West. If we concentrate on those concrete issues, we will be on the right track. If we try to elaborate a comprehensive solution, we will achieve nothing and we'll let things deteriorate even more.

*\* This material is prepared based on the audio-recorded conference presentation by  
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*Kai-Olaf Lang\**

**EU AND NATO ENLARGEMENT POLICIES AND  
NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY IN THE LIGHT OF THE  
UKRAINE CRISIS**

I would like to expand our debate into a bit broader context. I would basically like to make three steps: give an overview of Russia's interests and the broader security framework, talk about EU objectives and interests, and in the end I would like to reflect upon what this means about Black Sea cooperation.

I would like to remind you of some of the important drivers and factors of Russia, which will probably remain important in the upcoming period. There are three important clusters in this regard: the domestic aspect in Russia, the fear of color revolutions or the "Maidan trauma" as I would call it, and the idea of reunification of the Russian world. What is more important for our debate is the foreign policy dimension. The third element is the reassessment of Russian elites and leadership of the role of the EU in the modernization of the country. For the Russian leadership Europe is not the indispensable partner for Russia's modernization anymore.

But what is the EU/West angle? I believe there are four aspects, which are determinants for EU behavior. It is the EU, not NATO, which has been the more powerful actor in the post-Soviet space, which is a paradox because de facto what the EU did in terms of Neighborhood policy was rather a low profile, it wasn't very enthusiastic but it had an effect or at least a potential impact. And Russia assessed this process as a critical junction. The second important aspect is the refusal of the EU to play a strategic role in the post-Soviet space. The third aspect is the US strategic negligence in this part of the world since 2009 or so. The events would have developed differently, if there was an interest from the US administrations in this region. The EU has not been able to

provide security for its partners and to protect them from The Eastern Partnership, and Russian intervention has caused uncertainty in these countries.

What is the bottom line of this? If we look at the Ukraine crisis, we see the stalemate of a confrontation of soft and hard power. Russia obviously has the escalation dominance especially using military power but it has no capability to re-integrate countries like Ukraine. On the other hand, the EU has sort of limited attractiveness as long as it is not willing to give full membership prospects to these countries, and it has a fragile strength of unity, which we are witnessing in the context of sanction policy. And the EU has lost its transformative power. This is the stalemate we see.

What are the scenarios for the future? The EU should discuss this against the background of its own interests. What does the EU want? I think the EU wants basically three things: ensure the right to decide of its direct neighbors, uphold cooperative relations with Russia and re-establish a rule-based order, which would help to reconstruct predictability.

How could this be achieved? There are three basic options and two of them are not really feasible. The first option which is not feasible is to have a kind of “great bargain” between the big powers such as France and Germany with Russia to the detriment of Ukraine. This will not be in line with the EU’s basic interests, because it restricts the right to free strategic decisions. The second option would be a tough policy of containment, but there is no consensus in the West and there is no doubt that it would be dangerous and would block the re-establishment of collaborative relations with Russia. So what will probably happen is some sort of “cooperative confrontation”, which I think means for the EU an increased resilience policy, which will include things like improved economic assistance for neighboring countries, and better involvement of societies and elites, and it has to find new ways to engage countries like Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan. As of Russia

in this scenario of “cooperative confrontation” there will be areas with reduced cooperation and there will be sectors like energy, which will more or less continue as they have done until now with some efforts on the side of the EU to improve their diversification, like with the Energy Union.

The question which we have to ask ourselves is how to organize dialogue with Russia, what is the place to organize negotiations? The Normandy format is not a tragedy but the real risk for this format is not a complete failure of Minsk, but rather a partial or superficial success of the Minsk process. If German and French leaders come to the agreement that Minsk helps to deescalate tension, this means that Russia has a format which is acknowledged by Europe and there is a model which helps to hammer out an agreement. Maybe we should use other countries like Armenia, where this discussion is not so politicized, in order to find a sort of way how to make close trade relations with Russia compatible with the EU and share that we are ready to be pragmatic with Russia.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a few observations on the Black Sea region. I think what is happening is that 10 years ago the Black Sea region was seen as a region with potential for cooperation with all the emerging frameworks and structures. This cooperation was to be strengthened when we talk about things like connectivity, trade and economy, people to people contacts, justice and home affairs, domestic security, etc. It was more about low politics. From the point of the EU, the Black Sea region and its cooperation had to have two functions. On one hand, it could have been a regional expression of the broader EU-Russia relations. On the other hand, it was an attempt to overcome diversity resulting from membership in it on the basis of different regularities - full-fledged members, accession countries, association track candidates and Russia, in order to create interdependence. This has changed with all the events we have had in the past year and it's rather a region where we need more management of conflict and where there is a highly fragmented cooperation. We have military confrontation in and

around the region, we have several frozen conflicts around the Black Sea and we have an unfinished project.

What I would propose is a two-track approach from the EU like we have on the Baltic Sea, where we have two levels of cooperation: The Council of Baltic Sea states and the Nordic Dimension (a meeting point for the EU and Russia). Both of these formats are rather stagnated at this point. And there is the EU Baltic Sea strategy, which is a framework for the EU member states in the region. The two track approach is suitable for the region.

*\* This material is prepared based on the audio-recorded conference presentation by*

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## **THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN UKRAINE: CAPABILITIES AND LIMITS**

Let me start with some general statements:

1. In today's globalised world an international cooperation provides opportunities for every state to take part in addressing common challenges. A membership or other forms alike provide a state with a toolbox for strengthening its position on the international arena and exerting influence on regional and global affairs.

2. An international cooperation is also a way to compensate the lack of national resources (financial, economic, political, military etc.). Being an equal member of the international community is supposed to offer additional capabilities for national governments to deal with their domestic and external issues, especially for small and mid-sized countries.

3. At least two preconditions are needed to enjoy the opportunities provided through an international cooperation: first, is an effectiveness of the interaction with and within an organisation and, second, is an effectiveness of the international organisation as such and its ability to fulfil its primary mission.

The on-going so-called "Ukrainian crisis" has not only dramatically changed the regional security landscape, but has also presented one of the most significant challenges to the existing global security system.

These days, Ukraine has a dramatic opportunity to learn very practical lessons about international organisations: their capabilities and their limits. One can hardly imagine more difficult circumstances for a country under attack in which Ukraine found itself back in February 2014. The then new Ukrainian Government having very limited means against the aggressor, immediately appealed for international assistance. After almost 18 month of confrontation it has become obvious that

Ukraine still exists largely due to the enormous and lasting international support.

From the very beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the global community – different international organisations and majority of states has been gradually dragged into the conflict. By using a definition of the “so-called” about the “Ukrainian crisis”, I would argue that this crisis has regional and global dimensions and should not be approached as a bilateral, let alone as an internal conflict.

Ukraine is broadly integrated in the system of regional and global organisations and participates in numerous regional and global security initiatives. Its membership in 75 international organisations proves intentions of the national government to be an active and responsible member of the international community. Just to mention, even today, 550 Ukrainian troops, 20 attack and transport helicopters are deployed abroad in different international peace-keeping operations.

It should be emphasised, that the majority of states and international organisations have sided with Ukraine by providing active moral, political and diplomatic, financial and technical assistance. Already on 27 March 2014, UN General Assembly adopted a resolution expressing support for “sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders”.

Ukraine was also supported by G7 members, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, European Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission. In numerous resolutions they condemned the aggression and demanded Russia to stop its unacceptable actions against Ukraine and against the global peace and stability.

Ukraine has also received considerable external financial, technical, humanitarian, advisory assistance from the West and international organisations. For example, in March 2014, the European Commission approved the €11.175 bln plan of assistance for Ukraine, opened up

its market for Ukrainian goods by implementing unilateral trade preferences. The European Union is also implementing a number of projects to support Ukrainian reforms, including the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine). NATO and its members have significantly increased the level of practical cooperation in every area under the existing partnership framework.

The IMF opened a two-year \$16.7 bln. credit line (stand-by) to restore the country's macroeconomic stability. The World Bank has provided a \$3.5 bln. loan in addition to a number of other projects (energy efficiency, urban infrastructure development, etc.).

In opposite, the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States was very reluctant to express its position and even refused to accept Ukraine's demand for conducting consultations regarding the conflict.

Among many international actors involved in the Ukrainian affairs nowadays, I will touch upon UN, the EU, NATO and OSCE – those four that, in my opinion, have played the most important role.

United Nations. The UN Country Team is represented by 16 funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other entities. In accordance to the Partnership Framework for 2012-2016, UN devoted \$133 million for economic growth and poverty reduction, social development, governance, Environment and Climate Change assistance programmes. The above mentioned priorities are still relevant, but the problems created by the conflict seems to demand significant amendments to the pre-war plans.

UN provides considerable humanitarian assistance. It is estimated that about five million people been affected by the conflict, incl. the most vulnerable two millions living in areas along the contact line, where aid organisations have been unable to operate due to insecurity and bureaucratic hurdles. Among 1.4 million IDPs 60% are elderly people and 13% are children. In accordance to the UN sources, since



21 July 2015, aid convoys have been unable to reach the area non-controlled by the Government due to the restriction imposed by the rebels. Had the UN been able to prevent or stop this conflict, this money would have been spent for solving many other – numerous and more urgent needs around the world.

Humanitarian and development assistance is very important and normally does not create big tensions among the main stakeholders in the UN. But, the main security mechanism of the international community – the United Nations Security Council – has been blocked by its permanent member, who pretends not to be the main troublemaker.

The European Union. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement is the legal basis and framework for EU-Ukraine relations, aiming at political association and economic integration. Both sides accepted mutual commitments to develop a close and lasting relationship based on common values. What is the most important – are the Ukrainian Government's commitments to fully implement democratic principles, rule of law, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The main role of the EU in Ukraine is not only to provide assistance in various areas, but also to maintain a positive external pressure on the national Government in order to meet its own commitments and to deliver what Ukrainian people need. The idea of becoming a part of Europe is widely supported by the Ukrainians (50+%) and has become a kind of the national interest.

In regard to the crisis, slowly but gradually the EU has developed its position towards the causes and parties of the conflict, introduced few stages of sanctions against the aggressor. However, any kind of the consistent strategy towards Russia or moreover a relevant and comprehensive European security strategy seems to be on the very early stage of development.

NATO. NATO-Ukraine relations have been through few ups and downs. In early 90s the newly independent Ukraine joined the North

Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991) and the Partnership for Peace programme (1994). In 1997 the parties signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership and established the NATO-Ukraine Commission. There are also permanent NATO missions in Kyiv – NATO Liaison Office and NATO Information and Documentation Centre.

Ukraine has both benefited and contributed to the cooperation being the only NATO partner who has participated in all NATO-led operations and missions.

In response to the conflict, NATO has reinforced its support for Ukraine giving priority to comprehensive security and defence sector reform, strengthening national capability to defend itself by providing a wide range of advisory, technical, financial assistance, conducting training and joint military exercises, establishing new trust funds.

Could NATO do more? Perhaps, yes, but not much. The Article 5 is not applied to non-member state as well as the “out-of-area operations” concept does not cover the areas of direct confrontation with Russia. However, being well aware of the main difference between an “ally” and a “partner” status, I would argue that had Finland or Sweden faced the same problem, NATO would have acted differently. Formalities, i.e. the formal membership, are as important as the informal links of solidarity and the logic of belonging to the same “club”.

By the way, the level of public support in Ukraine for possible NATO membership has increased from 20 to 50% over the last year. However, for the nearest future it is hardly possible expect any radical change of the existing partnership format.

OSCE. OSCE, which was traditionally criticised for lacking effective conflict resolution mechanisms, unexpectedly has become a major player in Ukraine-Russia conflict resolution. In March 2014 OSCE made a decision to deploy its Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine (excluding Crimea since the Russian delegation limited the geographical area of deployment and activities of the mission). The SMM currently consists of 500 civilian unarmed monitors from 40

States and the number can be increased up to 1000.

Also, in July 2014, the OSCE decided to deploy an “Observer Mission to the two Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk” at the Russian-Ukrainian border in response to a Russian invitation (15 observers).

At the beginning of the SMM operations a number of facts of the obvious misconduct and misinformation by some of the observers (not only representatives of the RF) were reported. There was a jock told by one Ukrainian soldier: “I want OSCE gays to be my neighbours. I can yell, listen loud music, use hand drill – they will notice nothing”.

I should say that now the regular SMM reports are probably as substantial as they can be taking into account the SMM mandate and the extremely dangerous environment of the area of operation. There are still a lot of critical comments about the SMM objectivity (impartiality and transparency) and effectiveness from both sides, but nevertheless the SMM has been playing a crucial role of an independent observer. It is hard to overestimate its value in this kind of conflict where the information warfare has been as powerful and destructive as the military hardware.

In addition to monitoring, OSCE is conducting a number of activities aimed at reconciliation, promoting national dialog, supporting reforms etc. Last, but not least OSCE has been facilitating the negotiations in Minsk formats.

In conclusion, it is beyond any doubt that the strong international reaction and active involvement have produced a tangible political and psychological pressure on the Kremlin leadership and has had a significant constraining effect. Without the international support Ukraine would not be able to resist against the multiple military and non-military challenges for almost 18 month of confrontation.

Nevertheless, regardless of all the efforts taken and measures applied by the international community, this crisis is still on the stage of development. No prospect for the reliable and realistic solution has

been achieved yet.

The most important is the fact that the United Nations as global security organisation and the OSCE as the regional one appeared to be unable to adequately and effectively respond to the aggression.

*Oleksiy Melnik, Co-director, Foreign Relations and International Security Programmes, Razumkov Centre, Ukraine*

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## *Ognyan Minchev\**

Ladies and gentleman I'm not a narrow specialist on security so I'll focus on the political prerequisites for establishing a more stable and secure situation in what we call the Black Sea region - even if we had a "region" in the beginning of the century when there was a common strategy or relatively integral strategy for transforming the region of the Black Sea and the post-Soviet countries into a community that can be anchored into the Euro-Atlantic mainstream, to the Euro-Atlantic security system. Many things have happened since then and we now have a disintegrated region which can hardly cope with the challenges of being a region both in terms of security and in terms of cooperation among the countries. So what kind of changes have taken place? We all know the empirical facts of what has happened in the last decade in the Black Sea Region. I would like to focus on the fact that in terms of institutional and international order we have had an evolution from this system or desired system of common security which was considered in the early 21st century - which was a part of the liberal idealistic perception from the first decade, after the collapse of the communist system - of the so called Kantian garden, where we would all be subjected to particular norms and values, and would be able to participate on an equal footing in systems of collective security and development. What we have encountered in the Black Sea Region after 9/11 2001 and after the Iraq war of 2003 is movement away from this Kantian garden of shared beliefs, values and principles into a new era of geopolitical competition and rivalry, which has come back to the Black Sea Region in particular, and which has created structural geopolitical competition that can be defined in the following terms. We have three basic actors – the West, the EU and the Atlantic Alliance. On the other hand, we have two major powers in the region which are aiming to restore a particular imperial or quasi-imperial state of their presence in the region. We have Russia, which completely gave up the opportunity to become a partner

of the European and Euro-Atlantic world, starting with the famous Putin speech in Munich from 2007 and going on the path which led the Kremlin regime to Georgia in 2008, and to Crimea and Ukraine in 2013-2014. We have a clear-cut imperial or quasi-imperial project of destabilizing the Eastern European periphery in order to restore a so-called sphere of influence, which means to serve the ambitions of Moscow for becoming the center of a new Eurasian Union or Eurasian quasi-empire. On the other hand, we have an evolution of Turkey in the post-Kemalist era, where we actually observe the transformation of this country from a country which has been firmly anchored into the Western security and international system in general, to a position in which an Islamist new Ottoman kind of regime is trying to frame the position of Turkey in quasi-imperial terms too. For the time being this ambition is being framed into a kind of soft formula of restoring the cultural realm of the Ottoman Empire. Although these are two quasi-imperial projects that are different by ambition and by presentation, they are manifesting themselves as clear challenges to the socio-political, economical and security model which the Western world is trying to offer the countries of the Black Sea region and the post-Soviet space in particular. Practically this kind of competition has drawn up into an open rivalry where we assess the position of the present Russian government with all the manifestations of power which I have mentioned.

What could we do from a perspective of strategy that could be designed by the EU and NATO? The first long-term security prerequisite for the Black Sea region is to preserve and safeguard the natural process of nation building which is taking place in the post-Soviet space and in the region in general. As we all know, the nation building process started in Paris in 1789 and continued for more than two centuries throughout Europe and throughout the world later on. The countries, the societies of the Soviet Union were the last ones after the collapse of the Soviet empire to enjoy the opportunity to engage in the process of nation building after the collapse of the USSR. That process was

underestimated and neglected by post-nationalist and post-modern Europe, which is focused on the more perspective agenda of unification, of creating a post-modern continent. But you can't skip the process of nation building that easily, because it is an integral part of modern development and the countries of the post-Soviet space need to enter the European and the Atlantic world of post modernity by generally covering all the steps of modern development which are necessary to create modern societies.

The basic purpose of the alternative coming from Moscow is to degenerate, to stop or weaken the process of nation building and creating responsible national elites, and reliable national institutions. All the processes of creating irresponsible oligarchies, which are depriving the newly created nations of the wealth they deserve, all the attempts to apply brutal force when those instruments of corruption and disintegration do not work practically shows that nation building is a very powerful enemy to all imperial or quasi-imperial projects that might emerge in the region of the Black Sea and the post-soviet region in general. This is why I think that the strategy to strengthen the nation building process in the countries around the Black Sea must include the creation of a stable environment.

How can we assist the process of nation building? This is a very important question, which is to be a topic for a separate discussion a very, very important discussion, yet I am going to say a few words about that. We are not having very admirable success in the nation building process throughout our region, neither the post-Soviet space nor in Southeastern Europe where old nations had to recover after half a century of Soviet domination. We don't have such remarkable success in the nation building process for many reasons, and one is particularly important. We are creating democratic systems without creating and having what the Germans call *Rechtsstaat* and what in the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition is called constitutional government. To practice democracy without such a government means to create a system of

controlled destabilization of society. The question is: who destabilizes and who controls the destabilization? The subject might change but you still have as a result an inert society and system that could be pushed in different directions and dimensions, because you have a democratic facade but you don't have the institutional backgrounds on which you can really practice not only democracy but a fully fledged national, political, economic cultural public life. So creating constitutional government, creating Rechtsstaat as the basis for further development of the democratic institutions is a very important emphasis of a strategy of the systems including in the security field. I quite actively monitored the developments of the South Caucasus and Georgia from 2004 and later on until probably 2012 and I myself observed the fact that many western representatives, in particular European representatives, strongly neglected the potential which the government of Georgia had for the establishing of that kind of constitutional government after the Rose revolution. President Saakashvili was criticized for being authoritarian, for being non-democratic, for suspending particular democratic rights and so on and so on, but he did not receive enough credit for establishing the essential basis for a long-term democratic development, which has coped with the corruption in the police and in the legal system. And Georgian government has successfully coped with the reinventing of the Georgian state as an independent nation state. So this is a very important strategic emphasis which we all have to bear in mind when we consider the opportunity of strategically stabilizing and creating a background of security for the countries in the Black sea region.

And I will end with this particular note - you don't create nations, institutions or governments without the particular human potential. It's absolutely essential to bear in mind that, in order to win particular success in creating that kind of stable national communities and states in the region, we have to keep the national political civic economic elites, the healthy parts of those elites in a position that can help them make a difference. In the decades of grim corruption and destruction



in Ukraine, Moldova and many other countries including my own, significant numbers of the national elite have fled the country. Two million people have fled my country in the last 25 years and a significant number of them could have made a big difference in the development of my country, which did not happen. And, if we look at the present situation, we see countries drained of that human potential, so it's even more important today to keep the people of capacity of expertise, the people with real potential for making a difference in their countries and to empower them so that they can make a difference in their national institutional, political and economic development. Easy to say, hard to do, but this is a real framework in which we can talk more easily about particular security predicaments that have to be addressed in the regional context.

*\* This material is prepared based on the audio-recorded conference presentation by Prof. Ognyan Minchev, Executive Director, Institute for Regional and International Studies, Bulgaria*

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## *Eka Tkeshelashvili*

Back in 90s Bruce Jackson referred to the Black Sea region as to "Bermuda Triangle" in the Western strategic studies. It was reflective of the level of understanding, attention and commitment to the region from Transatlantic community. We are definitely far ahead now. However, the lack of strategic vision for the region is still quite apparent. The discourse of regional relationships has been affected not only by regional players. Notably US has played a significant role in pushing for greater role of transatlantic community in the region as well as developing platforms for regional cooperation and strategic partnerships. While increased role of the US was seen positively by most of the littoral countries in the region, Russia was alarmed and even Turkey felt unease about it. Unfortunately, US engagement in the region lacked the consistency in maintaining its interest as well as in following through the initiated and supported projects. EU as well as NATO lack any meaningful strategy for the region. Both organizations treat Black Sea area as the periphery rather than transatlantic area per se. It is reflected in the level of their commitment to project stability in the region. The main reason for that is the lack of consensus on why this region matters and why therefore political capital shall be spent for that purpose. This is even more troublesome against the backdrop of escalation caused by actions of revisionist and more assertive Russia.

There are different factors to take into account while assessing importance of the Black Sea region for the overall stability and prosperity of Transatlantic community:

- Potential of the region to serve as the bridge to the larger neighborhood (Central Asia and Middle East in particular) having implications for energy as well as the general security of Europe.

- Black Sea has become the main theater of operation of the biggest confrontation between Russia and the West since the end of the cold war. It started in 2008 with Russian aggression against Georgia and

has crystallized after Russian annexation of Crimea and continued aggression against Ukraine. It is the black sea area where European Security architecture is being challenged now.

While considering strategic vision for the Black Sea area it is important to take following questions into account:

- What are the reasons which turned the black sea area an easier target for Russia? What are the weak spots that make it a suitable theater of operation for Russia for its confrontation with the West?

- What are the strategic goals of Russia that we need to be aware of while developing effective strategy for the Black Sea region?

Response to the above mentioned questions has two layers in it:

- Deficiencies of Russia related policies of US, NATO and EU

- Weak institutional development of littoral countries

- Inability to consolidate regional effort on a meaningful level due to diversity of interests of littoral countries, including in the economic and security sectors.

- Inability to form proactive agenda for the region.

While considering what should be the components of the comprehensive proactive agenda for the region, one needs to recognize importance of security. While having broader understanding of security not overlooking central importance of hard security. For more than a decade there has been an attempt to overlook the simple truth that hard security matters, that in the unsettled, contested neighborhoods hard security is a prerequisite for the achievement of a broader stability and prosperity. Development of institutional as well as defense capabilities in the security sector matter not less than economic and societal development and should be considered as an integral part of state building process itself. This issue shall not be seen through the prism of whether or not this will be an irritating factor for Russia.

Another important element should be the national building processes

for the countries playing the key role on the regional discourse. Inefficiency of state institutions and corruption provides a fertile ground for Russia's soft as well as hard power maneuverability. Assistance and deep engagement of our partners in state building processes should be the main focus while strengthening resilience of countries in the region for withstanding pressure from Russia.

One way of thinking comprehensively about the region could be thinking beyond littoral countries. One example is Georgia-Azerbaijan-Turkey relationship, which is connected with the role of the Black Sea in terms of diversification of energy supplies of Europe. Central Asia, including on trade related opportunities is an interesting example as well. Moldova obviously feeds into this dimension and the role of the countries, especially Romania, for the European development of Moldova.

One of the most powerful tools which the Euro Atlantic community disregarded for years vis a vis the Black Sea Region is enlargement. Enlargement was the tool for the realization of the idea of Europe whole and free and secure. The credibility of that promise was the biggest transformational force after the end of the cold war. Enlargement itself has been the driving force for the stabilization and prosperity of Europe after that. Both EU and NATO have ceased to project that pole of attraction. It limits the toolkit of what can be used by the EU and NATO in the long run while at the same time emboldens Russia's assertiveness by creating a perception that aggressive steps, including use of force are affective tools of stopping enlargement of NATO and even EU. Change of this pattern should be part of the new vision for the Black Sea region. Otherwise

Revival of talks between EU and Turkey could play a significant positive role for the regional dynamics in the Black Sea Region. Success in this direction could have game changing effect on the region.

Finally for any meaningful strategy to emerge the role of big regional players needs to be better developed. Turkey is obviously a big player,

however, more active role of Romania and Bulgaria should be considered as well. Russia's new naval doctrine and the results of the annexation of Crimea and occupation of Georgian region of Abkhazia need to be taken into account. There has to be more NATO in the Black Sea in a way that could be in the interest of Turkey as well and at the same time contributing more to the stabilization of the region, so that Russia can realize that it is not unchallenged in terms of military capabilities that could be placed on the ground.

*Eka Tkeshelashvili, President of The Georgian Institute for Strategic Studies, Georgia*

## **EU'S APPROACH TO FROZEN CONFLICTS IN ITS EASTERN NEIGHBORHOOD**

I will talk about frozen conflict in the EU's eastern neighborhood and more specifically about how the EU approaches these conflicts and how this approach has changed over the years. The frozen conflicts I have in mind are the ones in Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan. Albeit the war in Eastern Ukraine might "freeze" at some point, we are still far from this.

I claim that the management of frozen conflicts differs from "typical" crisis management in many respects. First of all, the instruments to deal with frozen ones are much harder to identify and decisions to act are much harder to make. When the level of violence is low, there is no perceived urgency to act and forming a political consensus on required resources and action is more often than not a challenge. Regardless of the term 'frozen conflict', the conflict dynamic evolves over time but the pace of this evolution is often so slow that it may escape an untrained eye.

Given all this, I argue that the management of frozen conflicts depends primarily on 1) knowledge, 2) capability, and 3) commitment. The first point indicates that an actor needs to have a thorough understanding of the conflict dynamics and local political, social and economic processes. And, of course, by these I mean the real processes on the ground, rather than what is argued officially or agreed upon formally. The second criterion – capability – refers to effective crisis management tools and ability to use the tools effectively. Third, there needs to be leadership and political long-term commitment to crisis settlement. When talking about EU's role in the management of the frozen conflicts, there has been significant improvement in the first two aspects but the third issue remains a challenge.

As always, in order to assess where we are now and where we are heading, we need to take a look at the past.

During the cold war the EU obviously did not have much of a role in crisis management. But as the bipolar system eroded and the socialist block overall dismantled (in some places violently), thinking about a greater EU involvement in crisis management started to develop.

### 1990s

Simultaneously with the Balkan wars, several ethnic separatist conflicts broke out in the former Soviet Union. From the EU's perspective, the latter conflicts appeared relatively distant; many Europeans had hardly heard of the places where the post-Soviet wars were being fought. Mental maps were still dominated by the unitary image of the Soviet Union. The primary foreign political worry at the time was the transition and the survival of Russia's liberal regime. The OSCE and the UN – alongside Russia, of course – were the actors involved in the settlement processes of these separatist post-Soviet conflicts.

### Early 2000s

However, the European perspective began to widen, gradually with the EU enlargement process in the east. The enlargement rounds in 2004 and in 2007 brought the post-Soviet East Europe much closer to the EU. The new geographical reality reflected on the EU's level of interest and attention and on the institutional framework: the European Security Strategy (2003), the launch of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003, EUSR for South Caucasus (2003), and for Moldova (2005). The mandate of EUSR for South Caucasus was widened to more include more specifically conflict resolution in 2006. EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine - EUBAM was established at the Ukraine-Moldovan border and a small border management team to Georgia (after the OSCE Border Mission's mandate was cancelled by Russia) in 2005.

But the increase in EU's eastern activity was only partly the result of internal processes. It was also a response to growing demand from the eastern partner states. In 2003, the Georgian citizens took the streets of Tbilisi and demanded a non-corrupt, more reform-oriented and western-looking regime in protests that were labelled as Rose Revolution. The new Saakashvili government looked for a more strategic relationship with the West and started an ambitious reform programme in Georgia. Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004 raised similar expectations for Ukraine.

Albeit the EU took more active role in the resolution of post-Soviet frozen conflicts, in particular of Transnistria and South Ossetia, it was still a beginner. The EU gained knowledge and know-how on regional issues and of conflict management only gradually over the years.

A crucial issue about which the EU was unsure about, was the Russia's role in the conflict: was Russia a part of the problem or of the solution – or both? This puzzlement is illustrated by a comment by an Estonian diplomat in 2006. He claimed that despite the observations that Russia's actions go against the conflict resolution, it is nevertheless: “justified to give Russia the “benefit of the doubt”. It means taking Russia at its word regarding the respecting of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its neighbors, allowing ourselves be guided by the constructive content of the written texts of the EU-Russia agreements. If the EU-Russia partnership would fail this test, if the predictions about Russia's wish to create a “shadow empire” would prove true, it would put into question a great deal of the work to build up the strategic partnership with Russia since the 1990s. How to respond to this kind of development has not been thoroughly and honestly discussed within the EU.”

So, in short: if facts on the ground and formal agreements were in conflict, too bad for the facts.

During the years preceding the Georgian war of 2008, the EU dedicated more time and energy to conflict management in the region more than ever before but concentrated its efforts to the realm of “low



politics” – typically infrastructure reconstruction projects, economic aid to IDPs and confidence building at grass root level – rather than on political conflict resolution processes and high politics. Furthermore, the EU failed to act proactively upon the signs of an approaching conflict (that were evident to the locals).

### Post-2008

When the August 2008 war broke out, the EU – and in particular France that was holding the EU presidency at the time – engaged in shuttle diplomacy to negotiate a ceasefire and a plan for a new political resolution process. A strong EU Monitoring Mission was deployed to Georgia very quickly, which was at the time seen as a great success. However, the political conflict resolution process stalled very quickly, and today we are most likely even further away from the settlement of the Georgian conflicts than ever.

In the post-2008 era, the EU’s involvement in the east has strengthened further: the Eastern Partnership was launched in 2009 and AAs have been signed with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. The Lisbon treaty streamlined and strengthened the institutional framework of the EU crisis management.

Again, the external changes influenced the EU’s standing regionally. During the Obama presidency, the US has consciously limited its involvement from South Caucasus and East Europe. Although the declared “pivot to Asia” has not necessarily worked on all fronts, the change of priorities have been apparent in this particular region. During the Ukrainian war, the US has called the EU to take the primary responsibility for handling the crisis.

Without going to any detail, let me just note that the war in Ukraine seems to have confirmed the fears (of the Estonian diplomat cited earlier) about Russia’s regional “shadow empire”. The European states and the EU are painfully coming to terms with this reality; wishful thinking about Russia is getting increasingly difficult. For the very first

time, the EU has used significant economic and political pressure tools against Russia.

Albeit the EU has in many respects stepped up to the challenge and showed determination and even leadership, some doubts about the sustainability of its commitment to the settlement of the conflicts in the Eastern neighborhood remain.

In conclusion, the EU management of the conflicts in its Eastern neighborhood is on a totally different footing than what it was 15-20 years ago. The EU has gained experience and knowhow of crisis management generally and increased its knowledge of and involvement with Eastern partners substantially over the years. It has proved that in acute crisis it is able to act even relatively quickly and use significant pressure tools.

The EU has not, however, managed to significantly push a resolution process of any of the frozen conflicts forward. Furthermore, it has always reacted to developments on the ground rather than proactively worked to settle issues before they emerge. Unless the EU develops in these respects, the frozen conflicts will stay with us for foreseeable future and they will keep on eroding trust and prospects for cooperation regionally.

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## **EU EASTERN PARTNERSHIP**

I was saying earlier that the EU presidency creates the illusion that decisions are not just made in Brussels, but in Riga as well. During the presidency period, we created a lot of partnerships and it seems like the post-presidency period is also good for expanding these partnerships.

I will start with the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga. For many it was a “survival summit”. If it was a “survival summit” and the mission was to survive, I think it was quite a successful summit in terms of surviving. A couple of positive things: apart from the political/formal event, there were also additional events (media, business events) and very importantly – civil society events. A civil society is certainly indispensable in keeping a government accountable. This is why I find the summit successful, because the civil society was very much present and dynamic. The second thing is that the summit gave a signal that we need to place less emphasis on summit diplomacy and more emphasis on implementation - quite a clear signal for our Eastern partners. It is not only about statements but about implementation. The final statement was also quite skillful. Three major issues were discussed: contentious ones, prospects and mobility. In the prospects part it was said that the aspirations for membership in some Eastern partners has been recognized. On the conflict issue, it was quite complicated because Belarus and Armenia were not willing to sign the paper about the annexation of Crimea, so there was the EU expressing their opinion. In terms of mobility, the biggest achievement was that Georgia and Ukraine will get a free-visa regime. It looks like Georgia will get that at the beginning of 2016.

The summit was more of a momentous redefinition of relationship between the EU and Eastern partners at the time of geopolitical resentment. The problem is that the challenges start, of course,

when we don't look just at the "summit of survival" but also at the Eastern Partnership as a long-term transformative instrument in the neighborhood, which is what all of us in the Summit expect. Here are a number of quite fundamental challenges that we recognized during the Summit in Riga: The Eastern Partnership region is very fragile, five out of six countries in the Eastern Partnership have territorial conflicts (the only one without territorial conflicts is Belarus); aggression of Russia is also a game changer in terms of regional stability and additionally adds a perception of insecurity; the region also has domestic challenges (some leaders are becoming increasingly reluctant and some were also missing at the Summit); societies are becoming increasingly skeptical. The frontrunner in the Eastern Partnership is Belarus. Political prisoners are being released, so we are talking about some progress in Belarus. I will correct myself. It is not Belarus, now it is Georgia because it is moving forward. It has chances of receiving the free visa regime. As for the EU, it is a challenge itself, it remains attractive, it has a transformative power, the dignity revolution in Kiev and Maidan was under EU flags but of course, there are a number of contradictory trends.

First of all, the EU's external activities are largely a reflection of internal functioning: compromise, consensus building, and rule following, but sometimes it is more about technocratic compromises and strategic visions. On the other hand, even without a strategic vision, the EU perceives itself as a more attractive, more normative, more moral superiority as Europe Security Strategy in 2003 said: "The EU is a force for good in the world". So there's a sort of asymmetry to how the EU engages with its Eastern Partners, it is just not about conditionality. The EU I believe understands the importance of neighborhood. The leadership has announced many times that if you want to be a global player, it starts in the neighborhood. You can't be a global player without being an important player in the neighborhood and that's why there will be discussions about the neighborhood and what can be done. There is a certain lack of ownership in the Eastern

Partnership. Who now politically owns the Eastern Partnership? There is a risk of permanent muddling through. Thus, the Western renaissance must not be expected in the neighborhood - at least not in the Eastern neighborhood. Also there is the question of what happens after 2017? What happens after the free visa regime is granted? Of course, it is a good benefit, although after free visa regime was given to Moldova, it seems as if Euro skepticism has increased, not decreased. What happens in Europe after free visa regime is given? The next Summit is in 2017. The first time in a declaration there was no name of the next place where the next Eastern Partnership will take place, although there were some discussions, it seems as if it will be the Brussels summit. Also in 2017 we have elections in France and Germany. Eastern Partnership certainly will not be a top agenda issue in European politics. And of course, we have recent challenges such as the Eurozone crisis or the refugee crisis, so the EU is in permanent crisis management mode, not just in the neighborhood but also in its own borders. And Russia is a factor as well. Russia was not mentioned in the Riga declaration, not a single time. I apologize, it was mentioned once. It was mentioned that the EU encourages the Ukrainian and Russian energy dialogue. That's it. But Putin was actually sitting in the meeting, he was present, you could feel him in the room. He was next to us. It seems that the Eastern Partnership on the one hand... we cannot completely ignore what happened in 2014... we cannot ignore the game changer, but of course there is still willingness at least to some extent to downgrade the tension moments between the EU and Russia... and somehow to make the Eastern Partnership more technocratic. There is also a certain asymmetry of involvement; unlike European countries Russia doesn't have any neighborhood fatigue, it is part of domestic politics, and it is indispensable in domestic politics, so there's certainly asymmetry in involvement on both sides. Another result: "Russia is making you an offer you cannot reject; the EU is making you an offer you cannot understand". It is about technocratic offers in many ways. Of course,

there is a risk that we can fall into some vicious cycle. In the Eastern neighborhood there is always “a neighbor of the neighbors – Russia”, we need some autonomy.

For Baltic countries, I believe for Bulgaria as well, the prospect for membership was crucial for transforming society, to make a state nation a democracy. We should take into account the geopolitical reality of what happened in 2014. Ukraine is very important; I would even say that if Ukraine fails, the Eastern Partnership fails. Last but not least, communication is an important element to us. We should become confident in ourselves, which will be important for engaging with other neighbors as well.

*\* This material is prepared based on the audio-recorded conference presentation by*

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## UKRAINE BEYOND THE MANTRAS

"Mantra" (Sanskrit मंत्र) means a sacred utterance... or group of words believed by some to have psychological and spiritual power. - Wikipedia

As 2014 is drawing to a close, let's take a look at how the West has debated its reaction to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. With all the controversy, there is nevertheless a number of statements that more or less everybody can agree on, at least in Europe. I call them the four mantras of the Ukraine debate. I don't claim they are false or mistaken. But the way they are formulated, none of them stands closer scrutiny, because they all are more or less massively beside the point.

1. 'The West has made mistakes, too':

Actually, the statement as such is what Americans call a no-brainer. Who doesn't ever make mistakes? The question is: which were the mistakes? And here we get some interesting disagreement. One school claims that the West was too triumphant after the end of the Cold War, expanded NATO ignoring Russia's fears, and crossed another Russian red line with its attempt to drag Ukraine into the West (thereby also forcing an unwanted choice upon the poor Ukrainians: Russia or us). This argument, or at least parts of it, has been made by many - probably in its most coherent form by the neo-realist U.S. pundit John Mearsheimer.

The other school is best represented by the American journalist Anne Applebaum: If anything, the West has nurtured the illusion of a cooperative Russia modernising along Western lines for much too long. Even when those who know better (i.e. the Poles, the Balts and a few others) had warned their Western partners that it was an illusion. As Estonian President Toomas Ilves likes to say: Georgia in 2008 was the wake-up call but we've been hitting the snooze button ever since.

From France's sale of the Mistral assault ships to our slow reaction to Russia's blatant attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in February 2014: It was our mistake not to challenge Russia much earlier and more decisively. We might actually have saved Ukraine, ourselves and the whole of Europe a lot of trouble.

2. 'We need to keep the channels for dialogue open':

Sure, talking always feels good. Some say that 'as long as people talk, they don't shoot!' - Nice. The problem with this conventional wisdom of Western diplomacy is that by the time it is uttered, the shooting usually has been going on for some time – just not by NATO, the U.S. or the respective coalition of the willing. Because to talk it takes two, but to shoot it only takes one who has at least a Kalashnikov and the determination to use it. And as we have seen, the shooting in the Donbas can very well go on while the talking is being solemnly carried out in Geneva, Vienna, Paris or Minsk.

It all boils down to the street thug techniques that Vladimir Putin learned as a teenager in the backyards of Leningrad, in what he still proudly calls his 'street university' (look it up in Masha Gessen's book). A good khuligan (=hooligan) first punches you in the nose, and then leaves you a choice: you can be unreasonable and escalate the situation, or you can be reasonable and work out a mutual compromise: You give him your wallet, and he will even smile at you again.

So where does this leave us? Communication is good, but only if it serves a purpose and if it doesn't keep us from calling a spade a spade, and from doing what needs to be done, such as broad-based economic sanctions. The West needs to have a position that is based on our core values, and back up this position with hard power, otherwise it's pointless.

3. 'There is no military solution':

This one is really popular. From UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to Chancellor Angela Merkel, even to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, everyone agrees on this one. Again, there is nothing wrong



with the sentence as such. Of course wars never solve anything. They never sort anything out (except for slavery in the US, the holocaust and a few dictators, as P.J. O'Rourke likes to point out). The trouble with Russia's new cold war is that there is no quick solution to it, period. Ed Lucas from the Economist has pointed that out brilliantly. As long as Putin wants it to drag on, it will continue, no matter what he signed. The fate of the Minsk agreement should have demonstrated that. What amazes me is that anyone in their right mind and not on the Kremlin's payroll still believes that Mr Putin's public statements, assurances in interviews, or even signatures, have any true meaning whatsoever.

Now, instead of uttering banalities such as 'There is no military solution', the much more interesting question is: Can there be an improvement in the situation as long as Ukraine is militarily as hopelessly inferior to Russia as it is at the moment? As for me, the answer is a clear no. Ukraine, after a democratic revolution, has been wrongfully attacked by its neighbor who is now bullying the whole neighbourhood. To take Western military intervention off the table from the very beginning, was tactically questionable but may have been necessary to calm down public opinion in Europe and America. But that does not mean that the West, or at least individual countries, shouldn't help Ukraine to at least partly redress the imbalance militarily. That goes from training to the delivery of non-lethal equipment to modern small arms and anti-tank and air defence weapons.

The simple truth is that sanctions may not be enough to make Russia change course. The military price tag of Russia's aggression counts: The more of those 'vacationing volunteers' come home in body bags, the more precarious Putin's image will become at home, all Novorossiya talk notwithstanding. All this does not mean stability will return if and when military options are brought back to the table. But it means that the Ukrainian government will be able to talk and act with more self-confidence. Which should be a worthwhile goal, and would spur the domestic reform effort of Ukraine.

4. 'There is no stability against or without Russia':

This is another beauty. As if Putin's Russia was interested in stability as we define it – or at least most of us do. Frankly speaking, I have no idea how people can consider a Europe with buffer zones and spheres of influence a stable place. I thought we've been through that for a few centuries. I cannot see why we should even endorse the idea that some countries which have the bad luck of being close to Russia, cannot freely choose their political system and alliances, and are somehow doomed to live in an authoritarian kleptocracy.

So it all depends on which Russia we're talking about. As Mikheil Saakashvili said in 2013: We will have stability in Europe when Russia becomes a normal nation state. Because at the moment, it isn't (and hasn't been for a long time). Instead, at least in its self-description, Russia is an empire and empires have no borders. As long as that is the case, there will be no stability. We'd better prepare for a long conflict with Putin's Russia. It will have political, diplomatic, psychological, economic and military aspects. It will neither be all-out war nor a repetition of the Cold War. It will even still contain elements of cooperation. But it will only be over when there is a fundamental change in Moscow.

If we really want a better future for the Ukrainians and the people in Eastern Europe (including Russians) and if we seriously aim at a Europe Whole and Free, we should go beyond the mantras. We need to shape up and win this. Otherwise, Mr Putin wins. And that would mean the end of NATO, the EU and Europe as we know it.

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*Adam Eberhart*

**BEYOND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP? THE EU  
RESPONSE TO NEW CHALLENGES FROM THE  
EASTERN NEIGHBORHOOD**

I apologize to be much more skeptical and pessimistic in my presentation. I will try to argue that Eastern Partnership (EaP) has indeed achieved success in the past 6 years but first of all, it is success by accident and second, the Eastern Partnership has almost exhausted itself. It will not fly anymore. Weakness of the EaP was obvious from the very beginning. The project was launched as a difficult compromise between competing interests of member states. The initial reluctance of some members of the EU was broken by two arguments: the need to balance the Southern dimensions of the European Neighbourhood policy with an Eastern one and the intention to somehow conceal the Western helplessness in the post-Soviet space, which was revealed and exposed by the Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008. The EaP initiative proved somehow useful for EU members, which are less interested in the region as some kind of alibi, which aimed to indicate that the EU has not forgotten about the region.

The substance of the Eastern Partnership was hardly a breakthrough. It is a bureaucratic project, there some mechanisms of dialogue, including multilateral forums, which never proved to be efficient. In order not to antagonize Russia the EU to skip security factor (frozen conflicts) from Eastern Partnership, so the program was intended to be a project about economic evolution and increased mobility with perspective on the free visa travel.

There was however one very symbolic gesture to the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood, which soon proved to have considerable political implication. A newly envisaged strategy document was renamed from “cooperation agreement” to an “association agreement”. The term

“association” has so far been treated by the EU in a very flexible way. Association agreements, which were signed by Bulgaria, Poland and other Central European countries in the early 90s were defined as step towards full membership within the EU, but there were also similarly named agreements signed with other countries, which obviously could not count on membership (just to name: Jordan, Morocco or even Chile). Although the agreements with some Eastern European countries like Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova did not mention prospects for joining the EU, it had political implications. In Ukraine, which is a crucial country for the Eastern Partnership because of its potential, the term “association with the EU” sometimes wrongly portrayed by the politicians and media as “associated membership within the EU” have come to take down its own life. It triggered hope among Ukrainians in state reforms and a better life.

There were two godfathers of the association process of Ukraine. The first was Yanukovich and the second was Putin. Yanukovich used the association process as a tool for playing the EU, Russia and his own people in a purely instrumental way but unexpectedly it managed to revive the hopes of the Ukrainians. The second involuntary godfather of the association process was Putin, who instead of allowing the Ukrainian dreams to collide with the painful reality of the bureaucratic project, made all his efforts to derail the process. In the result he strengthened the association process by putting pressure on Yanukovich, which proved efficient in the short term and was effective only tactically. If Ukraine had signed the association agreement in Vilnius in 2013, it would not have increased the chances of any reforms in Ukraine being implemented by Yanukovich. As the result, it would lead to a growing disappointment of Ukrainians and increase it anti-European sentiment. As a result Yanukovich could easily cast off his pro-European mask and ask Russia for support. The myth of association with the EU would have been over.

We might have a look at the case of Moldova. A much more pro-

European government has signed the association agreement but later they stopped further reforms because it would have harmed the interests of the oligarchic groups within Moldova. The association agreement has not been a turning point for Moldova and even despite granting Moldova visa free regime, which is the sweetest carrot of the EU, the anti-EU sentiments are on the rise in Moldova.

But I would like to focus on Ukraine, which is the country that will determine the success of the Eastern neighbourhood policy. Is not Moldova, not Georgia but Ukraine which matters. Ukraine is a country with by far the greatest geopolitical importance with a population and GDP larger than GDP and population of all other Eastern Partnership countries together. So it is precisely the situation in Ukraine, which will decide the direction in which the entire region will follow, including perhaps also Russia.

What seemed to be a failure of the Europeanization progress in Vilnius in 2013 in fact opens a door for change in Ukraine. The victory of the revolution confirms systematic weakness of the government and strength of the civil society in Ukraine. There are certainly some risks, including risk of anarchy in Ukraine in the coming months or years, but still the Maidan revolution (named in Ukraine as Revolution of Dignity) will serve as a strong vaccination against an autocratic regime. And Russian aggression against Ukraine will serve as a very strong vaccination against pro-Russian and pro-Soviet sentiments. The difficult process of pro-European transformation of Ukraine has been launched.

So today we face a completely different situation. Ukraine has dramatically changed, Eastern Europe has dramatically changed itself, so have relations between Russia and the EU but the Eastern Partnership has still not changed at all. It is still a bureaucratic project not able to adjust to new challenges, ignoring clear political threats. We witnessed it during the Riga summit. The EU has to meet its commitments, which are part of the Eastern Partnership, which is to introduce a visa free

regime with Ukraine and Georgia as fast as possible. We should certainly cherish the association agreement as a tool for modernization. We should not forget however that even if the long term transformative tools are important, there are more pressing needs. We should acknowledge that implementing association agreement in the case of Ukraine is not as vital as it seemed to be two years ago. It is not the priority given massive reform agenda in Ukraine, fighting corruption, reform the judiciary, decentralization, transforming gas market, overcoming deep economic crisis, fighting against Putin who tries to derail not only the reforms in Ukraine but Ukraine itself. We should not forget that over 600 Ukrainian soldiers and civilians have been killed since Minsk 2 agreements was signed. And we are not observing any attempts by Russian proxies to implement political commitments of Minsk agreement.

It leads me to conclusion that today we are in a situation of new huge challenges and the Eastern Partnership can hardly answer them. It proved useful as a impulse to strengthened European dream of neighbouring countries years ago but it become irrelevant in the new situation. The EU macro-financial assistance to Ukraine is just Euro 2.2 billion, while the financial assistance to Greece in the last two years was close to Euro 400 billion. It is not only about additional financial resources but also about our political will to defend our values in the region.

The EU has not only to deter president Putin from further aggression in Ukraine but also to work out new vision of EU engagement in the Eastern Neighbourhood which would support extremely difficult transformation of the Eastern European countries. Otherwise Ukrainian, Georgian and Moldovan commitment to EU will start to fade.

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*Luis Simón\**

## **SECURING THE EASTERN EUROPEAN FLANK: A JOINT (EU-NATO) ENDEAVOR**

Russia's annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014 has sparked much attention to questions related to defense and deterrence alongside Europe's Eastern Flank. This, in turn, has led to a renewed interest in NATO, which has suddenly returned to the center of the European security stage after more than two decades of soul searching.

Perhaps the best illustration of the increasing importance of defence and deterrence in an Eastern Flank context is the Alliance's adoption of the so-called Readiness Action Plan (RAP) at its September 2014 Wales Summit. The purpose of the RAP is to ensure NATO is in a position to react to crises swiftly and firmly – and its backbone is a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) of some 4000-6000 troops, which should be able to deploy to the front line within a matter of days.

Arguably, the RAP is no game changer. Questions remain ([http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Autumn\\_2014/10\\_SimonLuis\\_Addressing%20NATO's%20Eastern%20European%20Flank.pdf](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Autumn_2014/10_SimonLuis_Addressing%20NATO's%20Eastern%20European%20Flank.pdf)) as to its ability to credibly deter conventional Russian military power in eastern Europe, not least given the lack of significant allied air and land power in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the RAP is but one cog in a much broader NATO-wide effort aimed at reassuring central and eastern European member states in the face of an increasingly assertive Russia. Such efforts include a higher tempo of allied air patrols in the Baltic, of naval patrols in the Baltic and Black Seas, and more frequent and significant NATO military exercises ([http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/preparing-for-the-worst-are-russian-and-nato-military-exercises-making-war-in-europe-more-likely\\_2997.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/preparing-for-the-worst-are-russian-and-nato-military-exercises-making-war-in-europe-more-likely_2997.html)) throughout Eastern Europe.

Also important are the ongoing efforts by the Alliance and some of

its member states to expand mil-to-mil cooperation with key Eastern European partners – especially Ukraine and Georgia. This shows that reassurance should not be interpreted in a strict, (NATO) members-only sense, as it also (partly) encompasses non-NATO democracies in Eastern Europe – although NATO members remain divided as to how far they should go in supporting non-members.

In fact, reassurance is not just NATO's business, nor a purely military endeavor. Whilst the military is indeed a central component of Eastern European security, reassurance is ultimately a political enterprise. And both NATO and the EU have a stake on it. After all, geopolitical competition in Eastern Europe is more likely than not to be characterized by subtle forms of intimidation and expansion rather than outright and open, steel-on-steel military confrontation. This begs the question of what Russia's challenge to Eastern European security means for the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and for EU-NATO relations.

The discussion on the EU's security role in Eastern Europe is all too often confined to the diplomatic and economic side of things. This is very important indeed, for Moscow is typically resorting to so-called hybrid warfare techniques ([http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/reacting-to-russia\\_1985.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/reacting-to-russia_1985.html)) to expand its influence across eastern Europe, i.e. by using the threat to cut off energy supplies, resorting to financial, political and cyber penetration, waging information warfare and so on.

Ultimately, ensuring that the countries of central eastern and southeastern European remain economically and politically wed to the EU is one of the best ways of countering Russian influence – and of upholding a liberal, rules-based international order in the old continent. In particular, greater efforts are needed to monitor Russian Foreign Direct Investment (esp. in Central and Eastern Europe) – and assess its political ramifications. Also important is to mitigate European energy dependence on Russia – for that is one of Moscow's most threatening



geopolitical levers. Likewise, forward economic and political engagement in Ukraine or Georgia is one of the most effective ways of countering Russian influence in Europe's eastern neighbourhood.

Given its vast economic and political resources, its power of attraction, and competence in a wide range of policy areas, the EU is uniquely placed to counter Russia's hybrid challenge to Eastern Europe. However, if the EU is to pull through what is arguably its greatest (external) test, a serious discussion is needed on how its CSDP can contribute to the security of Eastern Europe. While the EU does not do defense proper, the sort of hybrid landscape that characterizes the ongoing competition for geopolitical influence in Eastern Europe means there is plenty of room for CSDP – and for greater EU-NATO cooperation.

Russia's cyber challenge, for instance, presents both civilian and military ramifications. Thus, greater EU-NATO cooperation in the cyber domain can lead to important synergies in terms of achieving a comprehensive Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance picture of cyber-space (i.e. tracking Russian malware and footprints), or building the cyber-defense and security capabilities of EU-NATO member states and eastern European partners. Much the same applies to countering Russian propaganda and disinformation efforts, for those cut across the military-civilian divide too. NATO has identified strategic communications as an area of priority – and the establishment of a STRATCOM center of excellence in Riga shows just how salient this particular challenge is in the Eastern Flank. The EU's range of competences and expertise in a broader range of policy areas means greater EU-NATO cooperation can also lead to productive synergies in this area, especially in terms of tracking & countering Russian efforts and articulating a powerful (liberal) alternative narrative.

Last but not least, civilian and civ/mil operational initiatives – the sort of stuff CSDP claims as its niche area – can be particularly useful in an Eastern Flank context. The lack of adequate structures, training

and information clearance procedures means Ukraine and Moldova are particularly vulnerable to leaking and external penetration – thus offering Russia multiple openings to the inner workings of those countries’ security services. The EU’s decision to establish a civilian CSDP mission to assist the Ukraine government with the reform of its security apparatus is a step in the right direction – and could be complemented with a similar initiative in Moldova. In addition to that, CSDP’s engagement in Ukraine would benefit from greater coordination on the ground with NATO, who considers the transformation of Kyiv’s defence and security sector a priority.

Arguably, the civilian and civ/mil realms present great opportunities for the EU to enhance its security profile in Eastern Europe – and constitute obvious niche areas where CSDP can complement NATO’s work. However, it is important that the EU’s security role in Eastern Europe also extends to the military realm, i.e. through initiatives such as the appointment of military attaches to Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova, mil-to-mil engagement with eastern partners (via training and exercises), military educational exchanges, capability building through Security Sector Reform a greater engagement of eastern partners in CSDP operations and permanent structures (EU Military Staff, European Defense Agency), etc. This leads to a broader point, namely the risk that the resurgence of NATO might lead to the cornering of CSDP into the civilian and civ-mil ends of security.

In particular, the notion of an EU-NATO division of labour whereby NATO is associated with military power and the EU and CSDP are confined to diplomacy, civilian and ‘civ-mil’ operational solutions can turn out to be quite damaging for European security. If nothing else, the EU carries significant influence over the strategic culture and orientation of its member states. This means that a so-called EU-NATO division of labour would allow many European countries to do ‘forum shopping’, offering them the possibility to keep their military-strategic responsibilities at NATO to a testimonial level – and embracing the

sort of soft power narratives that are often promoted at the EU level. This is particularly tempting for the less hard-power inclined member states. For that reason, it is of utmost importance that CSDP does not give up on the military aspect – and that NATO and the EU speak a similar language when it comes to security. Secondly, and relatedly, given the prospect that the NATO defence planning process reaffirms its influence over force planning and force structure in Europe, it is only logical that this process feeds into capability discussions at the EU level. This means that greater efforts are needed to link NATO's International Staff and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe with the EU Military Staff, but also Allied Command Transformation and the European Defense Agency.

*\*This article was originally published on the ELN website  
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## **MIND THE GAP: RHETORIC AND ACTION IN THE WEST – RUSSIA RELATIONS**

The present crisis in Ukraine is, from a Western<sup>1</sup> perspective, the embodiment of the “worst case scenario” in the security field in Europe after the formal end of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation seems to have made, from a legal point of view, everything wrong in the Black Sea region that someone could have imagined and what the West has feared for 25 years. It has unilaterally changed internationally recognized frontiers in Europe by the military invasion of the Crimean Peninsula. It has occupied parts of an independent country (the Eastern Ukraine) which is a member of the United Nations. The entire approach of the West in dealing with the Russian Federation in the last 25 years seems to be based on wrong assumptions. Nobody predicted that that could be the case. European Union and NATO have a difficult time accommodating the current situation and managing to draw the right lessons to be used in its future political, security and economic relations with Moscow.

The crisis in Ukraine is not about technicalities and tactics. It is highly challenging because it is a crisis between different approaches to domestic and international politics (if we are to assume – and we should assume – that they are consistent). It is a crisis which is a result of a clash of different political cultures. Some analysts put a strong emphasis on a person (the Russian president Vladimir Putin) but they somehow ignore the strong and growing support of his foreign policy among the Russian population. According to a poll conducted by the Levada Center in 2015, cited by The Guardian, 87% of those interviewed support the

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the concept of the “West” to designate the actors from the Euro-Atlantic area (such as NATO, European Union, and individual European states). It is not a geographic term but mainly a political term.

Russian annexation of Crimean Peninsula while 66% believe that the economic sanctions of the West “*are meant to humiliate and weaken Russia*”. Some 70% of the same population believe that Moscow “*should stick to its current position on Ukraine*”. So the issue here seems to me not only about a dictator and how aggressive he is (the re-spelling of “*the democratic peace hypothesis*” advanced by scholars in the discipline of international relations) but a lot more. It cannot be limited to propaganda. It is, in fact, a clash of political cultures.

The origin of this gap is the definition of what is right and what is wrong, what is legitimate and what is illegitimate in political action, both domestically and abroad. I think it is obvious today that the political cultures of the West and of Russia include constructed political identities that are not compatible in terms of how they understand territoriality and the relationship between the individual and the state. In my personal opinion, there is a massive gap between the two approaches to domestic and international politics. I may call the “*pluralistic*” approach of the Western societies and the “*singular*” approach of the Russian Federation. Basically, the first one is at the core of some organizations (like the European Union and NATO) and propose a set of political values based on democracy, contractual society and respect of all the actors in the political scene. Differences in opinion are negotiated and mutually agreed solutions are identified. It is a-territorial as any actor can adhere to it irrespective of its location. It is introspective and its identity is autonomous. The second one is based on power and control and, ultimately, the threat of violent punishment. It is territorial as it defines power in terms of territory and constructed homogenous ethnicity. It is also highly dependent on constructed symbols of status and prestige. It is retrospective and is highly dependent to foreign confirmation for its own identity.

The Ukraine Crisis can be considered to be the equivalent of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis with a big difference: while the political

leadership of USA at that time finally refrained from invading Cuba mainly because of its political culture (and not to endanger its own citizens), the Russian leadership decided today to pursue the invasion in Ukraine. Irrespective of the correctness of the political and military calculus – the Russian leadership was convinced that the West won't start a war with potential massive costs in order to enforce the sovereignty of Ukraine – the Russian leadership gambled however the welfare and lives of its own population.

But, in the same time, we should recall that the Cuban Missile Crisis has not reached the stage of a hot war mainly due to the final clarity of language and the frank revelation of real political objectives from the part of both actors. President Kennedy spoke about *„this secret, swift, and extraordinary build-up of Communist missiles-in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the Western Hemisphere, in violation of Soviet assurances, and in defiance of American and hemispheric policy - this sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil - is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country”*.

The clash between the political cultures has led to a gap between what is said and what is done in the political communication and action between the West and the Russian Federation. The West fell into its own wishful thinking when he thought that the failure of the reformation of the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev and its subsequent demise has meant the acceptance by the Russian political establishment (as the main political successor) and population in general of the Western political values. Let's recall that the formal fall of the Soviet Union was almost entirely an accomplishment of Boris Eltsin. He was just opportunistically acting in a political game against Gorbachev in what some analysts considered to be a personal vendetta. And should we

remember that on 17th of March 1991, almost 70% of Soviet citizens approved in a referendum the preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics?

While Russia adopted the Western rhetoric, it may be argued that it didn't change its political culture. It didn't experience a Wilton Park<sup>2</sup> initiative that could have changed the way Russians perceive democracy and plurality of opinion. Moreover, the Russian society was able to take over its skills developed in the Soviet era in differentiating between the talk and the walk. Formally, the Soviet Constitution guaranteed the freedom of speech, the freedom of association and the freedom of religion. Whether this talk was also walked, millions of citizens – victims of the communist gulag – have experienced.

The gap between thinking and acting has been forever present in the field of international relations. We should recall not only the Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty but also Yalta and Malta. The leaders of great powers sometimes assume the special quality of allowing themselves to act in a Machiavellian way. And I suspect that the Russian leadership assumed at its turn that all the talking about human rights, post-Cold War peace and common values was just a talk that dissimulated the continuing geopolitical drive of the West towards the expansion of political influence in the East.

So if we accept the difference in the political culture and the gap between rhetoric and action, we just conclude that we are witnessing an international context where some of the most important actors do not believe each other. It is a very dangerous context as the uncertainty is manifest. It has been repeatedly recalled during the present conference the acclaimed lack of trust from the part of Ms. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, in the words and signature of the Russian president.

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<sup>2</sup> Winston Churchill took the initiative of “de-nazification” of Germans after the Allied victory in the Second World War.

It may be suspected that the same could be stated by the Russian president with regard to other political situations.

A return to realism?

Both the European Union and NATO are a particular type of actors in international relations. One of the core elements in their nature is the enlargement process, a process that makes the distinction between internal / external very thin and transitory. The other actor from “outside” may be in the future the partner from “inside”. So they naturally are inclined to spread their values and cosmogony to the outside in an almost evangelical way. Which is very challenging for the other actors in the international arena who may feel uneasy about the possibility of being “integrated” in the future into this organization.

So how do two actors in international relations relate each other assuming that they do not share the same values and cosmogony? Or even more, that they find the behavior of the other as unacceptable? It cannot be known for sure by a Romanian scholar what Angela Merkel and Vladimir Putin tell each other when they are speaking at the telephone but it should be obvious that telling frankly what they want and think is critical for the international peace. Irrespective of how outraged becomes the other one for the moment. The West knows that some actors of the international scene have a poor record of human rights but as long as this West is not ready to fight in every corner of the world for the protection of any individuals who seems to be abused by his state, it should adopt a realist approach (*„do not question the legitimacy of the other”*) and give up the evangelical rhetoric. Put it bluntly and maybe over simplistically, the European Union and NATO should first of all protect their member states and their citizens and afterwards look after the human rights in other societies in the world.

The discussion about the present crisis in Ukraine forgets the fact that a great part of the responsibility lies in the former Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovych, and the pre-Maidan Ukrainian political elite in general. He was the one that attempted to play the West against



Russia and somehow extract rents from both of these actors. The lack of maturity of the political leadership in the post-soviet world cannot be supplemented by external action from the part of the West. Yanukovych was voted in a democratic election by the majority of the Ukrainian population and it is a matter of evidence that he didn't have an integration agenda into the West. He lost in his own game.

The Russian leadership has seen a lot of inconsistencies in the policy of the West towards not only Russia and the former Soviet space but also in international relations in general. The very fact that somebody is engaged in basic trade at all while at the same time morally condemning the other party is, in my personal opinion, a major inconsistency. Or a Machiavellian approach in the eyes of the other. Such inconsistencies most probably fuel the Russian perception of the same gap between rhetoric and action and support their cynical perception of international politics. The Russian perspective could be called "*cynical*" as "*lawfare*" and the breaking of the international rules of law by an actor that was supposed to enforce them are a truly Machiavellian perspective.

One of the core tasks of traditional diplomacy was to reveal the real objectives of the actors in the international scene and somehow accommodate their interaction in the middle ground. Irrespective of issues of legitimacy of the other party as a political system. Such a task has been compromised in the modern world by a complex of factors which created an abysmal gap in the perceptions between the actors as related to their objectives and their actual behavior. The international diplomacy needs today devices, mechanisms and actors that reveal to actors what are the real objectives of other parties. However unacceptable they could be at face value. For the moment, I suspect that today none of the actors in the Western have a clue about what really Russia wants to achieve in Ukraine. And because of the dominant rhetoric in the international relations, I guess that Russia does not tell to the Western actors what it really wants. In such a context,

misperceptions, misinterpretations and, in consequence, deceptions are the rule.

The end of the Cold War was not a result, at least in my opinion, of a political, military or propagandistic strategy of the West. It was the mundane economic failure that made Eastern European peoples revolt and the Soviet leadership lose its grip of internal and external power. Centralized – or singular – systems will always fail due to their lack of mobility and dynamic resilience. I truly believe that the values of freedom – both political and economic – will prevail not because of better political action, intelligence and military strategy of some of the actors in international relations but because of their core competitive advantages as compared to control and planning.

Politics and international politics are sometimes a game of deception through which political actors dissimulate their real objectives in order to achieve an element of surprise that, under certain conditions, can act as a compounding factors for success in political action. This is classical statecraft and its Machiavellian approach. There is a gap between what somebody thinks, what he/she speaks, what he/she writes and what he/she signs.

What should the West do in its relationship with the Russian Federation now, in the autumn of 2015? The image of the U.S. State Secretary, Ms. Hillary Clinton, and its “reset” button is very vivid as it could be considered as the image of a real awareness that something has to be changed in the relationship with the Russian Federation. Something is wrong and day-to-day diplomacy cannot solve it. And in my personal opinion, the core problem is exactly the way the actors in the international arena communicate. It may seem rhetorical, it may seem too little but the West should abandon its evangelical approach (that is, spreading its own values) in its foreign policy and adopt a more realist approach. The West should know what Russia really wants as much as possible and find ways to accommodate the two sets of objectives. In fact, somebody may find it in the domestic political discourse of the Russian society. The West – and

Russia in the same way – should also set caps and thresholds, redlines and greenlines, and really mean it. Otherwise, diplomacy has no real meaning in today world. It is only a contest of deceit.

It must be also stressed that the umbrella of the West may generate some moral hazard from the part of some Eastern European leaders. They somehow may assume at certain moments that the West will rush to help them in dealing with the Russian Federation. They somehow gave up a prudential approach in dealing with a superpower and look for rewards from Brussels or Western capitals. It was a core principle of the European and NATO integration that the candidate country should solve all its issues with the neighbors. And this was and is a rational principle. The West may help but should not substitute local leadership unless it treats these countries as colonies.

In terms of political discourse, the West should engage in a fair communication with the Russian political class but also population about the gap between rhetoric and action in internal politics. Such a gap is ingrained in cyberwarfare, propaganda and manipulation. But the audiences are aware, in the end, of such a gap. The West should massively invest in the education of the populations and leaders in Eastern Europe. While another Wilton Park may not be possible, it should not be assume that individuals and societies construct the same image about what they really mean by freedom, democracy and prosperity. I think that big surprises in this respect can be met also in the West within certain social groups and communities.

How can the West discover what the Russian Federation really wants? Besides direct communication, it needs to develop a coherent expertise on Kremlinology. So any proposals for networking the academic, intelligence and the NGOs actors in the region should be welcomed.

And the West should also demand from the Russian Federation confidence building initiatives. During the last 25 years, the Russian Federation become too confident in its dealing with the West, especially

in his close neighborhood. Moscow was convinced that Western politics is only about talking the talk. The Russian leadership made a wrong choice by invading Ukraine even according to their own standards. By getting Crimea, it lost the entire Ukraine. What is alarming in the Ukraine crisis is that there is no exit strategy for either Ukraine or the Russian Federation. The Crimean occupation may prove to be a Pyrric victory for the Russian leadership

Someone may also perceive, in the international arena, another gap, a gap between the way the Russian Federation approaches international issues, making a distinction between its approach in the space of the former Soviet Union and its approach with issues outside this space. While Russia seems to be a rather rational actor in international politics outside of this space, it is a rather compulsive and non-rational one inside the area. A speculative argument is that the Russian approach to political issues in the space of the former Soviet Union is captive of an outdated strategy that was formulated during those times based on so-called “*frozen conflicts*”. These conflicts generate a society that is fundamentally a socialist one. It is paralyzed in its institutions and its dynamics and is based on state and organized crime. The drawing of borders between the soviet republics as well as the consistently similar pattern of intervention in this area are proofs in this respect.

International institutional cooperation seems to have miserably failed during the present crisis. Such devices cannot “lock” actors in international relations through their membership. States fall back to their national interests and power and if somebody accepts such an assessment it means that we are entering a new age of realism in international politics. And one of its consequences is that actors in international relations should openly communicate their objectives and frankly negotiate.

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## **DOES THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY NEED A NEW STRATEGIC VISION?**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Many challenges have occupied the attention of NATO and EU policy makers during 2015; the ongoing Greek debt crisis, the freezing conflict between Russia and the West over Ukraine, and lately the outpouring of migrants from the Middle East on Europe's shores. Those are merely three of the most visible challenges among many others which confront values and living standards. Faced with the complexity, scope, diversity and rapid evolution of these and concomitant challenges, the Euro-Atlantic community appears to be spreading itself too thin and finds itself overstretched; largely reacting to crises.*

*This paper examines the phenomena of hybrid conflict, anarchic terrorism, and cybersecurity as a focal point in addressing whether the Atlantic community might benefit from a new strategic vision. It looks at the meaning of "strategy", proposes a paradigm within which contemporary international relations operate, assesses our success at confronting a) hybrid conflicts, b) anarchic terrorism and c) cybersecurity – the challenges of the hour facing Euro-Atlantic nations – and whether these threats warrant any strategic redefinition. The paper concludes by providing policy recommendations.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Sofia Security Forum, held 9-10 September 2015 asked whether the Euro-Atlantic community (defined here as NATO/EU members, PfP Partners and like-minded nations) requires a new strategic vision to

respond to emerging challenges such as hybrid warfare and the risk of Alliance fragmentation that stems from policy asymmetry.

The symposium organizers also wanted to know what are the complex security threats and ways to overcome them. The pertinence of this questioning cannot be overstated. It is not the sheer number and diversity of challenges and risks which represent a problem, but rather the inability to focus enough attention and resources on any given problem to see it through to the end. For example, since the beginning of 2015, policy-makers' attention has rapidly shifted from the Ukraine-Russia crisis to the on-going Greek debt crisis, only to be supplanted by massive inflow of refugees washing onto Europe's shores.

The Atlantic community is clearly in reactive mode. In that respect alone, a discussion on strategy is urgently needed. The objective of this chapter is to engage in a discussion as to the meaning of today's upheavals, to identify the challenges to the Atlantic community's objectives and values, to stimulate thinking about solutions and develop actionable advice for national policy makers.

## **RECONSTRUCTING "STRATEGY"**

Sir Lawrence Freedman, in his last opus *Strategy: A History* lamented how the term "strategy" had become drained of meaning. The word strategy has been used and abused by sundry disciplines: education specialists, business tycoons, health professionals, and, of course, military and political decision-makers, to name just a few. The word "strategy" has become confused with process and does not distinguish between goals and means. As *The Economist* put it; "strategy is not a plan."<sup>1</sup> Rather strategy is the articulation of particular resources towards a clearly defined goal. Freedman is more nuanced, describing

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<sup>1</sup> The Economist. "Why Strategy is not a Plan." November 2, 2013, online.

strategy as “...being about maintaining a balance between ends, ways and means; about identifying objectives, and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives.”<sup>2</sup>

Even ill-defined, “strategy” remains the best concept to describe actions and outcomes in the future. Strategy is required when survival is at stake, when matters of life and death come into play, when there is conflict. We speak here of conflict between countries, groups, and people, but also conflicts of interests, as well as conflict between available resources and the conditions present for their employment.

### 1. Defining objectives

The first task of a strategy is to define objectives. The Atlantic community’s objectives are common and familiar. For example, the U.S. National Security Strategy aims at the security and prosperity of the United States, its citizens, and Allies. In addition, it seeks the establishment and respect of universal values within a just international order<sup>3</sup>. Poland’s national security strategy aims at maintaining political independence, ensuring prosperity and the protection of its citizens<sup>4</sup>. Holland’s architecture of security policy documents aims at ensuring “sovereignty, territorial integrity, welfare and stability...”<sup>5</sup>. In Georgia those objectives are enshrined in the national constitution<sup>6</sup>. Italy, which until 2008 had never published a comprehensive national security

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<sup>2</sup> L. Freedman. *Strategy: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. x-xi.

<sup>3</sup> Barack Obama. *National Security Strategy of the United States (2010)*. Washington, DC: The White House, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Republic of Poland. *Strategy of Development of the National Security System of the Republic of Poland – 2022*. Warsaw: Council of Ministers, 9 April 2013, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> M. De Haas. *From Defence Doctrine to National Security Strategy: The Case of the Netherlands*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria, September 2007, p. 2. (Online). [http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/5673/DeHaas\\_From%282007%29.pdf?sequence=1](http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/5673/DeHaas_From%282007%29.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. *National Security Concept of the Republic of Georgia. 2011*. (Online). <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/MainNav/ForeignPolicy/NationalSecurityConcept.aspx?lang=en-US>

document, aims at the preservation of independence and territorial integrity, and the reduction of criminality and external threats<sup>7</sup>.

This brief survey of particular countries' national security strategies is sufficient to demonstrate the commonality of objectives and of values - what the OECD calls "well-being". However, such objectives are influenced by geopolitics. That is, the political conditions of the United States, Poland, Holland, Georgia and Italy will differ and while their objectives might be the same, their methods and interests will differ greatly. Geopolitical differences provide fertile ground for splitting the Atlantic community as resources lack to satisfy every country's security objectives.

It therefore follows that the overarching goal of the Atlantic community members would be to *avoid fragmentation*, i.e. *maintain policy* unity even in the absence of resource coherence. With the migrant crisis now unfolding we see the European Union's unity fraying in real terms, with the momentary suspension of the Schengen agreement, and the re-erection of border checkpoints<sup>8</sup>. One can easily see that the free movement of goods and people across Europe, thus impeded, will have a definite impact on national and individual revenue; in other words, on the success of the strategy of particular members in sustaining collective and individual well-being.

## 2. The security environment

The second stage of strategy formulation is the description of the

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<sup>7</sup> F. di Camillo and L. Marta. *National Security Strategies: The Italian Case*. Paper WP-39, Madrid: Instituto Real Elcano, 20 October 2009, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> The signs were already clear nearly five years ago; see D. Saunders. "Fearing Influx of Migrants, France Brings Back Border Checkpoints", *The Globe and Mail*, 10 June 2011, online <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/fearing-influx-of-migrants-france-brings-back-border-checkpoints/article4261120/>, and now, Associated Press. "The Latest: German Border Checks Jam Traffic in Austria", *The New York Times*, 14 September 2015, online, [http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/09/14/world/europe/ap-eu-europe-migrants-the-latest.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/09/14/world/europe/ap-eu-europe-migrants-the-latest.html?_r=0)



security environment, from which derives the identification of threats and challenges. This exercise must be the fruit of rational judgement based on hard facts, rather than on the emotions brought on by media coverage. A paradigmatic description of contemporary international relations is a helpful starting point. The paradigm of the Cold War was anchored in bipolarity and a realistic interpretation of international relations. In the post-Cold War strategic environment, two factors characterised relations between states; on the one hand there was the consolidation of multilateralism and international law created by and within which most advanced economies have evolved<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, the world witnessed the tragedy of intra-state and inter-ethnic warfare that has marred the first post-Soviet decade<sup>10</sup>.

It could be said that the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 brought the post-Soviet era to a close and ushered in a paradigm of international relations heavily coloured by the fight against international terrorism, but this would be overlooking other forces and movements during the same period, including the impact of the “Great Recession” of 2008-2010, as well as the resurgence of Russia, and the emergence of new economic competitors, such as Brazil, India and China. Those are not threats per se, but are features of international relations which competent advisors and responsible policy-makers must acknowledge. In the next section, we develop a strategic assessment derived from an image of international relations where change is the only constant, and where the Atlantic community is facing the rise of alternative locus of power.

## **MULTIPOLARITY AS A STRATEGIC PARADIGM**

The “unipolar” moment where the United States was the dominant

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<sup>9</sup> F. Labarre. “Self-Interest and Cooperation: The Emergence of Multilateral Interdependence in Post-Conflict Eras”, *Connections*, Winter 2007, pp. 82-93.

<sup>10</sup> J. H. Lebovic. “Uniting for Peace? Democracies and United Nations Peace Operations after the Cold War”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48(6), December 2004, p. 910.

economic, political, and military power has passed. Brad Setser assessed that

[the] fiscal cost of the financial bail-out – and the fiscal cost of necessary Keynesian stimulus to counter a stunning contraction in private demand – [has added] to the United States’ stock of public debt. The burden of that debt is a limit on the United States’ long run ability to project power abroad.

At the same time a continuation of the trends that existed prior to the crisis would not have worked to the United States’ advantage... the coffers of a set of countries that in general didn’t fully share US goals were growing – and the US increasingly came to rely on the governments of countries that were neither democracies nor US allies for financing<sup>11</sup>.

However, this does not reveal the whole picture. US defence spending has sharply dropped after the withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, returning to percentages of GDP from before 2008. *Nevertheless* the nominal amount of spending has increased due to the economic recovery<sup>12</sup>. In 2010, the United States became energy self-sufficient, providing only one of a host of reasons to withdraw from the international scene. US decline is thus a matter of interpretation.

These facts have gone nearly unnoticed in that period, and perhaps because of that a Pew Research Center survey has revealed that a plurality of countries believes that the Chinese economy is now dominant, and that China will eventually replace the United States as superpower, if it

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<sup>11</sup> B. Setser. “Strategic Implications of the Financial Crisis.” In: M. Emerson, *et al*, eds. *The Strategic Consequences of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis*. ESF Working Paper no. 31, Brussels: European Security Forum, March 2009, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> P. Jolicoeur and F. Labarre. “OTAN et Austérité: La Difficile Gestion d’un Équilibre Stratégique en Mouvence”, In: Ian Roberge, ed. (Title to be determined), Brussels: Bruylant, 2014.

hasn't done so already<sup>13</sup>. Here also, this advantage is not borne out by China's military spending, which remains stagnant<sup>14</sup>. China's power is elsewhere; it lies latent in its demographics, but it does not automatically translate - yet - into *influence*. Power, it is now realized, is not always based on material strength, but on appeal and attractiveness<sup>15</sup>. In fact, the Pew Research Center's survey demonstrates that China's cultural appeal is tepid, at best, and that Euro-Atlantic socio-cultural values remain the gold standard.

Cultural and soft power appeal – not to mention economic necessity and public fatigue with overseas adventures – have led many Euro-Atlantic countries to reduce their defence spending. Among NATO countries that have done so, two categories are visible; those countries that have chosen to reduce spending to balance their yearly budget, and those that have chosen to pay off their public debt<sup>16</sup>. The conclusion is that NATO as a whole is opting for a strategic withdrawal of sorts. This means that the coercive function of the Atlantic community's military dimension is less available to support the strategic objectives of the community.

Russia is another perceived challenger, and the economic data in this case seems more worrisome to the Euro-Atlantic community than China's. In 2014, the World Bank showed that Russia's GNI had increased by 20 percent from the previous year, with military spending as percentage of GDP equal to that of the United States. The GDP itself is, of course, far lower than that of the average EU member, but Russia's cultural appeal has increased over the last few years, and its foreign policy conception, which speaks of "civilizational" spheres of

<sup>13</sup> Pew Research Center. *America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's*. Pew Global Attitudes Project, 18 July 2013, pp. 35-36.

<sup>14</sup> Jolicoeur and Labarre, "OTAN et Austérité..."

<sup>15</sup> B. J. C. McKercher. *Routledge Handbook of Diplomacy and Statecraft*. London: Routledge, 2012, p. 442.

<sup>16</sup> Jolicoeur and Labarre, "OTAN et Austérité..."

influence is gaining some traction in contested areas where the Euro-Atlantic community is receding. This is the case in Central Asia and in the South Caucasus<sup>17</sup>.

Russia's strength is derived by the Kremlin's near total control over the political sphere, what is often called the "power vertical". But here too, there is a caveat; Russia has successfully entered the mainstream global economy in August 2012 when it joined the World Trade Organisation. Engagement in multilateralism would incite the Kremlin in obeying international trade rules. This behaviour is at variance with how Russia is pursuing its interests in Eastern Ukraine, where international law has been broken, albeit not so openly. Russian policy-makers justify their courses of action in Ukraine and Georgia by pointing out that what Russia does is no different than what the West has done over Kosovo<sup>18</sup>. One can therefore say that Russia has chosen to diversify its dispute resolution mechanisms, in addition to creating a parallel trading system that mirrors that of the EU; the Eurasian Security and Economic Union (also known as Eurasian Union), which brings together Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia into a widening Eurasian trading system oriented towards the Chinese and European markets<sup>19</sup>.

Elsewhere, much of the developing world has begun unraveling after the so-called Arab Spring. There are many causes for the upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East; one is weak governance, and another is weak resilience to adverse climatic events. The Arab Spring of 2011 is the result of food-price inflation stemming from a drought that occurred in

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<sup>17</sup> P. Jolicoeur and F. Labarre. "The Breakup of Georgia: Fragmentation or Settlement Fringe?" *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 1, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> P. Jolicoeur and F. Labarre. "The Kosovo Model: A (Bad) Precedent for Conflict Management in the Caucasus?" *Connections*, Summer 2014, pp. 43-61

<sup>19</sup> B. Kuznetsov. "Russia-Georgian Rapprochement: A Light at the End of the Tunnel", in: F. Labarre and E. Felberbauer, eds. *Building Confidence in the South Caucasus: Strengthening the EU and NATO's Soft Security Initiatives*, Vienna: National Defence Academy, July 2013, pp. 115-119.

Russia the previous summer<sup>20</sup>. In Syria and Egypt, the revolutions there are thought to be the result of the respective regimes' callous disregard for ordinary citizens' right to earn their livelihoods<sup>21</sup>. Off the coast of the Horn of Africa, it is now well established that a combination of inclement agricultural weather, conflict and natural catastrophe has been the catalyst for the upsurge of piracy there<sup>22</sup>. We see now that the upheavals that have rocked have less to do with a democratic "awakening" than but with the dissatisfaction of basic human needs. The end result has been the influx of migrants and refugees to European shores, stressing the absorption capacity of many States, and threatening Atlantic unity.

Taking advantage of geography, governance weakness and the erosion of international law with regards to questions of sovereignty, recognition and state-building, radicalized groups seek the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate that would encompass the entire Middle East and North Africa. The "caliphate's" motives are unacceptably at odds with those of the Euro-Atlantic community. The strength of the movement lies in the availability and cost-effectiveness of today's global communications, and the appeal of license to a stifled and disenfranchised youth regardless of religion, political creed or nationality. These modern day *pastoureaux* have access to the whole world, but aim principally at the Euro-Atlantic countries. This phenomenon is one derived from demography and exposure to callous governance and capricious weather, and a chronic inability to adapt.

In the great beyond called the ether, anonymous juveniles commanding zeroes and ones have emerged as individual challengers

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<sup>20</sup> World Bank Group. *Severe Drought Drives Food Prices Higher Threatening the Poor*. 2012. (Online). Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2012/08/30/severe-droughts-drive-food-prices-higher-threatening-poor> [Accessed 22 August 2015]. See also R. Wray. "Russian Drought Could Push Up Food Prices." *The Guardian*, 9 August 2010. (Online).

<sup>21</sup> T. Friedman. "Without Water, Revolution", *The New York Times*, 19 May 2013, p. SR1.

<sup>22</sup> F. Labarre and H. Hill. "Natural Hazards, Vulnerability, and Conflict: Local Crises and Global Supply Chain Insecurity Linkages", 2013 (unpublished).

of the state. Cyber-criminality's reach is nearly limitless, and in our economies and societies that depend as greatly on ease of electronic communications as on unimpeded supply chains and lines of conveyance, so is our vulnerability. China is said to train and produce hackers by the tens of thousands every year. Russia has its "troll farms" abusing the sensitivities of social media users. In the Atlantic community, multinational businesses have grown so powerful as to be able to retain the services of equally powerful public relations companies that shape messages to abuse Western audiences. As a result, public opinion becomes a misguided force that restricts policy- and decision-makers margin of maneuver and distracts attention and action.

The challenges keep mounting and the responses seem inadequate. There is a feeling, again revealed by the Pew Research Center, that the Atlantic community is suffering from relative decline, and that its options are diminishing. It is the property of globalization and of our system of international institutions to diffuse power. In that respect, the post-Cold War order has worked well to maintain peace and stability, but it does not help in meeting the contemporary security challenges that derive from the consequences of a shift in global power.

Based on the foregoing description, states relate to each other within a "double oligopoly" paradigm, where multipolarity simultaneously operates at regional and functional levels. At the regional levels, we live in world where the military might of America, the normative appeal of Europe, led by France and Germany, the demographic mass of China and India represent factors of influence and power-in-being. Superimposed on this is the functional level, where we see a number of non-state forces at play; poles of technological advancement are now situated in the developing world. Estonia, Brasil and India, for instance, are great "technological" powers. Poles of financial and commercial power are no longer the US and the UK, but Canada and the Gulf

States. While the United States is now energy independent, Europe and the developing world's dependence upon energy great powers, such as Russia, Qatar, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan will increase. Finally, agricultural distress and weak governance in the developing world have created a power vacuum filled by angry radicals where the resulting "Islamic Caliphate" is a virtual country spanning several time zones whose constituency is motivated by ideology, and where the people they displace are prone to move to better socio-economic climates.

## EVALUATING THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC REDEFINITION

From this paradigm, we can assess risks against the Euro-Atlantic community's relative success in meeting its strategic objectives. This requires answering what is the Atlantic community's situation *now*? As we have argued earlier, the objective of the Atlantic community members is "well-being and security", which encompasses indicators of GDP per capita, real wages, education level, life expectancy, health (measured as individual height), personal security (homicide rate) and political institutions, among other indicators<sup>23</sup>.

If we take well-being as the strategic objective of the Atlantic community partners, the OECD data shows that Europe and the British "off-shoots" (the United States and the British Commonwealth) fared better in 1820 along the whole set of indicators than Sub-Saharan Africa does *today*<sup>24</sup>. In fact, the composite data shows that there is no significant difference in the increase of well-being over the same period between Western Europe (including the British off-shoots) and Eastern Europe (including Russia).

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<sup>23</sup> J. Leuten van Zanden et al, eds. *How was Life ? Global Well-Being since 1820*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2014. In this publication, the OECD reprises Angus Maddison's economic studies of 1982, 1995 and 2001, which looked beyond GDP as lone economic indicator. It extrapolates the indicators above across the whole globe to come up with a picture of global well-being from 1820 to 2000.

<sup>24</sup> A. Rijpma. "A Composite View of Well-Being since 1820", In: J. Leuten van Zanden et al, eds. *How was Life? Global Well-Being since 1820*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2014, p. 260.

East Asia fares equally well, but has reached Western levels with some delay, while South Asia and South East Asia meet the global median for the whole period. However Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North African well-being indices have remained stagnant and far below the global median<sup>25</sup>. These results testify to the justness and success of the Atlantic community's strategy, not only relative to other regions, but also relative to any point in time in the last two centuries. On that score alone, there is no need to alter the Atlantic community's strategies.

Most challenges come from regions of the world that are not so successful in procuring the same level of well-being for their constituents. The challenges and threats that the Atlantic community is facing today emanate from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and from some regions of South East Asia. The Atlantic community's model and achievements have become so attractive that the failure of the latter regions' governments to emulate have led to regional conflict, and to massive emigration. On that score, it is up to *those governments* - not ours - to come up with a better strategy of retention of their people, namely based on their increased well-being. But since security is indivisible, it follows that neighbouring insecurity sooner or later affects domestic security. The question remains open as to how the Atlantic community can effectively and respectfully intervene.

## **EVALUATING THREATS AND RISKS TO THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY**

The end of the Cold War allowed more focus on other areas of state concern to become "securitized"; i.e. elite and public came to interpret certain aspects of policy as worthy of a security interpretation, or, in other words, worthy of inclusion in the locus of state power. The post-Cold War security environment required more profound explanation.

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<sup>25</sup> Rijpma. "A Composite View...", p. 261



International relations and security studies scholars led by Barry Buzan revamped the concept of security, encompassing areas beyond the political and military. In doing so, they incorporated the relationship with state goals and strategy; “securing is... the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states... to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change [authors: not states only, but non-state actors, and other non-man-made events], which they see as hostile. The bottom line of security is survival, but it also... concerns... the conditions of existence [authors: in other words, “well-being” as taken by the OECD].”<sup>26</sup>

This approach allowed analysts to account for the complex relationships that compose the pursuit of security. A wide interpretation of security means that previously “neglected” concerns had gained in significance. This also meant that this “significance” was socially-constructed (not to say “made up”). Once constructed as an object worthy of policy-making, the risk or threat becomes “believable”, and, once believed, becomes “real<sup>27</sup>.” This approach is entirely in keeping with our definition of the “double oligopolistic” paradigm of international relations because security is not simply about political and

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<sup>26</sup> B. Buzan. “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century”, *International Affairs*, 67(3), 1991, pp. 432-433.

<sup>27</sup> The constructivist school of international relations was unwittingly founded by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the mid-1970s, when they attempted to understand the possibility for the United States and the Soviet Union to cooperate in the midst of the bipolar confrontation. The scholarly confrontations that this triggered lasted until the late 1990s, and spawned a new school of international relations theory, which was dubbed “constructivist institutionalism” or the “Copenhagen school” of IR. Buzan’s contribution to the debate leans much more to the earlier interpretations (realist) of IR, and is part of the “English school”. The realist side of the equation also attempted to account for changes in perception. See, for example, Stephen Walt. *The Balance of Threat*, New York, 1985, which makes bipolarity work on the credibility of threat rather than on the relative material power factor. For more on the subject, see Alexander Wendt. “Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics.” *International Organization*, 46(2), Spring 1992, also Robert Jervis. “Realism, Game Theory and Cooperation”, *International Politics*, no. 41, October 1988 and Peter J. Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

military security. It is also about “life, health, status, wealth, freedom.”<sup>28</sup>

Analysis and response should therefore be multi-disciplinary. Pandemics, natural disasters, climate change, economic crisis, human rights, rule of law, internet security, military security and political stability all vie for policy-makers’ attention and prioritization, because we believe that they are pressing security concerns, and that furthermore neglect of these security priorities may affect the components of individual and collective well-being, life, health, status, freedom, etc<sup>29</sup>. There is also the belief that these elements of well-being “cannot be replaced if lost<sup>30</sup>.”

Be that as it may, our societies must face those challenges, and their equivalence has led decision-makers to move from one crisis to another in turn, failing to resolve any. The scope of this paper does not allow considering every security risk outlined above. For our purpose, we will limit our analysis, as we have in the Sofia Security Forum, to three distinct challenges; hybrid warfare, anarchic terrorism, and cyber security. Our evaluation of these risks proceeds from the idea that certain challenges are a function of our success.

## 1. Hybrid conflicts

The hybrid conflict brewing between Russia and Ukraine finds its source in the Ukrainian population’s decision to steer away from a pan-Slavic governance and economic model and turn towards the Euro-Atlantic model. The threat here is not to our model of governance

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<sup>28</sup> M. Stone. “Security according to Buzan: A Comprehensive Security Analysis”, *Security Discussion Paper Series*, Groupe d’Études et d’Expertise “Sécurité et Technologie” (Paris/ Science Po), no. 1, Spring 2009, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> For more on the psychological complexes leading to risk assessment, see Daniel Kahneman. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. London: Penguin, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> B. Buzan. *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, p. 36.

or to the geopolitical security of the Atlantic community, but to the international legal regime on which its success is based. If our success depends on the predictability purchased through the international system of rules that have been put in place since the Second World War, then Atlantic prosperity and security depends on the preservation of this fragile system.

The Ukraine conflict has given us the definition of hybrid conflict; the takeover of Crimea has taken place nearly without bloodshed, using the mere threat of greater force, and the separatist fighting in the Donbas is being waged by proxy by disgruntled miners and Russian fighters sporting fake uniforms<sup>31</sup>.

But why has Moscow chosen this method? Here are a few hypotheses:

1) Moscow knows it is on the wrong side of history, and of international law; on the one hand, it pursues its own strategic interests by preventing the encroachment of Atlantic “civilizational” ideas into what it considers its sphere of influence. On the other hand, Russia fears for the stability of international legal regimes if it pursues these interests too openly, and it wants to maintain confrontation out of the military domain<sup>32</sup>.

2) It fears the reaction of an Atlantic cooperation system that is better equipped, better prepared, and in full possession of its means, or, to put it more strategically, that threatens to escalate the confrontation to levels that are less manageable, and perhaps more dangerous than what it can accept. The low “intensity” of coercive action that Russia is carrying out in Ukraine is therefore a hedge against uncontrolled escalation.

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<sup>31</sup> Andras Racz (Finnish Institute of International Affairs). Presentation to the Centre for International and Regional Policy (CIRP) Winter School, Velikiy Novgorod, Russia, 8 February 2015.

<sup>32</sup> P. Karber. “Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukrainian War – Personal Observations”, Washington DC: Potomac Foundation, 6 July 2015, p. 6.

3) Hybrid warfare represents the limit of what Russia can afford in terms of coercive display. It cannot compel any further in consideration of the fact that Russia has many more strategic security challenges of its own, namely in the North Caucasus. The Russian Armed Forces modernization efforts were designed to produce a force structure better adapted to support Russia's foreign and defence policy goals, but have arguably not proceeded to plan<sup>33</sup>.

The Atlantic community's strategy is centered on a cocktail of targeted sanctions, forward presence and limited military aid. The response has been differentiated by the relative strengths and interests of NATO and EU members. But this doesn't mean that we do not have consensus on their objectives; all want to see full restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The reversal of Russia's political and military aims in the Donbas and Crimea is necessary to preserve the integrity of the international legal order, and prevent a return to national self-help and anarchy.

Is the Atlantic community's strategy being successful? This question can be answered with a cautious "yes". For one, the intensity of combats in Eastern Ukraine has dramatically decreased since the imposition of sanctions and NATO's regional deployments. The Russian public is reported as losing interest in the Ukraine issue<sup>34</sup>. This has not induced the Kremlin to reverse its position yet. However, the Moscow Times reported in July 2015 that the State Duma had voted 4 billion USD for the building of a bridge across the Kerch Peninsula, as a means to

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<sup>33</sup> See F. Labarre. "Defence Innovation and Russian Foreign Policy." In: J. L. Black and M. Johns, eds. *Russia after 2012: From Putin to Medvedev to Putin – Continuity, Change or Revolution?* London: Routledge, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> The Moscow Times. "Russians Tiring of Ukraine, Poll Shows". Online. 16 September 2015. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russians-tiring-of-ukraine-coverage-poll-shows/531132.html>

connect Crimea with Russia<sup>35</sup>.

The operationally-minded will quickly fasten on the significance of such a decision; it means that the area between Crimea and the separatist-controlled area of the Donbas (Lugansk and Donetsk) and which are still under Ukrainian government sovereignty will become less essential to Moscow. It may also be a sign that Moscow is losing patience with the fractious separatists, or doesn't have the stomach to fight on.

Finally, it leads the Kremlin to implement tit-for-tat solutions to hedge against escalation. These solutions may also lead the Putin regime in making decisions that could hasten its demise; for example, the continuing curtailment of free speech and media freedom, not to mention the wanton destruction of imported foodstuffs in a country where famine is still within living memory.

Targeted economic sanctions were designed to discriminate between regime cronies and the general public. Sanctions may not be sufficient considering the changed structure of relations between oligarchs and the Putin regime since 2007. In effect, the dynamics among the Russian policy and economic elite have dramatically changed since the ousting of oligarchs Berezovsky, Khodorkovsky and Abramov in 2006-2007. The purging of oligarchs has allowed the re-nationalization and re-privatization of a number of industries in Russia, many of which, like Berezovsky's *AvtoVaz*, are now partly owned by Western companies. The rate of "political connectivity" of the Russian captains of industry, while eight times higher than the global average, is nevertheless far less

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<sup>35</sup> The Moscow Times. "Duma Approves Construction of 4 Billion USD Bridge to Crimea". Online. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/duma-approves-construction-of-4-billion-kerch-bridge-to-crimea/525168.html>. Also reported in The Kyiv Post of 7 July 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine-abroad/the-moscow-times-duma-approves-construction-of-4-billion-kerch-bridge-to-crimea-392838.html>

significant than it used to be prior to 2003<sup>36</sup>.

Therefore, discriminatory sanctions may have unintended consequences; they might reinforce Putin's base by attracting disgruntled oligarchs to it. Russia's membership of the World Trade Organization has also had the effect of limiting the sway of domestic economic and financial forces, and has opened up international competition within Russian industry<sup>37</sup>. Meanwhile, Russia has managed to alleviate the effects of sanctions by relying on unaffected intermediary countries - like Belarus - to act as alternative supply chain. In other words, sanctions against Russia may hurt Euro-Atlantic economies as well – if not more.

## 2. Anarchic terrorism

According to the 2014 Global Terrorism Index, some 80 percent of terrorist acts occur in just five countries; Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria. The list of victims increased by 61 percent between 2012 and 2013 and continues to rise<sup>38</sup>.

More alarming still, radical violence is making its way into our cities and streets. It is not perpetrated by disgruntled immigrants, but by immigrants' sons and daughters, and by natives to our societies. How can people from our societies be led to conduct violent actions for violence's sake? The terrorism visited upon us by DAESH has no point. It doesn't aim at a better world; it aims at preventing the emergence of

<sup>36</sup> M. Faccio. "Politically-Connected Firms." *American Economic Review*, 96(1), 2006, pp. 380-384, and P. Fadeev. *Political Connections and Evolution of Ownership Structure in Russian Industry*. Working Paper no. BSP/2008/099, Moscow: New Economic School, 2008, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> C. Yang Lee., E. Kolesnikova. *Russia's Accession to the WTO and its Implications for the Russian Economy*. <http://www.jgbm.org/page/14%20Choong%20Yang%20Lee%20.pdf>, pp. 5-6. See also V. Kharitonov, T. L. Walmsley. *Impact of Russia's WTO Accession on the Structure of the Russian Economy*. <https://www.gtap.agecon.purdue.edu/resources/download/1843.pdf>, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace. *Global Terrorism Index – 2014*. New York, 2015. Online. [http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report%202014\\_0.pdf](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report%202014_0.pdf)

modes of governance that reward freedom of speech, of worship, and of opinion.

The DAESH brand of anarchic terrorism is a response to the Atlantic community's success; failing to emulate freedom, the Islamic Caliphate engages in license. Homegrown terrorism or returning jihadists do not directly threaten to topple governments or impose sharia law. Rather the threat is that these elements may end up leading the public to interpret other cultures as sinister and to stoke intolerance. Arguably the Atlantic community's most important contribution to mankind is its values. Values which would be jeopardized if intolerance came to dictate policy. Finally, the sustained growth of our economies – and the attendant well-being of our constituents – will come to depend on the stability and predictability of new markets.

Devoid of ideology, politics, and religious rationale, anarchic – the epithet *nihilistic* is perhaps preferable – terrorism is a threat because it somehow attracts disenfranchised young men and women from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the US and the UK to not only volunteer for a pointless cause, but to return and wage war on the societies that nurtured them thereby prompting excessive internal securitization. Drone strikes and airstrikes are only of limited utility, and they do not fix the need for our young men and women to achieve something meaningful, something historical, something greater than themselves. The nature of the state is to provide the means for a society to attain a certain status; for itself and for its members.

Euro-Atlanticism needs to develop projects that are constructive and appealing to our own youth, and that establish a dominant narrative for the benefit of would-be terrorists and insurgents to tell them that our system of governance is the method whereby their ideology and religious choices will thrive.

### 3. Cyber-security

The internet is also a function of the West's technological success; this achievement has become an important cultural and commercial exchange tool. By the end of this decade, the average growth of internet business-to-consumer commercial exchange will average ten percent, with North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific leading the trend to a projected worth of 2.4 trillion USD<sup>39</sup>. The internet has become a channel in our critical infrastructure. It represents the new supply chain system between trading blocks. The democratization of communications now acts as a critical vulnerability of our societies, as well as an enabler for adversaries. As our constituents continue to depend on this avenue for their livelihoods and well-being, their right of exchanging virtually will have to be protected.

It is not only our personal or even government computers that are under threat, but anything that is electronically commanded. The car you drive to work, the plane that brings your family to your dream vacation, or any system of communication that ensures that road, sea and air traffic carries on safely are all exposed. There are many dimensions to this problem, and the space lacks to explore those here. Suffice it to say that these threats affect everyone; ask the Estonians and the Georgians who suffered systematic cyber-attacks in 2007 and 2008. In the summer of 2015, hackers gained access to the telemetry software of a German Patriot missile battery, and issued orders to it that the battery servants were unable to countermand<sup>40</sup>. The risk is to the trust we put in our technology to deliver the wealth and well-being we

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<sup>39</sup> E-Marketer. "Worldwide Ecommerce Sales to Increase nearly 20% in 2014", 23 July 2014. (Online). <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Worldwide-Ecommerce-Sales-Increase-Nearly-20-2014/1011039>

<sup>40</sup> "Hackers" Give Orders to German Missile Battery. The Local. 7 July 2015. Online. <http://www.thelocal.de/20150707/german-missiles-taken-over-by-hackers>



have come to expect.

The internet is where we do most of our business; we communicate and plan, buy and sell, find our way and ourselves online. We depend on it in socially, economically and politically significant ways. For good or ill, it is supplementing the fabric of our societies with a layer whose artificiality is increasing in significance for our individual and societal well-being. It has become a strategic object to defend – even if virtual. The solution is not in shutting down websites or servers, or in retaliating under Article 5 of NATO, as former Estonian minister of defence Jaak Aviksoo once mused.

## **SUMMARY CONCLUSION – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper has taken a fresh look on the issue of whether the Atlantic community would benefit from changes in strategic vision. For the most part, evidence suggests not. Indeed the members of the Atlantic community have arguably been exceedingly successful – despite the risks and threats to their livelihood and security – in securing constituents’ safety and well-being. Notwithstanding, all policies and visions would be well served by exposure to the test of periodic institutionalized review. Within such a context, an interdisciplinary approach in a whole-of-government context – indeed a whole-of-Alliance complex – to strategy formulation, implementation and review would go a long way in alleviating and minimizing the consequences of complex risks.

Inherent in the approach taken, is recognition that the security environment is multipolar; and that security issues are multi-varied and interlinked. This chapter concludes that the Atlantic community should take steps to ensure greater harmony among its members to more effectively master the resources and instruments at their disposal.

Hence, general agreement on broad goals does not seem at issue. Rather, it is more a question of implementation and the ability of Atlantic community Members to more proactively contribute their support and resources. Thus this chapter calls for innovating thinking both in policy-making and in resource application.

Complex crisis scenarios abound. But contingency planning is often compartmentalized, sometimes producing uncoordinated and inconsistent solutions. The potential for fusion of the risks we have examined here calls for an interdisciplinary approach to contingency planning and crisis management. For example, how might the Atlantic community prevent or pre-empt an entity like DAESH should it succeed in hacking – and adversely programming – the launch software of a forward-deployed missile battery, and then employing it against a Russian unit?

Within the analytical framework presented, the following policy seven (7) policy recommendations are offered for consideration:

1) In today's world, crises often develop on many fronts requiring a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to crisis mitigation. Hence, it would be advisable to more actively take into consideration the interlinkages between contemporary security issues. Policy-makers would be better served if they more regularly and comprehensively assess, among the variety of threats and risks present, which transnational threat(s) is (are) more likely to affect strategic goals. Ideally, institutional mechanisms should better reflect on- the-ground realities.

2) Arguably, a certain degree of reassessment of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture – one that takes into account Russia's current strengths and weaknesses – is urgently needed. Inherent in such a reassessment is a) promotion of a common vision of the relations

between former adversaries, and b) articulation and planning for joint action against common threats and risks.

3) Atlantic community goals are arguably better served by maintaining national and common objectives as they are, while striving for still greater human progress. In this view, countries should seriously consider investing in ambitious projects that incentivize participation of the best and the brightest. To the maximum extent possible, such projects should seek to engage the talents of youth in reaching goals designed to benefit the common good.

4) Where feasible, the Euro-Atlantic countries should commit to a whole-of-government approach, bringing a full range of national disciplines to bear on clearly defined objectives that place emphasis on programs that maximize public participation in the collective well-being. Such initiatives would serve not only to strengthen the reputation of every nation, but also to consolidate the appeal of the Atlantic community. Under such an approach, countries might undertake goals such as increasing energy efficiency nation-wide, reforesting a certain percentage of felled land and increasing agricultural self-sufficiency. Inherent here would be rigorous performance measurements, to establish whether programs are in fact meeting expectations, and whether these objectives serve national and collective well-being.

5) Within the framework of a more interdisciplinary approach to security, individual programs should support overarching strategic goals. In this regard, efforts to promote democratic values region-wide can do much to strengthen the Atlantic community's appeal. To cite one example, the Partnership for Peace Consortium's participation in NATO's Defence Education Enhancement Program (DEEP) serves to sustain momentum for Ukraine's military reforms and promote broader goals of strengthening critical thinking within a military context.

6) The Atlantic community could arguably do more to foster stability at its periphery, as it impacts security. One potential tool, often influential, is foreign aid with specific milestones attached.

7) Re-establishing the UN Trusteeship council to promote good governance practices in failed and failing states is an option that merits consideration as well. For example, initiatives modelled after the Nansen Passport (used to regularize the status of refugees and asylum-seekers after the Second World War) could be resurrected to register internally-displaced persons, refugees and economic migrants.

In conclusion, it is important to stress that while the post-Cold War era has not resulted in the lasting level of stability hoped for by many, the Atlantic Community, in the opinion of the co-authors – does not require a new strategic vision. Ever present in the Euro-Atlantic strategic vision is promoting democratic values and bettering mankind in an environment of peace, stability, and security. Indeed, such goals must continue to remain foremost both in strategic vision and implementation. Within this context, continually employing resources more effectively – in a better coordinated and more comprehensive manner – is clearly the course of wisdom.

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## **PART TWO**

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## **DEEPER LOOK AT THE SECURITY SYSTEM IN EUROPE. TIME FOR REASSESSMENT OF EU AND NATO POLICIES?**

*Yordan Bozhilov*

The crisis in Ukraine and the illegal occupation of Crimea have a negative impact upon security in Europe and the world as a whole. Participants in Working Group 1 agreed that Russia clearly demonstrates that the pursuit of self-interests may be in violation of international norms and principles and at the expenses of third countries. Power politics is back in Europe again after the end of the Cold War. Two conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the situation in Ukraine, namely that the security mechanisms in Europe and particular in the Black Sea region are not sufficient to prevent such aggressive actions, and that NATO and the EU were not prepared to predict the crisis and to respond appropriately and promptly. It is very important that NATO and the EU give a clear and definite assessment of the crisis in Ukraine and do not abandon the principles and values.

The situation in the Black Sea region raises the question of the need to seek new security mechanisms in the region and throughout Europe. The crisis in Ukraine shows the complex use of different means to achieve goals: "little green men"; energy as a political weapon; political, financial, and cyber-penetration; information warfare, etc. Based on the analyses of the Ukrainian crisis, NATO and EU need to review its mechanisms and policies with regard to crisis management. The last refers mostly to NATO, as an organization which has the necessary military and political potential to counter aggressive policies. EU needs to reassess its capabilities for management of complex risk situations. This shortfall of the EU is even more visible in the wake of the refugee crisis.

Participants in the working group noted the importance of deepening the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO especially in shared

intelligence capacity.

NATO should focus on counter-strategies, which include emphasis on Special Operations Forces, Cyber security, Intelligence and Strategic Communications. It is important to note that the hybrid countermeasures are effective only if they are supported by conventional military power.

NATO will have to develop clear and definitive approach to the eastern flank which will include a boost allied air and land presence in the Baltics and Poland, and the strengthening of the theater missile and air defenses of Baltics & Poland and the German-Polish air / land interoperability.

NATO and EU have to reassure all its members against any threats by taking concrete measures and actions. It is also important that a level of reassurance should be given to non-NATO and non-EU democracies in Eastern Europe and to stop the ambitions of Russia, which aims to establish a sphere of influence over former Soviet states such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

EU can do more in the wider Black sea region by strengthening ties with the countries. Participants highlighted the importance to develop an economic model of the EU and to limit Russia's economic influence. Countries in the region should be integrated in all common EU markets because it would give them a sense of belonging to the EU without being politically integrated into it.

EU has to develop more definitive policies towards countries from the region, which will include a broad spectrum of measures such as engaging in real policy making and not only rely upon the use of financial instruments. It is of paramount importance to assist countries in fighting corruption, which will reduce Russia's influence in the region.

Participants emphasized on the need for a bold security strategy by the EU and NATO that includes both member and non-member states. The following practical recommendations were made by the participants:

- 1. Keeping Russia engaged in renegotiating new security order in Europe. But hardening the security of Eastern Europe is a precondition to any meaningful dialogue.**
- 2. Keeping strategic communications with Russia and finding a proper interlocutor on the Russian side in designing new rules of the game (No new rules = No rules at all)**
- 3. Setting the terms of engagement and terms of deterrence**
- 4. Need to distinguish between northeastern flank and southeastern Europe: different challenges require different capability mixes**
- 5. Greater NATO conventional contribution to military security in North-East Europe flank**
- 6. Developing multi-level capabilities (EU, NATO, nation-states) for countering Russia's hybrid strategy in South-East Europe**
- 7. Need for credible strategy for interoperability between EU and NATO, as well as new types of security initiatives between EU and NATO (cyber, strategic communications, monitoring Foreign investments inflows)**
- 8. EU/NATO should not show weakness in their relations with Russia, and in the meanwhile no one can expect that Russia would give up**
- 9. Greater EU-NATO effort in Security Sector Reform in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia**
- 10. EU-NATO outreach effort to engage NGOs, think tanks, academic institutions and other opinion makers/shapers in Russia, as well in other countries from the region.**



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# **THE WEST AND RUSSIA - DIFFERENT VIEWS AND APPROACHES TO SECURITY. IMPLICATIONS FOR EU AND NATO.**

*Velina Chakarova*

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most challenging tasks during the international conference on ‘The role of the EU and NATO in the wider Black Sea region’ was to understand the different views and approaches to security that the West and Russia currently have. This was the main topic of the Working group 2 at the conference, whereas its members engaged in a productive discussion on possible challenges and implications for the EU and NATO.

After the Ukrainian crisis, the institutional framework of bilateral relations between the EU and Russia as well as between NATO and Russia ceased to work. That is why one of the important issues that was pointed out within the working group was how these institutional frameworks would work efficiently again and which structures could be re-opened in the near future. Indeed, it was established that the EU still applies rather a values-based than an interests-based approach in its relations with third countries, and thus lacks a geopolitical understanding of global affairs. However, it was pointed out that the EU’s value-based approach is working towards consolidating the EU within but at the same time it is not quite efficient, when it comes to dealing with third countries outside of the EU. Still, the normative power of the EU is valid, especially with regard to the instruments and tools of the EU towards Eastern Europe such as the European Neighbourhood policy, the Eastern Partnership but also within the enlargement process of the EU. Moreover, it was noted that the EU does not have a working framework with Russia right now. The four spaces have practically ceased to exist and the only realistic field for maintaining bilateral relations remains research and science.

It is to be expected that the EU-Russia relations will deteriorate in short-middle term, while the relations between the EU and the EaP countries will rather intensify, especially with regard to the three frontrunners – Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. It might lead to a two-folded policy in the region due to conflicting interests among the EaP countries with regard to political association/economic integration, on the one hand, and a free-trade zone with Russia, on the other hand. However, there might be a few realistic platforms of cooperation in the long term – such as possible FTA negotiations between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as well as a cooperation between the EU and Russia within the framework of the Silk Roads initiatives by China. As mentioned above, the space of science and research will further offer a platform for exchange. Other potentials such as the fight against terrorism will not work out towards cooperation as the current strategies of the USA, the EU and Russia explicitly demonstrate in the case of Syria. So far, there are no overlapping interests with regard to the refugee crisis in Europe either.

During the discussion within the Working Group 2, a wide range of specific issues were raised, including the problem with conflicting risks perceptions and attitudes, the lack of studying academically and scientifically Russia, which leads to the lack of understanding Russian motives in global affairs or the problem with the Western approach of strategic patience towards Russia. Also, a policy of regime change in Russia by promoting NGOs, civil society groups and the Russian-speaking groups abroad has been discussed broadly. Finally, it became clear that it is not only about different views and approaches by the West and Russia towards security, but about clear asymmetry of these approaches. Just to give one quote from the discussion: ‘Russia thinks it is in war. The West thinks it is in crisis.’ Apparently, the sanctions policy has also not affected the Russian approach in the way the West has expected. However, switching to a new ‘Reset policy’ between the West and Russia seems very unrealistic from a current perspective.

## **OUTLOOK**

Unfortunately, Cold War-style escalation between the West and Russia could be described as likely to very likely in the years to come. Currently, there are no good prospects for lasting bilateral relations either in the political or in the economic field. Further sanctions as well as trade and economy barriers will remain. Diplomatic and political links would persist but could also deteriorate, if Russia increases military activities in Donbass, Ukraine, in Syria or another geographical area of conflicting interests (Afghanistan and Iraq for example). No great revival of bilateral relations between the West and Russia is really expected as it was witnessed during the period after the Georgian war in 2008. Moreover, the EU and the EAEU are pursuing rivalling regional integration projects in Eastern Europe – while the EU will focus on the three frontrunners – Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, Russia will further deepen relations with Belarus and Armenia, which have already joined the EAEU. It is to be expected that the EU will be moving from a ‘Russia-first’ to ‘Ukraine-first’ policy in its relations towards Eastern Europe. In this regard, promoting the Association Agreements and the DCFTA with the three EaP countries will be definitely on the EU agenda for the years to come, which might lead to further deterioration of relations with Russia as well. To conclude, trilateral formats such as EU-Ukraine-Russia might create or strengthen workable platforms for future relations with Russia, be it with regard to topics such as energy, the peace process in Donbass or trade and economic cooperation.

### **Recommendations by Working Group 2:**

- 1. Defining a realistic set of interests and goals towards Russia that goes beyond the Western ‘value-based’ approach in order to identify pragmatic short-middle term achievements in the relations with Russia.**
- 2. Although the West is rejecting the idea of zones of influences and is using a ‘value-based’ approach in its relations with third countries, geography matters too and thus the acknowledgement of the current**

- situation of global affairs should lead to a tangible strategy with long-term formulated priorities and objectives towards Russia.
3. An extended process of learning from experience such as the failed Reset policy and the less efficient sanctions policy towards Russia is much needed in order to identify efficient tools and instruments how to engage Moscow in the future.
  4. A revival of Russian studies both in academia and public policy should be advanced in order to address the need to understand the real driving factors and influences behind Russian politics and calculus.
  5. Even after switching from 'Russia-first' to 'Ukraine-first' policy, the West should develop necessary (most probably) trilateral formats such as EU-Ukraine-Russia in order to explore possibilities and expand efforts to stabilise the relations and reach compromise on various conflicting issues.
  6. The NATO could launch and expand a new framework on confidence building measures, especially in the field of security and defence, with Russia. The events in Ukraine, and particularly in Syria, could create dangerous potential for confrontation and thus should lead to an establishment of defence and security-related communication links, political and diplomatic contacts as well as a serious discussion on possible CBMs. The Helsinki Act from 1975 could be a useful source for this. NATO-Russia council or a similar framework might be a suitable platform to start with.
  7. Deep and comprehensive understanding of global and regional models of order and governance is very much needed in order to recognise the emergence of new actors and potential challengers of the global order. Russia is pursuing a policy of undermining the global and regional dominance of the transatlantic community and thus its potential alliances, partnerships and cooperation with third countries should undergo a serious analysis as to what the implications might be for the West.

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## NATO AND EU - TIME FOR NEW/UP-DATED STRATEGIC VISION?

*Monika Panayotova*

The working group 3 in the framework of the International conference on: “The role of NATO and EU in the wider Black sea region”, was a great platform for discussions on the principle question whether it is time for new/up-dated strategic vision of NATO and EU.

The generated answers were in three main directions:

- ❖ First from the perspective of the security landscape;
- ❖ Secondly from the point of view of a new/up-dated strategy;
- ❖ Thirdly related to the different perceptions of the participants due to their nationality.

Concerning the first direction, the security environment was presented through: \*its characteristics, \*the existing security threats and \*the current lessons from Ukraine, the operation in Libya and the Arab spring.

The five key elements, characterizing the security landscape are as follow:

- Rapid speed of change, uncertainty and the complex character of security threats;
- Decentralization of power and the respective increase of the one of the non-state actors;
- Growing interdependence and interconnectivity between the actors in the globalized world and the important dimension of the cyber security;
- Growing impact of technology and science in security and defense sector;
- Education as an element of soft power, promoting human values and democracy.

The hybrid war, the cyber risks, the terrorism and the migration were the main security threats discussed in the context of the specificities of

the unstable security environment as well as of the consequences after the conflict situation in Ukraine, the operation in Libya and the Arab spring.

The participants agreed on the fact that independently of what will be the future design of the security landscape, EU and NATO should be ready for all kind of scenarios, taking into account the existing complex security' challenges and risks.

Concerning the second direction - the need of a new/ up-dated strategic vision, the main focus was on the need of an EU security strategy which should be proactive, containing a new vision for a stronger cooperation between NATO and the EU, based on a variety of security threats as well as implementing a comprehensive approach and a periodic review in order to remain more flexible to the dynamics in the security landscape.

The key questions related to the new security strategy were how to keep the balance between public and secret/private aspects of the document; what should be the goal setting and does it need sub strategies? In this regards the participants discussed the importance of the public diplomacy, the participation of the NGO sector and academic circles for the formulation and implementation of a new strategic vision. They emphasized on the positive and negative aspects of the publicity, which generates on the one hand a public support, but at the same time represents a tool in the opponents' hands, having information about what a state/international organization is going to do. In this context was initiated the idea for the creation of a public, secret and/or quasi strategy, which to keep the balance between soft and hard policy, implementing the so called comprehensive approach.

The suggested main goals of a future security strategy were to guarantee security, stability, freedom and prosperity.

On the basis of the complex character of security threats and the different level of defense capabilities of EU and NATO member states, the participants discussed the options for the creation of specific strategies

corresponding to the different risks as well as of subgroups - called “boutique partnerships” which contain the opportunities of the Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defense, provided by the Lisbon treaty.

Concerning the third direction it was interesting moment to see how the national identity of the different participants had influence on their perceptions about the security environment which led to a different approach towards the situation in Ukraine. The participants were from US, Germany, France, Hungary, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania. They generated different messages in the context of Russia and the Ukrainian conflict. They could be summarized as follow:

- Ukrainian conflict gave birth to a new generation “frozen conflicts”. The difference with the previous ones is that it is on a bigger scale and closer to the EU;
- The situation in Ukraine is a geopolitical clash between EU and Russia, not “US – Russia” and/or “NATO – Russia”. There was an opposite opinion as well, that namely the enlargement of NATO to the East provoked the Russian aggression;
- The Eastern partnership should be radically renewed. The EU should focus on those partners who are looking Kremlin with different eyes (as Belarus and Kazakhstan);
- The current situation is different from the Cold war. It is misleading to describe the present geopolitical situation in terms of a New Cold war as there are no defined ideological camps, the chance for a nuclear is almost impossible and there are no two strongly determined economic blocks. There was an opposite opinion that the Cold war has never ended and that the Ukrainian people are living behind an “Iron wall”. Nevertheless it was noted that the current stage of the Cold war is different and that the only institution that can handle it is NATO. For this reason Ukraine should be integrated to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In conclusion, on the basis of a very constructive debate, intellectual imagination and strategic way of thinking, the participants generated

the following four political recommendations, which they preferably called political options:

- **Identifying countries with strong defense and security concerns resulting from Russian aggression against Ukraine and intensifying programs and activities therein;**
- **NATO and EU should expand their efforts to incorporate comprehensive approach in which soft power elements such as education, institution building and leveraging of civil society are incorporated;**
- **Given the changing dynamics of the security landscape, NATO and EU policy makers should institutionalize a periodic reevaluations of strategies and doctrines;**
- **Given the importance of science and technologies in our societies as well as in the security and defense sector, NATO and EU policy makers should place an emphasis on the implications and consequences of such developments.**



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