

July 2017

Position Paper V

Managing the Cold Peace between Russia and the West

Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe

About the Task Force

The Task Force brings forward proposals to allow all countries of the region to decisively break with the costly legacy of the Cold War and focus more effectively on meeting the emerging political, economic, and security challenges of the 21st century. It addresses the causes of current levels of mistrust between key countries and actors in the region, has trust-building as a central theme in its deliberations, and sets out a rationale and vision for a cooperative Greater Europe and a range of practical steps necessary to move the international relations of the continent in that direction.

The Task Force is supported by, and draws on, independent analytical work by the European Leadership Network (ELN), the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), and the Global Relations Forum (GRF). The Task Force is made possible by generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI).

The Task Force has the following confirmed membership:

- **Igor S. Ivanov**, former Foreign Minister, President, Russian International Affairs Council, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia) (Task Force Co-Chair);
- **Des Browne**, former Defence Secretary (UK) (Task Force Co-Chair);
- **Adam Daniel Rotfeld**, former Foreign Minister, (Poland) (Task Force Co-Chair);
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Please note that not all members of the Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe have officially endorsed this position paper; for a full list of signatories please see page 4.

Managing the Cold Peace between Russia and the West

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Euro-Atlantic security has grown complicated, dangerous and difficult to improve, with a multitude of unknowns. Russian and Western perceptions of European security differ fundamentally and continue to drift further apart. A serious risk of military confrontation between Russia and the West – intentional or otherwise – lurks down this road.

In such circumstances, **an immediate priority is to halt the downward spiral in our adversarial relationship and manage the risks better through a stable and sustainable West-Russia security relationship.** This is the main focus of this Task Force intervention.

At the same time, we feel that to do no more than this would be to condemn the continent to another round of Cold War, in which it would be increasingly difficult to escape the action-reaction cycle of a West-Russia arms race. So **a further priority should be to conduct disciplined dialogue, for the long haul, on the future of European security order,** not requiring either side to change its view of fundamental differences but asking of both sides a patient and sustained engagement to improve mutual understanding and confidence. Such a dialogue should also cover the possibility for collaboration in such areas as offer mutual benefit, based on broader common threat perceptions and on shared values.

The proposal

It would be unrealistic to call for a complete freeze on the introduction of new types of armaments, new military deployments and larger exercises in Europe. Instead, this Position Paper calls for all sides – Russia, NATO, its member states, and other European countries – to observe the rules of **reasonable sufficiency and restraint** in making decisions concerning their military postures. It also calls for **preserving and expanding arms control and confidence-building instruments** that can help stabilize the situation.

It is obvious that in many ways we have already passed the point of no return, and that any hopes for a return to the way things were in 2013 are futile. There is no sense in denying that, for a number of Euro-Atlantic states, Russia is perceived as a military threat, and vice versa.

In the current circumstances, the best course would be to move to a phase of **stable and sustainable mutual security relationship.** That should involve a commitment to abstain from the use of force, a more cautious and restrained approach to the build-up of military potential by all countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, and proactive seizing of opportunities for arms control and confidence building. We should also take into account the real situation in terms of force postures in Europe and regional

and sub-regional balances of military power, in order to identify the most dangerous hotspots of possible conflicts.

We suggest that reaching this phase would require all sides to agree, even if only implicitly, on **four fundamental points**:

1. Our political and military leaderships should accept that a war between Russia and NATO cannot be won and must never be fought, and any attempts to achieve political goals by threat or use of force would be futile.
2. They should accept that any efforts to gain decisive military advantage in Europe or any of its regions by developing or deploying new weapons systems will ultimately be pointless, as other countries would counter such moves.
3. They should recognize the grave risks of an unmanaged, un-regulated deterrence relationship in which unintended escalation is more likely to happen.
4. They should admit that the lack of a mutually satisfactory agreement on stabilizing the relationship would have a negative effect on their broader national priorities, including economic development and social well-being.

The recommendations

In its previous interventions, the Task Force has made the case for a lasting peace in Ukraine, for NATO and Russia agreeing on instruments and procedures to prevent incidents or accidents, and for the two sides to resume military-to-military contacts.

While we continue to call for further progress on these issues, this Position Paper formulates a broader set of recommendations to the leaderships of all Euro-Atlantic countries, including Russia:

- **Check national decisions on new defence acquisitions and deployments against their potential to escalate tensions in Europe.**

The principles of restraint and reasonable defence sufficiency should be taken into account when making national decisions on procurements and the development of the capabilities of armed forces. For example, some countries treat the addition of new strike capabilities (including long-range conventional systems, ballistic and cruise missiles) as well as strategic defences as a way of enhancing their deterrence and defence potential. Yet these capabilities, especially if acquired in bigger numbers, will create pressure for the other side to respond. The decisions to obtain them should thus be carefully scrutinized from the viewpoint of consequences for European stability.

- **Observe the commitments of mutual restraint included in the NATO-Russia Founding Act**

Moscow is plainly displeased with developments such as the deployment of new NATO units in the Baltic region, a more frequent NATO presence in the Black Sea,

the strengthening of the NATO Response Force or the development of the Alliance's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. NATO Allies are clearly alarmed by Russia's actions against Ukraine which they perceive as a violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. They are also concerned by the strengthening of Russia's military potential in the west of the country and its large-scale, short notice military exercises which are seen as violations of at least the spirit of Moscow's Vienna Document commitments. Yet, both sides have so far avoided extending all their military might and employing all the available options for bolstering their forces, including for example through major new nuclear deployments. The starting point for a stable security relationship could be some form of credible return to and reconfirmation of basic principles and mutual restraint commitments, as enshrined in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997.

- **Preserve and ensure full implementation of the existing arms control and confidence-building agreements**

In an adversarial relationship, **formal arms control agreements are a means to prevent wars; stabilize, manage and reduce the costs of the confrontation; and increase trust.** That is why they are especially important in the current critical stage of Russia-West relations.

We highlight the value of existing agreements, including the INF Treaty, New START, and the multilateral Open Skies Treaty. We support their goals and remain concerned about the allegations of non-compliance, which should be promptly resolved. Some of us find that the non-consensual suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) undermines the legal integrity of the regime and see critical value in its preservation, with any appropriately introduced revisions to reflect the changing context.

We also urge that politically-binding confidence-building measures, including the Vienna Document, should be preserved, implemented fully and in good faith, and strengthened where possible.

- **Explore the opportunities for new arms control agreements**

Revitalizing the existing arms control commitments, linked with the threats and risks of the past, will not be sufficient to bring security to the continent now and in the future. European security would benefit from opening discussions on new arms control measures, such as agreements on limiting strategic missile defence, the high-precision conventional strike missiles blurring the line with nuclear weapons, cyber-attack measures, use of drones, or the deployment of weapons in space. Some of us argue that a possible successor to the CFE Treaty developed through a process agreed by all the parties should also be included among those measures.

We acknowledge that some of these discussions will take place within the framework of bilateral US-Russia contacts. But they all require a European input and, in most cases, active European participation to be effective.

- **Initiate a comprehensive expert discussion on the conditions for strategic stability in Europe**

In the past, strategic stability dialogue was conducted between the US and Russia and focused primarily on the issues of nuclear parity between them. There has been no comparable mechanism to tackle the basic question of strategic stability in Europe, with sustainable mutual deterrence as its core.

We recommend, as a starting point, that the expert community should engage more systematically to develop a concept of strategic stability for Europe. Such an approach would not replicate the past and ongoing debates about the security architecture for Europe and broader principles of the Russia-West relationship based on Helsinki and Paris Charter principles. As this paper suggests, it could be limited and focused primarily on the conventional and nuclear military balance, strategic cyber operations, and other non-kinetic measures of confrontation which may have strategic consequences.

When fully developed, such a concept could then be applied to managing the process of achieving peace and stabilization of security on the continent, fully utilizing the potential of the OSCE and its Structured Dialogue, as well as the NATO-Russia Council.

Signed

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This paper is published in the name only of those Task Force members who have signed it, and not on behalf of the Task Force in its entirety.

Updates on project activities will be placed on the ELN, PISM, RIAC and GRF web-sites at the following addresses: www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org; www.pism.pl; www.russiancouncil.ru; www.gif.org.tr.

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Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe

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