

FROM THE UPCOMING ISSUE OF



No. 1, 2010.

EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY: A PATH TO THE FUTURE

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This article presents the key propositions of a report, entitled “Euro-Atlantic Security: One Vision, Three Paths,” that was prepared by a group of authors under the aegis of the EastWest Institute.¹

The idea of writing this report emerged in a situation that, to put it mildly, was not conducive to a grand scientific and political debate over European security issues. Even though the cannonade in South Ossetia had already died down, a full-blown diplomatic “exchange of fire” continued between the West and Russia over the Caucasus war.

In those conditions, the EastWest Institute, responding to requests by American and Russian officials, assembled an Experts Group to discuss conceptual and practical recommendations that could help prevent a further degradation of relations between Russia and the West, as well as a paralysis of European security mechanisms. The group was comprised of 22 persons – researchers, military experts, and diplomats from the United States, France, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, and Australia.

The participants in the projects were confronted with a challenging question: How, in such an emotionally and politically tense atmosphere, to organize a joint study that would result not in yet another declaration of disagreements, but in concrete, constructive proposals of a short-term as well as a long-term nature?

With that end in view, a decision was made right from the start to refrain from making any lists of complaints on either side. The project was focused on identifying the long-term shared interests of Russia and her Western partners in the Euro-Atlantic space, as well as ways of pursuing these interests.

We agreed that the report would not be a consensus document on all issues raised in the course of the study. The logic was different: First, to identify a number of common conceptual guidelines in the sphere of Euro-Atlantic military and political security, and

then propose options for action (sometimes substantially differing from one another) to move toward these guidelines.

The result was a document offering elements of a common strategic vision of security in the Euro-Atlantic region and a panorama of possible lines of action – “paths.”

We are satisfied to say that the work of the Experts Group has not been wasted.

Ahead of the Corfu OSCE ministerial meeting, the report was sent to all foreign ministers of the member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as to the secretaries general of the OSCE, NATO, and the CSTO, and the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy. It was also presented to the public in Moscow, Brussels, and Washington, in June 2009.

The authors are far from entertaining the vain hope that all of their recommendations have had a direct impact on the nature and concrete content of the European security debate that has been unfolding in Euro-Atlantic space since Corfu. Nevertheless, we are pleased that a whole number of conceptual and practical proposals made in the report, which only a year ago were regarded as wishful thinking by the majority of politicians and experts, are now meeting with growing support in Europe.

This primarily concerns the recognition, both by NATO member states and Russia, of the unacceptability, in the periods of crises, of “freezing” the operation of such dialogue mechanisms as the Russia-NATO Council (RNC) and the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC). There is an ongoing discussion on the role and concrete content of the principle of equal and indivisible security. It is very encouraging that the idea of holding a meeting of secretaries general of Euro-Atlantic security organizations (the OSCE, NATO, the CIS, the EU, and the CSTO) to compare their security concepts or doctrines, which was put forward by the authors of the report, is gaining increasing support.

And, needless to say, one should welcome the US administration’s decision not to go ahead with the deployment of the so-called “hard” missile defense option in Poland and the Czech Republic. We would like to hope that this step will help finally start a substantive dialogue on creating a single missile threat monitoring system and, if need be, a continental missile defense system with the participation of NATO member states, Russia, and other countries concerned. This is exactly the authors’ goal.

Toward a new shared vision of military-political security principles

The decision to resume the full-scale operation of the Russia-NATO Council, which was made at the RNC meeting in Corfu, is a very positive step. However, now, after the political and psychological trauma that the war in the Caucasus has caused to relations in the Euro-Atlantic region, there can be no question about returning to the status quo that existed in the security sphere in Europe prior to August 2008. The relations in this sphere are still marked by a shortage of mutual trust, and serious disagreements regarding not only practices but principles. Unless these trends are corrected, negative strategic consequences for European security are imminent.

The “unfreezing” of relations between Russia and NATO should provide an impetus to substantive dialogue on the future of “hard” (i.e., military-political) security in the Euro-Atlantic zone.* There is a need for a “grand debate” on the status and prospects for strengthening security in the Euro-Atlantic region.

OSCE member states, as well as leaders of the main European security organizations – NATO, the CSTO, the EU, and the CIS – should work out a new vision both of fundamental approaches toward security in our region and practical solutions to put them into practice. All of this should help the Euro-Atlantic states to get out of the rut of geopolitical rivalry and bloc thinking that has been emerging as an increasingly disturbing trend in Europe in recent years.

New opportunities have emerged today for rethinking the security situation in the Euro-Atlantic region, for strengthening confidence, changing mutual relations, and, if need be, institutions. A basis for this can be found in the hopes for Russian-American relations expressed by U.S. President Barack Obama, in the initiative by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on reforming the European security architecture, as well as in the process of elaboration of the new NATO strategic concept.

All members of the Experts Group did agree that a common strategic vision of security should be based, *inter alia*, on the following:

- Recognition of the pluralism of decision-making centers in the security sphere and the need for them to cooperate;
- Preparedness to negotiate from a position of respect for the declared security interests of all states; and
- Striving to convert conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic security sphere into win-win situations, not approaching them in the logic of “zero sum games.”

A new level of security in the Euro-Atlantic region requires new standards and styles of diplomacy. In practical terms, we should hold states and political leaders accountable for more efficient and predictable forms of problem solving than we have seen; turn away from the growing tendency to see retaliation (e.g., political and economic sanctions) as a legitimate first response without even entering into serious negotiations; provide for more shared decision making across the old East-West divide as foreshadowed in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Insist on reciprocal obligations for all parties in the security sphere. We need to ensure that we are simultaneously improving everyone’s security, not decreasing it.

Clarifying Security Concepts

NATO and Russia have declared that they are no longer enemies. They need to agree just what that means in terms of a number of important military/political issues. The heated debates over NATO expansion and the political uncertainty about the terms of the adapted Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) provide the proof that the two sides have not yet made that fundamental settlement.

Common security between Russia and NATO and Russia and the United States can be defined on the basis of these shared understandings:

- Collective (cooperative) action is required to effectively meet non-traditional security threats as well as to deal collectively with the protracted conflicts or potential sources of instability in Europe;

- Risk-sharing means shared responsibility, or the acceptance of a measure of interdependence;
- Attention to the sub-regional dimension of security as well as integration of this dimension into the overall relationship is a constitutive part of the global cooperative framework;
- Security is a comprehensive concept. It includes military, economic, and human dimensions and presupposes responsible behavior by each actor in these three domains.
- Increase transparency and consultation in working out strategic concepts and military doctrines, primarily those of the United States, NATO, Russia, and CSTO.

The report presents three possible paths (scenarios) towards strengthening security on a cooperative basis in the Euro-Atlantic region. These paths represent the three main strands of opinion among the experts. These proposals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor do they necessarily represent the view of the group as whole. Each contains elements that might be relevant to the others.

Choosing between remedial repair, partial reconstruction, and fundamental transformation

The experts presented the following paths.

Remedial Repair: institutional status quo; emphasis on removing mutual misperceptions and strengthening transparency and confidence; identifying and pursuing common interests in the Euro-Atlantic zone.

Arguments for this approach: apparent absence of the threat of a large-scale military conflict or of an arms race in Europe; existence of multiple institutions and mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation in the security sphere (the OSCE, the NATO-Russia Council, the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council, as well as the UN Security Council). NATO is the dominant reality of European collective security. Several NATO countries, particularly in Central Europe, are not currently willing to take any other approach. Some countries consider the current Russian desire to reform security institutions to be out of step with their own wish to modernize in closest possible cooperation with the EU and NATO, including possible membership in the future, however distant.

Proposed concrete measures could include finding some “quick fix” measures that might promote new confidence, such as

- A political commitment to joint ballistic missile launch monitoring or to extend the geographical scope of the Cooperative Airspace Initiative*;
- Adopting a mutual obligation by OSCE member states and by NATO-Russia Council members that they will under no circumstances block the functioning of dialogue mechanisms in the security sphere (the NRC, the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation), but, on the contrary, make their work more active in the periods of crises for exploring ways for their settlement;
- Resetting the NATO-Russia Council *modus operandi* by, where possible, moving beyond the “28 vs. one” model; focusing discussion in the Council on significant issues of European security such as the future of the CFE Treaty.

As an earnest display of shared commitment to indivisible security, leaders of the OSCE, NATO, the EU, and the CSTO should convene a summit on Afghanistan/Pakistan to agree on a common set of policies to combat arms smuggling, drug trafficking, recruitment of militants, and violent extremism, and to assist in addressing the socio-economic problems of the two countries.

It has been proposed also to continue the current review of the cost-effectiveness and political repercussions of planned national ballistic missile defense deployments in Poland and Czech Republic as well as consider possible joint missile threat monitoring and, if the need arises, joint missile defense.

Partial reconstruction: identifying additional political, legal, and military arrangements, possibly including overlapping security guarantees, that address potential security concerns of states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region; pursuing common interests beyond the Euro-Atlantic zone.

Arguments for this approach: The status quo in Europe and unilateral attempts at changing it are generating tensions. Current policies are not sufficient to guarantee peace in the long term.

Some multilateral institutions will need to be reformed in order for them to deal more effectively with controversy between Russia and NATO over possible further plans to enlarge the alliance, or strengthening security in the southern Caucasus after the August 2008 war. Here, the United States, NATO, the EU, and Russia need to partially reform existing institutions in order to establish real forms of power sharing and measures of “cooperative collective security” in a great region stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Caucasus.

Proposed concrete measures could include practical steps that will defuse the tensions in the southern Caucasus that have not dissipated after the August 2008 war. With all the profound differences of positions concerning the international status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia, the EU, the OSCE, and the UN – working with the countries concerned – should take immediate measures to conclude legally binding agreements on non-use of force between sides of the conflict; to exclude provocative military actions, and to resolve on a compromise basis the problem of monitoring the security and military situation.

The development of a system of cooperative collective security through sub-regional security communities and new variable military consultative structures would represent a win-win situation – as opposed to trying to define spheres of influence between the United States/NATO and Russia/CSTO within the Black Sea and Caucasus regions; NATO, the EU, and Russia can together or in parallel provide mutual and overlapping security guarantees to countries that seek those guarantees (Georgia and Ukraine may be among them). Such guarantees might make it easier, at least for the foreseeable future, to defer consideration of the extremely sensitive issue of NATO membership of the aforementioned states. At the same time, an agreement on such overlapping guarantees could help create a basis for NATO and Russian constructive cooperation in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions.

Fundamental transformation: reforming the overall architecture of Euro-Atlantic security by signing and bringing into force a European Security Treaty on the basis of the principle of equal and indivisible security.

Arguments for this approach: The existing legal framework of security relations in Europe does not meet the requirements of the 21st century, as evidenced by recent crises, by sharp divergences in interpretation of commitments in the security sphere, and by the absence of sufficient guarantees for safeguarding the equal and indivisible security of states of the Euro-Atlantic region, irrespective of their military-political status. The treaty should translate political commitments in the security sphere taken by OSCE members at different times into legal obligations. The treaty should also provide mechanisms ensuring universal application of this principle. A variegated architecture must be found that can incorporate the interests of all states in the Euro-Atlantic and throughout Eurasia. Not only states but also organizations such as the OSCE, NATO, the CSTO, and the EU must be involved in the elaboration of this new architecture of Euro-Atlantic security

Proposed concrete measures: It is necessary to lay down in the treaty appropriate procedures and mechanisms for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the UN Charter in order not to endanger international peace, security, and justice: not to ensure one's own security at the expense of the security of others; not to commit any actions (within the frameworks of any military alliances and coalitions) that undermine the integrity of the common security area, including the use of one's own territory to undermine the security of other states, or the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area as a whole; not to allow the evolution of military alliances to the detriment of security of other parties to the treaty; respect the right of any state to maintain neutrality or choose its own security arrangements.

The principle of equal and indivisible security should occupy an important place in any future security system in the Euro-Atlantic area. Equal and indivisible security is a quality of relations between states in the security sphere and a quality of their military capabilities that are based on a policy of causing no damage to the security of other partners, strengthening one's own security along the lines of cooperation with them, using such cooperation for the purpose of strengthening international peace and security. Equal and indivisible security presupposes overcoming the logic of "negative" interdependence, based on the confrontation of mutually assured destruction capabilities, and moving toward the logic of "positive" interdependence in the security sphere. This logic is based on the recognition of shared fundamental security interests, and their consistent joint application.

The treaty should ensure the development or improvement of collective coordination mechanisms on the political and operative level with regard to measures aimed at preventing and settling conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic area, helping address international issues, and develop friendly relations and cooperation between states.

Equal and indivisible security of all countries in the area can be ensured by the following major institutional and legal guarantees:

- The adapted CFE Treaty, to be succeeded in the future by a new CFE Treaty;
- A NATO-Russia agreement on cooperation in the field of peacekeeping (based on the concept of joint peacekeeping elaborated in the framework of the NRC). Such an agreement is to provide a basis for an ad hoc center for planning and executing peacekeeping operations;

- A joint control center/system of centers for European airspace (with a view to prevention/suppression of acts of air piracy and terrorism);
- A joint NATO-Russia counter-terrorist center;
- An improved "Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security" (adopted in 1994 in the framework of the OSCE) that would specify politico-military guarantees of equal and indivisible security.

However, members of the group diverged in their opinions as to the feasibility of finding a consensual, legally binding definition of the principle of equal and indivisible security. This is a conceptual and diplomatic challenge that brings forward a number of key questions: What would constitute concrete guarantees of equal and indivisible security of states? How to ensure equal and indivisible security of states having different military-political status (NATO and CSTO member states, neutral states, European Union member states not belonging to NATO but participating in the EU's security and defense policy)? How to combine guarantees and obligations which can be taken by the states within the framework of such an international legal document, with their already existing obligations as to collective and individual self-defense?

These matters, as well as other important legal, political and practical aspects of the EST initiative should be thoroughly examined.

EastWest experts suggest OSCE governments, leaders of NATO, the EU and the CSTO should convene a Group of Eminent Persons, composed of high ranking politicians, former diplomats, and military officials, to make recommendations on how to translate the new hopeful signs in United States-Russia relations to the Euro-Atlantic security scene, and to assess the Russian proposal for an EST and other similar initiatives that may come up.

Governments of the Euro-Atlantic area could consider the idea of holding, in a realistic timeframe, an OSCE summit meeting for discussion of conclusions and recommendations from this effort. Such a summit could initiate the process of a formal and thorough discussion of all EST aspects.

The OSCE with its comprehensive approach to the security issue, including the military, economic, and humanitarian dimension, is a natural platform for such a discussion. However, "hard" security issues, which should constitute a core of a possible treaty, could also be discussed at other forms, such as the NRC and the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council.

Eurasian dimension of security of the Euro-Atlantic area

Taking into account the number of threats and challenges for countries of the Euro-Atlantic area originating in the Near and Middle East and considering the growing role of the leading Asian states in regional and international security, it is proposed to hold a meeting of NATO, OSCE, EU, CSTO, and SCO secretaries general, as well as of speakers of the respective parliamentary assemblies. The purposes of the meeting could be to identify similar functions of the said structures in the spheres of hard and soft security and to discuss possible opportunities for cooperating in spheres and regions of common interest.

NOTE

¹EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY: ONE VISION, THREE PATHS. June 2009, Brussels-Moscow-New York /EastWest Institute// www.ewi.info

FOOTNOTES

[p.2] *The Euro-Atlantic zone is a term that is understood in two dimensions: geographic (the OSCE area) and institutional, covering multilateral institutions/organizations active in the security sphere in the OSCE region.

[pp.3-4] *The Cooperative Airspace Initiative involves the creation of a system of air traffic information exchange along the borders of Russia and NATO member states. Presently the system consists of four units in Russia and four units in NATO states.